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Enacting 'community': Conceptualisations and practices of 'community' in a UK  
area-based, empowerment initiative.

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Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
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LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE

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**Disclaimer:**

The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health.

I, Joanna Louise Reynolds, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.  
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been  
indicated in the thesis.

Signed: 

Date: 14/06/2016

## Abstract

The practice of engaging the 'community' has established presence in public health efforts to target inequalities. However, there remains a lack of critical consideration of how 'community' is conceptualised in delivering and evaluating participatory health interventions. This may contribute to the lack of conclusive evidence of the impact of 'community' engagement on health inequalities in the UK and elsewhere. This thesis explored how 'community' was enacted through an area-based, 'community' empowerment initiative in the UK, to contribute to approaches for evaluating the impacts of such interventions.

Drawing on post-humanist, ontological perspectives and actor-network theory, I examined how 'community' was enacted through the delivery of the 'community' initiative in two areas. I conducted an ethnographic case study over 13 months between 2014 and 2015, and employed multiple qualitative methods to identify practices and conceptualisations constituting enactments of 'community'. The research was conducted in parallel with a study evaluating the initiative's impacts on determinants of health inequalities.

'Community' was enacted through ongoing 'boundary work'; or, the assertion and negotiation of spatial, material and social boundaries around eligibility to contribute to and/or benefit from the initiative. Practices and values of the initiative contributed to positioning the individual as separate from the 'collective', and to constructions of the 'community' as a holistic but segmented entity. Finally, relations of disconnection – of 'missing out' – were identified as inherent to enactments of 'community' and to the process of aligning my ethnographic practice with evaluation research. These findings hold implications for theorising the pathways to improved health via collective empowerment, and processes of inclusion and exclusion in participatory initiatives. They indicate that evaluation practice must explore how the multiple ways of doing 'community' cut across the intervention-context divide, and consider the relevance of this for producing transferable evidence on engaging the 'community' to address health inequalities.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Abbreviations and List of Tables</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1. Introduction and Background</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Situating ‘Community’ Within a Public Health Agenda – an Introduction .....	10
A Note on Disciplinary Perspective(s) .....	11
Theorising ‘Community’ .....	13
‘Community’ and Health Improvement .....	30
A Case Example: The Big Local .....	38
<b>2. Review of Literature on Conceptualising the ‘Community’ in Receipt of Money</b> .....	<b>43</b>
Introduction .....	43
Cover Sheet .....	45
Abstract .....	47
Background .....	48
Methods .....	50
Results .....	53
Discussion.....	59
<b>3. Research Aim and Positioning</b> .....	<b>73</b>
Introduction .....	73
Overall Aim.....	73
Positioning.....	75
<b>4. Conceptual and Philosophical Framing</b> .....	<b>78</b>
Overview .....	78
An Ontological Perspective .....	79
Overview of Actor-Network Theory.....	80
Applications of ANT.....	82
Framing ‘Community’ in Relation to ANT .....	85
Linking to the Research Aim and Questions .....	88

<b>5. Methodology and Methods .....</b>	<b>90</b>
Introduction .....	90
Methodological Approaches .....	90
Methods Employed .....	99
Analysis of Data .....	109
Ethical Considerations.....	113
<b>6. Descriptions of the Field Sites .....</b>	<b>118</b>
Craybourne.....	118
Westin Hill .....	119
A Note on Terminology .....	120
<b>7. The Boundary Work of Enacting ‘Community’ .....</b>	<b>122</b>
Introduction .....	122
Processes of Boundary Making .....	125
Processes of Boundary Negotiation.....	139
Interpretation.....	147
<b>8. Fragmented Relating: Positioning the Individual and the Collective .....</b>	<b>151</b>
Introduction .....	151
Part A: Individual Positioning and Trajectories.....	153
<i>Individual positioning</i> .....	154
<i>Individual trajectories</i> .....	159
Part B: Governing and Segmenting the Collective ‘Whole’ .....	167
<i>Governing the collective-individual divide</i> .....	167
<i>Segmenting the ‘whole’</i> .....	172
Interpretation.....	178
<b>9. ‘Missing Out’: Reflections on the Positioning of Ethnographic Research Within an Evaluative Framing.....</b>	<b>182</b>
Introduction .....	182
Cover Sheet .....	184
Abstract .....	186
Introduction .....	186
The Ethnographic Study .....	188
Experiencing and Interpreting ‘Missing Out’ .....	192
Conclusions .....	201

<b>10. Discussion .....</b>	<b>206</b>
Overview .....	206
Summary of Thesis .....	206
Implications for ‘Community’ Engagement and Improving Health .....	209
Contributions to Evaluation Approaches.....	216
Limitations, Reflections, and Further Questions .....	223
Concluding Statements .....	229
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>231</b>
Appendix A: Copy of License Agreement .....	232
Appendix B: Sample Phonographic Recording Reflections Note .....	233
Appendix C: Ethics Approval Letter.....	235
Appendix D: Interview Participant Information Sheet.....	236
Appendix E: Interview Consent Form .....	240
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>241</b>

## Abbreviations

ANT	Actor-network theory
BL	Big Local
CiC	Communities in Control study
LT	Local Trust
NIHR	National Institute for Health Research
SPHR	School for Public Health Research

## List of Tables and Boxes

<b>Table 1</b>	Search terms for scenarios of 'communities' receiving money by domain	p63
<b>Table 2</b>	Summary of texts included in the review	p65
<b>Table 3</b>	Conceptualisations of 'community' and their construction in the texts reviewed	p71
<b>Table 4</b>	Summary of research activities by method and site	p106
<b>Box 1</b>	Search inclusion and exclusion criteria	p64

# 1. Introduction and Background

## Situating 'Community' Within a Public Health Agenda – an Introduction

The established and persisting presence of the concept of 'community' in public health discourse and practice reflects an acknowledged commitment towards participatory and engaged approaches to improving health at the population level, but arguably obscures the multiplicity of possible interpretations of the concept. Perhaps since the Alma-Ata Declaration identifying 'community participation' as a fundamental component of primary health care (World Health Organization 1978), the 'community' has been implicated in multiple strategies to address poor health and its determinants. The focus on 'community' also intersects broader social and political policy efforts, for example in the UK, to decentralise the delivery of health and social care, and increase localised participation in decision making. In public health fields, Dahlgren and Whitehead's much cited conceptual model locates 'community' as a social determinant of health at the meso level, in between the individual and structural factors influencing health (1991). As such, the 'community' has become the site in which efforts to address persisting, even widening health inequalities (Mackenbach 2012) are frequently oriented, for example through area-based initiatives. Moreover, increasing engagement of the 'community' also reflects a rights-based approach to health improvement, and a premise that engaging the 'community' will not only lead to more appropriate and therefore effective interventions, but also to improved psycho-social wellbeing via means of increased sense of empowerment and capacity (De Vos, De Ceukelaire et al. 2009).

Yet, the evidence, in public health terms, of the effect of interventions and initiatives which engage or involve the 'community' on health inequalities remains limited and largely inconclusive (O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013). Modest improvements to some secondary outcomes (such as health-related behaviours, neighbourhood perceptions, sense of cohesion) are the only typical positive outcomes of such efforts (Bambra, Gibson et al. 2010, Milton, Attree et al. 2012, O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013). The challenges of evaluating the impacts of these kinds of intervention – highly contextualised with (often) multiple interacting components – have been acknowledged (Hollister and Hill 1995, Hills 2004, South and Phillips 2014). Yet while questions have been asked about what 'engagement' or 'participation' really look like in these interventions and the implications of this for interpreting pathways of effect (Burton, Goodlad et al. 2004, Milton, Attree et al. 2012), few similar questions have been asked of the concept of 'community'. This seems particularly surprising given the wealth of theorising and debate around 'community' across the social sciences, some of it at the

very root of fundamental theories on 'society' and 'the social'. This incongruity, therefore, points to the focus of this thesis, attempting to take a step towards addressing what Bertotti and colleagues (2012) have described as

*"... a fundamental gap between the conceptualisations of community in the academic literature and the way in which community is used in policy and practice."* (p9).

This first chapter will seek to establish an overview of key bodies of literature pertaining first, to the rich and diverse history of the 'community' within various social science traditions, and second, to the operationalisation of the concept of 'community' within public health theory and practice, and health improvement strategies. Finally, I will outline a particular case example around which the research for this thesis was oriented; a 'community' empowerment and area-based initiative underway across multiple sites in England, and which is the focus of a public health evaluation study to assess its impacts on determinants of health inequalities.

Given this particular empirical focus, much of the literature addressed in this review will be from a UK context, drawing largely from schools of thought and theory from Western Europe and North America (the 'global north'). This points to limitations in the scope of the review, which should be acknowledged; in particular, the lack of engagement with literature from a 'global health' context and the prominent use of the 'community', for example, as a mechanism and site for interventions to strengthen health systems in low-income countries. My focus here (predominantly) on the UK also indicates a particular scope for considering the dimensions of health inequality, in relation to a low-income country setting, such that the focus of this chapter (and indeed this thesis) remains on *relative* levels of inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett 2007), as opposed to absolute deprivation. In narrowing my focus in the way described, I do not wish to imply that conceptualisations of 'community' are necessarily distinct depending on socio-economic context or philosophical traditions of social theory, but only that these demarcations have been made in the interests of a focused, applied and coherent thesis.

## **A Note on Disciplinary Perspective(s)**

It is perhaps helpful at this early juncture to make explicit the disciplinary influences that have shaped my approach to identifying and reviewing the literature in this introductory chapter, and indeed my approach to defining and addressing the core research question at the heart of this thesis. I situate this thesis firmly within the field of 'public health', in terms of the 'problem' I

identify in this, and subsequent, chapters, and in terms of the body of knowledge to which I seek to contribute. However, I must also acknowledge my disciplinary training in social anthropology, which has undoubtedly shaped how I have framed my research question(s), and the conceptual and methodological choices I have made in structuring my approach to addressing these questions. I characterise my approach as one that borrows from both critical and applied perspectives within social anthropology. I draw on typical, critical aims of challenging assumptions about the organisation of the social (and material) world and problematising taken-for-granted concepts and structures, to identify their (social) constructions and the processes that lead them to be reified and/or unquestioned. Yet, I also draw on the strengths of the discipline in using in-depth approaches to construct detailed accounts of contextualised social processes, with the view of shedding light on otherwise neglected or overlooked dynamics, and which might identify points at which to intervene. As such, I characterise my approach along the lines of what Rylko-Bauer and colleagues argue should be the approach of contemporary, impactful anthropology:

*“a systematic joining of critical social theory with application and for pragmatic engagement with the contemporary problems of our social and physical worlds.”* (Rylko-Bauer, Singer et al. 2006, p178).

However, acknowledging my application of principles from social anthropology to the field of public health in this thesis is not to negate the range of other (predominantly social science) disciplines which have been woven into my exploration of the topic. Engagement with other disciplines has come particularly through the literature I have explored to examine how ‘community’ has been theorised, and how ‘community’ approaches to targeting social and health inequalities have been framed. For this, I have found perspectives from sociology, social policy, social psychology, human geography and urban studies to be highly useful and relevant, though I do not claim to follow necessarily their specific disciplinary assumptions or to present a comprehensive picture of the relevant literature and theories from these fields (or, indeed, from social anthropology). In summary, I intend for this chapter and the thesis as a whole to be read as a critical and reflexive application of social science perspectives (most prominently, social anthropological) to a question of public health importance.

## **Theorising ‘Community’**

There exists a vast wealth of literature from multiple (predominantly social science) disciplines that engages with concepts of ‘community’. Among these literatures there can perhaps only be one consistent thread identified: that ‘community’ is a highly contested and contestable concept that has been used in myriad ways with multiple, almost limitless possible meanings (Bell and Newby 1971, Macfarlane 1977, Crow and Allan 1994, Jewkes and Murcott 1996). Despite past attempts to develop typologies of ‘communities’ (for example Hillery 1955), there continues to be empirical research and lively debate around its meaning; see for example the recent programme of research coordinated by UK research councils entitled “*Connected Communities*” (Connected Communities 2014).

In this section, I will seek to map and review some of the key strands and debates within social science theorising of ‘community’ that are perhaps most relevant and pertinent to public health agendas around engagement of the ‘community’ for improving health and inequalities. As mentioned above, this thesis focuses empirically on the UK, and much of the theorising around ‘community’ that will be described here represents Western traditions of sociological and philosophical thought. This section will be broken down into five different ways in which ‘community’ has been described, defined or framed in these literatures, including in relation to the rise of ‘modern society’; as a moral ideal; as relating to place and/or identity; as relating to policy and the state; and as a form of sociological or anthropological method.

### **‘Community’ and modern society:**

An exhaustive account of the entirety of theorising around ‘community’ across the social sciences (and beyond) is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I will attempt to draw out some key aspects of the trajectory of these theories and debates, focusing predominantly on the latter half of the 20th Century, and, as described above, with a bias towards Western social thought and empirical examples. These key aspects reflect my assumptions about the most relevant topics and theories for the particular focus of this thesis: enactments of ‘community’ in an area-based, empowerment initiative in the UK. As such, I have drawn out conceptualisations of ‘community’ in relation to broader ideas about modern society, including (but not limited to): the rise of capitalism and industrialisation; urbanism and post-industrialisation; increasing globalisation, technologisation and mobility; race, gender and other identity politics; constructions of the state; modes of governance, governmentality and power; and ‘grassroots’ democracy, participation and activism. Bertotti et al (2012) present a detailed meta-narrative review of conceptualisations of ‘community’

from across the social and political sciences, synthesising key themes along with historical developments that prompted particular 'storylines' of theorising. I will not seek to replicate this valuable work, but to orientate my review more towards those ideas I consider most relevant to the focus of this thesis.

From the origins of modern sociological thought, the 'community' has held a prominent position in theorising on the state and conditions of society, and the broad social, political and economic shifts that have shaped, and been shaped by it. In an attempt to present a useful synthesis that goes beyond a chronological list of theories and theorists, I will borrow from several authors in their categorisations of theories of 'community' in terms of its absence and presence in relation to modern society (Wellman and Leighton 1979, Delanty 2003).

### *'Community lost'*

In efforts to describe and interpret the fundamental changes experienced with the rise of capitalism, industrialisation and key political revolutions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Bell and Newby 1971), foundational sociological thought identified the 'community' in relation to the changing nature of society, increasing bureaucratisation of the state, and a weakening of ties between individuals. Tönnies and Durkheim can both be identified as influential in theorising the loss of 'community' as a traditional form of relatedness between groups of people, based on mutual exchange and solidarity (Wellman and Leighton 1979, Cohen 1985a, Hoggett 1997). For Tönnies, the shift from *Gemeinschaft* – traditional, communal ties resulting from interpersonal relations and expressions of sentiment – towards *Gesellschaft* – rationalised, individual actions based on self-interest – represented the eradication of 'community' and its social values by the rise of bureaucratized, modern society based on industrial organisation (Macfarlane 1977, Tönnies 1987 [1957]). Inherent in these conceptualisations are moral assumptions about the value of the different types of interaction and relations between people which, for Tönnies, are irreconcilable: the altruistic bonds of people within a 'community' versus the self-interested individualisation of modern society (Tönnies 1987 [1957], Calhoun 1980).

Durkheim similarly described a shift towards advanced individualism in an increasingly industrialised society, whereby a previous *mechanic solidarity* – reflecting a common, collective conscience and system of social cooperation, resembling 'community' – is replaced by *organic solidarity* – reflecting difference between individuals and their moralities, and an inter-dependence based principally on the division of labour (Durkheim 1997 [1933], Aron 1999). Arguably, for Durkheim, it was not so much that 'community' had been lost with the shift from *mechanic* to *organic* solidarity, but that

there had a been a failure to evolve a new form of collective spirit in modern society. This resulted, for example, in experiences of *anomie* and suicide, reflective of the inappropriateness of traditional forms of 'community' for coping with modernity (Durkheim 1951 [1897], Delanty 2003). Thus, the increase in scale of the nation-state's activities and the presence of bureaucratic institutions, alongside industrialisation, has been theorised to have weakened ties of local solidarity, and the sentiment experienced in belonging to a group – a 'community' (Macfarlane 1977, Wellman and Leighton 1979, Delanty 2003).

These early depictions of the irretrievable changes in society as the loss of 'community' can be traced into later work on social relations in increasingly urbanised modern society, for example the work of the Chicago School in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The work of Park and others has described the weakened, communal ties within neighbourhoods of the modern city as 'social disorganisation' (Park 1925), with comparisons made between rural and urban societies to exemplify the difference between more traditional and modern forms of social belonging (Cohen 1985a, Delanty 2003, Clark 2007). Under this framing of 'community', inhabitants of the modern city are presented as "*alienated isolates*" (Wellman and Leighton 1979, p369), who hold only weak ties with limited, fragmented networks of others. Here, one can identify assumptions of a 'true' sense of 'community' – one that is ascribed to historical modes of social organisation – that is lost in the modern (urban) society, and with it, the values of collective belonging that arise from relations of similarity and contiguity (Wright 2015). This assumption, at least within the Chicago School, also denotes an assumed difference between urban and rural societies in terms of their level of complexity and development (Burgess 1925, Cohen 1985a). Thus, the politico-economic shifts of recent centuries underpin interpretations of the individualisation of society, the weakening of social organisation based on interpersonal ties and sense of relatedness, and thus, the loss of 'community', as a traditional mode of social organisation and set of values that are incompatible with modern society.

### *'Community saved'*

There are also theorisations of 'community' as a traditional model of social organisation that has persisted *despite* major social, economic and political shifts. Wellman and Leighton's depiction of the 'community: saved' highlights theories of 'community' relations as important sources of support in the face of increased industrialisation, bureaucratisation and urbanisation (1979). They suggest that this framing of 'community' corresponds closely with spatialised social relations in the form of the 'neighbourhood', emphasising the role of local forms of sociality as methods of maintaining autonomy and control within broader contexts of large scale institutions, such as the nation-state

(Wellman and Leighton 1979). These assumptions are arguably reflected in the rise of 'community studies' as a distinct strand of social science research and a quasi-discipline in the 1950s and 1960s, many of which focused on urban neighbourhoods and took a small-scale, focused approach to examining spatially-situated groups of people. Within such studies, forms of solidarity among residents were closely examined and often interpreted as indications of a permanent, persistent 'community' (Crow and Allan 1994, Crow 2002, Clark 2007).

Studies in this tradition often took as their research subject distinct working-class, 'communities' or neighbourhoods, for example Young and Wilmott's influential work on family and kinship relations in Bethnal Green, London (1957). In this study, Young and Wilmott emphasise the connections and sense of solidarity among neighbours in this area, formed and maintained largely through women's kinship and friendship networks, interpreted as a resource for mutual support and help, against a backdrop of economic hardship in the post-war era (Young and Willmott 1957). Other studies in this tradition focused on the centrality of shared occupation for the structure and maintenance of 'community' identity and relations, where the occupation was typically 'working-class' and geographically-situated, such as mining (see for example Dennis, Henriques et al. 1969, Bulmer 1975). Such studies have tended to emphasise the 'unifying' effect of the distinctive structure of labour relations, within a defined, often relatively isolated spatial area (Crow and Allan 1994), implying a boundedness to the 'community' constructed, in part, through shared identities of occupation (or unemployment).

Within the tradition of these studies there was some consideration of how broader economic and political shifts influenced the construction of 'community', for example Young & Willmott's description of the fracturing of familial, and thus 'community', relations as a result of the movement of some residents deprived London areas to new housing developments on the outskirts of the city and beyond (Young and Willmott 1957). However, there remains an implied sense of stability of 'community' in many of these studies, in depictions of 'traditional', supportive connections through relations of proximity and common class (and gender) identities. The implied homogeneity, absence of conflict, and sense of disconnection from wider contexts have held this style of 'community' study up for subsequent critique (Macfarlane 1977, Cohen 1985a, Hoggett 1997), which in turns calls into question the value of conceptualising the 'community' as 'saved' or 'persisting' within modern society.

### **'Community' as moral ideal:**

Other framings of 'community' in relation to modern society present it less a 'relic' of a traditional age and more as a mode of organisation that is desirable – and achievable – in contemporary society. Discourses of communitarianism are particularly prominent in relation to this framing in which political and moral values are mobilised in agendas to re-order the individualised modern society towards a utopian ideal of a 'community' responsive to the needs of its members (Etzioni 1996a, 1996b, Delanty 2003). Communitarianism can be traced back to political ideals proffered, for example, by de Tocqueville, such that civic participation in political life means the state cannot exist outside the 'community' (Delanty 2003, de Tocqueville 2003 [1835 & 1840], Powell 2009), reflecting the value of the interconnectedness of civil society (Powell 2009). A resurgence of communitarianism in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be interpreted as an attack against the 'excessive individualism' of classical liberalist economic regimes of the political Right, particularly in the US and UK in the 1980s (Etzioni 2003), but also as critiques of the centralising tendencies of the Left, undermining the ties of social institutions such as the family (Robinson 2008).

Although varying defined, a communitarian perspective typically frames the 'community' as balancing potentially contradictory sets of values of serving the common good, and personal, individual autonomy (Putnam 1995, Etzioni 1996a). This framing of 'community' as the political and social ideal to be achieved is perhaps the most explicit in its valorisation of 'community' as a moral entity, and an inherently 'good thing'. For Etzioni, the 'authentic' (or, balanced and responsive) 'community' plays a pivotal role as "*an antidote to alienation and tyranny and as a key element of a 'good society'*" (1996b, p4). In the framings of 'community' as 'lost' and 'saved', the historicity underpinning both framings implies a level of nostalgic longing for a pre-modern form of social organisation and implicit assumptions of a higher moral order characterised by collective and connected social relations (Wright 2015). An *explicitly* moralised interpretation of 'community', however, such as in communitarianism, appears to avoid the confusion identified by Bell and Newby in many studies of 'community' between what 'community' is, from an empirical perspective, and what it *should be* – a normative prescription (Bell and Newby 1971). The influence of these interpretations of the 'community' as a moral ideal in modern society can be seen in recent social and health policy-making, in which the concept of 'community' is engaged (Rose 2000); this will be explored in more detail later.

### **'Community' of place and/or identity:**

More pragmatic attempts to define 'community' within empirical research have tended towards two groupings: 'communities' of place, and of identity (Stephens 2007), particularly in application of theories of 'community' to addressing health and social 'problems' (Campbell and Murray 2004). These framings intersect and overlap in many ways, but it is valuable to unpick the assumptions underpinning each.

The common tendency to define 'community' in relation to notions of space, place or territoriality perhaps reflects traditional conceptualisations of 'community' (Clark 2007), and the simplistic dichotomies of traditional versus modern forms of social organising, rural versus urban localities, and the collective versus the individual. Echoing classic sociological interpretations of the pre-modern society (Wellman and Leighton 1979), the spatial 'community' is often assumed to be characterised by forms of social interaction facilitated and influenced by spatial proximity. These include dense structures of relations formed through regular, face-to-face engagement, and often underpinned by processes of mutual exchange and solidarity (Wright 2015). Examples from the 'community studies' tradition represent a focus on geographically-situated groups of people, and the everyday activities and interactions of residents (Day 2006), contained within a defined, and bounded, locality.

Other theorising of 'community' has taken a more ecological perspective of the spatial organisation of groups of people, drawing on biological framings of ecology in which symbiotic relations are produced in response to the surrounding habitat (Bell and Newby 1971). For 'community', the inter-relatedness of its members is interpreted as a "*function of their common residence*" (Bell and Newby 1971, p33), with the component parts interacting to maintain a 'communal system' (Hawley 1986). The supposed origins of this social-ecological perspective in the Chicago School's studies of urban neighbourhoods (McKenzie 1923, Sampson 2003) saw a strong emphasis on the spatial elements of 'community' relations, and how urbanised environments, causing increasing individualism, threatened to erode the interdependency of people within a locality, and thus 'community' (Cohen 1985a). The influence of this perspective can be seen more recently in trends for area-based interventions targeting or engaging the 'community' to improve health and social outcomes, drawing on systems theories in which the 'community' forms part of the ecological, spatially-situated system in which an intervention is delivered and evaluated (Stokols 1996, Trickett, Beehler et al. 2011).

More recent work has explored extreme versions of this territoriality of 'community', for example the positioning and interactions of 'gated communities' as physically segregated groups of people (Low 2001, Delanty 2003). This perspective has tended to present (gated) 'communities' as active, purposeful constructions, using space and physical boundary markings to facilitate the expression – and protection – of difference in identity between those within and those outside the 'community' (Low 2001). As such, they differ from previous framings of 'community' in which the spatial organisation and boundedness tended to be interpreted as 'natural', organic expressions of social organising.

The influence of 'place' appears deep-rooted in the traditions of social studies of 'community', illustrated, for example, in Crow and Allen's use of a map to indicate the geographical location of 55 individual 'community' studies they review and critique in their book (1994). Similarly, Bell and Newby's recognition of multiple interpretations of 'community', was offset by their definition of a 'community' study as examining the "*inter-relationships of social institutions in a locality*" (Bell and Newby 1971, p15-16), drawing on Parsons' definition of 'community' as a structure of social systems that is 'referable to' a territorial location (Parsons 1960). This assumption (explicit or implicit) of the primacy of place has meant these approaches, particularly within the 'community studies' tradition, have been critiqued for their 'localism' (Bell and Newby 1971) and failure to consider the 'community's' position (spatially, socially) within a larger societal and structural context. Furthermore, there has been a tendency for under-examination of the assumptions underpinning conflation of 'community' with place (Stephens 2007). Such an approach might result in 'spatial determinism' (Day and Murdoch 1993), in which "*undue importance*" is placed on spatial influences on 'community', to the neglect of others (Wellman and Leighton 1979, p366). Following Calhoun, this also runs the risk of reducing 'community' to a 'static' category of social organisation, rather than one characterised by dynamic relations between social actors (1980).

The 'falsity' of assuming a 'community' to be definable by distinctive geographical boundaries alone has been identified (Crow and Allan 1994), and illustrated, for example, in Cohen's study of the Scottish island of Whalsay (1987). Here, he describes how collective identity relating to the spatial context of this remote and geographically bounded island must be worked at through symbolic expression and interpretation, reflected in struggles to maintain the Whalsay 'community' identity in the face of modernism (Cohen 1987). Similarly, others have looked at the 'place-making' processes and the social relations required to constitute this form of 'community', that arise in people's attempts to form a shared sense of place, for example the reciprocal relations of exchange among sheep farmers in the Scottish borders as a mode of 'emplacing' the 'community' (Gray 2002).

However, more recent attention towards globalisation, non-spatialised social relations and increasing mobilities (of people, communications, information, resources) have forced a re-consideration of the taken-for-granted conceptualisation of 'community' as 'local', and a re-casting of the relationship between social identities and place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a). Appadurai (1996) argues that the production of the 'local' comprises both the mobilisation of ideas, resources and relations at trans-local levels, and the flow of these (back) into lived neighbourhoods. As such, he argues, that there is a steady erosion of the distinction between the spatial and virtual 'community', wherein locality is not a spatial or scalar category, but a relational, contextual one (Appadurai 1996). Thus, the 'community' has become a category through which to consider relations of connectedness that come from flows of people (and resources) through and beyond spatial localities (Wright 2015).

These perspectives gravitate more towards a framing of a 'community' of identity, in which the relatedness and sentiments of connection between people are theorised to arise from interpretations of shared (or perhaps complementary) identities (Hoggett 1997). This reflects, in part, a 'cultural turn' in the mid-1980s towards social constructionism and emphasis on meaning, rather than the form or practice of social interactions (Delanty 2003). It also reflects more emphasis on the subjective 'choice' of being a member of a 'community' – a process of selection of the type of identity(ies) an individual wishes to express in relation to others – and thus privileging the cognitive dimension of relatedness, over more structural dimensions such as geographical proximity (Anderson 1983, Hoggett 1997).

Social psychology literature has explored in depth ideas of identity in relation to 'community', drawing, for example, on social representations theory from Moscovici (1984) to examine social representations, as shared, everyday knowledges that guide the practices and interpretations of reality among 'community' members, and their collective 'worldviews' (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000). Such representations provide symbolic and practical resources which are employed by 'community' members in their engagement with each other and their environment. Identity is taken to be a central focus within social representations perspectives, with emphasis on exploring how representations are (varyingly) used among and between individuals to communicate with others, develop ties and assert differences (Howarth, Foster et al. 2004). Thus it reflects a dialogic interpretation of 'community' as something both constituting and constituted through the negotiation of shared social representations among 'members', relative to 'non-members' (Howarth 2001, Marková 2003). This frames 'communities' as heterogeneous entities, comprising shifting, sometimes conflicting identities, rather than as static, unified groups of people (Stephens 2007).

This perspective has been employed to attempt to disrupt the spaces between the individual and the social (Howarth 2001, Campbell and Cornish 2014), and has focused particularly on how understandings of collective identity, and the negotiation of shared social representations, shape relations of power and access to resources, for example for health and wellbeing (Campbell and Cornish 2014).

The dialogic, relational framing of 'community' through a social representations lens offers critique of assumptions that a 'community' defined by shared identity is something stable and homogeneous, but instead is something that is produced through social exchange. This carries some similarity with focus on the symbolic constructions and expressions of 'community' and collective identity. For example, Cohen's influential work describes the sharing of collective symbols as the process of communicating meaning between individuals, and thus constructing the "*consciousness of community*" (Cohen 1985a, p13). Although Cohen does not explicitly frame the role of symbols in the construction of 'community' boundaries as 'identity', he does emphasise the relational nature of 'community' (1985a, 1987). In describing the construction of symbolic meanings of 'community' and assertion of boundaries in relation to 'external' forces or groups (Cohen 1985a, 1985b), his perspective shares similarities with theories of identity-based 'communities' and rejections of spatial categorisations of 'community' relations (Delanty 2003). This work on 'community' as symbolic expression also draws on Turner's exploration of symbols in the production of 'communitas'; a "*generalized social bond*" that surpasses or exists beyond typical 'fragmented' structures of social life (Turner 1969, p96). For Turner, 'communitas' emerges through ritual behaviours that reflect the boundaries of the group in relation to others during periods of 'liminality', a state of 'detachment' from the normal, prevailing social structure (Turner 1969, Delanty 2003). Yet, Turner's 'communitas' rests on a shared sense of experience and meaning across all members, and does not allow the possibility that symbols may carry multiple meanings interpreted differently by different 'community' members (Cohen 1985a).

The symbolic construction of identities and boundaries is valuable for emphasising the social relations and exchanges that continually constitute 'community' in a dynamic way, rather than privileging a spatial fixedness to its boundaries. Yet, again among these approaches there appear glimpses of assumed territory, or at least proximity, in the way people share and communicate symbols of identity. For Turner, reflecting his anthropological background, his exploration of symbols and 'communitas' occurs primarily among the Ndembu people in Zambia, and their position relative to other groups in various degrees of geographical proximity to the Ndembu (Turner 1969). Cohen has also explored geographically-situated 'communities', for example in Whalsay, and while

he seeks to critique the assumed influence of the geographical isolation and boundedness of the island on the social relations within, elsewhere he still maintains a distinction between *symbolic* boundaries and “*actual*” geo-social boundaries of ‘community’ (Cohen 1985a, p50). Similarly, from the social psychology literature, examinations of the role of social representations in collective identity-making has also been spatialised in some accounts, such as Howarth’s work on collective identity among young people living in Brixton, London (2002), in which their residence in the area appeared to be the impetus for examining their collective identity.

Other work, however, has examined how collective identity has become a ‘defining mode of social organisation’ (Castells 2010) in the face of increasing transnational flows of information and culture, for example through new forms of technology (Appadurai 1996, Clark 2007, Castells 2010, Castells 2012). Within a modern ‘network society’, characterised by globalisation, mobility and communication, Castells describes identities of resistance, constructed by actors in positions of marginality or subjugation, who express identity collectively as a form of resistance or survival against dominant institutions and ideologies (2010). This perspective can be linked with discourses of ‘community’ in relation to ‘identity politics’ from the 1980s (Hamalainen and Jones 2011), and in ‘community’ organising as grass-roots activism and resistance (DeFilippis, Fisher et al. 2010), in pursuit of political and human rights goals, for example, the mobilisation of collective identities around disability and mental health to influence health and social care services (Barnes 1999). It highlights how identities are not fixed to collectives or groups, but are constructed and employed for different, political ends.

Yet, even within these emphases on constructions and expressions of collective identity, questions of space are often implicated, particularly when set against, as Castells does, a backdrop of global networks and shifting patterns of communication and flows of resources. Anderson’s work on the sense of attachment to the nation-state that constructs ‘imagined communities’ (1983) highlights that there can be spatial dimensions to the sense of sharing a collective identity, but these spatial dimensions may be cognitive, or imagined, rather than geographic and relating to physical proximity. This can perhaps be seen most evidently in theories of ‘community’ in relation to (im)migrant populations, and how collective identities and belonging are bound up in mobility, displacement and trans-localism (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a). Yet, other expressions of ‘community’ through shared identity also engage with emerging and shifting ways of relating at a distance, and thus indirectly implicate notions of space and locality (Delanty 2003, Clark 2007, Castells 2010). Thus it appears that as new forms of relating emerge, and notions of space and locality are disrupted and extended (Appadurai 1996, Massey 2004), theorising on ‘community’ continues to grapple with questions of

relatedness, connectivity and boundary-making, and relationships between the individual, the collective and place.

### **'Community', policy and the state:**

While much of the literature described above implies conceptualisations of 'community' and processes of boundary-making that stem from the practices and identities held by those *within* the (socially and/or spatially-constructed) boundaries of a 'community', attention must be given to how 'community' as an identity and social process can be imposed upon a group of people from outside, for example through discourse, practices and other forms of relating. This perspective critiques the assumption that a 'community' identity is something produced 'organically' (Howarth 2001), but rather is something that can be used as a mechanism of power (Barnes, Newman et al. 2004). As such a 'community' of identity becomes internalised and reproduced by those 'within' the 'community' (Brent 1997), echoing theories of governmentality and discipline (Taylor 2007, Wallace 2010a), drawing, for example from Foucault (Marinetti 2003, Foucault 2007). This framing of externally-imposed and 'legitimised' forms of 'community' identity (Castells 2010) indicates the importance of examining the presence of 'community' in public policy. This enables consideration of the assumptions about the relationships between individuals, the collective and the state inherent in discursive, political rhetorics, and in the policies and programmes that shape the lives of those affected. The primary focus in this section will, again, be on the UK policy context.

A summary of the use of 'community' by the UK government in the past fifty years has identified several trends that roughly follow the patterns in the theorisation of 'community' described above (Hamalainen and Jones 2011). These include spatially-defined 'communities' as most prominent overall, but with acknowledgment of interest-based 'communities' in the 1970s, 'communities' of identity in the 1980s, and a surge in use of 'community' in policy under New Labour in the late 1990s onwards, some of which recognised 'community' as a network (Hoggett 1997, Hamalainen and Jones 2011). Particular attention has been paid in recent sociological, social policy and political science literatures of the increased presence of 'community' alongside the rise of neo-liberalism and the reconfiguring of the welfare state in the past few decades (Hoggett 1997, Wacquant 1999). Amin argues that while the 'community' as the focus of development policies in the 1970s – such as the Community Development Projects (Imrie and Raco 2003) – was conceptualised as situated within broader sets of economic and social connections, and thus the domain of centralised government, this shifted with the arrival of neo-liberalism to the expectation on 'communities' to "*sort out their own problems*" (Amin 2005, p612).

The 'community' became the conceptual and geographical space for the realignment of welfare provision in the UK in the 1980s, as the 'social' became individualised and marketised by Thatcher's New Right, and discourses of welfare shifted towards 'dependency' (Amin 2005). Perhaps the most notable example of the 'community' positioned as a domain of responsibility for welfare is the 'care in the community' policy strategy for mental health care in the UK (Knapp 1990, Hoggett 1997). Through this policy shift, the 'community' became conceptualised as both the space in which care can be delivered, and also the mechanism for the efficient redefinition of state responsibility towards its subjects. Thus, 'community' became a "*metaphor for the absence or withdrawal of services by the state*" (Hoggett 1997, p10). More recently, the advent of the New Labour government in 1997 saw an explicit acknowledgment of the 'community' and its involvement in the shaping and delivering of social policy, framed by a commitment to 'empower' individuals and increase their 'self-determination' (Bridgen 2004). A host of policies and strategies were developed which located rights and responsibilities towards improvement of health and wellbeing in the hands of 'communities', based around goals for regeneration and targeting social exclusion among the most deprived sectors of society (see for example Bowring 2000, Watt and Jacobs 2000, Social Exclusion Unit 2001). Within these cross-cutting policy strategies emerged a range of programmes seeking to improve the determinants of social inequality through area or neighbourhood-based interventions, and which drew to varying degrees on principles of 'community' involvement, ranging from consultation approaches to more engaged, empowerment approaches (Bridgen 2004, Popay, Attree et al. 2007).

The most prominent feature of these types of policy interventions and programmes in which the 'community' is implicated, including, for example *Health Action Zones*, *New Deal for Communities*, *Sure Start*, and *Healthy Living Centres* in the UK, and the *Healthy Cities* programme across Europe (O'Dwyer, Baum et al. 2007), is perhaps their location and delivery in 'local' spaces. This reflects a recognition of persisting, even rising, health, social and inequalities across the UK (and elsewhere) that are spatially patterned (Blackman 2006), illustrated for example in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Blackman 2006, AMION Consulting 2010). This recognition led to characterisation of specific geographical territories and neighbourhoods as 'socially excluded', in a process that Wacquant has called a regime of 'territorial stigmatisation', centred on "*neighbourhoods of relegation*" (1999, p1640). Yet, this spatialisation of poverty and inequality also carried the assumption that social exclusion was a "*problem of local origin*" (Amin 2005, p615, emphasis in the original), and thus the 'local', in the form of the 'community', became implicated as the "*cause, consequence, and remedy of social and spatial inequality*" (Amin 2005, p614).

This hints at the paradox in how the 'community' has been discursively employed in social policy, both as the 'problem' to be addressed and as the 'fix' to social problems (Brent 2009, Hamalainen and Jones 2011), wherein 'bad community' needs to be replaced with 'good community' in 'failed areas' (Amin 2005, p619). In his ethnographic study of a housing estate in Bristol, UK, Brent explores the 'problem status' that is affixed to certain places, which are seen as troubled 'communities', making them the target of local policies and research, but also as places *lacking* a sense of 'community' – or at least, the *right* kind of 'community' relations - and thus additionally 'problematic' (Brent 1997, Brent 2009). This echoes discourses of 'problem' sub-groups of the 'community' that have been present in different policy framings, such as the unemployed, 'benefit scroungers', and young people (Mooney and Neal 2008). Here, the undercurrent of 'community' as a moral discourse and ideology is evident, but so too is the slipperiness of the operationalisation of such a contested concept, whereby 'community' becomes both the problem and the solution (Hamalainen and Jones 2011, Crow and Mah 2012). It, arguably, reflects attempts to localise and territorialise 'problems' (and responsibility for their resolution) "*whose roots lie far outside the locality in much broader structural attributes*" (Crow and Allan 1994, p158).

The territorialisation of responses to social deprivation and inequality and the emphasis on 'community' reflect broader conceptualisations of the state, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens at a political level. Recognition of the 'community' as a 'key partner' in the identification of local needs and delivery of services reflects a political trend of decentralisation of powers, its rationale based on enabling control over resources at a local level, and ensuring more effective, responsive services (Buser 2012, Grover 2012). New Labour rhetoric, from the late 1990s onwards, stated that even the best social policies will 'fail to deliver' unless the "*community is fully engaged*" (Social Exclusion Unit 2000, p5), and their emphasis on 'community' served a discursive function in aligning themselves with a distinctive new 'Third Way' of politics (Giddens 1998, Lund 1999). New Labour's discourse of the Third Way rejected previous statist and neo-liberalist politics, proposing a bridge between commitments to social solidarity and welfare, and a dynamic economy (Blair 1998, Giddens 1998). Within this, 'community' became both a conceptual and geographic space in which to recast the relationship between citizens and the state (Sevenhuijsen 2000), meaning people have an obligation to exercise 'responsible citizenship' and civic duty to build 'strong communities', in order to deserve the "*conditions of the good life*" provided by the state (Rose 2000, p1398).

The emphasis on 'community' participation suggests that the spaces and mechanisms through which the 'community' is involved in the delivery of policy strategies for regeneration and renewal have become new or re-configured spaces of 'civil society' (Barnes 1999) which are ultimately legitimised,

and therefore controlled, by the state (Wilson 1995, Wallace 2010b). More recently under the recent UK Coalition government, similar mapping of the 'community' onto civil society (and vice-versa) can be seen in the 'Big Society' policy strategy, originally set out by the Conservative party in 2009 (Bailey and Pill 2015). This strategy emphasised the importance of giving communities 'more power' to address the social and economic problems faced in the UK, and enabling citizens to take an active role in their 'community' (Cabinet Office 2010). Articulations of 'responsibility' and 'civic action' echo those of the previous (Labour) government's policies, suggesting an underlying political intention of the Conservative party to distance itself from the Thatcherite era (Macmillan 2013). Critiques of the vagueness of the concept of 'Big Society', have been supplemented by evaluations of its failings, particularly in its aims to empower local, deprived 'communities' and increase cohesion, demonstrated, for example, in the 2013 riots in Tottenham, London, and other place that had previously been the targets of regeneration efforts (Dillon and Fanning 2013). Yet, while the focus on 'Big Society' and 'community' may have been reduced in the latter years of the Coalition government, new forms of localism continue to emerge as part of a committed decentralisation agenda in the current Conservative government (Tait and Inch 2016), enacted through spatialised policies such as the 'Northern Powerhouse' and the transference of more powers to local authorities.

Critical perspectives on such policies, and on the involvement of the 'community', have emphasised the re-configured relationships between the citizen and the state, via the 'community', as a normative framework for governing the moral behaviour expected of citizens (Wallace 2010a, Wallace 2010b). The emphasis on the 'responsible' citizen, working as part of the 'community' in partnership with government to improve health and wellbeing, draws on values of 'communitarianism' and the importance of strong social bonds, of which civic responsibility is part, for ensuring the welfare of a population (see for example Etzioni 1996a). More critically however, it can be seen to reflect Foucauldian notions of 'governmentality' whereby the localised 'community' engaged in policy delivery can be interpreted as an example of the dispersal of state power and its (re)production at local sites (Rose 2000). As such, the concept of 'community' becomes a device through which to map and define citizens, and their conduct (Rose 2000), thus ultimately undermining the rhetoric of 'empowerment' that is frequently used to frame the goals of such policies (Wallace 2010a, Wallace 2010b, Bailey and Pill 2015). The spatial and localising frameworks of policies resting on an expectation for the 'community' to participate in their delivery, arguably serves to "*territorial[ise] the social into governable, spatially bounded sites which can function as partners*" to the state (Wallace 2010b, p805). By focusing on the relationships between individuals

and the state, and the spatialisation of social relationships and problems through policy rhetorics, it is possible to consider how 'community', as a 'tool' of politics and policy (Brent 1997, p69), may shape how 'community'-based programmes are delivered and experienced, and thus, how their impacts can be interpreted.

### **'Community' as method:**

Finally, it is valuable to consider briefly the role that 'community' has played in shaping methods of social research, and the assumptions that underpin its use. I will focus here on two sub-fields of social science; the sub-discipline of sociology known as 'community studies', and ethnographic fieldwork as the traditional approach of social anthropology. Within both approaches, the 'community' has been interpreted (implicitly as well as explicitly) as the focus of study, as well as the site, sample and scope of the study, denoting its role as method (Bell and Newby 1971, Macfarlane 1977). As described above, the tradition of 'community studies' drew on anthropological approaches in the in-depth, detailed explorations of social relations and structures within apparently bounded localities or neighbourhoods, whereby the 'community' represented both the field and object of study. The focus of many of these studies was on micro-interactions – the everyday dynamics and relations – between individuals within a domestic and neighbourhood context that were assumed to constitute, and maintain, a sense of 'community', arising amidst increasing attention on 'the social' and social science methods (Savage 2010). The approach of many of these 'community studies' framed the 'community' of interest as a microcosm of society in general, and there appeared an implicit assumption, therefore, that a prolonged, embedded and thorough methodological approach would enable the holistic interpretation and description of a localised social structure (Crow 2002). Thus, through detailed enough attention to the domestic, political, economic, cultural and familial dimensions of a locality, the 'community' could be accurately captured.

Critiques of this wave of 'community studies', however, rested very much on the assumed fixedness of such 'communities', often underpinned by a functionalist or structural-functionalist perspective, through which the dimensions of 'community' were examined for their purpose in maintaining social structures (Crow 2002). The portrayal of timelessness in much of the analysis of 'communities', as if they were entities isolated from (shifting) broader social and political contexts, and a portrayal of a homogeneous, harmonious social organisation, as if conflict between and beyond 'members' did not occur, has also been critiqued (Macfarlane 1977, Day and Murdoch 1993, Crow and Allan 1994, Hoggett 1997). Moreover, from a broader, theoretical perspective, 'community studies' were critiqued for being rarely comparable, and 'non-cumulative' (Macfarlane 1977), thus offering little

opportunity to build on knowledge from each and piece together broader theories of 'community' or society (Bell and Newby 1971, Crow 2002). The obscuring of inequalities of relationships within 'communities' and its sub-groups of members – for example, the side-lining of female 'voices' - also became a common critique of the 'community' studies tradition (Crow and Allan 1994), leading to rejection of this approach by the late 1970s.

More recently, however, there has been a re-examination of 'community studies' as a theoretical and methodological approach and re-consideration of the bounded 'community' as a lens through which to explore the impacts of broader social, economic and political changes on the everyday (Crow 2000), for example in Pahl's work on experiences of social and economic inequalities among inhabitants of the Isle of Sheppey, UK (1984). There has also been a number of efforts to return to 'communities' previously studied under this tradition, and to 're-study' the same 'community' as a method of exploring processes of change (and continuity) (Charles and Crow 2012). As such, the 'community' has reemerged as a unit of sociological interest and method, as an assumed 'case' of a broader social context, which can act as a lens through which to explore social phenomena.

Turning to the methods of anthropology, the concept of 'community' arguably reflects the discipline's earliest (colonialism-influenced) tradition of studying intensively a remote, bounded and 'exotic' society, such as Malinowski's foundational ethnography of the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia (2002 [1922]). Here, the 'community' was taken as the mechanism to study a 'unique' culture and its structures in a holistic sense, and reflecting influences of evolutionary biology, the isolated, exotic 'community' became as a window into pre-modern social forms and 'cultures', and a tool for historical interpretation. Although the historicism of this evolutionary perspective was largely discarded in later waves of the discipline, much of anthropology continued to take the 'community', as a geographically-situated group of people, as a unit of analytical interest, through which accounts of the structural functioning of a 'culture' could be produced. The 'community' (and related synonyms such as 'society') represented the object of study, as well as the theoretical 'whole' onto which ethnographic observations could be mapped and interpreted (Klass 1972).

Anthropology has seen numerous shifts in the theorising of its field and subject of study, but the traditional methodological approach of ethnographic field work – in-depth, situated within the population or 'community' of study, and prolonged – has largely remained constant, and is often cited as a defining feature of the discipline (Amit 2000, Hannerz 2003), along with a comparative approach for generating theoretical abstractions from individual studies (Macfarlane 1977, Strathern 2004). The much-cited value and approach of 'thick description', proffered in Geertz's interpretive

anthropological work (Geertz 1983), maintains the emphasis on spatially and social-embedded research practices that can be compared across contexts. Thus the 'community' has continued to play a role (albeit implicit, perhaps) in defining the anthropological method, typically defining the scope (geographical, social) and boundaries of anthropological study in its role as the 'field'. The 'community' could be seen as the physical as well as conceptual space in which anthropological interpretations of social structures would occur, whether in remote location, or increasingly, 'at home', such as Strathern's study of a village 'community' in Essex (1981). However, a 'reflexive turn' in anthropology in the 1980s saw the inward problematisation of the position of the ethnographic researcher in relation to the 'subject' of study, and of claims of representation through ethnography (Clifford 1986). This gave rise to questioning of the assumed boundedness and distinctness of the 'community', and instead a focus on a "*shared field of belonging*" (Fog Olwig 2002, p124) through interactions in the 'field' between researcher and researched. Finally, there has also been critique of the assumed boundedness of field sites (and thus of 'communities') in increasingly globalised societies (Marcus 1995, Choy, Faier et al. 2009), such that ethnographic fieldwork may shift away from fixed territories and towards interpreting flows and networks of relations, both locally and trans-locally (Fog Olwig 2002, Choy, Faier et al. 2009). Therefore, it appears that the 'community' has held a complex, and shifting position within the relationship of ethnographic fieldwork to anthropology as a discipline, highlighting the tension in distinguishing between method and subject of research.

Anthropology and 'community studies' share commonalities in the construction of the 'community' as the research field, as well as object, and thus interpretations of 'community' must be shaped by disciplinary assumptions of what is feasible, appropriate and 'valid' in terms of scope and duration of social research. Where the two approaches differ, however, is in the way the 'community' is interpreted to relate to the 'other' for the purposes of generating theoretical claims about the social world. For 'community studies', the critique of the lack of aggregation in the approach (Macfarlane 1977) indicates assumptions of an individual 'community' as a stand-alone case, or exemplar, of social organisation. This suggests that as a holistic picture of society (or a sub-section thereof) in micro-cosmic form (Crow and Allan 1994), it is assumed that the 'community' of a 'community study' can, alone, be abstracted to the general. In contrast, the comparative approach of anthropology rests on an assumption of a 'community' being defined in relation to an 'other' or set of 'others' (Strathern 2004), such as the 'exotic' defined in relation to the 'familiar' in classic anthropological texts. Thus the role of 'community' as method is both holistic in terms of the focus of fieldwork and partial in terms of abstracting interpretations and generating 'knowledge'. Hence, it is important to

consider not only how 'community' is employed as a theoretical concept, but also the implications of the methodological choices made, which shape the parameters of how a 'community' can be approached and 'known' through research.

## **'Community' and Health Improvement**

Next, to consider more specifically how the 'community' relates to health and health improvement, I will draw on various strands of work, including understanding and measuring the spatial patterning of health and inequalities; participatory approaches to improving health; and questions of how to evaluate the impact on health of interventions engaging the 'community'.

### **People, place and health:**

The term 'community' is commonly used in policy and public health discourses in discussions of the spatial patterning of health and health inequalities (Dunn 2014, Walthery, Stafford et al. 2015), and its use has often conveyed assumptions of shared social relations within a spatial boundary, and a related coherence of this as a social unit (Jewkes and Murcott 1996). The theorised relationships between people, place and health have been described differently across epidemiological and social science literatures. Some perspectives, reflecting ecological models, see the 'community' as a spatially-defined locality containing particular sets of resources (physical, economic, social) that influence individual health and contribute to the manifestation of health inequalities (Kawachi and Berkman 2003, O'Campo and O'Brien Caughy 2006). Epidemiological explanations for the observed relationships between people, place and health have tended to fall into two themes; contextual effects, or the impact of characteristics of the area or environment; and compositional effects, or the impact of the distribution of characteristics of the individuals residing in that area (Duncan, Jones et al. 1998, Gatrell, Popay et al. 2004). Links between the two types of effect are acknowledged and it is argued that a distinction between people and place, and thus between compositional and contextual effects, may be artificial, and that characteristics normally attributed to individuals, such as socio-economic status, may in fact reflect characteristics of the place in which they live, or vice-versa (Macintyre and Ellaway 2003). In addition, it is recognised that the social and physical features of an area may interact and influence each other, for example physical resources and amenities in a neighbourhood may have social, symbolic properties which shape social interactions, and psycho-social determinants of health (Forrest and Kearns 2001).

The concept of 'social capital' has also featured prominently in recent social epidemiological research on place and health, reflecting assumptions about the role that physical proximity (Kearns and Parkinson 2001) plays in shaping social relations characterised by reciprocity, trust and beneficial cooperation (Putnam 1995, Lomas 1998, Putnam 2001, Kirkby-Geddes, King et al. 2013). While there is some evidence of increased social capital associated with improved health in a number of settings (Murayama, Fujiwara et al. 2012), critiques can be made of the privileging of the individual in theorising social capital, as relationships, networks and exchanges are conceptualised at the individual level. Furthermore, as an analytical framework, social capital may obscure inequalities of power, and how increased social capital for some could result in exclusion and reduced capital for others (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000), making it potentially problematic for considering the role of 'community' in influencing health and inequalities.

From these varied perspectives, the 'community' often appears comparable with the 'neighbourhood' – a spatially-conceived entity that is centred on individuals and their residential habitats – and indeed, 'neighbourhood' holds a prominent position in epidemiological research on health and inequalities (Kawachi and Berkman 2003, Sampson 2003). However, it is problematic to assume that 'community' as a concept is always interchangeable with epidemiological uses of neighbourhood as an analytical unit. The moral dimensions often (implicitly) underpinning conceptualisations of 'community' do not transfer so easily to the spatially-defined dimensions of 'neighbourhood', even when 'community' carries spatial interpretations. However, given the prominence of spatial interpretations of 'community', particularly in recent policy and programming, the influence of neighbourhood-oriented, epidemiological approaches to mapping and measuring health inequalities should be acknowledged alongside interpretations of 'community' and its role in relation to health improvement.

Taking a different perspective, geographical and sociological literatures have also sought to examine the relationships between people, place and health, but have problematised the distinctions between context and composition. Instead, a more relational approach to exploring health and place has been advocated for examining how place both contains and constitutes social relations and resources that influence health (Gatrell 1997, Cummins, Curtis et al. 2007). These perspectives reject the idea that places are mere 'passive containers' of social problems such as poor health, or simply settings for social interaction (Gatrell 1997), and instead views them as 'active agents' (Massey 2005), interacting dynamically with physical, social, human and economic resources within and beyond them (Jupp 2013, Andrews, Chen et al. 2014). These literatures tend to focus on the meaning generated through people's experiences of living in, and engaging with particular spaces,

and how this meaning potentially shapes their (relative) sense of identity and agency, contributing to wellbeing and psycho-social determinants of health and inequalities (Popay, Thomas et al. 2003). What is less clear from this literature, however, is how such theorising on space and (individual) health intersects with conceptualisations of 'community', as a social-spatial entity, and how 'community'-based interventions or initiatives might interact with experiences of space and place, and thus shape complex the relationships between place and individual and collective identities, wellbeing and health status.

### **The participating or engaged 'community':**

Public health rhetoric and approaches have frequently drawn on the notion of 'community' since its recognition in the Alma-Ata declaration and a focus on the importance of the role of 'community' participation in delivering effective primary health care (World Health Organization 1978). In a typology of interventions to address health inequalities, Whitehead has identified 'strengthening communities' as a category of action for targeting the exclusion and powerlessness experienced by some groups of people and which is associated with their poorer, health (Whitehead 2007). These interventions typically draw on methods to develop 'community' capacity to identify and address their own health needs, potentially influencing their immediate environment and its impact on their health, and improving mental wellbeing through increased social cohesion and support (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000, Whitehead 2007).

The concept and goal of 'empowerment' is central to much of the theorising of the health improving potential of engaging the 'community' (see for example Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988, Rappaport and Simkins 1991, Wallerstein 1993). This reflects rights-based approaches to improving health and social inequalities (De Vos, De Ceukelaire et al. 2009, Wallerstein and Duran 2010), whereby the participation of the 'community' in identifying and addressing its own needs may be the chief goal over any particular health or social outcomes (Morgan 2001). It is thought that the act of participation itself can be health improving via psycho-social pathways, by increasing sources of social support for individuals, increasing levels of social capital and/or individual sense of control, and may increase the capacity of individuals to engage in health-enhancing behaviours (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000). From a more radical perspective however, 'community' participation or engagement has also been conceptualised as a process through which to challenge and change the structures of inequality that impact on health. This reflects a bottom-up, 'grassroots' approach to 'community' development (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000, Campbell and Murray 2004), drawing on theories of 'conscientisation', for example from Freire (1970) and other grassroots development movements, particularly in Latin America (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000, De Vos, De Ceukelaire

et al. 2009). This approach sees 'communities' mobilising, or self-organising, to lobby for social change to improve their health and social status, following critical realisation and analysis of their subjugated position (Campbell and Murray 2004, Pearce and Milne 2010, Campbell and Cornish 2014).

Critiques of 'community' participatory approaches to health improvement have highlighted their inability to address broader, structural determinants which may be the root cause of socio-economic inequalities (Crawshaw, Bunton et al. 2003, Labonte 2004). The ambiguity and variable use of terms such as 'community participation', 'engagement' and 'empowerment' make interpreting the body evidence on their role in improving health difficult (Bridgen 2004), and may also mask inequalities and differences *within* 'communities' themselves (Kothari 2001). There remain questions about who participates and the possibility for those most excluded to be further excluded by approaches that favour only those with existing capacity and inclination to participate (Jewkes and Murcott 1998, Crawshaw, Bunton et al. 2003, Lawson and Kearns 2010). Questions of representation in 'community' involvement and the power relations which surround representation continue to challenge these approaches, and more fundamentally, there are critiques that underpinning many of these interventions is the assumption that the right to participation is 'self-evident' which limits the way in which its effectiveness is evaluated (Burton 2009).

### **'Community' interventions in the UK:**

In the past couple of decades in the UK, a vast range of policy initiatives and interventions have been implemented at local, regional and national levels which seek to draw on the 'community' as a location, target population, set of resources, and/or decision-making partner in efforts to improve the determinants of health and inequality (O'Dwyer, Baum et al. 2007). The structures, approaches and aims of these programmes have varied considerably, and have been labelled variously as area- or neighbourhood-based interventions, as well as 'community' interventions. The range is too broad to describe in detail here, but I present a brief overview of some common types with examples, ranging from those with a more individual focus to those more area focused:

- Interventions delivered at the 'community' level but targeting individual health behaviours, for example a 'community'-led intervention to address physical activity and healthy eating in Stoke (Hurst, Smith et al. 2012);

- Interventions targeting single determinants of health and wellbeing at a local 'community' or neighbourhood level, for example a 'community'-development programme in Torbay to improve residents' housing (Somerville, Basham et al. 2002);
- Interventions addressing the needs of particular sub-groups of the population at the 'community' level, for example the *Sure Start* programme targeting the parenting of children in deprived areas (Barnes, Belsky et al. 2005);
- Interventions targeting determinants of health and/or social inequality from a more holistic, ecological, perspective at the 'community' level, for example the *Health Action Zones* initiative addressing social exclusion in local areas through regeneration strategies (Bauld and Judge 2002).

There have been several reviews published in the past ten years of the evidence of the impact of 'community' and/or area-based interventions on health, inequalities and broader determinants (Hills 2004, Thomson, Atkinson et al. 2006, O'Dwyer, Baum et al. 2007, Thomson 2008, Bambra, Gibson et al. 2010, O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013) and of 'what works' in engaging 'communities' in these types of intervention (Bridgen 2004, Burton, Goodlad et al. 2004, Popay, Attree et al. 2007, Milton, Attree et al. 2012, O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013). The overall picture is that evidence of the impact of such interventions on health inequalities is limited and of questionable quality and generalisability. Thomson et al conclude that although small positive impacts on health had been seen in the case of a few area-based interventions, there was also the possibility of adverse effects on self-reported health and on key social determinants including employment (2006). Similarly, O'Mara-Eves and colleagues found that while 'community' participation interventions can improve certain health behaviours among disadvantaged groups, some health consequences, and particular social inequalities such as self-efficacy, it was not possible to conclude that they impact on health inequalities, nor which models of 'community' participation are most effective (2013).

Explanations given for the paucity of evidence centre largely on the challenges of evaluating these types of interventions, due to their complexity, highly context-specific nature and the difficulty of evaluating long term outcomes such as inequalities in the short timeframes available for evaluation (Burton, Goodlad et al. 2004). The poor quality of both the evaluation methods and reporting of many publications has been highlighted, resulting in acknowledgement of the difficulties faced in reviewing the literature, systematically or otherwise (Burton, Goodland et al. 2004, Hills 2004, Milton, Attree et al. 2012). As South and Phillips emphasise, there needs to be careful distinction

between “*programme failure and evaluation failure*” (2014, p692) in the interpretation of the lack of clear evidence of the contribution of ‘community’ engagement approaches to health inequalities.

The reviews focusing specifically on interventions with ‘community’ participation or engagement approaches identified the lack of focus in evaluations of these interventions on key outcomes such as impact on health and inequalities (Milton, Attree et al. 2012). Burton, Goodlad et al (2004), Bridgen (2004) and O’Mara-Eves et al (2013) highlight the multiple uses and definitions of ‘community’ involvement and related synonyms across the literature, echoed in Milton, Attree et al’s review, in which they describe the range of models of involvement from informing the ‘community’ at the lowest level to full ‘community’ control at the highest level (2012). Popay and colleagues, in evaluating the impact on health inequalities of different approaches to ‘community’ engagement across the *New Deal for Communities* initiative, indicate few significant differences in outcomes between different kinds of approach, but that resident-led approaches might have the most positive impact, suggesting that more control may lead to better health (Popay, Whitehead et al. 2015). Similarly, in a collection of systematic reviews, Whitehead and colleagues (2014) suggest there is some empirical evidence to support hypothesised pathways between community-level interventions that increase control and a reduction in health inequalities. However, given the tentativeness of these (and similar) conclusions, it appears that previous calls for improved reporting of evaluations of these initiatives (Burton, Goodlad et al. 2004, Milton, Attree et al. 2012), and more appropriate process measures for understanding how they bring about change (Bridgen 2004) still stand, leaving open questions around how best to interpret the impacts of ‘community’ engagement on health inequalities.

Moreover, what is largely absent from this body of literature on initiatives engaging the ‘community’ is critical consideration of how ‘community’ might be (varyingly) interpreted within both the interventions and their evaluations, and the potential implications of this for interpreting the impacts on health and inequalities. Given the wide range of ways in which ‘community’ is (explicitly and implicitly) operationalised in these types of intervention – as a setting, a target population, a delivery partner, a social-spatial context – and the attention paid to the varying conceptualisations of ‘participation’ and ‘engagement’, the lack of consideration of conceptualisations of ‘community’ is somewhat surprising. O’Mara-Eves and colleagues do acknowledge the different ways ‘community’ can be defined, and its fluidity as a concept, and they employ a broad definition of a group of people united by at least one characteristic in their search strategy (2013). However, their interpretation of the review findings indicates that they did not consider the possibility of ‘community’ as something subject to change through the processes of an intervention being delivered. Instead, the review

implied an interpretation of 'community' as something externally definable and identifiable, for the purposes of measuring particular social and health outcomes.

This limited perspective, echoed across the rest of this literature, indicates a lack of critical consideration of how the fluid concept of 'community' is varyingly practiced and understood in and around an intervention in its social and spatial context. As a consequence, the ability to interpret evaluations of the impacts of these interventions on health inequalities is potentially also constrained, or at least made more difficult, given the potentially wide range of relationships between people, place and health that could be implicated by different interpretations and uses of 'community'. Given the complexity of social-spatial relations that contribute to (different) experiences and constructions of 'community', many of which may be shaped by the dynamics of engagement and empowerment mechanisms, it seems vital that in evaluations must attend explicitly to 'community', and its multiple, contested and shifting forms, in relation to the initiative in question, and its mechanisms for intervening on determinants of health inequalities.

### **Evaluating 'community'-based interventions:**

Given the complexity not only of operationalising a fluid concept such as 'community' in interventions to target health inequalities, but also in evaluating the effects of these, it is valuable to review literature on approaches to evaluating 'complex interventions'. The increasing body of literature in this area in the past decade or more reflects a shift towards evidence-based policy making (Campbell, Fitzpatrick et al. 2000, Pawson 2006, Craig, Dieppe et al. 2008, Medical Research Council 2008). Many, if not all, 'community' initiatives of the types described above fit well within standard definitions of 'complex interventions', such as that given in Medical Research Council guidance (Craig, Dieppe et al. 2008, Medical Research Council 2008): an intervention involving multiple actors and activities in multiple settings, often flexible in design, within influential contextual settings, and involving complicated pathways of effect. An added layer of complexity, not yet well explored in this literature, may well be the challenges of conceptualising 'community' and interpreting its role in the pathways of effect.

Theory-based evaluation approaches have been advocated for understanding how a complex intervention brings about change, in recognition of the limitations of methods-based approaches such as the traditional randomised control trial (Stame 2004). The general aims of theory-based approaches are to elicit or generate theories of how an intervention is anticipated to bring about change, and to test these theories through the evaluation. These approaches have their roots in 'community' development programmes implemented in the US as part of its 'war on poverty' in the

1960s, and in more recent efforts in the 1980s and early 1990s (Kubisch, Weiss et al. 1995). Although each approach reflects slightly different epistemological and methodological framings (Stame 2004), they tend to follow the assumption that a 'black box' of mechanisms and interactions exists between the input (the intervention) and the output (its effect) which must be explicitly theorised and investigated through the evaluation (Stame 2004, Blamey and Mackenzie 2007).

Questions of 'what works, for whom, under what circumstances and why?' have become prominent in evaluating complex interventions (Bonell, Fletcher et al. 2012), informed, in part, by the realist evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley 1997), with emphasis placed on understanding the context of the intervention and the influence it has on the mechanisms of change (Pawson and Tilley 1997, Koenig 2009). These questions indicate an advance from the focus on simply 'does it work?' and indicate further challenges for an uncritical application of 'community' in the evaluation of complex interventions involving 'community' engagement approaches. Through this framing, conceptualisations of 'community' can be implicated not only in defining target groups of people (the 'whom'), but also in experiences of place and space (the 'circumstances'), in sets of social interactions (the 'what'), and the complex processes and pathways through which change may or may not occur (the 'why'). The conceptual fluidity of 'community' therefore holds potential to influence interpretations of an intervention's effect from multiple dimensions.

How 'community' is conceptualised will undoubtedly also influence the definition of 'community' participation or engagement, and in turn, how its role in improving health can be interpreted (Crawshaw, Bunton et al. 2003, Trickett, Espino et al. 2011). Hawe has drawn attention to the challenges that the ambiguity of 'community' pose for evaluating participatory, 'community' interventions (1994), and argues that due to the varying conceptualisations of 'community', its definition in relation to empowerment-focused interventions must be agreed at the outset of an evaluation's design and the delivery of the intervention (Hawe 1994). Similarly, there have been attempts to develop a generalisable model of 'community' and its attributes as a framework to guide 'community' participation approaches (see for example MacQueen, McLellan et al. 2001). However, these perspectives appear to limit opportunities to examine how 'community' might be influenced and shaped through the very relations and practices of engagement or participation of an intervention.

Recent engagements with complexity and systems theories for evaluating complex interventions have associated the 'community' with interpretations of the system in which an intervention is delivered as open and dynamic, interacting with, and shaping an intervention's mechanisms (Durie,

Wyatt et al. 2004, Shiell, Hawe et al. 2008, Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009). However, across this literature ‘community’ seems to be framed as occupying different positions – as the setting or context, as part of the system, or as the system itself – which further hints at the challenges of theorising ‘community’ and operationalising it as a fixed concept in an evaluation of an intervention involving engagement approaches. A nuanced and pluralistic approach to exploring the varying practices and interpretations of ‘community’ that unfold as an intervention is delivered in context could be valuable to informing approaches to evaluating such interventions and generating more useful interpretations of their pathways of effect and impact on health inequalities.

A separate review of literature presented in the next chapter will explore different conceptualisations of ‘community’ and how they relate to a particular mechanism that is increasingly used in ‘community’ empowerment interventions (including the initiative focused on in this thesis): the transference of financial resources, and responsibility for management of them, to the ‘community’. The literature review will consider some of the possible implications for the way ‘community’ might be conceptualised in this scenario for evaluating the health impacts of such interventions.

### **A Case Example: *The Big Local***

The research presented in this thesis was oriented around a case example of an area-based, ‘community’-led, empowerment initiative – the *Big Local (BL)* – which is, arguably, a reflection of much of the contemporary public health and policy perspectives around engaging the ‘community’ in targeting inequalities that have been described previously. The initiative is also the focus of an independent public health evaluation study – the *Communities in Control (CiC)* study – which is seeking to explore the impacts of the initiative on the determinants of health inequalities. In this section I will describe the *BL* initiative, its aims and structures, and will introduce the *CiC* study, although the positioning of my research in relation to this study will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

#### **A note on language:**

It is perhaps important to note here a subtle (and deliberate) switch in language, from ‘intervention’ to ‘initiative’ when referring to the *BL* initiative. While much of the public health evaluation literature focuses on ‘complex interventions’ (a term I have used also in this chapter), I feel it is more appropriate to use the term ‘initiative’ from this point forwards. This decision reflects my

perception of the *BL* as an initiative that has been developed, funded and is being delivered independently of the public health evaluation study seeking to interpret its effects on health inequalities. For me, the term ‘intervention’ carries with it connotations of experimental research, of a systematic process of designing, delivering and evaluating the effect of a set of actions that are imposed from the outside, and designed to disrupt (traditionally, within a highly controlled way) the status quo. In contrast, the *BL* initiative, while instigated at the outset by an external organisation, was designed to unfold and develop through actions occurring *within* the ‘communities’ themselves, in a bottom-up approach. Also, for me, the term ‘initiative’ captures more of the *BL* as something with an agenda, timescale and assumptions that are independent of those of the evaluation research process examining its impacts, unlike much traditional, biomedical experimental research in which an intervention can be designed and evaluated within the same programme of work. As such, I will refer to the *Big Local* as an ‘initiative’ from this point forwards, though will likely also refer to other ‘interventions’ where appropriate.

### **Overview of the *Big Local*:**

The *Big Local* is an area-based, empowerment initiative underway in 150 (relatively) disadvantaged urban and rural areas across England. It is funded by the BIG Lottery and delivered at the national level by a charitable trust, *Local Trust (LT)*, along with several partner agencies. The initiative’s origins lie in recognition by the BIG Lottery that some disadvantaged areas in England had received disproportionately low amounts of funding from Lottery grants, for example for regeneration programmes (Niven 2012), and therefore might be considered to be ‘forgotten communities’ (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014). The aim of the *BL* is to increase the capacity and ability of residents to identify local priorities and to take action to address them, to make “*a massive difference to their communities*” (Local Trust 2015a, p5). The main mechanism for achieving this is investing one million pounds in each selected area and passing the responsibility to the residents – or the ‘community’ – for identifying local priorities for improvement, developing a plan to address these, and then delivering the plan, using the allocated money, over a period of 10 or more years.

The ‘community’ is firmly implicated in the framing, values and goals of the *BL*. The four intended programme outcomes of *BL* are that:

- “*Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them.*”
- “*People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future.*”

- *The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.*
- *People will feel that their area is an even better place to live” (Local Trust n.d.)*

Each area, with support and advice from a representative employed by *LT*, is expected to form a ‘partnership’ comprising a majority of residents plus members of local organisations, whose remit is to develop and deliver a plan for spending the funds. Areas were selected and joined the programme in three waves of 50, in July 2011, February 2012 and December 2012. Of these, 134 are urban areas and 16 are rural towns or villages, and the areas typically contain between 3000 and 8000 residents, occasionally more (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014). While reflecting many aspirations and values of area-based regeneration seen in recent policy initiatives in the UK, the *BL* is presented as being distinct from previous ‘community’ and area-based initiatives, such as the *New Deal for Communities*, in that local residents have control over the decision-making of how to identify local needs, how to address them with the funds available, and over the timescale of the plan and pace of delivery (within the ten year lifespan of the programme) (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014).

### **Structure and delivery of the *Big Local***

The process for identifying eligible areas to be included in the *BL* was essentially a ‘top-down’ one. It involved identification by BIG Lottery of areas of ‘disadvantage’, defined by various social, economic and physical indicators, that had received little funding or investment for regeneration, and were characterised by low capacity or skills to mobilise to attract funding themselves (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014). Stakeholders at the local level, for example local authority community development officers and employees from local delivery partners, were then consulted to agree the priority locality(ies) in each identified area, and to agree the specific geographic boundaries of the areas to receive the £1million (Community Development Foundation 2011). It is indicated that the boundaries of each of the 150 areas selected were fixed, but that *Local Trust* would consider reviewing the boundaries if residents felt they should be changed (Community Development Foundation 2011).

Once areas were selected, *Local Trust* and its partner agencies appointed representatives (or ‘reps’) to each area, who are employed part-time (a few hours a month) to support the activities of the residents in their allotted area. At the beginning of the initiative, the reps played an important role in engaging with local agencies and contacts to begin bringing together a group of local residents interested in forming an initial ‘steering group’, to begin the process of consulting with the local ‘community’ and developing a plan for spending the £1million (Local Trust 2015a). This phase is

known as the 'Getting Started' phase, and areas received an additional £20,000 to fund the activities required to consult with the 'community' and develop their plan, typically conducted over a year or more (Local Trust 2015b, Local Trust 2015c). As part of this initial stage, residents' steering groups were also required to identify a 'locally trusted organisation' who hold the funds and are responsible for financial governance on behalf of the residents. Typical organisations selected for this role include local housing associations, credit unions, local charities and voluntary organisations, and occasionally, local authorities (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014).

Following a period of consultation and engagement activities, the steering groups were expected to develop a profile of their local 'community', and subsequently a plan for how they will spend money to address each of the priorities identified by the 'community' for their local area (Local Trust 2015b). At this stage, the plans developed did not need to be for the whole ten year period or million pounds, but could be for the next few years and a proportion of the full amount. Following development of the plan, each area was expected to formalise its steering group into a 'partnership', an elected group of between eight and 15 members, a minimum 51% of whom must be residents of the *BL* area. *Local Trust* would then approve the election of the partnership, and review and approve the area's plan, with a 'light touch' review process (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014), before releasing the agreed amount of funds to the local area to begin delivering their agreed plan.

In addition to the reps employed to support each *BL* area, several of the seven delivery partners working with *LT* at the national level provide extra, ongoing support and opportunities to the *BL* areas. These include, for example, schemes for supporting social entrepreneurship, enterprise and investment, and for environmental and inequalities issues. *Local Trust* also organises and supports a range of networking, training and peer-learning events held regularly around the country to which *BL* areas are invited and supported to attend (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014).

### **Evaluating the *BL***

The individual *BL* sites are expected to report on their activities and progress annually to *LT*, using a 'light touch' reporting process, and have been involved in various 'early-years' evaluation activities commissioned by *LT*, for example the evaluation of the early phases conducted by NCVO in 2014 (National Council for Voluntary Organisations 2014). Independently of *LT*, a larger-scale programme of evaluation research (the *CiC* study) to explore the impact of the *BL* on determinants of health inequalities has been designed, and is underway, conducted by a multi-institution team from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)-funded *School for Public Health Research* (SPHR). A

key focus of the evaluation is the theorised mechanism of 'collective control', hypothesised to influence health as a result of the 'community's' control over the delivery of the *BL* initiative, including the allocation of financial resources. A review of literature on conceptualising the 'community' as a recipient of money, such as in the *BL* initiative, will follow this chapter and will further set the scene for the research described in this thesis, seeking to explore enactments of 'community' around and through the *BL*, and which was positioned closely alongside the first phase of the *CiC* evaluation study. The aims and framing of the *CiC* study, and its intersections with my own research, will be described in more detail in subsequent chapters, presenting an overview of how the positioning of my research in relation to the *CiC* evaluation study shaped my research aims, methodological choices and ultimately, interpretations from my fieldwork.

## 2. Review of Literature on Conceptualising the ‘Community’ in Receipt of Money

### Introduction

Following the preceding chapter’s overview of theoretical and empirical literature on ‘community’ and ‘community’ engagement approaches to health improvement, it seems important to consider in more detail how ‘community’ might be conceptualised in relation to specific mechanisms of initiatives that engage the ‘community’. This is presented as a first step towards considering how the ‘community’ might be produced and shaped through the structures of the initiative itself. Here I present a review of literature focused on one such mechanism which can be seen in the *Big Local* initiative, and is hypothesised to contribute to dimensions of ‘collective control’. This mechanism is the transference of money, or financial resources, to the ‘community’, exemplified in the *BL* in the giving of one million pounds to each participating area, and over which the ‘communities’ have control, in terms of deciding how to spend it. I see this review as taking a step towards conceptual considerations of how particular mechanisms of ‘community’ interventions – such as the transference of money and ‘control’ – might shape the relations between people, place and identity, and how they are framed and interpreted in evaluations. For an initiative such as the *BL*, this would have implications for how membership of the ‘community’ is conceptualised, and therefore how eligibility to access or benefit from the allocated financial resources is defined. This indicates the importance within an evaluation such as the *Communities in Control* study of considering critically how the framing of these specific mechanisms, and of the resultant relations, might contribute to interpretations of the impacts on health. Following this review will be a chapter outlining the key aims of the research for this thesis around exploring ‘community’ in relation to the *BL* initiative, and describing how my research was positioned alongside the *CiC* evaluation study.

This chapter is the final version of a literature review paper published in 2015 in *Social Science & Medicine*, which reviewed literature describing different scenarios in which ‘communities’ might receive money, to explore conceptualisations of ‘community’ in relation to the flow of financial resources. The review covers a number of different types of scenario from across multiple high-income country settings, including reparations and compensation for past or anticipated harms, development or social investment initiatives, and land settlements. It highlights how, in addition to explicit definitions of ‘community’ given in these papers (for example a group of people defined by location or ethnic heritage), other, more implicit conceptualisations of ‘community’ emerge. This

occurs through the framing of the context and rationales for the transference of money, and in the framing the 'problematics' (or the key research question/argument) presented in each paper. As such, the review emphasises that evaluations of 'community' interventions must attend critically to how interpretations of the 'community' are constructed not only at the outset of an intervention and an evaluation study, but also through the dynamics of these in practice, and of how the effects of such an intervention are framed and communicated through evaluation outputs. The review also emphasises the influential role that money, and the flow of it from one group to another, can play in thinking how 'community' is conceptualised, particularly in contexts of inequality of social, material and financial resources. While none of the literature included in the review explicitly focused on interventions with health improvement aims, or described health-related outcomes of the transference of money to 'communities', all the papers spoke to contexts and relations of inequality (of access to resources, and to power and ability to influence decision-making) and therefore offer important insights to considering health and health inequalities from a perspective of the broader, social and material determinants of health.

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<b>Student</b>	Joanna Reynolds
<b>Principal Supervisor</b>	Mark Petticrew, Matt Egan
<b>Thesis Title</b>	Enacting ‘community’: conceptualisations and practices of ‘community’ in a UK area-based, empowerment initiative

**If the Research Paper has previously been published please complete Section B, if not please move to Section C**

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For multi-authored work, give full details of your role in the research included in the paper and in the preparation of the paper. (Attach a further sheet if necessary)	I devised the scope of the literature review; developed the search strategy and conducted the search; led on the interpretation and synthesis of the literature; and led on writing and revising the paper.
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## **Conceptualising the 'Community' as a Recipient of Money – a Critical Literature Review, and Implications for Health and Inequalities**

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### **Research Highlights**

- Focuses on interventions giving money to communities in high-income settings
- Examines multiple conceptualisations of community across those interventions
- Shows that flow of money and existing inequalities shape constructions of community
- Describes implications for evaluations of impact of money on health inequalities

### **Abstract**

There is increasing attention on how money may bring about positive changes to health, and money-based development approaches are becoming more commonplace at the 'community' level, including in high-income countries. However, little attention has been paid to how the 'community' might be varyingly conceptualised in these scenarios, or to the potential implications of this for interpreting the impacts of such health improvement approaches. This paper presents a critical interpretive review of literature presenting different scenarios from high-income countries in which the 'community' receives money, to explore how 'community' is conceptualised in relation to this process. Some texts gave explicit definitions of 'community', but multiple other conceptualisations were interpreted across all texts, conveyed through the construction of 'problematics', and descriptions of how and why money was given. The findings indicate that the flow of money shapes how conceptualisations of 'community' are produced, and that the implicit power relations and inequalities can construct and privilege particular sets of identities and relationships throughout the

process. This highlights implications for approaching public health evaluations of giving money to ‘communities’, and for better understanding how it might bring about change to health and inequalities, where the ‘community’ cannot be interpreted merely as a setting or recipient of such an intervention, but something constructed and negotiated through the flow of money itself.

## **Keywords**

Community; development; money; inequality; review; high-income context.

## **Background**

The ‘community’ has become a conceptual mainstay of much of the design of health improvement approaches globally (Morgan 2001), and in policy discourses framing efforts to address inequalities. This reflects a social model of health wherein the engagement and empowerment of ‘communities’ are recognised as social determinants of health and as fundamental components of bottom-up approaches to improving health and health inequalities (Laverack and Labonte 2000). The concept of ‘community’ and its definitions and uses are multifarious and much debated across the social sciences (Crow and Allan 1994). There is a long, diverse history of theorising around ‘community’ (Howarth 2001), among which, attention has been paid to the symbolic negotiation and construction of its boundaries (Cohen 1985a), as well as to the social processes of identity-making that can extend the ‘community’ beyond understandings of place and the ‘local’ (Anderson 1983). Despite this theoretical richness around ‘community’, there has been a marked absence in policy-making of engagement with its conceptual intricacies and fluidity. The concept of ‘community’ is often operationalised uncritically in programmes and policies, without acknowledgement of its contested nature (Bertotti, Jamal et al. 2012), raising questions about what can or should be interpreted from evaluations of ‘community’-focused initiatives to improve health and inequalities.

Money-based initiatives are increasingly prominent within ‘community’ approaches to health improvement, with the transference of money to the ‘community’ theorised to increase wellbeing via material and psycho-social pathways (Rawlings, Serburne-Benz et al. 2004). Examining the ways in which ‘community’ is conceptualised around practices of giving money is important for understanding how these types of initiative might contribute (or not) to health improvement. The role of money in improving health outcomes can be theorised, on one hand, as increasing access to

basic material resources and services essential for wellbeing (Leatherman, Metcalfe et al. 2012). The simple premise of 'giving money to the poor' may enable them to increase their standards of living, including material determinants of health and wellbeing (Hanlon 2004). This 'asset transfer' approach implicates the 'community' as the setting in which the intervention is delivered, for example conditional cash transfer programmes giving money to households or individuals to prompt particular behaviours, such as accessing health services (Lagarde, Haines et al. 2007).

These initiatives reflect a utilitarian perspective, wherein the transfer of money at the 'community' level is undertaken to achieve specific, often externally-determined outcomes. Other initiatives reflect a more participatory premise (Labonne and Chase 2008), engaging the 'community' in decision-making around money, with a view to changing the wider social and economic conditions of inequality that shape their health. These initiatives have included micro-financing programmes to reduce risk factors for HIV (Pronyk, Kim et al. 2008) and social fund initiatives in which the 'community' helps organise the funding of local projects (Rawlings, Serburne-Benz et al. 2004). These initiatives reflect shifts away from a focus purely on material wellbeing towards a rights-based approach to improving health (Wallerstein 1993, De Vos, De Ceukelaire et al. 2009), in which empowerment strategies may lead to increased perceptions and mobilisations of control, recognised as a determinant of health and health inequalities (Bosma, Schrijvers et al. 1999).

These examples of money-based initiatives are all drawn from well-established practices to address inequalities in low and middle-income countries, but there is also increasing focus on these approaches in some high-income countries. In the UK for example, political rhetorics advocating increased power and participation at the local level (Department for Communities and Local Government 2008) have emerged alongside renewed calls to address inequalities (Department of Health 2010). This has resulted in the development of initiatives seeking to engage the 'community' in decision-making around a broad range of social determinants of health (Milton, Attree et al. 2012), including deciding how funds should be spent at the local level (Kaszynska, Parkinson et al. 2012). Many initiatives have sought to engage the 'community' in decision-making while giving established organisations responsibility for managing the money, for example the UK's *New Deal for Communities* programme (Lawless 2012). However, recent approaches are looking to locate control over financial resources, as well as decision-making, in the 'community' itself. An example of this is the current *Big Local* initiative, in which one million pounds is given directly to 'communities' to bring about change in deprived areas (Local Trust 2015a).

The description of such initiatives as ‘area-based’ denotes implicit framing of ‘communities’ as people living within a given geographic location (Lawless 2012). However, this definition will rarely account for the complexity of conceptualisations (and experiences) of ‘community’ in terms of social and/or spatial identities (Bertotti, Jamal et al. 2012), nor of the negotiations and contestations of these identities among different groups of people (Cohen 1985a, Howarth 2002), that might be anticipated in a ‘community’-based initiative. The narrowness of such framings may go some way to explaining the paucity of current evidence of the impacts of such initiatives on health inequalities (O’Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013). If the way(s) in which ‘community’ is conceptualised influences how the impacts of such initiatives on health can be interpreted, the transference of money may add further complexity, given the differing roles money can play in mediating relationships between people and context (see for example Bloch and Parry 1989, Maurer 2006).

To generate a deeper understanding of how giving money directly to the ‘community’ might influence health, specifically in high-income settings, it is important to consider how ‘community’ could be conceptualised in this scenario. The transferability of evidence of effective money-based initiatives from low and middle-income countries is questionable, given that *relative* deprivation and perceptions of inequality are arguably more influential factors for health in high-income settings than absolute deprivation (Wilkinson and Pickett 2007), and thus the pathways and effects of giving money directly to ‘communities’ may differ. Hence, it becomes important to ask what kinds of ‘community’ are assumed, constructed and experienced through flows of money given directly to groups of people, and how these may be shaped by the different contexts in which money is given.

A critical review of literature was conducted to address the following question: how is the ‘community’ conceptualised in scenarios of receiving money in high-income country contexts? This paper presents the findings of the review, to help understand how conceptualisations of ‘community’ may contribute to interpretations of the impact on health of initiatives involving flows of money.

## **Methods**

### **Methodological approach:**

A traditional systematic review methodology was considered inappropriate for this review, which did not seek to present an exhaustive synthesis of all literature on ‘community’ and money, or to generate ‘robust evidence’. To explore the conceptual framings of ‘communities’ receiving money

directly, from (likely) disparate and heterogeneous bodies of literature, a critical interpretive synthesis approach (Dixon-Woods, Cavers et al. 2006) was considered appropriate. This methodology was developed to generate theory from a variety of types of 'evidence', using an interpretive approach to synthesis rather than the aggregative approach of the traditional systematic review (Dixon-Woods, Cavers et al. 2006). The methodology calls for reviewers to adopt a critical lens to examine how the literature '*constructs its problematics*' – or the issue(s) presented as being of key interest – and the '*nature of the assumptions*' on which each of the publications draw (Dixon-Woods, Cavers et al. 2006, p2), and was thus suitable for interpreting conceptualisations of the 'community' in receipt of money across a wide range of literatures.

### **Search strategy:**

An iterative approach was taken to develop the final search strategy, to ensure a body of texts that was varied but manageable in scope for the review. This involved several preliminary searches to explore the breadth of relevant literature, and identify key search terms. Reflecting on these searches, the authors discussed to identify – from a potentially very broad set of literatures – the types of scenarios that might be most relevant to informing interventions in which money is given to 'communities' to improve health and inequalities. Consequently, four 'domains' of scenarios in which 'communities' might be given money directly were identified, and used to tailor the search strategy towards the most relevant literature. The four domains included:

- *Development*: money received for the purposes of economic, social, health, or other types of development);
- *Windfalls and income shocks*: unexpected receipt of money, for example collective lottery winnings or dividend payments;
- *Compensation and reparation*: money received in acknowledgement of health or social harms suffered in the past, or risk of such in the future;
- *Research participation*: money received in exchange for participation in research activities.

Pilot searches were then conducted to refine the key search terms under each domain, before the final search strategy was agreed (see *Table 1*).

A range of electronic databases and 'grey' literature resources were identified to provide access to literature from multiple disciplines and of different types. The four sets of search terms were applied to each of the following seven databases:

- *Academic research databases:* International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), PubMed, Academic Search Complete, GEOBASE, Web of Science;
- *Grey literature databases:* GreenFILE, Open Grey (Europe).

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria:**

The main rationale guiding selection of texts for the review reflected the increasing focus in high-income contexts on engaging the ‘community’ in health and social development agendas by giving them money and control over it (Kaszynska, Parkinson et al. 2012). As such, included literature was restricted to papers that described scenarios of direct transfer of money to ‘communities’, as opposed to transfer of other types of resources, or the transfer of money via third parties such as non-governmental organisations or local councils. A (predominant) focus on high-income country contexts, using membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (<http://www.oecd.org/>) to denote a country of high-income, was also stipulated. No time period restrictions were applied to the search strategy or inclusion / exclusion criteria. The full inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in *Box 1*.

### **Synthesis and interpretation:**

All records identified through the search were downloaded to EndNote 7 and titles and abstracts were screened for inclusion by the lead author. The full texts for those not excluded during screening were retrieved and read, to assess further their eligibility for inclusion. The final set of eligible texts was then uploaded to QSR Nvivo 10 for interpretation and synthesis by the lead author. Descriptive information was extracted from each text to record the country/ies and population(s) of focus, rationale for giving money to ‘communities’, general disciplinary perspective(s) and a summary of the main arguments of each text.

Following Dixon-Woods *et al* (2006), the review focused on interpreting the content of texts rather than assessing their quality. The steps of synthesis involved identifying concepts of, and relating to ‘community’ presented explicitly and more implicitly across the texts via an inductive approach, and grouping these into common themes. Following reading each text, codes were developed and assigned to relevant concepts presented explicitly in the texts, and also to those interpreted by the lead author through close reading of the texts. These codes were then grouped by identifying common meaning in an iterative manner, to generate themes, which were then discussed among the authors to identify and synthesise broader conceptualisations relevant to the focus on health inequalities.

## Results

### Overview of search results:

A total of 4814 separate texts were identified, and their titles and/or abstracts screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of these, 46 were identified for possible inclusion and their full texts sought. Subsequently, 24 texts were included in the review. The formats of the texts were varied and included historical and non-historical case studies (seven), empirical research reports (six, of which five were qualitative); theoretical and methodological pieces (three); programme evaluation reports (two); policy analyses (two); discursive or position pieces (two); and literature reviews (two). The texts spanned several high-income countries (the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, Hungary); three did not refer to a specific country. A wide range of disciplines were represented including the physical sciences (environment, energy and engineering disciplines), and humanities and social sciences (psychology, sociology, social policy, development studies, law and history), and most texts seemed to straddle more than one discipline or field. *Table 2* summarises the characteristics of each text, main discipline(s), rationale for giving money, location (country) and population, theoretical framings, and overview of each text's main focus.

Described below are the variety of ways in which 'community' was conceptualised across the texts reviewed, and how these linked with the contexts for giving money to 'communities', the related 'problematics' identified, and to the different framings of the flows of money to 'communities' from other groups. While there was limited explicit consideration of 'health' in the texts reviewed, the synthesis process helped identify cross-cutting conceptualisations of (in)equality, which are relevant to questions of how giving money might impact on health inequalities. See *Table 3* for a summary of the ways in which conceptualisations of 'community' were presented and the interpretation of these in relation to conceptualisations of (in)equality.

### Explicit conceptualisations of 'community':

There were limited examples across the texts in this review of explicitly stated definitions of 'community', with far more conceptualisations indirectly implied. The explicit definitions given in several texts drew on ideas of shared characteristics, such as cultural heritage among indigenous populations (McLean 2012); ethnicity among African Americans (Fullinwider 2007, Franklin 2012); and political interests and modes of organisation for protecting these (Fenge 1992):

*“Those communities with shared political and administrative interests, and, most importantly, those with shared land use, were grouped together into six regions” (Fenge, 1992, p133);*

Other texts acknowledged more contingent constructions of ‘community’, relative to emerging projects such as commercial or energy developments (Feldman 1991, Annie E. Casey Foundation 2007, Vari and Ferencz 2007, Esteves 2008, Esteves and Vanclay 2009, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2011, Klassen and Feldpausch-Parker 2011, Bristow, Cowell et al. 2012, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2012), defining them as *“affected”* or *“local”* to the development of interest (Esteves & Vanclay, 2009, p143).

### **‘Community’ characterised by the rationale and context for giving money:**

Across the texts there emerged a range of different ways in which the description of rationales for giving money conveyed assumptions about ‘community’. While acknowledging some conceptual similarities, scenarios of ‘compensation’ and ‘reparations’ have been separated here, reflecting the language used in the respective texts, and a distinction between money given for specific loss of benefits or risks thereof (compensation), and money as recognition of guilt or responsibility for more systemic discrimination (reparations).

#### *Compensation for harms experienced and/or anticipated*

The majority of texts framed the giving of money to communities as ‘compensation’ for harms (environmental, economic), or for anticipated risks thereof, describing scenarios of the impacts on ‘communities’ of the siting of industrial developments such as mines, dams, irrigation and energy developments, and also commercial developments (Feldman 1991, O’Faircheallaigh 2004, Annie E. Casey Foundation 2007, Égré, Roquet et al. 2007, Vari and Ferencz 2007, Esteves 2008, Esteves and Vanclay 2009, Allan, McGregor et al. 2011, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2011, Klassen and Feldpausch-Parker 2011, Bristow, Cowell et al. 2012, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2012, Lucas-Darby 2012, McLean 2012, Saito 2012, ter Mors, Terwel et al. 2012, Campbell and Hunt 2013). The depiction of these scenarios appeared to frame ‘community’ as an entity impacted upon, vulnerable to the forces and interests of external entities such as energy companies and commercial retail developers.

Yet, there were also framings of ‘community’ as an entity with potential to influence the success (or otherwise) of a venture, with money mediating relationships between the ‘community’ and external entities, to generate ‘acceptance’ of a development, for example a nuclear energy facility (Vari & Ferencz, 2007):

*“The local population’s consent was obtained via negotiations where the prime stake concerned the financial compensation of the host and neighbouring settlements.”* (Vari & Ferencz, 2007, p189).

In some scenarios, this conveyed the ‘community’ as having interests distinct from those of other, for example corporate, entities but which could be closer aligned through the transference of money, manifested in support for a development (Égré, Roquet et al. 2007, Esteves 2008, Allan, McGregor et al. 2011, Klassen and Feldpausch-Parker 2011, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2012, ter Mors, Terwel et al. 2012). In other texts, however, the money was presented as highlighting, and even cementing the distance between these sets of interests, through depictions of the ‘community’ rejecting compensation as ‘bribery’ (Vari and Ferencz 2007, Esteves 2008, Allan, McGregor et al. 2011).

#### *Reparations for past injustices*

Texts describing reparations for historical injustices faced by particular ‘communities’, including slavery and discrimination faced by African Americans (Fullinwider 2007, Franklin 2012), damaging policies targeting Aboriginal Australians (Berndsen and McGarty 2012), and damages faced as a result of urban redevelopment (Lucas-Darby 2012), firmly conceptualised the ‘community’ as the ‘victim’, relative to much more powerful, dominant entities. It was implied in these texts that the process of agreeing and giving money as reparations was instrumental in ratifying the identity of the ‘community’ as victim and wronged. Overlaps between compensation and reparation were indicated in one text (Akashah and Marks 2006). Here, money given to the ‘community’ in recognition of harms suffered – including to health – was presented as compensation to help restore wellbeing, but also as reparations to acknowledge the wrong done to the ‘community’ in the past. As well as the ‘community’ being conceptualised as a victim, it was also framed as playing a role in influencing social relations beyond its boundaries; by receiving reparations the ‘community’ helped dissuade future harms to others:

*“In this context, compensation has emerged as an attempt to help victims of human rights violations reclaim aspects of their former health and to dissuade future acts of wrong-doing”* (Akashah & Marks, 2006, p259).

#### *Land claims agreements / settlements*

Several texts centred on the transfer of money to ‘communities’ in agreements around collective land claims. While these texts shared some similarities with texts describing compensation, the

processes and relationships depicted around money for land agreements conveyed distinct conceptualisations of 'community'. These texts focused on notions of 'traditional' rights to land, with reference to the ethnic and/or cultural heritage claims of particular indigenous 'communities', (Anders 1989, Fenge 1992, O'Faircheallaigh 2004, Égré, Roquet et al. 2007, Dayo and Kofinas 2010, McLean 2012, Campbell and Hunt 2013). The emphasis placed in these texts on the transference of money from the state to 'communities' conveyed constructions of the 'community' centred on historical identities and claims to physical resources, and on distinct forms of collective 'ownership' and 'property', often at odds with a dominant capitalist economy (Anders 1989, Fenge 1992, O'Faircheallaigh 2004, Dayo and Kofinas 2010):

*“With thousands of years of experience in holding communal property and relatively little experience living with private property, it's no wonder that conflicts arise between the new land tenure under ANCSA [land settlement act] and the older notions of communal property.”*  
(Anders, 1989, p289).

Descriptions of land agreements also implied a broader process through which 'communities' come to be recognised externally, acknowledged as legally-recognised entities with whom the state can cooperate (Anders 1989, Dayo and Kofinas 2010). Echoing explicit conceptualisations of the 'community' as sharing characteristics, these representations implied a homogenous and distinct group of people, historically situated in long-established struggles for identity and resources against the dominant state.

### **'Community' constructed through descriptions of the flow of money:**

Depictions of the flow of money in the texts also conveyed conceptualisations of 'community'. In many, the flow was framed as dictated by dominant groups in possession of greater resources, such as state or corporate entities, and thus, again, constructing the 'community' as a subordinate, and passive entity, whose identity and eligibility to receive money – such as compensation or reparations – rested in established hierarchies of power and inequality. More complex pictures of the 'community' and its agency in relation to the flow of money were also presented, however. For example, the description of 'benefits-sharing' – the sharing of financial outcomes from energy developments between the owning corporation and affected 'community' – presented the 'community' as situated in a more dialogic relationship with a corporate entity (Égré, Roquet et al. 2007, Allan, McGregor et al. 2011):

*“Monetary benefit sharing mechanisms can thus be implemented even in cases where there are no project-affected people. The interest of such mechanisms reside in their potential to*

*support long-term beneficial partnerships between developers and concerned communities”*  
(Égré et al., 2007, p235).

This conveyed the ‘community’ as playing a more instrumental role in the ongoing success of a development, and having similar interests in potential profits as the corporate entity. Other texts portrayed claims to money being made by the ‘community’, for example in establishing ‘community benefits agreements’ with urban developers (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2007, Lucas-Darby 2012, Saito 2012). This suggested a much more agentic, active and strategic interpretation of the ‘community’, though still one arising from contexts of inequality, power and resources.

### **‘Community’ constructed through framing of problematics:**

Three prominent themes were identified across the framing of problematics – or, the key arguments or issues - in the reviewed texts, which revealed assumptions about the conceptualisation of ‘community’ in the scenarios described.

#### *Negotiated and contested identities of ‘community’*

Several texts described the difficulties faced by indigenous ‘communities’ in establishing themselves as legal entities recognised by the state in negotiations over land settlements, conveying the ‘community’ as struggling to assume a form that can participate in decision-making over resources (Anders 1989, Fenge 1992, Dayo and Kofinas 2010):

*“The process of selecting land for villages, as well as regional corporations, was a challenge in ANCSA because it required meeting the requirements of the settlement while also negotiating conflicts with private in-holders of property”. (Dayo & Kofinas, 2010, p149).*

Similarly, in other scenarios the ‘community’ was presented as lacking in particular resources recognised by external entities, for example corporate developers, and needing to acquire these before being able to enter into negotiations over claims to benefits (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2007). Critiques of the extent to which the ‘community’ can enter into a true partnership with other entities also reflected the political or commercial value for some entities – such as energy developers – in being seen to engage the ‘community’ (Esteves and Vanclay 2009, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2011, Lucas-Darby 2012).

Other texts described competing claims to ‘community’, highlighting conflicts between internal and external constructions of a ‘community’ identity, such as the perceived ‘inadequacy’ of local government categories of ‘community’ employed in processes for allocating financial benefits for land use to Aboriginal groups (Campbell and Hunt 2013). There was acknowledgement of the

different sets of power relations among groups with different interests that shape these conflicting claims to 'community', for example in situations of determining compensation for the siting of energy developments (Cowell, Bristow et al. 2011, Bristow, Cowell et al. 2012, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2012):

*"The notion of community, like that of scale itself, is therefore being shaped by inherent power relations or who is making claims for the affected 'community' and for what purpose"* (Bristow et al., 2012, p1116).

#### *Calculating the 'right' amount of money*

Several texts presented the difficulties in calculating and assigning monetary value to harms or risks faced by the 'community', and in doing so often conveyed the 'community' as a set of resources (social, physical, economic) that may be 'used up' or disturbed by developments or acts of harm (Akashah and Marks 2006, Esteves 2008, Allan, McGregor et al. 2011). Descriptions of perceptions of injustice in the process for determining compensation, for example for land use, implied that the value of a 'community' and its resources may be perceived differently by those deemed within it and outside it (Klassen and Feldpausch-Parker 2011).

#### *The lack of impact of money on the disadvantaged 'community'*

A number of texts conveyed the 'communities' receiving money for harms or from land settlements as disproportionately disadvantaged compared to other sectors of the population, (O'Faircheallaigh 2004, Cowell, Bristow et al. 2012, Lucas-Darby 2012, Saito 2012), for example low-income residents facing potential harms from urban commercial development:

*"These projects tend to reflect the policy interests of affluent members of society and negatively impact low-income communities."* (Saito, 2012, p130).

Some texts argued that money given as compensation or reparations would not improve the levels of social and economic inequality that the recipient 'communities' faced (Anders 1989, Franklin 2012), or that the money given would not adequately address the harms faced by 'communities' (Égré, Roquet et al. 2007, McLean 2012). Across these texts, therefore, were implied conceptualisations of 'community' as defined by, and situated in a complex context of inequalities which would be little affected by the receipt of money.

## Discussion

The powerful influence of money on health is well-documented (Ecob and Davey Smith 1999, Benzeval, Bond et al. 2014) and initiatives in which money is transferred to disadvantaged populations have the potential to bring about positive changes to health (Leatherman, Metcalfe et al. 2012). Many of these initiatives rest on participatory principles, seeking to engage the ‘community’, but critical consideration of how ‘community’ is conceptualised in this role has been lacking. This critical literature review sought to explore how ‘community’ has been conceptualised across a range of scenarios in high-income countries of giving money directly to groups, to contribute to theorising on how the health impacts of giving money to a ‘community’ can be evaluated and interpreted.

While only one text in the review made explicit reference to health, describing the types of harms suffered by ‘communities’ for which they might be compensated (Akashah and Marks 2006), the remaining texts depicted elements of the processes and impacts of giving money to ‘communities’ that can be interpreted and evaluated as broader determinants of health and inequalities. These included access to physical, social, political and economic resources (Milton, Attree et al. 2012), and capacity to participate in the wider contexts shaping access to these resources (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000). The multiplicity of conceptualisations of ‘community’ identified across the texts – and the different ways in which these were conveyed or implied within texts – resonates with theoretical debates on the concept and meaning of ‘community’ (Crow and Allan 1994). Furthermore, it reflects that multiple, different identities may be variously, and continuously, negotiated within and between groups of people in any particular context, spatial or non-spatial (Anderson 1983, Stephens 2007).

Moreover, the review indicates the influential role that money plays in such scenarios. The flow of money contributes to the ongoing construction of identities around ‘community’ through its symbolic and material role in mediating – and sometimes reaffirming – inequalities of power and access to resources between different groups (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000). This suggests that attempts to evaluate the impacts of giving money to ‘communities’ should not only be explicit in defining ‘community’ at the outset – for example, as conflated with a defined, geographical area (Lawless 2012) or as a complex, ecological system (Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009) – but must also explore the multiplicity of identities of ‘community’ that arise through the processes of the flow of money.

The conceptualisations of inequality that underpinned much of the literature in this review, commonly depicting the ‘community’ as marginal, subordinate and vulnerable, resonate strongly

with rights-based, empowerment approaches to health improvement (De Vos, De Ceukelaire et al. 2009). However, the potential implications of adopting such a framing of 'community' in evaluating the impacts of giving money must be carefully considered. If an evaluation starts, uncritically, from a perspective of the 'community' as disempowered, the agency of members to negotiate 'community' identities around money (Bloch and Parry 1989), and the mobilisation of these to bring about change to determinants of health, may be overlooked. A minority of papers in this review gave more nuanced depictions of agency in relation to the transference of money, for example the 'community' actively making claims to monetary benefits (Saito 2012). Tendencies to present the 'community' as a unified, homogenous entity – either by shared cultural or geographic characteristics, or by relative deprivation or poor health – may result in misleading assumptions of the fixedness and coherence of a group of people (see for example Mitchell 1998), and an obscuring of the plurality of power relationships between individuals, and within and between 'communities' (Howarth 2002).

This review also suggests that scenarios of receiving money may lead to increased emphasis on assessing 'eligibility' to be part of a 'community'. The processes of negotiating eligibility, and the values and power relations on which it rests, both within and beyond the 'community', are likely to have differing impacts on levels of participation and perceptions of control and access to resources – all key determinants of health. Careful attention to these processes in context must become a fundamental component of attempts to evaluate and understand the health impacts of giving money to 'communities' (Marston, Renedo et al. 2013).

### **Implications for public health evaluation:**

The common depictions here of the 'community' in receipt of money as subject to harms (either historical, or potential risk thereof) holds important implications for how to assess the health impacts of giving money. Links between harms (experienced directly or indirectly) at a structural level and observable inequalities in health have been theorised, for example, as 'structural violence' (Farmer 1999). Public health evaluations of interventions seeking to address health inequalities by giving money to 'communities' must therefore be attuned to the broader structural relations within which interventions are contextualised. They should consider the extent to which the giving of money could be (unintentionally) complicit in 'harmful' relations between those with access to resources – and good health – and the 'community' without. Evaluators should furthermore examine assumptions about the role money given to the 'community' is expected to take in relation to protecting against future health and social 'harms' (inequalities), or in mitigating the effects of those already experienced, and assess the success or otherwise of an intervention in achieving this. The extent to which money reaches and benefits those most at risk of such 'harms' is important to

evaluate. A critical, reflexive approach within evaluation work, drawing for example on principles of ethnography (Reynolds, DiLiberto et al. 2014), might help unearth implicit and structurally-embedded contexts of inequality which a money-based, 'community' intervention could perpetuate or even exacerbate.

Public health rhetoric assumes that 'bottom-up' interventions hold potential to address inequalities by engaging those otherwise excluded (O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013). However, this review suggests that processes of defining a 'community's' eligibility to receive money often reflects existing social and power hierarchies. Thus, it is plausible that interventions to address health inequalities via the transference of money may serve to entrench further the disparities of agency and power that underpin the identification of the recipient 'community', and/or lead to new struggles for access to resources between members of that 'community'. Therefore, evaluations of such interventions must pay careful attention to the negotiations of 'community' identity and their inherent power dynamics, to examine the possible negative effects of giving money to 'communities', and for whom health inequalities persist, or worsen, as a result (Lorenc, Petticrew et al. 2012). Though this review did not seek to assess the effects of giving money to 'communities', the indication in several texts that money did little to address existing positions of relative deprivation, suggests this is an important concern for public health evaluations of such interventions.

### **Limitations:**

The methodology used for this review relied on interpretation of themes across texts, and thus is not reproducible as a traditional systematic review aims to be. However, efforts were taken to maintain a 'critical voice' throughout the analysis and interpretation by all authors, and to ensure interpretations were grounded in the texts reviewed, thus establishing the transparency and plausibility of the findings (Dixon-Woods, Cavers et al. 2006).

The review was potentially limited by its search strategy which reflected the aim of synthesising a varied set of texts on 'communities' receiving money in high-income countries, rather than an exhaustive mapping of all relevant literature. The vast majority of the texts included in the review comprised journal articles published in the past couple of decades, perhaps reflecting the bias of electronic databases toward journal articles rather than books or monographs. Despite no limits set on the time interval searched, the earliest text reviewed was published in 1989 and the majority published since 2004, which might reflect recent political and technological developments that have given rise to scenarios in which 'communities' receive money.

The lack of explicitly health-focused literature in this review must also be noted, acknowledging other, related literatures that speak to money, the 'community' and health outcomes in high-income countries. These include research on the impacts of profits from gaming sites on native Indian populations in the US (see for example Stephenson 1996); on other types of 'community' development or regeneration initiatives and health inequalities (see for example Mathers, Parry et al. 2008), and the vast literature on reparations, and specifically, on reparations and health (Williams and Collins 2004). The absence of these literatures likely reflects the specific focus on money being given *directly* to 'communities', as opposed to other, subtly different mechanisms of funding, and other terms used for groups of people. This serves to highlight the importance of acknowledging not only the plurality of the term 'community', but also the conceptual and semantic spaces around it. Further attention to this might unearth different ways of imagining flows of agency and resources, and among groups of people identifying themselves in different ways, for example as a online, disease-oriented 'community' (Radin 2006), that could inform approaches to evaluating the health impacts of giving money to groups of people.

### **Conclusion:**

This review illustrated the conceptual complexity of the 'community' as a recipient of money in high-income countries, and the embedded relations of inequality influencing the negotiation of identities and eligibility to receive money. With emphasis in public health literature of the importance of 'upstream', systems-level approaches to addressing health inequalities, intervening on the "*distal and structural causes*" of relative poor health (Diez Roux 2011, p1631), the complex social, political and economic relations that shape how a 'community' in receipt of money is conceptualised has clear implications for attempts to address health inequalities. Evaluations of the impacts on health and inequalities of initiatives giving money directly to the 'community' must take a critical approach to examining the relationships of agency and power that cause the identification of a particular group, by another, as a 'community' eligible to receive money. This critical approach should extend to considering the types of interpretations of impact on inequality that can be made, given the construction of 'community' at the outset. Attention should also be paid to the processes of the initiative, through which the ongoing negotiation of identities and eligibility, within the 'community' and between the 'community' and external groups, will invariably be shaped by the specific flows of money within broader contexts of inequalities, and thus influence how, and for whom, changes to determinants of health can be identified.

**Table 1** Search terms for scenarios of ‘communities’ receiving money by domain

Domain	Search Terms
Development	(money OR grant* OR cash OR monetary OR invest* OR donat*) AND (“social fund*” OR “social investment” OR “community chest*” OR regenerat*) AND (impact* OR effect OR influence* OR change* OR outcome* OR interact* OR negotiat* OR value*) AND (social OR health OR identit* OR economic) AND (communit* OR group* OR household* OR family)
Windfalls and income shocks	(money OR grant* OR cash OR monetary OR invest* OR donat*) AND (“social fund*” OR “social investment” OR “community chest*” OR regenerat*) AND (impact* OR effect OR influence* OR change* OR outcome* OR interact* OR negotiat* OR value*) AND (social OR health OR identit* OR economic) AND (communit* OR group* OR household* OR family)
Compensation and reparation	(money OR cash OR monetary OR in-kind OR benefit*) AND (settlement* OR compensat* OR reparat* OR payment*) AND (energy OR development OR frack* OR harm* OR legac* OR damage*) AND (social OR health OR identit*) AND (communit* OR group* OR household* OR family* OR village* OR population* OR public)
Research participation	(compensate* OR payment* OR fee*) AND (research OR study OR program* OR project*) AND (“community partner*” OR “community participat*” OR “community-based partner*” OR “community-based participat*”)

## Box 1 Search inclusion and exclusion criteria

### Inclusion criteria:

- Journal articles, reports, grey literature, books.
- Empirical, discursive or theoretical papers focussing on real scenarios of giving money directly to 'communities'.
- High income country setting (denoted by OECD membership).
- Exploring process and/or effects of giving money to 'communities'.

### Exclusion criteria:

- Newspaper articles and other literature not based in empirical or theoretical research, and which do not refer to 'community'.
- Literature focussing on hypothetical situations of giving money to 'communities', e.g. compensation willingness-to-accept studies.
- Papers with predominant focus on low or middle-income countries.
- Papers focussing primarily on other forms of financing where money is not given directly to 'communities'; on micro-credit or micro-financing processes of giving loans which need to be repaid; on types state-managed social welfare.
- Papers not published in the English language and without English translation.

**Table 2** Summary of texts included in the review

Author & Year	Type of Text	Main discipline(s) & <i>conceptual framing</i>	Rationale for money to community	Location and population	Key focus / statement of problem
<i>Akashar &amp; Marks, 2006</i>	Theoretical / methodological	Public health; law. <i>Social justice; health &amp; human rights</i>	Compensation / reparations for harms	No specific location or population	Argues a lack of equity and transparency in determining compensation; describes challenges of costing wide range of harms, including to health.
<i>Allan et al, 2011</i>	Theoretical / methodological	Energy studies; development studies. <i>Economic impact analysis; participatory development.</i>	Compensation for disruptions	UK (Shetland Isles); rural island population	Describes and evaluates different approaches to estimating economic impacts to community of wind farm development.
<i>Anders, 1989</i>	Case study	History. <i>Participatory development; social identity theory.</i>	Settlements for land rights and use	US (Alaska); indigenous population	Explores challenges for native communities of establishing corporations to negotiate settlements for land use.
<i>Annie E. Case Foundation, 2007</i>	Programme report	Development studies. <i>Participatory development; corporate social responsibility (CSR).</i>	Community benefits agreements (CBAs) (compensation)	US; urban, low-income population	Describes supporting urban communities in their negotiations of CBAs; identifies the range of resources required by communities to enter into negotiations.

Author & Year	Type of Text	Main discipline(s) & <i>conceptual framing</i>	Rationale for money to community	Location and population	Key focus / statement of problem
Bernsden & McGarty, 2012	Empirical research (quant.)	Psychology. <i>Social identity theories.</i>	Reparations for historical injustices	Australia; indigenous and non-indigenous populations	Explores resistance by non-indigenous people towards compensation and reparations for indigenous people; describes how entitlement is perceived from different perspectives.
Bristow et al, 2012	Empirical research (qual.)	Energy studies; development studies. <i>Participatory development.</i>	Compensation for disturbances; to generate support for development	UK; no specific population	Critical exploration of competing perspectives to define the community in negotiations around compensation for wind farm siting.
Campbell et al, 2013	Programme evaluation	Development studies. <i>Participatory development; social justice.</i>	Compensation for land use	Australia; indigenous population	Considers the best uses of payments to the community as compensation for land use for mining, and in contexts of community-led development.
Cowell et al, 2011	Empirical research (qual.)	Energy studies; environmental science. <i>Social justice; environmental planning.</i>	Compensation for disturbances	UK (Wales); rural population	Explores range of influences on negotiations around acceptance for energy sitings via focus on community benefits.
Cowell et al, 2012	Position paper and case study	Energy studies; development studies. <i>Participatory</i>	Compensation for disturbances	UK; rural and coastal populations	Critiques compensation as a means for generating acceptance for energy projects, and describes how

Author & Year	Type of Text	Main discipline(s) & conceptual framing	Rationale for money to community	Location and population	Key focus / statement of problem
		<i>development; social justice.</i>			affected communities are often disproportionately disadvantaged.
Dayo & Kofinas, 2010	Case study	Development studies; history. <i>Participatory development; social identity theories.</i>	Settlements for land claims	US (Alaska); indigenous population	Describes challenges of entering into land agreements, given communities' traditional cultures of collective ownership of resources.
Égré et al, 2007	Literature review	Development studies; history. <i>Participatory development; social justice.</i>	Benefit sharing from dam developments	Canada; indigenous population	Describes different approaches to compensating communities affected by dam development, and questions of ensuring equitable benefit sharing.
Esteves, 2008	Empirical research (qual.)	Business studies; development studies. <i>Participatory development; CSR.</i>	Social investment	Australia (& Southern Africa); no specific population	Explores approaches for companies to provide money and support to host communities to ensure ongoing relationships and mutual benefit.
Esteves & Vanclay, 2009	Theoretical / methodological	Business studies; development studies. <i>Participatory development; CSR.</i>	Social investment	No specific location or population	Explores how mining companies should understand development needs of host communities and provide social investment.

Author & Year	Type of Text	Main discipline(s) & <i>conceptual framing</i>	Rationale for money to community	Location and population	Key focus / statement of problem
<i>Feldman, 1991</i>	Policy analysis	Policy studies; environmental science. <i>Social identity theories; environmental planning.</i>	Compensation for land use	US & Canada; no specific population	Describes difficulty of aligning competing values and priorities in relation to water policy: compensating communities for loss of land versus broader environmental concerns.
<i>Fenge, 1992</i>	Policy analysis	Policy studies; history; sociology. <i>Participatory development; social identity theories.</i>	Settlements for land claims	Canada; indigenous Inuit population	Describes a newly agreed land settlement; presents the political and policy barriers overcome by Inuits in desire to settle land agreement.
<i>Franklin, 2012</i>	Discursive piece	History; development studies. <i>Social justice; social identity theories.</i>	Reparations for historical injustices	US; African American population	Argues for money to support social development initiatives for African Americans as form of reparations; describes debates over who is responsible for paying reparations to communities.
<i>Fullinwider, 2007</i>	Case study	History; legal studies. <i>Participatory development; social justice.</i>	Reparations for historical injustices	US; African American population	Describes challenge of deciding who is liable and who is entitled to reparations; suggests targeting reparations towards persisting inequalities faced by African Americans.

Author & Year	Type of Text	Main discipline(s) & <i>conceptual framing</i>	Rationale for money to community	Location and population	Key focus / statement of problem
<i>Klassen et al, 2011</i>	Empirical research (qual.)	Environmental science; development studies. <i>Participatory development; environmental planning.</i>	Compensation for land use	US; no specific population	Describes challenges faced by communities in engaging with discussions around energy developments; presents different models of community engagement.
<i>Lucas-Darby, 2012</i>	Case study	History; development studies. <i>Participatory development; social justice.</i>	Reparations for injustices through developments	US; urban, low-income population	Describes rise of urban community activist groups seeking benefits for injustices; argues those most impacted are those already disadvantaged.
<i>McLean, 2012</i>	Case study	Environmental science; political science. <i>Participatory development; post-colonial theory.</i>	Compensation for harms	Australia; indigenous population	Describes problems of representation for indigenous groups in negotiating compensation; presents challenges of partnerships between groups with different values.
<i>O'Faircheallaigh, 2004</i>	Case study	Development studies; policy studies. <i>Participatory development; theories of the state.</i>	Compensation for land use	Australia; indigenous population	Highlights issue of benefits received from companies for land use being used to provide community services in absence of state provision.

Author & Year	Type of Text	Main discipline(s) & <i>conceptual framing</i>	Rationale for money to community	Location and population	Key focus / statement of problem
<i>Saito, 2012</i>	Empirical research (qual.)	Development studies; policy studies.  <i>Participatory development.</i>	Community benefits agreement: compensation for loss of benefits	US; urban, low-income population	Describes embedded inequalities surrounding urban developments and rise of community groups negotiating compensation, setting precedents for other communities.
<i>ter Mors et al, 2012</i>	Literature review	Environmental science. <i>Social justice; environmental planning.</i>	Compensation for disturbances and risks	No specific location or population	Reviews literature exploring effectiveness of compensation for overcoming opposition to carbon developments; community-level compensation may be more effective than individual.
<i>Vari &amp; Ferencz, 2007</i>	Case study	History; policy studies. <i>Participatory development; participatory democracy.</i>	To generate local support for developments	Hungary; no specific population	Describes increasing opposition to nuclear waste, and community claims to compensation; summarises processes of negotiation around acceptance.

**Table 3** Conceptualisations of ‘community’ and their construction in the texts reviewed

How Constructed in Texts	Conceptualisations of ‘Community’	Conceptualisations of (In)equality
Explicitly defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group of people with shared ethnic or cultural heritage; shared experiences of harm; or historical connections to land or physical resources.</li> <li>• Group of people ‘affected’ by a development or project, defined geographically or otherwise.</li> </ul>	<p>Relative marginalisation or vulnerability of the ‘community’ linked to their shared characteristics.</p> <p>Inequality embedded in historically-situated relations, or more contingent, in relation to new developments.</p>
Through descriptions of rationale for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Compensation</i>: the ‘community’ as victim of loss of benefits or resources, impacted upon, requiring and deserving of remuneration; the ‘community’ as having a distinct set of interests.</li> <li>• <i>Reparations</i>: the ‘community’ as victim of systemic discrimination or harms, subjugated; identity of ‘community’ ratified through reparations process; emphasis on historically situated, shared ethnic or cultural heritage.</li> <li>• <i>Land claims agreements</i>: the ‘community’ as minority, with historically-situated ethnic / cultural origins; defined through historical claims over physical resources; the ‘community’ as having a distinct organisation and set of knowledges that must be assimilated with dominant state.</li> </ul>	<p>Assumed potential for money to address inequalities experienced as a result of harms or injustices faced or anticipated by nature of ‘community’ identity, but embeddedness of inequalities undermines this.</p> <p>Ownership of resources (e.g. land) is disempowering in face of goals of more powerful corporate / state entities, indicating unequal status afforded to different sets of values.</p>
Through descriptions of the flow of money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ‘community’ as a passive recipient in a flow of money dictated by more dominant entities, such as compensation.</li> <li>• The ‘community’ as having a distinct set of interests to be reconciled with those of a corporate entity through the profit sharing from a development.</li> </ul>	<p>Lacking equality of power, voice or capacity to participate in discussions about money.</p> <p>Attempts to reduce the inequality of status between the entities, but through mechanisms which protect the status of the more powerful entity.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'community', or some of its members, as agentic, making claims to money through the acquisition of particular skills or resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Unequal distribution of skills, but which can be overcome to help 'community' address other inequalities of resources.</p>
<p>Through framing problematics of giving money to communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Negotiating relationships between the 'community' and others:</i> the 'community' as an entity requiring modification or accumulation of resources to negotiate with more powerful groups; the 'community' as an entity with political or commercial value for external groups.</li> <li>• <i>Calculating the amount of money:</i> the 'community' as an entity with a worth that may be viewed differently by different groups;</li> <li>• <i>Lack of impact of money on the 'community':</i> the 'community' as marginalised and disproportionately disadvantaged; as entrenched in persisting structures of inequality, despite receipt of money.</li> </ul>	<p>Marginalised communities must be more closely aligned with values of dominant entities to be able to influence the inequalities they face.</p> <p>Power relations around negotiations of money reflect – and may perpetuate – existing inequalities.</p> <p>Existing structural context of inequalities faced by 'community' cannot be overcome by transference of money</p>

### **3. Research Aim and Positioning**

#### **Introduction**

The literature reviewed has indicated that the acknowledged conceptual fluidity and contested nature of ‘community’ remains relatively under-explored in relation to evaluating the health and social impacts of initiatives that rest on the premise of engaging the ‘community’ to bring about change. The review of literature presenting the ‘community’ as a recipient of money, in different scenarios, also indicated that mechanisms of an intervention or initiative – such as the transference of money – might influence how ‘community’ is conceptualised and its relations performed and experienced. Reflecting these observations from the literature, this chapter will outline the key aim of the research conducted for this thesis, and the guiding research questions. I will also describe the positioning of this research alongside a broader programme of work, a study evaluating the *Big Local* initiative, to present in more detail the rationale for the specified research questions, and the context which has shaped the research aim, both conceptually and methodologically.

#### **Overall Aim**

The focus of the research described in this thesis centred on examining ‘community’ in the context of the delivery of the *Big Local* initiative. I sought to explore how ‘community’ was enacted through and in relation to the delivery of the *BL*; how conceptualisations and practices of ‘community’ arose, and how they interacted with, shaped and were shaped by the mechanisms, people and actions of the initiative as it was rolled out. In doing so, I hoped to contribute conceptual interpretations of ‘community’ to the work of the evaluating ‘community’ initiatives such as the *BL* and interpreting their impact on health and health inequalities. I hoped that my research would add empirical and conceptual depth to understanding the role of the ‘community’ in the pathways of change through which such initiatives might influence the determinants of health inequalities, and for whom this would or would not occur. Thus, I sought to offer a step forward in the face of acknowledged challenges of evaluating such complex, ‘community’ initiatives and of producing generalisable understanding of how they do (or do not) reduce health inequalities (Burton 2009, O’Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013, South and Phillips 2014).

As such, I aimed to take the *BL* as an empirical, case example through which to explore the complexity of ‘community’ as it is enacted through an initiative, and to reflect on the implications of

this for public health evaluation practice. Hence, I was *not* seeking to assess from an evaluative perspective how the *BL* specifically impacts on ‘community’, wherein ‘evaluation’ denotes the process of making a value-based assessment of the “*merit, worth, or significance of [an] entity*” (Scriven 2013, p170). Instead, I sought to identify, describe and interpret the different ways in which ‘community’ was enacted *through* the initiative. It is perhaps also helpful to note that my overall aim was not to produce a definitive set of classifications of ‘community’ that could be operationalised within the design of the evaluation of a ‘community’ initiative, for example to define the population of people in each area against which outcomes might be measured. Rather, I anticipated providing insights into the – presumably – multiple and nuanced ways in which enactments of ‘community’ might be produced contingent to the specific interactions of the initiative unfolding in context. Thus, I envisioned my research might contribute to understanding the different ways in which an evaluation might need to plan for and attend to these complexities in order to interpret more fully the pathways through which changes to health might occur as a result of an initiative, and for whom.

This overarching aim was underpinned by three key research questions (one primary and two secondary) which guided the planning and execution of my research methods and analysis:

*Primary research question:*

- i) How is ‘community’ enacted within and around the *BL* initiative in local contexts, and what actors and sets of relations are engaged in these enactments?

*Secondary research questions:*

- ii) What conceptualisations and practices, arising through the delivery of the Big Local, contribute to these enactments?
- iii) What can understanding how ‘community’ is enacted contribute to approaches for evaluating ‘community’ initiatives and their impact on the determinants of health and inequalities?

In subsequent chapters, I will explore the conceptual, epistemological and methodological decisions I made in light of these research aims, and in an attempt to address the research questions outlined above.

## Positioning

It is helpful to outline in more detail the broader context in which I conducted the research described in this thesis, specifically the *Communities in Control (CiC)* study, a programme of work designed to evaluate the impact of the *BL*, as a 'community'-led, area-based empowerment initiative, on the determinants of health inequalities.

### Overview of the evaluation study:

The *CiC* study, alongside which my research was situated, represents the main strand of research into health inequalities under the NIHR-funded *School for Public Health Research*, and the study has involved the contributions and participation of six academic institutions around England. The *CiC* study follows the design of a 'natural policy experiment' (Medical Research Council 2011), such that it is framed as an evaluation independent of the *BL* initiative, and seeks to generate knowledge of the effects of the specific empowerment mechanisms of the *BL* on determinants of health inequalities (NIHR School for Public Health Research n.d.). By looking at the localised roll-out and impacts of the *BL* in multiple sites, the *CiC* study aims to generate transferable and more widely-applicable knowledge of how 'community' engagement and empowerment mechanisms might contribute to improved health and reduced inequalities. The study has been designed in two phases; the first, which commenced in January 2014, to explore how the *BL* was happening 'on the ground' across multiple sites and to identify potential mechanisms and markers of 'effect' that could be used to inform the design of the second phase. This second phase, which commenced in October 2015, aims to measure the impacts of the initiative on determinants of health. I will describe in more detail below how and where my research was positioned in relation to the programme of work of the *CiC* study.

### Theorising 'collective control':

The theoretical framing of the *CiC* study rests on the premise of 'collective control', and the assumption that through the 'community's' control over resources and the decision-making process for improving their local area, the *BL* initiative may improve determinants of health and inequality (Becker 1999, Whitehead, Orton et al. 2014, Popay, Whitehead et al. 2015, Whitehead, Pennington et al. 2016). This framing draws strongly on established theories of individual control and the role it plays in shaping health outcomes and, specifically, measurable health inequalities, typically interpreted via psycho-social and ecological perspectives (Siegrist and Marmot 2004). An influential contribution to this body of theory can be seen in the Whitehall II study, with its particular focus on individual's sense of control in the workplace, as well as at home (see for example, Marmot,

Stansfeld et al. 1991, Chandola, Kuper et al. 2004). Other bodies of literature are also reflected in the theoretical framing of the *CiC* study, particularly the established literature on individual and community empowerment (see for example, Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988, Wallerstein 1993, Woodall, Raine et al. 2010). How collective control can be mapped on to the ‘community’ is therefore at the heart of the approach to understanding the *BL*, and how it can be assessed or measured, and its impacts interpreted, are key questions for the first phase of the *CiC* study, to inform the second phase. This also points to the potential contributions of my research for approaches for evaluating similar kinds of ‘community’ initiative involving complex mechanisms of change theorised to occur at the collective – or ‘community’ – level.

### **Aligning my research with the evaluation study:**

I developed my research questions alongside (but independently from) the development of phase one of the *CiC* study, which explored experiences of delivering the *BL* at the local level (a sample of 15 individual *BL* areas) and the national level (the experiences of *Local Trust* and its delivery partner organisations). While my research questions and conceptual framing (to be discussed in the next chapter) were different to those of the evaluation study, it made sense for me to engage in regular dialogue with colleagues from the study as we developed out respective research plans. This engagement became closer at the point of selecting *BL* areas in which to conduct my fieldwork, and it was agreed that I should align my fieldwork closely with that of the first phase of the *CiC* study, and collect data in two of the fifteen *BL* areas that had been sampled for this phase of the *CiC* study. More detail on the sampling process and its implications will be presented in the Methodology and Methods chapter. From March 2014, I worked with colleagues from the *CiC* study in the early phases of the local fieldwork in two areas to establish contact and negotiate consent with residents to participate in our respective research activities, which were presented as a coherent ‘package’ of research involving several researchers (including me), that would take place for up to twelve months. Again, more information on the consent process will be given in the Methodology and Methods chapter.

Over the course of my fieldwork, between March 2014 and April 2015, the alignment of my research with the *CiC* study meant that there was frequent interaction between me and colleagues working on the evaluation as our respective fieldwork progressed, and there was periodic overlap and collaboration on specific research activities. The fieldwork for phase one of *CiC* used an exploratory approach to gather data on implementation of the *BL* ‘on the ground’ in the local *BL* areas, and comprised predominantly qualitative research methods to explore experiences of delivering the *BL* among residents and other stakeholders in the local areas. Due to the similarity between some of

the research methods chosen for my fieldwork and those used in the *CiC* fieldwork, and the overlap in terms of the kinds of people (and places, events, organisations) we were interested in for understanding enactments of 'community' (my research), and experiences of the *BL* (the *CiC* study), at times colleagues and I collaborated directly with our data collection. This included me sharing transcripts of interviews with the *CiC* study, and us conducting group research activities together. Again, more detail will be given in subsequent chapters.

As such, this meant that for much of the duration of my fieldwork, I felt fairly closely affiliated with the aims and evaluation agenda of the *CiC* study, and while my distinct research questions and conceptual framing meant that my methodology differed in many ways to the research practices of my colleagues, there were still moments when my alignment with *CiC* seemed to influence my fieldwork. This, I later reflected, carried some implications for how I interpreted the kinds of relations I observed unfolding around the *BL* and the kinds of conceptualisations and practices contributing to enactments of 'community'. The methodological and empirical tensions posed by the positioning of my research will be explored in depth in the results chapter focusing on experiences of 'missing out'.

## 4. Conceptual and Philosophical Framing

### Overview

The preceding reviews of (some) of the multiple and wide fields of literature pertaining to exploring and understanding 'community' highlight clearly the multifaceted, contested and politically-contingent natures of the ways in which 'community' can be both theorised and operationalised in policies and initiatives. As such, this poses something of a conundrum for identifying an appropriate conceptual or theoretical position from which to frame the research questions and trajectory of this thesis, seeking to explore 'community' in relation to a 'community'-led empowerment initiative. To pick any one theory or conceptual framing of 'community' from the range of subtly different offerings described in the previous chapters (and not forgetting the many more that could not be included in the confines of this thesis), seems rather arbitrary and counter-intuitive, given that the only clear conclusion to be drawn from these literatures is that 'community' is a highly contested term. To select a framing of 'community' as a symbolic entity, or a bounded socio-geographic space, for example, would appear to denote assumptions of 'community' as a fixed and stable entity (albeit, arguably, a socially-constructed one) that exists prior to an initiative or intervention, such as the *Big Local (BL)* initiative at the focus of this thesis. I suggest that to apply such a framing would put constraints on the kinds of 'community' that could be explored through this thesis.

Hence, it appears more useful not to choose any one particular established theory of *what* 'community' is, as a conceptual starting point through which to frame this research, but instead to propose a framing that enables examination of *how* 'community' is, and *how* it becomes in relation to the *BL* initiative. As such, I suggest that 'community', as the focus of this research, is less an object to be discovered than a process to be followed, as it comes into being and is (variably) 'enacted' through and around the delivery of the initiative in question. In this chapter I will present some of the key epistemological, ontological and theoretical debates that underpin the position I propose in relation to examining enactments of 'community'. I will describe an application of actor-network theory as the conceptual framing for my approach to exploring how 'community' is variably produced through the relations of the initiative-in-process.

## An Ontological Perspective

The philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of taking this conceptual stance towards 'community' reflect broad currents within the social sciences of post-humanist and post-structuralist approaches to attending to the world. These approaches varyingly focus on materiality and agency beyond (or in addition to) the human (Law 1992, Latour 1993, Barad 2003, Farías 2010, Wagenaar and Wilkinson 2013), and on realities as performed and in process, rather than fixed (Butler 1990, Mol 1999, Barad 2003, Barad 2007, Woolgar and Lezaun 2013). These perspectives correspond also with what has been described as the 'ontological turn' within social sciences; a shift away from a central epistemological tenet of 'representation' as the principal form of knowing the world (Barad 2007). A focus on ontology(ies) instead presents the world as pluralistic, in process, and unfolding; to be followed and engaged with processually, rather than as a fixed entity which is to be represented through knowledge production methods, and thus necessarily distinct from the 'knower' (Mol and Law 1994, Mol 1999, Mol 2002, Woolgar and Lezaun 2013). Barad (2003) argues that the interpretive paradigm, embedded across much of the social sciences, rests upon a flawed assumption of an ontological 'gap' between the reality to be known or interpreted, and the representations constructed about or of them. Through this representation process, the words and language of interpretation are cast as distinct from the (assumed) pre-existing 'things' they describe (Barad 2003). Instead, a focus on ontology – attending "*more directly to the composition of the world*" (Woolgar and Lezaun 2013, p322) as it is brought into being and realised through activity – offers a way to capture multiplicity, plurality and alterity of ways of being in the world (Mol 1999). For Barad, therefore, the representation through words and language cannot be disentangled from the ontological 'reality' of the object or phenomenon (2003, 2007). Furthermore, an ontological perspective, through attending to the processes through which realities are enacted, offers greater scope to consider the not-quite-realised or in-progress dimensions of practising reality(ies) (Escobar 2007, Woolgar and Lezaun 2013).

I propose that positioning myself and my research within these philosophical standpoints is potentially highly productive for achieving the aims of this study, to explore enactments of 'community' in relation to the *BL*. It offers an opportunity to move away from the wealth of literature seeking to theorise (and in some respects generalise) what 'community' *is*, denoting an implicit representational perspective, and assumption of it as a fixed entity pre-existing the interpretational and representational process. Instead, attending to 'community' through ontology offers the opportunity to examine its enactment and unfolding through the practices of the delivery of the *BL* initiative, and creating space for a plurality and diversity of performances-in-process of

'community' in this way. In an attempt to refine further my conceptual framing and the way I will approach examining enactments of 'community', I draw more specifically on principles from the varied body of work that has become known as 'actor-network theory' (ANT), and which seeks not to explain or interpret (social) phenomena, but instead to examine how they are constituted and performed. As such, ANT reflects an ontological positioning that disputes previous assumptions of a division between reality (or materiality) and representation (or meaning) (Latour 1999, Fenwick and Edwards 2011), arguing instead for a research perspective that looks at how realities are (newly) performed and crafted (Mol 1999).

## **Overview of Actor-Network Theory**

The origins of ANT in social science research can largely be traced to fields of social studies of science and technology. It emerged as a critical approach for tracing how different entities such as scientific knowledge or technological innovations are enacted, and how the relations constituting them become so familiar that we assume them to be fixed and pre-existing (Callon 1986, Latour 1987, Latour 1988, Callon 1990, Law 1992, Law 2002, Callon and Law 2004, Law 2007). I am cautious to describe ANT as the theoretical framing for this thesis, given that the classification of ANT as a 'theory' has been debated by many and dismissed by some since its origins in the 1980s (Callon 1999, Latour 1999, Law 1999, Law 2007, Rimpiläinen 2009, Farías 2010, Fenwick and Edwards 2010). In acknowledgement of the varying perspectives and pathways that have been taken under the banner of ANT over the past few decades, Law suggests that it should be seen as a 'diaspora', or a "*disparate family*" of "*material-semiotic tools, sensibilities and methods of analysis*" (2007, p2).

This flexibility of definition and avoidance of strict classification as theory reflect key assumptions embedded within the approach, namely a rejection of entities (such as 'theories') as being fixed, stable or singular (Fenwick and Edwards 2010), and an avoidance of cementing boundaries and standardising approach or application (Neyland 2006). Yet, there are of course a number of common and distinguishing elements or principles of the ANT 'diaspora', which reflect its formation in post-humanist, post-structuralist spheres, and which are relevant to my approach and framing of 'community' in this thesis. These include an equal focus on human and non-human 'actors' (such as materials or 'things'); a focus on 'translation' or the mutually constituting, transformative relations between entities; and consequently, the assumption that reality is performed rather than pre-existing (Law 2007, Farías 2010, Fenwick and Edwards 2010, Fenwick and Edwards 2011). These principles will be discussed in more detail below.

In the earliest proposals for ANT, arising particularly in social studies of science and technology (see for example Latour and Woolgar 1979, Latour 1987), a distinct emphasis was made on adopting a perspective of 'symmetry' between human and non-human (typically technological, material) entities, and thus rejecting the human-centred approaches that had predominated in the social sciences up to that point. This reorientation of the analytical position towards a generalised symmetry between the human and non-human was proposed as a mode of dissolving the assumed, a priori distinction between the 'social' and the 'natural', whereby the 'social' could be used, almost uncritically, as an explanatory variable for relations and phenomena (Strathern 1996, Latour 2005). Within the ANT perspective lies the proposition that not only humans have 'agency', but that all other types of entity (material, spatial, conceptual) are capable of creating effects, or 'translations' in ANT terminology (Callon 1986), through their interactions and relations with other entities (Hetherington and Law 2000, McLean and Hassard 2004, Fenwick and Edwards 2010). Agency, therefore, is taken as relational, and as *"an effect distributed through an heterogeneous arrangement of materials"* (Hetherington and Law 2000, p127), rather than a property inherent to any particular kind of entity, human or otherwise.

Stemming from this recognition of the similar status of human and non-human entities is the principle of how these entities relate to each other. Farías describes this as a 'radical relationality', through which all entities mutually constitute each other (2012), and Law highlights the roots of this premise in semiotics, such that entities take their form and attributes as a result of their relationships with other entities; thus there are no inherent qualities (Law 1992, Law 1999). What is of interest from an ANT perspective is how these entities assemble themselves into 'networks' of relations and associations, and Latour argues that it is only possible to trace these linkages or associations between entities when they become modified, or 'translated' (2005). In a classic ANT account, Callon presents the network of relations between fishermen, scallops and researchers (and their various materials) in a programme of scallop cultivation, and describes the mode of relating, or 'translation', between these different entities as a process rather than an outcome or effect. An example from this text is the chain of relations comprising 'successful' cultivation of scallops that includes negotiations between researchers delivering the cultivation programme, currents, tides, parasites, larvae, fishermen keen to harvest scallops, and materials of recording and measuring anchorage of scallop larvae and defining 'successful' cultivation. This series of negotiated relations is, for Callon, *"the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form"* (1986, p205).

As an amalgamation of the above two principles, a third key premise of ANT is the assumption that entities such as knowledges, policies, technologies (and potentially, 'community') are enacted into, and as, realities. Law states that the performance of entities is the 'starting point' for social inquiry through ANT (1992), and that entities are "*performed in, by and through*" the relations in which they are located (1999, p4). Thus, everything is uncertain, reversible and precarious, lacking lasting fixedness as assumed through a more structuralist epistemology. As such, it is the job of the ANT researcher to examine how 'things' are performed into relations, and how they (appear to) stay in place (Law, 1999). This further emphasises the assumption that 'things' (such as knowledges or technologies) are continually in process via the networks of relations constituting them, and as such they are 'unfinished' (Hetherington and Law 2000) and can only be temporarily situated or stable (Murdoch 1998). For Latour and other advocates of ANT, its strength lies particularly in its ability to 'unpack' the multiple complex, shifting relations that are so assembled as to enact something such as a technological device as an entity that *appears* unitary, stable and pre-existing.

## **Applications of ANT**

The earliest applications of ANT can be characterised by an agenda of rendering 'visible' the networks of relations that position and enact 'things' such as technologies or knowledges. It is categorised by an aim and approach seeking to unpack the 'black box' and highlight the instability, fragility and continual remaking of relations that constitute those things we take for granted (Latour 1987, Fenwick and Edwards 2010, Smith 2015). Classic examples of this from the repertoire of ANT literature include Latour's examination of the production of scientific knowledge in relation to Pasteur's work on microbes and disease, identifying the multiple, heterogeneous 'actants' and networks involved in rendering 'visible' microbes and establishing their relationship to disease as scientific 'fact' (Latour 1988). Mol has adopted an ANT perspective to explore the plurality of enactments of disease, for example anaemia (Mol and Law 1994) and atherosclerosis (Mol 2002), identifying the spaces, materials and human actors, and the flows and emerging relations between them, that produce multiple realities of diseases that are usually taken to be fixed, situated and single.

The common application of ANT to research on the use of technologies and technological processes perhaps reflects Latour's assertion that ANT is particularly appropriate for understanding situations of innovation, where new associations between a range of elements are being made at 'rapid speed' (Latour 2005). It may also reflect the conscious turn away from humanist perspectives and towards

an active embracing of the agency of material and non-human 'objects', emphasising a non-dualistic relationship between 'society' and 'technology' (Prout 1996, Woolgar and Lezaun 2013). In fields of health and medicine, ANT has been applied to work on medical devices, such as the inhaler, which Prout describes as contributing to ongoing process of interaction through which people and technologies mutually constitute each other (1996), rejecting a simplistic assumption that technology 'impacts upon' society. The 'technologisation' of health care organisation and management has also been examined through ANT, for example in recent research on the introduction of electronic medical records (see for example Vikkelsø 2007, Cresswell, Worth et al. 2011). Vikkelsø (2007) describes the multiple ways in which electronic patient records are enacted, the different sites in which this happens and the tensions, clashes and negotiations that arise as they interact, disrupting the assumption of a technological system as a stabilising, unifying and generalising entity.

More recently, however, there have been moves away from this core hub of applications of ANT for the central concerns of the field of Science and Technology Studies (and related disciplines), and which seem to offer useful conceptual tools for considering how 'community' might be enacted. Distinct from classic ANT examinations of material objects, there are increasing examples of the use of ANT approaches to examine more indeterminate 'assemblages' such as policies and spaces, a perspective that perhaps holds more relevance for considering how 'community' is enacted through an initiative such as the *BL*. Fenwick and colleagues have advocated in recent years for a turn to ANT within education studies, to examine how education policies and structures are enacted in reality (Fenwick 2010, Fenwick and Edwards 2010, Fenwick 2011, Fenwick and Edwards 2011, Fenwick and Edwards 2012, Fenwick and Landri 2012). They use ANT to consider how policies as entities "*come to be assembled, to associate and exercise force, and to persist or decline*" in the socio-material contexts of the schools in which they are delivered (Fenwick and Edwards 2011, p1).

Fenwick describes studying the 'micro-interactions' through which elements are performed into being. She states that it is the processes of how entities (such as policy documents, educational spaces, teaching materials, people) persuade, coerce, resist and negotiate with each other, and how they come together in networks that 'perform into existence' a phenomenon such as an educational standards policy (2010, 2011). Fenwick further argues that the policy or intervention, and the environment in which it is to be delivered, should not be seen as distinct, pre-existing entities, such that the school or other environment is "*separate from the thing that is understood to carry within it the force for change*" (Fenwick 2011, p116). Instead, drawing on Nespor (2002), she states that an ANT approach enables a shift away from categorising some elements as actors with agency and

others as (passive) 'contexts' – for example 'community' – and towards examination of the change process; the ongoing 'mundane' exchanges between socio-material entities that enact translations and transformations within and between networks (Fenwick 2010, Fenwick 2011, Fenwick and Landri 2012).

Additionally, and relevant to considering the spatial dimensions of 'community' as something enacted through the *BL* initiative, there has also been increasing focus on the role that 'space' plays, as an actor and type of relation, in the actor-network (Mol and Law 1994, Murdoch 1998). A recent example is a collection edited by Farías and Bender that uses ANT to examine the city or urban environment as an 'assemblage' in production, counter to more traditional, structural representations of the city (Farías and Bender 2010). Farías argues for a 'decentring' of the city as the focus of urban studies, taking it not as a fixed or bounded object, but as a:

*"multiplicity of processes of becoming, affixing sociotechnical networks, hybrid collectives and alternative topologies"* (Farías 2010, p2).

Taking the city and urban networks as pluralistic entities continually being 'assembled' opens up opportunities to examine some of the more 'mundane' practices that occur, and in turn constitute the city, or other (urban) spaces as an assemblage. An example of this is Latham and McCormack's (2010) examination of the range of social, material, spatial and organisational practices involved in the 'work' of delivering an internationally-attended marathon through the city's streets. They describe 'globalised' networks of the practices of holding competitive marathons in cities, and which are performed through localised interactions between different entities assembled in and as the city (2010). This highlights how, from an ANT perspective, the spatial dimension of something such as 'community' should not be assumed as stable or pre-existing, but instead something performed through interactions between multiple types of actor or entity.

These recent engagements with ANT highlight an extension of its applicability, as a conceptual framework, beyond the topics of scientific knowledge production and uses of technology with which ANT is most commonly associated. As such, there appears to be an opportunity to apply an ANT perspective to the concept of 'community', to examine it as a performative process (or series of processes), an assemblage of relationships, interactions and negotiations unfolding, shifting and happening as an initiative, such as the *BL*, unfolds.

## **Framing 'Community' in Relation to ANT**

Following the shift away from humanist and representation-based epistemologies that is characterised in ANT, for the purposes of this thesis I frame the focus of my research not in terms of defining what 'community' is or how it is affected or changed by the initiative, but how it is produced through the multiple, heterogeneous entities and relations constituting the delivery of the *BL* initiative in each area. As such, I move away from propositions that 'community' can be classified as a purely social, spatial or even socio-spatial entity, as assumed for example in theories of the symbolic construction of 'community' (Cohen 1985a). Rather, it is a concept that becomes enacted in multiple ways as and through different kinds of relations between different kinds of actors; human and non-human, social, material, discursive, spatial and conceptual.

Specifically, I propose to follow Mol (1999, 2002), Fenwick (2010, Fenwick and Edwards 2010, 2011), and Vikkelsø (2007), among others, in what has been deemed an 'after-ANT' perspective by framing 'community' as something that can be multiply enacted and have multiple realities that 'hang together' (Mol 2002); thus, as an assemblage that is 'more than one and less than many' (Mol 2002, Rimpiläinen 2009). This 'after-ANT' perspective places more emphasis on exploring the multiplicity of a phenomenon (here, 'community') rather than following or tracing a particular actor in a more classic Latourian ANT model (Latour 2005). In doing so, I will seek to look at the ways in which "*coexisting and partly connected versions of reality are enacted*" (Vikkelsø 2007, p301), attending also to how the multiplicity of networks relating to, and affecting, the constitution and performance of, 'community' through the *BL* initiative intersect and produce tensions and connections. As such I start from the assumption that there are multiple possible enactments of 'community' that will arise through and around the initiative, and my research will seek to explore how, where and involving which entities and networks of relations these different realities of 'community' are performed. This approach will enable me to move away from the limitations of taking 'community' to be a single, definable thing or structure (albeit a socially-constructed one) that pre-exists the work, actions and interactions of any initiative, but rather, as something that emerges in multiple and varying forms through the delivery of the initiative in each area.

To illustrate this further, I will outline a series of assumptions that underpin how I propose to frame 'community' from an ANT perspective. First, to define my interpretation of what the 'network' is (or will be) in relation to enactments of 'community', I draw particularly on Nespor (2002), and Fenwick's engagement with Nespor's work (2011) to define networks in relation to scenarios of educational reform:

*“Nespor treats networks as assemblages of heterogeneous entities such as written curricula, videos, human actions and buildings that can move educational practices across space and time (2002 p. 369). Entities themselves are neither solid objects and subjects nor clearly separated from their context. They are each an effect produced through a set of relations that is constantly in motion. The network that appears through the linkages among these entities is a trace, reasonably stable, of a series of translations that have changed and continue to change each entity participating within the network. In fact, network effects work on and are exercised by entities that may not be enrolled into a particular network.”* (Fenwick, 2011, p118).

For this thesis then, ‘community’ is interpreted as both constituting and constituted through various overlapping networks of relations between the multiple entities that are invoked through the enactment of the *BL* initiative in each local area. I theorise that it is these networks of linkages that will arise through the ongoing delivering of the initiative in each area, and which produce different forms of ‘community’ in different spaces and scenarios (within each area). This is similar to Mol’s identification of the different realities of atherosclerosis performed through networks in different sites, including the consulting room, the pathology laboratory and the domestic home (Mol 2002).

It is perhaps valuable to point out here that I am not equating ‘community’ with ‘network’ as taken from a classic social network analysis perspective, which would conceptualise ‘community’ as a defined pattern of (usually) social connections and linkages between people (Scott 1988). This perspective reflects a more structuralist approach and would rest on the assumption that linkages between people, and thus the structure of the ‘community’-as-network would pre-exist any kind of intervention, rather than only come into being through its delivery. Furthermore, it is worth distinguishing my perspective from systems and complexity theory approaches, in which the ‘community’ might be theorised as a ‘complex adaptive system’ (Durie, Wyatt et al. 2004, Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009). From these perspectives, the ‘community’ could be taken to be a series of interconnected networks of structures and relations which act as the ‘receptive context’ (Durie, Wyatt, & Stuetely, 2004) into which an intervention or process of change happens, and with which it interacts in often unpredictable, non-linear ways (Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009). For this thesis, I follow Law (1992) in asserting that my starting point is interaction and not ‘the system’, and that ‘community’ is not the context into which the initiative is delivered, but is produced through the effects of the interactions between diverse entities, in and around the activities of the initiative. Furthermore, through my ANT perspective, the ‘community’ is not a totality of a (single) system or network, within which entities and structures have a defined place, but is produced through

multiple, *partial* networks, indicating an ongoing instability, contestation and precariousness (Koyama 2012) to these enactments of 'community'.

Second, it is helpful to identify the kinds of 'heterogeneous entities' that I envisage will likely constitute the networks as assemblages, and among which translations, or displacements, inventions, mediations (Nespor 2012), will occur which continuously and varyingly perform the networks of 'community'. Reflecting again on the post-humanist origins of ANT and the principle of 'symmetry' between human and non-human entities, the entities I propose will likely be engaged in the performance and production of 'community' will include not only people, but material objects. In the case of the initiative, these will likely include the residents, employees, workers, and other 'stakeholders' engaged (more and less directly) in the delivery of the initiative, plus the materials involved in the day-to-day 'work' of the initiative such as tools of administration and organisation (themselves 'assemblages' or networks of multiple entities). The money available to each area as part of the initiative will likely have a role as both a physical and conceptual entity.

Again, drawing on more recent configurations of ANT which have moved beyond the traditional focus critiqued for 'privileging' the material object in networks (McLean and Hassard 2004) – perhaps in an active dismissal of earlier human-centred epistemologies – I also include spatial, conceptual and discursive entities as potential actors in the networks performing 'community' (Murdoch 1998, Dugdale 1999, Farías 2010, Fenwick 2011). I anticipate these will include the various spatial configurations of 'doing' the *BL* initiative, such as physical meeting and event spaces, and discursive and conceptual entities that constitute and are constituted through the initiative, for example memories of place (Bender 2010), conversations, and decision-making.

Additionally, through reflecting on a common critique of ANT (and responses to them), I will describe how I consider this conceptual framing to complement and enable the broader purpose of this thesis, to contribute to approaches to evaluating and interpreting the impact of 'community'-based initiatives on health inequalities. Following Fenwick, in response to critiques of ANT 'homogenising' the relations within a network and assuming a totality of connections (Hetherington and Law 2000), I recognise the importance of looking at not only what is connected and engaged in networks enacting 'community', but the entities and associations that become excluded (Fenwick 2011). With enactments of 'community' it will be important to consider the actions at the 'margins' of these networks, plus the partial and failed connections between different entities that arise through the enactment of the initiative. Fenwick urges for attention to the 'gaps' and 'fluid spaces' (2011) between and within networks, and adopting this perspective within my research will offer an

opportunity to consider how the initiative might produce differential outcomes and effects among and through different networks of entities (people, spaces, things, concepts). This has potential relevance for considering how a 'community' initiative might influence (positively or negatively) existing inequalities, and unequal relations between people and access to resources for health.

This, then identifies the parameters and scope of this conceptual framework for the purposes of this thesis: to identify the range of enactments of 'community', the entities and networks constituting these, and the struggles, contestations and disruptions characterising the associations among them, as 'community' is multiply enacted through the initiative.

## **Linking to the Research Aim and Questions**

Following the presentation of the conceptual framing for 'community', underpinned by an emphasis on a post-humanist, ontological perspective, here I will briefly link this back to the specific aim and questions for this research, outlined in the previous chapter. The primary research question of exploring how 'community' is enacted, corresponds very closely with the terminology and assumptions of the ontological position and engagement with ANT described above. This framing presents 'community' as something multiply and variously performed through the networks of relations between different actors or entities in the delivery of the *BL* initiative. The secondary research question, focused on identifying different conceptualisations and practices that contribute to these enactments, perhaps requires a little more explanation, however. This question is presented to help break down or suggest some of the kinds of things (or assemblages) that might be 'looked for' through the research process, in terms of identifying enactments of 'community'. As such I feel this question provides something of a bridge between the arguably fairly abstract notion of an 'enactment' and the practical steps that must be taken through the research methodology to 'gather data' in order to answer the overall aim of how 'community' is enacted through the *BL* initiative. The terms 'conceptualisations' and 'practices' hold more familiar territory in terms of the kinds of social science methods one might employ to explore and identify them, and as such, help frame how enactments will be identified through the research process.

However, the possible philosophical connotations of these terms must be acknowledged, particularly in terms of how they might fit with the ontological perspective described above, and the ANT approach to assuming a symmetry between human and non-human entities and their agency. Here, I have found it helpful to draw on the work of Karan Barad, and her attempts to extend the

poststructuralist, posthumanist debates in terms of considering how ‘meaning’ and ‘matter’ might be considered not as separate elements, but ‘intra-acting’ (Barad 2003, 2007). This work is influential for my framing ‘conceptualisations’ and ‘practices’ as components of ‘enactments’. While ‘practices’ seem to resonate closely with enactments, suggesting (bodily) interactions between people and things or spaces, as part of, and in turn, producing networks of relations, attention to ‘conceptualisations’ might seem to imply a more human-centred, interpretive epistemology. Certainly, exploring cognitive and/or discursive conceptualisations of an experience or phenomenon is typically the focus of research conducted within an interpretivist epistemology, such that the conceptualisations are taken as *representations* of lived experience rather than ontological realities or productions in themselves. However, for this research, I propose to include conceptualisations as actors or entities that can play a role in enacting ‘community’ through, and as part of networks of relations with other entities, and which are ‘entangled’ with more materially-oriented practices (Barad 2007) to produce enactments of ‘community’.

Barad’s work proposes that rather than seeing ‘intentions’, or other cognitive entities such as a conceptualisation, as pre-existing states of mind and confined only to the individual person, the binary distinction between inside and outside should be confronted. She argues that we should attend more to how ‘knowing’ (or conceptualising or perceiving) arises through direct, material engagement with the world (2003, 2007). For Barad, *“our knowledge-making practices are social-material enactments that contribute to, and are a part of, the phenomena we describe”* (2007, p26), and rather than seeing discourse and cognition as ‘representations’, we should see them as performative realities, emerging through and as practices. I base my interpretation of ‘conceptualisations’ and ‘practices’ around this proposition; that conceiving of, and communicating conceptualisations of ‘community’, is a performative, productive process that is necessarily coupled with material practices. Therefore, to include conceptualisations and practices as components or forms of enacting ‘community’, when framed in this way, is consistent with the focus of this thesis on exploring ‘community’ as something produced or performed through the interactions between different kinds of actors – human, spatial and material. The next chapter will describe in detail the methodological approach taken to address the research aims, reflecting the conceptual and philosophical assumptions outlined in this chapter, and will present the selection of methods designed to identify and explore enactments of ‘community’, and the range of conceptualisations and practices that comprise them.

## 5. Methodology and Methods

### Introduction

Following the exploration of literature to examine the ways in which ‘community’, as a contested concept, has been employed in public health approaches to intervening on health inequalities, I will describe here the methodological approach and methods I used to address the research questions and aims outlined previously. In this chapter I aim to build on the presentation of my conceptual and philosophical framings, which positioned the ‘community’ as something enacted through the unfolding interactions of the *Big Local* initiative, and the multiple networks of actors and relations comprising those interactions. I will outline the selection of a case study design as an approach to exploring enactments of ‘community’ within two case areas participating in the *BL*. I will then describe the choice of an ethnographic approach, and the ethnographic fieldwork I undertook over a period of 13 months across two case sites, which involved the use of multiple qualitative methods to enable me to ‘follow’ the emerging enactments of ‘community’. I will explain the approach taken to analyse the data gathered through ethnographic fieldwork, highlighting the way in which the themes presented in the subsequent results chapters came to be identified and developed through the analysis. Finally, I will reflect on the positioning of my research alongside the *Communities in Control* evaluation study, which influenced particular aspects of my methodological decisions and the putting into practice of the methods selected.

### Methodological Approaches

#### A case study approach:

In my endeavour to explore enactments of ‘community’ around and through the delivery of the *BL* initiative, to contribute conceptually to approaches for evaluating ‘community’ initiatives and their impact on health inequalities, I sought to situate my research ‘gaze’ at the local level. I chose to focus on the contextually-specific, locally practised enactments of ‘community’ within individual areas participating in the initiative. Yet, as I also hoped for my research to contribute conceptually to broader approaches to evaluating similar kinds of initiatives engaging or led by the ‘community’, this posed a possible tension between the localising ‘gaze’ of the first aim, and the more generalising (conceptually speaking, at least) focus of the second.

The juxtapositions of local and specific with general and transferable, and of the tensions inherent in these, have been discussed particularly in relation to case study approaches to evaluation, with questions debated on how broader inferences and understanding can be made from single, or a few cases (Flyvbjerg 2006, Simons 2015). Stake argued for a broader interpretation of ‘generalisation’ and how it can be achieved, in his work refuting the criticisms of case study approaches for their lack of capacity to be generalisable (Stake 1978). He, and others have proposed the value of the knowledge of the ‘particular’ drawn from cases in enabling more informal or ‘naturalistic’ approaches to assessing the generalisability or transferability of the experience from these cases to other settings (Stake 1978, Flyvbjerg 2006). These interpretations of the process and function of generalising reflect the important roles played by tacit or personal knowledge and experience (see for example Polanyi 1958 [1962]) in the process the ‘user’ – or, the policy or programme decision maker – undertakes to consider the value of the evidence from the case(s) for informing their own situation. Furthermore, the contextual detail offered in case studies has been highlighted by decision makers as valuable for assessing comparability of settings, and therefore transferability of interventions or policies, sometimes over perceptions of the rigour of the methods employed to generate the evidence of effect (McGill, Egan et al. 2015).

The case study approach, therefore, offered a potential bridge between the locally constructed knowledge I sought to generate from my attentions to the enactments of ‘community’ around delivery of the *BL*, and the agenda for generating knowledge that might have broader conceptual value and application within public health evaluation of similar kinds of ‘community’ initiative. Simons proposes the value of interpretivist and constructivist approaches to evaluation using a single case study design, arguing for their potential to produce generalisations that *“not only retain a connection with the context in which they first arose, [but] also invoke the agency of the person generalizing from them”* (Simons 2015, p173). She follows Flyvbjerg (2006) and Stake (1978) in asserting that generalising from specific findings is not a process of abstraction, but involves *“tacit and situated understanding”*, and that generalisations *“depend for their meaning on maintaining a connectedness with the particulars of the concrete case in context”* (Simons 2015, p178). Thus, it appears that attention to the particular enactments of ‘community’ in an in-depth, localised and contextualised way via a case study approach has potential to meet the more generalist aim of contributing to public health evaluation, and to highlight the value of locally-constructed knowledge in the process of understanding how an initiative such as the *BL* brings about change.

Reflecting these aims and tensions I structured my research via a case study design with two cases. My approach reflected key principles of case study design: using a multi-faceted approach to

understand a phenomenon in a holistic way, and within its 'natural' or 'real-life' context (Crowe, Cresswell et al. 2011), and also its application particularly to topics in which the boundaries between the phenomenon of interest and its context – for example 'community' – are not easily definable (Yin 2003). Using categories defined by Stake (1995), my research, involving two cases, reflected both an 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' type of case study. 'Intrinsic' denotes the aim of learning about enactments of 'community' in unique contexts, and 'instrumental', the aim of drawing on two cases to gain a broader appreciation of how understanding enactments of 'community' can contribute to evaluating complex interventions such as the *BL*. The potential for this case study design to link the situated knowledge constructed in localised contexts to a broader evaluation agenda is also reflected in recent applications of case study designs to theory-based evaluation, including realist evaluation approaches (Stame 2004). Ragin posits that case studies are valuable for understanding contexts with dynamic, shifting relations and processes of change (1999) and their appropriateness for exploring complexity within its contextual setting has also been acknowledged (Crowe, Cresswell et al. 2011, Woolcock 2013). Recognising the emphasis in realist evaluation on assessing the contextual circumstances influencing the mechanisms of change on an intervention (Pawson and Tilley 1997, Pawson 2006), the appropriateness of case study designs for evaluating complex interventions via a realist approach has been stated (Koenig 2009, Marchal, Dedzo et al. 2010). Hence, this methodological choice appeared to offer me both an opportunity to explore in depth how enactments of 'community' were produced around the *BL* (Simons 2015), while still maintaining a methodological and epistemological link with the values and agenda of public health evaluation work, such as the framing of the *CiC* study evaluation of the *BL*.

Of course, a key part of a case study design is the process of defining the 'case' or cases. The process of 'casing', or defining and identifying cases, has been described from a critical realist perspective as the act of creating a case-object for study, which can be assumed to be ontologically real (Harvey 2009). A more interpretivist perspective on casing might suggest that cases are constructed through the research lens, rather than 'identified' or 'selected'. Ragin proposes that defining a case and the process of casing delimits the phenomena of interest – in its real world setting – within a temporal and spatial context (Ragin 1992, Fiss 2009). Furthermore, Ragin and Becker suggest that a case is neither just a given social entity, to be defined as it is, nor is it just the product of the researcher's interpretations brought to the research problem or phenomenon of interest (Ragin and Becker 1992, Harvey 2009).

It is this perspective I drew on to make sense of the casing process for this research. I took as my cases two of the 150 geographically-defined areas that had been chosen to be included in the *BL*

initiative and to receive £1million to spend over 10 years. I will describe these areas in more detail later, but for the purposes of this research the two areas will be known as 'Craybourne' and 'Westin Hill' (both aliases, to be discussed later as part of reflections on anonymisation processes adopted within this thesis). The boundaries of Craybourne and Westin Hill, as areas participating in the *BL* initiative, had been agreed as part of the planning and development processes of the early stages of the set-up of the initiative. A number of stakeholders (representatives of the organisation delivering the initiative at the national level and representatives from each local area, such as local authority employees) negotiated the specific, geographical boundaries of the participating areas to receive the funding, based on various criteria such as perceptions of deprivation and numbers of residents. While this negotiation process was not necessarily very clearly remembered or understood by residents of each area (at least in the cases of Craybourne and Westin Hill), the geographical boundaries were clearly displayed, for example, on the maps of each *BL* area available to view on the Local Trust website.

As such, these areas as cases, defined through the *BL* initiative, pre-dated the research planning and process described here, and could be said to be 'real' and pre-existing social, spatial, even administrative (from a *BL* programme perspective) entities. However, the research process also played a role in defining these areas as cases, through the processes of sampling and negotiating access to *BL* areas, as part of the broader *CiC* study (to be described in more detail below). My assumption that these areas would be sites in which enactments of 'community' would occur and could be traced, through the research process, contributed to the construction of these areas as distinct cases, in terms of the potential value they offered for meeting the aims of research.

If the cases were taken to be the two areas geographically defined as part of the *BL* initiative, the content of each case – the people, spaces, things and processes of research interest – I took to be the range of actors (human and non-human, as described in the previous chapter) more and less connected (historically, conceptually as well as actively) to the delivery of the *BL*. These cases, I assumed, comprised the activities, processes and structures comprising the initiative, within the particular temporal context of the fieldwork I conducted. Although I took each case to be distinct, unique and defined geographically by the *BL* demarcation, I also recognised the cases were linked via the broader delivery of the *BL* at the national level, and thus offered potential to abstract observations about how 'community' is enacted through the comparison of these two, connected cases; thus a marrying of an intrinsic and instrumental case study approach (Stake 1995). This perspective also kept open the possibility to explore *beyond* the given case boundaries, and to approach Craybourne and Westin Hill (as participating areas in the *BL*) as contextually positioned in

wider networks of relations that might shape the way their borders were locally defined (Massey 2004), and how conceptualisations and practices of ‘community’ were enacted. As Dorr-Bremme argues, the boundaries of any programme and its delivery should be treated as ‘problematic’ in an evaluation (1985); thus, the boundaries of the cases in my study would likely fall under critical question as the network(s) of connections producing and produced by enactments of ‘community’ around the *BL* were investigated.

### **Selection of case sites:**

My original intention was to explore enactments of ‘community’ in two *BL* areas that were not included in the sample of areas selected for the first phase of fieldwork of the *CiC* study, which took place at the same time as my fieldwork. The rationale for this was to attempt to see how ‘community’ was understood and practiced in isolation from any potentially ‘contaminating’ influences of the evaluation fieldwork, such as the way the research plans would be discussed with residents of the areas, the questions asked in interviews, and general awareness raising of the mechanism of ‘collective control’ that might come from interaction with the *CiC* study and team. Secondly, I held concerns about the potential overlap between the activities of my research and that of the main fieldwork. Although the areas selected for inclusion in the *BL* had populations ranging from around 3000 to 12000 residents, it was likely, I anticipated, that I would be engaging and spending most of my time with a small sub-set of that population, particularly the people actively involved in the *BL* in the area, and the organisations and local structures and services intersecting and connecting with the activities and networks of the *BL*-in-action. It was likely that the *CiC* fieldwork would also seek to engage with many of the same people and organisations, and within a fairly confined space and time period. Therefore, it seemed that the potential for overlap between our research could pose a heightened burden on a small group of people, who might be called to participate in two, comparable sets of research activities. Similarly, I felt this scenario could potentially create some confusion among residents and workers in the areas over the relationship and distinction between the two studies – seemingly linked but also being done separately. As such, I requested, via the leads of the *CiC* study in their discussions about research plans with *Local Trust*, the organisation managing and delivering the *BL* at the national level, to have access to two additional sites, beyond those sampled for the main evaluation.

However, following these discussions it was agreed that I should not have two of my ‘own’ *BL* areas as case sites in which to conduct my fieldwork, but should work alongside the main study team in two of the areas sampled for their fieldwork. The rationale for this restriction reflected concerns on the part of *LT* about the total number of sites that this programme of research would be operating in

– in the first phase of fieldwork, this was 15 – due to other, unconnected evaluation activities and projects that *LT* was planning, which would need access to *BL* areas also.

The process of selecting the two *BL* areas that would be my case sites then became a largely pragmatic exercise. The sampling of areas for the first wave of fieldwork for the *CiC* study, as briefly described previously, reflected practical decisions about ease of access to areas by researchers from the respective institutions collaborating on the study, and more theoretical decisions about the need to get a variety of types of area. Within this (limited) sampling frame, my own selection of case sites followed a similar approach. I sought a certain level of perceived difference between the two areas in terms of the stage of the *BL* programme they had reached, and the socio-geographic features of the area, to facilitate the comparative, interpretive exercise between the two cases (the ‘instrumental’ casing approach). I married this with pragmatic interpretations of the ease of accessing the areas over a period of time, as per my ethnographic intentions. As a result, I identified one *BL* area in London – *Westin Hill* – and one *BL* area in the north of England – *Craybourne* – as my ‘cases’ for this research. More information and contextual description of these areas will follow in the next chapter.

### **An ethnographic approach:**

Within the structure of the case study, I chose to take an ethnographic approach to explore the contextualised enactments of ‘community’ in two *BL* areas. Ethnography, with its earliest roots in anthropology, has been described as a form of ‘idiographic inquiry’ (Ingold 2008), through which the documentation, description and representation through the ethnographic text of a particular set of social, cultural relations or structures, takes precedence over attempts towards general statements or theories. In its most traditional forms, anthropological applications of ethnography have been understood as the process of in-depth, long-term fieldwork to explore and interpret the ‘culture’ of (seemingly) bounded, often ‘exotic’ or distant ‘communities’ (Clifford 1986, Gupta and Ferguson 1997a), with the primary goal of “*document[ing] context, process and meaning*” (Messac, Ciccarone et al. 2013, p177). However, more recent debates have arisen in anthropology (and extending to other disciplines) over the claims that can be made through the ethnographic text in terms of its representation of a particular society or culture. There have been questions around what the textual dimensions of ethnography – the product of the ethnographic research methodology – convey about the authority of the ethnographic researcher in speaking for or about another group of people (Clifford 1983, Clifford 1986, Atkinson and Hammersley 1994, Hastrup 2004). These debates – dubbed the ‘crisis of representation’ (Rabinow 1986) – have been accompanied by critical reflections on what the ethnographic field site can or should look like, particularly in the context of

an increasingly globalised world. Rejecting many of the assumptions of an ethnographic approach from the traditions of anthropology, contemporary scholars have sought to expand the 'field' in which ethnographic research might be conducted, and to dissolve the assumed boundedness of social systems and structures (Marcus 1995, Gupta and Ferguson 1997b, Marcus 1998, Caputo 2000, Hannerz 2003) and the processes of 'othering' (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994, Gupta and Ferguson 1997a) that might accompany the identification of a particular territorialised group of people as worthy of ethnographic study.

Reflecting on these debates, there are several issues that hold relevance for the application of ethnography in this research on enactments of 'community'. On one hand, my approach to ethnography reflects something of this contemporary framing of it as a methodology. My interest in the two areas as case sites comes not from an assumption about them as any kind of unique, bounded and socially-distinct ('other') cultures that I seek to 'translate' through my ethnographic approach, but as socio-spatial constructions of a broader set of structures and relations that shape the *BL* initiative and its design from a national level (see for example Marcus 1995). However, despite my focus on two areas, my approach could be seen to be at odds with some of the propositions of a contemporary 'multi-sited' ethnographic methodology (Marcus 1995), which seeks to examine the inter-connectedness of multiple, non-spatially defined domains and systems (Peirano 1998, Caputo 2000, Hannerz 2003, Choy, Faier et al. 2009). Rather than focus on the flows and connections between the two areas, and between them and the *BL* initiative at large, I chose to focus my ethnographic practice predominantly *within* each of my two case sites, acknowledging and engaging with the geographical constrictions posed by the structure of the initiative as a whole. In doing so, rather than assuming an inherent fixity of these spaces, or assuming an innate meaning to the boundaries as given through the initiative, I envisaged this set of constraints on the field as potentially valuable for the very aims of this research; exploring enactments of 'community'.

Candea argues that the increasing attention on multi-sited ethnography and de-coupling the ethnographic 'field' from territorial boundaries, has prompted (unwittingly) a new sense of 'holism', and a subsequent lack of attention on the processes of bounding, selection and choice that are necessarily part of any ethnographic fieldwork (Candea 2007). Instead, and as I hoped to do through my own ethnographic fieldwork, he states that the delimited field site – the 'arbitrary location' – forces reflection on how boundaries are drawn (ethnographically, socially, epistemologically). Drawing on Strathern (2004), he argues that "*no geographical or theoretical bounding will eliminate the possibility of finding ever more complexity 'within'*" (Candea 2007, p174). As such, I chose to orientate my methodology towards ethnographic engagement and interpretation of enactments of

'community' *within* the two, distinct *BL* areas, in part as a mechanism for exploring the role of the given boundaries in localised conceptualisations and practices of 'community'.

In an attempt to define more specifically the kind of ethnographic approach I undertook for this research, and acknowledging recent debates over the potential misuse of the term 'ethnography' (Ingold 2014), for example to describe more generic qualitative research (Messac, Ciccarone et al. 2013), I will describe three key principles that underpinned my approach. As will be discussed in a later chapter, however, my expectations for and assumptions about what constituted 'good' ethnographic practice were somewhat challenged by various dynamics arising through the research process.

First, I aimed to draw on a key principle of 'embeddedness' or 'being there' (Hannerz 2003, Lewis and Russell 2011), through which proximity (socially and/or geographically) and presence over time in relation to the 'object' of my research (enactments of 'community' in the two *BL* areas) would be a key mechanism through which I would be able to identify the kinds of networks of actors and relations constituting these enactments. To this end, I spent 13 months conducting fieldwork across both Craybourne and Westin Hill between April 2014 and April 2015, during which time I endeavoured to spend extended periods of time within each area. Although I had originally planned to stay in one area for long periods of time at a stretch (for example a couple of months), before moving to the other area, the timing of much of the activity of the *BL* initiative in each site was such that I found myself moving much more frequently between the two sites, to engage with and capture meetings, events, and other 'happenings' relevant to the enactment of 'community'.

I typically spent anything from a day or two up to a couple of weeks in one area, before moving back to the other, dependent on the schedule of meetings and activities. Most of these *BL* and other relevant local activities were conducted by residents as volunteers in their spare time around work, family life and other day-to-day responsibilities (activities that I did not typically include in my research focus, as they were not directly connected to the *BL*). Committee meetings were typically held every four or six weeks in both areas, with other *BL* meetings and activities in between. While my movement between the areas according to these local schedules could be seen as a limitation, in only 'being there' temporarily, I think it also (and perhaps more importantly) reflects my awareness of and engagement with the specific tempos of the *BL* activity in each area. Beaulieu (2010) describes a similar process of aligning ethnographic fieldwork with the tempos of her field sites, as part of a broader attempt at 'co-presence' with the dynamics of her research 'object' rather than continual 'co-location', in the sense of physical proximity:

*“it was more important to determine ‘when’ the field would be available than ‘where’ it could be found. Rather than organizing travel, the challenge was to organize availability, as the rhythms of this group had to be coordinated with other schedules and commitments.”*  
(p459).

This highlights the possible interpretation of ‘being there’ as extending beyond the physical or geographic embeddedness in the field, and instead allowing for ethnographic research practices that reflect and continue a sensibility towards the dynamics of the ‘object’ under study, even if this means periodic departure from the field.

The principle of ‘being there’ is linked to a second principle; the assumption that ethnographic knowledge is produced through situated social relations between the researcher and the ‘researched’ (Strathern 1995, Hastrup 2005), via positioning “*oneself in the amorphous field between subjective and objective*” (Hastrup 2005, p141). It is this process of interaction, the productive experience of engaging in relations with the inhabitants of the ‘field sites’ that is the mechanism of generating ethnographic knowledge about the object of study – the researcher as research instrument – rather than a process of ‘extraction’ of data or information (Scheper-Hughes 1992). Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) highlight that postmodern approaches to ethnography seek to dissolve the assumed distinction between the ‘observed’ and the ‘observer’ (the ethnographic researcher), which indicates an orientation towards the productive, interactive and reciprocal nature of the relations that generate ethnographic knowledge. Yet, while there is a tendency to focus on the *social* relations that underpin the practice of ethnography, given the framing of my approach to exploring enactments of ‘community’ from an actor-network theory (ANT) perspective, my application of this principle also sought to accommodate interactions and relations with non-human entities, such as the spaces and materials of the field sites.

Third, and finally, is a principle that acknowledges the importance of reflexive positioning within an ethnographic approach. This principle denotes that the observation and interpretation of structures, processes and events ‘in the field’ is not one of mere description, or that the ethnographic account is an unproblematic representation of the field (Clifford 1986). Instead, my ethnographic approach was centred on acknowledging the role of the (my) self in constructing both that to be researched – the areas participating in the *BL* and the enactments of ‘community’ therein – and the final account of the observations and interpretations made. Following Ingold (2008), this reflects a close (perhaps inextricable) alignment of the processes ‘knowing and being’, such that the production of ethnographic knowledge from my research must involve the active and constant “*monitoring [of] its*

*location and partiality of perspective in relation to others*" (Lewis and Russell 2011, p411). As such, I sought to embed mechanisms for reflexivity into my research practice, and to attend to my role and position in the production of knowledge in this thesis.

## **Methods Employed**

### **Selection of methods:**

The largely ethnographic perspective I chose to adopt was underpinned by a range of qualitative methods, designed to allow engagement with the spaces and people of my 'two case sites in differing ways, to explore enactments of 'community'. While spending time in each site, I employed a range of qualitative methods to trace different types of relations and interactions between actors (human, spatial, material, conceptual) which contributed to enactments of 'community'. These included (largely) non-participant observation, informal conversations and spatially-oriented 'go-along' interviews, group research activities, in-depth interviews, and phonographic recording methods. The use of multiple qualitative methods for this research reflects the assumptions of my research questions – acknowledging the role of both conceptualisations and practices within enactments – and the variety of types of actor I anticipated would be engaged in such enactments of 'community' through the *BL*. Recognising the limitations of any single qualitative method to explore and trace the connections between these different types of actors (for example, in-depth interviews would likely privilege the discursive and conceptual connections; observations, the spatial, material and discursive), I identified a range of methods I assumed would be complementary for exploring my research questions. Rather than using different methods to be able to triangulate or validate the claims from any one source of data (Creswell and Miller 2000, Reynolds, Kizito et al. 2011), my collection of methods represented a kind of toolbox of approaches, each potentially offering access to different types of actors, connections and enactments. This perhaps echoes Law's depiction of ANT, not as a unified theory, but as a collection of 'tools' through which to trace material-semiotic relations (Law 2009). I will describe further my interpretation and use of each of these methods.

### **Non-participant observation:**

In the tradition of ethnographic approaches for anthropology, participant-observation reflects the value placed on the "*fieldwork itself as the basic constituting experience of ... knowledge*" (Stocking 1984, p7), wherein interactions between the researcher and her 'field', *in situ*, are the sources of 'data' and interpretation (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). Emphasis on *participation* has seen this

method often enacted through the researcher's direct involvement with the activities and processes of the 'object' of study; for example performing nursing tasks to understand the embodied role of the nurse (Savage 2000b). For my research, however, the scope for participating in the delivery of the *BL* and thus the enactment of 'community' was limited, both by the structures of the programme itself and its emphasis on being resident-led, and the expectations of the evaluation study alongside which my research was situated. These limitations on my 'participation', and their implications for the kinds of ethnographic knowledge I was able to produce, will be explored in depth in chapter nine describing processes of 'missing out' as potentially productive relations for ethnography and evaluating a 'community' initiative such as the *BL*. As such, the extent of participation in the unfolding processes of the delivery of the *BL* initiative in each field site, could only be described in terms of 'being there'. I engaged through my presence in the broader socio-geographic contexts of my case sites, rather than taking on the role of resident, and contributing to the *BL* and enactments of 'community' in the way an existing resident might. I used a field diary to capture reflexive notes on my experiences of spending time in Craybourne and Westin Hill, and as part of the process of interpreting my 'being' in the field, and of identifying social, spatial and material relations in the enactment of 'community'.

As described above, my presence in each field site was not continuous, but fragmented, moving between sites over a period of 13 months according to the tempo of the delivery of the *BL* in each area. However, I was able to maintain a level of connection and awareness of what was going on with each site while physically absent through virtual media. The committees in both areas had their own Facebook groups and websites for the *BL*, to which I had access, though updates (such as highlighting upcoming meetings and events, newly funded projects) could be sporadic, and of course presented something of a 'public' account of what was happening. At times I also received emails that circulated between committee members, or between the committee and wider networks of people, which gave updates and advertised forthcoming meetings. Yet, I was aware that I also missed out on quite a lot of exchanges between committee members that occurred through these media, something that will be considered in more detail in the chapter describing more general experiences of 'missing out' (chapter nine). Given that I tended to access these forms of information *outside* my time in each area, I did not include them as formal 'data', but acknowledge that they undoubtedly shaped my awareness and interpretation of what was happening in each area.

The observation aspect of the method, however, was perhaps more conventionally applied within my fieldwork. Observation has been widely used as a research method, for example in organisational settings, contributing a perspective on 'what is happening' to complement (or

challenge) methods designed to elicit people's interpretations of their experiences (Green and Thorogood 2004). In the context of my research, observation of *BL* meetings, activities and events, as well as other related, but non-*BL* events, were a regular feature of my fieldwork and a fundamental aspect of structuring the scheduling of my time in each field site, in a kind of ethnographic sensitivity to the unique tempos of each area (Beaulieu 2010), as described above. This process of observation offered the opportunity to identify and follow the processes of the *BL* in practice, and the people, materials, concepts and spaces engaged as a result. Typically, my role as observer would be a passive one, sitting at the edge of the room during a meeting or other event, but there were moments when this observation took on more participative qualities such as assisting with the organisation or set-up of an event in an attempt to be 'helpful' (again, this will be discussed further in a later chapter). My recording of these observations was usually through brief notes written during the observation itself, or immediately afterwards, and which were then typed up in full, with additional reflexive comments inserted as I used this process as a mechanism to interpret the ongoing identification and following of enactments of 'community'.

#### **Go-along interviews and informal conversations:**

These methods were employed for their ability to offer different ways to trace connections and relations in the enactment of 'community', particularly between spatial, material and human actors (go-along interviews) and between human and spatial actors (informal conversations). Go-along interviews are a method in which the researcher typically invites a participant to lead them on a walk (or other mode of movement) to and through spaces that the participant considers to be significant or meaningful, and the discussion produced between researcher and participant during this process also contributes 'data'. Go-along interviews have been used in research predominantly as a way to access and explore the meanings participants construct around their engagements with spatial environments, closely following an interpretive tradition (Kusenbach 2003, Garcia, Eisenberg et al. 2012). As such, I reasoned they would be valuable approaches for exploring conceptualisations of 'community', where these conceptualisations intersected and were constructed through experiences of interactions with space(s). Additionally, however, I felt go-along interviews offered something more. In their close alignment with values of ethnography (Kusenbach 2003) I saw their potential role in assisting my engagement (or participation) with the social and geographic spaces of the case sites. Thus I saw go-alongs as offering me opportunities to identify and trace connections between different sets of actors that might constitute (and be constituted by) enactments of 'community'. By inviting residents who were actively involved in the *BL* programme to lead me (and colleagues from the *CiC* study) on walks around their local area, I was able to witness the unfolding

of these connections in real-time, as they emerged through discursive and bodily engagements with 'significant' spaces, and their material and social realities, for example when encountering other people (friends, neighbours) during the walk.

Informal conversations were also reflective of, and produced through my ethnographic approach to my fieldwork. Through their spontaneity (for the most part), they offered participative opportunities to engage in situated, spatialised and discursive relations with people within (and occasionally beyond) the *BL* areas, and through my field notes recorded after the conversations, to trace connections relating to enactments of 'community'. As well as what people said in these conversations, I was interested in how they arose and unfolded, taking interest in the spatial, material as well as social dimensions of the conversations-in-context. Occasionally, I took a more deliberate approach to holding informal conversations, engineering a situation in which I would be able to speak with a particular person (or people) that I had identified as valuable to engage with. In these scenarios, the spontaneity of the conversation was limited, and thus the spatial and material contexts in which the conversation unfolded was of less importance, perhaps (though still of interest) as it had been more 'manufactured' for the purposes of my research. Here, the informal conversations took on a similar purpose and status to the in-depth interviews described below.

The kinds of people I engaged in informal conversations included attendees of *BL* committee meetings (either committee members or other interested residents); other residents for example those attending local events; local workers such as business owners, and employees or volunteers of charitable and faith organisations. Some people I encountered through the various activities occurring in each area as part of the delivery of the *BL* (such as committee meetings, more public 'forum' meetings, presence at local events such as festivals); some through other events or meetings happening locally that I became aware of via connections with the *BL* (for example, being invited to a local police safety forum for residents by a member of the *BL* committee in Westin Hill); and others via more serendipitous or unexpected means, such as walking around the area or sitting in a café having lunch.

### **Group research activities and in-depth interviews:**

The alignment of my research alongside the *CiC* study fieldwork resulted in opportunities for more formal qualitative methods, including group research activities and in-depth interviews. I had not previously identified the group discussion as a method I wanted to apply, largely because I placed more emphasis on exploring enactments of 'community' as they unfolded in the more 'naturalistic' settings in which the *BL* was being delivered. However, in both case sites, colleagues from the *CiC*

study were keen to explore perceptions of the history of the *BL* in the area, with groups of residents actively involved in the delivery of the *BL* (for example committee members), and I worked with my colleagues to arrange and conduct a group discussion in each site. Group mapping exercises were proposed as a mechanism to facilitate discussion between participants and also to explore (potentially different) perceptions on significant events, processes and/or people involved in the *BL*, and also hopes and/or anticipated future trajectories for the *BL* in their area. Participants were encouraged to describe and discuss significant points in the *BL* history and to construct together a timeline onto which these events or occurrences were physically mapped and discussed. Aside from its obvious discursive content, valuable for exploring conceptualisations of ‘community’, I also took the group mapping exercises as opportunities to explore how discussions around ‘community’ were practised in relation to spatial and material actors (in particular, the physicality of the mapping exercise).

The use of in-depth interviews reflected my orientation towards understanding the role of the conceptual in enactments of ‘community’, reflecting its typical use as a method for exploring perceptions and understandings from a hermeneutical perspective. I adopted a largely unstructured approach to interviewing, typically guided only by a few general questions around perceptions of the *BL* in relation to the local area, to enable a fairly free-flowing account of the participant’s experiences to unfold. Interviews tended to be at least an hour in length, often longer, as a result, and were all audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed *verbatim* and I supplemented these transcripts with my own notes reflecting on the setting, content and dynamics of the interview. Interview participants were selected from an evolving process of identifying ‘key stakeholders’: typically *BL* committee members and other local residents or workers who were or had been involved (even if peripherally) with aspects of delivering the *BL*, or who represented organisations that had an interest in the work of the *BL*. I will explain in more detail below how the positioning of my fieldwork closely alongside that of the *CiC* study resulted in negotiation and collaboration around interviewing these ‘key stakeholders’.

It is important to outline briefly my assumptions about the kind of data produced through an interview, for the purposes of this research. Typically, the interview and its resulting transcript are taken as the participant’s account of their (phenomenological) experience (Green and Thorogood 2004). Taking transcripts as sources of data could be seen, from an ANT perspective, as privileging the human as actor (Nimmo 2011), and the social as the mode of producing meaning, obscuring the non-human and the non-social relations that are involved in the enactment of ‘community’. But this relies on an assumption of the transcripts as a ‘representation’ of human perceptions,

interpretations and the social interaction that structures the interview. Instead, I found it more useful to think of the transcripts as accounts and objects produced through participants' engagements with a social, spatial, and even material context through the interview. These interviews, thus, were taken as practices in themselves. They did occur separately from the routine enactments of 'community' through the activities, spaces and structures of the *BL*-in-practice, as they were constructions (or products) of the research enterprise. But they still occurred in social-material-spatial 'realities' (usually, within the geographical bounds of the 'community' as defined by the *BL* and within 'everyday' spaces), including domestic homes, meeting spaces in local organisations, cafés and pubs, and others.

Moreover, the process of discussion, of eliciting and producing voiced opinions, perceptions, interpretations of the *BL*, the local area, 'community', and of their own role or position within that, can be seen as a series of enactments, involving human, spatial, conceptual and possibly material actors. Thus, my handling of each interview transcript was not necessarily as a record of what someone said or thought, or even as a representation of their perceptions or take on 'community', but rather as an account of a series of enactments that are situated within – and further produce – the network of relations through which 'community' – as a conceptual entity of the *BL* – is enacted.

### **Phonographic recordings:**

I identified phonographic recording methods as an additional way to explore the spatial dimensions of my fieldwork sites and enactments of 'community', without over-reliance on the visual or discursive ways in which knowledge might be sought. This method – seeking to capture 'soundscapes' through audio recording – has been identified as part of sensory approaches to qualitative research (Paterson 2009, Pink 2009), in acknowledgement of the different ways in which knowledge can be obtained and meanings made, via different sensory sources including sound (Gallagher and Prior 2014). Although such methods have been successfully used to collect 'primary' data (for example, using recordings of soundscapes as data in and of themselves), my engagement with phonographic recording was a more reflexive enterprise. I decided to use the opportunity of identifying spatial-temporal contexts to record phonographically as devices to reflect on my unfolding perceptions and experiences of each field site, and to consider my assumptions about what kinds of spaces, activities, people and materials I was framing as 'useful' for my research into enactments of 'community'.

Having selected a particular context – for example, the corner of a central shopping street in Craybourne – I would record using a sensitive audio recorder (typically in stereo format) for

anywhere between five and ten minutes, in order to capture something of the 'soundscape' of this particular space. I would then listen back to the recording (using a decent set of headphones in a quiet place), and note down thoughts on what I was hearing and what this made me think in terms of my perceptions of the area, activities unfolding and my general sense of what I understood about the space. In writing these notes, I also challenged myself to reflect on what had drawn me to that specific location to record in the first place, how this related to my ongoing identification of enactments of 'community', and the implications of this for the process of producing ethnographic knowledge. As such, I found this method to be highly valuable from a reflexive perspective, and enabled me to track across my fieldwork something of the shifts, developments and progress in the development of my ethnographic knowledge. I have included a sample note from one of these recordings in the Appendices (Appendix B) as an illustration of my use of phonographic methods as a mechanism of reflexivity.

### **Summary of research activities:**

*Table 4* below summarises the number of research activities conducted by type of method with an overview of the kinds of participants and activities or events involved (where relevant). The 'being in the field' and the informal interactions and conversations that arose from my (non-participating) presence in each area are harder to quantify, but I have attempted to illustrate the extent of these through indicating the number of days of 'being there' over the period of fieldwork in each area (for Craybourne, 11 months between April 2014 and March 2015, and for Westin Hill, 10 months between June 2014 and April 2015).

**Table 4** Summary of research activities by method and site

Case site	Method	Number of activities	Types of participant / event
Craybourne	Formal observations	12	Of Big Local committee meetings (7); of other local meetings (3); of other events (2)
	In-depth interviews	7 (inc. one with 2 participants)	BL committee members (4); employees of local organisations / enterprises (4). Average length of interview: 76 mins
	Go-along interviews	2 (including one involving two participants)	BL committee members (3). Average length of go-along: 98 mins
	Group research activities	1	BL committee members (6). Length of activity: 85 mins
	'Being there': informal interactions, conversations and observations	63 days over 11 months	<i>Events / activities attended:</i> BL consultation activities (5), council meetings (2), local carnival and festivals (4), traders' meeting and events (3) private social activities (4), conference for local faith organisations (1), local coffee mornings and charitable organisation activities (4), assisting delivery of local magazine. <i>People engaged with:</i> residents, BL committee members, employees and volunteers at local charitable organisations, shopkeepers and other local traders, faith workers, councillors, tourists.
	Phonographic recordings with reflexive notes	8	Of public spaces eg shopping street (4); of events / activities (4)
Westin Hill	Formal observations	14	Of Big Local committee, forum and planning meetings (11); of other local meetings (council and police) (3).
	In-depth interviews	10	BL committee members (4); local residents / workers (3); local authority employees / councillors (3). Average length of interview: 72 mins.
	Go-along interviews	3	BL committee members (3). Average length of go-along: 104 mins.

Group research activities	1	<i>BL</i> committee members (2). Length of activity: 112 mins.
'Being there': informal interactions, conversations and observations	59 days over 10 months	<i>Events / activities attended:</i> sessions delivered by <i>BL</i> -funded programmes (3), police safety meetings (2), neighbourhood consultations meetings (2), council meeting (1), local festivals (4), local coffee mornings (2), assisting delivery of newsletter. <i>People engaged with:</i> residents, <i>BL</i> committee members, attendees of forum meetings, faith leaders, councillors, directors and employees of local charitable organisations, local police officers, local traders, participants and deliverers of <i>BL</i> -funded programmes, employees of local housing association.
Phonographic recordings with reflexive notes	7	Of public spaces eg residential estate (3); of events / activities (4).

### **'Getting in' and getting on:**

Here, I will describe briefly some of the experiences of establishing myself and my fieldwork in each area, alongside the fieldwork of the *CiC* evaluation study, and how this positioning shaped my approach to identifying suitable people, places, events and processes to explore through the methods described above. As detailed earlier, the sampling of my two case sites – Westin Hill and Craybourne – meant that my fieldwork practice coincided with that of the first phase of the *CiC* study (though my 13 months across both sites extended past the 7 to 9 month period in which colleagues conducted their data collection for the *CiC* study). This resulted in me working closely with colleagues at key times, particularly in the early days of establishing first contact with the *BL* residents' committees in each area, to talk about the research and set up processes for agreeing consent to conduct fieldwork in the area and with those involved in the *BL*. We worked together to present the *CiC* fieldwork and my own research as a 'package' of research activities that would be conducted in each area, and once consent was agreed, we tried to set up mechanisms to feedback and discuss the progress of the research periodically with members of the *BL* committees in each area (though this was more successful in Craybourne than Westin Hill).

I also worked in a form of collaboration with colleagues from the *CiC* study across some of methods used as part of our respective fieldwork, given that there was some inevitable overlap in the types of methods used (particularly, observations and in-depth interviews) and the kinds of participants with whom we would want to engage (particularly, the residents and local stakeholders more actively involved in the delivery of the *BL*). Additionally, although the aims of the two studies were different, we anticipated some convergence in the more general questions we might ask of participants in interviews, particularly in terms of getting to understand the history of the *BL* in the area, the kinds of processes and activities undertaken, and aspects of on the local area, residents, organisations and structures considered relevant to the delivery of the *BL*. In practice this meant an agreement between me and the other *CiC* fieldworkers about how to 'share' the research activities and participants that we would both want to include in our fieldwork. Observations of activities such as regular *BL* committee meetings and local events were commonly done in tandem, each of us taking our own notes during the observation. Sometimes observation notes would be shared between us if one person had not been able to attend the event, however I have only included notes taken directly by me in my analysis. Go-along interviews and group activities were also done in tandem, with me and my colleague(s) working in partnership to facilitate discussions.

For in-depth interviews, however, it was necessary to share much of the process of interviewing between us. I worked together with *CiC* colleagues to identify which people to invite to be

interviewed, allocated these interviews between us, and shared transcripts. I also conducted a few interviews with other people who were not considered for the sample for the *CiC* fieldwork. While taking a fairly unstructured approach to interviewing, guided only by a few broad questions in order to enable a more free-flowing account from the participant, I was also careful to include several key questions about the *BL* process (such as ‘what do you think are the priorities for the *BL* in this area?’ and ‘what would change as a result of the *BL* look like?’) that would be of value to the *CiC* study. I had the option of including the transcripts of interviews conducted by colleagues in with the ‘data’ from my fieldwork. However, on reflection, I decided that this would pose a challenge for incorporating these interviews into my ethnographic framing and my orientation towards ‘knowledge’ that is situated and produced through the relations in which I participated personally. I felt that taking a transcript produced from an interview conducted by someone else to be equal as a source of knowledge to the other ‘data’ I generated myself through my presence in the field, would be problematic. Therefore, I opted not to include these interviews in this research. Further discussion of the relationship between my fieldwork and the *CiC* study as it was practiced, and the implications of this for my methodological approach and my interpretation of enactments of ‘community’ will be presented in the results section.

## **Analysis of Data**

The application of the above described research methods produced different forms of ‘data’ to be analysed: chiefly observation notes; interview transcripts; notes from informal conversations, go-along interviews and group research activities; phonographic recordings and their respective reflexive notes; and, most numerous, general reflexive field notes from the time spent in each area. I approached these different sources of ‘data’ as distinct but potentially complementary sources of information and insight arising from my overall ethnographic approach, and considered them all to be accounts constructed during my time engaging with the people, spaces and activities of my field sites. Approaching my ‘data’ in this way meant that the steps taken to analyse were similar across the different sources, although I acknowledged the different kinds of accounts that were presented by each source (Barbour 1998).

I started preliminary analytical steps during the fieldwork process. Much of this was in the form of reflexive field notes, which, in addition to capturing ‘what happened’ in the field (for example while attending an event, or from informal interactions), were a space in which I could reflect upon my knowledge of each area, of the *BL* initiative and of the unfolding enactments of ‘community’. These

notes also captured my emerging ideas and questions, which I used to shape the directions in which I pursued the fieldwork, for example in tracing connections and sets of relations more peripheral to the central core of *BL* activity in each area. These reflections were also important for the more formal analysis of all the 'data' after the end of the fieldwork period, shaping the kinds of themes and constructs I traced across the data. As such, this constituted an inductive and largely iterative analytical approach, which also reflected the conceptual framing of my study drawing on ANT and the process of tracing and following particular sets of actors and networks of relations as they emerged as enactments of 'community'.

The more formal stage of analysis commenced as fieldwork came to an end and the full volume of 'data' had been produced and organised. Although not taking a grounded theory approach to interpreting my data (Strauss and Corbin 1998), I borrowed some of the more practical steps it promotes in order to continue an iterative, 'bottom-up' analysis, that rooted my theoretical interpretations in the empirical data (Green and Thorogood 2004). The first of these steps was familiarisation with the range of sources of data, reminding myself of the 'journey' through which this broad set of reflections, observations and recordings had occurred. I uploaded all documents to the qualitative data management software NVivo 10, for organisation and coding, and to capture ongoing reflections and interpretations of the data in 'memos'. Following familiarisation, I used a bottom-up coding approach, starting first with broad open coding of data, working through each document to identify and capture different types of 'actor' (spaces, materials, groups of people, organisations and more), that were engaged in the interactions, conversations and observations captured in my data sources. This reflects something of Latour's recommendations for analysis from an ANT perspective (described in McLean and Hassard 2004), to 'make a list' of all the heterogeneous actors that 'do the work' (McLean and Hassard 2004). As the open coding developed, I began a process of grouping, re-grouping, renaming and re-organising the labels and structures of codes, as I identified different assemblages or networks of these actors which constituted conceptualisations and practices of 'community' arising in and around the *BL* initiative. My labelling of these groups of codes attempted to capture something of the kind of assemblage identified, and the relations between the actors that constituted it.

During this coding process I produced and added to analytical 'memos', which captured my immediate reflections and questions pertaining to higher level, theoretical ideas and framings of the data. The purpose of the memos was to act as a traceable record of my analytical thinking as it progressed, and also to capture emerging ideas and questions that could then be brought back to the data at a later stage to be 'tested', refined, refuted or further developed. In addition, I kept an

analytical 'diary', in which I summarised the analytical work I had done at the end of the day – new codes created, existing codes refined or re-categorised and broader ideas or themes I identified. This proved valuable again as a record of my evolving interpretations, but also as a way of catching up with myself when coming back to the analysis after a break.

The first stage of familiarisation and open coding was conducted for each field site in sequence, reflecting my framing of Westin Hill and Craybourne as two distinct cases, but the codes and memos produced for each case were combined into a single (complex) coding framework. Following this, when exploring in more detail the content of each of these codes and memos, I examined the content separately for each case site. This was to ensure that I treated each field site as a distinct 'case' – a contextually specific, unique set of structures and activities. Of course, the separation of each site analytically can only be partial; the process of moving between the two sites for fieldwork resulted in ongoing comparisons between the two areas (explicit and more implicit). This will only have continued into the analytical process, so that even when concentrating on one 'case', my awareness and understanding of the other case will no doubt have shaped my case-specific interpretations of the data. I attempted to make this explicit where possible through analytical memos, in which I would acknowledge any comparative thoughts or perspectives that had influenced my thinking.

Following the formal coding process, which in some ways represents a deconstruction of the flow of ethnographic narrative arising from fieldwork by 'chopping up' the accounts, reflections and observations into discrete chunks of coded text, I realised it was important to bring the emerging themes of coding back into dialogue with the 'whole' story of each area that I captured through my fieldwork. As Latour might agree, a list of actors is not sufficient for interpreting how they come to interact and bring about translations, and therefore it is the tracing through of these actors and relations that remains a fundamental part of an analytical approach that corresponds with the sensibilities of ANT. I sought to do this by taking the bodies of data organised under each group of codes (or assemblage), and then working through them by case site to chart trajectories (or 'stories') across the chronology of my time in each area, noting the different sets of actors and relations coming and going in each. It was these different flows of assemblages, or sets of actors constituting conceptualisations and practices, that I interpreted as enactments of 'community'.

This tracing through and construction of 'trajectories' of different types of enactment reflects something of the debates around how to 'bring together' the strands of an ANT interpretation of a phenomenon. McLean and Hassard (2004) imply that attempts to construct a singular, coherent analytical 'picture' of networks of relations would belie the orientation towards pluralism and

multiplicity upon which ANT rests, and therefore we must be satisfied with 'incomplete' and 'fractional' ways of 'telling' the distributions of actors, relations and networks (p514). Acknowledging this, I sought to present, through the analytical trajectories, a collection of multiple (if incomplete) assemblages that constituted different types of enactments of 'community', and to describe the kinds of 'work' involved in their production in each area. This practice necessarily leads to considerations of comparison between the two case sites. While I did not conduct any formal, structured comparison of the coding for each site, a level of comparison (and therefore connection) was inevitable due to the way I conducted my fieldwork (moving between sites regularly) and analysis (moving conceptually between the ideas and themes emerging from each set of data). Thus, while the particular enactments of 'community' and the kinds of actors and relations involved were specific to each area, I was able to draw together the two cases in the development of more abstracted interpretations of the way enactments unfolded, and the kinds of processes that produced them.

In the following chapters, the presentation of my interpretations of enactments of 'community' will be presented under broad themes, but will be described in detail by individual area. There were a range of different groupings of codes and trajectories traced through each case site that could be interpreted as contributing to enactments of 'community', but two in particular seemed particularly prominent, both in terms of the range of types of assemblage that constituted them, and the presence and salience of their trajectories across *both* case sites. This prominence led me to identify them as enactments of 'community' that could be convincingly abstracted from the two cases included in my study, to contribute more general conceptual findings for approaches to evaluating complex 'community' initiatives. I will describe these two types of enactment in detail in subsequent chapters, but in brief they reflected processes and practices of 'boundary work' (asserting and negotiating boundaries), and forms of fragmented relating (the construction and the governance of a divide between the individual and the collective, and the construction of the collective as a holistic but segmented entity). I identified in a slightly different way a third prominent set of relations and practices characterised as 'missing out', which cut across the assemblages constituting enactments of boundary work and fragmented relating. It was through reflexive consideration of my own methodological limitations during fieldwork that led me to identify relations of disconnection and concerns over absence and exclusion in the data itself. While not a form of enacting 'community' per se, I considered this theme to be valuable for highlighting the intersection of the methodological and empirical and its implications for evaluation practice, and generating 'evidence' of effect of an intervention.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Overall, I sought to take a situational approach to considering and practising the ethical dimensions of my fieldwork (Goodwin, Pope et al. 2003). This approach emphasises the importance of maintaining a conscious awareness of research practice and its ethical implications throughout the process of the research, and to consider ethical principles as different situations arise and relationships are developed. Fundamental ethical values of consent, confidentiality and anonymity were put into practice in relation to the case sites, and individual participants, according to standards agreed by the principal investigators of the *CiC* study in discussion with *Local Trust*, and with subsequent approval by the relevant ethics boards. I obtained separate ethical approval for my research from the ethics committee of London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine in January 2014, approval reference 7116 (please see Appendix C for full details of the approval).

### **Consent processes:**

As described above, the process of obtaining consent among the local residents of each area for the fieldwork was undertaken in collaboration with colleagues from the *CiC* study. The first level of consent was established by the principal investigators of the *CiC* study and the *Local Trust*, the organisation delivering the *BL* at the national level who agreed a small sample of *BL* areas that could be approached for inclusion in the study. Colleagues from the *CiC* study then approached each selected area via making contact with the respective ‘reps’ – the representatives employed centrally to provide support to the residents’ committee in each *BL* area – requesting an opportunity to meet and discuss with the committee members the plans for the research. Discussion about the study and negotiation over consent to participate was carried out with members of the committees directly, and the final permission to conduct research in their *BL* area was given by them. Thus, the people delivering the *BL* in each area, being the people that would be most directly involved in the research, were approached to give consent for the whole *BL* area to be included and represented in the study. In Westin Hill, I was directly involved in the early discussions and negotiations with members of the committee and the rep, prior to gaining their consent, but in Craybourne, this process was conducted primarily by colleagues at the local SPHR institution and my first interactions with residents and the area itself were as part of the early familiarisation research activities.

Consent for individual participation in research activities was further sought as fieldwork activities occurred. Individual interviews were preceded by a traditional, formal information and consent process, particularly as I sought to audio-record the interviews, and participants’ explicit consent for this (as well as for the interview generally) was required. See Appendices D and E for copies of the participant information sheet and consent form used in the consenting process for interviews. For

observations of regular committee meetings, we sought consent from individual members at the outset of the fieldwork, and agreed that we (me and/or *CiC* colleagues) would sit in and observe each meeting, but that we were happy to be asked to leave the room at any point should members not want us to hear something they wished to discuss. While it tended to be the same set of residents attending *BL* committee and public forum meetings during my fieldwork, who got to know me and the purpose of the research quite well, I endeavoured to introduce myself to any new faces at these meetings and let them know about the research processes.

At more public, open meetings and events, both for the *BL* and other purposes (such as a local police meeting), I (and my colleagues, when present) would endeavour to seek permission to attend in advance, and then introduce myself and summarise the research briefly at the beginning of the meeting, inviting attendees to approach me at the end with any concerns. On several occasions this approach was not feasible or appropriate, for example at large council meetings in Craybourne, but I reasoned that as these were meetings open to the public, my presence and note-taking were not necessarily problematic.

At times it was also difficult or inappropriate to obtain formal consent for informal conversations and interactions that happened as part of my 'being there' in my two sites. Where I had direct conversations with individuals, I would attempt to inform them of the research I was conducting and would carry copies of information sheets to give out (usually at the end of the conversation), although this was sometimes difficult to achieve if conversations were fleeting or partial, for example overheard in a public space, and if observations were made at a distance, for example during a public festival. This highlights a tension in ethnographic approaches to research, where the position of the researcher, and therefore a process of (implied, if not explicit) consent is not always knowable for all those people who might indirectly come into contact with the research, by nature of them being in the 'field'. I largely rested on the situational ethics principles, and the practice of trying to ensure individuals were aware of my continuing presence in the 'field' as a researcher. My assumption here was that, if I knew that the person I was talking to was aware of my position as a researcher 'in the field', and my ongoing research practices, they would be aware of my potential interest in what they told me for the purposes of my research.

This, of course, is not a flawless approach to ethics-in-practice, particularly for people with whom I developed closer relationships over the course of the fieldwork. Certainly, these people were aware of my position as 'researcher' and the reason I visited the sites and attended things such as meetings, public events or hung around in cafes. However, as more friendly relationships developed overtime with a couple of people in particular, and as they told me more personal and occasionally

potentially contentious things about themselves and other people in connection with the *BL*, the boundaries between us became more blurred at times. This is a familiar concern particularly for long-term, embedded ethnographic methods (Kelly, Ameh et al. 2010), and highlights that for ethnographic approaches, where individual consent to participate is difficult, if not impossible to obtain, consent may be better viewed as an ongoing process of dialogue between the researcher and the 'researched' (Wax 1980).

### **Anonymity:**

Another key ethical consideration in the planning and execution of my research rested on questions of anonymity, both for the individual participants of the research and of the areas included as case sites. I had considered both the opportunities and challenges posed by attempts to anonymise whole areas, and had hoped to discuss the practicalities and various options for anonymity with the residents of the case sites. I felt there were some strong arguments for allowing the areas to be named and described explicitly in the writing up of my research – with participants' consent – not only because of the challenges of attempting to obscure completely the identification of an area, particularly following the use of in-depth, ethnographic methods (Brent 1997). Scheper-Hughes' reflection on her ethnographic account of a community in rural Ireland describes how the approaches she used to anonymise participants and places did not prevent participants being able to identify themselves and others and triggered a collective sense of anger at the account published (2001). This example suggests that methods of anonymisation might, first, be fallible, and second, might give the researcher an unwarranted sense of protection against having to consider the potential impact of their interpretations on the participants.

There are also methodological implications of anonymity which are particularly relevant for a study on 'community' (Nespor 2000). By removing identifiers of the setting in which a study is located one may risk 'dislodging' the group of participants from the particular historical, and geographical context in which they are situated, suggesting a level of theoretical abstraction and generalisation that may not be appropriate for the research (Nespor 2000). Some have argued that grounding research and presentation of findings explicitly in the context in which they arose is vital when acknowledging 'community' as an idea, practice and/or, discourse that is contextually derived and relational (Brent 1997). However, as my fieldwork was necessarily closely aligned with the data collection for the *CiC* study, I was required to adhere to their plans for anonymisation of the participating areas, as well as of individuals and organisations engaged in the research activities. This decision taken for the main evaluation study represented concerns both among the research team and *Local Trust* about sites being identifiable to other areas, and the potential for discomfort

from this as a result of the reporting of (evaluative) statements on the progress of the *BL* in each area and its impacts. I followed the principles set by the main study in anonymising the areas – creating the pseudonyms *Craybourne* and *Westin Hill* – and being careful when describing geographical, political and social characteristics so as to reduce the opportunity for identification. Of course, people from the individual sites included in my research will likely be able to identify their own area, though may not be able to identify their own contributions or other individuals or organisations mentioned in the data.

In addition to the anonymisation of the two case sites, I also developed pseudonyms to anonymise participants, places and organisations encountered within my fieldwork. However, this was not as straightforward a process as I had anticipated, particularly in terms of anonymising key people who were actively involved in the delivery of the initiative, and were prominent in my ‘data’ and interpretations. There were a couple of aspects of this anonymisation process I think it important to draw out here. First, I realised during the analysis and writing up of my results that simply allocating a pseudonym to a person would not necessarily remove the possibility of a participant recognising themselves in the thesis, or someone else they know well, by nature of what is reported or described. While complete anonymisation is almost impossible (at least in the presentation of research that seeks to be contextually grounded, with ‘thick’ description and detailed accounts), I decided that in addition to pseudonyms I would, in places, use the device of ‘composite characters’ (Scheper-Hughes 2001). This involved combining personal and contextual details from across two or more people (or occurrences) to lessen the possibility of identification of a particular participant or event, particularly when conveying a story or account that was potentially sensitive or inflammatory to some.

There are obvious limitations of this approach for conveying a ‘realistic’ or ‘faithful’ account of the fields observed through research, and Scheper-Hughes describes the failing of her ‘composite characters’ to protect anonymity in her ethnographic accounts, indicating they prompted former participants to try to work out the amalgamated identities (2001). However, I justify my decision by emphasising that I only employed composite characters in a few places in the writing up of my research, where doing so did not seem to distort significantly the account being described, and where identification of the participant or activity might (by the participant themselves, or by others) might be potentially distressing or inflammatory. To further protect the anonymity of those involved, I do not indicate where I have employed a composite character in the description of events.

A second issue with the use of pseudonyms was my concern about conveying something of the heterogeneity of people engaged and encountered in my research (in terms of gender, class, age and ethnicity, for example). While there have been debates on the political and ethical dimensions of choosing when and for whom to use pseudonyms over 'real names' (Guenther 2009, Lahman, Rodriguez et al. 2015), comparatively little has been written about the process of choosing which names to use, and the political implications that are carried with assumptions about the identities conveyed by particular names (Hurst 2008). Allocating pseudonyms to participants was a tricky process, trying to choose and allocate names across the groups of participants to reflect some of the diversity of the group, but without drawing too much attention to any one person's (real) identity, particularly in terms of class or ethnicity. Reflecting this, at times I selected deliberately vague names that could be male or female or might be typical of different ethnicity or class groups, or 'reallocated' a minority ethnicity to another participant via a pseudonym. This process forced me to reflect on the kinds of assumptions I held for constructions of identity through naming, and the precarious position I held in terms of shaping interpretations of the accounts I described by any readers of this thesis. This refers back to the ongoing political and ethical tensions of attempting to 'represent' social accounts through the ethnographic text.

## 6. Descriptions of the Field Sites

In an attempt to ‘set the scene’, to bridge the description of my methodology and the findings describing the enactments of ‘community’ observed, I will give a little contextual detail about my two case, or field, sites – Craybourne and Westin Hill. Acknowledging the tensions outlined in the previous chapter regarding anonymisation of the research areas, I will attempt here to give some background information and description of each site and to convey something of the process through which I ‘entered’ each site and began my fieldwork.

### Craybourne

The area of Craybourne, as designated by *Local Trust* for the purposes of the *Big Local* initiative, reflects what seems to be locally acknowledged as a distinct neighbourhood in a larger town, situated near the coast in the north of England, and has somewhere in the region of 6000 residents. There is some geographic sense to the boundary of Craybourne (as illustrated on the map displayed on the *LT* website), due to various physical features of the landscape, and some sense of separation from the rest of the town created by a vacant plot of land and some commercial buildings in between the residential streets of Craybourne and the start of the centre of the wider town. Craybourne was selected to be part of the *BL* in one of the later waves of the initiative, and at the point of negotiating access and consent for conducting research in the area, in March 2014, the committee of residents (at that stage, still a ‘steering group’) were beginning the process of consulting with the wider ‘community’ to identify priorities for the local area, in advance of developing a plan to address them. The committee had several formal, elected positions including the chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary (all residents of Craybourne), but the monthly committee meetings were open to any others to attend, although only residents of the area were permitted to vote on any decisions to be made in meetings. Much of the ‘work’ I observed during my fieldwork included the committee’s negotiation and planning of different strategies for engaging with the wider ‘community’ both to publicise the *BL* and to invite their contributions to identifying priorities for improvement in the local area. During my time in Craybourne, the committee decided to employ a part-time ‘community worker’ to lead on the consultation activities, but the person appointed in May 2014 left the role a few months later, and the committee decided not to refill the position. By March 2015, the committee had conducted a number of consultation activities and had appointed local consultants to bring together all the information they had gathered, to prepare a

‘community profile’ and subsequently, to assist in the drawing up of the *BL* plan for the area. This felt like an appropriate time to finish my fieldwork as it appeared that the group were preparing to move onto the next phase of the *BL* initiative.

As with many coastal towns around England, Craybourne had had a history as a tourist destination until the 1970s and 80s, when local tourism declined in the face of the increasingly accessible foreign holiday. A largely residential area now, there are a few small businesses such as grocery, furniture and gift shops, and several bed-and-breakfasts (where I would typically stay during my fieldwork visits) but the lack of local economy and employment is often identified as a problem in the area. The sea front remains a popular feature, however, among local residents and attracting those from further away, and is the location for several festivals and events round the year. It also posed a valuable space for my own reflections, spending time (when weather permitted) sitting on a bench or wandering along the front in between meetings, interviews or other more formal research activities.

## **Westin Hill**

The area of Westin Hill, as designated by the *Big Local* initiative, follows the boundary of an administrative ward, and is a densely populated area in a borough towards the outskirts of London, with somewhere around 11000 to 12000 residents within the ward boundary. It was selected to participate in one of the earlier waves of the initiative, and by the time of approaching the members of the Westin Hill *BL* committee of residents to invite them to participate in the research in April 2014, the group had undertaken the first ‘community’ consultation phase and identified priorities for the local area, which included focus on improving economic, environmental and social aspects of the area. At the start of fieldwork, the committee had developed and recently had approved by the *LT* their plan for the first few of the allotted ten years. The group had also formalised their committee as a ‘partnership’, as per the structured design of the *BL* initiative, and during my fieldwork, between eight and twelve local residents who had been elected onto the committee would regularly attend the committee meetings, held every six to eight weeks at a meeting space in one of the several ‘community’ centres within the Westin Hill boundary. The committee also held ‘forum’ meetings approximately every quarter, which were open to the general public (residents and representatives from local organisations, the council and other institutions), and were intended to be a process of both feeding back to the wider ‘community’ and enabling their input into the work of the residents’ committee.

At the start of my fieldwork, the committee was beginning the process of putting their plan into action and thinking about how to identify and fund projects that would meet the four priority areas they had outlined for the first 18 months. Much of the 'work' conducted in and between committee meetings during my time in Westin Hill revolved around developing and implementing a structure for inviting bids from local organisations and groups to request funding for programmes or projects that would contribute to the priority areas. The committee employed a part-time 'development worker' (at the start of my fieldwork, someone new had recently taken over the role), to undertake much of the day-to-day administrative and communicative work of liaising between the committee members and the activities and engagements involved in putting into practice the approved plan. I finished my fieldwork in April 2015 just after the committee's annual general meeting, at which they held (re)elections for partnership members and had attracted several new residents to join the partnership committee.

The area of Westin Hill is characterised by a large amount of residential housing; mostly rows of terraces, but also a large housing estate with blocks of flats. There are several streets cutting through the area with numerous small shops, businesses, cafes and pubs, and a few 'green spaces', including a popular and attractive park. It is situated within a borough that has an established reputation for its ethnic diversity and relative levels of deprivation, but as with much of London, there are clear signs of economic change within the area, illustrated in the increasing house prices and outward spread of indicators of 'gentrification'. Due to its relative proximity to my home, my time in Westin Hill was very different to that in Craybourne; I adopted much more of a 'commuter' style of engagement with the area, dipping in and out according to the schedule of events, in contrast with the one to two week stretches I would spend in Craybourne. In an attempt to 'get to know' the area beyond the more formal research activities, and in a similar way to my engagement with Craybourne, I would periodically spend time in the area walking around, sitting in the park and working from local cafés.

In acknowledgement of my commitment to maintaining the anonymity of the two areas and the participants of my research, I would like to clarify that, among the 150 areas participating in the *BL*, there are several that could fit each of the descriptions given here of Craybourne and Westin Hill.

## **A Note on Terminology**

These brief sketches of Craybourne and Westin Hill hopefully provide some contextual backdrop to the following chapters describing different dimensions of the enactments of 'community' arising

through the *BL* in each area, and to my reflections on the methodological and empirical implications of the positioning of my ethnographic research alongside the *CiC* study fieldwork in these two areas. In the presentation of the findings in subsequent chapters, I refer frequently to the committees of residents leading the delivery of the *BL* initiative in each local site. As described here, at the time of my fieldwork, the committees of Craybourne and Westin Hill held slightly different constitutions and names. Craybourne's committee was a 'steering group' that did not yet have formalised status under the structure of the *BL*. The Westin Hill committee was a 'partnership', in that it had undergone an official election process and had been ratified by *LT*. In the subsequent chapters, however, I refer to both more generically as 'committees' to avoid confusion and to enable some comparison between sites.

## 7. The Boundary Work of Enacting 'Community'

### Introduction

At the heart of the research question of how 'community' is enacted through the *Big Local* (*BL*) initiative lies the (assumed) problematic of 'community' as something more contested, unfixed and variable than is implied through the rhetorics and framings of 'community'-led initiatives, and of evaluations seeking to assess their impacts on health. This chapter will take a first step to exploring this contestation and variability, using the notion of 'boundaries' as a departure point to present analysis of the conceptualisations and practices constituting enactments of 'community' in relation to the *BL* initiative in my two case sites, Westin Hill and Craybourne. I will examine how 'community' was varyingly practiced and interpreted in terms of its boundaries: how the scope of the 'community' was conceptualised and demarcated, and where the 'community' (varyingly) began and ended, through the practices, structures and activities of the initiative. I will also identify the different kinds of actors (human, spatial, material) contributing to these constructions of boundaries. My focus on boundaries draws strongly on theorisations of 'community' (and other forms of social and spatial organising) as inherently relational; see for example Barth's influential work on ethnicity and cultural boundaries (1998 [1969]), Cohen's work on symbolic construction of 'community' boundaries (1985a, 1985b, 2000), and Gupta and Ferguson's work on spatial boundaries and the state (Gupta and Ferguson 1997c, Ferguson and Gupta 2002). The focus on boundaries, therefore, offers an opportunity to consider how 'community' is produced and understood only in terms of how it sits alongside, interacts with, rubs up against and/or is disconnected from other forms of social or spatial organisation (perceived, enacted, both), and thus becomes a meaningful and productive assemblage of relations.

My attention to the multiple ways in which boundaries of 'community' were constructed and interpreted around the work of delivering the *BL* in my two case sites engages, but is also in tension with, the ostensibly fixed geographical boundary of the 'communities' defined for the purpose of the *BL* initiative. The explicitly defined boundaries of the included areas and their apparent fixedness – demonstrated in maps of the sites reproduced on the website for the whole *BL* initiative and in materials used at the local level – proved to play an influential role. They shaped the organisation of activities, decision-making processes, and the nature of different sets of relationships bound up in the delivery of the *BL* in the local areas. Certainly, the clarity of the geographic boundary was used as a resource and a tool for determining the parameters of the scope and focus of the *BL*'s activities

or work. It also often acted as a point of reference for constructing the 'community' to whom those more actively involved in the *BL* – typically, the residents' committees leading the delivery of delivering the *BL* in each area – felt themselves responsible and accountable for the management of the money, priorities and progress of the *BL*. However, other boundaries were also constructed and articulated through and around the practices of the *BL* in the local areas, which intersected and, at times, competed with the given geographical boundary. Furthermore, these boundaries were continuously negotiated, challenged, revised and at times dissolved through the practices and interactions arising around the *BL*. This comprises what I frame in this chapter as the ongoing 'boundary work' of enacting 'community' in relation to the *BL*.

Before examining in detail the role of boundaries in the enactment of 'community', I will outline my interpretation of 'boundary work' as the analytical framing for exploring this aspect of 'community' in relation to the *BL*. The notion of 'boundary work' has roots in social theories of knowledge production and demarcation of bodies of knowledge, such as boundaries between disciplines and between science and 'non-science' (Lamont and Molnár 2002). Gieryn has been credited with engaging the term 'boundary work' in his depiction of rhetorical processes used to demarcate between science and non-science, where the construction of boundaries between the production of scientific knowledge and its consumption by 'non-scientists' represents the work of retaining control over the autonomy of the scientific domain (Gieryn 1983, p789). He conveys the 'everyday' work of dissolving and challenging different boundaries in order to maintain an ideological demarcation around 'science'.

The notion of the 'boundary' has been prominent in much social science work around the 'community', typically emphasising the symbolic nature of boundary making. The (symbolic) boundary is often interpreted in relation to its role in demarcating particular (collective) identities, typically in the face of 'external threats' to an established identity in the form of broader social and economic change. See for example Strathern's work on 'villagers' and 'outsiders' in a rural village in Essex (1981); Rapport's examination of (wealthier) incomers to a village in the Yorkshire Dales (1986); and Skiffington's study of incomers intersecting and disrupting class boundaries in the Western Highlands of Scotland (1991). Cohen's work has also examined in detail the symbolic practices involved in articulating and confirming 'community' boundaries and a distinctive 'Whalsa' identity among residents of Whalsay in the Shetland Islands, Scotland (1985a, 1985b, 1987). He describes in detail both implicit and explicit symbolic practices such as the 'spree', a ritual of moving from house to house to drink and gather with neighbours in a process of 'social mapping' of close kin and associates (1985b). Cohen argues that while the meanings of such rituals and their symbolic

elements might be interpreted differently among residents, the practices serve to 'reassert' collective connections with the unique social and economic structuring of Whalsa society, and in the face of broader economic change encroaching on the traditional modes of production including fishing and crofting.

However, in drawing on the concept of 'boundary work' from Gieryn and others, I sought to explore the practices and conceptualisations that *produced* boundaries (and thus contributed to enactments of 'community' in relation to the *BL*), rather than just reflected or represented them in a symbolic way, for example as Cohen describes. This is where the notion of 'work' is helpful, echoing Barad's assertion that "*boundaries do not sit still*" (2003, p871). From my analysis, I present 'boundary work' as encompassing two dimensions: *boundary making* and *boundary negotiation*. Boundary making I interpret in relation to my analysis as the ongoing practices constituting the articulation, demarcation and assertion of boundaries, enacting the scope(s) and categorisation(s) of 'community', and where it meets and relates to other entities. Boundary negotiation I interpret as the processes that explicitly or implicitly challenge, question, revise or breach existing perceived or articulated boundaries, through different kinds of practices. Although the two dimensions will be described and presented separately in this chapter for analytical clarity, they are necessarily linked and the overlaps and intersections between boundary making and negotiation are I suggest, a fundamental part of enacting 'community' in relation to the *BL* in each field site. As connected practices, boundary making and negotiation – together comprising boundary work – convey the interpretation that neither 'community' nor its boundaries are fixed, static, or finitely constructed, but relational, contingent, and continuously 'in process' around the *BL*.

In this chapter, I will give examples from both sites of how this boundary making and negotiation unfolded through, among and in relation to the core activities and actors delivering the *BL* in each area, and will indicate a few points at which the distinction between making and negotiation became blurred. Most of the examples described, and the actors and relations comprising them, occurred within the designated geographical boundaries of the 'community' for the purposes of the *BL* initiative. As such, much of the 'boundary work' described here demonstrates the negotiations and constructions – the relational work – that occur among those considered (from the organisational perspective of the *BL* initiative) to be *within* the 'community'.

I will give a brief reminder here of the analytical process undertaken to make sense of the field notes, observation notes, and interview transcripts – the 'data' – gathered throughout my fieldwork in both sites. Each field site was considered as an independent 'case' and I took care to identify, interpret and trace through the practices and conceptualisations constituting enactments of

'community' in each site. However, I also acknowledged that these two sites, though geographically separate from each other, are conceptually linked to each other (via the broader structure of the *BL*) and therefore I sought to compare each site and their respective enactments to identify conceptual and analytical commonalities. The analytic construct of 'boundary work' is something that has been interpreted across the two cases, but also traced specifically within each individual site. Here, I will describe the overall nature and shape of the 'boundary work' of 'community', as an analytic construct comprising boundary making and negotiation, as well as describing these practices in each specific field site, Westin Hill and Craybourne.

### **Processes of Boundary Making**

As one component of the construct of 'boundary work', the practices and processes of boundary making – asserting, affirming and demarcating boundaries - proved prominent in and around the delivery of the *BL* in each site. Although varying in each local context, there were some commonalities that underscored the making of boundaries in both Westin Hill and Craybourne. Physical and material practices, and acts of emplacement contributed to spatial constructions of 'community' boundaries. These could be both explicit and implicit (or intentional and unintentional) in their expression of a boundary: explicit, for example, in the use and exhibition of a map of the area with the *BL* geographical boundary clearly marked; or implicit, for example, in the positioning (closely or otherwise) of *BL* activities with other locally-situated events or causes. Physical acts of engagement with spaces, such as moving through space as part of a parade for a festival or for the delivery of newsletters and information about the *BL*, also served as ways of directly demarcating and asserting spatial boundaries.

More discursive, conceptual practices were also engaged in the making of boundaries, often arising through the interactions and exchanges characterising the decision-making processes required for the *BL* as part of the typical day-to-day 'work' conducted by the residents' committees, in the form of meetings, communications, administration and oversight. Within these discursive practices, questions of allocation of resources according to perceptions of need and deservedness, and ideas of representation and accountability towards a broader public(s) were prominent, and contributed to the construction of different boundaries of the 'community', and the process of boundary making.

#### **Westin Hill:**

The work of boundary making was often explicit in discursive practices that structured the regular meetings of the *BL* residents' committee in Westin Hill and their interactions as they began to put

into action their plan for delivering the *BL* by selecting projects to fund according to the priorities set out in the plan. Among the conversations and processes of decision-making, the prominence of the ‘ward’ boundary – the administrative, geographical boundary that had been confirmed by *Local Trust* as the official boundary for Westin Hill as a participant in the *BL* – was notable, with conversations among the committee members often making reference to what was ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the ‘ward’. The sense of responsibility over how and where to allocate the financial resources available for the *BL* (the ‘money’), and the reality of actually ‘doing’ the *BL*, rather than planning for it, appeared to be instrumental in constructions of boundaries, as I observed committee meetings and engaged with committee members and others during my time in Westin Hill. The point at which I started my fieldwork in the area, shortly after the committee had had their plan approved and were beginning to put it into practice, was perhaps influential. The focus of the committee at this juncture in delivering the initiative likely shaped my identification of concerns over prioritisation, fairness and responsibility towards both the money available and the processes of decision-making, on behalf of the ‘community’, and their prominence in discursive constructions of boundaries.

Perhaps one of the most explicit and common discursive demarcations of a boundary occurred through emphasis, by those most actively involved in delivering the *BL*, on the initiative being ‘resident-led’, a value and term inherited from the rhetoric and structure of the *BL* at the national level. Typical enactments of this boundary assertion arose in relation to questions of contributing to or being part of the committee delivering the work of the *BL* in Westin Hill, as ‘representatives’ of the wider ‘community’. Eligibility to contribute to decision-making through membership of the committee was restricted to residents (of the geographic *BL* area) only, concretised in the ‘framework’ developed by committee members as a code of conduct, and which was engaged (literally or discursively) fairly regularly for example in meetings. One such illustration of this occurred at one of the committee’s public ‘forum’ meetings open to the wider ‘community’, when attendees were talking about how to get more local young people engaged with the delivery of the *BL*. Charlie, an employee of a small youth charity located in Westin Hill and who often attended these forum meetings, spoke up to offer some advice to committee members around how to engage young people. In response to this advice, another attendee of the meeting suggested that Charlie would be a useful addition to the (at that time, somewhat depleted) committee as he worked locally, but it was announced by a committee member that “*under the framework, he’s not permitted as he’s not a resident*” (Westin Hill, O-08, January 2015).

Similarly, the boundary around ‘residents’ and their eligibility to contribute was frequently discursively asserted in relation to ‘the council’. Emphasis was placed, particularly by committee

members, on the fact that 'the council' was not eligible to contribute to the decision-making processes of, or benefit from, the *BL* in Westin Hill. Various discursive and positioning strategies were employed to affirm the boundary between the *BL* and 'the council', arising in committee meetings as decisions were made around which projects to fund, and around other, local events and activities occurring alongside the *BL*. For example, at one committee meeting Nadia, the committee's development worker, told committee members that she had been invited by a local councillor to attend a meeting about council plans for Palmer Grove, a large housing estate in Westin Hill. The response to this, made most strongly by one committee member in particular, was that Nadia could not attend the meeting as the committee did not have time to agree what she could say on their behalf. This indicated an emphasis of the boundary as a somewhat protective measure to limit interaction and flow of relations between the two entities of the *BL* residents' committee and 'the council', with Nadia considered at risk of breaching the boundary by attending the meeting. Similar discursive actions occurred periodically throughout my time in Westin Hill, often intersecting other spatial and material forms of enacting boundaries, as will be described next.

Spatial emplacement and spatially-situated practices of the *BL* in Westin Hill also served as processes of boundary making. The visibility of some of these practices in public spaces acted as assertions of a particular kind of boundary, largely through the process of spatial positioning and connection. Fairly early on in my fieldwork, as my colleague from the evaluation study and I were struggling a little to connect with members of the committee in research activities outside committee meetings (which were fairly infrequent at that stage), we took time to walk around the Westin Hill area, using the map downloaded from the *Local Trust* website as a guide. We were walking down a long residential street and were slightly surprised when a car pulled up next to us and the window was lowered. Driving the car was Caroline, a member of the committee, and next to her a woman she introduced as Nadia, who had, at that stage, just been appointed to the part-time development worker role, to assist the committee. Caroline explained that she was showing Nadia around the area, as part of her 'induction' into the role, and Nadia added that they were trying to find some local office space to hire from where she could do her work for the Westin Hill *BL*, as she lived some way out of the local area and said she found working from home quite difficult. They indicated that they had visited a number of places in the area – community centres and the premises of a couple of local charity and faith organisations – without luck. Nadia's search for suitable office space within Westin Hill would prove to be an ongoing issue, frequently highlighted and discussed in committee meetings, until she finally managed to find a small office to rent in one of the community centres in the area, right at the end of my fieldwork.

Here, then, several different spatial boundaries appeared to be in production, alongside the (re)production of the given geographical boundary of Westin Hill that my colleague and I were contributing to through our walk around the area. The practice of Caroline and Nadia moving around the area, passing and visiting a number of places within Westin Hill, served to construct a spatial boundary that reflected something of the geographical demarcation of Westin Hill according to the administrative structures of the *BL* (they visited places only within this ward boundary). Yet, it also constructed a boundary based around spatial points of value. This boundary was drawn around spaces prominent by their geographical situation in Westin Hill, by their public status or presence in terms of being well-known (the places that Caroline and Nadia visited would be referenced and engaged multiple times in relation to the *BL* during my fieldwork), and for some, by their explicit orientation towards ‘community’ (for example the community centres, so-named). Furthermore, this boundary reflected anticipations of the spatial opportunities provided by these places, and their potential to contribute to the work of delivering the *BL* by acting as a point of connection between Nadia’s duties as the development worker, and the people and spaces of Westin Hill.

An additional, and subtly different type of boundary was further (implicitly) presented through these processes of searching for office space, indicated by Nadia’s own residence outside the Westin Hill area. She had worked locally for a number of years prior to taking the role with the committee, but her ongoing inability to find a suitable space within Westin Hill from which to work for the *BL* served to produce, and re-affirm her residential status as an ‘outsider’ (geographically) from Westin Hill. This then reproduced a boundary in terms of the figurative and geographical distance between Nadia and the ‘community’ she was serving through her work.

The perceived inadequacy of not having an office base in Westin Hill was articulated through the boxes of files and materials Nadia kept permanently in the boot of her car, as she drove between her home and Westin Hill, which she indicated irritated her husband as he could not ‘fit the shopping in the boot’. Similarly, she highlighted the limitations of the technological resources at her home, and required for the *BL* work, such that she often asked another committee member to print out copies of the meeting papers as her ‘family printer’ at home was not up to the job. On several occasions Nadia also shared a list of the places she had visited in the local area in the search of office space as part of the collection of reports and updates she passed around to the committee members at meetings as a record of her productivity and outputs as the paid worker. An example of this was captured in this fieldnote, recording our conversation before the start of a committee meeting:

*“After this, [Nadia]. . . began getting all the paperwork ready for the meeting, putting out copies of the charter . . . for the [committee] structure. . . and a print-out from her*

*spreadsheet detailing all her work and time. She implied that it was important to print it out so that people could look at it and see how much work she's done, in case they ask and think she hasn't been doing much. I looked at a pretty long list of places that Nadia had approached to request office space – approximately 15 places including shops, offices, community and other centres, churches. We chatted about a couple, including the wine shop on Castle St, which she said would be a lovely place to work, but we agreed it perhaps wasn't the right space for meeting with the community.” (WH-O-07; January 2015)*

As such, the boundaries of where the 'work' of the *BL* should and should not happen, and the distinction between committee members who were (necessarily) residents of the official Westin Hill area and Nadia whose eligibility lay in her suitability for the role of development worker rather than her residential status, were continually drawn and re-affirmed through the ongoing process of searching for appropriate office space in the local area, and the material and discursive practices that involved.

Other forms of spatial enactment contributed to the making of (various) boundaries in, and through the *BL* in Westin Hill. During my time in the area, the committee opened the first round of applications for funding for projects and programmes that would contribute to the achievement of the priorities they had identified in their plan. The process of opening and inviting applications from residents and groups in the local area, reviewing them and deciding which would be funded took several months. One of the first projects chosen to be funded through this process was a weekly sports programme that would take place at the communal space on the Palmer Grove housing estate in Westin Hill, over a period of a couple of months. The programme was selected by the committee as reflecting the priority in their plan to provide more resources for young people in the area, and the programme had been run successfully on at Palmer Grove and elsewhere in the wider borough over the past couple of years. Less explicitly, the location of this funded project at Palmer Grove also reflected broader, historical narratives about Palmer Grove as a particularly isolated and neglected part of the wider area, and as such, an area that was particularly 'in need' of attention from the *BL*.

In some ways, the siting of the programme on the sports pitch at Palmer Grove appeared to construct a small, and rather limited spatial boundary in terms of enacting the *BL* through the funding and organisation of local projects. Within this small space was a high level of activity, however, as the programme organisers led different kinds of games with young people of a range of ages, with loud music playing from large speakers at the edges of the pitch, and a number of parents, residents of Palmer Grove and a few others (including, on occasion, me, my *CiC* colleague

and Nadia, the development worker), observing from the side lines. The density of activity as the programme was delivered somehow belied the spatial limitations of this small spot on the housing estate. This was emphasised further by the procedures for registering for the programme which involved giving an address and postcode (to identify whether participants were residents of Westin Hill or not). Furthermore, a range of flyers arranged at the registration desk publicised a number of other, similar events that the programme organisers were holding elsewhere in the wider borough, beyond Westin Hill.

Alex, the director of the organisation delivering the programme, described later in an interview with me a level of uncertainty around understanding and enforcing the Westin Hill boundary at the sessions. She suggested having a large map would help participants understand this boundary and how it related to their participation in the programme, funded by the *BL*:

*Alex: . . . and they can maybe dot, maybe have a map for a project, so when people come, can you put a dot or a pin on your road or something?*

*JR: Oh OK, yeah, yeah, yeah.*

*Alex: Just so we can see and we can build a picture of the [sports] project within Westin Hill. . . Where everyone's come from. . . And did we get anybody outside?*

*JR: Yeah, yeah.*

*Alex: Because I know there was like priority is Westin Hill but I don't want to turn away anybody, you know, that sort of . . . You know, so that's, and then that's ways for people to kind of say, look [the programme's] here from Westin Hill, look this is what we're doing to encourage building of knowledge.*

*JR: Yeah.*

*Alex: And I can just imagine that, right, guys, look we're trying to build to see where everyone is from the Westin Hill ward . . . Because we've, obviously we've got the register and we can kind of allocate the roads and the postcode to where they are. Because when we asked them, are you Westin Hill? They didn't know." (Interview with Alex, Westin Hill; December 2014)*

As such, this bold, highly visible (and audible) emplacement of the *BL* and its priorities, via the delivery of the funded programme, served to construct boundaries in different ways, some more

narrow than others. First, the targeting of the sports pitch at Palmer Grove asserted a (relatively) spatial boundary, designating this space as particularly important for the *BL*, in terms of its identity as a neglected – and therefore ‘needy’ – space and in terms of its value and appropriateness for the requirements of the funded programme. Similarly, and second, the focus on ‘young people’ constructed a boundary around a particular group of people framed as ‘in need’ in relation to the goals of the *BL*, and ‘targetable’ through a series of sessions that were manageable and deliverable within the structures of the *BL* set up by the committee in Westin Hill. Third, a broader boundary that corresponded with the geographical boundary adopted for the *BL* was implied by attempts to delineate between young people who were and were not residents of Westin Hill (and therefore ‘eligible’ recipients of the *BL*’s anticipated benefits).

Yet, these boundaries were also in tension with the situation of the programme funded for the *BL* within the work of an organisation that was used to delivering events across a wider geographical spread and to a range of people. Their ‘audience’ or ‘clients’ would typically include not just the ‘young people’ participating in the sports activity, but also their families and others residents of the space in which the programme was delivered (Palmer Grove or elsewhere). This therefore illustrates an area of overlap and blurring between boundary making and negotiation. Alex’s and residents’ uncertainty around the geographical *BL* boundary and how it might be asserted in terms of participation in the sports programme, contributed to the sense of instability and potential contestability of the asserted boundaries.

Alex’s idea of having a visual, tangible representation of the ‘official’ boundary of Westin Hill was something that was practised in a number of different ways throughout my fieldwork, and used as part of discursive and material constructions of boundaries as part of the *BL*. The map of the area, represented on the websites of Westin Hill and the national *BL*, held a prominent presence – figuratively, discursively and physically – across much of the work I observed during my time in the area. This geographic boundary and the spatial representation of the ‘community’ via the map were often referred to, or implied, in conversations around who was participating in the delivery of the *BL*, who might be excluded and in making sense of the varying priorities and needs of different groups of people and spaces in the area. In reference to the shape of the Westin Hill area as designated by this physical map, several residents and committee members described the most westerly end of the area as being under-represented in terms of who sat on the committee, and the distinct groups of people living in this part of the ward, compared with the rest of the ward. It appeared that for some, the drawn boundary, produced in material form through maps on websites, flyers and other

publicity materials, became a way of interpreting the spatial layout of the area and its boundaries, perhaps in ways they had not done previously.

Caroline, a committee member, who lived in this part of Westin Hill, said she had begun to call it ‘the wedge’ (reflecting its shape as depicted on the map) when she realised that her part of the ward was not being ‘represented’ at *BL* meetings, and had been concerned that residents in the ‘posher’ parts of the ward, closer to the park, were more dominant. Similarly, in conversation with Michael, the director of a local faith organisation based in the area but not actively involved in delivering the *BL*, he recounted the limited number of residents ‘representing’ the part of the ward he referred to as ‘the appendix’ at earlier meetings of the *BL* during its plan development stage. Thus, the visual, aesthetic attributes of the map as a representation of a boundary seemed to have come to play a role in residents’ spatial interpretations and experiences of what was contained by that boundary, and to what degree it was being represented or included within the *BL* via the committee.

Furthermore, several committee members and residents indicated that they had not really been aware of the ward boundary of Westin Hill prior to becoming involved in the *BL*, describing and naming other spatial configurations of the local area (both within and beyond Westin Hill) that had been more meaningful for them, in relation to, for example, their education or working lives. One such example of this emerged during a conversation during a go-along interview with Ajay, one of the youngest members of the committee who had grown up in Westin Hill, but who said that before joining the *BL* committee, he had thought about his local area more in terms of the wider town and borough in which Westin Hill was located. In describing to me his participation in the committee and the delivery of the initiative, however, he recounted some of the ways in which the map, with its clear geographical boundary of Westin Hill, had been employed in decision-making for the *BL*:

*“I asked [Ajay] how strictly he thinks the ward boundary is ‘policed’ within the context of the BL. He said he did think it was quite strictly policed; there was an understanding among the [committee] that they need to stay within the confines of the ward when selecting projects to fund, but that they need to be applicable and available for all of the ward too. He said that someone had brought along a map of the ward when they were discussing the project [funding] applications to check the boundary.”* (Westin Hill, fieldnotes from go-along interview with Ajay, July 2014).

This illustrated the instrumental role that the material manifestation of the geographical boundary of Westin Hill – in the form of a map – played in shaping the processes of delivering the *BL* and making sense of their responsibilities as committee members.

During my time attending committee and other meetings in Westin Hill I directly observed the role played by the map in demarcating boundaries for the *BL*. On several occasions discussions arose around which was the 'right' version of the map, and how to reproduce it in physical form, for example on the back of a newsletter to be delivered to all residents of Westin Hill, publicising the *BL* and its progress. At one committee meeting, while discussing the process for opening up a new round of applications for funding for local projects, committee members described various roles that different physical formats of the map could play, as part of asserting and managing the geographic boundary within which the money and activities of the *BL* were expected to be situated:

*"Derek said the projects need to be for the whole of the ward, and that was made clear to [an arts project] and [a sports project], saying they had to attract people from outside Palmer Grove. Someone suggested having a map of the ward on the application form to show the area projects are expected to cover with their activities. Lydia said they could have a big map at the meeting on a poster to show people. Sue said they had one previously from Janet Davies [a former local councillor], and Derek said there used to be a leaflet with a ward map on it, and perhaps this could be blown up. Colin suggested marking onto a map the projects as they happen, to show what's been happening where. Derek said it's useful for getting the scale of the area and helping people understand what's expected."* (Westin Hill, observation O-07, January 2015)

Here, and at other meetings, the geographic boundary was being asserted through the engagement of the map, as both a representation of the 'community' covered by the *BL* and as a potential physical resource (in different forms) with value for controlling and managing the administrative processes of delivering the *BL*, particularly attracting and governing the 'right' types of projects to be funded by the *BL*.

Although in this meeting the materiality of the map was only partially present – in discursive rather than physical form – the production and sharing of a physical form of the map continued to punctuate activities of boundary making in Westin Hill. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I had offered to assist Nadia, the development worker, with delivery of newsletters round the area. As we left her newly-acquired office space with newsletters in our bags, she asked to take a quick detour to a local printing shop situated on the high street running along one edge of Westin Hill. In the shop, she handed a copy of the newsletter to the man behind the counter and asked if he would be able to blow up the image of the map into a large poster size, which she intended to display at the public forum meetings. There was discussion between Nadia and the printer regarding the quality of the image, whether she had access to the original electronic version and what size she would need.

Negotiating on price for the printing, Nadia asked for a discount saying that she was a 'community worker'. At first the printer refused and it emerged that he assumed Nadia was 'from the council', complaining that business rates had been put up recently so he would not offer a discount. This led to Nadia attempting to explain the position of the *BL* as distinct from the council, describing its funding structure and purpose, and eventually they agreed a price and date for the poster to be printed. Here, then, the materiality of the map, and the physical, discursive and financial processes of getting it produced in a particular format, served not only to reproduce the geographic boundary of the *BL* in a visual, tangible and mobile form, but also necessitated the discursive positioning (and to some extent, negotiation) of the *BL* as distinct from the council, constructing another boundary around the purpose, values and ideology of the *BL*.

### **Craybourne:**

Similar assemblages of material, discursive and spatial practices constituted boundary making in Craybourne, though with some differences to Westin Hill in the kinds of boundaries asserted. This may, in part, reflect the fact that the residents' committee in Craybourne was at an earlier stage of the *BL* process than Westin Hill at the point of my fieldwork, as there seemed at times more tentativeness and less emphatic declaration of the boundaries constructed. The spatial enactment of boundaries was a prominent feature of much of the activity that occurred during my time in Craybourne.

One of my first encounters with the group of residents and local workers that regularly attended committee meetings was on the morning of a carnival taking place in the town in which Craybourne was situated. I learned that much of the route of the parade was along the sea front and within the Craybourne area, and the committee had arranged to put up a stall along the route to promote the *BL* and to canvass opinions from members of the public about the priorities for the local area, as part of their 'community consultation' work. I helped committee members with the setting up of the stall and arranging publicity materials, including leaflets and a large printed map of the area, on the stall table, but realised that while there were already a number of people gathering along the sea front in anticipation of the parade, the *BL* committee's stall was the only one in this area. I was informed that the rest of the carnival – amusements, food stalls, a stage for bands – was situated further up towards the centre of town, beyond the Craybourne area.

This rather stark, bold emplacement of the *BL* onto the physical landscape of Craybourne was also questioned a little later by a man in a high-visibility jacket, who approached the stall and asked Ryan, the committee chair, whether they had permission to be positioned here for the parade. There was

some discussion between the man and Ryan over who ‘at the council’ had given permission for the stall, and eventually it was agreed the stall could remain, with the carnival official suggesting that the council had not informed the organisers of the carnival about this stall. This encounter suggested that the visible and tangible positioning of the *BL* within the spatial landscape of Craybourne via the stall reflected both an assertion of a geographical boundary of the ‘community’ represented by the *BL*, but also a boundary between residents and ‘the council’ in relation to the governance of that space. However, this encounter also highlighted something of the precariousness around the assertion of these boundaries, requiring a degree of negotiation to affirm their positioning.

Over the course of my time spent in Craybourne, the committee arranged and held a presence at a number of different local events, including the carnival (described above), an arts and music festival held also along the seafront on the edge of the area, the ‘Craybourne Festival’ held in a park within the area boundary, and a few other events that took place across town, all as part of their efforts to consult with the ‘community’, to elicit opinions on priorities for the *BL* plan. These public expressions of the *BL*’s existence, typically in a highly visible form such as the stall with a large, bold banner, and committee members wearing matching t-shirts bearing the Craybourne *BL* slogan, seemed to be continued assertions of their positioning within spatial boundaries. Sometimes this was combined with assertions of the ‘official’ geographical boundary designated for the *BL*, expressed and enacted, for example, through displaying and engaging with a large map of the area placed on the stall table at local events:

*“Also on the stall [was]. . . a large, colour print map of the Craybourne area, with the boundary for the BL area marked in black. This proved to be a good focal point for conversations between members of the committee and members of the public, with lots of people tracing the line of the boundary, and using the map to indicate where they live (in a couple of cases, down to the exact house plotted on the map), whether just in or just outside the boundary. Others, when looking at the map, seemed to find it a little challenging to orientate themselves by the map and to find their location.”* (Craybourne, observation O-01, May 2014)

Other, more implicit boundaries were also indicated, however, through the very positioning of the *BL* (represented through the physical materials of the stall and people manning it) at public events occurring in local spaces. The continued and recognisable presence of the *BL* at what were considered ‘key’ local events indicated a process of fixing the work of the *BL* onto the spatial

landscape, and as an assertion of its presence alongside other 'local' people, activities and organisations also prominent at these events.

At a couple of committee meetings prior to the Craybourne Festival in the summer of 2014, members discussed a range of interactive features to add to the stall, to attract and engage different groups of people in suggesting improvements for the area. Underscoring the activity around planning for the festival appeared to be a general sense that the Craybourne Festival would be their 'big day'; the committee's chance to situate themselves as part of the local area and assert the Craybourne identity as the boundary of the *BL* (and vice versa). At a participatory group research exercise conducted with colleagues from the evaluation study several months later, we asked members of the committee to highlight significant events or time points in their experience of being part of the *BL*. Angela, a committee member, was quick to identify their presence at the recent carnival and festival as a key 'turning point' in the trajectory of the *BL*. She stated that it was at this point that they came together and were out 'in public', rather than being just a group of people sitting in a room having meetings. Hence, this process of ascribing the *BL* onto the physical landscape appeared to be an important mode of asserting the boundary of 'community' as spatially-oriented and publically visible.

These public events were seen as key opportunities to 'engage' the public and to consult the 'community'; to gather opinions on the positive and negative aspects of the area and what should be the priorities for the *BL*'s plan. Brief questionnaires were often used - for example at the carnival, the Craybourne Festival, and at a Christmas music event at a local arts organisation – as mechanisms to approach members of the public and capture their views. However, the 'public' nature of these consultation opportunities seemed to provoke and necessitate assertions of the boundaries, as part of debates around who was eligible to give their opinions. Prior to these events, committee members discussed whether they should only target people from Craybourne (the boundary implied as the 'official' one designated for the *BL*), or whether 'outsiders' might be able to contribute too. It was decided by the chair of the committee, Ryan, that the opinions of 'outsiders' on Craybourne might be very helpful, in addition to local residents. While this highlights some of the discursive negotiation around boundaries and how they should be enacted through consultation activities, the inviting of comments from 'outsiders' also served to highlight and demarcate a particular boundary of a shared, public identity of Craybourne. At the carnival, I witnessed a few people who came up to the stall and, when asked for their opinion on Craybourne, were quite forceful in criticising its buildings and the people who live there, suggesting that 'knocking it all down' would be the only way to improve it. Committee members who had been talking to other members of the public reported

back some similar comments from ‘outsiders’, including one woman’s assertion that it was a mistake to put residents in charge of the *BL* as they would waste the money by ‘spending it all on drugs’.

These comments seemed to reflect a broader sense of Craybourne carrying a negative ‘reputation’. While committee members and other residents were often explicit in their critique of this reputation as unfair and unfounded, they also (implicitly) engaged with the notion that Craybourne had an externally recognised and shared reputation. Gerry, a local priest whose parish was partly situated within Craybourne, described to me external perceptions of the area as a place to work:

*JR: And er do you know why other people or other priests were perhaps less keen to come; why they were struggling to fill that position before you came?*

*Gerry: Erm it’s partly because back in the erm late 90s it was quite a nasty area to live in. My predecessor once removed was beaten up on the doorstep . . . there was a lot of violence in Craybourne . . . But it’s a lot tidied, it’s been tidied up a lot.*

*JR: Ok*

*Gerry: . . . It’s a poor parish; people . . . haven’t got a lot of money and for a lot of people, it-it’s, I mean I got it well, I got it when I- when it was announced, why do you want to go to that dump?*

*JR: Really?*

*Gerry: And overall that is the way a lot of people who don’t live in Craybourne would describe it.*

*JR: And even to this day, so that hasn’t changed?*

*Gerry: Even now and you see I’m able to say well I don’t think it’s a dump and they say oh why don’t you think it’s a dump; because I said, well because I made the conscious decision to move here and to live here. The Bishop didn’t make me come here; I wanted to come here . . . You go to [nearby village], nice church, nice garden round it; everybody wants to get married there, whereas for me this is where the real work is.”*

(Craybourne, interview with Gerry, July 2014).

Here Gerry engaged with the external reputation of Craybourne both to dispute it and to use it to justify the importance of a priest’s work in the area, reaffirming a boundary of the area via a relational process of conceptualising the identity of ‘within’ and ‘beyond’ the boundary. Thus, the multiple processes of inviting people to characterise and comment upon Craybourne as an area

discursively constructed boundaries through the conceptualisation of an identity of Craybourne as distinct from other places. This identity was constructed in the form of a 'poor reputation' of it as a place to live, one which necessarily demarcated 'outsiders' and 'insiders' by those who shared or refuted this identity (respectively).

Finally, a way that seemed to bridge both the articulation of a spatial boundary of Craybourne and something of its boundary in the form of a negative identity, seemed to arise through the practice of delivering a local magazine, produced partly in conjunction with the *BL*, to all the households and businesses within the area. I offered assistance to Katy, the committee's 'community worker' in delivering the first edition of the magazine, which was produced a few months into my fieldwork. I was handed a photocopy of a map with the *BL* boundary marked and the streets I should deliver to highlighted, and was given copies of the magazine which listed what was happening in Craybourne and included a feature on the *BL* and how to get involved with it. My delivery route took me to a couple of streets that I had not spent much time in up to that point, including a primarily residential street, with long rows of large, terraced houses down both sides. I tried to put the magazines through letter boxes, but for almost all of the houses down one side of the street this was impossible due to the letter box being blocked in from the inside, or due to the amount of other post (largely junk mail) already overflowing out of the letter box. I was a little confused by this until a woman sitting out in front of her house on the other side of the street called over to me to say that all those houses were empty and waiting for redevelopment, and I realised they were part of an intended programme funded by the council that I had heard about but which, I understood, had been delayed.

My own participation in the delivery of newsletters thus engaged me in the practices of following, and thus reinforcing, the geographic boundaries of Craybourne and the spaces contained by them, as I traced streets within the demarcated area on the map. Additionally, the physical experience of trying to negotiate a rather derelict part of the area and its abandoned houses also led me to engage with a broader identity of Craybourne as both an 'undesirable' place to live and an area neglected by external agencies such as the council. The latter identity was fairly commonly narrated by committee members and other residents of Craybourne who would recall a number of historical scenarios in which 'the council' and other organisations and agencies had failed to deliver promised funds and development opportunities to Craybourne. Committee members Angela and Paul echoed my experiences some months later, when delivering a subsequent edition of the magazine. They remarked how surprised they had been, when trying to deliver along the same street, on finding so many houses deserted and boarded up, despite them both being aware of the stalled status of the

redevelopment programme. Here, the magazine and its delivery played a role in connecting committee members and me to the physical reality of the geographic space and character of Craybourne, and to the boundaries demarcating it as a 'problematic' space in which to live (for some), and its separation from the council and structures of resourcing.

## **Processes of Boundary Negotiation**

The distinction between boundary making and boundary negotiation is perhaps something of a false one, as typically both were engaged (though not always equally) in what I have identified as the 'boundary work' of enacting 'community' around the *BL*. However, just as there were occasions where more concerted emphasis was made on the demarcation and assertion of particular boundaries, so too were there scenarios in which such (and other) boundaries were brought into explicit debate, discussion and contestation. These fields of negotiation often reflected competing sets of values that were reflected in the work of the *BL* and its relationship with the 'community', including values of perceived 'need' and 'deservedness' to participate in and/or benefit from the *BL*, sometimes intersected by notions of 'skill' and capacity to deliver the *BL*. In both Westin Hill and Craybourne, the positioning of boundaries in relation to other entities – other organisations, causes, sets of resources, and spaces – led to questioning and negotiation of the scope of the *BL*, who should be involved and in which spaces the work should (and should not) happen.

### **Westin Hill:**

As described earlier, the emplacement of the *BL* in the local geographic space played an important role in the making and asserting of boundaries in Westin Hill. However, the spatial boundaries of 'community' in relation to the *BL* were often called into question (explicitly and implicitly) and negotiated in terms of their appropriateness for the purpose of the *BL* and their perceived value or eligibility for inclusion in the work of the *BL*. Similar to Nadia's search for the 'right' kind of space in which to situate herself as the development worker for Westin Hill, there were a number of debates around what constituted the 'right' (and therefore also the 'wrong') spaces for various aspects of delivering the *BL*. These negotiations of spatial boundaries were writ large in historical narratives of how the 'official' boundary for Westin Hill was agreed at the outset of the *BL* initiative. A common story was communicated of the boundary originally covering a smaller area within Westin Hill, considered particularly deprived, before being 'extended' to cover the whole of the ward. Several people who had been involved in the early stages of establishing the *BL* in Westin Hill described some of the negotiations that had occurred around agreeing the 'right' area to be included in the

initiative. A council worker, Hardeep, described the challenges of agreeing a geographic boundary that also corresponded with the perceived values of the *BL* in terms of ‘need’:

*JR: And, um, I understand that there was a bit of change around the, the kind of actual boundaries that, um, the BL was allocated to? So, I think, is, is that right?*

*Hardeep: Yeah. It was a bit, it was a bit difficult, because, if I remember correctly, the, the, the size of, Local Trust were looking for things that, in terms of, in terms of the local government context, they were looking for things that really, they wanted a certain size of area but also places that had been overlooked in terms of regeneration funding. . . So that was the first challenge I think, in terms of them wanting a certain population size, but for the, for that population size not to have received any regeneration funding.*

*JR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

*Hardeep: So I really struggled with that . . . So what we ended up doing was saying, well, we can't give you that because there will be nowhere in the borough that has a population of that size that is deprived that will have been overlooked. . .*

*JR: Yeah.*

*Hardeep: But what we can do is identify some of our really most deprived small areas that have been overlooked, literally because they're often islands within wider, there are, sort of, islands of deprivation within wider areas of, of non, non-deprivation . . . And if you're insisting on the money being, um, the population being there, what we'd have to do is look within that ward and see where we could, kind of, add bits.” (Westin Hill, interview with Hardeep, December 2014).*

Thus, negotiation of the geographic boundaries of the ‘community’, and of the boundaries determining ‘need’ and subsequent eligibility to benefit from the *BL*, was embedded within the historical narrative and origins of the initiative in Westin Hill.

These narratives were evident in discussions and activities I observed during my time in the field, particularly those involving residents who lived in the part of the ward that had originally been designated as the boundary for the *BL*. There appeared to be ongoing tension around perceptions of the ‘need’ of this area and its residents, in comparison with other parts of Westin Hill considered to be more affluent, but this intersected concerns among committee members over the importance of representing and benefiting the ‘whole community’ in their decisions over allocating funding and delivering their plan. On several occasions in meetings and other conversations, a couple of

committee members were keen to remind others that this part of Westin Hill was the original intended area for the *BL*. Sue, a committee member and long-time resident of this part of the ward, indicated to me that she considered it her responsibility to try to 'protect' this area, and that if she stepped down from the committee, which she said she had previously been tempted to do, she believed 'nothing' would be done for this area at all.

In contrast, however, others questioned the appropriateness of the *BL* focusing too much on this area, for example funding activities such as the sports programme that took place at Palmer Grove, within this part of the ward. In conversation with Max, a resident of Palmer Grove and someone who had been involved with the *BL* previously but had since stepped back, he conveyed to me a rather conflicted perception of this area being a focus of the *BL*. He was critical of what he saw as a dominance within the committee and those most actively involved by 'middle class' residents of the ward, with their 'airy-fairy' ideas, and the lack of representation and 'voice' of people from the more deprived part of the ward, such as himself. Yet, he also questioned the value of too narrow a focus on the delivery of *BL*-funded activities:

*"Talking about the two projects that have been approved for the pilot spending for the BL, Max indicated that he didn't think it was a very good idea that these projects were at [the Palmer Grove community centre], and implied he thought there was too much attention on [this area]. He said this approach wouldn't be very 'inclusive' as there are a lot of people who won't go to [this area]. He said doing more things at [another community centre] would be better, as it's somewhere that lots of people pass on their way back from the station and the high street. He said he thought the fact that the two projects were both at [the community centre] indicated that it reflected whose voice is heard and who shouts the loudest."* (Westin Hill, conversation with Max, IC-03, October 2014).

Here then, the negotiation of boundaries in terms of the Westin Hill area as a whole, and of spaces within it, reflected different sets of values and claims which intersected around a geographical boundary, including perceptions of relative need, feasibility and representation of a diversity of residents.

This part of Westin Hill, including Palmer Grove and its community centre, also played a role in negotiations around boundaries between the 'community' represented by the *BL*, and other entities, particularly the council, mediated through questions of where to allocate funds. The uncertainty of funding for various activities at the community centre, such as a youth club, was a prominent feature in this positioning between the 'community' and the council. At several meetings, committee members and others debated whether putting *BL* funds into the community centre would be

appropriate, or if this would be seen as encroaching onto the responsibilities of the council, which some committee members thought was not 'permitted' under the structure of the *BL* and would be prevented by the 'rep' allocated to assist the committee with their work:

*"Faith [director of a local arts organisation] said that when they'd applied for the funding [from the BL], they'd planned to combine their activities with the youth club activities at [the community centre] but then couldn't, and said that the youth now have nowhere to go. Derek said the problem relating to [the community centre] is that when they've discussed it in committee meetings, the rep has always said that they shouldn't use the money to replace council funding. Derek said that his 'own view' is that the youth club is funded from the housing association, and then from a grant from the councillors' ward forum funding . . . so it's not permanent council funding. He said that last year the BL committee didn't have the money to offer, but Derek said that the rep said he'd 'veto' any applications made requesting funding for something that should be funded by the council . . . Lydia brought up the issue of 'legacy and sustainability', saying that if they just keep paying for the youth club, it will end again in 10 years. They need to find other ways to fund it. Derek said it's important to get it up and running now, and then to look for alternative funding later, but Lydia disagreed, suggesting they'd lose the impetus to look for other funding."* (Westin Hill, observation O-08, January 2015).

This debate highlights the role that money – how it is accessed and spent – played in the positioning and negotiations of roles, responsibilities and priorities among the 'community' covered by the *BL* and other intersecting entities, including the local council (and its various structures of funding) and local third sector organisations seeking funds. It also indicates how temporal aspects of the processes of spending money influenced the positioning of boundaries around what and whom should be prioritised through the *BL*. Lydia's mention of 'sustainability' – reflective of broader (political) discourses of resource allocation and development – hinted at the range of values that underpinned negotiations of boundaries. These values reflected 'local' concerns, such as the spaces and people of the 'community' and how to prioritise their need for benefit from the *BL*, but also 'supra-local' concerns, such as questions of efficient and effective allocation of (public) resources in a broad context of austerity and spending cuts.

Money continued to play a similar role in other situations arising around the work of the *BL*, particularly in relation to the planning of a local festival which was held in Westin Hill just after I finished my fieldwork. A few committee members were leading the planning of the festival, meeting with representatives from other local organisations such as community centres and an arts

organisation, to decide on the various sites at which events for the festival would be located, and the logistics for a parade to process between each site. Observing these planning meetings, I was surprised when different potential sources of funding, including the local councillors' 'ward forum funding' were mentioned and strategies for accessing them discussed. I had presumed that the festival would be funded through the *BL*, as the idea for the festival was instigated by members of the committee, and the approved plan for Westin Hill had allocated funding for events that brought together different local spaces and groups. While funds available from the *BL* were highlighted at these planning meetings, so too were pots of money potentially available from the council for street parties and from a local housing association for residents' events. The discussions among the various local representatives and committee members about who might be eligible to apply for each of these pots of money, for how much and for which element of the festival, structured much of the planning meetings. This demonstrated not only the complex web of resources and organisations operating in and across the local area, but also the different levels of knowledge and expertise among individuals regarding how to access funding. Negotiations of boundaries of the 'community' relating to the *BL*, therefore, drew on shifting positioning among multiple organisations, individuals, local knowledges and sets of resources in the process of establishing and ascribing a 'community' event onto local spaces.

Positioning in relation to 'the council' also prompted more explicit disagreements among committee members in particular as they tried to conceive of the work of the *BL* and how to deliver it, acknowledging other changes in the local area planned by the council. While the demarcation between 'resident' and 'council' was clearly made, conceptually and in practice, through the eligibility criteria for being a committee member, it became more blurred in relation to the identities of some of those involved in the *BL* (in the past and present) and how the multiple, different roles played out by some individuals intersected and challenged the boundary of the 'community' as residents. A couple of months into my fieldwork, at a committee meeting, Jasmine, the chair (at the time) of the committee, informed the other members that she had been in contact with a couple of people from the council, and was trying to arrange to meet with them. The purpose of the meeting was not very clear (at least to me), aside from Jasmine suggesting that a council worker wanted to discuss their 'support' in relation to the *BL*. In a later conversation with Jasmine, however, she also implied to me that she had been in contact with the same council worker regarding 'something else' connected to her employment with a voluntary organisation located just outside Westin Hill. This indicated a blurring of positions between Jasmine as chair of the *BL* committee, and other (professional, personal) roles she held in the (wider) local area.

Similar blurring of the boundary between the council and *BL*, and between residents as members of the 'community' for the *BL* and other identities they held, were implicated periodically at other meetings and events punctuating my fieldwork in Westin Hill. On a couple of occasions, committee members reported attending the bi-monthly public meetings held by local councillors in Westin Hill but stressed that they had attended 'as a resident' or on behalf of another group, such as the local police safety forum, rather than 'representing' the *BL*. As such, the expression of boundaries between different roles played by individuals, the different groups, causes or organisations they were more and less connected to, and the spaces in which these intersected locally – such as at councillors' meetings – served to blur and cast into ongoing negotiation the boundary of the 'community' through the work of the *BL*. Here, the shifting between boundaries, identities and roles involved both the distinction of these boundaries relative to others (boundary making), but also ongoing revision and re-positioning (boundary negotiation).

### **Craybourne:**

The stage of the *BL* that the Craybourne committee was at, during my fieldwork, seemed to contribute to the processes of negotiations around the boundary of 'community' in ways that, at times, differed from Westin Hill. The main work of the committee during that time – consulting with the 'community' to identify priorities for the local area and to develop the plan for delivering the *BL* – framed discussions and more implicit questioning of who was eligible to contribute to setting the priorities for Craybourne, and of the kinds of spaces in which the views of the 'community' might be sought. A prominent issue of some tension historically, and which seeped into the interactions I observed in Craybourne, was a perceived (and enacted) division between the 'residents' of the area and the 'traders', commonly framed as the two principal constituents of the local population. As I began to understand a little of the history of the *BL*, a common narrative shared among those attending committee meetings and actively involved in the *BL*, was that there had been divisions and tensions at previous committee meetings between residents and people who owned shops in the area, commonly categorised as 'the traders'. I was told that some people had previously questioned the 'agendas' of the local traders who had attended committee meetings, and had expressed concerns that they should not be permitted to influence the *BL* as they were just interested in 'getting money' for their own businesses. I understood that earlier committee meetings had often been quite tense and difficult, with arguments particularly around who could or should be participating. It was conveyed that the traders had since stopped attending the committee meetings, and I came across several residents who also said they had withdrawn from the *BL* during this period, due to the uncomfortable dynamics between different people.

Shortly after I started my fieldwork in Craybourne, the committee appointed their first, paid 'community' worker to assist with the consultation process. In her first few weeks in this role, Katy decided to attend the monthly meeting of the local traders' group which met in a café in the centre of Craybourne. I, too, attended the meeting, and it emerged Katy had requested permission to attend the meeting to talk about the *BL*. After some discussions among the group about plans for putting up Christmas lights to attract people to the main shopping streets in Craybourne, Katy introduced herself and briefly talked about the current stage of the work for the *BL*. She mentioned the *BL* committee's plan to apply to one of *Local Trust's* partner agencies for some support to increase social entrepreneurship in the area, which she thought might be of interest to the local traders. Katy said that she was aware that there had been some tensions between the traders and the rest of the *BL* committee previously, but that she wanted to try to bridge the relations again. This prompted discussion among some of the other people at the meeting about their various experiences of attending *BL* committee meetings in the past:

*"There was more discussion about the feelings of division between the traders and residents and the experiences some traders had had at earlier [committee] meetings where they found people rude and unwelcoming, so didn't come back . . . They discussed how they'd been questioned as to whether they're 'residents' of Craybourne, but a woman said 'we're here because we believe in Craybourne, not because we make money out of it'." (Craybourne, fieldnote R-02, June 2014).*

By the end of this meeting, many of the traders seemed to be slightly more positive towards re-engaging with the *BL*, offering to take copies of leaflets promoting the Craybourne *BL* from Katy and to put them in their shops to 'spread the word'.

As such, the appointment of Katy into the 'community' development role appeared to influence the (re)negotiation of boundaries between people within the area by nature of their status, potential to 'gain' from the *BL* (in different ways), and therefore their eligibility to participate in conversations and decision-making. Indeed, the relationship between the traders' group and the *BL* committee improved over the course of my time in Craybourne, even after Katy had stepped down from her role a few months later. This improvement was illustrated at the end of my fieldwork, when the two groups were planning to collaborate by constructing and sharing a float at the annual carnival, to promote both causes to the local public.

Processes and practices of boundary negotiation were also enacted in relation to other events and anticipated plans for changes to the local area. During my time in Craybourne, a proposal for the

development of a large, long-neglected plot of land by a commercial company emerged in discussions among residents, and was frequently reported in the local paper. The geographical situation of this proposed development at once challenged the 'official' boundary of the Craybourne BL's 'community' as the plot lay just beyond the edge of Craybourne but was of great interest to the residents and committee members. This was due in part because it was felt that this neglected plot was a 'barrier' dissuading people from moving from the main town centre down into Craybourne. Committee members were keen to find out more about the plans for the proposed development – to be a retail and leisure complex – to understand how the development, if approved, might impact on Craybourne, its residents and businesses, and whether to position the BL as being in public support of the plans. I attended a meeting that had been arranged by Ryan, the chair of the committee, to bring together residents and traders from Craybourne, and representatives from the commercial development company.

At the meeting, two developers gave a brief presentation of their plans and the timescale for the planning approval and building, and then answered a range of questions from committee members and others. These included questions about the type of facilities that would be built, about roads and pedestrian pathways to link the complex and Craybourne, and the possibilities of jobs for local contractors and residents, indicating a conceptual negotiation of the boundary of the area in terms of opportunities and resources available. There were also discussions about possible complaints against the planning proposal from business owners in the centre of the wider town, prompting discursive negotiation of the boundary between Craybourne and the wider town, and the potential for increased flows of people, money and spatial identities across the boundaries:

*“The developer also said that another major issue or complaint against the planned development was around its potential impact on the town centre, particularly the [leisure complex]. There were various murmurs of complaint about the [leisure complex], and how it was owned by [a non-local company] so the money goes out of the area . . . There were a few comments about how the new development might bring the 'centre' of the town further towards Craybourne, relocating it.” (Craybourne, observation O-06, August 2014).*

Thus, this meeting appeared to create processes of attempted alignment between the different interests of the 'community' (as residents needing employment, as business owners needing customers) and the commercial company, as well as a (temporary) dissolution of previously demarcated boundaries between the residents and the traders, and around the geographic area of Craybourne as designated for the BL.

At a *BL* committee meeting a few days later, the members discussed their opinions on the proposed development with enthusiasm, agreeing that it could potentially be very beneficial for the area to have the neglected plot of land back in use, and attracting more visitors into the broader area, and Craybourne specifically. However, the mood grew tenser as people disagreed at the approach they should take as a committee to show their support for the development plans, in advance of the council meeting at which permission for the development would be decided. Some members argued that the committee were in a 'position of power' with respect to the development company, and should request some financial or other benefits in return for a public statement of their support for the plans. Others, however, felt that they should not, as a committee, be seen to be greedy or to be 'prostituting' themselves to the developers. Moreover, at this meeting the committee members found themselves debating their position in relation to the 'community' they were seeking to serve through the *BL*, contesting how a public statement of support for the development in the form of a press release, would be interpreted:

*"Geoff said that they're a group of residents looking to spend some money, and wasn't sure that they should be making a public statement as it might put barriers up with some residents who don't support the development. Ryan said they'd be speaking as the committee not as the whole of Craybourne; he emphasised the high level of support that had already been shown for the development and said there are already lots of people who don't like us [the committee] anyway."* (Craybourne, observation O-08, August 2014).

Here, the boundary between the wider 'community' and the committee was negotiated, with the function of representation used to negate (in the case of Geoff) and affirm (in the case of Ryan) any separation between the two. This occurred within negotiations of the scope of the work of the *BL* committee in relation to the boundary between Craybourne and a large commercial development with potential wide-reaching economic impacts. The timing of this scenario, amidst the efforts of the committee to engage with and consult the 'community' on priorities for the *BL*, highlighted the frequent shifting of positions and tensions embedded within constant drawing and redrawing of geographic, social and material boundaries.

## **Interpretation**

This chapter has described the ongoing boundary work of enacting 'community' in relation to the *BL* initiative via focus on the sometimes distinct but often linked processes of boundary making (affirming, asserting, demarcating) and boundary negotiation (contesting, dissolving, revising). I

have identified a wide range of spatial, material and discursive practices that arose around and through the work of delivering the *BL* in Westin Hill and Craybourne, and which constituted the boundary work around enactments of 'community'. This range of practices and the sets of relations they comprised and engaged unfolded differently in each site, reflecting the specific dynamics of the areas, such as historical narratives of identity, geographic characteristics, and the particular stage and focus of each *BL* committee at the time of my fieldwork (for Westin Hill, the allocation of money to projects; for Craybourne, 'community' consultation on local priorities). It should also be noted that the boundaries produced and negotiated cannot be said to be always commensurate with, or directly interchangeable with concepts of 'community'. In some cases, these boundaries were discursively distinct from 'community' in an explicit way, such as the frequent classification of the Westin Hill area as the 'ward', and other times boundaries were enacted that demarcated sub-groups or distinct spaces, depending on the values at stake and purpose for boundary work being undertaken.

This indicates that boundary work around 'community' was multi-dimensional in nature, engaging "*multiple, interacting boundaries*" (Pachucki, Pendergrass et al. 2007, p15) which were never complete or fixed, but "*partial and fragmentary*" (Bashkow 2004, p451). As Bowker and Star assert (1999), this illustrates that classificatory processes (such as defining 'community') can never be complete, and that our attention should be drawn to where and how the demarcations between categories 'fail' (p10), or (in the case of the *BL*), get challenged, negated or revised.

The heterogeneity of actors and relations in the examples of boundary work described highlights the complexity of boundary work as an ongoing, incomplete, and temporally-specific process. However, there are some commonalities observable across the two sites in terms of the kinds of negotiations occurring, and the values underpinning these negotiations. In both Westin Hill and Craybourne the residents' committees engaged with, reproduced and/or revised the geographical boundary given through the organisation of the *BL* initiative at a national level, and values including eligibility to contribute and deservingness to benefit were evoked in the assertion or challenging of boundaries. These practices perhaps suggest ongoing struggles around the question of 'representation' within and around the structure of the *BL* initiative and its delivery in local sites. The notion of 'representation' has become prominent in literature on 'community' and participatory approaches to addressing health and social inequalities (Connelly 2011), with questions raised around the different meanings of representation when it occurs outside a formal democratic, electoral structure (Barnes, Newman et al. 2004, Urbinati and Warren 2008). Enmeshed with interpretations of what it means for a small group of people (such as the residents' committees) to be 'representing' the

interests of a larger group and/or territory (such as the designated *BL* areas), are ideas of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘accountability’, in terms of the rights and responsibilities of the few to speak and act for the many (Connelly 2011). Clearly, then, the boundary work described here – which boundaries are asserted, through which practices and by whom, and how they might be questioned, challenged or negotiated – becomes highly relevant for understanding how representation might be practiced and interpreted within a ‘community’ participatory initiative such as the *BL*. Given that much of this boundary work emerged through the actions and interactions of a very small proportion of the people (and spaces) indicated by the *BL*’s given scope – predominantly, the residents’ committees – the process of representation itself was a form of boundary making and negotiation, in terms of constructing the imagined dimension (Anderson 1983) of the ‘community’ and its scale beyond the committee and the meeting room.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, previous work on the symbolic nature of ‘community’ boundaries has perhaps neglected to consider the range of material and spatial practices that were engaged in the boundary work observed in relation to the *BL*. For example, Cohen presents boundary work as a process of protecting and maintaining a particular ‘community’ identity, performed through activities such as collective, social rituals which symbolise, and thus represent and reaffirm, characteristics of that identity (1985a, 1987). Yet, I suggest that in the context of the *BL* boundaries and boundary work are themselves *productive* as well as (or even instead of) representative of ‘community’, in that boundaries and their meanings are co-produced with the ongoing delivery of the *BL* by the committee and other actors in their specific contextual settings. Barth identifies boundaries as ‘generative’, in relation to ethnic identity and culture (1998 [1969]), and this appears commensurate with the roles that boundaries seem to play in relation to both the *BL* and the ‘community’ in Westin Hill and Craybourne. Boundaries (and the work of asserting and negotiating them) arise through, but also contribute actively to the demands of delivering the *BL*. From the accounts presented here, they seemed to play a generative role in the work of identifying priorities and allocating resources; making sense of, and ‘doing’, representation (of the ‘community’); and positioning the *BL* in its contextual environment alongside other entities and structures such as ‘the council’, and other broader processes of social and economic change.

Gieryn’s (1983) discussion of boundary work among scientists and its role in protecting autonomy and claims over resources, as well as authority, is relevant here. Gieryn’s work focuses largely on the rhetorical strategies employed in boundary work to demarcate ‘science’ from ‘non-science’, and has some resonance with the boundary making and negotiation in both sites around the ‘community’ as distinct from other entities, in particular ‘the council’. This reflects established and entrenched

hierarchies of power and unequal access to resources, illustrated for example in the shared historical narratives of Craybourne as 'neglected' by the council. The presence of money within the *BL* seemed to influence further this boundary work between the 'community' and other entities such as the council, particularly given a wider context of (state) cuts to public resources at the local level. This seemed to prompt testing and challenging of the established hierarchy of powers and resources between the council and the 'community', via mechanisms of asserting and protecting (and occasionally negotiating) the boundary between the two, particularly through the evocation of criteria of eligibility to participate in *BL* decision-making.

However, where the accounts from Westin Hill and Craybourne differ perhaps to the emphasis in Gieryn's work, is the extent of boundary work occurring not just as a process of relating between insiders and outsiders, but also the negotiations, positioning and repositioning among the materials, spaces, and people that are ostensibly *within* the field of interest; here, the 'community' and geographical area as demarcated by the *BL* initiative. This highlights the necessity of attending closely to the shifting assemblages of relations that seem to shape, from 'within', interpretations of eligibility of particular people, spaces and activities to contribute to and/or benefit from the processes of the *BL*, such as decision-making or the allocation of funds.

Therefore, the examples of boundary work presented in this chapter highlight possible implications for evaluating and interpreting the impacts of a 'community' initiative, such as the *BL*, on determinants of health inequalities, particularly in terms of the dynamics of how eligibility to contribute to, and benefit from, the initiative are negotiated. This indicates the influential role played by boundary work in mediating differential access to resources (social, material, economic) that influence health states and therefore inequalities, in relation to different practices and scenarios arising through the delivery of the initiative. This chapter has also given an introduction to some of the key actors (spatial, material, human, conceptual), and the networks of relations between them, that were at play in the ongoing enactment of 'community' through and around the delivery of the *BL*. In subsequent chapters, I will explore in more detail some of these forms of relating: the positioning of the 'individual' in relation to the 'collective', and its contribution to enactments of 'community'; and relations of distance and exclusion that arose not only among the processes of the *BL* delivered in each area, but also in terms of my own position as an ethnographic researcher within each field site. Finally, the implications of these forms of relating, the networks of actors involved, and the processes through which 'community' was enacted through the *BL* will be considered carefully in relation to broader questions of how the 'community's' role in intervening on health inequalities might be interpreted and framed from a public health evaluation perspective.

## 8. Fragmented Relating: Positioning the Individual and the Collective

### Introduction

The previous chapter's focus on boundaries and practices of boundary work might, forgivably, leave the reader with a sense of the important processes of relating and identifying occurring only at the *edges* of the 'community', and thus leaving its 'interior' under explored. Certainly, approaches to theorising the symbolic construction of 'community' boundaries in terms of insiders and outsiders could be critiqued for their neglect of the shifting processes of relating that occur among a 'community's' members, unwittingly implying a homogeneity and coherence of relatedness and of relating (if not of identities). As such, it is important to take a figurative step inside the boundaries of the 'community' (however problematic that proposition might be), to consider the forms of relating, positioning and (dis)connection that constitute the 'community' and its parts. This chapter will focus on, and challenge, the premise of the 'community' as a collective entity, comprising multiple, connected individuals. I will examine how observations of the processes of enacting 'community' in and through the *Big Local* initiative in my two field sites led to the identification of relationships between the 'individual' and the 'collective', and of varying forms of relating among and between the people involved, or implicated, in the initiative. Dividing this chapter into two parts, I will first describe the processes and narratives which positioned the individual as separate and distanced from, but also intersecting, the collective, as constructed through the *Big Local* initiative. In the second part, I will describe how the divide between the collective and the individual was varyingly governed, and how the 'community' was constructed as a collective, but also segmented, 'whole' through the work of delivering the initiative.

The focus of this chapter (and its two constituent parts) is reminiscent of some of the most fundamental debates within social theorising; namely the relationship between and positioning of the individual and the social group (usually, 'society'). Traditional social theories have arguably privileged the view of the social group as a collective entity, separating out individualism, and often consigning it to an abnormal, even pathological space in relation to the social collective, for example in Durkheim's theory of 'anomie' leading to suicide, and Marx's focus on 'alienation' from one's class (Cohen 1994, Cerulo 1997). However, this dichotomy of the individual and collective (in 'community' or society) denotes a distinction between the two that arguably does not account for the full range of forms of relating that are involved in positioning the individual self within a social context (Cohen 1994), and there have been explicit calls for a disruption of the assumed binary of individual–social

(Campbell and Cornish 2014). Furthermore, taking the collective entity as merely an aggregate or plurality of individuals potentially undermines the complex, dialogic and interactional processes through which identities and relations are formed and shared between and among groups of individuals (Somers 1994, Jenkins 2008).

Criticisms of traditional 'community studies', that they over-emphasised solidarity and relations of connection amongst groups of (spatially situated) people (Crow and Allan 1994, Hoggett 1997, Crow 2002), have also been oriented more recently towards examinations of contemporary forms of collective identity, for example in contexts of increasing globalisation, mobility and communication (Fog Olwig 2009). For example, Rapport and Amit argue that the discipline of anthropology has always privileged "*collectivities as the proper locus and subject matter of anthropological investigation*" (Rapport and Amit 2002, p4). Even as the anthropological 'gaze' turns towards new forms and flows of 'community' in a multi-sited, deterritorialised world, 'collectivities' and collective sociality often remain the focus of its attention (Sökefeld 1999, Amit 2002). As such, there persists an implicit assumption of holism, solidarity and connectivity underpinning examinations of the relations of 'communities' (Amit 2002, Coleman 2009). Acknowledging these criticisms, and the tension of the individual-collective positioning in theorising social groups and sociality, it is important therefore, to examine different forms of relating in, between and among individuals and groups, in relation to the enactment of 'community' (Squire 2011), and as Rapport urges, to "*apprehend that ambiguous interface between aggregation and individuality*" (2002, p138).

Therefore, in this chapter I will present and describe different perspectives on forms of relating between the individual and the collective, arising through and around the *BL* in Craybourne and Westin Hill, and which serve to disrupt, decentre and fragment the idea of the 'community' as a collective whole, and/or as a connected aggregate of individuals. The first part of the chapter, Part A, focuses on how the activities of the *BL* gave rise to varying and shifting positionings of the individual in relation to the collective. This is shown through the discursive, conceptual and physical 'setting apart' of individuals (and small groups of individuals) from the collective, arising around the delivery of the *BL* and which reflected perceptions of different values of eligibility to contribute to, or benefit from, the initiative. The narration and sharing of personal trajectories also served to position the individual relative to the collective in various ways, both diverging from and intersecting the collective domain of the *BL*. Part B focuses on the dynamics between the collective and the individual, specifically in relation to the management or governance of the divide between the two, and according to various sets of values, for the purposes of delivering the *BL*. I also describe the processes of sub-dividing the collective into different groups and spaces according to varying

agendas, and the attempts, at times, to re-construct the segments into a composite whole. These processes arise as part of intentions to represent the 'community' and to make sense, in practical terms, of the scale of the 'community' to be served through the *BL*.

Though presented separately in this chapter, I see the relations of positioning the individual, and of positioning the collective as necessarily linked, and that the processes of defining, distancing, and connecting the individual with the collective are all part of the fragmented forms of relating that constitute enactments of 'community' through the *BL*. With illustrative examples from Craybourne and Westin Hill, I will present how these forms of relating have implications for interpreting how a 'community' empowerment initiative might intervene on relations of inequality and their resultant health effects, for example via a theorised mechanism of 'collective control' (Whitehead, Pennington et al. 2016). Similarly to the previous chapter, I will explore each set of perspectives by presenting examples from each area separately, but will describe interpretations of the relevance of these observations for evaluating 'community' initiatives by abstracting from both cases, and across both parts of the chapter.

## **Part A: Individual Positioning and Trajectories**

The first part presents the framing and positioning of the individual person or self, in relation to the collective 'community', and how it arose in multiple ways throughout my observations of the people, spaces and processes of the *BL* delivered in Westin Hill and Craybourne. Such positioning of the individual (or sometimes, a small group of individuals) comprised discursive conceptualisations of (and by) individuals as distinct from the collective. There were also more implicit practices which served to situate (physically, conceptually) the individual in relation to the 'community' served and represented through the *BL*. Many of these processes of positioning occurred among the (comparatively) small numbers of people actively involved in the day-to-day administration of delivering the *BL* activities and decision-making in each area, on behalf of the larger 'community' they represented. These narratives of representation served to highlight the tension in the positioning of the (group of) individuals involved, as members of the 'community' they 'represented' and also distinct from it through the position they occupied on the committee. Additionally, within this perspective I will describe the individual 'trajectories' that were prompted, mediated and narrated through and around the processes and practices of the *BL*. These trajectories (past, present and future) embodied different aspects of personal lives such as health and wellbeing, and

professional opportunities, and varyingly intersected, diverged from, and at times conflicted with the collective domain of delivering the *BL* in each area.

### **Individual positioning:**

#### *Craybourne*

In Craybourne, many of the ways in which individuals were positioned, and positioned themselves, in relation to the collective 'community', arose around a construction of 'need' and how it was reflected in, and enacted through, the processes of the *BL* initiative. Perceptions of 'need' and who or what was most deserving of the anticipated benefits of the *BL*, were prominent in the ways that individuals positioned themselves as distinct from the collective. Sometimes this positioning occurred fairly explicitly through discursive practices in which people distinguished themselves from a collective 'other' in terms of who had the most capacity or need to benefit. For example, in conversation on one occasion with Paul, a resident and active member of the committee, he said that he thought the potential benefits of the *BL* would not "*have a lot of impact*" on him or his life which he saw continuing in much the same way, despite the regular effort he contributed to the delivery of the *BL*. Thus, Paul set himself apart from the collective other who he saw as the intended, and worthy, beneficiary of the process.

In other ways, the separation between individuals and the collective via the notion of 'need' was performed more implicitly through spatial and other discursive practices that took place during my time in Craybourne. For example, when I conducted go-along interviews with several members of the residents' committee, they would point out to me and navigate past various spaces identified as requiring intervention or help (from the *BL* or elsewhere) or as representing groups of people that were 'in need'. These included buildings that the residents identified as meeting points for local support groups, such as for people with alcohol and addiction issues, and neglected spaces, such as several empty shops on Broadgate, a formerly popular shopping street. One resident, Frances, pointed out these shops during our walk, suggesting that they could be renovated through *BL* funds and also provide employment for local people. Via these acts of identifying 'needy' spaces and groups of people attached to those spaces, Frances and others were discursively and spatially distinguishing themselves from a 'community' that was the most worthy focus of the aims of the *BL* initiative and its funds.

The ongoing 'work' of delivering the *BL* during my time in the area seemed to highlight some of the tension of this ongoing positioning of individuals as connected to, but also distinct from a collective 'community'. This perhaps was most obviously the case among the relatively small number of

residents most actively involved in the committee, and the various activities they undertook, such as attempting to consult with the wider 'community' to identify priorities for the local area. These activities and the discussions around them created a strong sense of the 'community' being 'out there' and in need of activation and bringing in, and within the consultation activities, a wide range of materials were used to mediate this process. Items such as photo boards, questionnaires, stickers, branded t-shirts, banners and leaflets were all physical means employed on numerous occasions by members of the committee to facilitate connections with people in the public and semi-public spaces in which they were used, such as at local festivals or on doorsteps as members went house-to-house to elicit opinions. Despite the intentions for these practices and materials to forge connections, they also seemed to highlight the detachment of the small number of individuals (committee members) using these materials from the 'community' they sought to attract. The individuals most actively 'doing' the *BL* were somehow distinct from those for whom they were doing it, and it was these materials and spaces in which they were mobilised, that seemed to play a role in both mediating and reproducing the positioning of these individuals as distinct from the collective.

The tension of this positioning, in relation to the aims and activities of the *BL* and perceptions of 'need', was not limited to the residents most actively involved in its delivery, however. An example of this came in the form of Ross, the proprietor of a bed-and-breakfast in Craybourne at which I stayed on a number of occasions during my fieldwork, and with whom I often discussed the progress of the *BL*, and Craybourne more generally, when I stayed. Through my early conversations with Ross, I picked up on his general lack of knowledge of the *BL*, and when I returned periodically to the B&B, I interpreted his scepticism over the committee's strategies for consulting with the wider 'community' to establish the priorities for improving Craybourne. On a couple of occasions, after asking me about the progress of the *BL*, Ross suggested that he did not think the committee were reaching the 'right people', as he and others 'like him', with skills and experience to offer, were missing out as they did not know anything about the *BL*. Yet, despite conveying a perception of his eligibility to contribute to the delivery of the *BL*, Ross also indicated that he was not interested in attending meetings, and positioned himself and his business partner at a distance from the focus of the *BL* and also from the 'community' more generally, by nature of their work running the B&B:

*"He said that because, as a B&B, they're busy dealing with people coming into the area, they tend not to go to or engage much with Craybourne . . . He said he'd never been involved in a community group like this as he hasn't had the time and because they're running a successful*

*business they don't really feel the need to engage with other groups (I'd mentioned the local traders' group). . ."* (Craybourne, fieldnote R-17, November 2014).

Thus, Ross seemed to position himself, as a resident and business owner, both within and distinct from the collective 'community', mediated varyingly by perceptions of 'need' as well as capacity to contribute to the work of the initiative.

### *Westin Hill*

Processes of positioning the individual in relation to the collective, as part of enactments of 'community' in Westin Hill, were subtly different to those observed in Craybourne, and tended to involve the positioning of small groups of individuals, rather than single persons. The concept of 'need' played a less explicit role in the positioning process here than in Craybourne. Instead, notions and practices of 'representation' were more prominent, situating the individuals most actively involved in the *BL* – the committee members – at some conceptual distance from the 'community' being served through the initiative. In Westin Hill, the committee comprised local residents who had been voted into their positions as representatives of the 'community', through the mechanism of the public 'forum' meetings that were held in addition to the (closed) committee meetings. During my fieldwork the committee members had been in position for between one and two years, and just before the end of my time in Westin Hill, re-elections for committee positions were held at a forum meeting. This process of voting for representatives could be seen as an individualising process in itself, as candidates were asked to introduce themselves briefly to the rest of the meeting attendees, justifying their (personal) eligibility and suitability to be part of the committee and represent the 'community' in the work of the *BL*.

Jasmine, a member of the committee who stepped down from her position as chair around six months into my fieldwork, described to me in an interview the process of putting herself forward at the previous round of elections, two years earlier:

*Jasmine: . . . I suppose when we had the voting for the Chair, um, because I put my name, myself forward and I didn't see anyone else coming forward. And if I had I wouldn't have put myself forward, but I put myself forward. I even asked other people if they wanted to and they didn't want to. Um, and I think two people objected and everyone else voted me in. But there was 10 people voting, and two of those objected.*

*JR: Yeah.*

*J: And because of I suppose my nature I naturally want to know why.*

**JR:** *Yeah, yeah, of course.*

**J:** *So, um, one person gave their reasons, which I thought any reason is fine, so as long as you have a reason.*

**JR:** *Yeah.*

**J:** *The other person had no reason and that to me was, you know, if, if you cannot, um, overcome a perception of you, um, or even change yourself if need be, if you, if you're in the blind. So I, I felt either that person doesn't like me for whatever reason . . . But this is not meant to be personal, this is meant to be about what I bring to the committee, um, that was one situation where, you know, I kind of felt disempowered because that meeting was really horrible. Um, but I got through somehow." (Westin Hill, interview with Jasmine, September 2014)*

Here, Jasmine clearly experienced the process of aligning herself as a representative of the 'community' for the purposes of the *BL* as a fundamentally 'personal' one, despite acknowledging that it 'shouldn't be personal'. She conveyed a sense of the strong emotions she felt as a result of another individual's actions in relation to the process of selecting representatives of and for the 'community'. She further discursively constructed her position as an individual through reference to this person and the committee, and to her sense of personality and self.

The process and practice of representation, constituting the positioning of the individual committee members in relation to the wider collective 'community', occurred also through the 'forum' meetings; quarterly open meetings led by the committee to which the wider 'community' was welcome and encouraged to attend. The function of the forum appeared to be constructed and enacted in multiple, sometimes overlapping ways, which played with the positioning of the individual in relation to the collective, as my field notes from observing one such meeting indicate:

*"I reflected on the fact that most of the (admittedly few) people at the forum meeting seemed to be people representing groups who might want to apply for funding. . . Although there was some emphasis among committee members on the importance of the meeting for generating new ideas and new applications for funding, there was some suggestion of being able to report 'back' to the community on what has happened over the summer, exemplified in discussions at the [previous] committee meeting about concerns over showing that they'd moved on from the last forum meeting. However, as Jasmine said to me at the start of the meeting, she was hoping for the 'right' sort of people to be here to help move things forward,*

*so perhaps there was more attention on the funding and progression side of the BL, rather than the 'representation' side.” (Westin Hill, observation O-04, September 2014).*

Here, casting the forum meeting as a mechanism to report back to the 'community' followed the positioning of the individual committee members as representatives of, and responsible to, and thus distinct from, the 'community', embodied in the people attending the meeting. Additionally, the number of individuals attending the meeting, and the different kinds of interests or aims they were perceived to hold, also contributed to a complex set of processes of positioning individuals in relation to the collective. Conceptualising the forum meetings as a space and practice through which to bring together the individual committee members with the collective 'community' seemed to be somewhat disrupted in this instance by the fact that most of the attendees were representatives of organisations seeking funding. From Jasmine's perspective at least, this identified them as potentially valuable for the *BL* by nature of their individual skills and expertise to develop and deliver projects locally, rather than their eligibility, as the 'community', to benefit from the *BL*.

The structure through which the committee members sought to fund projects to address the priorities outlined in the plan further served to highlight the tension and distinction between them as individual representatives of the 'community', and the groups of people considered to have the capacity to deliver against the plan. The structure adopted was one of a quasi-funding body, such that the committee would 'open up' funding to be applied for by local groups and organisations who would propose projects or programmes that corresponded with the priority areas. I realised fairly early on in my fieldwork that the committee felt this was the only model available to them for delivering the plan (although it was not stipulated in design of the *BL* at the national level). I picked up on the sense of frustration that some committee members felt at what they considered to be the restrictions of this model, in which (they believed) the individual committee members were necessarily separated from the wider collective of people eligible to apply for funds and deliver projects. Furthermore, uncertainty among committee members around the bureaucratic processes of approving funding proposals, arranging contracts and setting up financial structures to deliver projects, seemed to emphasise and contribute to the distinct status of the group of individuals meeting each month, in relation to the 'community' they were representing. Alan, the 'rep', appointed to Westin Hill reminded the committee in one meeting that they were "*just a group of residents*" who make decisions "*on behalf of the community*" and therefore had no 'legal' status to enter into a contract with funded groups or to manage the financial processes themselves.

However, occasionally this apparent divide between the individual committee members and the 'community', in terms of capacity to apply for and use funds from the *BL*, was disrupted and blurred

by the activities of some individuals. An example of this came in Patrick, a committee member who instigated the planning of a cultural festival towards the end of my time in Westin Hill. While the approved plan for Westin Hill included an allocation of funding for a 'community'-wide event to help publicise the *BL*, it did not seem to be a formal priority for the committee in the first six or so months of my time in the area. In January 2015 however, Patrick seemed to be take a more determined approach to establishing a group of interested volunteers (including a few other committee members and representatives from various local organisations), arranging planning meetings over the next three or four months that took place separately to the usual committee and forum meetings.

The various conversations around different sources of funding for the festival (in addition to that available from the *BL*) have been described in the previous chapter. But it was the ongoing uncertainty and ambiguity about how the festival would be funded, and whether Patrick as a committee member would be able to apply for funds from the *BL*, that blurred the distinctions between individuals and the collective. Patrick's positioning in relation to the other, local people interested in contributing to the festival, and the interactions between them occurring in spaces outside the usual domains of the *BL* committee meetings, thus positioning him varyingly as an individual (as committee member, and as enthusiastic driver of the festival planning) and as part of the 'community' (as part of the collective eligible, and with requisite capabilities, to apply for *BL* funds to deliver a project). Furthermore, the navigation of multiple and often unclear administrative and financial processes as part of applying for funding for the cultural (from both the *BL* and other sources) festival contributed to, as well as reflected, this tension and ongoing negotiation of the position of the individual in relation to the collective.

### **Individual trajectories:**

#### *Craybourne:*

Connected to the positioning the individual in relation to (and therefore distinct from) the 'collective' were the emergence and interpretation of individual trajectories, intersecting the ongoing work of the *BL*. As I became more familiar with the areas and those involved in the *BL*, I became more attuned to the particular, personal pathways of individuals closely (and less closely) involved with the committees delivering the *BL* work, and which were often set in tension with the assumed collective nature of the 'community'. In Craybourne, these trajectories included personal narratives, and narratives of other people, and were constructed around and through the spaces and activities of the *BL*. They highlighted, in particular, individuals' socio-health statuses, and

professional or occupational endeavours, which served to position individuals varying in parallel, intersecting and diverging from the collective domain of the *BL* and the 'community' being served.

There were several personal, occupational trajectories that I observed unfolding during my fieldwork in Craybourne, and which arose somewhat tangentially to the collective spaces and processes of the *BL*, even among those individuals most actively involved in the delivering of the initiative. The availability or draw of other opportunities arising in connection with the *BL* appeared to be influential, leading individuals to take up activities or projects that intersected and diverged from the work of delivering the *BL*. One such example was the 'Star People' scheme, run by an organisation working in partnership with *Local Trust* delivering the *BL* at the national level, and through which they offered small pots of funding and professional support were offered to individuals residing in *BL* areas for the piloting of social entrepreneurship ideas. Magda was a regular and active member of the committee who, shortly after I first met her, began to tell me in informal conversations, about her desire to find a new project and source of income, and to get back into catering, something she had trained in previously. As I got to know her better, chatting for example before and after committee meetings, Magda told me about her plan to apply for a small 'try it' fund from the 'Star People' scheme, to pilot a lunch club in local venues around Craybourne.

Throughout my time in Craybourne I was interested to follow Magda's progress with applying for – and receiving – the 'try it' fund and setting up her first lunch club, in a newly renovated building on the outskirts of the area. In many ways this venture of hers was an individualising process, in contrast to her continuing involvement with the work of the committee. Much of the preparation work was located in her private home (in the kitchen), and her interactions with other people and spaces to facilitate setting up the venture tended to involve those unconnected with the *BL*, for example the local council environmental health officer. Furthermore, her discursive construction of this trajectory in narrating it to me tended to occur on the spatial and temporal 'fringes' of the ongoing *BL* activity, for example as we were leaving committee meeting venues, or at a local café when Magda and I had arranged to meet more socially. On one occasion, Magda said firmly to me that the venture was, in her mind, "*completely separate*" from the *BL*, and she talked about how her personal "*confidence and drive*" had increased as a result of the process.

This divergence of her trajectory was further reinforced by others' interpretations of Magda's venture (and the ventures of other people who had applied for the same scheme). For example, I was surprised towards the end of my fieldwork when talking with Ryan, the Chair of the committee and on friendly terms with Magda outside the *BL*, and he indicated he knew little about the details of

Magda's project or who else from the committee and wider 'community' had received funding from the scheme:

*"Talking about Star People, Ryan implied he was not really sure how many and who had received an award, saying people tend to keep very quiet about it, perhaps because they're 'try it' awards, but also people are a bit protective / secretive about it. He thought maybe Kerry, maybe Geoff had received awards, and he mentioned Magda, but he didn't seem to know when her event was." (Craybourne, fieldnote R-24, March 2015).*

Yet, despite this conceptual and spatial separation, the practices of Magda's occupational trajectory also, at times, intersected the collective nature and practices of the *BL*. For example, on several occasions Magda would bring samples of new recipes she was trying out for the lunch club to committee meetings for feedback from attendees, and once invited me and several committee members back to her house after a meeting to try some of her food and see her kitchen, newly renovated in anticipation of her catering venture. As such, the materials (financial, edible) and spaces engaged in Magda's attempts to develop her venture mediated the tangential and intermittent intersection between Magda's individual trajectory and the collective action pursued through the *BL*.

I also observed a different kind of individual trajectory, centring on the social and health experiences of Raymond, but which was a trajectory largely constructed and performed (to me, and in relation to the ongoing *BL* activities) by other people in Raymond's absence. I first met Raymond on one of my earliest trips to Craybourne, and on chatting with him about his experiences with the committee and living in the area, I learned that he had been unemployed for a while and was actively seeking work. This narrative was reinforced when I bumped into him a couple of times over the next few months at the premises of a local charitable organisation, Craybourne Action, where he would go to use the computers to apply for jobs, and would occasionally help out as a volunteer. I also encountered Raymond a few more times in relation to the work of the *BL*, attending committee meetings and enthusiastically helping at public events to consult the 'community' on priorities for Craybourne:

*"Raymond, Lucy, Geoff and Angela took copies of the questionnaire, clip boards, stickers and raffle tickets and made their way out onto the main part of the seafront to approach people and ask them what they knew about the Craybourne Big Local . . . Raymond was particularly visible in a bright orange jacket, and despite a slightly chaotic air, with questionnaires and raffle tickets flying about the place, he seemed pretty purposeful in approaching people to talk about the *BL*." (Craybourne, observation O-01, May 2014).*

However, from about three or four months into my fieldwork, I did not see Raymond again until a couple of months before I finished in Craybourne. In his absence from many of the spaces I attended to observe the actions of the *BL* during that period, I began to pick up on various discursive constructions among others of his personal circumstances and health issues that were preventing him from attending committee meetings.

A couple of committee members who both lived on the same street as Raymond would periodically share stories (usually on the 'fringes' of more formal *BL* interactions, for example while packing up at the end of a meeting) of Raymond's rather difficult living situation alongside 'troublesome' neighbours. On a couple of occasions, his absence from meetings was explained by descriptions of him as being 'in a bad way'. As my fieldwork continued, similar narratives of Raymond's state of wellbeing were periodically constructed and shared among committee members in these more informal environments. One evening I was invited, along with several other committee members, to Paul's house, on the same road as where Raymond lived. After a while, and as Paul looked out of the window down the street towards the 'troublesome' neighbours, the conversation turned to Raymond, his wellbeing and living arrangements, including the poor condition of his accommodation and how his health had affected his ability to be involved with the committee and the *BL* in recent weeks. The absence of Raymond during this conversation, despite our physical proximity to his flat, highlighted this shared narrative of his health as an enactment of his disconnection from the collective action of the committee and its focus towards the 'community'. It served to individualise him and his position through a focus on intimate, personal details of his life, shared in semi-private spaces.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, as Raymond began to attend and contribute to committee meetings once more, his wellbeing was again conveyed to me as part of this continuing narrative of his personal situation, by a couple of committee members informing me that he was now doing 'much better', and that he had now moved out from the flat and into better accommodation, beyond the Craybourne boundary. This, somewhat ironically, meant that a vote was required within one of the later meetings to enable Raymond to stay on the committee, given he had now moved out of the area and was no longer eligible to contribute to decision-making. This example indicates the spatial and discursive practices involved in the construction of narratives of an individual's personal trajectory of wellbeing, but also highlights the complex tension of this trajectory in terms of the positioning of Raymond, as an individual, in relation to the collective. The fact that much of his personal trajectory was constructed through and in his absence from the *BL*, and by groups of people more actively connected to the work of the *BL*, indicates some of the shared processes of the

positioning of the individual in relation to others. In contrast with Magda's personal, occupational trajectory, narrated directly by her to me, away from the collective spaces of the *BL*, the construction of Raymond's trajectory occurred largely through and by others. It reinforced his disconnection from the collective, but also the necessary role of the collective for discursively, spatially performing his position of absence from the *BL* due to the trajectory of his wellbeing.

### *Westin Hill*

Individual trajectories in Westin Hill were also conveyed and constructed, through personal narratives, arising through and around activities of the *BL* and its orientation towards the collective 'community'. Personal socio-health and wellbeing narratives were perhaps less prominent across the course of my fieldwork than the example described in Craybourne, but did, at times intersect the work of the committee and the sense of the collective. Discussions about individual health states cropped up periodically in and around committee work, and in more informal interactions within committee meetings, and reflected and contributed to individual positioning. For example, Nadia, the committee's development worker, would periodically refer to her health in relation to her role, describing how having to work from home, due to an ongoing lack of suitable office space within Westin Hill, meant she was not taking much exercise and was concerned about putting on weight, as well as about being disconnected from the 'community' for whom she was working. This positioning shifted, however, towards the end of my fieldwork when Nadia found some office space to rent locally and was looking forward to meeting with local residents there. Around the same time, the Nadia and the committee had developed a newsletter to be delivered to each household in the area, and she seemed enthusiastic about going door-to-door to deliver them, using her new office as a base. Assisting her with some of the deliveries, Nadia told me that she was happy to deliver the newsletters as she needed to do more exercise after working from home for so long. Thus I interpreted her concerns over her weight and exercise levels as intersecting, and shaped by, her varying degrees of individual connection and disconnection from the physical space of the 'community' that she was trying to serve through her work.

On other occasions I noted that the sharing of individual health narratives contributed to the structure of interactions between committee members in the semi-collective space of meetings. Typically, individual members' health issues would be referred to in only vague detail to explain their absence from meetings. At one meeting in January 2015, however, I was surprised that those who were present spent some time before the formal start of the meeting sharing their personal health complaints (and those of close friends and family) and recent experiences of health services:

*“Nadia asked Sue how her Christmas had been and Sue said that she’d been ill over Christmas, was well enough to get up and cook on Christmas Day, but wasn’t well enough to eat any of it and then went back to bed to recover. . . This was the beginning of quite a long, detailed series of conversations about different health stories exchanged between different members of the committee. . . Lydia arrived, apologising for being a bit late. Sue and Nadia asked how she was and she said she was getting better, although not fully recovered yet. . . Lydia asked Derek how he was feeling, saying that she thought he looked better. . . She asked several questions about the care he’d been given, indicating her knowledge of his condition, as well as making some comparisons with her own illness and discussion going backwards and forwards between her and Derek around their respective illnesses. . .”* (Westin Hill, meeting observation O-07, January 2015).

My reflections in fieldnotes on this rather unusual and lengthy exchange between several committee members indicate my interpretations that it represented a point of connection and solidarity among individuals who, though linked through their commitment to the *BL*, mostly had only limited social or inter-personal connection outside committee meetings. Given that the mood of meetings was quite often tense and occasionally strained between some individuals, I considered whether exchanging personal accounts of ill health was a way in which these people felt they could share, collectively, their individual selves and lives beyond the *BL* in a way that was suitable for the context of a committee meeting. Of course, it could be suggested that the time of year – January – played a role in the amount of illness ‘going round’ and thus in the prominence of it in the conversations at that meeting. Yet, still this exchange seemed to demonstrate how individual narratives of health could be manoeuvred in a semi-public context, connecting the positioning of the individual in relation to the collective, around the *BL* in Westin Hill.

In contrast to the connective possibilities of individual narratives of health, my fieldwork in Westin Hill also identified individual trajectories framed around ‘personal risk’ that intersected the *BL* and led individuals away from the collective. One such example emerged through an interview with Des, a resident of Westin Hill who worked locally and had been involved with the *BL* at the beginning but had withdrawn from engagement with it sometime before my fieldwork started. During an interview with Des in his flat on the Palmer Grove housing estate, he told me in some detail about his background, including a period of unemployment and homelessness before he was offered accommodation on the estate and secured his current job. He also recounted his involvement with the processes of the *BL* in its earliest days, when the appointed ‘rep’ was supporting residents of Westin Hill to establish a committee to begin the process of ‘community’ consultation and

development of a plan. In my fieldnotes following the interview, I reflected on how Des had described his reasons for ceasing to be involved in the work of the *BL*:

*“Des’s own background experiences over the past decade or longer seem to be quite prominent in how he frames his experiences with, and perceptions of the local area, groups of people, his job and ideas about the BL. His being homeless and unemployed (for a while at least) . . . all seem to influence how he . . . talked about the aims and process of the BL, and . . . his own concerns about being too involved with the BL. His main concern about this was articulated as the responsibility that comes with management of the money, and his fear that somehow being connected to it would prove too much of a risk for his current employment . . . should it be found that some of the money had gone missing or was unaccounted for. This seemed to be a risk that he thought was too big to take, and so had extracted himself from the early days of the BL.”* (Westin Hill, fieldnote R-07, August 2014).

Here, then, Des’s personal (historical) trajectory served to present the prospect of engaging in a collective endeavour, with responsibility towards the ‘community’ particularly in terms of managing finances, as too great a risk to his (now stable) personal circumstances, leading him actively to distance himself from the collective work and structures of the *BL*. This distancing also seemed to be reflected and enacted in the spatial context in which I interacted with Des – in his private home – and the fact that I did not see him again in any of the more public, collective spaces I engaged with during the course of my fieldwork.

Another example of detachment through the relationship between individual trajectories and the collective focus of the *BL* arose through getting to know Max, a resident of Westin Hill, who too had been previously actively involved with the *BL* but had since distanced himself, transferring his attention to his own ‘community’-focused social enterprise. I had been told about Max by another local resident and worker, Sam, who had engaged in different ways with the *BL* since its earliest development. Sam had described Max as having previously been one of the ‘community champions’, local residents who volunteered to spread the word about the *BL* to engage others in the consultation process, but that he had left amidst some difficult relations between him and others involved. I contacted Max and we arranged to meet one afternoon in October 2014 and through our conversation he described how he had been keen to be involved in the *BL*, as he thought it was a great idea, with the potential to encourage people who “*don’t normally get involved*” to participate. But, he said that he had found that once “*the money*” started to play a role, people started to get “*suspicious*” about each other’s “*agenda*”. Max talked about how he had offered to help draft the budget for the Westin Hill *BL* plan as he had a background in finance, but

that he began to face some criticism from others involved when his name featured in the plan both to credit his work on the budget, and as someone intending to apply for funding from the *BL* for a project he hoped to run.

I got a sense of Max's disappointment and emotion as he described it as a "*big blow*" to feel that people were talking behind his back and "*spreading rumours*", leading him to decide that he needed to "*take a step back*". Here, Max perceived his personal skills and interests (his finance background, and desire to develop a 'community' project of his own) to have led to the disconnection between him and the collective work of the committee. This seemed to indicate an individualising process, mediated by the intersection of Max's activities with those of delivering the *BL* (the practices of preparing a budget, and producing the plan document shared among the wider group for approval), and by his perceptions of how others (in the collective sense) viewed him and his position. This intersection led to his feelings of disconnection from the collective following perceived suspicion of his 'agenda' as an individual, seemingly at odds with the goal of working for the 'community' in a collective sense. Consequently, Max's trajectory led him further away from the collectivity of the *BL* as he pursued other opportunities for developing his idea of a mentoring service for young people in the area, including securing funding from the 'Star People' scheme also operating in Westin Hill.

Clearly here, the tensions felt by Max as he struggled to position his personal capacity to contribute among the collective work of developing the plan for the *BL*, plus the availability of other sources of funding and support, led his individual career and social trajectory away from the collective sphere of delivering the *BL*, despite similarities in intentions to serve the 'community'. This example also highlights the role that the financial resources available within the *BL* play in mediating positioning and relationships between the individual and the collective, in the context of working for the 'community'. Together with the distancing influence of 'the money' via perceptions of personal risk, it appears that the management and flow of financial resources within the *BL* shaped how the individual was positioned (or positioned themselves) in relation to the collective, and how the potential future of that relationship was interpreted.

Thus, via discursive processes and various practices arising around, or stemming from, the delivery of the *BL*, individuals were varyingly positioned as distanced and distinct from the collective, but personal and shared narratives of individual trajectories saw these positions shifting, drawing individuals closer to and further away from the collective activity of delivering the initiative.

## **Part B: Governing and Segmenting the Collective ‘Whole’**

In addition to processes of individual positioning, and individual narratives and trajectories, I identified processes that contributed to the constructing and positioning of the collective, in relation to individuals and sub-groups of the ‘community’. In this section of the chapter I will first explore the processes negotiation and management of the divide between the individual and the collective. Second, I will describe the processes of segmenting the whole ‘community’ into parts, and (at times) attempting to reconstitute the collective, which I identified as inherent to many of the practices of delivering the *BL*.

### **Governing the collective-individual divide:**

Processes of governance and occasional disciplining of the interests and actions of individuals, in relation to those of the collective, further contributed to the shifting and fragmented forms of relating in enactments of ‘community’. Many of these observations of governance practices occurred in the context of the residents’ committees, and their attempts to manage the dynamics among the individual members, alongside the demands of developing or delivering the plan, and being accountable to the wider ‘community’ for the progress of the *BL*. Attending to these practices of governing the collective-individual divide indicates how the putting into practice of core elements of the *BL* initiative prompted necessary reflections and actions on how to manage sometimes competing interests arising among the collective. It thus indicated the tensions inherent in the enactments of ‘community’ through this initiative, and which arguably have relevance for theorisation of ‘collective control’ as a mechanism for impacting on health inequalities.

### *Craybourne*

In Craybourne, the use of materials was prominent in the practices of governing the interests and positions of individuals in relation to the collective, through and around the *BL* activities. When I started my fieldwork in Craybourne, quite quickly I heard stories of how difficult some committee meetings had been in the past, and that, as mentioned previously, several members of a local traders’ group had distanced themselves from the *BL* following arguments about their interests in ‘profiting’ from the *BL*. I described in the previous chapter a meeting of the local traders’ group that I attended and at which Katy, the newly appointed ‘community worker’ for the *BL* committee, invited the traders to consider coming back to the *BL* committee meetings. In this meeting Katy placed discursive emphasis on the ‘code of conduct’ that had been developed by the committee to regulate behaviour in meetings, and to manage the interactions between attendees. Subsequently, at the next committee meeting when Katy reported back on her interactions with the traders’ group,

committee members discussed the value of code of conduct as a way of managing dynamics between current members, and any potential new ones:

*“Reflecting back to the issues discussed at the traders’ meeting the night before, Katy and Lucy both brought up the issue of how meetings are managed, to ensure that people still want to attend them. Lucy said that although things were a lot better in meetings, it’s important to go through the chair, not to interrupt and to follow the code of conduct. It was suggested that the code of conduct could be sent out to new members or potentials so they know what they’re signing up to, and to reassure people who had stopped attending previously.”* (Craybourne, observation O-03, June 2014).

The code of conduct as a document was not physically prominent in meetings (or at least I never saw a copy), unlike the gavel that Ryan, the chair, started bringing (half-jokingly) to meetings to manage discussions if they got out of hand and to try to keep the committee to the agenda. Yet, the promise and supposed power of the code of conduct – both as a representation of collective values and as a physical (or virtual) resource to be shared among individuals – to manage difficult relations and smooth over different interests held by individuals within the group, seemed to be acknowledged among the committee members.

The limitations of the code of conduct’s ability to govern across different, individual interests and positions within the committee became evident later on in my fieldwork, however, in relation to ongoing tension between a few individuals and the rest of the committee. I observed some of these tensions at several meetings that I attended in the first few months of fieldwork, when exchanges would occasionally get a little heated, particularly during discussions of the progress being made in relation to the ‘community’ consultation work. Those leading the meetings would attempt to manage these disagreements which, at times, seemed to disrupt the flow of the meeting and the timings of the agenda. However, later on, there arose a couple of scenarios in which a more active and determined approach was taken by members of the committee to ‘govern’ the threats to the work of the collective that a few individuals seemed to pose. One such example involved Damian, a local resident and worker, who I discovered was at the centre of some complaints from other committee members for his behaviour towards them personally (such as criticising their work for the *BL*), and in the collective environment of the committee meetings. This came to something of a head around seven months into my fieldwork, and a range of strategies were employed to attempt to dissolve the disruption and tension that had arisen.

One such strategy was implemented by the rep, Ashley, who decided to lead a workshop in place of a scheduled committee meeting, which involved a series of activities to encourage the committee members to work together and identify common goals and values for the *BL*:

*“Ashley moved the posters to the side of the room and then went on to describe the next activity. Ashley explained these envelopes had lots of words and phrases in and they said the groups [should] use the words and any others they want to create sentences and statements about how they want to work together as a group, how they want to involve people in the committee. He said after each group has done this, they’ll look across each of the posters to see which statements are similar and then everyone will have 10 points to vote for their favourite statements.”* (Craybourne, observation O-09, November 2014).

This activity constituted an explicit attempt to address the fragmentation between individuals and the committee as a collective through the use of various materials to identify the kinds of values the group should hold and practice collectively. Following the meeting, I learned that there were various further private exchanges among different members of the committee and with Ashley, in attempts to ‘mediate’ the tensions that had arisen. However, it appeared that these strategies had failed to address the divide, and I was surprised at a meeting in January 2015 when committee members announced they planned to send to Damian (absent from that meeting) a letter regarding his position on the committee.

The Chair, Ryan, summarised the situation, and read from the draft letter to state that Damian’s behaviour towards others in the committee had breached the ‘code of conduct’, and that the time and attention spent on managing Damian’s *“difficult and unhelpful”* behaviour in and around committee meetings meant they had been *“wasting time”* and were *“doing a disservice to the community”* as a result. Ashley, the rep, was present at this extended meeting, and attempted to counteract some of the criticisms of Damian in his absence, and to dissuade the committee from suspending him from the group. However, this seemed to prompt the committee members present to identify collectively, in opposition both to Damian and to Ashley’s attempts to mediate the situation. Several people stated that they needed to make the decision ‘as a group’, thus dismissing the advice of the ‘outsider’ (Ashley). Consequently, the code of conduct was used to bring into question the behaviour of an individual in the context of the committee, and thus to pitch against each other, and ultimately negate, the position of the individual in favour of the group. This exemplified a process of manoeuvring and negotiation of the individual in relation to the collective, favouring the value of the ‘serving’ of the ‘community’ through the *BL* over an individual’s eligibility as a resident to contribute to decision-making.

### *Westin Hill*

Such an overt episode of governance of the divide between the collective and the individual did not occur in Westin Hill. However, materials and processes of disciplining and controlling were periodically evoked around the work of the committee, demonstrating their power in the management of the positioning of the collective-individual divide. Some of this arose around concerns over 'conflicts of interest', particularly where those most closely connected to the work of delivering the *BL* also held roles or connections with other 'community' organisations who would potentially seek funding from the Westin Hill *BL*. In several meetings committee members discussed how they would manage a conflict if it arose in the future; for example at one meeting an issue was raised that the 'framework' guiding the committee's operation did not state how conflicts of interest would be managed in relation to applications for funding:

*"Derek said there was currently nothing in the framework about conflicts of interest, how to define them, how to declare them and how to handle them, for example if the person should be asked to leave a meeting when it's being discussed. Patrick said the person should just be asked to leave the room if a decision's being made. . . Caroline gave the example of her being part of the [local community centre] management committee, asking what would happen if [the manager of the centre] puts in an application for funding, how would that be dealt with? Gary said it would depend on circumstances, and Derek asked if she'd be able to vote. Several people said no, she wouldn't, and she wouldn't be part of the decision-making process for the application. . . Derek said that for people outside the BL, once the money starts moving through, without a policy on conflicts of interest, they might think the money is being used for their own gains." (Westin Hill, observation O-11, February 2015).*

This exchange highlights the slightly tentative way in which committee members navigated a hypothetical scenario of a clash between the interests of individual committee members towards the collective work of the committee and their interests aligned with other 'community' organisations or groups lying beyond.

Despite their lack of certainty as a group around how exactly to handle an individual who posed a perceived threat to the balance of interests, including whether they should be removed from the committee meeting space, there seemed to be an implicit confidence and trust in the power of 'a policy' on conflicts of interest to manage this tension between the group and the individual. Furthermore, as Derek's comment implies, the document was seen to have the potential capacity to mediate relations between the committee and the 'community' they represented, and to counteract

criticisms arising as money flowed between individuals, groups and the committee, varyingly positioned in the 'community'.

Further examples of attempts to govern, and even discipline, the position of the individual in relation to the collective arose around the development worker role – past and present – and the structures of responsibility and accountability in relation to the committee and the wider 'community'. I heard several accounts of how, prior to my time in Westin Hill, some people had been dissatisfied with the work of Ollie, a local resident who had held the role of development worker during the earlier consultation and plan development phases. Helena, a committee member, said in conversation with me early on in my fieldwork that Ollie had been "*really instrumental*" in progressing the work of the BL, but that they had reached a point with the draft plan where people began to question how it had been pulled together. Helena suggested that Ollie's 'pace' of doing things had meant some people had been "*left behind*" and subsequently felt their views had not been heard. I was told that, as a result, several other committee members decided they needed to review what had been written in the plan and attempted to bring in additional ideas, suggesting a process of questioning and diminishing the influence of Ollie as an individual. In an interview with Ollie a couple of months later in my fieldwork, this narrative was raised again from her perspective, and Ollie acknowledged that perhaps she had been given "*too much responsibility*" and that being "*that close to [the process] just wasn't really helpful*". As such, the draft plan appeared to play a role as a record of individual and collective contributions and 'voice', and thus a tool through which to critique and lessen what was considered to be too much individual input by Ollie.

There also seemed to be some challenges in managing the role of the paid development worker visible in the relationships between Nadia, who held the position during my fieldwork, and the committee, exemplified through ongoing scrutiny of her work. On a number of occasions, Nadia brought various pieces of paper along to committee meetings as records of her work and before one committee meeting she told me it was important for committee meetings to be able to see how much work she had done in case they question it. These materials of accountability held potential (from Nadia's perspective) to smooth over the tension of her position, as a 'non-resident' and paid employee, in relation to the committee. However, they also served, at times, to disrupt relations between members of the committee, complicating the dynamic of the collective in relation to the individual, as the structure of responsibility and line-management for Nadia's work was debated among committee members. In several committee meetings towards the end of my fieldwork one member, Helena, repeatedly asked to see the minutes of a meeting at which a decision about Nadia's line management had been made, and this prompted a broader debate over the framework

guiding the committee's structure, the mislaying of minutes, and the responsibilities of the Chair (at that time, a vacant position).

Thus, the absence of particular kinds of materials of accountability (such as the missing minutes), relating to the sometimes unclear position of the development worker in relation to the committee, highlighted broader concerns over visibility and legitimacy of decision-making. Helena's concerns over which individuals were responsible for managing Nadia and her work were an illustration of the ongoing anxiety within the committee about the containment of individual perspectives and influences within the collective, as a fundamental part of the process of acting for, and on behalf of the 'community'.

### **Segmenting the 'whole':**

Alongside the governance of the divide between the individual and collective, the enactment of 'community' through the delivery of the *BL* also involved multiple processes (conceptual, practical, spatial) of dividing and assembling the 'community' as a collective entity. A number of the unfolding practices of the *BL* in both Craybourne and Westin Hill constituted the breaking down of the 'community' into parts, and, at times, attempts to bring disparate parts together, with both processes contributing to enactments of a collective whole, albeit an inherently fragmented and unstable one. Many of these processes of segmentation emerged through practices of representation, and the practical attempts of the committee to make sense of, and reach the 'community' for consultation, and to manage the workload of delivering the *BL* plan. Active attempts towards (re)assembly of the collective were less prominent, but occurred more implicitly, for example, through the processes of developing a coherent profile of the area, and plan for the *BL*. As such, these processes, largely arising through the day-to-day 'work' of the *BL*, served to highlight the collective whole as something continuously being constructed and deconstructed, in the practical efforts to make sense of working for, on behalf of, or as the 'community'.

#### *Craybourne*

Much of the work of the committee during my time in Craybourne involved different attempts and approaches to engage with the 'community', to elicit opinions on the area and suggest priorities to be addressed through the *BL* initiative. This process of consultation – an expected stage of the *BL* – and the reality of putting into practice mechanisms for reaching and connecting members of the 'community', involved different strategies. These included adopting a visible presence in public spaces (potentially) open to the whole 'community', for example, stalls at the carnival and local festivals; and also more directed and focused measures to 'target' particular groups. In doing so, the

committee conceptually, spatially and materially fragmented the 'community' into a series of sub-groups; categories of people and places determined by their status as particularly 'in need', or 'missing' from the picture of the 'community' the committee were seeking to represent through the consultation process.

A range of spaces were implicated in these processes of segmentation and targeting, and thus the division of the 'community' as a collective whole. Katy, shortly after starting in the position of 'community worker' for the committee, identified her role and workload predominantly in terms of the need to 'get round' as many groups in the 'community' as possible, as part of this consultation process. She arranged to have weekly 'drop-in' sessions at a couple of centres in Craybourne, as a mode of connecting directly with different types of people, and would feedback on her progress to the rest of the committee at meetings:

*"Katy said she'd been holding her drop-in sessions and although they'd be slow to start with they'd picked up and she now has a queue of people. . . She also talked about a few groups of people who wanted to talk to her, but in a group setting and in a 'safe' place. She said there's a rehab group who meet at Craybourne Action who'd like to have a session with her, and there's a group of older women who meet at the Aroma café who would like to meet with her, but in an environment they feel comfortable in. . ."* (Craybourne, observation O-04, July 2014).

Here, both Katy's interactions with, and categorisations of, groups of people emerged through her engagements with various spaces within Craybourne. Her attempts to arrange conversations with these groups of people, to elicit their opinions on the priorities for the *BL*, further highlighted processes of segmentation of 'community' spaces into safe (or comfortable) and non-safe, in relation to their assumed particular characteristics and needs. However, later on, the limitations of this approach to 'covering' the whole 'community' were identified, as Katy expressed frustration that her sessions and methods were not "*bringing in enough people*" and were too "*ad hoc*". Thus she indicated a framing of the 'community' as something potentially mappable and knowable, but only through certain systematic means that were not necessarily available to her within the constraints of her part-time role.

Discussions among committee members over the following months, including after Katy's resignation in August 2014, continued the theme of segmenting the 'community' into groups of people (and the spaces with which they were identified) for the purposes of the consultation. Committee members would list a range of 'types' of people that they had not yet engaged with, for

example younger people, older people, the homeless, those with addiction problems, young professionals; and demonstrated personal and shared knowledge of a wide range of local services, spaces and organisations through which these types of people might be reached. Here, the categorisation of the 'community' and the segmentation of the collective into sub-groups seemed to cover a range of sets of (implicit) values, including perceived levels of 'need', those considered 'problematic' for the 'community' (for example homeless people), as well as perceived levels of detachment from the collective sphere (for example, young professionals). There was also some reflection on the committee members as 'types' of people in relation to other sub-groups of the 'community', for example when in a meeting, Lucy suggested that they had tended to talk to people "like us" and needed to "cast the net wider" in their consultation activities. Here she seemed to be distinguishing (if implicitly) between the groups of people within the 'community' by their willingness and/or capacity to 'get involved' in civic activities like the *BL*.

The pragmatics of organising and delivering activities to meet the committee's goals of doing more consultation and attempting to reach or represent the whole 'community' via a process of segmentation and targeting, highlighted the influential roles played by spatial and material entities. The mapping of sub-groups was actualised through the identification of key spaces at which to drop off questionnaires for users or visitors to complete, or to engage with more actively through more formalised consultation activities. These spaces tended to be identified as being of value by their potential to provide access to the different kinds of people 'missing' from the consultation picture of the whole 'community'. The specific characteristics and atmospheres of these spaces also seemed to mediate the process of consultation, and thus of segmenting the collective into groups. For example, following a consultation activity tied in with an event for families at a local arts charity, committee member Geoff recounted that while it had been a lively event with lots of people, they had only managed to complete a few questionnaires due to the levels of noise at the venue (from live music and the various activities going on), which made conversation difficult. At the same, meeting Ryan and Lucy described visiting a local sports and social club which they had not known much about previously, and said they were surprised to find "loads going on... [and] a very mixed group, mixed ages, families, kids running around", with Ryan indicating that he returned later in the evening to pick up questionnaires and to enjoy a pint in the bar. As such, the process of segmenting the 'community' and mapping the potential connection points for engagement with key groups reflected constructions of both social and spatial identities within the collective whole. Yet these spaces in turn contributed to the enactment of this segmentation and engagement, further influencing how groups were mapped onto the landscape of the Craybourne 'community' in terms of the connection – or otherwise – with the work of the *BL*.

Furthermore, the materials engaged in these consultation activities, specifically the 'data' produced through the completion of questionnaires, highlighted and enacted the segmentation, and attempts at re-assembly, of the collective. Towards the end of my fieldwork in Craybourne, the committee, with guidance from their 'rep' Ashley, decided that they had spent enough time on the consultation process. It was agreed that they now needed to draw together the information they had gathered to develop the required 'community profile', to provide the contextual background for the plan which would guide the delivery of the next stage of the *BL*. The committee decided to hire an external consultant to synthesise the information they had gathered and to generate a profile of Craybourne, and my fieldwork finished just as the recruited consultant was beginning his work. In the final couple of committee meetings I attended in February and March 2015, the committee members discussed how much information they had gathered over the months of consultation and debated the process of gathering it up to pass onto the consultant. These conversations involved attempts to locate where different pieces of information were residing, and the format they were in:

*"Ryan added that he thought all the consultation data was in one place, but asked if anyone had anything else, they should get it to Chloe at Craybourne Action or to Paul. Chloe said she'd spoken with Katy who said there was some stuff on the laptop, but she wasn't sure yet which folders and so was going to look through. Suzanne added that Janet . . . said she'd be happy to hand over the information she'd collected."* (Craybourne, observation O-11, February 2014).

Thus the fragmented nature of conceptualising and enacting consultation of the 'community' was reflected in the fragmented nature in which the data, as material representations of sub-groups of the 'community', their preferences and opinions, were stored in different material (and digital) formats, dispersed among different spaces and people connected to the *BL*. Furthermore, the process of preparing for the consultant to create a profile of the 'community', using data from the consultation (among other things), involved attempts to (re)constitute the collective through tracing the whereabouts of these data and physically gathering together the separate records of engagements with sub-groups, or fragments of the 'community'. This highlights the roles that materials and spaces, as well as discursive and conceptual processes, played in the segmentation of the 'collective' through attempts to reach and make sense of the whole 'community', through consultation and representation.

### *Westin Hill*

Perhaps due to the later stage of the *BL* in Westin Hill, wherein the committee had already conducted the formal 'community' consultation and used it to develop a plan for addressing the

priorities for the local area, there were fewer overt examples of segmentation of the 'community', or related attempts to reconstitute the whole than in Craybourne. Yet, the very process of trying to implement the plan contributed in some ways to processes of segmentation of the 'community'. The committee decided that as a first step towards putting their approved plan into action they would 'pilot' the procedure for inviting funding applications for projects that would contribute to the various priorities for Westin Hill identified in the plan. They selected one of the five priority areas – 'bringing different generations together' – to target in this piloting phase, and then further narrowed this down to 'young people', inviting applications from projects that sought to offer activities or resources to children and young adults in Westin Hill.

This reflected a largely pragmatic decision as the committee prepared to navigate their way through a new process, testing out their procedures with a relatively small amount of funds. They described and defended this decision at a forum meeting in September 2014, amid questions from the attendees about the timing and focus of the next round of funding:

*"Derek said that they did the first round of funding applications, and from that they've learned that they need to advertise better next time. He's since come across a couple of projects going on in the ward which he didn't know about and which would have been eligible for the funding, but hadn't heard about it. Jasmine added that they want to review and revise the application process to learn from what's happened so far. She said that as members of the committee, they're representatives of the ward and there is money and it will be spent, but they will invite applications when they're ready to do the next round. She said that it would be opened more widely than for the pilot projects, and they're currently trying to make connections and get information across to people."* (Westin Hill, observation O-04, September 2014).

Here the structures of the pilot funding process contributed to the segmentation of the 'community' served by the BL into categories defined firstly by priority of need (as indicated in the plan), and secondly by their amenability to the tentative, cautious actions of the committee taking their first steps into delivering the plan. The category of 'young people', therefore, was (implicitly) identified as the most achievable of these categories at this early stage, and arguably reflected something of the level of comfort with which the committee members felt in terms of 'risking' a small pot of funding in piloting their procedures, compared with the other categories such as 'community spaces' and 'local economy'.

The segmentation of the 'community' into practical and achievable target areas was further illustrated through periodic discussions about 'working groups', and the potential for these to enable progression against each priority area more effectively than the committee taking responsibility for the delivery of the plan as a collective. At several forum meetings, attendees were asked to split into discussion groups reflecting each of the priority areas, to share ideas for projects to be funded in relation to these priorities. It was articulated on several occasions by committee members that this structure would enable attendees of the forum meetings to generate new ideas and plans for projects to be funded by the *BL* (again illustrating the division between the committee members as over-seers of the *BL* process and the 'community' as potential 'do-ers' or deliverers of projects). Yet, there were also concerns articulated about what to do with the ideas suggested through these discussion groups, with reference to the 'networks'; working groups that had been established previously during the phase of developing the plan but were no longer active:

*"Jasmine said that it's not 'for us to decide how groups choose projects' and it's not their role to 'plan' the projects, but just to lead the groups to try and generate two or three applications from each. Lydia suggested that reps for each group might like to invite an expert to come and talk to them, eg an expert on the local economy . . . Jasmine asked about the networks and whether they were supposed to be meeting outside the forum. Lydia said that was never formally agreed, and Jasmine said she thought they were at a standstill with the networks, as it's in the plan and can't expect them to produce applications without more meetings."* (Westin Hill, observation O-01, September 2014).

This exchange highlights the rather uncomfortable and uncertain positioning that emerged from attempts to segment the 'work' of delivering the plan and addressing the priorities of the 'community', which reflects doubts about the level of responsibility and authority members of the committee have over developing and allocating funds to projects to address the priorities.

Furthermore, the potential segmentation of the collective into working groups (or 'networks') also seemed to be cast as a threat to the progress of the *BL*. In one committee meeting Sue argued against breaking into discussion groups at the next forum meeting, stating that it would mean the whole meeting would 'lose momentum', and Derek suggested that some attendees of the meeting might not want to share publicly their ideas for projects for fear of competition for funding. Additionally, in conversation with Helena fairly early on in my fieldwork, she told me she had previously been asked to lead on the 'community spaces' priority, but then the Chair (at the time), Jasmine, asked her to 'hold off' as the piloting process started, suggesting that too much segmentation of efforts and energy towards the priority areas might disrupt the committee's

progress at that stage. Thus, a complex set of dynamics emerged around the practices and potentials of segmenting the collective in terms of both the 'community' as a set of priority areas to be addressed through the *BL*, and in terms of the people with the capacity and interest to contribute to addressing these priorities. In particular, the perceived capacities of the committee members, in terms of their time, expertise, experience and confidence, as well as their sense of legitimacy and accountability towards the 'community' they represented, shaped how and when these segments (of people and of priorities) would become distinct. Therefore, the fragmentation of the collective posed both productive and constraining possibilities for delivering the *BL* and for enacting and representing the 'community'.

## **Interpretation**

The range of examples illustrated here of different forms and practices of relating arising through and around the delivery of the *BL* indicate the complex positioning of the individual and the collective in relation to the 'community'. Fragmented relating emerged in different forms, challenging common assumptions of 'community' as a collective, comprising relations of connection and solidarity between individuals. These forms of relating included the positioning of the individual (or small groups of individuals) as distinct from (but also necessarily linked to) the collective, mediated by perceptions of need and capacity to benefit from the *BL*. Personal trajectories – individualised and shared narratives – also played a role in varyingly drawing individuals closer to and further from the collective work of the *BL* at different times. In addition, the practices of delivering the *BL* often involved necessary processes of governing or managing the tension between the individual and the collective, to negate, diminish or negotiate the threat of disruption posed by competing sets of values and reflecting a need, at times, to privilege the needs of the 'community' over individuals. Finally, processes of segmentation, exemplified through practices of 'community' consultation and pragmatic attempts to manage the day-to-day work of the *BL*, highlighted the challenges of enacting the collective 'whole' except through 'sub-groups' defined by various characteristics, reflecting perceptions of identity, and engagements with local spaces.

As many have indicated (see for example Strathern 1988, Somers 1994) the division between 'individual' and 'collective' is not a simple one. This follows critiques of an assumption of the individual as a distinct, autonomous unit, rather than one embedded within, and contributing to, shifting sets of social relations (Renedo 2010) which are "*fluctuating, relational, and situational*" (Todd 2005, p432). A focus on the individual as a plurality of relations has been prominent, for

example in anthropological theory (Hastrup 2005, de Pina-Cabral 2013), whereby it is the practices of relating that contribute to the (shifting) identities and sense of 'self' of the individual. For example, Strathern presents the 'dividual' as a conceptual challenge to the assumed prominence of the individual, one which captures how the person is constructed (only) through shared social relations, such as processes of reciprocal exchange (Strathern 1988). As such, it was a focus on the practices of delivering the *BL* – the materials, spaces and decision-making processes – as well as the people involved, that demonstrated how the varying and shifting forms of relating between the individual and the collective can be interpreted. This suggests that the relations of the 'community' – who is 'included' and the various connections and disconnections among them – cannot be understood in isolation from the practices that produce them (Tavory and Goodman 2009); here, the delivery of the *BL*. Moreover, these practices embody and enact sets of sometimes competing values, such as perceived need and eligibility (to participate or benefit), which further mediate the positioning of individuals in relation to the collective, at any given moment. The examples of the committees employing strategies to govern and even discipline the position of the individual in relation to the collective, reveal attempts to maintain the legitimacy of the group as a representative body acting for and on behalf of the 'community' (Taylor 2007, Connelly 2011).

Furthermore, the practices of delivering the *BL* revealed various forms of fragmented relating arising through pragmatic attempts to conceptualise the whole 'community'. Faced with a mandate to 'consult' and 'represent' the 'community', members of the residents' committees used various strategies to manoeuvre their way through the uncertain and intangible scale and spread of these imagined 'communities' (Anderson 1983). The identification and targeting of sub-groups to consult (whether by perceptions of need or potential to be useful), or negotiating the delegation of work away from the core committee, could be seen as exercises in grappling with the perceived risks and responsibilities attached to the process of representing the whole 'community'.

It must be noted that the accounts and constructions described here of the fragmented relating emerged predominantly through the interactions of the actors (human, spatial, material) most actively involved in delivering the *BL* in Westin Hill and Craybourne. With some exceptions, much of the positioning and segmentation presented here of sub-groups of the 'community' in relation to the (relatively) small group of people involved occurred in spaces and through processes from which they were physically absent, for example at committee meetings. Thus, the 'collective' was often constructed and embodied by a relatively small number of people. This in part reflects the focus and scope of my research, but it also highlights the possible agency of those people and spaces most actively involved in the *BL* for (implicitly) reproducing broader structural relations of division and

segmentation – and inequality – that shape who has the capacity (in terms of time, confidence, skills) to participate and benefit, and who does not. The potential of such processes of segmentation of the collective to reflect and reproduce existing hierarchies of relations (of power, of identity) must be considered (Cerulo 1997, Anthias 1998). However, the constant flow of these relations, the continual shifting and repositioning of individuals, segments and the whole ‘collective’ must also be acknowledged, presenting some challenges to thinking of hierarchies of relations and power within and beyond ‘communities’ as being necessarily fixed or stable. This holds some implications for how inclusion and exclusion, in relation to participatory approaches to health improvement, might be measured and interpreted.

In the cases of Craybourne and Westin Hill these social divisions of who participate at times seemed to extend beyond the common, simplistic trope of the ‘usual suspects’; those few, ‘same old voices’ (Taylor 2006), typically considered to be those with the most power or capacity to participate (Kenny, Farmer et al. 2015) and who reflect a particular, narrow set of knowledges or perspectives (Larkham, Hardman et al. 2013). Rather, there appeared to be a more complex, interconnecting set of relations around capacity, empowerment, drive, vision and tenacity, which underpinned processes and relations involvement, and which shifted over time as individuals’ personal and occupational trajectories intersected that of the *BL*. Moreover, I think the examples illustrated in this chapter also hint at situations of *powerlessness*, or at least uncertainty and apprehension around the daunting task taken on by committee members to put into practice the *BL*. Narratives of personal risk intersected the imperative for ‘representation’ and ‘accountability’ towards a ‘community’ whose entire body of members and spatial scale cannot really be known (Anderson 1983). The assumption of engaging and representing the ‘community’ as a whole presented a difficult prospect for the day-to-day work of the few individuals most actively involved in the *BL*, with possible consequences for certain psycho-social determinants of health.

In summary, this chapter focused on how the assumption of the ‘community’ as a collective whole can be unpacked to illustrate the shifting positions and types of relating between individuals and the collective. It points towards the importance of examining the practices of ‘community’ for their influence on (and reflection of) forms of relating around inclusion and exclusion in participatory empowerment mechanisms. For considering how an initiative might influence health inequalities via a process of ‘collective control’, examining the dynamic relationships between practices of positioning, hierarchies, segmentation and discipline arising through the *BL* might unearth mechanisms which shape differential outcomes such as access to resources for health. The next chapter will examine in more detail experiences, practices and interpretations of disconnection –

'missing out' – and how ethnographic approaches to researching 'communities' might contribute to evaluative agendas to measure levels of inequality. Finally, the Discussion chapter will provide further reflections on the implications of the fragmented forms of relating and shifting positions of the individual and collective, as enactments of 'community', for some of the values underpinning 'community' empowerment and engagement initiatives, and for the values and assumptions of approaches for evaluating the public health impact of such initiatives.

## 9. 'Missing Out': Reflections on the Positioning of Ethnographic Research Within an Evaluative Framing

### Introduction

This chapter comprises a paper written for publication which seeks to marry methodological reflections with interpretations of the empirical ethnographic 'data' produced through the fieldwork for this research. The reflections described in this paper centre on a concept and experience of 'missing out', and its potential value for researching and interpreting 'community' initiatives and their impacts on inequalities. These reflections first emerged during the course of my ongoing fieldwork, as I grappled with concerns around my methodological practices in the 'field'. During the more formal analysis of my ethnographic data, after fieldwork, I began to identify parallels and linkages between my methodological experiences of 'missing out' and the different forms of relating I observed arising around and through the activities of the *Big Local* in both Craybourne and Westin Hill. This paper, therefore, represents a bringing together of the methodological and empirical, highlighting the importance and perhaps unavoidability of relations of disconnection, both in terms of methodological practice and choices made in (and out of) the field, and in terms of understanding the dynamics and processes of change in 'community' initiative.

The paper, which was submitted to *Ethnography* journal in March 2016, draws on contemporary debates, particularly within anthropology, around assumptions and practices of 'representation' within ethnographic approaches, and how the researcher's positioning produces ethnographic 'knowledge' that is necessarily situated, partial and incomplete. In the paper, I build on this perspective by highlighting the additional 'constraints' I perceived on my ethnographic practice that came from the alignment of my research with the *Communities in Control* study and its evaluation agenda, and also from the moral expectations of conducting research alongside (but seeking not to influence) the 'communities' in control of delivering the *BL* initiative. As such, I sought to link the critical debates from theoretical work on ethnography to a more applied use of the methodological approach, highlighting in particular how attending to relations of disconnection may be valuable for evaluation of the impact on health inequalities of 'community' initiatives based on participatory mechanisms. Furthermore, I sought to highlight ways in which my methodological experiences of 'missing out' might offer a productive lens through which the processes of knowledge making – and the boundaries and limits of that knowledge – might be more explicitly considered within evaluation approaches, embracing and critically considering what is 'not known'.

I decided to present this work as a distinct paper rather than chapter as I felt it was different to the previous, more traditional 'results' chapters, in both its temporal origins (constructed in part during fieldwork as well as after) and its aims. As an amalgam of methodological and empirical reflections, it is less a presentation and interpretation of aspects of the enactments of 'community' observed through my research, and more a critical consideration of how my knowledge of those enactments came about and what this can offer to approaches for evaluating 'community' initiatives like the *BL*. An additional feature of this paper that reflects its origins in my ongoing fieldwork is my decision to anonymise the *Big Local* as '*The Initiative*', unlike elsewhere in this thesis. This decision was due to ongoing discussions between the *CiC* study and *Local Trust* regarding timeframes and formats for outputs and papers, and the fact that, at the time of my writing the paper, the *CiC* study was not in a position to release formal 'results' from the first phase of research. As such, by anonymising the initiative, it was agreed that I would not be compromising the future reporting from the main evaluation.

Thus, I hope this paper offers a link between my descriptions of the different aspects of enacting 'community' – boundary work, and fragmented relating – and my attempts to situate these findings in a broader context. I will reflect more on the implications for engaging the 'community' in efforts to address inequalities, and the work of producing through evaluations generalisable 'evidence' of the mechanisms and effects of such initiatives in the Discussion chapter that follows this.

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## **'Missing out': reflections on the positioning of ethnographic research within an evaluative framing**

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### **Abstract**

Contemporary approaches to evaluating 'complex' social and health interventions are opening up spaces for methodologies attuned to examining contextual complexities, such as ethnography. Yet the alignment of the two agendas – evaluative and ethnographic – is not necessarily comfortable in practice. I reflect on experiences of conducting ethnographic research alongside a public health evaluation of a community-based initiative in the UK, using the lens of 'missing out' to examine intersections between my own ethnographic concerns and those of the communities under study. I examine potential opportunities posed by the discomfort of 'missing out' particularly for identifying the processes and spaces of inclusion and exclusion that contributed both to my ethnographic experiences and to the realities of the communities engaging with the initiative. This reveals productive possibilities for a focus on 'missing out' as a form of relating for evaluations of the impacts of such initiatives on health and social inequalities.

### **Keywords**

Evaluation; community; empowerment; positionality; health inequalities; inclusion; exclusion

### **Introduction**

Amid continuing calls for evaluations of social and health interventions, to understand their mechanisms of effect and to generate 'evidence' of their impact (Hawe 2015), there is increasing recognition of the limitations of experimental approaches to evaluation, resting on probabilistic pathways of causality (Cartwright 2011), for explaining the successes and failures of 'complex' interventions (Blamey and Mackenzie 2007). This has prompted a re-orientation towards evaluation

methods that enable exploration of complexity (Byrne 2013) and towards understanding the ‘how’, ‘where’ and ‘why’ of the changes produced by a particular intervention – the opening of the ‘black box’ (Stame 2004) – as opposed to more simply *if* it works. This opens up space for alternative and ‘non-traditional’ (from a biomedical perspective at least) methodologies such as ethnography to contribute to evaluation of complex interventions (Riley, Hawe et al. 2005, Cohn, Clinch et al. 2013). Ethnography within and/or for evaluation gained prominence in research on educational and social development programmes, particularly from the early 1980s onwards (see for example LeCompte and Goetz 1982). More recently, alongside increasing recognition of the value of qualitative and mixed methods approaches within health sciences (Pope 2005), ethnography has been employed alongside experimental trials of health interventions (Savage 2000a), and has informed evaluations of the health impacts of ‘complex’ interventions (see for example Aronson, Wallis et al. 2007). Furthermore, ethnography has been prominent in participatory or action-focused approaches to evaluation, seeking to engage both the evaluators and the ‘evaluated’ in collaborative work to develop the effectiveness of a programme (see for example Schensul, LeCompte et al. 1999).

Typically, across this varied literature, two key contributions of ethnography to evaluation practice are highlighted. First is its capacity to attend to ‘context’, or the wider structures of relations and resources that shape how an intervention is delivered in practice, thus shaping the ‘fidelity’ of implementation to the intervention as planned (Dorr-Bremme 1985, Messac, Ciccarone et al. 2013, Bunce, Gold et al. 2014). Second, and related, is ethnography’s sensitivity towards capturing multiple and different ‘stories’; the varying experiences and interpretations of those involved (either delivering or receiving the intervention) and which may influence the acceptability and/or effectiveness of the intervention (Schensul, LeCompte et al. 1999, Harklau and Norwood 2005, Riley, Hawe et al. 2005). Together, these reflect an interpretation of ethnography as being able to fill the ‘gaps’ left by quantitative evaluation methods in explaining how and why an intervention does or does not work. Thus, ethnography’s value for evaluation is framed as lying in its ‘holistic’ perspective (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, Morgan-Trimmer and Wood 2016), highlighted particularly in recent systems-based approaches to evaluating ‘complex’ interventions (Aronson, Wallis et al. 2007, Cohn, Clinch et al. 2013).

This attention to holism in evaluation literature, however, appears to overlook broader debates across the social sciences in which the evidentiary claims that can be made through ethnography have come under critical reflection. Following the ‘crisis of representation’ within anthropology and related disciplines (Clifford 1986), it is now commonly acknowledged that ethnographic knowledge is always partial, situated and therefore unstable (Punch 2012). A wide range of factors have been

identified as being inherent to the relational work of ethnographic fieldwork (Coffey 1999), which necessarily shape and limit what can be known about the 'object' of study. These include the identity of the ethnographer in relation to those being studied and the subsequent dynamics of fieldwork, for example relations of mistrust or suspicion, and disconnections arising through 'foreignness', as well as relations of connection and good rapport (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). They also include dimensions of the hierarchies within the field of study, whereby initial 'access' to the field, and ongoing engagement with people, spaces and events, can be determined by 'gatekeepers' and the power they hold, and also mediated by the perceived identity of the ethnographer relative to the 'researched' (Whitten 1970, Reeves 2010). Finally, the very nature of what is being studied and where it is configured poses limitations on a holistic understanding, for example the inevitable 'incompleteness' of a multi-sited ethnographic study that seeks to follow flows of relations across multiple fields (Hannerz 2003).

I argue that attention to the partial relating and inevitable disconnections of the ethnographic process must be applied to the increasing engagement with ethnography for evaluation, to consider more critically the claims of holism as its primary contribution. Furthermore, I suggest that conducting ethnography for or with evaluation research may give rise to new forms of relating that shape how ethnographic knowledge is produced, and what it can offer to interpretations of an intervention's impact on health or social outcomes. In this paper, I engage with relations of disconnection and distance via a concept and experience of 'missing out', to reflect on the partial (rather than holistic) processes of knowledge-making through ethnography for evaluation. I focus specifically on the relationship between my ethnographic research and the evaluation agenda, in the context of research on a community-based, empowerment initiative, to identify dimensions of 'missing out' that arose from this relationship. I also describe relations of disconnection and distance within the communities under study, and the intersections between our respective 'missing out', which I identified following reflection on my methodological practice. Finally, I consider the value of both empirical and methodological dimensions of 'missing out' and what they can contribute to evaluations of interventions to address health inequalities.

## **The Ethnographic Study**

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork over a period of 13 months between 2014 and 2015, to explore enactments of 'community' in two areas participating in an area-based (or local community) empowerment initiative being delivered across multiple, relatively disadvantaged areas of the UK.

My research question centred on how 'community' is enacted through the delivery of the initiative, reflecting prominent discourses of 'community engagement' that underpin much contemporary public health practice and social policy-making (Lawson and Kearns 2010). My research also reflected the often uncritical, and largely pragmatic way in which the concept of 'community' is operationalised in policies and interventions (Bertotti, Jamal et al. 2012), and in evaluations of the same, which raises questions about how to interpret the evidence of impact of 'community' interventions.

### **The Initiative:**

The 'community' empowerment initiative at the heart of my research focus was established in the late 2000s, following around a decade or more of UK Government-driven policies targeting areas of 'social exclusion' deemed to be indicative of, and contributory towards, persisting health and social inequalities in the country (Mackenbach 2012). Initiatives delivered under these policies have typically involved varying levels of 'community' participation (Reynolds, Egan et al. 2015), reflecting a range of (predominantly neo-liberal) values concerning the rights and responsibilities of citizens in relation to the state (Rose 2000), and localism agendas, or the devolution of responsibilities for welfare to local arenas (Grover 2012). Despite a continued emphasis on the importance of engaging the 'community', the evidence of the impact of such area-based initiatives on health and social inequalities in the UK (and elsewhere), has been found to be lacking and largely inconclusive (O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013).

The initiative explored in my ethnographic research (hereafter, '*The Initiative*') sought to adopt an empowerment approach to improving disadvantaged areas across the UK, by situating control for the planning and delivery of *The Initiative*, and the management of the financial resources allocated to each area, solely in the hands of local 'communities'. The areas were selected for inclusion in *The Initiative* by various measures of relative deprivation, and geographic boundaries were stipulated for each area, thus denoting the 'community' as the people residing or working within this geographic area (typically between 4000 and 9000 people per area). While *The Initiative* was ostensibly 'community'-led, there were various features of its design that structured its delivery in each local site. Each area was facilitated by a centrally-appointed representative to bring together a committee to lead the delivery of *The Initiative* at the local level. The committees typically comprised between 10 and 15 people, all taking on the role voluntarily, and the majority of whom were expected to be local residents. The committees were tasked with consulting with the wider 'community' to identify local priorities for change, and to then develop and deliver a plan to address these over a period of at least ten years, using financial resources allocated to each area; typically

upwards of one million pounds. At the time of my research, the two areas included in my fieldwork were in their first few years of participating in *The Initiative*.

### **The evaluation study:**

A programme of public health evaluation research has been developed independently of *The Initiative* with the aim of exploring the potential impacts on health inequalities, through a theorised pathway of 'collective control', a mechanism of collective empowerment arising through the 'community's' control over the delivery of *The Initiative*. The evaluation study, with its focus specifically on health outcomes, is conducted by academic researchers and funded by a national health research body whereas *The Initiative* has committed funding from a national charitable organisation for fifteen years. While the organisation delivering *The Initiative* at the national level has coordinated a range of evaluation activities to assess the progress of *The Initiative* against its original objectives, the public health evaluation study is being conducted independently of these activities. A first, exploratory phase of research within this public health evaluation study was conducted between 2014 and 2015, using qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand how *The Initiative* was being rolled out in different local settings, and to identify some of the mechanisms and contextual factors of *The Initiative* that might contribute to (and be measurable indicators of) 'collective control'.

My ethnographic study was designed separately from, but in dialogue with, the development of the evaluation study. However, the field sites for my research were two of *The Initiative* areas that were sampled for the first phase of the evaluation, and therefore my fieldwork was positioned closely alongside the data collection conducted by colleagues from the evaluation study. Consequently, for the purposes of gaining access to the field sites and maintaining relations with residents throughout the research process, I was presented, alongside colleagues, as a member of the evaluation study team conducting various research activities in the area to understand how *The Initiative* was unfolding 'on the ground', but with a specific interest in aspects of 'community'. The pragmatics of this close positioning of my fieldwork alongside, and occasionally intertwined with, the evaluation study prompted a series of critical reflections on the kinds of ethnographic knowledge I was able to produce through my research and what was absent or missing.

### **The field sites:**

The first site, to be known as *Westin Hill*, is an urban area on the outskirts of a large city, and the boundary of the area, as designated for the purposes of *The Initiative*, follows exactly the boundary of an electoral ward of the same name, comprising around 12000 residents. The area of *Westin Hill* includes a large housing estate along with multiple other streets of residential housing, some small

shops and local businesses, and also has a large, well-maintained park that proves a draw for residents and others from outside the area. It is positioned close to a busy high street with good transport links into the city. At the time of my fieldwork, the residents' committee in Westin Hill were beginning to implement the plan for the local area that had been drawn up following a period of consultation with the 'community'. The committee comprised around 10 local residents, although this number fluctuated slightly during my fieldwork, and would hold closed meetings every six weeks or so to discuss progress for funding projects and other matters of delivering their plan. Some of the committee members were connected with other local organisations and projects, and a few knew each other via these connections prior to getting involved with *The Initiative*. The committee also employed a part-time development worker who was responsible for much of the day-to-day administration of delivering *The Initiative*, although was not eligible to vote on decisions made within committee meetings. The committee held larger meetings open to the rest of the 'community' every quarter, known as 'forum meetings', at which they would feed back on progress against the plan and invite discussion and suggestions for ideas of new projects to fund.

The second site, to be known as *Craybourne*, is an area within a town near the coast in the north of England. The boundary of Craybourne seems to reflect a locally-recognised neighbourhood, one that is often perceived to be somewhat separate (socially, economically and geographically) from the centre of the town. Within the boundary designated as part of *The Initiative*, there are around 5000 to 6000 residents, and Craybourne (and the wider town in which it is situated) shows some of the typical signs of a once-popular holiday resort. Craybourne joined *The Initiative* more recently than Westin Hill, and at the time of starting fieldwork, the committee of residents had only recently begun the 'community' consultation process to help identify priorities and develop a plan of action. The residents' committee was not a fixed group, though had around 12 local residents who would regularly attend the monthly (open) meetings, and had nominated several people into formal positions (chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer). A number of committee members were involved with other local organisations, or worked within Craybourne, but a few were fairly new to the area. At the beginning of my fieldwork, the committee appointed a 'community worker', employed part-time to lead the consultation process. Other residents, local workers and representatives of local organisations would periodically attend these meetings, though eligibility to vote on decisions made during the meetings was restricted to those who were residents of the designated Westin Hill area.

My fieldwork time was spent moving between the two sites, largely according to the schedule of activities unfolding as part of *The Initiative* in each area, including committee meetings, events, initiative-funded projects, and other activities occurring locally. As someone who grew up in the north of England (though not particularly near Craybourne), but who now lives in the same city as

where Westin Hill is located, my fieldwork engagements with each site were slightly different. For Westin Hill, my approach was that of a 'commuter', crossing the city regularly to conduct fieldwork activities. For Craybourne, my time was more periodic but intensive, spending one to two weeks at a time in the area, usually staying in a local Craybourne hotel or with friends nearby. This approach to the timing of fieldwork perhaps reflects what Beaulieu (2010) describes as 'co-presence' rather than 'co-location' with the research focus shaped by the 'when' rather than the 'where' of the field.

Access to both field sites was negotiated by colleagues from the evaluation study and me, through a series of conversations, first with the organisation delivering *The Initiative* at the national level, then with the appointed representative in each area, and finally with the committee of residents delivering *The Initiative* in each area, who granted permission for us to conduct our (respective) fieldwork. Consent was sought on an individual basis throughout fieldwork for interviews, and where possible, for observations and informal conversations. As part of these consent processes, we sought to make it clear to residents that the evaluation study and my research were not designed to assess how well they were delivering *The Initiative*, but to understand more about how *The Initiative* (and 'community') was unfolding in different areas.

## **Experiencing and Interpreting 'Missing Out'**

Reflection on my research practices occurred throughout my time in the field, often prompting deliberation and concerns over the kind of ethnographic work I was able to do, while positioned in close alignment with the evaluation study. While I acknowledged, from an academic and epistemological sense, the partial nature of my position as researcher and of my interpretations, I still felt ongoing discomfort and uncertainty about the level to which I was able to 'participate' in an ethnographic sense in the processes and relations of the 'community' delivering *The Initiative* in each area. This prompted me to consider the kind of experiences, and thus knowledges, I was 'missing out' on. Yet, as ethnographers have come to recognise in recent years (Punch 2012), attending to the emotional dimensions of doing ethnographic research can be a productive, reflexive mechanism for examining the relationships between our experiences and those of our participants (Lee-Treweek 2000). Considering further my anxieties, I began to recognise parallels between my experiences of 'missing out' ethnographically and narratives in my 'data' concerning processes and practices of exclusion, distancing and partiality – 'missing out' – that intersected enactments of 'community' in relation to *The Initiative*. Here, I will describe the ways in which these ethnographic and empirical accounts of 'missing out' came to be identified, and their parallels (if not

comparability) interpreted, to demonstrate the potential methodological value of 'missing out' for examining the processes and value of knowledge production, alongside an evaluative framing.

The positioning of my ethnographic research in close proximity to the first phase of the evaluation study was one of the first prompts that caused me to reflect on the kind of ethnographic work I was doing, and was able to do, and what I might be missing as a consequence. While the evaluation study followed a largely pragmatic approach to describing the processes of *The Initiative* within its complex, contextual settings (Hawe, Shiell et al. 2004), values of a more experimental evaluation approach, aiming (in the future) to establish a (causal) relationship between *The Initiative* and any measured effects were also evident. This was implied in attempts to position the work of the evaluation as 'external' to, and independent of that being observed (*The Initiative*), with the aim of minimising the influence of the research processes on the mechanisms and effects of *The Initiative*. This positioning was exemplified in study protocols urging, for example, 'unobtrusive observation' of activities, meetings and events during data collection. By nature of my association with the evaluation study, my ethnographic approach was also subject to similar expectations to avoid unduly influencing the people, activities and processes of *The Initiative*, and thus I felt restricted in my ability to 'participate' in the field in ways I would have liked.

Furthermore, there were also implicit restrictions on my capacity to be involved through the structures and values of *The Initiative* itself which emphasised residents' control over decision-making for their local area and 'community'. This posed more moral (as opposed to epistemological) restrictions on the kinds of engagement possible with the field sites through my ethnographic research, and for the evaluation study also. As an 'outsider' – someone with no prior connections to either field site, and no intention to live there beyond the fieldwork period – it seemed inappropriate for me to attempt to participate in the decision-making processes that would have real impacts for the local area and its residents in the years to come. Thus, my positioning alongside the evaluation study, and the ideological framing of *The Initiative* itself, both served to position me, as an ethnographic researcher, at some distance from the focus of my study. My position as a non-resident, and as affiliated with the evaluation study, served to delimit my capacity to engage in a participative way in the field, which prompted reflection on the kinds of ethnographic knowledge I was able to produce.

### **Missing out ethnographically:**

So, to turn to the reality of attempting to avoid, where possible, influencing *The Initiative*, and the people, processes and activities I encountered in my field sites. On a number of occasions during my fieldwork this approach became rather complicated and uncomfortable to negotiate, which

subsequently led me to question the kind of ethnographic study I was doing and the knowledge I was producing. Comparing my position with a more traditional, anthropological approach to ethnographic fieldwork, rooted in participant-observation and driven by an ideal of the ethnographer's full 'immersion' into their field (Lewis and Russell 2011) as the most valid source of knowledge production (Ingold 2008), I began to feel somewhat lacking and restricted by the need to observe and not participate. The more formal spaces of observation, such as regular committee meetings in which I would sit quietly at the back of the room to take notes, were largely unproblematic. Other scenarios, however, when my presence in relation to residents and their practices was less structured and my role more indistinct, were often more difficult to negotiate. Consequently, I was forced to reflect on what I might have 'missed out' on in terms of ethnographic knowledge by not being able to play a participative role akin to the roles played by the people and spaces of my field sites (Ashworth 1995). Moreover, I was prompted to reflect on what I might be missing, or not fulfilling, in terms of the social expectations constructed through ongoing interactions and relationships with residents.

One such scenario occurred early on in my fieldwork in Craybourne, at a time when I had met only a few of the residents involved in delivering *The Initiative*, and was still getting to know the area. The residents' committee had organised a stall along the route of a carnival that would pass through the main town and into the Craybourne neighbourhood, and planned to use the stall to attract members of the public to give their opinions on the priorities for the area, as part of their 'community' consultation. Feeling slightly nervous about integrating myself into the group and the activities of the day, I tried to make myself useful on arrival by helping to erect and decorate the stall, and other small tasks. Around these activities, I tried to engage in conversation with the eight or nine members of the residents' committee who were present and to observe their interactions with members of the public passing by. However, my field notes from the day capture my sense of discomfort at this positioning, as I attempted to be 'embedded' within the activities of the day but not be drawn into (inter)actions that might influence the practices or people of *The Initiative*:

*"... I was standing behind the stall, trying in most circumstances not to appear too much like I was part of the team – helped by my lack of [Craybourne Initiative] t-shirt – as I didn't want to be put in the position where I'd have to start talking to some of the members of the public coming up to the stall, as I felt that would be a conflict of interest, and potential impact on the initiative. At times, this felt slightly uncomfortable, when there were people at the stall front wanting to talk but no one free behind the stall, or no one paying attention, to talk to them, and sometimes I would be implicated in the conversations between members of the public and committee members, as I stood next to them, and their gaze would be extended*

*to me, as if to get my agreement or approval on what they were saying. . . Overall, this was slightly tricky, and perhaps I hadn't considered fully beforehand what my offer of 'helping out' might look like, in terms of trying not to impact on what was going on, but also not to get in the way, and to some degree, to justify my presence and 'hanging around'. . . I felt more comfortable keeping myself busy with the more practical activities, such as passing pens, taking in questionnaire sheets, handing stickers etc, than more 'influential' activities such as talking to members of the public." (CB-Observation-01, May 2014)*

These notes capture something of my assumptions around the kind of ethnography I had anticipated, or assumed, I might do, and the discomfort and challenge of doing this in practice, faced with the perceived constraints of not 'influencing' the initiative, either as an 'outsider' or as an affiliate to the evaluation study. These notes also hint at the slight sense of discomfort around my precarious position as 'researcher' and my perceived need to justify my persistent 'hanging around' to those around me. The concept of participant-observation hints at a relationship of (relative) reciprocity with the 'field' (Savage 2000b), but this sense of giving and taking was only ever partial, and often lacking given my positioning in relation to the field, and in relation to the principles of the evaluation agenda.

My sense of 'missing out' on part of this assumed reciprocal relationship was also felt at times in Westin Hill, for example in relation to the planning of a cultural festival to be funded as part of the delivery of *The Initiative*, around eight months into my fieldwork in the area. The planning was largely done in a series of meetings held outside the regular committee meetings, and at the first meeting, Patrick, a committee member leading the planning of the festival, announced that he needed to 'pick my brains' regarding food hygiene issues. Suddenly my position as a mere observer appeared to be negated and my potential (or hoped-for) value as a contributor to the planning of the festival was made explicit as Patrick asked me to advise on the environmental health requirements for providing food at the festival. I realised that Patrick had perhaps misinterpreted my background as a public health researcher, and I felt awkward having to correct him and admit that I did not know anything about food hygiene and so could not help. However, later I also reflected on his request as embedded in the developing relationship between me and Patrick (among others in Westin Hill). My inability to respond to his request for my contribution left me feeling uneasy about 'missing out' on my side of the reciprocal nature of this relationship, due to my hesitancy over influencing the course of *The Initiative*. Furthermore, if taking ethnography as a collaborative process (Gottlieb 1995), it could be suggested that being constrained in my ability to

collaborate in a reciprocal sense constrained the depth and value of the ethnographic knowledge produced.

As my time in the field sites progressed I also became aware of particular spaces and forms of interaction arising around the delivery of *The Initiative* (and of enactments of ‘community’) from which I was disconnected, or of which I was cognisant only from a distance. For example, there were a number of occasions when I would turn up for a committee meeting, or a more informal interaction with committee members, and realise that something had ‘happened’ recently that I had not been aware of. Around five months into my fieldwork in Westin Hill I arrived at a committee meeting and before the meeting started, I was asked by Nadia, the employed development worker, if I wanted to sign the two greetings cards she had open in front of her. My fieldnotes capture some of my confusion as I tried to understand what had happened in the past couple of weeks:

*“Nadia seemed to be quite busy with some pieces of paper and other things in front of her and then asked me if I wanted to sign the cards for Colin [a committee member], as his mother had just passed away, and for Jasmine [the committee chair]. I think I was a bit confused about the card for Jasmine and so tried to enquire gently, and Nadia said it was to thank her for all her work now that she’s ‘stepped down’. Nadia was saying this to me as if she thought I knew what had happened, and she was also a bit distracted with other pieces of paper etc in front of her, and chatting with the others, so I tried to ask a few more questions about it, but didn’t get much further than finding out that Jasmine had emailed round after the last committee meeting to say that she was stepping down.”* (WH-Observation-05, November, 2014)

This surprising (but partial) news was an indicator at the time of how I missed out on particular kinds of exchanges and interactions of *The Initiative* in Westin Hill that occurred particularly in virtual spaces – via email and telephone between committee members and others – from which I was often excluded, likely due to my ineligibility to contribute to the work of the committee, not being a resident of the ‘community’. The context in which I came to find out about Jasmine’s departure from the committee was indicative of the partial nature of my connections with the practices and circulation of knowledge bound up in *The Initiative*.

There were similar occurrences in Craybourne too, where I would arrive at a meeting and have to pick through pieces of information to work out what had happened or been discussed in spaces that I was not privy to, again by nature of not being a committee member, and fear of disrupting *The Initiative*. My access to the more informal interactions and ‘goings on’ around the work of *The*

*Initiative* in Craybourne was fairly variable, however. I was usually included on emails sent around the whole committee, and on a few occasions I was invited, as part of a more select group of residents, to social gatherings at the local pub or at a committee member's house. At other times, however, I realised I had been missed off certain exchanges, for example, arriving at a committee meeting towards the end of my time in Craybourne to find out that Paul had stepped down unexpectedly from his position as treasurer on the committee following an undisclosed (to me) incident. The Chair opened the meeting by asking for a volunteer to take over in Paul's absence, indicating that although he had done a good job as treasurer, there were 'very good reasons' why he was no longer in the role. The language used and explanation given in the meeting by the Chair appeared deliberately partial, leading to me writing in my notes that it was a "*classic case of me feeling like I was missing out*" on key exchanges. I realised that despite inclusion and connection in some informal and more private spaces of interaction, the distance at which I had positioned myself via (necessary) non-participation meant that my access to the processes and dynamics of the field was not guaranteed or consistent.

### **Missing out empirically:**

Yet, I also began to realise that the sense of missing out on certain interactions, knowledge and engagements in the field were not always unique to me as a researcher, restricted in my capacity to participate due to the evaluative framing in which my research was embedded and my status as an outsider. Through more systematic analysis of my empirical data, I began to identify processes of boundary-making at the heart of the enactment of 'community' and the delivery of *The Initiative* that led to other people, places and things being 'missed out'. I realised that there were similarities, parallels and occasional intersections between my experiences of 'missing out' ethnographically and those of the people and places of my field sites.

Articulations of concern or anxiety over being disconnected from processes of steering *The Initiative* were fairly prominent among the people with whom I spent much of my time in both field sites. These indicated some individuals' feelings of 'missing out' on their expected role in relation to decision-making in committee meetings, and on behalf of the 'community'. In both Craybourne and Westin Hill, the appropriateness of particular spaces (physical and virtual) in which conversations and interactions took place that constituted the formal, and more informal work of progressing *The Initiative*, were, at times, questioned and challenged by members of the residents' committees (and others) as expressions of perceived exclusion. In Westin Hill, Derek, a dedicated member of the committee, would periodically express his frustration and concern over having 'missed out' on email

exchanges between other committee members in between meetings, largely due to his apparent reluctance to use a computer.

Several other committee members in Westin Hill indicated, both in meetings and in more informal conversations with me, that they disapproved of others holding smaller, 'private' meetings together, for example in a resident's home. They indicated that the only appropriate place for discussing the work of *The Initiative* and making decisions was at formal, scheduled committee meetings, typically held at a local community centre. Several times rather heated discussions ensued at committee meetings as Derek and others aired their frustrations, which seemed to indicate both personal concerns over 'missing out' on key exchanges, but also their sense of what qualified as 'appropriate', non-exclusionary space for the work of representing the 'community' in delivering *The Initiative*. This was an example of the way in which boundaries of what, where and whom did and did not constitute the 'community' were continually being drawn and re-drawn through the work of *The Initiative*.

Narratives of concern about 'missing out', relating to representation, also arose around the practices of consulting the 'community' on priorities for *The Initiative* in Craybourne. The processes of planning events and approaches for consulting invariably involved a range of negotiations around the people and spaces still 'missing' from their picture of the 'community' and its preferences, and discussions about what would be 'enough' consultation, for example in one committee meeting:

*"Jon asked which groups aren't engaged . . . Lucy said specifically the younger and older people, and there was also a suggestion that other groups haven't been involved like the drug addicts, homeless people and young professionals . . . There was some discussion about the types of spaces these groups use, particularly services provided by various churches in the area. Lucy said that there's a need to do this engagement quickly, but the problem is that the group have 'tended to talk to people who are like us'. There was a suggestion that this is a process that has been done before, but that it needs to be repeated and for the 'net' to be cast wider . . . [Jon said] they need to ask themselves what would be 'enough' engagement? Lucy said 'enough' would be having more people from the groups they'd identified as missing."* (CB-Observation-07, August 2014)

These discussions prompted and intersected a series of practices designed to target the 'missing' groups within the 'community', including funding Christmas social events at a local arts charity, a community centre and a social club, as a way of accessing different groups and eliciting their opinions on the area. Reporting back from these events at committee meetings prompted some

people to reflect on how they had never really known about some of these spaces or the groups of people who attended them, prior to the consultation events, and wondered how many more groups or places they were 'missing out'.

Thus, the values underpinning *The Initiative* and the stages that residents' committees were expected to complete as part of its delivery, including 'community' consultation, appear to be influential in shaping narratives of concern about who and why some groups might be 'missed out' from representation in the planning of *The Initiative*. These narratives further intersected notions of accountability of a small sub-group – the committee – towards the broader 'community' they represented, and the negotiation of appropriate spaces and mechanisms for progressing the work of *The Initiative*. They highlighted the processes of segmentation of the collective in attempts to grasp, or approximate the whole 'community', and to legitimate decision-making practices, and which contributed to the boundary work of enacting 'community' through *The Initiative*.

### **Intersections of missing out:**

The parallels between the two framings of missing out – me, ethnographically, and the field, empirically – were often clear, but it is perhaps helpful to examine a little more closely how to relate the two. In particular, I found that my own points of connection with spaces, activities and people in the two sites would sometimes highlight the relative disconnection of others, and of the processes of *The Initiative*. At times, this connection/disconnection relation was highlighted through my active pursuit of understanding what lay 'beyond' the typical boundaries of *The Initiative*, and the people and spaces it engaged. As one example, I was prompted to attend a local council meeting in Craybourne following mention of it at a residents' committee meeting and the forceful urge of the paid 'community' worker to all attendees of the meeting to "avoid it at all costs!" (CB-Observation-04). This strong, active distancing from the work of the local council, despite the apparent relevance of the subject of the meeting (proposed funding for local festivals, with which *The Initiative* often engaged), provided a compelling reason for me to pursue a tentative connection with this 'forbidden' space.

A more complex scenario of (dis)connection also arose in Craybourne, about mid-way through my fieldwork at a time when there were some tensions among members of the committee, and meetings were occasionally disrupted by arguments over the progress and direction of *The Initiative*. One afternoon I met Angela, a committee member, for coffee and a chat, and she told me at length about her upset at a complaint made against her in a public forum by Frank, another committee member, and someone she had known quite well prior to *The Initiative*. She felt frustrated that she

had not been given an opportunity to respond to his complaint, and seemed saddened by the disruption she felt his complaint had made for the committee trying to get on with the work of *The Initiative*. I realised that I had been missed off the original set of emails in which the complaint had been shared, and so was surprised a week or so later when I discovered Angela had 'blind copied' me into an email from her to Frank and several others connected with *The Initiative*. In this email, she responded to Frank's complaint and outlined her own complaint against what she described as his 'bullying' behaviour. This partial 'inclusion' of me on a rather heated, contentious set of interactions prompted reflections on my ambiguous positioning in relation to the issue:

*"After I realised I'd been Bcc'd into the email, I felt slightly uncomfortable, feeling somehow conspiratorially implicated in Angela's plans to complain, and uneasy that I was being privy to some information that others in the committee wouldn't know was being shared, and perhaps wouldn't want me to see."* (CB-Fieldnote-19; November 2014)

Here, I was simultaneously connected and kept at a distance by the secretive way in which I had been granted access to the exchange and as a result, I felt I was unable to discuss this issue with anyone other than Angela, and subsequently 'missed out' on the emails in response to her complaint.

Similarly, in Westin Hill, my own developing ethnographic engagements prompted identification of other points of disconnection or missing out. An example of this occurred around one of the first programmes funded through *The Initiative* as part of delivering their approved plan, which was a sports programme for young people, held in a communal space at the main housing estate in Westin Hill. I attended one of the programme's four sessions, to observe *The Initiative* 'in action' and to chat with local residents and young participants, and unexpectedly, was encouraged to participate by the enthusiastic organisers. I was surprised, however, that from the committee only Nadia, the development worker, was present when I attended and, from her indication, only one other committee member had come along to watch the sessions. At a committee meeting a few months later, the disconnection of the committee from this activity was further emphasised when they discussed how to increase their engagement with young people in the area, and one member reflected that perhaps they should have attended the programme sessions as a way of connecting with young people. This highlighted the shifting ways in which my points of connection, in the form of attending particular spaces and engaging with people and activities of *The Initiative* (and of the 'community'), brought into view perceptions of the disconnection of others, expressed particularly through their concerns of 'missing out' on the involvement of specific groups of people, such as young people.

Hence, reflection on the emotional dimensions of my sense of 'missing out' on important aspects of the production of ethnographic knowledge served to highlight both ethnographic and empirical accounts of disconnection, and their intersection, in relation to the enactment of 'community' through *The Initiative*. Thus, my sense of 'missing out' appeared not only to reflect the constraints posed by my methodological positioning in relation to an evaluation agenda, but also my position relative to the complex series of connections and disconnections arising among different sets of actors, spaces and processes in my field sites. As Mesman (2007) argues in her account of ongoing positioning of the researcher in ethnographic fieldwork, the disruptions we experience in our research both highlight and reflect the complex "*dynamics of the local-interactive spaces*" (p293) that we seek to understand.

## Conclusions

The notion of 'missing out' has been explored as both an emotionally-rooted experience of engaging (or otherwise) with the social and spatial relations of the 'object' of my research – enactments of 'community' in relation to an area-based initiative – and an analytical construct relating to processes of boundary making underpinning the delivery of *The Initiative* for the 'community' in these contexts. The role played by 'missing out' in linking the methodological reality of ethnographic research and the empirical reality of delivering *The Initiative* reflects a mutuality between modes of knowing and being in the field; and between interacting with, and interpreting, the 'object' of study (Ingold 2008). For Pigg (2013), the continual critical reflection that is inherent to ethnography means that knowledge production necessarily intersects the ongoing process of "*everyone's efforts to make sense of what is going on*" (p132) in the field, researcher and researched alike. Following Punch (2012) and Lee-Treweek (2000), the emotional dimensions of feeling I was 'missing out' ethnographically, due to my alignment with an evaluation agenda, served as a productive form of reflexivity that enabled me to consider the relationship between my experience of the 'community' around *The Initiative* in each field site, and the experiences of the residents themselves. So, while my anxieties about not being able to participate in the practices of *The Initiative* and the 'communities' delivering it reflected a form of disconnection from the activities in the field, this could also be seen as a kind of participation in the processes of exclusion and boundary-making that permeated enactments of *The Initiative*.

Hastrup (2005), drawing on Strathern (1993), argues that ethnographic fieldwork offers a particular mode of perception "*consisting of, and steeped in, social relations*" (p141), and that it reflects the

distinctive characteristic of anthropology that assumes that knowledge is created through such relations. It is possible to theorise 'missing out' as a form, rather than a lack, of social relation; a type of (dis)connectivity to a socio-spatial sphere through awareness of its presence and through perception of one's position outside of, or excluded from it. Thus 'missing out' can potentially be viewed as a valid form of ethnographic knowledge production, such that it reflects and arises out of particular sets of embedded relationships with the people and places of the field. There are multiple factors that shape the relationship and positioning of the ethnographer with the field, including dimensions of identity, 'access' and rapport (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Here, however, I have illustrated how an attempt to align ethnography with an evaluation framing poses particular (additional) forms of 'missing out', and thus prompts new ways of considering the contribution of ethnographic knowledge to evaluating the impacts of an intervention such as *The Initiative*.

This perspective holds parallels with a range of anthropological and sociological literatures on absences, concealments and disconnections in the processes of 'knowing'. Reflecting currents from Science and Technology Studies in particular, there are various anthropological interpretations of the work that secrets and concealments do in the processes and relations of knowledge production, for example in the context of international diplomatic deliberations (Rappert 2010) or in clinical trials (Geissler 2013). Such accounts convey theorisations of 'unknowing', and the absences, disconnections and concealments underpinning 'unknowing', not as the dialectical opposite of knowledge, but as part of the economies of social and political relations that construct boundaries around what counts as 'knowledge', and by and for whom (Dilley 2010, Rappert 2010, Geissler 2013). Thus, the fact that I 'missed out' on engagement with certain practices and contexts, such as participating in the delivery of *The Initiative*, does not necessarily equate with a subsequent lack of (ethnographic) knowledge.

Considering also my position as ethnographer in relation to the people, practices and spaces of my research 'object', it is useful to think about 'missing out' not merely as an absence of social closeness or connection, which would denote a simplistic subject/object division, but as part of a more fluid and pluralistic way of relating. Alternative ways of interpreting the positioning of the researcher in relation to that to be known allow for disconnection and distance as productive types of social relations, for example Candea's identification of a "*middle ground between intersubjectivity and the absence of relation*" in scientific relations (2010, p249), and Coleman's description of 'collective solitude' as a form of sociality in busy, urban spaces (2009). These examples suggest that my experiences of disconnection and distance need not be cast solely as regrettable 'limitations' of my ethnographic methodology, treating them as 'missing data' in a traditional scientific way. Rather, the experiences of 'missing out', as legitimate forms of relating and positioning in the field, can be

acknowledged as prominent and productive components of the construction of knowledge (Dilley 2010).

I am cautious, however, about suggesting that my experiences of ‘missing out’ as a researcher were wholly commensurate with those experiences of the people and places of my research, in the enactments of ‘community’ around *The Initiative*. The forms of relating I have identified here reflect largely the restrictions posed by the agenda of conducting evaluation research, underpinned by authoritative forms of ‘scientific’ knowledge (Mykhalovskiy, Armstrong et al. 2008) that did not intersect residents’ own concerns about who or what might be ‘missing’ from the process of delivering *The Initiative*. However, there were much closer ties between the localised moral economies underpinning the processes of residents working for, and representing, the ‘community’ in delivering *The Initiative*, and my own sense of (self-)exclusion from participating as an ‘outsider’, in terms of who was eligible to contribute and in which spaces this could legitimately happen.

### **Implications for evaluation:**

Given the entanglement of my ethnographic knowledge production with the values of evaluation research, it is useful to consider what my reflections on ‘missing out’ might offer to the evaluative agenda. I suggest that ‘missing out’ offers a conceptual means to consider how evaluation approaches might attend more closely to the intersection of the methodological and empirical. This may shed light on the spaces, processes and relations that may be unknown and/or unknowable in research seeking to understand how an intervention works (or does not), and the impacts it has, and for whom. Contemporary evaluation approaches, in seeking to ‘unpack the black box’ (Stame 2004), assume a holistic epistemological perspective, though typically with a critical pragmatism that acknowledges the limitations of research methods. Yet, they often attempt to negate, reduce or explain away the uncertainties, absences and discontinuities that arise through the research process, reflecting the need to demonstrate the validity of research and fulfil the requirements of ‘good research practice’ (Reynolds, DiLiberto et al. 2014).

Turning attention to the role that absences and relations of disconnection play in shaping understanding and interpretations of, for example, a community empowerment initiative, must surely contribute to the agenda to uncover ‘hidden’ processes of change that previous, experimental forms of evaluative research could not reveal. While it may be a fallacy to assume that by generating *more* knowledge we will have more control (Ling 2012), it is possible that by better understanding the limits of our knowledge – identifying the spaces occupied by the ‘known unknowns’ (Rappert 2010) – the evaluative agenda of generalising evidence of how an intervention brings about change could be improved through more precise circumscription.

Attending more closely to processes of disconnection and 'missing out' must surely be vital for public health evaluations in particular, facilitating, for example, interpretation of the mechanisms of an intervention such as *The Initiative* and how they shape how local access to resources that influence health (and inequalities) for different people (Gatrell 1997). Attention to 'missing out' may also offer a more critical interpretation of the mechanisms through which collective action plays out in context, for example in a community empowerment intervention which assumes increasing solidarity and mutual support will lead to improved psycho-social wellbeing (Campbell and Murray 2004). This perspective may reflect a similar 'bias of solidarity' of which ethnography has been accused (Coleman 2009), which means evaluations may overlook the subtle and fluid roles that disconnections, absences and distancing seem to play among the people and places of an intervention.

Despite my proposition that 'missing out' methodologically should not be merely explained away or bracketed as a regrettable 'limitation', it is important to consider the possible limitations of the approach I have taken to identifying 'missing out' as a valuable conceptual and analytical tool. My experiences of 'missing out' methodologically could be interpreted as indicators of where I could have tried harder, gone further, or stayed longer in my ethnographic approach to make more, deeper, or 'better' connections with the objects of my study. Certainly, my movement between the two field sites likely contributed to the 'incompleteness' of my interpretations (Hannerz 2003). It could also indicate the unsuitability of a traditional ethnographic methodology for exploring an initiative that limited my participation, or that my assumptions about what ethnography would entail were misguided. However, I have identified that through my 'missing out' I was able to engage in a form of 'participation' that contributed to my readings of the social reality of an initiative-in-context and which may enhance the evaluative interpretation of how and for whom it brings about change.

These findings also point to outstanding questions that cannot be explored fully here, such as how my interpretations of the 'community' in my field sites were likely influenced by other dimensions of relating, including perceptions of identity and related rapport-building. My insights also highlight something of the complex 'folding together' of the methodological, empirical and ethical dimensions of ethnographic research (Parker 2007), via the relations of connection and disconnection with research participants. Thus, there remain questions of how 'missing out' on the reciprocal nature of participation intersects expectations for the relations and exchange between ethnographer and participants in, and beyond, the field (Scheper-Hughes 2001).

To conclude. The value of ethnographic work for evaluation has often been centred on its offer of

more holistic understanding of how an intervention works in context (LeCompte and Goetz 1982). However, I propose that an ethnographic approach can play a different, and potentially more valuable role, in bringing to light the spaces occupied by the unsaid, the unrepresented and the parts of the social 'whole' that are characterised by disconnection, absence and partialness. I argue that within evaluation research, ethnographic attention to 'missing out', and how it manifests methodologically as well as empirically, will help to highlight the processes through which spaces, people and things become excluded, distanced or disconnected, and which may be obscured in standard evaluation approaches resting on models of causality. This will potentially add depth, as well as clarity of limitations, on interpretations of *how* change might be produced through a community initiative, and by whom its effects (health-related or otherwise) will and will not be experienced.

## 10. Discussion

### Overview

This concluding chapter seeks to draw together the connected strands of the research described in this thesis, through which I aimed to explore how ‘community’ is enacted through the *Big Local* initiative delivered in two local sites, and to situate it in a broader context of understanding the role constructions of ‘community’ might play within engagement interventions, to bring about changes to health inequalities. I will first summarise the thesis, outlining the key findings from my research, and will then interpret them in relation to existing literature on the relationship between ‘community’ initiatives and the pathways to health and inequality, with specific focus on concepts and practices of participation, inclusion and exclusion. Next, I will consider the implications of the findings for approaches to evaluating complex, ‘community’ initiatives, challenging the use of ‘community’ as a stable, analytical and/or methodological concept, and comparing the conceptual approach adopted within this thesis with other theoretical frameworks commonly used in evaluation of complex initiatives. I will then offer a broader reflection on the limitations of my research, and I will highlight further questions to consider that lie beyond the scope of this thesis. Finally, I will present some concluding statements about what this thesis adds to current knowledge and understanding of how to conceptualise the ‘community’ in relation to initiatives targeting health inequalities.

### Summary of Thesis

Through the research described in this thesis I examined in detail enactments of ‘community’ in and around a ‘community’-led, area-based empowerment initiative – the *Big Local* – for the purposes of contributing to approaches for evaluating such types of programme, and for interpreting how, and for whom, impacts on health inequalities may occur. I situated my research question within a substantial, and increasing, body of conceptual and empirical literature on the functions and values of engaging the ‘community’ in attempts to address social and health inequalities. I sought to problematise the way in which ‘community’ as a concept is employed and operationalised (typically pragmatically, often uncritically), both in policy initiatives and in evaluations of these. Hence, I intended that a critical, but empirically-driven examination of ‘community’ would offer conceptual and methodological insights for methodological choices within evaluation, and thus, contribute to interpretations of the ‘evidence’ of effect of ‘community’ initiatives on health and inequalities.

I situated my empirical research around the *BL*, an initiative that seeks to enable ‘communities’ in relatively disadvantaged areas of England to lead the process of making their areas ‘better places to live’, giving them autonomy over decision making processes and the management of financial resources. I conducted my research alongside the *Communities in Control* evaluation study, which aims to explore mechanisms of collective control within the *BL* – such as ‘community’ control over financial resources – and their influence on determinants of health inequalities. Reflecting this, I conducted a review of literature on the ‘community’ as a recipient of money, for example in contexts of development, or reparations or compensation for harms. I interpreted the different ways in which ‘community’ was constructed through the flow of money, and via the surrounding social and material relations of inequality. I identified the importance of examining how the mechanisms of a policy or programme contribute to the ongoing negotiation of identities and eligibility, within the ‘community’ and between the ‘community’ and external groups, for understanding how an initiative such as the *BL* might impact on determinants of health inequalities, and for whom.

This work led to the identification of the broad aim of my study: to examine how ‘community’ is enacted through the *BL*, and to explore practices and conceptualisations of ‘community’ that arise through and around the delivery of the initiative in local sites. I adopted a broadly ethnographic approach within a two-site case study to examine enactments of ‘community’ in two areas participating in the *BL* initiative. Underpinning this aim was my engagement with theoretical and conceptual literature rooted in post-humanist and ontologically-oriented paradigms. I drew specifically on principles from actor-network theory to consider ‘community’ not as a pre-existing structure or entity, but something in process, enacted through networks of relations arising between different human and non-human actors (Law 2007, Fenwick and Edwards 2010), through and around the delivery of the *BL*.

My ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in two areas, ‘Craybourne’ and ‘Westin Hill’, over a period of 13 months. I employed various qualitative methods (including observations, interviews, and more informal interactions) to observe and follow enactments of ‘community’, and to identify the practices, conceptualisations and range of entities (social, spatial, material, conceptual) engaged, through the unfolding *BL* initiative in each area. To analyse the resulting ‘data’ – chiefly, observation notes, interview transcripts, and reflexive field notes – I considered each case site separately, to trace through the interactions between different actors (human, spatial, material), and identify various conceptualisations and practices around ‘community’. From this case-specific perspective, I

looked across the two cases to generate more abstracted interpretations of what constituted and contributed to enactments of 'community'.

### **Key findings:**

Through my analysis I identified three ways in which enactments of 'community' were produced through and around the activities of the *BL* in each area. The first type of enactment was the 'work' of making and negotiating boundaries; the ongoing processes through which various spatial, material and social boundaries were drawn and re-drawn between what was and was not eligible for inclusion in the decision-making processes and/or for the potential benefits of the *BL*. This boundary work intersected, but also often challenged, the geographic boundary of each area designated through the structure of the *BL* initiative. The boundary work also reflected engagements with concepts and practices of 'representation', influenced in particular by concerns over responsibility for the financial resources allocated to each 'community'. Thus, boundary making and negotiation both reflected and contributed to the particular activities of the initiative that were unfolding at the time of my fieldwork, for example the 'community' consultation in Craybourne, and the selection and delivery of projects in line with the priorities of the plan in Westin Hill.

Second, my analysis identified fragmented forms of relating, and ongoing positioning between the individual and the collective, that constituted enactments of 'community' in and through the *BL*. The processes of the *BL* gave rise to the positioning of (some) individuals as distinct and separate from the collective, particularly in relation to perceptions of need and deservedness to benefit from the initiative, and through the narrative construction of personal trajectories that intersected and/or diverged from the collective activity and spaces of the *BL*. The shifting positioning of the individual in relation to the collective was also performed through governance of the divide between the two, particularly practices that saw people acting as (or on behalf of) the collective to negotiate and, at times, negate the interests and eligibility of individuals for the benefit of the 'community'. The delivery of the *BL* also gave rise to practices of segmentation of the collective as a whole, through conceptual categorisation and targeting of priority spaces and sub-groups of the population (work typically done by a small group of people), thus enacting the 'community' as both a fragmented and holistic entity.

Third, through reflection on my ethnographic practice and on its intersection with my empirical observations, I identified the prominence of relations of disconnection and distance. My own concerns over experiences of 'missing out' methodologically, in terms of my ethnographic practice within the 'confines' of an evaluation agenda, were paralleled by similar concerns and experiences

among those involved in delivering the *BL*. 'Missing out' emerged within enactments of 'community' particularly in relation to decision-making processes and attempts to conceptualise and engage with the 'community' as a whole. This pointed to the importance of considering 'missing out' as an active and productive form of relating within a 'community' context. I surmised that attending to relations of disconnection, and the spaces within and processes through which they occur, may be of value for attempts to interpret the mechanisms through which a 'community' initiative impacts on inequalities, and for whom health is (or is not) improved. Furthermore, this reflexive work highlighted the value of attending more closely to the intersection of the methodological and the empirical, particularly in evaluation, for assessing the 'unknown' and the limits of knowledge, and for considering its application and transferability to other contexts.

I will reflect further on how these results, and the difference kinds of enactments of 'community' identified, contribute to existing framings of the value of 'community' engagement for health improvement, and for theoretical and methodological approaches to evaluating complex, 'community' initiatives, such as the *BL*, for their impacts on health inequalities.

## **Implications for 'Community' Engagement and Improving Health**

The broader context to which this thesis speaks is the ongoing emphasis in health and social policy making on the engagement of the 'community' in efforts to target inequalities, via participatory and/or empowering pathways (Taylor 2006, Barnes 2007, Milton, Attree et al. 2012, Popay, Whitehead et al. 2015). The findings of my research offer an added dimension to theorising the pathways through which engagement and empowerment mechanisms may impact on health inequalities, by highlighting how the very processes, values and materials of the engagement or participation structure itself produce new forms of 'community', and new forms of relating between individuals and collectives. The ongoing negotiation of boundaries, and relations of disconnection and fragmentation, identified as constituting enactments of 'community', may mediate pathways to health that have been underexplored through theorisations that (implicitly) rest on notions of cohesion and connectedness as central (or at least desired) qualities of the 'community'. Here, I will outline how my findings contribute to existing work around processes of inclusion and exclusion, in relation to participatory practices for improving health, and to theorisations of the pathways from 'community' engagement and empowerment to reduced health inequalities.

### **Social inclusion, exclusion and participatory initiatives:**

Mechanisms to involve those most 'socially excluded' (or at least residing in areas designated as 'socially excluded') in processes for decision-making are typically thought to enable those excluded to become more active citizens (Barnes, Newman et al. 2003), with potential health benefits theorised through increased social cohesion and social capital (Labonte 2004, Burton 2009) and control (Popay, Whitehead et al. 2015, Whitehead, Pennington et al. 2016). The processes of boundary work that contributed to enactments of 'community' in relation to the *BL*, could be seen as ongoing processes of (re)defining inclusion and exclusion, not as fixed states but more as dynamic sets of relations, as Popay et al suggest in relation to the concept of 'social exclusion' (Popay, Escorel et al. 2008). What the findings of this thesis add is empirical illustration of the range of actors (the social, conceptual, spatial and material entities engaged in the delivery of the *BL*) that constituted the positioning of people, spaces and things as varying inside and outside boundaries constructed and negotiated around different aspects of the initiative. Distinctions of included and excluded were in constant negotiation around the *BL*, according to a range of sometimes conflicting values (such as perceived 'need' or deservedness to benefit), and the different types of 'work' being undertaken to deliver the initiative, such as 'community' consultation activities (for example in Craybourne), or deciding which projects to fund (in Westin Hill).

Literature exploring processes and dimensions of inclusion and exclusion, in relation to participatory mechanisms, have emphasised the social and discursive practices that are influential in determining who is and is not included (see for example Barnes, Newman et al. 2003, Agger and Larsen 2009). Barnes and colleagues (2003) identify perceived competence and skill as values that mediate forms of inclusion in participatory contexts, and this corresponds with the boundary work within the *BL*, in particular the discursive practices between committee members in which individuals' capacity to contribute to the work of the initiative were debated. However, my findings demonstrate additional values at play within this boundary work and as part of the shifting positioning of the individual in relation to the collective: values of perceived 'need', 'deservedness' and 'capacity to benefit'. These values were identifiable in negotiations of boundaries particularly for the allocation of resources, for example in discussions in Westin Hill of where and for whom funded projects could be delivered. They were also prominent in shaping positioning of individuals in relation to the collective, for example in consultation activities undertaken in Craybourne, through the process of identifying priorities for the initiative and the groups of people most eligible to benefit from the resources available in the *BL*. This illustrates engagement with multiple dimensions of 'eligibility' in the

discursive practices shaping relations of inclusion and exclusion around participation in the *BL* and its anticipated benefits, and shaping enactments of 'community'.

What this thesis also demonstrates is the role played by other kinds of practices, beyond the social and discursive, in constituting relations of inclusion and exclusion in enactments of 'community'. My findings contribute to, and extend, an emerging literature on the spatial dimensions of inclusion and exclusion in participatory practices (Barnes, Newman et al. 2003, Renedo and Marston 2015). They demonstrate how both active engagements with space (such as going 'door-to-door' around the local area), and the communication of spatial narratives (such as defining the identities of under-represented or 'forgotten' places), are highly prominent in the relations of negotiating boundaries and positioning of individuals and the collective.

Furthermore, my findings also point to the importance of exploring the role of materials in mediating and producing relations of connection and disconnection, and thus positions of inclusion and exclusion, in relation to a 'community' initiative such as the *BL*. My observations of enactments of 'community' identified the prominence of engagement with materials to explore, negotiate and assert spatial boundaries, and the roles materials – such as maps, newsletters and codes of conduct – played in producing new forms of relating among people, and between people and spaces.

Perhaps the clearest example of this, in relation to processes of inclusion and exclusion, was the use of the code of conduct by committee members to govern the discrepancy between the interests of the individual and the collective in Craybourne. This shows the potential for materials to influence and mediate the (re)drawing of boundaries of inclusion (here, in terms of contributing to decision-making), negating the eligibility of an individual, as a resident, to participate, in favour of the responsibility towards the collective and protecting its capacity to benefit from the initiative. Thus, I argue for the importance of acknowledging and exploring different types of actors and practices (material and spatial, as well as social and discursive) that constitute the shifting positioning of individuals and groups, in relation to the collective, and the mechanisms of the initiative.

Furthermore, my findings demonstrate the need to identify the different values (such as perceptions of need and capacity to contribute) that are varyingly evoked and dismissed – brought in and out of focus – as part of the ongoing boundary work that constitutes inclusion and exclusion.

There remains a strong concern within debates and practice on 'community' engagement that participatory mechanisms may continue to exclude the already most excluded (Thomson 2008, South, Raine et al. 2010), and therefore masking or overlooking some of the relations of inequality occurring within a 'community' (Taylor 2006, Cornish and Ghosh 2007), and potentially exacerbating these existing inequalities with detrimental effects on health. The trope of the 'usual suspects' is

used in some of this literature (Barnes, Newman et al. 2004, Larkham, Hardman et al. 2013, Kenny, Farmer et al. 2015) to reflect the issue of a few voices from more privileged positions dominating the processes of participation. However, the findings of this thesis indicate that it is not a straightforward process to categorise the identities of those whose voices are heard most loudly. My research demonstrates that the positioning of even those most actively involved in the delivery of the *BL* was not stable, but continually revised and worked upon, for example as individual trajectories intersected and diverged from the collective work of the initiative, and relations of disconnection gave rise to experiences of ‘missing out’.

Moreover, the process of segmenting and categorising the whole of the ‘community’ into priority or ‘missing’ spaces and sub-groups of people, for example in relation to consultation activities, was a shifting and dynamic one, varyingly drawing on different values and different spatial and material engagements. This research indicates, therefore, that it is not sufficient to rely on particular social categories of identity (such as class, gender, occupation, education, levels of self-efficacy) to describe who is more and less included, or as (fixed) ‘explanatory variables’ through which to interpret the differential effects on health outcomes and inequalities. Rather, I argue for examining the processes (social, material, spatial) and values that cause some people, places and things to be held in a position of inclusion or exclusion over others, at any one time, and in relation to activities or mechanism of the initiative, and which may or may not relate to particular social categories of identity.

The questions of identity, inclusion and exclusion also relate to notions of representation, which underpinned some of the boundary work, positioning and (fragmented) forms of relating that constituted enactments of ‘community’. Literature on participatory and engagement initiatives has suggested that they create new spaces for democratic participation, but raise new questions over what ‘representation’ can or should mean in a non-electoral, ‘community’ context (Rao 2000, Barnes, Newman et al. 2004, Urbinati and Warren 2008). The findings in this thesis affirm the assertion that representation cannot be conceptualised as a fixed relationship between people, which would denote a “*simple and static notion of identity*” (Barnes, Newman et al. 2004, p273) of both the represented and representative. Instead, the positioning of individuals acting in representative capacities towards a broader collective, is fluid, and emerges through interactions between people, spaces and materials that are engaged as part of the work of delivering the *BL*. For example, the positioning of individuals as disconnected or ‘missing out’ from decision-making processes arose through questioning the legitimacy of certain spaces (such as private homes or electronic media) for doing committee work and thus representing the ‘community’.

What is further illustrated through this research is the influence of particular features of the *BL* initiative on the kinds of values that are evoked in the ongoing positioning of individuals in relation to the collective, to assert or question the legitimacy of representatives, and representative practices around decision-making. As suggested in my review of literature examining the 'community' in receipt of money, the financial resources which the 'community' managed, via the representative committee members, played a particularly influential role in this. Taylor (2007) describes practices of "*self-surveillance*" (p304) within 'communities' as they seek to manage the risks transferred to them through engagement strategies. I argue that the money allocated to each *BL* area likely intensified these governance practices, as those most active in delivering the *BL* sought to demonstrate their legitimacy in decision making, and their authority to act as representatives for and on behalf of the 'community' (Urbinati and Warren 2008) in terms of the allocation of resources.

The values of eligibility that intersected enactments of 'community' reflected struggles among those delivering the *BL* to put into practice the legitimate representation of the 'community' (Jewkes and Murcott 1998, Connelly 2011) in the management of money and responsibility for improving the lives of an abstract, largely faceless collective. As noted from my literature review, the money (in its conceptual and social, as well as material forms) seemed to play a role in mediating the relations around the articulation and mobilisation of values of eligibility in the management of legitimate decision-making. My findings indicate, therefore, that attempts to interpret the effect of 'community' engagement on wider states of inclusion, exclusion and inequality, should attend closely to the specific mechanisms and structures of each initiative – for example, the transference of money. This attention should be focused on the roles these mechanisms play in mediating the differing positions of people (individuals or groups), and how these may reflect broader struggles with risk and responsibility, as 'communities' are tasked with 'sorting out their own problems' (Amin 2005). Furthermore, the potential negative effects (on health) of these mechanism should be explored. As suggested in the literature review, the transference of money to the 'community' may serve to entrench further the relations of inequality that underpin the identification of the recipient 'community' (in the case of the *BL*, as 'disadvantaged'), and/or lead to new struggles for access to resources between members of that 'community'.

### **Pathways to influencing health:**

Much of the focus of this thesis has been on enactments of 'community' that have little explicit link with health states, conceptualisations of health and/or health-related behaviours, with perhaps the exception of health-related personal trajectories positioning the individual in relation to the collective. Despite this, however, the relations arising through the delivery of the *BL*, and that

constituted enactments of 'community' could be interpreted as contributing to the types of social processes that are considered to be broader, 'up-stream' determinants of health, in their potential to shape access to social, material and economic resources for health (Whitehead 2007, Milton, Attree et al. 2012). By attending to the boundary work, positioning and forms of relating occurring through the *BL*, this thesis offers an opportunity to consider further the theorised pathways between these 'distal' determinants (Diez Roux 2011) and observed health effects.

Building on the previous focus on inclusion and exclusion within participatory practices, this thesis contributes to existing critiques of the concept of 'social exclusion' (see for example Bowring 2000, Agger and Larsen 2009), and its relationship with poorer health. This framing reflects, in part, assumptions of connection and solidarity as necessary and desirable for improved health via psycho-social pathways. My findings highlight the range of ways of relating and interaction that emerged through the enactment of 'community' around the *BL* that were *not* characterised by proximity and connection, but at times by fragmentation and distancing, for example the relations of missing out and disconnection around the work of delivering the initiative. Missing out constituted relations among those most actively involved in the *BL*, as well as between the committees of residents and the wider 'community' they sought to represent. This form of disconnection, I argue, does not necessarily denote a failure of 'community' engagement, or even (acceptable, inevitable) 'imperfect participation' (Cornish and Ghosh 2007), but instead points to the need to recognise different forms of relating, beyond solidarity and connection as (sole) indicators of inclusion and active engagement.

This points perhaps to the ongoing lack of clarity over definitions of 'participation' or 'engagement' (Burton, Goodlad et al. 2004) and what constitutes an effective model of participation for improving health (O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013, Popay, Whitehead et al. 2015). Yet it also suggests the possibility of interpreting exclusion as not necessarily a *lack* of agency, but as an active form of positioning that is potentially empowering in itself (Kothari 2001, Labonte 2004), and/or which may have a valuable function in the delivery of a participatory initiative such as enabling progress to be made by avoiding 'deadlock' (Agger and Larsen 2009). Therefore, relations of disconnection and distance, and the processes through which they occur, should be considered as potentially productive dimensions of participation at a collective level, and thus influential in the mechanisms of change of a 'community' initiative and its impact on health inequalities. A further dimension to this relationship appears in the example of narratives of ill health acting as a point of connection when shared among individuals, such as the committee members in Westin Hill. This again indicates that an assumed pathway of social inclusion, through connectedness leading to better health may

obscure key forms of relating and positioning among people that intersect their individual, and collective, health experiences.

This thesis also speaks to the empowerment aspect of the *BL* and similar initiatives, and to the theorisation of 'collective control' as a mechanism through such initiatives might impact on health inequalities, adopted as a framing for the *CiC* evaluation study. In particular, Whitehead and colleagues (2014, 2016) indicate that the dynamics and effects of collective control cannot be hypothesised directly from observed mechanisms through which *individual* levels of control (perceived or 'actual') impact on health outcomes, but that the interaction between the different levels adds complexity to understanding these pathways to health. Here, I argue, is where the findings of this study can contribute. My identification of the ongoing and shifting positioning between individuals and the collective, and the processes of fragmenting and reconstituting the 'community' as a whole, offers a potential framework through which to explore the interaction between the individual and the collective, for examining, for example, how empowerment of the individual leads to and/or arises through collective control. This thesis also highlights the different forms of interaction – spatial and material, as well as social – that give rise to the interplay between the individual and collective levels, and thereby aids theorising of how processes of collective control might influence determinants of health, and how they might be identified and measured.

Finally, as Whitehead et al note (2016), the empowerment premise of initiatives centred on 'community' engagement and control does not necessarily rule out experiences of *disempowerment* and *lack* of control among even those most involved, especially when faced with structurally-determined conditions of living that collective control may not be able to influence. The findings of this thesis offer ways in which to theorise further how participatory mechanisms may unfold varyingly, and create senses of exclusion and disempowerment, characterised, for example as experiences of 'missing out'. This highlights the importance of examining critically the unintended impacts of public health interventions, and 'community' participation in particular, for their potential to reproduce and even exacerbate existing structures and relations of inequality, at local and wider levels (Lorenc, Petticrew et al. 2012), as was indicated in my review of scenarios of giving money to 'communities'.

However, to reiterate what has been argued previously, this thesis also points to how relations of exclusion, distance and disconnection should not necessarily be viewed solely as indicators of the 'failure' of a participatory mechanism. Instead, I suggest that enactments of 'community', and of collective participation, necessarily involve shifting relations of proximity and distance, which are constituted through the different activities, mechanisms and structures of the initiative itself (for

example, *BL*'s financial control mechanism). As such, they will likely shape how collective capacity to act and collective sense of empowerment are produced through an initiative, and for whom positive (and negative) impacts on health are experienced. This points again to the need to theorise distance and exclusion as necessary parts of a process of increasing 'collective control', and to examine in more detail how and why these occur, to understand better the pathways from control to improved health inequalities.

## **Contributions to Evaluation Approaches**

In addition to contributions of this research to theorisations of the pathways between 'community' participation, inclusion, exclusion and improved health, it also offers important considerations for the work of evaluating the health effects of these kinds of initiative. In this section I will outline the thesis' implications for the prominent theoretical framings commonly used in evaluating complex 'community' initiatives; and also, methodological considerations for conducting and interpreting evaluations of these initiatives' impacts on health and inequalities.

### **Implications for use of theory in evaluation:**

The aim in this thesis to contribute conceptually to approaches for evaluating 'community' initiatives and their impact on health inequalities, can be linked to what Cohn and colleagues have described as the "*turn to the complex*" (2013, p42) within literature on evaluating 'complex interventions'. It is important to consider what my critical examination of how 'community' is enacted in practice, can add to the way an evaluation of a similar complex intervention might be framed, given acknowledged challenges with evaluating these kinds of initiative (Burton, Goodlad et al. 2006, Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009, South and Phillips 2014). First, I will outline the contributions of my findings to a theoretical framing that is prominent in contemporary approaches to evaluating 'complex interventions', which draws on complexity and systems theories to frame the intervention as an 'event' occurring in a 'complex adaptive system' (see for example, Durie, Wyatt et al. 2004, Kernick 2004, Durie and Wyatt 2007, Shiell, Hawe et al. 2008, Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009, Diez Roux 2011, Hummelbrunner 2011, Cohn, Clinch et al. 2013, Durie and Wyatt 2013, South and Phillips 2014, Hawe 2015).

There are some clear parallels between my conceptual approach and this theoretical framing. The emphasis in complexity theory on emergent and dynamic relations, which arise through interactions between the intervention and the system in which it is implemented (Durie and Wyatt 2007), relates closely to the emphasis in ANT on 'translation': the process through which actors or entities interact

to produce new and unfolding networks of relations (Callon 1986). For example, my focus on the 'boundary work' of enacting 'community' through the *BL* highlights how particular features of the initiative (for example conducting 'community' consultation) contributed to and interacted with emergent relations between entities (the different people and places engaged in the *BL*, and things such as maps, and codes of conduct). This in turn constituted the ongoing assertion and negotiation of 'community' boundaries.

The prominence of the continual negotiation of boundaries within enactments of 'community' also carries parallels with the theoretical perspective that the system, into which an intervention is delivered, is 'open' (Durie, Wyatt et al. 2004, Durie and Wyatt 2013), and continually responding to the interactions emerging among its constituent parts, and between those parts and the intervention itself (Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009, Cohn, Clinch et al. 2013, Durie and Wyatt 2013). Moreover, the shifting positioning of individuals in relation to each other and to the collective mediated by, for example, perceptions of eligibility to benefit or participate, highlights the dynamism and unpredictability of relations between the components of the initiative and those involved. As such, this research seems to contribute an empirical example of ways in which some of these theorised relations of dynamism and emergence of an intervention in a complex system can be identified in the evaluation of a 'community' initiative such as the *BL*.

Yet, what the enactments of 'community' identified in my findings also indicate is a much more fluid and contingent sense of boundaries between the activities and relations of the intervention (or initiative) and the context (or system) into which it is delivered, than is currently captured in complex systems approaches to evaluation. The conceptual distinction implied between the 'system' and the 'intervention' in such literature is often complicated by the presence of other concepts such as 'context', 'environment' or, occasionally 'community'. There also appears to be some inconsistency across (and sometimes within) papers in how these structural dimensions are assumed to be related for the purposes of evaluating how an intervention brings about change. For example, the system has been presented as equal to or synonymous with context or setting (Durie and Wyatt 2007, Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009, Hawe 2015); and also the context / setting / environment presented as external to the system and as something with which the system interacts as well as the intervention (Kernick 2004, Durie and Wyatt 2007, Hummelbrunner 2011, Durie and Wyatt 2013). When it is explicitly mentioned across this literature, the concept of 'community' adds further uncertainty to the conceptual relationships between these dimensions, conveyed for example as part of the system, as context and/or as a system in itself (Durie and Wyatt 2007, Shiell, Hawe et al. 2008, Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009, Durie and Wyatt 2013, South and Phillips 2014, Hawe 2015).

This lack of clarity perhaps alludes to some of the problematic assumptions behind the framing of an intervention as an 'event in a system', which seems to imply a fairly simplistic and stable (structural) relationship between the intervention and the system (or context or setting or, perhaps, 'community'), even if the two interact and 'co-evolve' as complexity theory asserts (Hummelbrunner 2011). As the findings of this thesis indicate, the boundaries between the processes of the *BL* initiative and the multiple actors and networks of relations constituting the 'community' were constantly shifting. This suggests that the assumed distinction and separation between the intervention and the system (or context) should be questioned, and should become an explicit focus of an evaluation. I argue, therefore, that the enactments of 'community' identified in this research point to a repositioning of the focus away from an intervention as an event *in* a system (Hawe, Shiell et al. 2009), and more towards examination of the "*dialectical interplay*" (Shoveller, Viehbeck et al. 2015, p7) among what is being evaluated: an in-process assemblage of the initiative, the actors engaged in its delivery and the relations between them, and the system in which it is delivered.

Thus, the findings of this thesis also speak to recent calls for critical questioning of the notion of 'context' as it has been employed in evaluation research (George, Scott et al. 2015, Shoveller, Viehbeck et al. 2015), with calls to unpack what gets categorised as 'context' and the implications of this categorisation for interpreting the effects of an intervention (DiLiberto *forthcoming*). The often vague, broad and overlapping categories used to describe 'context' in evaluations of complex interventions have been criticised (Shoveller, Viehbeck et al. 2015). Yet, the ways in which 'community' was enacted through the *BL* suggest that assuming some conceptual distinction between the intervention, system and context may be problematic, given the flow of relations among different kinds of actors, and the shifting positioning and boundary work involved.

Many contemporary evaluation approaches, often reflecting a realist perspective, seek to 'unpack the black box' of a complex intervention by focusing on 'context, mechanism and output' (Stame 2004, Pawson 2006, Jackson and Kolla 2012, Byrne 2013, de Souza 2013). Furthermore, within a systems perspective, there have been attempts to differentiate between dimensions of the system, which, although linked and inter-relating, are assumed to operate in different ways; for example Hawe and colleagues distinguish between 'activity settings', 'social networks', and 'time' as different dimensions of the system (2009). However, attending to the enactments of 'community' through the *BL* initiative seems to challenge and dissolve any clear distinction between these kinds of categories. Instead, my findings point to the need to identify and follow complex networks of relations, involving multiple types of actor or entity, that cut across what might be categorised as different dimensions of the system, or as context as distinct from mechanism.

As indicated above, there are some commonalities between the conceptual principles underpinning my approach to exploring enactments of 'community' and those for the complex systems approach prominent in literature on evaluating 'community' interventions. However, there are also subtle, but critical differences between the two perspectives which should be highlighted, and which, I suggest, pose some important questions and potential developments to the complex systems approach commonly employed in evaluation. A key difference that is highlighted through this thesis is the assumption of multiple ontologies that shaped my application of ANT to exploring enactments of 'community', and which differs from the realist epistemological perspective that seems to underpin much of the evaluation literature described above. From this perspective I was able to identify how numerous different enactments of 'community' could be 'performed into existence' (Fenwick 2010, Fenwick 2011) through the *BL*, such as the varied expression of 'community' boundaries, as varied configurations of individuals, collectives, spaces and materials. However, my assumption of multiplicity is in contrast with the implicit assumptions embedded in complex systems approaches to evaluating 'community' initiatives, in which the 'system' (and sometimes the 'community' or 'context') tends to be presented as a single entity, albeit one that is complex and evolving through interaction with the intervention. This further suggests an implicit assumption that what happens within that system and how change comes about is something unitary and consistent, and therefore, when done 'correctly' through a good evaluation, can be both described and interpreted with little contention.

As an example, Durie & Wyatt (2007) describe the process of change in a 'community' initiative from a complex systems perspective, but represent the system and the 'community' within it as a single, unitary set of structures and properties. While they describe the relations between component parts of the system and the intervention as emerging and dynamic, the overall scale, structural dimensions and form of the system (and of the 'community') are presented as uncontested. This contrasts with the shifting and multiple forms of positioning (between individuals and the collective, and between spatial, material and human entities) that emerged in enactments of 'community' through the *BL*. These enactments were often in tension and occasionally in conflict with one another, such that the 'community' could be enacted at once as both segmented and a holistic entity; as comprising relations of both proximity and distance; and defined by different geographical, social and material boundary work. As such, my findings indicate no single or stable relationship of positioning between the intervention (the *BL* initiative), the 'community' and the system.

Perhaps because Durie and Wyatt report substantial improvements to health and social outcomes as a result of the 'community' initiative they describe (2007), there is little need to consider multiple

ontologies (for example of the 'community', and of its position in relation to the system and intervention) and the conflicts and tensions that might arise from these. However, from my findings, I argue that attending directly to the multiplicities of an initiative as it is performed could be extremely valuable for understanding better the dynamics of such processes and how they lead to differential and unequal health and social outcomes. As described earlier, the emphasis in my findings on the importance of relations of disconnection and distance in enactments of 'community', as well as connection and proximity, indicates the range of pathways through which a 'community' initiative might intervene on determinants of health, both positively and negatively. Thus, embracing and actively exploring through evaluation multiple, different enactments of the intervention, system and 'community', and the connections between them, might give clearer interpretations of for whom an initiative does and does not improve health, and thus how inequalities within and between populations will be shaped.

This perspective can also contribute to a broader level of public health 'knowledge', and the current paucity of conclusive evidence of the effectiveness of 'community' engagement strategies on reducing health inequalities (O'Mara-Eves, Brunton et al. 2013). A focus on the multiplicity of different enactments of initiatives such as the *BL* (both within and across studies), might assist interpretations across this literature of varying and even conflicting results, which currently, when aggregated, lead to a lack of definitive statements about 'what works'. Thus, through the lens of exploring enactments of 'community' as multiply produced, I reveal the potential of identifying the 'ontological politics' (Mol 1999) – the negotiations and interactions between enactments of reality that lead some to appear (temporarily) stable over others – of how an initiative is varyingly performed. This could facilitate interpretation of how its mechanisms of change have differential effects on health, both within and across populations.

### **Methodological implications for evaluating 'community' initiatives:**

In addition to the theoretical contributions this thesis offers for evaluating complex 'community' initiatives (or interventions), I will describe what it contributes to the methodological work of designing and interpreting such evaluations. I will draw, first, on reflections from my ethnographic approach, as well as what the different enactments of 'community' identified indicate for how to operationalise the concept of 'community' in the analysis and interpretation of effects of an intervention, and thus in the production of 'evidence'.

I follow Cohn and colleagues (2013), in their overview of the 'turn to complexity' in public health evaluation, in recognising that ethnography is a valuable methodological approach within evaluation

of complex interventions, in part for its attention to the 'particular'. However, acknowledging the findings of my research, I diverge from Cohn et al in arguing that the value of applying ethnography to evaluations might not lie in its 'holistic' perspective but rather in the *opposite*. As demonstrated in my account of 'missing out', ethnography enabled reflection on the *limits* of understanding and the process of knowledge production. A systems perspective to evaluating interventions might lead to the selection of particular methodologies assumed to enable the capturing of the system, and its unfolding interactions with the intervention, "*as a totality and only as a totality*" (Byrne 2013, p218). However, the findings of my research indicate an ethnographic approach's sensitivity towards both the disconnections and tensions of relations emerging through, for example, enactments of 'community', but also the disconnections and tensions of the relationship between the researcher, method and 'knowledge' produced. It was the disjuncture between my (perhaps naïve) expectations for my ethnographic approach and the expectations of the evaluative agenda of the study to which I was connected that led me to identify 'missing out' as a vital component of the relations in the 'field' and between me and the knowledge I was producing.

The inevitable 'unknowns' of the complex system and of its interactions with the intervention to bring about change have been acknowledged by some in evaluation literature (Hummelbrunner 2011, Cohn, Clinch et al. 2013). However, the continuing evaluation tropes of 'unpacking the black box' and finding out 'what works, for whom, under what circumstances and why' (Bonell, Fletcher et al. 2012, Byrne 2013, Petticrew 2015) indicate little space for explicit consideration of what cannot be known and what is uncertain. Following the findings generated that illustrate relations of disconnection and absence, as well as connection and presence, a reflexive ethnographic approach which embraces being situated and partial, could benefit evaluation of complex 'community' initiatives.

For example, my findings offer a framing for considering the implications of how boundaries (for example of a case, or of the system) are drawn and operationalised within the methods of an evaluation, and in turn how they might be negotiated or challenged through the interaction between research practice and the unfolding of the 'object' of study, the initiative. As Hummelbrunner argues, the boundaries of the system are not to be taken for granted, but must be considered and explored within an evaluation to understand what gets 'left out' (2011). This should be applied not only to understanding the boundary work of enactments of 'community', but also to what is included and excluded within the scope of an evaluation study (spaces, people, materials, networks of relations), and how the system is defined. As my experience captured in this thesis

demonstrates, there is capacity opened up by a reflexive ethnographic approach to consider the very intersection between the methods employed and the empirical observations recorded.

A second methodological consideration is how to manage the concept of 'community' within the evaluation process of analysing and interpreting effect, if acknowledging it to be something contested and in production through the relations of the intervention under study, and what this might mean for the kinds of 'evidence' of effect that can be expected from such evaluations. As Burton and colleagues indicate, 'community' is not a "*sufficiently tangible and constant phenomenon*" (2006, p298) so as to be used as a variable in research evaluating the impact of 'community' engagement approaches on health and inequalities. The multiple and sometimes contested enactments of 'community' described in this thesis indicate problems with employing 'community' uncritically as an analytical unit for measurement and comparison of outcomes of effect, across areas. This, I argue, would be as unhelpful as categorising 'community' as simply 'context' or 'mechanism' of the intervention. It leads to questions about how 'community' might relate to the concept of 'population' for analytical purposes (and particularly relevant to the endeavour of public health more generally), and relates to Krieger's concern over how 'population' is taken, uncritically, to be a neutral analytical unit in epidemiology (2012). Krieger argues that we should not assume 'population' to be an inherently meaningful concept, but is a relational idea that involves the 'transmutation' of data from the individual to the collective level, and as such, 'populations' become active (conceptual) agents rather than passive aggregates (2012).

This position reinforces the indication from my findings that the scaling up from the individual to the collective is not a simple or stable relationship, but can be varyingly positioned and performed. I suggest that attempting to use 'community' as some kind of aggregate unit for measuring outcomes of interest will likely overlook key interactions and relations across scalar dimensions of individual and collective. It might diminish attention in the important relations of *disconnection* that seem critical to enactments of 'community' in an initiative such as the *BL*, and which would seem to be at odds with the assumptions of the process of aggregation, or of bringing together. Instead, I think this thesis indicates productive value in the use of 'community' as a way to unpick assumptions of 'scale' that might be embedded within a complex systems perspective, and to investigate how relations and interactions flow across scalar dimensions (for example across the individual – collective divide, or across wider and narrower spatial boundaries) as a result of an intervention. If a complex system is deemed to be 'open', flows of relations within, across and beyond the system's specified components will be important to capture in an evaluation, to enable better understanding

of how micro-level interactions interrelate with wider or more macro-level interactions to influence health (Diez Roux 2011).

This perspective may also provide an avenue for considering further how to navigate the tension between knowledge of an intervention's effect on health in a single, unique setting, and the 'imperative' to formulate more generalisable or transferable 'evidence' (Cartwright 2013). The example of 'community' highlights the tension of the 'incommensurability' of attempts to align individual health status and needs with 'evidence' generated at the population level (Lambert 2013), as well as the assumptions underpinning the dominant criteria of what defines 'good evidence'. There is increasing recognition that the standards for determining the strength of evidence of 'what works', rooted in assessments of the rigour of methods (Cartwright 2011, Lambert 2013), is at odds with what might constitute valuable 'evidence' in terms of deciding on whether or not to implement an intervention elsewhere, a process which is more political and technical than 'scientific' (Woolcock 2013). I suggest that the exploration of how 'community' is enacted through the *BL* initiative adds to this emerging discourse in evaluation literature. It indicates the need for fuller accounts of 'what happens' (Petticrew 2015), to help reposition the framing of what constitutes 'strong' evidence from evaluations of complex 'community' interventions towards its value for its potential users (Cartwright 2011).

## **Limitations, Reflections, and Further Questions**

While I have attempted to demonstrate how my research has met my aim of exploring enactments of 'community' through the *BL* initiative, to contribute to approaches for evaluating the health impacts of similar 'community' initiatives, I must acknowledge the limits of the scope of my work, and the limitations posed by the methodology, framing and perspectives adopted. Here I will outline reflections on the limitations of the study design, ethnographic approach, and other methods, for the claims that can be made about how 'community' is enacted through the *BL* and what this means for evaluating similar initiatives. I also will consider my choice of ANT as a conceptual framing and the limitations it posed. Through these reflections, I will also identify the questions that have emerged from this work and which require further exploration, to extend and develop knowledge around how to intervene on health inequalities, and how to interpret the effects of interventions engaging the 'community' on inequalities.

## **Methodological reflections:**

### *Defining 'cases' and the scope of the research*

The way the 'community' was approached as the focus of this research, within a two-site case study design, reflected my aim to examine the enactments of 'community' in each unique area (Westin Hill and Craybourne), but also to undertake cross-case comparisons as a mechanism for generating broader conceptual inferences (Simons 2015). My decision to take the geographical areas participating in the *BL* initiative as the 'cases' invariably means that my observations have been circumscribed by the negotiations (of geography, numbers of residents, socio-economic status and other factors) that were involved in identifying and designating these areas as participating in the *BL* initiative. While the ongoing negotiation of these given boundaries has been an important focus of my analysis, the original starting point for identifying my cases will have influenced the kinds of observations I made around enactments of 'community'.

A further question that remains is how my attention on these two cases constrained the opportunity to examine enactments of 'community' arising through the broader *BL* initiative. It was beyond the scope of this thesis to explore how 'community' was enacted at the national level of the delivery of the *BL*, via *Local Trust*, its delivery partners, and the multiple structures, processes and events that occur as part of the wider delivery of the initiative. Attending to the range of enactments of 'community' produced through these extended networks would have offered insight into another set of emerging relations and processes shaping 'community' across the initiative as a whole. This is certainly an important question for evaluations of area-based initiatives, and reflects the broader tension in evaluation research of how to bring together local and national level observations, to generate knowledge that is both contextualised and specific, and abstracted for transferability at a general level (Lambert 2013).

There is also more work to be done in examining how 'community' is enacted through the work of evaluation research, for example the *CiC* study. The way 'community', as a theoretical, methodological and analytical 'object', is operationalised and interpreted through the various processes of an evaluation study in practice is another important dimension of the process of generating knowledge on an initiative's impact on health inequalities. Recent critical literature on the processes of scientific knowledge production has highlighted the creative and transformative activities that are involved in the production of 'valid data' (Will 2007, Will and Moreira 2010, Biruk 2012, Geissler 2013), framing evaluation research as something negotiated in the particular context in which evaluation activities are undertaken (Reynolds, DiLiberto et al. 2014). Hence, to understand better the role the contested concept of 'community' plays in interpreting an initiative's impact on

health inequalities, an next important step of inquiry should be how 'community' is framed and enacted through activities and relations of an evaluation study, in dialogue with the enactments of 'community' unfolding from the initiative itself.

### *Choice of methods and methodology*

While I have reflected in chapter nine on my experiences of 'missing out' in my ethnographic practices during fieldwork, and considered the productive possibilities of these relations of disconnection for examining enactments of 'community', it is also important to reflect on the possible limitations of my choice of ethnography for this research. My use of ethnography reflected perspectives from anthropology in seeking to adopt an embedded approach to unpacking and problematising a concept that seemed to have been employed fairly uncritically in literature on 'community' based initiatives, and evaluations of their effects. Yet, I think it is important to reflect briefly on some of the 'legacies' of the discipline of anthropology that might have shaped my methodological expectations, and thus the kinds of findings I identified.

Marcus argues (1998) that despite recent acknowledgement of the 'fiction' of ethnography's attempt to capture the 'whole', there remains in contemporary uses of ethnography an inherent attempt or hope for holism. If so, this may have carried implications for how I approached and delimited the sites of my fieldwork. I confined myself (predominantly) to the agreed geographic boundaries of Craybourne and Westin Hill, in the hope of getting to know them as 'holistically' as possible, rather than tracing relations beyond these boundaries, for example into the networks and spaces of the *BL* delivered at the national level. As such, I may have unwittingly been privileging locality and proximity as the starting point for my inquiries (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), in an attempt to embed myself in the social relations of the 'communities' under study. Rapport and Amit (2002) identify a "*continuing bias towards collectivities as the proper locus and subject matter of anthropological investigation*" (p4), and hence, my choice of ethnographic methodology might have influenced my identification of the *diversions* from connection and solidarity as the novel findings from my research. This, of course, points to the fallacy of a holistic perspective, both within ethnography and within the goal of evaluation, and attempts to 'unpack the black box'. It also indicates a possible danger of adopting uncritically (from either an anthropological or evaluation perspective) a localising lens, for its potential to contribute to situating blame and responsibility for bringing about change to inequalities on to the local 'communities' most in need of support (Amin 2005, Taylor 2007).

Finally, I reflect on my methodological choices that shaped who (and what and where) features most prominently in the enactments of 'community' I describe, and who is absent, particularly salient

given the focus of this research on relations of inequality. My choice to focus on the unfolding activities of the *BL* (as opposed to other activities occurring within the areas but not necessarily connected to the initiative) undoubtedly posed limitations on the numbers of people, spaces, organisations and processes ‘captured’ within my research. Even among those most involved in the *BL*, and featuring within my research particularly via my observations of meetings, events and other activities, there are people whose direct ‘voices’ are missing from my research, though they may be referred to. In part this is due to a lack of time and capacity in my fieldwork to engage equally with everyone (and every place or activity) that was actively engaged through the *BL*, reflecting to some degree my movement between the two field sites; there are certainly gaps in my ethnographic ‘gaze’ as a result of this methodological decision.

However, the absence of particular voices also relates to the challenges I faced with engaging with some people and spaces. I found a few individuals involved in the *BL* in both areas quite difficult to talk to at times, and reluctant to participate in research activities beyond consenting (implicitly or explicitly) to my observations, particularly at times when relations among committee members (and others) were quite strained. Similarly, some spaces (such as organisations where *BL* or related activities occurred) were more difficult for me to access, either due to time constraints or challenges around finding a way ‘in’; making contacts and explaining the purpose of the research. These limitations raise certain ethical issues for how ‘voices’ are represented in the accounts presented in this thesis, both in terms of what people understood about their ‘participation’ and what would be recorded, and in terms of the broader question of how to include those most socially excluded, through engagement approaches. Perhaps adopting a more participatory approach to my choice of methods and research design in general, facilitating the inputs of the ‘communities’ to how I approached my research, to whom I spoke and what I observed, might have helped bridge some of the gaps between those more present and more absent from my findings. However, as my findings suggest, I should perhaps attempt to feel comfortable with some level of disconnection and distance within my research practice. This highlights the importance of reflecting on the role of the researcher and the research process on the representation, and potentially the reproduction, of relations of inclusion and exclusion, and thus of inequality.

### **Theoretical and conceptual reflections:**

Here I will draw out some further reflections on my use of ANT to frame this research and my approach to exploring enactments of ‘community’, to consider some of the possible limitations it posed for the aims of this thesis. I selected a set of principles from ANT as a conceptual instrument to avoid selecting (somewhat arbitrarily) a framing of ‘community’ from the wealth of social science

theorising on the concept. Instead I chose not to pre-assume any particular characteristics or definitions of 'community' except that it is something that is produced through the unfolding relations of the initiative. I will highlight two questions around the 'fit' between the ANT framing and my research; first, the emphasis in ANT on 'symmetry' between human and non-human actors; and second, the issue of power and its presence (or absence) in the ANT perspective adopted here.

The first reflection engages with a key principle of the ANT perspective, namely the 'symmetry' between human and non-human actors, all of which are deemed to have 'agency'. I outlined in my framework chapter that I would be including as possible actors a range of types of 'thing', including people, spaces, materials, and discursive or textual concepts. Certainly, I identified in my observations of how 'community' was enacted through the *BL* multiple different entities that seemed to play a role in these enactments, through relations within one another and the relations of the delivery of the initiative in each field site. However, a read of my results chapters would indicate that there remains, for the most part, more focus on the 'human', in terms of the telling of stories and describing enactments, with the presentation of quotations, names of people and brief descriptions of their backgrounds undoubtedly contributing to the human-ness of these accounts. In the description of some kind of enactments, spaces and materials are more prominent. However, it would not be accurate to describe this as 'symmetry' across the different types of actors, or to say that material entities, say, appeared to play as influential a role in the networks of relations producing 'community' as people.

On one hand, this suggests that within my research practice I was not as 'faithful' to the principles of ANT as I should have been, and perhaps could have taken more care to 'follow' particular material or spatial actors more explicitly to help ensure a balance between the human and non-human focus of the findings. It might betray the (still) person-predominant methods and approaches used within my ethnographic methodology (for example interviews and conversations) and implicit assumptions about relations of connection within the 'community'. I tended to go where the *people* of the *BL* initiative were (such as meeting rooms, public events, private homes), to identify and follow enactments of 'community', although I actively tried to explore the interactions between the people and the spatial and material dimensions of these (and other) contexts. It might also reflect something of the particular stages of the *BL* initiative that each area was at during my fieldwork, such that the discursive enactments of 'community' – constructed through people's talk and people's interactions – were the most prominent, in comparison to more spatialised and material activities that might be anticipated at a later stage with more projects being delivered.

On the other hand, however, these possible limitations of the choice and/or application of ANT in my research raises some intriguing questions for it as a conceptual or theoretical framework, including whether 'symmetry' between the human and non-human should always be the goal of the framework, or whether exploring if and when symmetry is *not* evident in particular networks of relations could be an important research question itself. For example, in enactments of 'community' described in this thesis, the presence of the 'money' as a conceptual and (potentially) material entity in the relations of the *BL* initiative was at times weaker than I had anticipated at the outset of my research and from my review of literature on conceptualisations of 'community' in the receipt of money. In my empirical observations money was not always, from an ANT perspective, a 'thing' to be followed through the enactments of 'community'. It, along with other human and non-human actors, moved through relations of connection and disconnection, presence and absence, and thus was not uniformly present or agentic. This indicates implications for the assumptions of an ANT approach, and its possible tendency to overlook the varying and shifting hierarchies of presence that different types of actors face as the 'thing' of interest (here, 'community') is enacted.

A second point of reflection relates to one of the main criticisms angled towards ANT; its 'flattening' approach and lack of consideration of relations of 'power' (Elder-Vass 2008). Perhaps it is due to adopting an ANT perspective that I was not able to explore in any great depth the possible types of power at play around these relations constituting enactments of 'community', and how particular enactments of 'community' emerged over others at any one point in the unfolding of the *BL*. Nor was I able to examine who (or what) held this power, and the mechanisms through which it was distributed and exercised. Furthermore, I was not able to reflect on the broader contexts and structures of power shaping the ongoing dimensions of inequality that led these areas to be included in the *BL* initiative, nor on the kinds of distributions of power (as 'governmentality') that construct 'communities' as 'new governance spaces' through localised policy initiatives (Rose 2000, Taylor 2007, Wallace 2010b).

However, while the aim of this research was not to examine 'power', my findings did indicate negotiations around multiple, sometimes contested boundaries and positionings which point at relations of power. Furthermore, the privileging and negating of different sets of values (such as eligibility to contribute or benefit from the *BL*), and how these were bound up in practices and narratives of representation of the 'community' by a small number of people, also indicate hierarchies of agency, though they shifted and were frequently negotiated. The 'ontological politics' (Mol 1999) at stake in the production of multiple enactments of 'community' through the initiative certainly indicates processes of power in operation. This opens up a new set of questions that

cannot be answered here, but are undoubtedly important for understanding the *BL* (and similar initiatives) in terms of their mechanisms of (collective) empowerment. Therefore, I argue that my use of ANT offered a first step to identifying the kinds of relations in which power might be exercised within the delivery of a 'community' initiative such as the *BL*, and the multiple and disparate kinds of actors that might have agency within these relations, at different times.

## **Concluding Statements**

In seeking to explore how 'community' was enacted through a 'community'-led, area-based empowerment initiative – the *Big Local* – my thesis has identified ways in which the mechanisms of the initiative are in constant, productive relations with the people, spaces, materials and conceptual entities of the areas in which the initiative is delivered, and it is through these relations that enactments of 'community' are produced. The boundary work and the shifting positioning of the individual collective that characterised these enactments have several consequences. The first is for how the 'community' can be conceptualised and operationalised in an evaluation study. The second is for how the theorised pathways to better health and reduced inequalities from collective empowerment interventions should be interpreted and examined empirically through evaluations of initiatives like the *BL*. This thesis places emphasis also on the importance of acknowledging relations of disconnection, distance and exclusion as necessary to the ongoing enactment of 'community'. It urges further consideration of the influence of these in evaluating such initiatives, and to question assumptions of cohesion, solidarity and inclusion as the only desirable or acceptable forms of relating for 'communities', and as criteria against which the 'success' of a participatory initiative should be assessed. This is perhaps particularly important for understanding the differential effects on health of such initiatives, and their impact on health inequalities.

Finally, this thesis demonstrates potential in adopting theoretical frameworks that enable exploration of multiple ontologies in an unfolding initiative or intervention, and in methodologies that enable reflection on the disconnections and exclusions that necessarily arise through the research process. This can help guide reflection on the partial and situated process of evaluating public health interventions, and producing 'evidence' of effect on health that can be transferred or put to use elsewhere. Thus, through the example of the *Big Local* initiative, and the accompanying evaluation of its impacts on health inequalities, this thesis offers new perspectives on how the negotiated, shifting and in-process 'community' is produced through participatory mechanisms and

the implications for interpreting the influence of these enactments on determinants of health and inequalities at local levels.

## **Appendices**

- A. Copy of licence agreement with Elsevier for reuse of “Conceptualising the ‘community’ as a recipient of money – a critical literature review, and implications for health and inequalities”, published in *Social Science & Medicine*.**
- B. Sample phonographic recording reflections note.**
- C. Copy of ethics approval from London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Ethics Committee.**
- D. Participant information sheet for individual interviews.**
- E. Consent form for individual interviews.**

## Appendix A – Copy of Licence Agreement for Re-Use of Article

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## Appendix B: Sample Phonographic Recording Reflections Note

<b>Audio file name:</b>	CB-AR-R-08
<b>Date recorded:</b>	09-02-15
<b>Location:</b>	Corner of Queen St and Grayson Rd, Craybourne
<b>Date notes written:</b>	12-02-15

### Justification for recording:

I'd been trying to find a location to record a kind of summative audio snapshot of Craybourne before leaving, reflecting on the fact that I hadn't recorded anything since the busy events of the summer before. I think I'd been slightly surprised at the levels of activity on Queen St when I'd been down it before, particularly when handing out the magazine and going into each of the shops, and when, for example I'd go to the fish and chip shop for dinner. This was surprising because Queen St didn't seem to feature much in people's accounts of the local area in relation to Big Local, either in their descriptions of what the area used to be like, or in terms of what they'd like to see improved. Broadgate, in comparison, was very prominent in narratives of the area in terms of its problems and potential future, identified as *the* shopping street for the area. I suppose I was intrigued as to why Queen St, with its shops (albeit a lot of charity shops run by the same charity, which did crop up more commonly in talk about the area and the lack of decent shops, as well as the kinds of local organisations operating in the area) was largely absent from BL interpretations and narratives of the area. It's likely that traders from particular shops on Queen St may have been involved in the traders' group, but I don't remember any in particular.

I suppose I wanted to try and capture this 'absent' space, and to see whether the soundscape offered any other kind of account of the area.

### Notes and reflections:

Being situated on the corner of the two roads, I tried to remain rather inconspicuous, especially as it was not long after school closing time and there were a few parents walking

with young-ish children around and I didn't want people to think that I was actively recording their conversations. I remember being fairly surprised at the number of people dipping in and out of shops around me, some with children, and a few cars stopping briefly to let someone pop into a shop, or to pick someone up. There was a general level of purposeful activity which, given it was a Monday late afternoon, was somewhat surprising. The main sound on the recording is the hum of the engine of a taxi (minicab) that was pulled up and waiting at the end of Grayson Rd, just before the junction with Queen St. It was waiting for several minutes, with its engine forming a backdrop to the other sounds and activities going on. I can't quite remember who came out and got in the taxi, but it eventually picked up its passenger and moved away. There are sounds of other cars coming and going, through the junction and passing along Queen St, and also sounds from a few conversations, including a parent and child walking past. I think again I was slightly disappointed that I didn't pick up very much 'action' on the recording, but perhaps this fits with the 'absence' of the space round here in narratives of the area and the BL. In fact there was a lot of subtle action, but nothing audibly remarkable (the predominant sound being that of cars moving around), and lacking a 'human' element perhaps, which is maybe why it becomes disconnected or neglected in conceptualisations of space and 'community' and problems that need 'solving' through the BL.

## Appendix C – Copy of Ethics Approval from LSHTM Ethics Committee

### London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

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### Observational / Interventions Research Ethics Committee

Joanna Reynolds  
GHD / PHP  
LSHTM

20 January 2014

Dear Ms. Reynolds,

**Study Title:** Exploring notions of community to inform the evaluation of the Big Local community-based programme in the UK

**LSHTM ethics ref:** 7116

Thank you for your application of 6 January 2014 for the above research, which has now been considered by the Observational Committee.

### Confirmation of ethical opinion

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

### Conditions of the favourable opinion

Approval is dependent on local ethical approval having been received, where relevant.

### Approved documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Protocol / Proposal	Study Protocol v3.docx	20/12/2013	3
Information Sheet	PIS pilot interview.docx	18/12/2013	1.0
Information Sheet	Consent form pilot.docx	18/12/2013	1.0
Information Sheet	PIS main study.docx	18/12/2013	1.0
Information Sheet	Consent form main study.docx	18/12/2013	1.0
Advertisements	Recruitment poster.pdf	18/12/2013	1.0

### After ethical review

Any subsequent changes to the application must be submitted to the Committee via an Amendment form on the online application website. All studies are also required to notify the ethics committee of any serious adverse events which occur during the project via an AdverseEvent form on the online application website. At the end of the study, please notify the committee via an End of Study form on the online application website.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor John DH Porter**  
Chair

[ethics@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@lshtm.ac.uk)  
<http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/ethics/>

## Appendix D – Interview Participant Information Sheet



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### Community empowerment and health and wellbeing in Big Local

#### Local fieldwork: Information about the study and interview participation

We would like to invite you to take part in an interview for our research study. Before you decide whether you would like to participate we have provided information (below) to help you understand why the study is being carried out and what you would be involved in doing. Please ask us (using the contact details below) if there is anything that is not clear.

#### 1. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being funded by an organisation called the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Public Health Research (SPHR) which is made up of a partnership of different universities in England. You can find examples of what we do on our web pages <http://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/>. The study is being organised by researchers based at the Universities of Lancaster and Liverpool and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Researchers based at universities throughout England who are also members of the SPHR are carrying out the research as well.

We are not employed by or connected to Local Trust but we have received permission from them to conduct the study.

#### 2. What is the research about?

As you may know, Big Local is trying to make neighbourhoods even better places to live by giving residents more control over decisions affecting their local areas and the lives of people who live in these areas, so residents can influence what needs to change or be improved and the types of actions that need to happen in Big Local plans.

SPHR researchers have developed a plan to carry out a research study that is exploring how Big Local *could* improve health and wellbeing in this way – by improving the places where people live and work and by increasing the control that residents have over decisions.

#### 3. Why have I been invited?

We are trying to understand how Big Local is working in your area by studying plans and documents; attending and observing events and meetings and by interviewing local people who have experience of and knowledge about how it is being rolled out. We are speaking to residents and workers in this area who have in-depth knowledge of their local area and/or about the Big Local programme here.

#### 4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether you would like to take part in this study or not and you will be given information and time so that you can make this decision in an informed way. If you agree to take part we will ask you to sign a consent form. However, taking part is entirely voluntary. There will be no negative consequences if you decide that you would not like to take part.

### **5. What will happen if I agree to take part?**

Once you have let us know that you would like to take part:

- You will be contacted by a researcher working on the project to arrange a convenient time and place for the group interview to happen
- The interview should last no longer than 90 minutes and may take less time than this.
- Even if you have agreed to take part, you can still decide that you don't want to carry on at any stage (even if it is during the interview) without having to give a reason why
- You can also ask to have any data that you have provided withdrawn up to three weeks after the interview has taken place.

It is possible that we would like to speak to you again in around six to eight months' time, so we can look at changes in the development of the Big Local over time. We will ask whether you would be happy to be contacted again at the end of the interview.

Ideally we would like to audio record and transcribe the interview so you will be asked if you agree to this. If you consent to this, when the interviews have been transcribed they will be analysed and anonymised extracts from the interviews might be used in reports and presentations to highlight key points from the analysis.

### **6. What sort of topics will the interview cover?**

The questions in the interview will focus upon your experiences and knowledge of Big Local but we realise that not everyone will be able to answer all of the questions we ask and that is fine.

The interview will cover your role or involvement in Big Local as well as the roll out of Big Local in your area including the ways that residents have got involved and have control over decisions made by Partnerships/Steering Groups. We are also interested in what your hopes are for Big Local for the future. We would like to find out about the history of the local area as well as what it is like as a place to live now including relationships between local people and organisations in general in the area. This is so we can learn more about how Big Local is rolled out in different neighbourhoods.

### **7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

We think that the possibility of risk, discomfort or inconvenience is likely to be low. A potential disadvantage might arise if you feel that you might be identifiable because of the specific nature of your role (see point 9 below).

### **8. What are the potential benefits of taking part?**

In general terms we do not expect the research to have direct benefits for you. We expect the research might provide opportunities for you to develop new skills or relationships during your engagement with the project.

#### **9. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

With your permission we would like to record the interview and transcribe what is said, but we will, remove your name and any other identifiable information from our notes or transcripts. However it might still be possible to identify you because of the specific nature of your role (such as your involvement as a chair or member of a steering group/partnership) and this is something that you should be aware of.

There are some limits to confidentiality. If what is said in the interview makes the researcher think that you or someone else is at risk of harm, they will have to break confidentiality and speak to the project's lead about this. If possible, they will tell you if they have to do this.

The audio files and transcripts from the interview will be stored securely on university servers, password-protected computers or laptops. Computer files will be transferred between sites using a secure file transfer service. Only people (e.g. researchers and transcribers) who are authorised to view identifiable data will have access to it.

#### **10. What will happen to the results of phase one?**

We will use the information gathered in this study to develop some practical resources for local residents as well as workers and researchers interested in initiatives like Big Local. We would like to work with residents to develop these resources.

With your consent, transcriptions of your interview may be archived for potential use by other researchers in the future. This will only take place if all features that could identify you, other individuals or local areas can be removed so the transcript is completely anonymous.

#### **11. Future contact with you**

We would like to keep your contact details in case we need to get in touch with you again in the future. Your contact details will be stored securely, will not be passed onto anyone else and will be destroyed when the project ends.

#### **12. Out of pocket expenses**

We will cover all reasonable expenses that occur as a result of your participation in this research (e.g. travel, subsistence, childcare). Where possible we will book and pay for expenses (e.g. travel) directly. Where applicable, the researcher will speak to you about this process and will give you an expenses form.

#### **13. Who has reviewed the ethical issues around this study?**

The Research Ethics Committee at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine has reviewed this study and agreed that it can go ahead.

#### **14. What do I do now?**

If you are interested in taking part, please use the contact details below to let us know. A member of the research team will then discuss taking part in the research in more detail with you and to arrange the interview.

## 15. Contacts for further information

If you have any further questions or are interested in taking part please contact the researchers:

**Joanna Reynolds:** London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Room 148, 15-17 Tavistock Place, London. WC1H 9SH. Tel: +44 (0) 207 927 2023. [joanna.reynolds@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:joanna.reynolds@lshtm.ac.uk)

**Ruth Ponsford:** London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Room 147, 15-17 Tavistock Place, London. WC1H 9SH. Tel: +44 (0) 207 958 8101. [ruth.ponsford@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.ponsford@lshtm.ac.uk)

**Matt Egan:** London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Room 146, 15-17 Tavistock Place, London. WC1H 9SH. Tel: +44 (0) 207 927 2145. [matt.egan@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:matt.egan@lshtm.ac.uk)

More information about SPHR can also be found at: <http://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/>

## 16. Making a complaint

If you wish to make a complaint or raise concerns about any aspect of this study and do not want to speak to the researchers, you can contact the project lead:

Professor Jennie Popay, Division of Health Research, Lancaster University, LA1 4YT.

Email: [j.popay@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:j.popay@lancaster.ac.uk) Tel: (01524) 593377

If you wish to speak to someone who is not involved with the project, you may also contact:

Professor Paul Bates, Associate Dean for Research, Faculty of Health and Medicine, Lancaster University

Email: [p.bates@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:p.bates@lancaster.ac.uk) Tel: (01524) 593718

## Appendix E – Interview Consent Form

### The Communities in Control study

Please read the participant information sheet and tick each box below if you agree. If you have any questions please discuss these with the researcher before completing the form.

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet and fully understand what is expected of me within this study.
2. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and to have them answered satisfactorily.
3. I give consent for the interview to be audio recorded and then made into an anonymised written transcript. IF YOU DO NOT GIVE CONSENT TO THE AUDIO RECORDING PLEASE WRITE N/A IN THE BOX
4. [If applicable] I understand that audio recordings will be kept until the completion of the research project.
5. I understand that I am not obliged to take part in this study and that I can withdraw my agreement before or during the interview.
6. I understand that I can ask for any information I provide during an interview to be withdrawn and any audio recording [if applicable] erased provided I do this before data analysis begins (3 weeks after the date of the interview).
7. I understand that the information from my interview will be combined with other participants' responses, anonymised and may be used in reports, conferences and journal publications
8. I understand that every effort will be taken by the researcher to protect anonymity and confidentiality but that there are limits to confidentiality and in some instances it might still be possible to identify some respondents because of the specific nature of their role.
9. I agree for the transcriptions of the interview that I provide to be archived by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine for potential use by other researchers in the future but that this will only take place if all the features that could identify individuals and local areas can be removed
10. I consent to the research team keeping my contact details so they can contact me again in the future but that this information will not be passed onto anyone else and will be destroyed at the end of the study.
11. I consent to take part in this study

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Consent form to be scanned for digital archiving - original document to be returned to the participant by post or a scanned copy by email.

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