FORUM

Rejuvenating Democracy: lessons from a communitarian experiment

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ABSTRACT Democracy has been weakened in the United Kingdom with citizens increasingly frustrated at not being able to shape government decisions in any meaningful way. State actions at the local and national level are at risk of becoming even more influenced by vested private interests. This poses a major challenge to the democratic health of the country. However, something can be done to strengthen collaboration between state and citizens. This article recounts a large scale communitarian experiment conducted by the author as a senior public official in local and central government between 1995 and 2010, with the aim of empowering communities to become real partners in public policy making. It draws out five key lessons to be learnt from the experiment for anyone concerned with rejuvenating democracy in the UK.

Democracy in Decline?

Since political power – the power to make decisions binding on society as a whole – can neither be safely left to an unaccountable few nor feasibly exercised by all citizens on a daily basis, representative democracy has come to be regarded as the most balanced approach to collective governance.

From the storming of the Bastille in 1789 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there was an apparent trajectory of arbitrary rulers being increasingly displaced by democratic institutions. But it was precisely when this trend was interpreted by some as the irreversible triumph of democracy, marking the end of political evolution [1], that less sanguine observers began to raise concerns about the weakening of representative democracy itself. In the oldest democratic states such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA, the gap between the general public and those elected to public office was widening. Fewer people joined political parties, which had hitherto been a key link between ordinary citizens and those they are prepared to vote for. More and more people refused

to believe that politicians would act in the interest of society as a whole. In the UK, for example, the proportion of people who felt they had a civic duty to vote fell from 70% in 1991 to 56% in 2010 as more concluded it would not make any difference.[2] The 2005 Citizenship Survey found that only around a fifth of the public believed they had any influence over decisions affecting their country. In that year, more people abstained from voting in the general election (39%) than actually voted for the winning party (36%).

Around the late 1980s and early 1990s, a common set of ideas began to gather momentum on both sides of the Atlantic, arguing that representative democracy could only fulfil its core mission of enabling the public to exercise well-informed control over the decision-makers acting on their behalf if a deeper culture of democracy was cultivated, with citizens as members of inclusive communities. The proponents of these ideas were variously described as progressive communitarians or civic republicans, but whatever label was used, we shared three important features.[3] First, we upheld the progressive tradition in democratic thought, propounded by the likes of L.T. Hobhouse, Jane Addams and John Dewey, which maintained that people could not attain a better condition of life unless they cooperated with each other as equal citizens in pursuit of their common good. Secondly, we valued the reduction of income inequalities and spread of community development practices from the early 1960s to the late 1970s as key conditions for sustaining a fair and vibrant democracy, and opposed the relentless marketisation of society that took off in the Thatcher–Regan years, leading to the growing polarisation between the powerful corporate elite and people trapped in low wage, insecurity and unemployment. Thirdly, we advocated concerted civic renewal actions by the state to signal a readiness to welcome and support civic activists in engaging citizens in shaping public policies.

Unfortunately, through the 1990s and 2000s political development has by and large gone in the opposite direction to that favoured by communitarian advocates.[4] With transnational corporate interests becoming ever more dominant (through their funding of political parties, control of commercial media, lobbying of legislators, etc.), the need for countervailing forces skyrocketed just when such forces were being substantially diminished. Trade unions had their powers curbed by pro-business governments; political parties converged on making it a key priority to accommodate the demands of the corporate sector; the media (with the few notable exceptions not owned by large business groups), instead of putting a spotlight on unaccountable corporate powers, increasingly focused on a mixture of celebrity trivia and routine scapegoating of the vulnerable and disadvantaged; local authorities were weakened with their finances tightly restricted by central government.

Consequently, many citizens viewed state institutions as unresponsively remote, and rather than entrusting their well-being to political leaders who would not listen to their concerns, they decided that they should rely on their own individual efforts to make it in the only arena which appeared to count – the marketplace. Notably, where the political leadership was most antithetical to

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a culture of social solidarity – by the mid 1990s the UK had joined the USA in having higher income inequality rates than all other developed countries in Western Europe and North America [5] – people's attitudes shifted towards a corrosive 'devil take the hindmost' individualism. A higher percentage of Britons and Americans than others in the developed world tend to blame poverty on people's laziness rather than on social injustice.[6] As democratic efficacy came to be increasingly regarded as illusory, people looked upon the state less with hope than with suspicion. Between 2002 and 2007, the proportion of people in the UK who believed the government has too much control went up from 54% to 64%.[7]

It is not surprising that the British Conservative's Big Society rhetoric and the American Republican Tea Party champions should exploit these trends and propose to deal with the insufficiently democratic state by shrinking it to the point where it is little more than a servile aide to corporate interests.[8] However, the communitarian case for rejuvenating democracy still stands, and instead of allowing democracy to weaken further, thus giving way to total plutocratic rule, we should consider what lessons can be learnt from a communitarian experiment which achieved significant impact in the areas where it was carried out.

A Communitarian Experiment
in Rejuvenating Democracy (1995-2010)

In the early 1990s, in addition to writing on communitarian ideas, I was also working as a chief officer in local government. It occurred to me that if I could secure the support of a political leader, at the local or national level, I would be in a position to develop and implement a communitarian programme of democratic renewal. At the time, most people in public office either did not consider the democratic deficit as a significant issue worthy of priority attention, or they regarded civic disengagement as an unavoidable feature of modern complex society which could not in any case be reversed. If the problem was to be tackled, it needed a strategic response backed by political will at the highest level. As it turned out, I was able to obtain the necessary support: first, at the local level from 1995 to 1999 with the Labour administration at St Edmundsbury Borough Council; and then at the national level from 2000 to 2010 with the Labour Government in the UK.

This communitarian experiment – which for the first time brought political and theoretical concerns with democratic renewal together in a coordinated public policy programme – was designed to test out if citizens could attain greater democratic influence and satisfaction with collective actions through the state as a result of three related strands of work. First, people were to be given the encouragement and support to deliberate as fellow citizens and put forward their views on public policy priorities affecting them. This must be distinguished from the unreflective feedback through basic surveys and focus groups, which drew on uninformed opinions and prejudices rather than what

people would think after due consideration of others' as well as their own needs. Secondly, community groups were to be assisted in developing their vital role as hubs and facilitators in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to exchange views, assess challenges, and organise for actions. This should not be confused with the common focus on promoting volunteering or commissioning voluntary organisations to deliver public services. The emphasis here is on communities engendering common goals to be pursued in partnership with, not in isolation from or merely as a contractor of, the public sector. Finally, public servants were to undergo a culture change whereby the people they serve are not treated as supplicants or customers, but above all as citizens whose informed views should ultimately shape public action. This contrasted strongly with what often passed as 'public service reforms', which sought to alter public services as determined by professional experts and present the results to the public as improvements. Community-orientated public services would enable civic-minded citizens to have a real say in their prioritisation and development.

In the next section I will outline what the experiment involved, and I will draw together the key lessons in the final section. Before I do, it would be useful to set out the circumstances under which it became possible to take the experiment forward.

The first phase took off when the Labour Group won control of St Edmundsbury Borough Council in the 1995 local elections. Not only was the new council leader, Councillor Gerry Kiernan, attracted to communitarian ideas, his political team included many who were well-disposed to the agenda of democratic renewal. As the chief officer responsible for community and corporate development, I thus had the opportunity to work directly with the council leader to turn our communitarian aspirations into a practical programme. The programme, 'Working with Communities', was sustained over the council's four-year term (1995-1999) and, as we will see, had a transformative effect across the borough. In 1998, a review of the programme [9] was published during the country's annual Local Democracy Week along with the announcement of it as the most comprehensive approach to democratic community involvement in England. A year later, in 1999, it won the Best Practice Award for engaging young citizens from the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

The second phase began in 2000 when I moved to central government where, following Labour's electoral success in 1997, a number of disparate policies relating to community and civic engagement had been initiated in different departments but did not operate as one joined-up programme. I initially worked as a director for community safety and regeneration to bring overall coherence to the initiatives across the East of England region, demonstrating how a better-connected approach could give communities greater control and confidence in securing the public outcomes they sought. Then in 2003, the opportunity arose for devising a nationwide strategy when the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, was looking to launch a programme

for civil renewal, to be taken forward by the Government and its partners for the whole of England. I was appointed Head of Civil Renewal, and worked with Mr Blunkett and a number of other Ministers [10] in devising the 'Together We Can' action plan for rejuvenating democracy.[11] In 2006, the lead responsibility for the programme was transferred to the newly formed Department for Communities and Local Government, and I continued to steer its delivery until 2010.[12] The achievements and limitations of this evolving programme inform the key lessons I will be drawing out in the final section.

What the Experiment Involved

The experiment involved four elements. The first, implemented during the initial local government phase, was to demonstrate how a locally elected council could provide the community leadership to cultivate a more collaborative relationship between citizens and democratic institutions serving their interests. All the leading councillors spoke consistently of their commitment to work with communities, and built public engagement into all aspects of policy development.

Instead of calling for public meetings which were of little interest to people, or simply responding to the lobbying of the most vocal groups, St Edmundsbury Borough Council reached out to all groups and adopted the most productive means of engagement with each to address what concerned them most. Youth workers played a major part in working with young people in improving local facilities, enhancing community safety, raising interest in civic participation through video projects in schools, and developing projects such as the Cangle Foyer to meet the housing needs of young people. Although the Borough did not have many areas with widespread poverty, it contained pockets of high deprivation which suffered particularly from the alienation of being surrounded by much more prosperous neighbourhoods. In one town with above-average unemployment, a community-based partnership brought young and old people together to identify regeneration priorities which over time boosted economic development and social cohesion. The council, the police and neighbourhood representatives considered how to target public resources on problems based on shared evidence. Contested development or traffic management proposals were resolved with deliberative techniques such as Planning for Real.[13] Community groups were given support through access to public buildings [14], long-term investment, and information networks to develop their capacity to help local people work together to anticipate and respond to local problems. Key public information was routinely provided in an interesting form (for example, through the award-winning council newspaper, *St Edmundsbury Times*) to local people, and opportunities to give feedback were given via ward members, public service points as well as the Web. The good communication between citizens and the council helped to shape new initiatives, from public drinking by-laws to the development of pioneering recycling policies.

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The next phase of the experiment built on the success of St Edmundsbury and a number of other councils, which had effectively strengthened community engagement in one or more policy areas, to promote the wider development and adoption of such practices nationally.[15] This in turn contained three elements: raise understanding of and interest in good practices; provide support to help targeted groups build their capacity; and develop government policies and practices to facilitate democratic engagement. I will outline some of the changes brought in under each of these elements.

To promote wider understanding of and interest in renewing the state–citizens relationship, a consistent flow of political encouragement and research findings was channelled to leaders, managers, activists in public organisations and community groups. Support for the civil renewal agenda was reiterated by not only the lead Secretary of State, but the Secretaries of State of other government departments, through regular publications and both national and regional events involving community groups. We worked with the Local Government Association, set up the network of Civic Pioneers (local authorities volunteering to help promote our shared agenda), and convened the Councillors Commission, to raise awareness of how community participation could strengthen representative democracy. With the help of the Citizenship Survey, the Active Citizenship Research Centre, and systematic policy reviews, we disseminated information on socio-political trends, and the approach and impact of practices such as neighbourhood management. We also invested in the Community Development Foundation, which supported a wide range of initiatives such as the Regional Empowerment Partnerships in bringing local authorities and their community partners together to make use of the most effective techniques in citizen involvement.

To provide support to targeted groups to build their capacity, community organisations were invited as partners in developing and delivering appropriate schemes on the ground. For example, we worked with the Participatory Budgeting Unit (part of Church Action on Poverty) to help local authorities and their communities learn how to use participatory budgeting (a technique invented for community engagement in poor areas in Brazil) to enable citizens to deliberate together in setting priorities for the use of public funds. We collaborated with Housing Justice in setting up Guide Neighbourhoods where residents from different parts of the country could learn from more established neighbourhood groups which had a good track record in shaping and improving the public services in their respective localities. We enabled the Development Trust Association to set up the Asset Transfer Unit to help communities take over public buildings when they could add greater value in meeting local needs. Through a range of community-based partnerships we advanced the Active Learning for Active Citizenship (later to be known as 'Take Part') project to help diverse citizens and groups learn how to bring their influence to bear on civic matters.

Finally, to develop government policies and practices to facilitate democratic engagement, we established a cross-government group to share

learning and maintain the momentum for change. Young people were proactively sought to become involved in the development of integrated children services, employment training, sports-based social inclusion and library design. The Active Citizens in Schools scheme increased the number of pupils taking part in public campaigns and community projects, learning to care about their local communities. More people from diverse backgrounds were effectively encouraged to become magistrates, members of youth referral panels, probation board and police authority members. Innovations in voter registration (such as using young urban artists to drive up the registration of 18-24-year-olds) were promoted. Older people and people with disabilities were invited to serve as advisors on government policy development groups. Local authorities were given incentives to engage local people more widely and effectively in neighbourhood and parish plans, spatial planning frameworks, and Home Zones (for residential street design). Extended schools were developed to draw the wider community into activities utilising school facilities. Parental involvement became standard in the development of Sure Start projects (for children). Support was given to engaging local people in 'myth busting' campaigns to tackle racism and misinformation, and to the use of mentors from within communities to work with refugees and build mutual understanding.

Policies introduced to enhance community safety included the rolling out of neighbourhood policing teams with a strong focus on seeking community views; the development of Community Justice Centres with locally based judges who regularly met with local people; the promotion of restorative justice processes to engage offenders with their victims to cut reoffending; the involvement of communities in prioritising local environmental projects for offenders to carry out; and the engagement of local people, families, victims and young people through Targeted Neighbourhood Prevention Programmes in preventing youth crime. Policies relating to health covered initiatives such as the Communities for Health programme enabling local people to set health promotion priorities; the development of the Healthy Communities Collaborative to bring community workers, health professionals and local residents together to reduce problems such as falls, diabetes, and malnutrition; the involvement of people with mental health problems and their families in raising service providers' understanding of stigma and where improvements were most needed; and the devolution of greater power to local NHS trusts.

Key Lessons for the Future

We can see that from what has been outlined above, the communitarian experiment in question took place on a much larger scale and across a far longer period of time than many of the ad hoc projects relating to democratic or community engagement that are taking place currently or appeared for just two or three years in the recent past. Although this makes it more difficult to sum up what the wide range of activities had collectively achieved, a number of lessons can still be drawn from it to inform how policy makers and community leaders

can rejuvenate democracy in the face of civic disengagement and community fragmentation. In this final section, I will draw out five key lessons in response to the five questions most likely to be raised:

- Do people really want to be involved?
- Is it really worth involving them?
- Have we got a formula for democratic community engagement?
- Why not just leave it to people to deal with their problems locally?
- What is most needed to renew democracy?

Lesson 1: the involvement people want

Terms such as 'involvement', 'engagement', 'participation' are often used interchangeably and yet with widely varying meanings, denoting activities from giving one's opinions, taking part in decision making, to volunteering, being a member of a community group, or simply engaging in sporting activities. And publications which quote widely different figures with conflicting definitions only confuse matters further. What we have learnt is that people want different levels of involvement in affecting public decisions and actions depending on their own civic interest and their perception of how effective their involvement would be in making a difference. Often around 10% of the adult population is found to have a strong interest in being directly involved in advising/making decisions as lay members of public bodies (i.e. not as appointed members of staff); 20-30% would be interested in participating in community groups/forums provided (but the figures vary depending on the track record of those bodies in influencing public decisions); 60% or more would like to have relevant government proposals explained to them and be given the opportunity to express their views if they so wish when the issues arise, and not just at the time of elections; and the vast majority (80-90%) are against the suggestion that those in charge of government institutions can be left to make decisions without seeking what people think (corresponding roughly to the figures for those registered to vote).[16]

While the Labour Government up until 2010 promoted effective engagement with a few million people, many in the most deprived areas, it did not reach enough of the country's overall population, and, critically, there were insufficient resources to ensure that the involvement opportunities created were always of the right kind to meet citizens' needs (see Lesson 3 below).

Lesson 2: the value of involvement

In local government, the expenditure relating to elected councillors (their elections, meetings, etc.) was recorded as 'the cost of democracy'. But there was never a corresponding column for 'the benefit of democracy'. There is a similarly one-sided account of the role of democracy at the national level. We are reminded of the costs of MPs and Ministers, but not the value they add to

what would otherwise be a technocracy of self-appointed experts on how the country should be run.

What the communitarian experiment revealed was that the value of democratic involvement was considerable in social, political and economic terms, and it was invariably underestimated or overlooked completely. Examples abound of how well-executed engagement processes led to greater benefits.[17] Birmingham City Council's community involvement initiative for safer neighbourhoods led to a reduction of 14% in all crime in the project areas compared with a 7% drop in other comparator areas in the city; with youth crime reducing by 29% compared with a 12% drop elsewhere; and achieved a saving of £6,406,000 for an investment of £600,000 after just one year of operation. In the East of England, 231 communities developed plans in partnership with public bodies, setting out over 9000 individual actions to improve their locality; 47% of these actions were taken forward by the communities themselves with the remaining 34% carried out by public service providers. Portsmouth City Council closely involved local communities in its £9 million Copnor Bridge project, and was able to complete it one month early, minimise traffic disruption, and achieve a 10% saving on the budget.

What is found in these and numerous other examples is that where people are given meaningful opportunities to reflect and contribute their views on the development of public actions, there is a good chance it would lead to more satisfactory and cost-efficient outcomes. As for whether inequalities in society mean that the poor and marginalised would lose out through possessing less capacity to be involved, experience has shown that inclusive engagement could provide the opportunities and support to all citizens, especially those who might otherwise be unable to get themselves heard, and ensure their views have a bearing on what their public bodies do as a result. Inequalities could certainly be a barrier if ignored, but it would be erroneous to suppose that engagement would be futile until inequalities have been eradicated. Indeed, extensive democratic community engagement is an important means to build collective support for tackling inequalities.[18]

The spread of neighbourhood management practices, particularly in deprived areas, led to higher levels of satisfaction with the police, street cleaning and the local area as a place to live.[19] More widely, the impact of engaging communities in shaping public actions was found in all policy areas: a cut in reoffending rates, reduction in use of hospital emergency services, consensus building through collective deliberations, raising education attainment, boosting local economic development, higher tenant satisfaction with housing management, and increased trust and confidence in public bodies.[20]

Lesson 3: the approach to engagement most likely to work

Building democratic relations is more akin to education than medicine. The tendency amongst some politicians and officials to ask for a standard treatment

to be dispensed is unhelpful when what is needed is a commitment to cultivate the conditions for active learning. These conditions will vary according to the different circumstances prevailing in different communities. What the communitarian experiment helped to engender is a substantial output of materials on democratic community engagement.[21] Drawing from their findings, the broad outline of a reliable approach can be sketched out.

Engagement should begin with people being given structured opportunities to talk about the things that most concern them. The identification of concerns should be followed by facilitated discussions so people can, under conditions of courtesy and reasonableness, ask each other and invited experts questions to examine the real causes of the problems they face. Participants should be enabled to share any proposal with others, while options put forward can be challenged on grounds of effectiveness, feasibility, and relative priority compared with options for tackling other problems. There should then be a transparent process for agreeing the priority actions to be taken with those present signing up to commitments in return for the outcomes they now jointly seek to pursue. Feedback is to be provided on the implementation of the agreed actions and impact made, including any obstacles encountered in taking the actions forward. Finally, the effects of the agreed plan of action are to be kept under review with further action developed under similar deliberative conditions to attain the agreed objectives.

Conversely, any attempt that goes against the key ingredients of this approach (e.g. meetings with no clear agenda; talking at but not seriously listening; failing to explain parameters or providing proper facilitation of discussions; allowing agitated voices to dominate without room for respectful deliberations; not identifying agreed actions; not giving feedback on progress; breaking off communications arbitrarily) would very likely deliver nothing except alienating the communities in question even more.

Lesson 4: the partnership between state and citizens must be strengthened

Partnerships between state and citizens are not easy to build. It requires patience, skills and considerable emotional intelligence. If the initial level of trust is already low, and the grasp of appropriate techniques poor, then the challenge is going to be tough. But for that very reason it must be met with dedication and a readiness to learn – from those with engagement experience and the communities concerned. Unfortunately, in addition to the risk of those in government shutting people out from their decisions, there is now a growing danger, with the Conservative-led Coalition Government simply passing the buck to communities.

Instead of following the ethos of 'Working with Communities' and 'Together We Can', the post-2010 UK Government has adopted more of a 'Leave communities to it' approach. Its 'Localist' agenda has been widely criticised for its incoherence – leaving local communities to shoulder the responsibilities for tackling public problems, but cutting their funding,

preventing them from raising their own revenue, and arbitrarily telling them how to run their waste management, or stopping them producing local newspapers to raise public awareness of key issues. Proponents of subsidiarity have always argued that where decisions can be more effectively taken at a level closer to communities, they should be passed to that level. However, not all decisions, especially those involving equity of resource distribution or requiring substantial collective capacity, can be made or carried out effectively by individuals in any given neighbourhood.

Politicians should work with communities to establish a framework for assessing what can be left to individual citizens and community groups operating on their own, what can be entrusted to local authorities and local people working in partnership, and what has to be the shared responsibility of central and local government, and the communities they both serve.[22] Attempts to pass endless social and economic burdens to individuals who cannot cope without collective political support are nothing more than an abdication of democratic responsibility. To do it under the pretence of building a 'big society' insults our civic intelligence, and betrays the citizenry who had assumed the state was there to serve them.

Lesson 5: the key to successful democratic renewal

In conclusion, bearing in mind the aforementioned lessons, what holds the key to successful democratic renewal is civic leadership. For those who stress the importance of having a groundswell of active citizens in sustaining democratic vibrancy, this might sound paradoxical. But whether it is widespread sceptical disengagement from public bodies or mass protest degenerating into mindless violence, the pitfalls of random public action/inaction can only be avoided if there is dedicated energy in organising and sustaining the pursuit of inspiringly articulated goals. Where the communitarian experiment achieved notable results it was always with the drive of committed civic-minded leaders.

At the political level, without council leaders or government ministers who understand the value of democratic renewal and are determined to press for communitarian actions to engage communities more widely and effectively, time and resources would be diverted to other issues. I have seen how a lack of interest in, let alone hostility to, community empowerment amongst political leaders blocks any significant development, or in cases where progress had been made by their predecessors, rapidly puts an end to any prospect of further work. Within organisations, having senior officials or chief officers who grasp the importance of democratic renewal and who would provide the leadership to steer institutional and policy changes is also vital. Otherwise, at best you have officials who carry out the letter of political instructions without exploring how to maximise their impact in accordance with the spirit behind them, or at worst the political will would be frustrated by cynics who cannot wait for an opportunity to jettison what they believe to be a waste of time and resources since, for them, communities can never know better than public officials.

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Last and certainly not least, within communities themselves, effective leaders who can combine outreach and listening skills with the ability to bring people together under a banner of common objectives are indispensable. This is not to say that community leaders who have held their positions for many years are automatically the ones to help make democratic renewal possible. Some of them, with an entrenched disposition to ignore the views of others, are more of an obstacle. But one of the most common causes of failure for communities to attain a coherent influence over public policies affecting them is the absence of inclusive leaders who are able to speak for their communities, not by imposing their priorities on them, but by enabling them to articulate and unite behind a set of genuinely shared goals.

Such leaders – political, organisational, community – do not come from any exclusive background. A commitment to democratic values can be nurtured, and the ability to play a leading role in improving community engagement can be learnt. Developing the next generation of politicians, public servants and civic activists so they acquire the leadership skills needed to help close the gap between state and citizens is undoubtedly one of the most crucial factors in rejuvenating democracy.[23]

Notes

[1] For example, F. Fukuyama (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man.* London: Hamish Hamilton.

[2] British Social Attitudes Survey (1991-2010): the 2010 figure for young people was 41%.

[3] In addition to myself, this group included colleagues such as Benjamin Barber, Robert Bellah, Bernard Crick, Charles Derber, David Donnison, Amitai Etzioni, William Galston, Bill Jordan, David Marquand, Stewart Ranson, Philip Selznick, John Stewart and William Sullivan.

[4] I use 'communitarian' as a generic term here for the ideas and practices promoted by the aforementioned thinkers (instead of the somewhat clumsy 'progressive communitarian/civic republican'), though I recognise that the term is not consistently used by academics or policy commentators. A detailed exposition of communitarian thinking is given in H. Tam (1998) *Communitarianism: a new agenda for politics and citizenship* (Basingstoke: Macmillan). The application of these ideas to a range of political issues is illustrated with contributions from European and American theorists in H. Tam (Ed.) (2001) *Progressive Politics in the Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press). More recently, similar ideas have been put forward under the term 'republican democracy' in S. White & D. Leighton (Eds) (2008) *Building a Citizen Society: the emerging politics of republican democracy* (London: Lawrence & Wishart).

[5] Luxembourg Income Study. http://www.lisproject.org (9 June 2003).

[6] According to the 2001 Eurobarometer poll, 23% in the UK believe that people live in want because they are lazy or lack willpower, while the 1995-97 World Values Survey found 61% in the USA subscribing to a similar view.

[7] Figures taken from the Pew Global Attitudes Survey (2007). Significantly, the corresponding figures for Germany, for so long a model social democratic state, went up from 61% to 74%. This coincided with the plutocratic push to marketise German society following reunification. According to a report in *The Guardian* (9 August 2011), 2 million German workers are now paid an hourly rate below that of the British minimum wage.

[8] See H.B. Tam (2011) The Big Con: reframing the state–society debate, *PPR* journal, March-May, 18(1);
http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291744-540X

[9] *Working with Communities*, published by St Edmundsbury Borough Council, 1998.

[10] These included Hazel Blears, Fiona Mactaggart and Kay Andrews.

[11] *Together We Can: people and government working together to make life better*, the government action plan, published by the Civil Renewal Unit on behalf of HM Government, 2005; and *Together We Can: annual review 2005/06*, published by the Civil Renewal Unit on behalf of HM Government, 2006.

[12] The Conservative-led Coalition Government drastically cut Labour's previous commitments to empower communities down to a very small number of initiatives and labelled the rump its 'Big Society' programme. Apart from the difference in scale, it should be noted that whereas civil renewal was concerned with strengthening the democratic partnership between state and citizens to act together, 'Big Society' is largely about leaving social problems to volunteers and under-funded community groups to sort out by themselves.

[13] Planning for Real was a technique developed by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation to bring people in any given neighbourhood together to make a three-dimensional model of their locality, which then serves as a focal point for people to express and consider their respective priorities before moving towards a shared understanding of what development should or should not go ahead. It was one of a range of techniques used by the Borough Council.

[14] The transfer of Borough property to community groups was also pioneered, setting an example for the work I later promoted on a national scale.

[15] Some of these ideas were set out in J. Stewart & H. Tam (1997) *Putting Citizens First: how to develop more citizen-focused local government*, published by Municipal Journal Ltd on behalf of SOLACE (Society for Local Authority Chief Executives).

[16] These figures are based on my own interpretations as arithmetical averages are impossible to calculate without a common definition in different research reports published over the years.

[17] Examples are taken from 'Empowerment Delivers More Efficient Outcomes' the annex to *Community Spirit in a Cold Climate*, published by the Department for Communities & Local Government, 2009.

[18] Effective democratic engagement can pave the way for reducing inequalities, provided, as Lesson 4 explains, the political will is there. Nonetheless, power inequalities are highly damaging for society and should be drastically reduced

through all forms of social and political action. See H. Tam (2010) *Against Power Inequalities: reflections on the struggle for inclusive communities*, Birkbeck, London University. Available as a free download from the Equality Trust: http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resources/against-power-inequalities

[19] *Neighbourhood Management: an overview of the 2003 and 2006 Round 1 Pathfinder Household Surveys*. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006.

[20] See, for example, B. Rogers& E. Robinson (2004) *The Benefits of Community Engagement: a review of the evidence*, published by the Active Citizenship Centre on behalf of the Home Office.

[21] See, for example, *People and Participation: how to put citizens at the heart of decision-making*, published by Involve (based on research funded by the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit), 2005; M. Pitchford, T. Archer& S. Ramsden (2009) *The Duty to Involve: making it work* (London: Community Development Foundation); T. Gardiner (2010) *Community Engagement and Empowerment: a guide for councillors* (London: IDeA [part of the LGA]). A wide range of freely-downloadable resources is also available from the National Empowerment Partnership/Community Development Foundation at http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/nep.

[22] And indeed what has to involve higher-level jurisdiction at the European or international level. An outline of how devolution to the local level could be advanced while retaining the key role of the central state in matters only it can handle effectively in partnership with communities can be found in H. Tam (2001) The Community Roots of Citizenship, in B. Crick (Ed.) *Citizens: towards a citizenship culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).

[23] Materials relating to civic leadership can be accessed at the Take Part website (developed with the support of the Civil Renewal Unit): http://www.takepart.org. See also H. Tam, 'Democratic Participation and Learning Leadership', paper commissioned for the EEA-funded project, *Civic Participation: diagnosing barriers and creating tools upgrading good governance* (led by the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Warsaw, Poland). The paper can be downloaded from: http://www.is.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/Tam_paper_English.doc

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