

Understanding Democratic Engagement at the Micro-Level:  
Communication, Participation and Representation

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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## Abstract

Theoretical and ‘real world’ research into democratic engagement concentrates on larger-scale contexts. There is an accompanying tendency to focus on participation, neglecting other aspects of engagement. The thesis rethinks the notion of democratic engagement by dividing it into three analytically distinct, but interwoven, aspects namely communication, participation and representation, and drawing attention to small-scale or micro-level contexts.

Understanding the communicative, participative and representative aspects of engagement in micro-level settings favours a case study approach and a research strategy designed to capture the minutiae of experiences of engagement. ‘Mossbank’, a neighbourhood in a small-to-medium sized Scottish town, has been chosen as an appropriate case. Mossbank is undergoing a physical and social regeneration initiative that has created new sites of democratic activity centred on Mossbank-related issues. It is also a setting where democratic engagement is likely to be constrained. A flexible mixed methods approach to data collection has been adopted using questionnaires, interviews, documentary analysis and non-participative observation, enabling the generation of ‘rich’ and ‘thick’ data.

A theoretically informed analytical framework is used to explore the different aspects of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Here, Iris Marion Young’s theorising on communication in deliberative settings has been particularly influential. Democratic engagement in Mossbank is dominated and constrained by formal, familiar and broadly conventional institutions, processes and roles ‘imported’ from established larger-scale democratic settings. Less visible, context-specific factors also have an influence. ‘Messy’ practices and asymmetry affect the ‘quality’ of communication. Participation in democratic processes has its own particular constraining characteristics related to individual motivations and abilities to ‘fit in’ and ‘succeed’ within pre-existing processes. Representation in Mossbank is distant and sporadic, culminating in the evolution of an increasingly brokered approach to the relationship, administered by an intermediary.

The thesis contributes to ‘empirical’ debates relating to the scope and nature of democratic engagement. This is especially relevant given the continued growth and development of micro-level democratic institutions and processes in developed democracies. The thesis also contributes to debates concerning the nature and extent of the ‘dialogue’ between normative ideals of

democracy and engagement, and research into 'real world' democratic engagement.

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### **Pictures**

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## **Abbreviations**

Throughout the thesis, the use of abbreviations has been kept to a minimum. However, a few have been used to avoid repetition of lengthy and cumbersome terms. As a reminder to the reader, these abbreviations with corresponding terms are listed below.

AGM - annual general meeting

CDW - community development worker

ITA - independent tenants' adviser

RSL - registered social landlord

SHQS - Scottish Housing Quality Standard

SIMD - Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

VAT - value added tax

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Katie's Puzzle

They're trying to get [Mossbank] regenerated so that it will be a nicer place to live. [...] They would like to see it as an urban village. I thought, my daughter stays in a place down in Devon. [...] It's a well-off village, put it that way. There's somebody goes around with an old lorry and they collect everybody's compost because they are too far out of Exeter to get those big compost bins. They take it to this place called - it's a green area - where its composted all the year around and then its brought back to folk who just have to 'phone in and they get compost for a small fee. Another person plants bulbs in all the shop windows and in wee bits of ground. Somebody goes round and waters the flowers all summer. God, what a great community spirit. I'd love to be able to know how they were able to get something like that off the ground. And they use a system if, say the woman over the road wanted her grass cut, they're in this kind of meeting, and she was maybe a good seamstress and I wanted trousers taken up, she would take up the trousers and I would cut the grass. It's a right united community. [...] Now I think that's great. I've often thought of writing and asking - is it a mayor they call them down there? - in what way it came about.<sup>1</sup>

Katie is a resident of 'Mossbank' a neighbourhood of a small to medium sized Scottish town that I refer to as 'Duncairn'. The above vignette is Katie's description of life in a Devon village that she has visited. Katie wonders why the 'community spirit' she describes in Devon is not replicated in Mossbank. Central to this is the creation and ongoing development of a set of problem solving processes - a 'kind of meeting' - with which people can engage, and in which they are included. Katie's picture of the Devon village may be somewhat romanticised, focussing on the attractive, surface qualities of village life. Nevertheless, her reminiscences prompt her to ask why there and not in Mossbank. The thesis describes the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank and puts forward reasons for this state of affairs. It sets out to provide answers to Katie's puzzle. What is it about Mossbank, the place, the people, its past, its present, and its situation that, to Katie at least, makes the 'quality' of democratic engagement

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<sup>1</sup> Interview: Katie (16 November 2005).

unsatisfactory? Such an investigation has to begin on more familiar ground, namely engagement with formal democratic processes at the national level. What is the state of democratic engagement in the United Kingdom?

- Exploring Disengagement: The Power Inquiry

Political disengagement across the United Kingdom has recently been explored by the Power Inquiry. This report, subtitled ‘an independent inquiry into Britain’s democracy’, aims to answer the question ‘[w]hy has disengagement from formal democratic politics in Britain grown in recent years and how can it be reversed’?<sup>2</sup> The key concerns of the Power Inquiry, what it perceives to be the main signs of political disengagement, cover a number of areas. First, the Inquiry highlights a decline in voting in United Kingdom general elections since at least 1997. The Inquiry extends this concern to a downturn in ‘[p]opular engagement with the formal processes and institutions of democracy’ that has been in evidence since the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, there is a ‘well-ingrained popular view’ that ‘political institutions and their politicians are failing, untrustworthy, and disconnected from the great mass of the British people’: the ‘quality’ of the relationship between representatives and the represented is declining.<sup>4</sup>

Explanations for this trend are, according to the Power Inquiry, deep rooted. There is a growing gulf between politicians and citizens with ‘many people feel[ing] that their views or interests are not taken into account when key policies are developed and key decisions are made’, and this is primarily due to an outdated political system unable to ‘reflect the values, expectations and lifestyles of [...] post-industrial Britain’.<sup>5</sup> It is a system that ‘still assumes inherently that today’s citizens are satisfied with a choice between two main parties, with the rare - once every four years - election of representatives who make decisions without any clear ongoing reference to the people they represent’.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p15.

<sup>3</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p27.

<sup>4</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p28.

<sup>5</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp29-30.

<sup>6</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p32.

The Power Inquiry also acknowledges that it is important not to fall into the trap of thinking about engagement or disengagement against a static backdrop of formal and ‘traditional’ approaches to democratic politics.<sup>7</sup> As Norris argues, the picture across actually existing democracies is altogether more complex and dynamic. As formal engagement declines, less formal, more widely conceived approaches to engagement, to ‘civic duty’, develop. The ‘repertoire’ of modes of engagement is evolving. The picture of decline or crisis does not adequately take account of ‘alternative’ forms of engagement and their co-existence with ‘traditional’ forms.<sup>8</sup>

The Inquiry’s focus on the ‘rise of new citizens’ as the ‘only [...] explanation [that] could account for the relatively recent, cross-national, intense disengagement and alienation from formal democracy alongside the vibrancy of, and innovation in, other forms of participation’ exemplifies the central shortcoming of the report.<sup>9</sup> To the Power Inquiry, citizens in ‘post-industrial societies’, including the United Kingdom, tend to work in the service sectors rather than in manufacturing industries, are better off, and are educated to a higher level.<sup>10</sup> These citizens are now less attached to class-based political loyalties, and are more likely to be interested in ‘post material’ issues, and are more likely to want to have a say in matters that affect their lives.<sup>11</sup>

Significantly, the Inquiry also acknowledges that there is another group in post industrial society ‘that has not only suffered from the decline of manufacturing industries but has also not enjoyed the benefits of the rise of the retail sector’ through ‘multiple deprivation’. To the Power Inquiry, this ‘leads to an inability or prevention from taking part in the wider social, economic, and cultural facets of our society but also, more relevantly here, an exclusion from the political life of the nation’.<sup>12</sup> As the Inquiry shifts from outlining the ‘problem’ of disengagement to the presentation of its recommendations, this second group disappears from the analysis:

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<sup>7</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp58-59.

<sup>8</sup> Norris (2002).

<sup>9</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp98-99.

<sup>10</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp100-101.

<sup>11</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp102-103.

<sup>12</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p101.



[i]n short, the changes of the post-war era have gradually created citizens who are better educated, have a higher sense of self-esteem, enjoy and expect to make decisions for themselves, and either lack or choose their own geographic, social and institutional bonds.<sup>13</sup>

This leads to over optimism regarding dealing with disengagement: deep seated socio-economic factors are excluded from the analysis and the Inquiry's recommendations.

To a degree, the Power Inquiry does touch on the 'causes' of disengagement in contemporary developed democracies. However, exposing the complex roots of disengagement, in macro to micro levels is abandoned to a preference to focus on the macro level and to reduce the 'causes' to procedural and institutional shortcomings. This research, in contrast, aims to reveal the complexity of democratic life in Mossbank, populated in the main by people who have not benefited significantly from the shift to a post-industrial state. In so doing, I comprehensively highlight the constraints and limitations of democratic engagement - the 'causes' of disengagement - in Mossbank.

Despite such shortcomings, the Power Inquiry's emphasis on the macro-level post-industrial political and social landscape is important. It is a reminder of the context in which Mossbank is embedded. The extent of the influence of the surrounding social and political landscape is explored in this research: a copying or transference of established, but arguably outdated, institutions and processes - as well as evolving alternatives - from larger scale contexts cannot be discounted. The concerns raised by the Power Inquiry concerning disengagement, tempered with the insights offered by Norris, and transferred to a smaller scale context, encapsulate the focus of the research. It is an exploration of the forms that engagement and disengagement take, and the uncovering of the factors that determine / delimit the practical limits of engagement in democratic institutions and processes in Mossbank.

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<sup>13</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p103.

Throughout the structure and development of the thesis, a number of motifs are repeatedly encountered. Collectively they provide the intellectual framework on which the thesis is built. These motifs also connect the thesis to academic debates, areas of inquiry, and ‘world views’. There are three distinct motifs (each consisting of a number of sub-divisions): the idea of ‘democratic engagement’ as referring to all aspects of peoples’ relationship with democratic institutions and processes, the notion of a theory-real world ‘dialogue’ between ideal accounts of democracy and studies of actually existing democratic settings, and the objective of ‘understanding’. Discussing these themes in the following three sections narrows and intensifies the focus of the thesis, and culminates in a statement of the core research questions. After the research questions have been presented, a six point argument is made for choosing Mossbank as the focus of this research project. The introduction concludes with a brief outline of the structure of the thesis.

### Rethinking Democratic Engagement

Central to the objectives of the thesis is a reconsideration of what is involved in the notion of engaging in democratic institutions and processes. This is linked to a focus on a relatively neglected and hidden ‘level’ at which democratic engagement can occur in a developed democracy, namely the small-scale or micro-level. These objectives amount to a rethinking of the scope and meaning of democratic engagement that contributes to current theoretical and ‘real world’ academic debates concerning democracy, particularly engagement in democratic settings. Two of the guiding motifs previously discussed can be examined here, namely the idea of democratic engagement itself and the notion of a theory-real world ‘dialogue’. Each helps to illuminate the contribution and significance of the thesis to academic debates on democratic engagement in developed democracies, and as is argued in Chapter 4, certain aspects of normative democratic theorising.

#### - Engaging with Democratic Engagement

Democratic engagement is, and continues to be, of interest to political theorists and empirical or ‘real world’ researchers. The concept of engagement is integral to all ideal

accounts of democracy and to the functioning and evolution of actually existing democratic institutions and processes. Some ideal accounts of democracy point to formal and limited forms of engagement, restricted to, say, taking part in the regular but occasional election of representatives. Others, advocate engagement of a deeper and sustained sort, with affected parties taking on a greater role in decision making processes. Engagement, however conceptualised or apparent in an actually existing context, offers modes, opportunities and relationships to ‘take part’ and ‘have a say’ in, and even shape, democratic decision-making processes. Dalton (1998) argues, ‘an involved public’ is a requirement of democracy and acts as a guiding force in defining and pursuing ‘societal goals’.<sup>14</sup>

One view of the scope of engagement is to equate it with formal, aggregative processes, such as voting for representatives. This relates most strongly to ideals of liberal democracy. Without engagement (in cycles of authorisation and holding to account), decision making processes would not be legitimate.<sup>15</sup> Such views reflect a formal, mechanistic approach to democratic engagement. The purpose of engagement is to register one’s personal preference. The endpoint is the conversion of the aggregation of personal preferences to the allotment of representatives or leaders to the legislature or representative assembly.<sup>16</sup> The process, and the resulting outcomes, are the result of an emphasis on formal political equality, individual ‘private’ preferences, the aggregation of these preferences, and the reflection of these preferences in the final outcome. Beyond those points, notions of justice are little considered: a ‘fair outcome reflects which preferences are more widely or strongly held’.<sup>17</sup>

Notions of democratic engagement can also be linked to more substantive ideas of justice. Here I am especially interested in making the connection clear between a just democratic decision making process (and outcomes) in a socially and economically differentiated society, and ideals of deliberative democracy. This reflects undercurrents

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<sup>14</sup> Dalton (2002), p32.

<sup>15</sup> Beetham (1991).

<sup>16</sup> Young (2000), p19.

<sup>17</sup> Young (2000), p21.

and occasionally encountered approaches to engagement in actually existing democracies.<sup>18</sup> Issues of social and economic inequalities, and differing levels of experience, knowledge and capacities can affect the extent to which individuals can engage in, that is access and contribute to, democratic processes.<sup>19</sup> Young is interested in highlighting an ideal of democratic engagement that counterbalances such inequalities. This approach to engagement is defined by a set of key normative ideals that promote genuine and meaningful inclusion of all affected parties in the decision making process. This thesis is particularly interested in exploring democratic engagement through an analytical framework informed by Iris Marion Young's particular ideal account of deliberative democracy. Democratic engagement is important because it acts to legitimise democratic processes, those who make decisions within these processes and the resulting outcomes. Other, more deliberative conceptions of democratic engagement - such that put forward by Young - add to this a concern with issues of justice, that democratic engagement ought to be genuinely and meaningfully inclusive.

Given its importance, there are a number of current academic debates and trends relating to engagement in democratic processes to which this thesis relates. These can be grouped under three headings, conceptualising democratic engagement, the evolution or crisis of democratic engagement, and issues relating to democratic engagement and scale. In each case, the thesis has the aim of making a direct contribution to how the concept and scope of democratic engagement is comprehended.

#### *- Conceptualising Democratic Engagement*

Close reading of *The Power Inquiry* reveals the frequent use of words such as 'engagement', 'participation' and 'involvement' as synonyms. This obscures the wide scope of the report, which although focussing on 'participation', also considers aspects that are better characterised as communication and representation - a point to which I return later. Similarly, Verba *et al* and Parry *et al* discuss 'contacting', and Pattie *et al* explore 'political discussions' - each relevant to communication - but subsumed into

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<sup>18</sup> Young (2000), p22, and Smith (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Young (2000), p34.

their discussion of 'political participation'.<sup>20</sup> Discussions of representation are also hidden beneath the catch-all term 'political participation'.<sup>21</sup> Pattie *et al*, for example, list contacting 'a politician' as an 'act of political participation'.<sup>22</sup> These close off a deeper exploration of the relationship, or engagement, between representatives and represented between elections, because the communicative dimension of representation is not opened up to enquiry. Such loose and inconsistent uses of terminology, and the resulting narrow scope of analysis, characterises debates and research related to democratic engagement. Within this climate of imprecision, a focus on 'participation' - defined in terms of 'acts' and 'action' - is discernible. This serves to blur distinctions between different aspects of democratic engagement. There is, therefore, a tendency to focus on 'acts' rather than other aspects or forms of engagement.

My developing critique of the conceptualisation of democratic engagement, outlined above, presents an opportunity to rethink its scope and meaning. On the one hand, I argue that democratic engagement encompasses 'networks and organisations through which citizens engage with the political system' supported by 'entitlements and procedures'.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, I contend that there is an additional dimension focussing on *forms* rather than *mechanisms* of engagement that sharpens the definition and analytical utility of 'democratic engagement'. Here I argue for a 'holistic' conceptualisation of engagement, explicitly acknowledging three aspects of how engagement can be experienced in democratic institutions and processes, namely communication, participation and representation. This approach to conceptualising democratic engagement is further discussed and justified in Chapter 4. At this point, it is enough to state the case that democratic engagement has a precise meaning, one that captures the full spectrum of mechanisms and forms of engagement.

- *Democratic Engagement: Crisis, Continuity and Change*. My analysis of the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank has to take account of opposing arguments in the wider literature that claim engagement in developed democracies is in crisis and that the

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<sup>20</sup> Verba *et al* (1987), pp54-56, Parry *et al* (1992), p43, Pattie *et al* (2004), pp89-96.

<sup>21</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p43, The Power Inquiry (2006) ch.7.

<sup>22</sup> Pattie *et al* (2004), p78.

<sup>23</sup> Smith (2005), p13, and The Power Enquiry (2006), p24.

nature of engagement is actually evolving. I have already mentioned the perspective of a democratic ‘crisis’ that argues processes central to the functioning of democracy are increasingly being abandoned by citizens.<sup>24</sup> This view focuses on an interpretation of turnouts at national elections in developed democracies, but also takes in to account decreasing party memberships, and declining levels of trust in elected politicians.<sup>25</sup> Such data reveal an inexorable trend of disengagement from democratic politics.<sup>26</sup> Explanations that account for this vary. People may be satisfied with the status quo.<sup>27</sup> They may simply lack the time to engage with democratic decision making processes. They may be ‘apathetic’.<sup>28</sup> Arguments for a culture of contentment, lack of time, and apathy as ‘explaining’ disengagement, although they cannot be entirely discounted, are questionable. Norris, for example, argues that ‘despite the conventional wisdom, there are good reasons to question popular assumptions that civic decline has become pandemic throughout the older democracies [...] Instead, after a few minutes thought, even the most casual observer of current events will quickly identify many complex contradictions, crosscurrents, and anomalies’.<sup>29</sup> These assumptions are not only undermined by numerous contradictions and inconsistencies, they are also too narrow in scope, being focussed on formal aspects of democratic engagement with too much emphasis on ‘apathy’ (a state of *disinterest* in democratic processes and outcomes) over what The Power Inquiry call ‘alienation’ (or *estrangement* from democratic processes).<sup>30</sup> In this thesis, I use the term ‘exclusion’ instead of alienation. ‘Exclusion’, relating to the ‘quality’ of engagement in democratic processes, is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Notions of inclusion or exclusion, as well as apathy can, I argue, help shed new light on disengagement from ‘traditional’ political activities. This move away from apathy as the explanatory factor allows another perspective to be examined, that of the structure of democratic institutions and processes and the ways that people move in and around them. There may be a perceived or actual distancing of political processes from citizens,

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<sup>24</sup> Pateman (1970), p3, Hirst (1993), p116, Norris (2002), p3.

<sup>25</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), ch1.

<sup>26</sup> Norris (2002), p6, The Power Enquiry (2006), p45.

<sup>27</sup> Pennock (1979), p438.

<sup>28</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), ch2.

<sup>29</sup> Norris (2002), p7.

<sup>30</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp53-54.

through, for example, the continuation of hierarchical forms of government, and the growth of consultation and other managerial approaches to governance.<sup>31</sup> This may lead to a cynical view of decision makers as remote and self-serving, and of ‘politics’ as a ‘rich man’s game’.<sup>32</sup> Citizens may see themselves as unqualified to become involved in political processes, perhaps through lack of relevant experience or knowledge. They may be in a position where they feel that access to, and inclusion in decision making processes is inadequate, that they are powerless.<sup>33</sup> Even the so-called rational actor may calculate that participation is too costly because any efforts in this direction count for little if there is little hope of ‘successful’ engagement.<sup>34</sup> These factors begin to highlight structural barriers to engagement in democratic decision making processes. This recognition that structural barriers to democratic engagement may exist in settings of formal political equality is an important point. My exploration of democratic engagement in Mossbank focuses on the *structure* of formal democratic engagement and the ways that residents relate to it. Disengagement is not necessarily entirely the ‘fault’ of (apathetic or contented) citizens. There are also constraints rooted in the structure of the institutions and processes, which limit the scope of engagement in developed democracies. These constraints contribute to the state of democratic engagement in a particular setting.<sup>35</sup> However, this is a somewhat static vision of democratic institutions and processes.

Norris, in her critique of the view that democracies are in decline, argues that democratic institutions and processes are actually evolving. Norris puts forward the case that in democracies across the world, including developed democracies, people are increasingly engaging through less formal organisations and networks, using a broader ‘repertoire’ of modes (some ‘traditional’, others less so), aiming to influence actors other than the state (for example ‘nonprofit and private agencies operating at local, national, and international levels’).<sup>36</sup> One result of this trend is that ‘alternative’ approaches to democratic engagement are adopted sometimes as ‘traditional’ ones are dropped. As The Power

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<sup>31</sup> Hirst and Khilnani (1996), pp2-3.

<sup>32</sup> Barnett (1996), pp168-169, and Hirst (2002), p411.

<sup>33</sup> Barber (1984), p272.

<sup>34</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p8.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 4 for more on structure and agency.

<sup>36</sup> Norris (2002), ch10.

Inquiry argues, 'it is important not to confuse changing senses of what constitutes [...] political involvement with a decline in [...] involvement'.<sup>37</sup>

What counts as democratic engagement in an actually existing setting may be 'traditional' and / or 'evolving'. The arguments summarised here highlight the complex nature of engagement in actually existing democracies. On the one hand, traditional or conventional approaches may continue or wane, whilst alternative approaches evolve. Peoples' relationship to democratic engagement in a particular setting, as a result, may also alter. A reference point is required to assess the developing state of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Here Young's ideal account of deliberative democracy has an important role. Young's account is operationalised in the creation of an analytical framework. This framework is presented in Chapter 4.

- *Democratic Engagement and Scale*. Thinking and research relating to ongoing engagement in democratic processes is primarily focussed on what I call meso- and macro-levels. By macro, I mean national and international levels. The meso level refers to democratic processes 'below' the national level, for example, regional and local government. Many investigations of democratic engagement, including Verba *et al*, Parry *et al*, Norris, The Power Inquiry, and Wilks-Heeg and Clayton, concentrate on one or more of these levels.<sup>38</sup> There is another level 'below' the meso level and this is relatively unexplored by political researchers.

This level relates to 'micro' or small-scale settings. More particularly, in the context of this thesis, the term has two defining aspects. It relates to a geographically, or spatially, defined area with a population numbering no more than the low thousands, and takes in institutions, networks and relationships that can be described as 'political' but that are more or less autonomous from the state. Pattie *et al* touch on the micro-level insofar as they explore engagement in relation to 'issues to do with their [the respondents'] daily

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<sup>37</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), p60.

<sup>38</sup> Verba *et al* (1987), Parry *et al* (1992), Norris (2002), The Power Inquiry (2006), and Wilks-Heeg and Clayton (2006).



lives'.<sup>39</sup> The scope of their investigation does not allow a sufficient study of the micro-level. Patemen discusses workplace democracy - which counts as a micro-level setting - but with an emphasis on developing a normative argument for increased democratic engagement at this level 'spilling over' into the macro and meso levels.<sup>40</sup> Mansbridge studies New England town hall meetings and other small-scale democratic processes.<sup>41</sup> However, Mansbridge is concerned with geographically specific cases of micro-level democratic engagement as historical products rather than contemporary manifestations of democratic engagement in contemporary developed democracies, which are noteworthy for their rarity as much as anything else. Research has been carried out in relation to 'innovative' processes within micro level contexts, including citizens' juries, and deliberative polling, for example.<sup>42</sup> Practical examples tend to be one off and time limited.<sup>43</sup> This research diverges from such instances of micro level democratic engagement in its emphasis on the *ongoing* development of democratic engagement *within* a particular setting and population.

Many theoretical and normative debates relating to democratic engagement tend towards abstraction, focussing on, for example, moral issues rather than process or context.<sup>44</sup> Others focus on questions of process, how democratic institutions and relations ought to be designed. Theorists of a participative or deliberative turn who focus on process are drawn to the micro level. Pateman, as already discussed, explores workplace democracy. Barber, offering another instance, raises the idea of a 'national system of *neighbourhood* assemblies' across the United States.<sup>45</sup> However, Barber points out that thinking in terms of scale - national and local, or macro, meso and micro levels - requires an awareness that 'political size is an ordinal rather than a cardinal measure. It is relative to psychology and to technology. How big is a big country? How many people constitute a "mass"? In politics there are no absolute measures of size'.<sup>46</sup> This point, that there is no clear dividing

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<sup>39</sup> Pattie *et al* (2004), p113.

<sup>40</sup> Pateman (1970), and Carter (2006).

<sup>41</sup> Mansbridge (1980).

<sup>42</sup> Fishkin (1995), Smith (2001).

<sup>43</sup> With the notable exception of 'co-governance' or partnership arrangements, see Smith (2005), pp56-57.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Gutmann and Thompson (1996).

<sup>45</sup> Pateman (1970) and Barber (1984), p269.

<sup>46</sup> Barber (1984), p246.

line between large and small or macro, meso and micro, is important and is one to which I return. However, it does not rule out a study of democratic engagement focussed on a micro level context. Rather it reminds researchers interested in the micro level that such settings do not exist entirely cut off from the influence of larger settings of which they are part.

However, there is a tendency amongst normative theorists to pull away from focussing exclusively on the micro level. Two overlapping concerns can be discerned here, a reaction against the association of ‘radical’ ideals of democracy with the micro level, and a concern with a perceived ‘dark side’ of micro level democracy. ‘Neighbourhood assemblies’, Barber argues ‘offer vital forums for ongoing political talk, but they reach only local constituencies and can divide and parochialize both regions and the nations as a whole’.<sup>47</sup> Citing similar reasons, Young also turns away from the micro level: ‘the small unit of democratic governance’, as well as promoting ‘unique virtues and functions’ linked to scale, also has a side that separates and excludes. ‘Small political jurisdiction’ according to Young, ‘often functions to separate people administratively whose actions nevertheless profoundly affect one another, and who dwell together in environments and structural processes that institutionally and causally relate them’.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Young contends that the major problems and conflicts that face most democracies now appear within the context of large scale mass society.<sup>49</sup> For these reasons, Young is primarily interested in mass decentred democracies; in other words, large-scale democratic contexts with multiple, overlapping democratic processes.<sup>50</sup> Barber’s and Young’s concerns over the negative side of small scale democracy are valid but do not justify this level being overlooked for detailed study. This dismissal of the significance of the micro level in normative democratic thought neglects the immediacy of issues ‘close to home’, and how they can affect the lives of ‘affected parties’ in powerful ways both positively and negatively.

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<sup>47</sup> Barber (1984), p273.

<sup>48</sup> Young (2000), pp228-229.

<sup>49</sup> Young (2000), p45.

<sup>50</sup> Young (2000), p46.

At the micro level, the individual comes to the fore as the principal ‘actor’ in democratic processes; the individual is the main unit of analysis. I describe and discuss my research in terms relating to individuals, their personal identities, and their experiences of democratic engagement.<sup>51</sup> However, it is also important to relate these experiences to ‘structural groups’ based around gender, age, socio-economic position, education, and so on.<sup>52</sup> An assessment of the reasons for the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank, or anywhere else, would be severely limited if I did not relate my individual level analysis to ‘structural differences’, an important part of the structure or context which influences an individual’s experience of democratic engagement. As Young points out, ‘a person’s social location in structures differentiated by class, gender, age, ability, race, or caste often implies predictable status in law, educational possibility, occupation, access to resources, political power, and prestige’.<sup>53</sup>

In relation to the study of democratic engagement in developed democracies, the collection and analysis of quantitative data has prevailed.<sup>54</sup> Since such research has been focussed on macro and meso levels this is justifiable. However, a study concerned primarily with a micro setting presents an opportunity to explore democratic engagement from a different perspective, from an alternative epistemological position. In Chapter 3, I present and justify a broadly constructivist approach to exploring democratic engagement in Mossbank, bringing to the foreground of the analysis the perceptions and views of Mossbank residents. This entails the use of a research strategy in which the collection and analysis of ‘rich’ and ‘thick’ qualitative data predominates.

Democratic engagement within the micro level is relatively unexplored. This is particularly so for ongoing, ‘everyday’ engagement, separated from, or outliving, novel or innovative approaches to engagement. Adopting a constructivist approach, closely

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<sup>51</sup> ‘A person’s identity is not some sum of her gender, racial, class, and national affinities. She is only her identity, which she herself has made by the way that she deals with and acts in relation to other social group positions, among other things’, Young (2000), p102.

<sup>52</sup> Young (2000), p92.

<sup>53</sup> Young (2000), p95.

<sup>54</sup> Verba *et al* (1987), Parry *et al* (1993), Pattie *et al* (2003). The Power Inquiry (2006) pp38-39 is an interesting exception. As well as using quantitative data, much of the case put forward in the report is based on statements made by ‘witnesses’, submitted as part of a series of public consultations.

linked to a broadly qualitative data collection strategy, facilitates a detailed examination of how Mossbank residents engage within a set of developing democratic institutions and processes.

### Instigating a Theory - Real World Dialogue

The theme of a dialogue or ‘conversation’ between ideal accounts of democracy constructed by theorists, and real world accounts of democracy as understood by political researchers, influences my approach to exploring the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Following Young and Dryzek, I contend that such an approach has particular benefits for normative democratic theorists and researchers of ‘real world’ democratic practices.<sup>55</sup> As Dryzek points out, ‘those who study the real world of democracy [...] ought to listen more to democratic theorists. But the converse is also true: democratic theorists should attend more to real-world constraints and possibilities that empirical social science can help to illuminate’.<sup>56</sup> Young, in particular, ties the idea of ‘dialogue’ to an approach to theorising and social criticism termed ‘critical theory’.

Critical theory rejects disinterested, abstracted and generalised approaches to theorising on human society.<sup>57</sup> To this end, ‘critical theory presumes that the normative ideals used to criticize a society are rooted in experience of, and reflection on, that very society’.<sup>58</sup> Maintaining a dialogue that relates to actual experiences necessitates what Young terms a ‘situated conversation’: the ‘topic’ of the conversation being ‘particular contemporary social contexts’.<sup>59</sup> In this research, the conversation concerns Mossbank and democratic engagement in this ‘neighbourhood’. However, there is scope to generalise, or relate, the discussion and findings to other micro-level contexts not only in Scotland but in contemporary developed democracies. This includes other ‘neighbourhoods’ as well as other small scale settings where democratic institutions and processes could or do exist.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Young (1990 and 2000) and Dryzek (2004).

<sup>56</sup> Dryzek (2004), p151.

<sup>57</sup> Young (2000), p14.

<sup>58</sup> Young (1990), p5.

<sup>59</sup> Young (2000), pp14-15.

<sup>60</sup> The term ‘neighbourhood’ is widely used and can be used in a number of senses, see, Kearns and Parkinson (2001). I avoid becoming embroiled in debates over the definition of the term ‘neighbourhood’.

Therefore, the thesis instigates and utilises a dialogue between theories relevant to democratic engagement in a developed democracy - centring on democratic communication, participation and representation - and democratic engagement as it actually exists, and is experienced and perceived in Mossbank.

The construction of the analytical framework - set out in Chapter 4 - especially aspects concerned with communication and representation, have benefited from such a 'conversation'. The dialogue extends beyond the development of the theoretical backdrop and approach to analysis adopted in this thesis. The insights gained from a theoretically informed analysis of democratic life in Mossbank can contribute to 'theory building'. In particular, this relates to utilising my findings, especially related to communication and representation, to develop a critique of Young's ideal of deliberative democracy. My critique of Young's theorising, based on insights gained during the development of the analytical framework and from the findings of the analysis, are discussed in Chapters 4 and 8 respectively.

The essence of the dialogue can be summarised thus. From theory to real world: theory acts as a tool to aid in the description and understanding of the state of democratic engagement. From real world to theory: insights and findings derived from the 'real world' can be used to critically assess and develop theory.

The thesis argues for a reworked conception of democratic engagement, deeper and wider in scope, which acknowledges the possibility of change and the likelihood of external and internal constraints on how people can engage. The thesis also allows a 'conversation' between theoretical / normative accounts of democratic engagement, and 'real world' research on the constraints on, and possibilities of, democratic engagement in developed democracies. A theoretically informed analytical framework incorporating such a notion of engagement is presented in Chapter 4. This framework operationalises this conception of democratic engagement and allows it to be used to examine a particular democratic

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Instead, I adopt a 'commonsense' definition, but with an emphasis on the 'political'. 'Neighbourhood' refers to a geographically defined residential area, a site where daily life is lived that is affected by 'broader social, political, and economic processes', Martin (2003), p365.

setting. The framework is oriented towards an exploration of a relatively neglected level of democratic activity, namely the micro level.

### Understanding Democratic Engagement

Understanding is the third intellectual motif of this thesis. It can be classified as a research objective. Research objectives, according to Blaikie, refer to the 'types of knowledge' that result from social research.<sup>61</sup> Understanding, as a research objective, takes the epistemological position that knowledge of a social setting or process involves 'establish[ing] reasons for particular social action, the occurrence of an event or the course of a social episode, these reasons being derived from the ones given by social actors'.<sup>62</sup> The objective of understanding is reached primarily through the use of accounts derived from Mossbank residents, which are interpretations of social 'reality', to reconstruct a 'social scientific account' of the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank.<sup>63</sup> Behind the objective of understanding lie other intellectual ambitions, most notably explanation, description, interpretation, and evaluation. The place of these endeavours in this research, and their relationship to understanding, require clarification.

In social research, it can be argued that there are two forms of explanation '*causal* explanation' - the achieving of intelligibility through the identification of mechanisms and factors that create social phenomena - and '*reason* explanation', namely understanding.<sup>64</sup> The seeking of causal explanations for social phenomena, structures, behaviours and attitudes can be associated with positivist world views. On the other hand, reason explanation is strongly identified with interpretivist or constructivist world views. So, although explanation is a central motif of this research, it is a particular sort of explanation that moves away from positivist assumptions. The emphasis on understanding ('reason explanation'), as opposed to explanation ('causal explanation'), ties in with the broadly social constructivist position adopted in this research.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Blaikie (2000), p72.

<sup>62</sup> Blaikie (2000), p72.

<sup>63</sup> Blaikie (2000), p77.

<sup>64</sup> Blaikie (2000), p75.

<sup>65</sup> See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of social constructivism in relation to the research.

Prior to understanding, a 'thick', theoretically informed narrative account, or description, of Mossbank and its residents is required.<sup>66</sup> This description, presented in Chapter 2, can be thought of as a 'story' recounting the development of democratic processes in Mossbank, the relevant social and demographic characteristics of the place and its people, and developments in the wider political and policy landscape. Description is a necessary component in understanding the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank.

Description places Mossbank and its residents in context. It 'sets the scene' by presenting relevant and particular information about the people and place: 'we cannot understand the behaviour of members of a social group other than in terms of the specific environment in which they operate'.<sup>67</sup>

The objective of understanding, not least because it is closely linked to social constructivist outlooks, places strong emphasis on the 'meanings and interpretations' that social actors use to make sense of their lives. Understanding the social world - including democratic life in Mossbank - therefore requires an 'uncovering [of] the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings, motives and rules' that people use in their lives.<sup>68</sup> A crucial task for the researcher is, therefore, to identify these interpretations. Another task of the social constructivist researcher involves the interpretation of the actions and meanings recorded in a social setting. 'Thick description' is crucial as the researcher attempts to arrive at his own construction 'of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to'. Unlike positivist world views, social constructivist researchers recognise that even their interpretations are partial, incomplete and provisional.<sup>69</sup>

Whilst evaluation is not a central objective of this research, traces of this endeavour are nevertheless discernible. To what extent do these traces complement and extend beyond the scope of understanding? In this research, there is no concerted attempt to evaluate in

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<sup>66</sup> Blaikie (2000), p74.

<sup>67</sup> Bryman (2004), p281.

<sup>68</sup> Blaikie (2000), p115.

<sup>69</sup> Marsh and Furlong (2002), pp26-27.

the sense of focusing on the production of knowledge related ‘to assess[ing] whether [democratic mechanisms in Mossbank] have achieved their desired outcomes’ and to assist with the development of policy making in engagement in micro-level regeneration initiatives.<sup>70</sup> However, evaluation is still discernible as an aspect, or side effect, of understanding. There is a degree of comparing ‘what is’ (democratic life in Mossbank) with ‘what should be’ (the goals of the regeneration initiative, especially that of involving the residents), or of assessing democratic life in Mossbank.<sup>71</sup> This is most evident when exploring the data derived from Mossbank. As Blaikie points out, ‘implicitly or explicitly, most social researchers appear to have some social issue or problem in mind when they undertake social research’.<sup>72</sup> In this research, this relates to ‘Katie’s puzzle’, presented in Chapter 1.

The objective of understanding, when subjected to scrutiny, is associated with a complementary set of intellectual ambitions. Understanding, at least as presented in this project, is a process involving other objectives such as description (a necessary precursor to understanding) and evaluation (showing that understanding is not necessary an end in itself). The understanding motif is, furthermore, a form of explanation, an alternative to ‘causal explanation’, that focuses on interpreting ‘explanations social actors can offer and which can be used by the social researcher to construct a social scientific account of their activity’.<sup>73</sup>

### Research Questions

The objective of understanding is defined and delimited by a set of research questions, which the thesis works towards answering. My approach to answering the questions is influenced by the other two motifs, namely the interaction between relevant aspects of normative theory and related issues in ‘real world’ research, and a ‘holistic’ notion of democratic engagement.

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<sup>70</sup> Blaikie (2000), p72.

<sup>71</sup> Blaikie (2000), p79 and Robson (2004), p202.

<sup>72</sup> Blaikie (2000), p51.

<sup>73</sup> Blaikie (2000), p77.



The primary aims of this thesis coalesce around a pair of questions:

What are the practical limitations of democratic engagement in Mossbank?

Why do these limitations prevail?

In order to be dealt with properly, these questions, representing a statement of the core aims of the research, require responses to be made to subsidiary questions. These sub-questions can be presented in two groups, the first (shown in Figure 1.1) relates to ‘theoretical’ aspects of the research, and the second (presented in Figure 1.2) concerns ‘real world’ aspects of the research. Furthermore, the three abiding motifs set out in this chapter, namely democratic engagement, a theory-real world dialogue and the objective of understanding are mirrored in these questions.

**Figure 1.1: The Theoretical Aspect of the Research: Subsidiary Research Questions**

- What is democracy?
  - How are ideal accounts of democracy utilised to ‘map’ actually existing democracies?
- What is democratic engagement?
  - What are the shortcomings and strengths of ‘standard’ definitions of democratic engagement?
  - What is the relationship between ‘democracy’ and ‘engagement’?
- What is the relationship between theory and ‘real world’ research?
  - What is the contribution of this dialogue to understanding democratic engagement in Mossbank?
  - What does the analysis and understanding of democratic engagement in Mossbank contribute to theory building?
  - How can Young’s normative concept of deliberative democracy be applied to understanding democratic engagement in Mossbank?
  - What shortcomings of Young’s account of democratic inclusion can be highlighted as a result of this research?

The core research questions and the subsidiary questions are designed to be easily discernible as ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ type questions. The only ‘why’ question, a core research question, represents the end of a sequence of question asking and answering. The subsidiary questions require mainly descriptive answers, highlighting relevant categories, processes, characteristics and patterns.<sup>74</sup> The climax of the research is the answering of the why question, the answer to which presents a set of *reasons* for the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank.

**Figure 1.2: The Real-World Aspect of the Research: Subsidiary Research Questions**

- What is 'Mossbank'?
  - What is the 'story' of Mossbank?
  - What is going on in Mossbank?
  - What are the characteristics of the place and the people?
- What analytical framework is used to explore democratic engagement in Mossbank?
- What are the modes of engagement in democratic processes available to and created by the residents?
  - In what ways do Mossbank residents experience and relate to democratic engagement in Mossbank?
  - What does democratic engagement in Mossbank look like?
  - What factors influence / constrain the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank?
- In what ways do the findings relate to other micro-level settings in developed democracies?
  - To what extent can the analytical approach adopted in this research be used to explore democratic engagement in other settings?

Why Mossbank?

Mossbank possesses a set of particular characteristics that make it a suitable research

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<sup>74</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp60-61.

locale for this study.<sup>75</sup> This discussion can be divided into six parts. The first two concern the area itself, and the remainder relate to practical questions of applicability, access and familiarity. Each of these six justifications is, on its own, insufficient, but when considered together make a convincing argument for the choice of Mossbank.

Firstly, Mossbank is the focus of an ongoing, long-term physical and social regeneration initiative. Chapter 2 describes this in detail. This project brought into being a residents' association and management committee, meetings and consultations occurred, and opportunities to engage were created and made. In short, the regeneration initiative has caused an amount of democratic 'noise' within Mossbank. My interest lies not with the regeneration initiative or the regeneration partnership, but with the democratic processes that exist *within* Mossbank as a result of the initiative.

The second reason concerns the essentially democratic nature of Mossbank and its institutions and processes. I have assumed that the institutions and processes that I study are essentially 'democratic'. How do I defend this view? Arguing that Mossbank is embedded in a developed democracy, and is therefore 'democratic', is part of my argument. By 'developed' (or 'mature') democracy I mean actually existing democracies with stable and established processes and institutions of democratic decision making characterised by formal political equality, free speech and association, pluralism, regular and competitive elections, and legislatures made up of elected representatives authorised by, and accountable to, the electorate. On a deeper level, there are embedded assumptions regarding relationships between political elites and the majority of the population: 'politics' being, for the most part, removed from the population and put in the hands of political elites acting as representatives. Thus, the majority are at a distance from decision making processes in areas of government. This sketch is too static. Therefore, in addition, I advocate a view of developed democracy that acknowledges dynamism and scope for change.

On its own, this view is inadequate in defending the case that Mossbank is essentially

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<sup>75</sup> My choice of a single case study approach is discussed in Chapter 3.

‘democratic’. Are the institutions and processes within Mossbank recognisably ‘democratic’? The residents’ association and management committee, the core institutions in Mossbank, are founded on broadly democratic principles: elections, voting, and the existence of accountable and authorised representatives. All members of the residents’ association are formally equal, in that each can vote for management committee members / representatives, and have opportunities to access these representatives. This sense of ‘democracy’ is clear when I explore democratic engagement across Mossbank in Chapters 6 and 7.

The ‘least likely’ justification, discussed in Chapter 3, is the third reason for choosing Mossbank. For a host of socio-economic reasons - highlighted in Chapter 2 - Mossbank is an unlikely place for a highly engaged population. Therefore, there is more scope for an exploration of why people do not engage in, and are excluded from, democratic institutions and processes. Constraints and barriers to engagement, if they are to be found anywhere, are likely to exist in Mossbank. Fourthly, Mossbank is conveniently small, counting as micro level, and being of a physical size and population suitable for the collection of ‘rich’ qualitative data. Details of Mossbank’s physical and population size are discussed in Chapter 2. Fifthly, during data gathering, easy access to Mossbank has been necessary in order to collect data ‘in the field’. Mossbank has been easy to access, being relatively close to my home.

The final reason for my choosing Mossbank relates to my past associations with the area: I spent my childhood there and have relations still living there. I realise that such a relationship may pose problems relating to researcher bias.<sup>76</sup> In order to counter these problems, I have avoided involving people already known to me in my data gathering, restricting them to the role of contacts and knowledgeable insiders. However, my connections to Mossbank have had distinct advantages. These advantages include a prior knowledge of the area, the layout of the streets, for example, and a wider knowledge of ‘Duncairn’, the town of which Mossbank is a part. On occasions, my associations with the area have been a distinct advantage in gaining access to, and building rapport with,

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<sup>76</sup> Harrison (2001), p98.

residents.

### Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is presented over eight chapters. The structure moves in a logical and sequential fashion from the introduction of the ‘puzzle’ in this chapter to reflections on the findings in the final chapter. Chapter 2 is a descriptive account of the people and place of Mossbank. As well as ‘setting the scene’, this chapter highlights particular aspects of the ‘story’ and development of Mossbank and its population that are explored and analysed in greater depth in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 3 discusses methodological issues, the research strategy, and data collection methods undertaken in this research.

Chapter 4 presents the theoretical foundation of the research, focusing on Young’s normative account of deliberative democracy. This chapter continues with the development of a theoretically informed analytical framework. There are two parts to this framework. The first concerns a taxonomy of ‘levels’, or degrees, of engagement in Mossbank that can be applied to individuals and introduces a measurement of the ‘quality’ of democratic engagement. This classification allows an analysis of *change* and *movement* that cuts across specific forms and sites of engagement. The second part of this analytical framework acts as the guide to my exploration and analysis of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Chapter 5 focuses on how residents *conceptualise* democracy and democratic engagement. Some comparisons are made between how residents think democracy and engagement *ought* to be and how it actually is.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the actual analysis, highlighting the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Chapter 6 focuses on participation and representation on one aspect of democratic engagement, whilst Chapter 7 explores the state of political communication. These chapters also begin the process of moving towards the objective of understanding.

The final chapter of the thesis draws together the findings presented in previous chapters

and presents a set of reasons - or factors - that account for the 'quality' of democratic engagement in Mossbank. In this chapter, I also look beyond Mossbank and comment on how the approach used in the research and the findings relate to engagement in other micro level settings. In relation to the theory - real world dialogue, I also discuss the influence of this approach on theory building, particularly with reference to Young's normative account of deliberative democracy. Finally, suggestions for future avenues of research are raised.

In this introductory chapter, I have set out the nature of the 'puzzle' - the issue of (dis)engagement in developed democracies, but this time transferred to a micro-level setting. The main, and recurring, motifs of the research, democratic engagement (conceptualised 'holistically'), the objective of understanding, and an ongoing dialogue between normative theories and theorists of democracy, and research and researchers concerned with actually existing democracy have been highlighted. The chapter culminates in the presentation of a set of research questions. Finally, looking forward to the following chapters and the unfolding of the thesis, I justify my choice of Mossbank as the focus of the research and indicate the organisation and content of each chapter.

Mossbank is not a place where engagement comes 'naturally' and is easily taken up by the population, in sharp contrast to Katie's Devon village. Democratic engagement as communication, participation and representation is a struggle, even for those 'willing few' who make the process work over time. 'Democracy' in Mossbank survives, but to what extent does democratic engagement flourish?

## Chapter 2

### Describing Mossbank: Setting, Characters and Plot

Description, like understanding, has a particular definition and scope in this research.<sup>77</sup> Generally it is about providing ‘an accurate account of some phenomenon, the distribution of characteristics in some population, the patterns of relationships in some social context, at a particular time, [and] the changes in those characteristics over time’.<sup>78</sup> Describing Mossbank the place, its residents and what goes on there is a necessary step towards ‘understanding’. More specifically, description involves introducing the place and people of Mossbank and certain relevant occurrences, developments and events. Description, at least in the context of this thesis, is not about haphazard window dressing. Two adjectives encapsulate how I approach description: ‘rich’ and ‘targeted’. Rich description pays attention to the *detail* of a phenomenon or context. Thus, my approach to description focuses on the minutiae of democratic life in Mossbank. The descriptive account of Mossbank is additionally *targeted*. What I describe is relevant to my research goals. Furthermore, targeting avoids ‘descriptive excess’, giving so much description that it gets in the way of the development and communication of the thesis.<sup>79</sup>

Dey advocates a metaphor of storytelling in relation to the presentation of academic research, highlighting three ingredients of ‘good’ storytelling, analogous to accessible and engaging academic writing.<sup>80</sup> These ingredients are setting, plot and characters and are the foundations of my rich and targeted description. The setting is Mossbank, an actually existing area where the ‘drama’ of democratic engagement and inclusion is played out. The residents of Mossbank are the characters that inhabit the setting. As far as possible, I endeavour to treat these people as ‘real’. I refer to them by name and remember that each has a particular, even unique, story to tell about democratic life in Mossbank. Plot is broadly analogous to the regeneration initiative. This also takes in the democratic institutions and processes within Mossbank, introduced in Chapter 1 and explored in depth in Chapters 6 and 7.

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<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion of ‘understanding’ as a research objective.

<sup>78</sup> Blaikie (2000), p74.

<sup>79</sup> Bryman (2004), p281.

<sup>80</sup> Dey (1993), pp238-239.

Dey's metaphor is echoed in the chapter structure. Firstly, I begin with a discussion of 'setting', the history and physical appearance of Mossbank. The section 'Characters' focuses on the residents of Mossbank. The third main section, 'Plot' describes the regeneration initiative, the development of democratic institutions and processes, and particular events and issues. In effect, this section describes various 'sub-plots' within the setting.

### Setting

Mossbank is situated in Duncairn, the largest town in the Guthrie local authority area. It has a population of around 23 000.<sup>81</sup> Duncairn originally developed as a medieval market town centred around the harbour. Duncairn gradually developed into a manufacturing centre particularly associated with textiles and engineering. Parallel to this, the town developed as a popular coastal holiday resort. Duncairn's manufacturing industries began to decline in the 1970s, although tourism remains an important factor in the town's economy. Mossbank, due primarily to the socio-economic profile of its residents, was particularly badly affected by Duncairn's industrial decline, most notably through increasing levels of unemployment.

The housing scheme of Mossbank came into existence in the 1950s on the northern edge of Duncairn.<sup>82</sup> The local authority - in those days, the local burgh council - envisaged that Mossbank would accommodate 'overspill' population, mainly from Glasgow. These people would be attracted to Duncairn by the prospect of new houses and employment in local manufacturing industries. Another part of the scheme had been set aside to accommodate military personnel and their families. In the 1990s, these houses were sold by the Ministry of Defence to a mixture of housing associations and private landlords.

Duncairn is part of the local authority area of Guthrie one of 32 in Scotland. Mossbank,

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<sup>81</sup> UK Census.

<sup>82</sup> 'Housing scheme' is the term used in Scotland for a local authority housing estate, Robinson (1985), p586.



in turn, is part of a council ward (also called Mossbank) and elects one councillor by a first-past-the-post process to represent the ward. The Mossbank ward has over recent years consistently elected SNP (Scottish National Party) councillors. The incumbent councillor, who has been the local representative since 1980, continues this trend. At the last local election held in the Mossbank ward in 2003, the turnout was 43 percent (with the sitting councillor a comfortable winner). The average turnout across all Guthrie wards was 51 percent, making the Mossbank ward below average. In fact, the Mossbank ward had the second lowest turnout of all Guthrie wards. The popularity of the SNP in the Mossbank ward is reflected across the Guthrie local authority area. In fact, this party has formed the ruling administration of Guthrie throughout the ‘story’ of Mossbank’s regeneration to date.

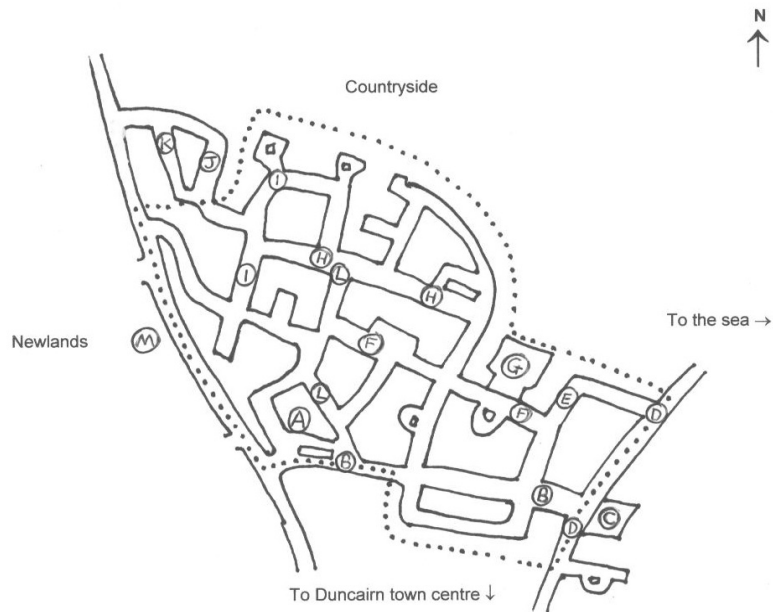
#### - A Tour of Mossbank

Mossbank is not a large area - a kilometre from end to end - as Map 2.1 shows. The first sight that most people see when heading into Mossbank is ‘the shops’, increasingly referred to in relation to the regeneration as the ‘gateway’ to Mossbank. The shops, as shown in Picture 2.1, occupy the ground floor of a three floor building, the largest single building in Mossbank. The shopping area in Mossbank consists of three mini-supermarkets, a sub-post office, two fast food outlets, as well as the residents’ association Drop-in Shop. This handful of shops is busy. However, they are situated in a depressing, shabby environment of broken paving slabs, peeling paint, graffiti - all indicative of long-term neglect. This is the hub of Mossbank. Perched on top of this line of shops are two storeys of mostly uninhabited flats, the brown harling and the boarded-up windows giving the viewer - residents and visitors - an impression of bleakness and oppression even on a sunny day.<sup>83</sup> Does the rest of Mossbank look like this? The following is an account of a short tour of Mossbank undertaken before any demolition and rebuilding had taken place.

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<sup>83</sup> Harling: ‘roughcast with lime and small stones’, Robinson (1985), p269.

**Map 2.1: The Mossbank Regeneration Area**



**Streets, Locations and Landmarks**

- A: 'The shops'
- B: St. Bride's Road
- C: Mossbank Hotel
- D: Mossbank Road
- E: Durrisdeer Crescent
- F: Balquhiddar Road
- G: Balquhiddar Road Park
- H: Balfour Road
- I: Shaws Drive
- J: Howard Avenue
- K: Heriot Crescent
- L: Ballantrae Road
- M: school

•••• Border of regeneration area

[-----]  
500m

**Picture 2.1: 'The Shops'**



Entering Mossbank from the direction of Duncairn town centre, the shops dominate the view. Turning right in front of the shops and on to St. Bride's Road, there are playing fields on the right and generally neat and tidy houses and gardens on the left. A few hundred metres on, at the end of this road, on the official boundary of the regeneration area, sits a small hotel. This is used by the residents' association / management committee for social events such as childrens' parties and is the venue of the AGM. Beyond this hotel, accessed by a footpath and roads, lie more playing fields and parks and then the sea. Turning left at the hotel, Mossbank Road marks the boundary of both Mossbank and the town of Duncairn. On one side, the houses continue and on the other, between the road and the sea, there are fields. Here Mossbank's situation on the edge of the town and near the sea is most obvious. Some gardens back on to fields and the countryside, and many residents have a view of the sea from their windows. Another left

turn a few metres later, leads through Durrisdeer Crescent and on to Balquhiddar Road. On this road sits the largest park in Mossbank. Scattered throughout Mossbank are play parks and open spaces of various sizes. Over the years, as the play equipment has fallen into disrepair it has been removed by the council and, in most cases, has not been replaced. The play parks, though still used by children, appear neglected, merely being open spaces with little or no play equipment. As a result of the house building programme, one play park (on Balfour Road) has been built on, being replaced with a smaller but better equipped play area designed for younger children in a nearby location.

Around Balquhiddar Road, most houses and gardens are neat and cared for, and there are no particular signs of physical deprivation or neglect. At the end of this road, the appearance of Mossbank changes and thoughts of regeneration come more easily to mind. The ground begins to slope upwards and the style of houses change. Alongside houses with their own gardens, there are three storey blocks of flats, known to residents as the 'skinny blocks' on account of their length in comparison to their width - see Picture 2.2. The houses are fully occupied but many of the flats are empty and the windows and doors are blocked off with metal shutters. These flats are due to be demolished and replaced with houses as part of the regeneration project. Moving towards the highest point of Mossbank, at the northern end of Shaws Drive, there are views encompassing the town, the sea and the countryside. Here, the regular 'stop and hail' bus service that connects Mossbank to the rest of Duncairn may be seen negotiating the narrow streets. From this point in Mossbank, the furthest from the rest of Duncairn, the town centre is close by, perhaps twenty minutes brisk walking or five minutes by car. Moving down hill, returning to the shops, two small streets of relatively newly built 'private' houses are encountered (Howard Avenue and Heriot Crescent), which though not strictly part of the regeneration area, have been included in the borders of the residents' association. Finally, before the shops come once again into sight, to the right there is a secondary school and beyond that the adjacent neighbourhood of Newlands.

- Defining Mossbank

I have chosen to use the label 'Mossbank' to relate to both the boundaries of the regeneration initiative, as drawn by the local authority prior to the regeneration

partnership, and the very similar membership area of the Mossbank residents' association. The guiding criteria used by the local authority in delineating the regeneration area are primarily socio-economic, with little attention given to issues of 'unity', or 'belonging' on the part of residents, to the views of the residents themselves, or to the long term and practical implications of initiating and sustaining a programme of *social* regeneration.<sup>84</sup>

**Picture 2.2: The 'Skinny Blocks'**



There are other, less visible, applications of 'Mossbank'. These other definitions, held by some residents, only became apparent to me once I was gathering data. Some residents -

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<sup>84</sup> Interview: Director of Housing (30 January 2006).

Paul the chairperson of the residents' association management committee, for example - feel strongly that 'Mossbank' really refers to an area larger than the regeneration area or membership of the residents' association.<sup>85</sup> Of more immediate interest to my research is the view that the regeneration area is actually two distinct 'neighbourhoods' with Ballantrae Road, shown in Picture 2.3, marking the border. Those who advocate this view tend to reside on the east side of the division (the right side of the picture) and view 'their' area as not requiring regeneration. Hazel, whose feelings are as strong as Paul's on this issue, refers to 'her' area as 'Mossbank', and the 'other' area as 'Hermiston'.<sup>86</sup> The impact of this split on democratic engagement is explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Picture 2.3: 'Ballantrae Road'**



### Characters

In this section, my aim is to describe the general population of Mossbank and a 'cast of

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<sup>85</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

<sup>86</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2007).

characters’ - those residents to whom I refer directly in my analysis. Describing the general population highlights in particular the socio-economic and demographic profile of Mossbank that affect the extent to which people engage with, and are included in, democratic processes. I have presented the data illustrating these aspects of Mossbank with reference to the ‘wider world’, particularly Scotland. This makes comparisons possible, regarding, for example, the state of Mossbank’s economic deprivation. It also highlights the existence of economic and social inequalities, usual in developed democracies. The cast of characters are introduced individually, with especial care being taken to highlight their links with the regeneration initiative.

- The General Population

- *Demographic Profile*. The following data, when considered together, give an impression of the demographic profile of the residents of Mossbank. There are approximately 775 households in Mossbank occupied by just under 2000 people.<sup>87</sup> Mossbank’s residents make up just over 10 percent of the population of Duncairn. Tables 2.1 to 2.4 give an indication of the demographic characteristics of Mossbank residents in comparison to the local authority area and Scotland.

**Table 2.1: Population by Sex, 2001 (%)<sup>88</sup>**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	48.05	51.95
<b>Local Authority</b>	48.39	51.61
<b>Mossbank</b>	47.79	52.21

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<sup>87</sup> UK Census. It is not possible to achieve an exact correspondence between the census data (in the form that it is made available) and the research locale. The census data is presented in ‘output areas’ which are small clusters of postcodes covering a few streets. In order to include all parts of the research locale any output areas containing postcodes from the research locale are included, even if they also contain postcodes outwith the research locale. Overall, there are sixteen output areas containing postcodes from the research locale. These output areas are made up of forty two postcodes of which forty are from the research locale. So, the fit is quite close.

<sup>88</sup> UK Census.

**Table 2.2: Population by Age, 2001 (%)**<sup>89</sup>

	16-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75 and over
<b>Scotland</b>	17.46	22.97	19.29	13.98	7.09
<b>Local Authority</b>	14.98	21.52	21.07	15.36	8.28
<b>Mossbank</b>	20.11	20.62	16.69	11.40	4.31

**Table 2.3: Ethnicity, 2001 (%)**<sup>90</sup>

	White	Non-White
<b>Scotland</b>	97.99	2.01
<b>Local Authority</b>	99.2	0.8

**Table 2.4: Country of Birth, 2001 (%)**<sup>91</sup>

	Scotland	England	Rest of UK	Republic of Ireland	Rest of EU	Elsewhere
<b>Scotland</b>	87.15	8.08	0.99	0.43	1.10	2.25
<b>Local Authority</b>	88.33	8.18	0.77	0.23	0.82	1.67
<b>Mossbank</b>	90.42	6.65	0.93	0.25	0.84	0.98

These tables show, that in terms of the ratio between men and women, age distribution, and country of birth, the population of Mossbank is generally representative of the Scottish population. In terms of ethnicity, census data relating to the Mossbank area is unobtainable, but after spending some time in the area, it is apparent that the ethnic composition of Mossbank echoes the data in Table 2.3. However, when statistics relating to socio-economic factors are examined later in the chapter, aspects of Mossbank's residents are revealed that make it of particular interest and relevance to a study of democratic engagement. In socio-economic terms, Mossbank is less 'typical' and

<sup>89</sup> UK Census.

<sup>90</sup> 2001 Census Data presented in Scottish Executive (2005). 'White' refers to 'White Scottish', 'other White British', 'White Irish', and 'any other White background'. 'Non-White' refers to 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', 'Chinese', 'other South Asian', 'Caribbean', 'African', 'Black Scottish or any other Black background', 'any Mixed background', and 'any other Background'.

<sup>91</sup> UK Census.



contributes to it being a 'least likely' setting for high levels of democratic engagement .<sup>92</sup>

- *Engagement in Politics.* Tables 2.5 to 2.8 present data relating to engagement in politics, particularly at local government and national levels. Table 2.5 shows levels of political activism taken from the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. That year corresponds with the distribution of the questionnaires in Mossbank, data from which is shown in Table 2.6. Comparing these data indicates that Mossbank residents are as politically active as is typical in Scotland. However, the following qualifications blunt such a conclusion.

**Table 2.5: Political Activism in Scotland (%)<sup>93</sup>**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Answer</b>
<b>Ever Been on a Demonstration</b>	12.8	87.2	0
<b>Ever Contacted MP or MSP</b>	23.1	76.8	0.1
<b>Ever Signed a Petition</b>	58.3	41.7	0
<b>Ever Attended a Public Meeting</b>	30.9	69.0	0.1
<b>Ever Contacted a Government Department</b>	11.2	88.8	0

Sample size: 1637

<sup>92</sup> I discuss issues of typicality in Chapter 3.

<sup>93</sup> Scottish Social Attitudes (2004).

**Table 2.6: Political Activism in Last Five Years Amongst Mossbank Residents<sup>94</sup>**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Answer</b>
<b>Been on a Demonstration</b>	2 (5.3%)	32 (84.2%)	4 (10.5%)
<b>Contacted a MP, MSP, MEP or councillor</b>	7 (18.4%)	25 (65.8%)	5 (13.2%)
<b>Signed a Petition</b>	23 (60.5%)	12 (31.6%)	3 (7.9%)
<b>Attended a Public Meeting</b>	17 (36.2%)	17 (44.7%)	4 (10.5%)
<b>Contacted a Government or Council Department</b>	17 (44.7%)	17 (44.7%)	4 (10.5%)

**Table 2.7: Turnouts at Elections (%)<sup>95</sup>**

	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Mossbank Ward</b>
<b>Local Council (2003)</b>	49	51	43

**Table 2.8: Attitudes to Voting Amongst Mossbank Residents<sup>96</sup>**

	<b>Number</b>
<b>I never vote</b>	6
<b>I seldom vote</b>	4
<b>I sometimes vote</b>	4
<b>I vote most of the time</b>	9
<b>I always vote</b>	15
<b>No answer</b>	1

The data relating to Mossbank (Tables 2.6 and 2.8) may over represent those who are more engaged with democratic processes. Here I am assuming that more active and interested individuals are more likely to complete and return the questionnaires. The data

<sup>94</sup> Data derived from Phase 1 questionnaires distributed to Mossbank residents - see Chapter 3 for details about the phases of data collecting.

<sup>95</sup> McConnell (2004), p107.

<sup>96</sup> Questionnaire: question 15.

- most particularly in Tables 2.5 and 2.6 - do not differentiate between one-off moments of engagement (such as signing a petition) and more frequent, or sustained and regular forms of democratic engagement. Referring to Table 2.7, the research locale makes up just a part of the Mossbank council ward, so the validity of this data is questionable. These factors suggest that the level of democratic engagement amongst those residing within the boundaries of the Mossbank regeneration area is in all probability lower than the data indicates.

- *Socio-Economic Profile*. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Executive's measure of area based deprivation and can be used to illustrate the economic and social profile of Mossbank in relation to the local authority area and Scotland.<sup>97</sup> Within the SIMD classification, there is an overall index for multiple deprivation as well as six other indices that refer to specific forms of deprivation. In terms of overall multiple deprivation, Mossbank is positioned in the most deprived twenty percent of areas in Scotland. Mossbank is ranked within the most deprived fifteen percent in relation to income deprivation. In all the other indices (employment, health, education, training and skills, and housing) Mossbank lies within the most deprived fifty percent. The degree of this deprivation in relation to Mossbank's local authority area and to Scotland is shown in Tables 2.9 to 2.15.

**Table 2.9: Type of Tenure (%)<sup>98</sup>**

	<b>Owned Households</b>	<b>Social Rented</b>	<b>Private Rented</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	62.6	27.1	6.7
<b>Local Authority</b>	65.0	23.0	8.1
<b>Mossbank</b>	39.0	52.0	4.7

<sup>97</sup> SIMD data are most appropriately utilised using 'data zones'. Three of these zones closely match the area of the research locale. For more on the indices used in SIMD and the sources and limitation of these data see Scottish Executive (a) and Scottish Executive (b).

<sup>98</sup> UK Census. The table does not include those household where residents do not own their homes and pay no rent.

**Table 2.10: Dwellings in Council Tax Band A, 2004 (%)<sup>99</sup>**

	<b>Dwellings in Band A</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	24.1
<b>Local Authority</b>	29.9
<b>Mossbank</b>	74.2

**Table 2.11: Adults and Children in Households Receiving Key Income Benefits, 2004 (%)<sup>100</sup>**

	<b>Receiving Key Income Benefits</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	15
<b>Local Authority</b>	12
<b>Mossbank</b>	31

**Table 2.12: Working Age Population on Unemployment Claimant Count in Receipt of Income Benefit, Severe Disability Allowance, or Compulsory New Deal Participants, 2002 (%)<sup>101</sup>**

	<b>Receiving IB, SDA or Compulsory New Deal Participants</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	13.8
<b>Local Authority</b>	10.3
<b>Mossbank</b>	19.4

<sup>99</sup> Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics. The data relating to Mossbank is a very close fit to the regeneration area.

<sup>100</sup> Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics.

<sup>101</sup> Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics.

**Table 2.13: Population by Occupation, 2001 (%)<sup>102</sup>**

	<b>Managerial and Professional</b>	<b>Administrative and Secretarial</b>	<b>Skilled Trades</b>	<b>Semi-skilled and Service</b>	<b>Unskilled</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	36.99	12.73	12.18	25.43	12.67
<b>Local Authority</b>	34.80	11.19	14.86	25.82	13.32
<b>Mossbank</b>	15.03	6.50	17.05	38.00	23.38

**Table 2.14: Approximated Social Grade, 2001 (%)<sup>103</sup>**

	<b>AB</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>C2</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	18.96	26.56	14.58	17.50	22.41
<b>Local Authority</b>	18.09	26.73	17.26	17.06	20.85
<b>Mossbank</b>	4.7	14.97	22.46	28.50	29.34

**Table 2.15: Limiting Long Term Illness or Disability Amongst Adults (%)<sup>104</sup>**

	<b>Long Term Illness or Disability</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	23.3
<b>Local Authority</b>	16.7
<b>Mossbank</b>	24.1

Although not a direct sign of deprivation, Table 2.9 reveals that in terms of tenure, many more households in Mossbank are rented than is the norm for Scotland and the local authority: tenants in council houses in Mossbank seem less likely to buy their council houses. Perhaps they cannot afford to do this; or perhaps they do not want to ‘invest’ in a ‘discouraged’ area such as Mossbank. Table 2.10, shows that the majority of houses in Mossbank fall within council tax band A, the band for the lowest valued properties. Across Scotland and the local authority, such houses are in the minority. Tables 2.11 and 2.12 show that the number of people receiving state benefits is higher than the national

<sup>102</sup> UK Census.

<sup>103</sup> UK Census.

<sup>104</sup> UK Census.

and local authority averages. Tables 2.13 shows that residents of Mossbank in paid employment tend to have semi-skilled or unskilled jobs, and this trend is mirrored by the inclusion of the majority of residents into C2, D and E socio-economic groups, indicated in Table 2.14. Overall, Tables 2.9 to 2.14 indicate that the socio-economic profile of the residents of Mossbank, in comparison to Scotland and the local authority, is, to use a shorthand term, predominantly ‘working class’. Table 2.15 shows that the number of adults in Mossbank with long term illness or disability generally matches figures for the local authority and for Scotland as a whole. The issue of ill health and disability in relation to democratic engagement is discussed in Chapter 6.

**Table 2.16: Education and Training Qualifications Amongst Mossbank Residents<sup>105</sup>**

	<b>Number</b>
<b>None</b>	16
<b>School Level</b>	9
<b>College Level</b>	14
<b>University Degree</b>	4
<b>Other</b>	4
<b>No Answer</b>	3

**Table 2.17: Personal Annual Income Amongst Mossbank Residents.<sup>106</sup>**

	<b>Number</b>
<b>Over £20 000</b>	2
<b>Less than £20 000 but more than £16 000</b>	2
<b>Less than £16 000 but more than £10 000</b>	6
<b>Less than £10 000 but more than £4 000</b>	9
<b>No personal Income</b>	6
<b>Up to £4 000</b>	5
<b>Did Not Wish to Answer Question</b>	13
<b>No Answer</b>	7

<sup>105</sup> Data derived from questionnaires distributed to Mossbank residents.

<sup>106</sup> Data derived from questionnaires distributed to Mossbank residents

Data from the questionnaires, referring to education and income, add to this picture and are shown in tables 2.16 and 2.17.<sup>107</sup> In Table 2.16, almost a third of respondents stated they had no formal educational qualifications. Although many respondents did not wish to divulge their income, the data presented in Table 2.17, is still able to show a clear trend towards incomes of below £16 000 a year. The link between socio-economic factors and engagement with, and inclusion in, democratic institutions and processes within Mossbank is explored in Chapter 6.

#### - Cast of Characters

The above data goes some of the way to describing the population of Mossbank. However, it lacks depth and detail; the people of Mossbank remain anonymous. Understanding democratic engagement in Mossbank requires some individuals to stand forward, to make their views known, to have their actions, motivations, and meanings scrutinised. These residents feature prominently in the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Here I introduce - in effect, describe - these individuals in the form of mini-biographies. These biographies, contained in Figure 2.1, serve at least three purposes. Firstly, they contribute to my descriptive account by focussing on the individuals who 'represent' the people of Mossbank in the research, whose voices make up much of the raw data that I analyse.<sup>108</sup> Secondly, although I occasionally remind the reader of pertinent details of individuals during my analysis, this summary acts as a point of reference. Thirdly, the information provided here can help to strengthen the credibility of the research, by helping to establish and maintain a close link between the setting and the analysis.

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<sup>107</sup> Data relating to actual household or individual income, and levels of education are not available from the census data or from SIMD.

<sup>108</sup> The issue of the actual 'representativeness' of this set of individuals is discussed in Chapter 3.

**Figure 2.1: Cast of Characters: Mini-Biographies**

**Andrew**

Andrew is Scottish by birth but was brought up in England. He came to Mossbank about 18 months ago with his partner and young family. He is self-employed in the catering trade. He has some involvement with the residents' association as a volunteer. Andrew also helps out with the street football project, described in Chapter 7. Andrew likes living in Mossbank, at least in relation to where he has lived before.

**Audrey**

Audrey, who is in her late fifties or early sixties, has lived with her husband in a council house in Mossbank for 18 years. She works as a part time cleaner. Although she no longer has any direct involvement in the residents' association, she has attended public meetings and took part in the consultation exercise organised in the early days of the regeneration initiative.

**Carol**

During my time data collecting in Mossbank, Carol moved from a privately rented house in Mossbank to one of the new houses appearing as part of the regeneration initiative. Carol and her husband have lived in Mossbank for about 10 years. She is not in paid employment but identifies herself as a 'volunteer'. She has previous experience of working in voluntary neighbourhood organisations gained before moving to Mossbank. Carol is the secretary of the residents' association management committee, a position she has held since first joining the committee on its formation in 2002. Carol is very active in the 'behind the scenes' activities of the residents' association and management committee, spending much of her free time in the Drop-in Shop.

**Craig**

Craig has lived in Mossbank as a council tenant for twenty years. He is unable to work due to ill health. Craig has no current involvement in the activities of the residents' association. He has, however, been a member of the pre-residents' association steering group but left as his sense of disillusionment over delays and the role of the local authority grew.



Daniel

Daniel has acted as the vice chairperson of the residents' association management committee since its inception in 2002. He is married to Sandra another committee member. Before joining the committee, Daniel had no experience of committee membership. Daniel and Sandra have lived in Mossbank for 10 years, moving to Duncairn from the countryside. They are home owners.

Hazel

Hazel has lived in Mossbank all of her life, about 33 years, and now lives with her partner and child in an ex-council house that they have bought. She works part-time as a sales assistant. Hazel has been the prime mover in the organisation of a petition to 'save' Balquhiddar Road play park from house building. Before and since this period of activism, Hazel has had no other substantive engagement with the regeneration initiative or the residents' association, arguing that her immediate neighbourhood - a part of the regeneration area - does not require regeneration.

Jordan

Jordan is retired and has lived in Mossbank for 37 years, residing at three different addresses over the years. He and his wife are local authority tenants. Jordan has had no involvement with the residents' association, although he has attended public meetings held in the early days of the regeneration project.

Katie

Katie has been a general member of the management committee since 2004. She is retired and lives in a council house with her husband. She has lived in Mossbank for 27 years.

Lucy

Lucy is retired and has lived in Mossbank for 26 years. She sees Mossbank as quite a good area to live in. Due to a physical disability, Lucy is unable to leave her home easily. She has had no involvement with the residents' association or management committee.

Paul

Paul has lived in Mossbank for most of his life, some 52 years. He is active in many committees and organisations in Duncairn, including the community council. He has been chairperson of the Mossbank residents' association management committee since its inception in 2002. Due to ill health, his attendance at committee meetings has been sporadic. However, despite this he has still managed to remain one of the most active committee members. The extent of these activities, coupled with his ownership of a successful business, make him an atypical Mossbank resident.

Randall

Randall has been a member of the management committee since it began in 2002. He is retired and has lived in Mossbank for over 40 years. The physical regeneration of Mossbank is of especial interest to Randall because his flat is due to be demolished and negotiations are underway to find him and his wife new accommodation in a newly built house in Mossbank. Randall takes an active part in discussions during the committee meetings but has less to do with its activities between meetings.

Sandra

Sandra is married to Daniel, the vice chairperson. She has been a committee member since 2004. The extent of Sandra's involvement in the activities of the committee is largely limited to attending the monthly meetings.

Vicky

Vicky is a mature university student and has lived in Mossbank for 9 years. She is a relatively new member of the committee, having joined in 2005. Vicky attends the monthly meetings but has little else to do with the work of the committee.

Volunteer A

Volunteer A is the most active of the volunteer helpers involved with the residents' association. She is an enthusiastic helper at events ranging from childrens' parties to fund raising events.

Member A

Member A has been a member of the management committee for most of its existence. She is a general member who has little to do with the organisation of the committee outwith the meetings. During the committee meetings, Member A is quite talkative.

Member B

Throughout the existence of the management committee, Member B has sat on the committee, except for a short period in 2004 when he resigned. Member B has little to do with the running of the management committee and residents' association in between meetings.

Plot

Here I want to prepare the way for my analysis by describing the development and structure of the Mossbank regeneration initiative and the related democratic institutions and processes in Mossbank. This can be approached by first focussing on the wider political and policy context relating to the idea of regeneration as it has developed in the United Kingdom and post-devolution Scotland. Secondly, the structure of the regeneration initiative in Mossbank itself can be described. The broader context should not be separated from the Mossbank regeneration initiative and the attempts to create and develop institutions and processes that give residents a presence in the regeneration partnership.

- The Policy and Political Landscape

The idea of engaging affected parties in micro level democratic decision making processes is a relatively new development in Scottish and United Kingdom politics and policy making. In this section, the development of this trend is traced. I have chosen to focus primarily on post 1997 developments, taking in recent trends in grassroots, 'stakeholder' engagement associated with New Labour and Scottish devolution. But it is still necessary to begin with a brief summary of the wider political and policy making

approach to engagement of affected parties in small scale settings prior to 1997. I round off my discussion of the wider policy and political landscape in which Mossbank exists with an account of the stock transfer process.

- *The Landscape Before 1997*. The Royal Commission on Local Government in Scotland of 1969 - also known as the Wheatley Report - recognised the need for, and benefits of, involving local people in decision making processes. However, throughout the 1970s, initiatives such as Neighbourhood Councils and Joint Area Housing Committees, tended to be little more than ‘the payment of “lip service” to public participation’.<sup>109</sup> Other concerns such as, assuaging public hostility to industrial decline, financial cutbacks and reductions in local services, motivated governments to set up such projects.<sup>110</sup>

In Scotland, in the 1980s and 1990s new participative initiatives of a more meaningful nature were launched. The motives for these initiatives can be linked to conflict between central (Conservative) and local government (most Labour controlled). On the one hand, central administrations were keen to control the power of Scottish local authorities by directly involving ‘local people’ in, for instance, school boards, housing co-operatives and postal ballots. Local authorities also consulted local people, using postal ballots, for example, to assist in their arguments for the maintenance of local authority spending and services.<sup>111</sup> In both cases, the driving force is ‘political’ and pragmatic, and less to do with a genuine interest in developing democratic processes along participative lines. With the coming to power of the ‘new’ Labour government in 1997, and the introduction of a devolved Scottish Parliament a few years later, came changes in the political and policy making landscape, not least in relation to ideas of engagement.

- *New Labour and Scottish Devolution*. The New Labour government, on coming to power in 1997, saw local area based regeneration initiatives as important in its aim to combat deep seated social exclusion. Within these initiatives there was an increased

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<sup>109</sup> McConnell (2004), p123.

<sup>110</sup> Foley and Martin (2000), pp480-482.

<sup>111</sup> McConnell (2004), p123.

willingness to involve local residents.<sup>112</sup> These trends are echoed in the policies of the Scottish Executive. Indeed, the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament carried with it a broad ‘vision entailing the transformation of the political process in Scotland to make it more open, transparent, inclusive, consultative and participatory’.<sup>113</sup> The development of area based initiatives designed to deal with social exclusion form the current political and policy context in which the Mossbank regeneration initiative exists. Once again, enhancing democratic participation has not been the main motivation. Instead, other concerns are more noticeable, including dealing with social exclusion, the development of ‘joined up’ and evidence based policy making, making local authorities more responsive and accountable to residents, and ‘modernising’ the image of local authorities. These trends are closely tied up with a shift away from ‘governing’ towards ‘multi-level governance’, a term used to describe an approach to problem solving and policy implementation in which government works in ‘partnership’ with other agencies and groups with relevant knowledge and experience.

*Governance.*<sup>114</sup> Governance, in relation to local, small scale contexts, focuses on ‘new combinations of markets, hierarchies and networks; the opening up of decision-making to greater participation; [...] and decentralisation and devolution’.<sup>115</sup> The expertise, specialist knowledge, resources and capacities of groups and individuals in communities is increasingly recognised by policy makers. However, the extent to which local people have been able to engage and be included in governance networks and partnerships is open to question. Ideas about power ‘flowing’ between partners stand in contrast to actual difficulties of gaining access and having a voice.<sup>116</sup> Shifts towards multi-level governance, irrespective of the results of this trend, have resulted in the rise of rhetoric and frameworks built around the idea of ‘partnerships’.<sup>117</sup>

*Partnership Working.* Notions of partnership working focus on reducing ‘bureaucratic

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<sup>112</sup> Taylor (2007), pp298-299.

<sup>113</sup> Bonney (2003), pp459-460, see also McMillan (2001), pp36-38.

<sup>114</sup> Newman (2001). Governance, in the context of this thesis, is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

<sup>115</sup> Taylor (2007), p300.

<sup>116</sup> Taylor (2007), p300.

<sup>117</sup> Sterling (2005), p141.

and professional power, [and] promoting decentralisation and participation from private, voluntary and community sectors as well as ordinary citizens'.<sup>118</sup> Partnerships are, nevertheless, still definable as 'relatively formalised arrangement[s] between two or more organisations in order to achieve a specific set of objectives'.<sup>119</sup> Partnerships, reflecting developments in governance, tend to become associated with 'collaboration' (even when such attempts are unsuccessful or token in nature), specific spaces or geographical areas (such as neighbourhoods, villages and local authority areas, reflecting trends in governance towards 'place identity and place quality'), and 'bottom up' participation.<sup>120</sup>

The link between partnership working, and participation and democratic accountability is complex and ambiguous, not least because partnership arrangements tend to operate separately from established democratic institutions and processes and may be primarily focussed on 'managing'.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, goals such as capacity building, increasing reserves of social capital, and empowerment can, as Mayo and Taylor (2001) observe, fall by the wayside as the partnership 'becomes increasingly unequal as time goes by and partners settle back into role'.<sup>122</sup> Those individuals and groups within the orbit of partnership arrangements with limited capacities to engage in partnership working processes, who are disempowered, and who possess low reserves of social capital (especially in relation to trust and networks) may find themselves, to a greater or lesser extent, sidelined. Issues also arise concerning views of 'the community' as a homogeneous entity (represented by the 'willing few', the 'usual suspects', local elites, or associations) versus concerns about integrating different voices and interests from within that 'community' into partnership working frameworks.<sup>123</sup> In Scotland, and across the United Kingdom, involving local communities in partnership arrangements is incorporated into political and policy making through 'community planning'.

*Community Planning.* Community planning is one aspect of central government's reform

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<sup>118</sup> Mayo and Taylor (2001), p39.

<sup>119</sup> Sterling (2005), p139.

<sup>120</sup> Sterling (2005), pp142-147.

<sup>121</sup> Sterling (2005), pp140, and 146-147.

<sup>122</sup> Mayo and Taylor (2001), p39.

<sup>123</sup> Sterling (2005), p146.

agenda for local government. More specifically, these ‘broad community well-being strategies’ are ‘designed to act as a bridge or interface between the “bottom-up” community responses to tackling community well-being issues, and the “top-down” broad policy agenda set by Government’.<sup>124</sup> The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 makes it a statutory duty of local authorities to adopt community planning as a ‘process to ensure greater engagement from communities in the planning and delivery of services and to secure effective joint working between agencies in promoting the well-being of communities’.<sup>125</sup> In other words, community planning encapsulates this shift towards government wishing to be seen to be committed to involving local communities, however genuine and meaningful it may actually turn out to be, in policy making and implementation.

In Scotland, as well as in the United Kingdom, the rhetoric associated with the regeneration of ‘discouraged’ / ‘distressed’ urban areas reflects the trends described above: in policy documents and official statements terms such as “community”, “participation”, “empowerment”, “inclusion” and “partnership” appear repeatedly.<sup>126</sup> However, rather than driving towards more participatory processes, the primary goal is to ‘manage’ the network of interested and affected parties, including those who live in the areas undergoing regeneration. As McWilliams *et al* (2004) comment in relation to Social Inclusion Partnerships - a comment that is relevant to other urban regeneration programmes - ‘[i]t is most noticeable that existing power structures and decision making processes did not change’.<sup>127</sup> Mossbank residents have access to the regeneration partnership board, but the extent to which they have a genuine influence is less certain.<sup>128</sup>

- *Stock Transfer*. There is another policy related aspect of the regeneration initiative that I want to mention - stock transfer. This policy has been developed across the United Kingdom, including Scotland.<sup>129</sup> The relevance of this policy to Mossbank, particularly

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<sup>124</sup> Robertson (2001), pp68-69.

<sup>125</sup> Scottish Executive (2002), p2.

<sup>126</sup> McWilliams *et al* (2004), p314.

<sup>127</sup> McWilliams *et al* (2004), p315.

<sup>128</sup> Although some residents, especially members of the management committee, expressed views on this subject which tended to support my contention, it is an issue that falls outwith the scope of this research.

<sup>129</sup> Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the term ‘housing transfer’ is used. Office of the Deputy Prime

regarding issues of engagement, is described in more detail later in the chapter. Stock transfer, as an outcome, refers to the transference of local authority housing to ‘not for profit’ registered social landlords (RSLs).<sup>130</sup> As a process, it refers to affected tenants being at the centre of decision making, climaxing in a ballot to decide whether a transfer should go ahead.<sup>131</sup>

‘Community ownership’ (an alternative term for stock transfer, particularly noticeable in official documents), according to Communities Scotland, is claimed to be a way of ‘empowering tenants [through] effective tenant involvement in key decisions’.<sup>132</sup> This discourse of ‘empowerment’ and tenant involvement is repeated by the Scottish Executive. Scottish Executive documents state that the tenant is placed ‘at the heart of investment decisions’ in a ‘tenant-led approach’, and tenant involvement ‘attract[s] lenders who know [tenant involvement] has a track record of success’.<sup>133</sup>

To some, this paints too rosy a picture of tenant involvement in stock transfer / community ownership. Critics question its participatory and democratic credentials. The trades union UNISON, as well as raising concerns of direct relevance to its members, highlights concerns about the democratic, participatory and representative implications of successful stock transfers.<sup>134</sup> The campaign group ‘Defend Council Housing’ highlights similar concerns that ‘[t]he transfer of council housing to a Registered Social Landlord [...] means [...] a less democratic housing service’.<sup>135</sup> Both critics and advocates of stock transfer / community ownership tend to focus on the outcome and subsequent developments and less on the process leading towards the deciding ballot.

The development of stock transfer as a policy lies in concerns regarding financing the

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Minister (2004), section 1, paragraph 2.

<sup>130</sup> The RSLs are housing associations or housing cooperatives able to access sources of private finance, which they use to pay for the buying and future maintenance of their housing stock.

<sup>131</sup> Although I have never seen it referred to as such in any Scottish Executive or Communities Scotland literature, I see the stock transfer proposal as essentially an exercise in direct democracy, akin to a referendum or plebiscite.

<sup>132</sup> Communities Scotland (2005b).

<sup>133</sup> Scottish Executive (2000a), pp1-3.

<sup>134</sup> UNISON (2005)

<sup>135</sup> Defend Council Housing.



maintenance of public sector housing. In Scotland, the Scottish Housing Quality Standard sets out minimum standards relating to the quality of socially rented housing stock, and local authorities and RSLs are expected to satisfy this standard by 2015. Local authorities have three options when considering how to conform to this standard: they can keep control of their housing stock ('a retention strategy delivering the SHQS within a prudential regime'), decide to transfer some of their housing stock (a 'mixed retention and partial transfer strategy'), and they can decide to transfer all their housing stock ('whole transfer to community ownership').<sup>136</sup> Scottish Executive housing policy has made the transfer of council housing, whether wholesale or partial, to RSLs the preferred option for improving the quality of rented housing.<sup>137</sup> It is the second option that relates to the Mossbank regeneration initiative. In Scotland, stock transfer has usually been aimed at larger numbers of local authority houses, often involving the totality of a local authority's housing stock. Communities Scotland favours a stock transfer / community ownership route as '[o]ne of the most effective means for councils with high rents and high investment needs to secure the resources to deliver the SHQS and to meet other housing need[s] in their areas'.<sup>138</sup> The physical regeneration of Mossbank thus becomes inextricably linked to the policy of stock transfer.

In the pre-ballot stage, guidance from Communities Scotland stresses that tenants should be given the 'information necessary to make an informed choice at the ballot'. This information should be 'reinforced at regular intervals and [should be] presented in clear and easily understood language'. Stress is placed on consultation material being 'measured and balanced' - '[t]he council should explain why it supports transfer but tenants must be given sufficient accurate information to enable them to decide whether they agree with the council'.<sup>139</sup> The guidance also gives an indication of the role of 'representative organisations' in this stage of the process. Such organisations are to be involved in 'a forum for the exchange of ideas with the council and the receiving RSL', but this should

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<sup>136</sup> Communities Scotland (2005<sup>a</sup>), section 1, paragraph 4. See also Scottish Executive (2000<sup>a</sup>), p2 for more on the 'need for investment' in improving 'the condition of much of the municipal housing stock in Scotland [...] through the efforts of the housing association movement, combining public and private investment with community control under non-profit landlords'.

<sup>137</sup> Communities Scotland (2005a).

<sup>138</sup> Communities Scotland (2005a), section 1, paragraph 6.

<sup>139</sup> Communities Scotland (2005a), section 3, paragraph 2.

not be in place of ‘the regular provision of information by the council and the receiving RSL to all tenants whose homes are included in the proposal’.<sup>140</sup> An ‘independent tenants’ adviser’ (ITA) has to be appointed to oversee the pre-ballot process. The ITA is to ‘provide independent advice on the whole range of issues surrounding a transfer to all tenants whose homes are included in a transfer proposal’. Tenant representatives have a role in the appointment of the ITA.<sup>141</sup>

Aspects of the wider political and policy landscape that relate most closely to the democratic institutions and processes in Mossbank have been outlined. Policies relating to regeneration, whether physical or social, increasingly adopt rhetoric, and to a degree, processes that place affected parties closer to policy making than was previously the case. Regeneration is, furthermore, increasingly associated with specific areas and spaces below that of traditional democratic governance. Such projects tend to be administered through partnership arrangements with residents as one of the partners. These political and policy developments hint only broadly at the structure and development of Mossbank’s regeneration initiative and democratic institutions and processes. What is going on in Mossbank?

#### - The Mossbank Regeneration Initiative

For sometime after its initial appearance, the housing scheme of Mossbank had a reputation as a desirable area in which to live. However, decline set in, although views differ as to when this actually started. It is clear, however, that by the 1990s Mossbank had deteriorated both physically and socially because of long term under investment and neglect, industrial decline (leading to unemployment), and the rise of alcohol and drug misuse within the area. An official recognition of Mossbank’s continuing physical and social decline and the beginnings of a sustained attempt to alter this state of affairs can be traced back to late 1999 and early 2000: this marks the conception of the Mossbank regeneration initiative. This event, and other landmarks in the development of the

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<sup>140</sup> Communities Scotland (2005<sup>a</sup>), section 3, paragraph 4.

<sup>141</sup> Communities Scotland (2000<sup>a</sup>), section 3, paragraphs 16-19. See also Scottish Executive (2000<sup>b</sup>), pp9-10.

regeneration initiative, are shown in Table 2.18.

- *Towards a Regeneration Partnership and Residents' Association.* By January 2000, the 'Hermiston Issues Group' had been established. It was composed of senior Council officers tasked with examining how a partnership approach could be used to address the decline of the Mossbank area. This group first raised the idea of a regeneration partnership. By the beginning of 2001 the group had been renamed the 'Mossbank Area Regeneration Group'.<sup>142</sup> Tentative contacts with the residents of Mossbank start at this time with the 'Hermiston Street Survey' and informal discussions with a number of residents and 'key' individuals, most notably Paul.<sup>143</sup>

**Table 2.18: Dateline for the Mossbank Regeneration Initiative**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Comments</b>
January 2000	'Hermiston Issues Group' established	A group within the local authority
Early 2001	'Mossbank Area Regeneration Group' established	The beginning of the regeneration partnership
Early 2002	Formation of the Residents' Steering Group	This informal, <i>ad hoc</i> group superseded by the residents' association and management committee
Mid 2002	Employment of a Community Development Worker	
September 2002	'Mossbank Residents' Association' constituted	
October 2002	First Issue of the Residents' Association Newsletter	
October 2003	Constitution of a Tenants' Subgroup	Due to lack of interest this group did not ever form
November 2004	Constitution of 'Mossbank First'	December 2005: still awaiting notification of charitable status
October 2005	'Mossbank and Newlands Residents' Association' constituted	Officially constituted at the first Mossbank and Newlands residents' association AGM

<sup>142</sup> The change from Hermiston to Mossbank is another example of the elasticity and flexibility of place names, including 'Mossbank' that I encountered. This is discussed earlier in the chapter.

<sup>143</sup> Paul's involvement at this early stage is explored in Chapter 6.

The Mossbank Area Regeneration Group established a partnership between the local authority, Guthrie Housing Association and Scottish Homes<sup>144</sup>. At this point, the emphasis was on *physical* regeneration through stock transfer to finance the construction of new houses. By early 2002, the scope of the regeneration had widened to take in environmental, health and economic issues. The membership of the partnership gradually grew to take in, amongst other organisations, the local police, the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Drummond Housing Association, another housing association with property in Mossbank. However, there was no formal place for Mossbank residents. At this point, the partnership employed consultants to elicit residents' views, through a consultation exercise, regarding options for the regeneration of Mossbank. In Chapter 7, I compare aspects of this exercise with ongoing democratic processes in Mossbank. Additionally, a community development worker (CDW) is employed. The community development worker eventually became based in a newly acquired shop in Mossbank - the 'Drop-in Shop'. The role of the CDW originally involved working closely with the residents as a guide and adviser in matters relating to the regeneration of the area and the partnership. Overtime, this role has developed in ways made clear in Chapter 6.

By the beginning of 2003, a formal place had been made within the partnership structure for Mossbank residents. This brought into being the Mossbank residents' association, formally constituted later that year. The residents are represented on the partnership board by a management committee made up of members of the residents' association.<sup>145</sup> In practice, the local authority, particularly the Housing Department, and Guthrie Housing Association are the leading members of the partnership. The other members of the partnership, though formally members of the partnership, have relatively peripheral roles in the development of the regeneration. The partnership board meet formally usually once each month. Between these meetings, a more regular, frequent and informal relationship has developed between the more active members of the management committee and the CDW, and individuals within the local authority Housing Department and Guthrie

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<sup>144</sup> Scottish Homes has been superseded by Communities Scotland an agency of the Scottish Executive which, amongst other roles, 'work[s] with others to ensure decent housing and strong communities throughout Scotland' also had a presence in the partnership, Communities Scotland (2005a)

<sup>145</sup> Newsletter: issues 1 (October 2002) and 4 (April 2003). The residents' association newsletter is discussed later in this chapter.

Housing Association. This takes the form of a steady stream of communication between these individuals / organisations through letters, telephone conversations and e-mails. On occasion, members of the Housing Department may visit the Drop-in Shop. On the surface, this may seem to indicate a close and inclusive relationship between residents' representatives (management committee members) and key individuals and organisations in the regeneration partnership. However, it is a relationship that has gone through periods of friction and discord. Most significantly, members of the management committee have noted occasions when they have felt excluded from the decision making process despite their formal 'seat at the table'. There is a strong sense that for all parties, being part of the regeneration partnership is a new experience (as much for the local authority as for the residents) and that relationships and roles are still being negotiated. Not least, this refers to the position and status of the residents within the partnership.

Following on from this broad description of the development of the regeneration initiative and the residents' association, I want to focus on certain aspects or 'sub-plots' - arenas, places and events - that are particularly relevant to questions of democratic engagement *within* Mossbank.

- *The Residents' Association*. Originally, the membership of the residents' association matched the boundaries of the regeneration area. All members of the regeneration area of 14 years of age and over became members of the association.<sup>146</sup> At the 2003 AGM of the residents' association, membership of the association was revised to take in 'people living in the local area'.<sup>147</sup>

Membership is imposed on the residents: '[i]f you live in the regeneration area, you are a member of the association'.<sup>148</sup> Thus, all residents are formally members of the association, each with an 'equal' opportunity to become involved in its activities. There is no provision for 'opting out' of membership. Overtime, the imposition of membership has expanded outwith the boundaries of the regeneration initiative. The first expansion

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<sup>146</sup> Newsletter: issue 4 (April 2003).

<sup>147</sup> Residents' association constitution.

<sup>148</sup> Newsletter: issue 4 (April 2003).

took in Heriot Crescent and Howard Avenue, two streets of fairly new, privately owned houses adjacent to the regeneration area. The second expansion, resulting in the creation of the 'Mossbank and Newlands Residents' Association', effectively doubled the size of the association through the addition of the Newlands area. I have chosen not to explore the process leading up to this larger expansion for two main reasons. Firstly, I want my study to remain focussed on Mossbank and the regeneration. Secondly, although I have collected data relating to the process, especially through documents and observation, there is insufficient space for an adequate discussion.

The formal scope and nature of the residents' association is defined by its constitution. Throughout the existence of the residents' association and changes to its constitution, the essential aims and objectives of the association remain unaltered. These core aims are presented in Figure 2.2. How these core aims - 'unity' and 'representation' in particular - are actually manifested in Mossbank are explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Figure 2.2: The Core Aims of the Mossbank Residents' Association.**<sup>149</sup>

- 'To safeguard and promote the interests of members on matters concerning housing and the environment of the area.'
- 'To provide a united voice for all [Mossbank] residents.'
- 'To represent [Mossbank] residents on specific issues.'
- 'To uphold equal opportunities and work towards good relations amongst all members of the community, specifically prohibiting any conduct, which discriminates or harasses on the grounds of race, religion, disability, political, sex or sexual orientation.'

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<sup>149</sup> Residents' association constitution: paragraph 2.

As members of the residents' association, residents are formally entitled to attend AGMs, to put themselves forward as prospective management committee members, and to vote in elections of management committee members and 'on any recommendations / motions and any amendments to the Constitution'.<sup>150</sup> The constitution gives no guidance as to the form and conduct of AGMs. I have chosen to describe the AGMs in Chapter 6 alongside my analysis of representation in Mossbank as I see them as important sites of authorisation and accountability.

The development of the residents' association in Mossbank has resulted in the creation of other subsidiary or parallel organisations, associations and objects. I introduce these below. With the exception of the management committee and newsletter, these have a minor part in my analysis. However, as my account shows, they help to highlight the growth and development of the residents' association.

- *The Management Committee.* According to the residents' association constitution, the management committee's role is 'to carry out the business of the association'. The constitution stipulates the formal nature and scope of the committee: it 'shall meet not less than 8 times per year, in addition to the Annual General Meeting'; it can 'invite members or non-members [...] as advisers'; is structured along 'traditional' lines, with office bearers - a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer - and 'up to 10 general members'. Committee members serve for two years before having to resign and seek reauthorisation. The management committee is ostensibly an elected body, with elections held at each AGM.<sup>151</sup> However, in practice, no elections have been required. So far, those who have nominated themselves for membership of the committee have not been opposed.

The committee usually meets on the first Thursday of each month in the evening, each member having previously been supplied with an agenda. The committee occasionally

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<sup>150</sup> Residents' association constitution.

<sup>151</sup> Residents' association constitution. At the November 2005 AGM of the residents' association a change to the constitution was approved that increased the maximum size of the management committee from 14 to 20 members. This was due to the incorporation of Newlands, an adjacent part of the town, into the residents' association.

invites guests, most usually non-residents, to their meetings, sometimes to give advice, but more often to give information. The meetings are held in the Drop-in Shop. This is quite a small space for 14 adults to occupy. Drawing mainly on my observations of these meetings, I can make some general comments on the conduct of these meetings that presage my analysis, in Chapter 7, of the relationship between conduct and engagement. The meetings vary in duration depending on the items on the agenda and the extent of discussion in the meeting. Of the meetings I observed, the shortest was one hour twenty minutes and the longest was over two and a half hours long. The average duration of the meetings I observed was one hour forty six minutes. Even though the committee has a formal structure (office bearers and general members), the meetings tend to be informal and generally relaxed. Only very rarely are comments addressed 'through the chair', for example. Usually, members talk directly to one another but this sometimes leads to occasions when members talk over one another.

Seven individuals have been members of the management committee since the inception of the residents' association in 2002. This can be viewed against a background of an otherwise fluctuating membership. Table 2.19 illustrates this fluctuation as a series of 'snapshots' taken at the committee's inception and at each subsequent AGM. The table also illustrates the proportion of men and women acting as office bearers. The degree to which this 'reflects' the membership of the residents' association is analysed in Chapter 6. The extent to which members participate in the work of the committee varies. Some are 'core' members taking on much of the behind the scenes activities, and decision making between meetings, whilst at the other extreme some do no more than attend meetings. I analyse these differing degrees of participation within the committee's membership in Chapter 6.

- *'Mossbank First'*. In order to enhance the fund raising capabilities of the residents' association the idea of a charitable arm developed, known as 'Mossbank First'. Progress towards a fully functioning charitable wing has been slow and by December 2005, charitable status was still pending. In the meantime, a separate constitution has been introduced, mainly with the aim of complying with Inland Revenue rules regarding the



awarding of charitable status. Although the constitution stipulates that Mossbank First's committee is non-elected, between its formation and the end of 2005, the management committee of the residents' association have also acted as the management committee of Mossbank First. From November 2005, the monthly meetings of Mossbank First have taken place immediately after the residents' association management committee meetings. In practical terms, the residents' association and Mossbank First are run by the same people - the management committee - or as I argue in Chapters 6, a core group within the committee.

**Table 2.19: Snapshots of Management Committee Membership at Inception and at AGMs**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Members (maximum: 14)</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Male Office Bearers</b>	<b>Female Office Bearers</b>
Sept. 2002	14	5	9	2	2
Oct. 2003	9	4	5	2	2
Oct. 2004	11	4	7	2	2
Oct. 2005	11	4	7	2	2

- *The Tenants' Subgroup*. In the summer of 2003, the management committee decided to encourage more tenants to become involved in the committee, particularly 'to discuss issues relating solely and exclusively to tenants of [Guthrie] Council', particularly the stock transfer process.<sup>152</sup> Following up on this, the launching of a tenants' subgroup has been attempted, but failed due to lack of interest. At the end of 2005, the provision for a tenant's subgroup is still part of the residents' association constitution, though there have been no discussions about trying once more to attract tenants. In Chapter 6, I analyse the extent to which the lack of council tenants on the committee affects the representation of tenants' needs and interests in relation to the stock transfer process and the development of Mossbank's regeneration in general.

- *Volunteers*. The management committee rely on a small group of volunteers (or

<sup>152</sup> Residents' association constitution.

'helpers' as they are sometimes called by members of committee) to assist in events and activities such as childrens' parties, catering at social events, helping out on the residents' association stall at local fairs and festivals, and so on. For most volunteers, for most of the time, it is an 'apolitical' relationship. These individuals do not take part in official decision making processes involving the organisation of these events. However, there is an underlying, subtle 'political' dimension at work, based on the importance of this practical help in the success of these activities. During my time gathering data in Mossbank, one such instance occurred involved 'Volunteer A' and I analyse this in Chapter 7.

- *The Residents' Association Newsletter*. The management committee produce a free residents' association newsletter, although the actual writing and decision making regarding content is largely left to the CDW and Carol, the secretary of the committee. Sometimes children are paid to deliver copies, on other occasions committee members and volunteers take on this task.<sup>153</sup> Between the creation of the residents' association in 2002 and December 2005 there have been 15 editions of the newsletter. The format has settled down to four sides of A4 sized paper. The newsletter is published four times a year and after issue nine, it has appeared in colour. The general style and content of the newsletter, before and after issue nine, has been consistent. The short articles always begin with a newspaper-style headline. Drawings / sketches and, since issue nine, photographs feature prominently. The content of the newsletters focuses on activities connected with the residents' association, the work of the management committee, and information about the progress of the regeneration initiative. The newsletter is the main channel of communication between the management committee and the members of the residents' association, supplemented, on occasion, by leaflet drops and letters. In Chapter 7, I analyse the newsletter and various flyers and letters as forms of communication within the context of democratic engagement.

- *Stock Transfer in Mossbank*. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the process of stock transfer as a product of the political and policy landscape of which Mossbank is part.

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<sup>153</sup> Fieldnotes.

Here I describe the ‘story’ of this process within Mossbank. A series of delays have slowed down the consultation process and progress towards the ballot. In particular, this relates to the distribution of information regarding the ‘offer’ that will be presented by the Guthrie Housing Association to the tenants. Dates for the stock transfer ballot - the climax of the process - have been continually put back: late 2004 or early 2005; summer 2005; March 2006 - by the end of 2005 there was certainty that the ballot would take place at this time.<sup>154</sup>

In April 2004 an ‘independent tenants’ adviser’ (ITA) was appointed by the management committee to oversee the process of stock transfer in Mossbank. The committee chose an organisation called the Tenants’ Information Service, an organisation ‘set up by tenants to provide information, advice and training for Scottish tenants and generally support the efforts of tenants to improve their housing circumstances’. This organisation has experience of overseeing stock transfer processes.<sup>155</sup> The ITA’s task of explaining and communicating the details of the ‘offer’ put forward by the RSL has been hindered by delays in the valuing of the local authority assets in Mossbank, and in the approach of the local authority to the process. The ITA’s attempts to begin the process of informing the council tenants have been, as a result, piecemeal. Up to December 2005, the ITA has carried out a number of door to door visits and two open meetings for tenants. I have chosen not to feature the stock transfer process to any extent in my analysis because of its lack of progress. However, given its existence within Mossbank and its function as a democratic decision making process, its importance in the long term future of the regeneration initiative, and as an ongoing issue within Mossbank, it has been necessary to include an account of stock transfer in Mossbank. Although not dealt with directly in my analysis it is frequently raised as an issue and topic within Mossbank

- *Unofficial Engagement.* So far, I have given the impression that the regeneration initiative and the residents’ association mark the boundaries of engagement in Mossbank: all residents who engage do so firmly with the ‘official’ opportunities and modes

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<sup>154</sup> I took these dates from the Residents Newsletter, issues 8 (February 2004), 11 (November 2004) and 13 (May 2005). To date there is still no sign of a date for the ballot

<sup>155</sup> Tenants’ Information Service.

presented to them. However, individuals sometimes opt for ‘unofficial’ forms of engagement. Here I highlight the most significant occurrence, the petition to ‘save’ Balquhiddel Road Park. Parks and open spaces have become a major issue in the regeneration initiative. Over time, this has focussed on one particular park, Balquhiddel Road Park. This park is roughly rectangular and just over 6 000m<sup>2</sup> in area. Public exhibitions of proposals for the future (physical) regeneration of the Mossbank area suggested the construction of houses on this park. This proposal triggered strongly felt opposition to the idea of house building on this park. Three hundred and fifty signatures were collected in a petition and sent off to the Director of Housing of Guthrie Council. In quite a short period a ‘play park strategy’ for the regeneration area became a ‘live’ topic.<sup>156</sup> Although relatively fleeting in duration, the effects of this petition have been far-reaching, focussing attention on one aspect of Mossbank - parks and open spaces - in a way that may not have otherwise been the case. For instance, plans have been made to develop Balquhiddel Road park as a ‘community park’.<sup>157</sup> Such occurrences act as a reminder that my exploration of engagement in Mossbank ventures beyond the residents’ association / management committee.

Whilst collecting data in Mossbank, I interviewed Hazel, the chief organiser of this petition. Her views of the regeneration initiative, her initial attempts to communicate her views to the management committee, her motivations for organising the petition, her perceptions of the results of her activities, and what happened after she had ‘saved’ the park were all captured in what I think is a particularly vivid interview.<sup>158</sup>

### Conclusion

Description is a necessary part of my thesis; it is a precursor to understanding. As Flick states, description ‘serves to provide the researcher with an orientation to the field under study and [...] is used to grasp the complexity of the field as far as possible and to

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<sup>156</sup> Newsletter: issues 3 (February 2003) and 5 (June 2003).

<sup>157</sup> Newsletter: issue 13 (May 2005).

<sup>158</sup> I use the word ‘saved’ with caution because the objections were based around proposals / suggestions, but the widely held perception was that these proposals represented actual plans.

develop at the same time more concrete [...] lines of vision'.<sup>159</sup> My rich and targeted description of Mossbank sets out the history and continuing story of Mossbank within the context of post-devolution Scotland. The account highlights the demographic and socio-economic profile of its residents contemporaneous with my period of data collecting. It describes the origins and ongoing development of the social and physical regeneration of Mossbank and the residents' association. Also highlighted is the existence of 'unofficial' forms of engagement, independent of the residents' association.

From here onwards, the focus of the thesis shifts from introduction and description to understanding. There are certain points raised in this chapter that should be remembered as the thesis unfolds. Firstly, the place, people and developments I have described are real. Behind the assumed names and statistics lie real people living in a 'discouraged' neighbourhood, experiencing and reacting to a long term regeneration initiative in different ways. Secondly, in Mossbank change is constant. Rather than analysing or understanding one event or one moment, my task involves examining a dynamic setting and the reactions to this ever changing scene. Thirdly, Mossbank does not exist in isolation, cut off from the outside world. No description of Mossbank, or understanding of 'democratic life' within its borders, can be completed without reference to the wider context. As well as the composition and 'character' of Mossbank and its residents, it is also necessary to bare in mind the wider context in which Mossbank is embedded. Within this chapter, I have highlighted the wider political and policy context 'imposed' on Mossbank and its residents. Other 'external' factors, concerned with democratic values and norms, and socio-economic resources are introduced in Chapter 4, and explored in my analysis (Chapters 6 and 7) and are integrated in to my conclusions (Chapter 8).

Mossbank is a place that one can drive past or through and hardly notice - just another housing scheme. Much of the detail is banal, lacking high drama or excitement. However, for the political researcher, the banal should not necessarily be written off as uninteresting and irrelevant.<sup>160</sup> Highlighting the banal and mundane tunes into everyday

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<sup>159</sup> Flick (2002), p140. Flick makes his comment in relation to 'descriptive observation' but his points are still applicable to description in general.

<sup>160</sup> Billig (1995) discusses the idea of 'banality' in relation to academic research in his study of the

life and experiences, and this is essential to the goals of this research project and the development of my thesis.

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reproduction of nationalism in everyday life. Furthermore, in the discipline of geography there is a small, but developing literature on 'banal and mundane spatialities' in relation to power and 'embodiment, performance, and affect'. Here it is argued that 'the mundane is often devalued' as 'a significant focus of inquiry', see, for example, Binnie *et al* (2007).

## Chapter 3

### Exploring Mossbank: Methodology, Methods and Data Analysis

In the preceding chapter, I described Mossbank. In this chapter, I discuss methodology and research methods in relation to my exploration of democratic engagement in Mossbank. ‘Methodology’ refers specifically to the study of ‘how research is done, or should be done, and to the critical analysis of methods of research’; ‘research methods’ relates to the practical ‘techniques or procedures used to collect and analyse data’.<sup>161</sup> I discuss methodology and research methods separately in order to justify and illuminate my research strategy in the clearest terms.

#### Methodological Backdrop

In Chapter 1, I state that the objective of this research is to *understand* democratic engagement in Mossbank. This objective begins to show the epistemological and ontological assumptions that guide my research strategy.<sup>162</sup> A discussion of these assumptions and how they affect my research strategy, including the objective of understanding, can begin at the level of ‘world views’. This may seem an abstruse starting point, but I agree with Marsh and Furlong when they argue that overlooking epistemological and ontological questions makes it more difficult to ‘distinguish between good and bad research and between good and bad arguments’.<sup>163</sup> Throughout this section, I link these discussions to my own research strategy to show that I regard an awareness of epistemological and ontological issues as essential in the foundations of ‘real-world’ research.

#### - World Views

There are a number of world views, but for reasons of brevity, I want to focus on positivism and social constructivism. Epistemologically and ontologically speaking, these world views stand opposed to one another. Positivist ontology views social reality as

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<sup>161</sup> Blaikie (2000), p8.

<sup>162</sup> Epistemology: how knowledge of social reality can be gained. Ontology: the nature of social reality. Blaikie (2000), p8.

<sup>163</sup> Marsh and Furlong (2002), p40.

existing outside of the individual. Universal generalisations derived from objective observation conceptualise social reality. Reality lies in what can be objectively observed and measured. Positivist epistemology assumes that ‘political scientists’ can only gain knowledge of reality through the senses, through ‘observation’. Such data can be used to test and validate theories and hypotheses. The goal is to establish universal and generalisable causal explanations, linking different social phenomena and events.<sup>164</sup>

Social constructivist epistemology ‘takes what Positivism [...] ignore[s] - the meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their everyday lives and that direct their behaviour - and it elevates them to the central place in social theory and research’. Gaining knowledge about this involves uncovering and describing - and ultimately re-interpreting - such data. Social reality, in the constructivist world view, is thus based on ‘the everyday beliefs and practices, mundane and taken for granted, which have to be grasped and articulated by the social researcher in order to provide an understanding of these actions’.<sup>165</sup> Constructivist ontology thus takes the intersubjective - the collective and shared - perceptions and views of social actors, their constructions of their social world, as the basis of social reality.<sup>166</sup> Social reality is based on the intersubjective, socially constructed knowledge, meanings, and institutions that form and structure social relationships.<sup>167</sup> Approaching this research from a social constructivist perspective places Mossbank residents at the centre of the analysis: the aim being to explore and *understand* democratic engagement from the ‘inside’, rather than from the ‘outside’, as positivist approaches do. The objective of understanding indicates, indeed requires, the adoption of a socially constructivist world view. Linked to my social constructivist approach is my adoption of a broadly ‘abductive’ research strategy.

#### - Research Strategy

The abductive research strategy operationalises a social constructivist approach to social and political research.<sup>168</sup> This close association is confirmed when the distinguishing

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<sup>164</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp 75 and 102, and Marsh and Furlong (2002), pp22-23.

<sup>165</sup> Blaikie (2000), p115.

<sup>166</sup> May (2001), p41.

<sup>167</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp115-116, and Marsh and Furlong (2002), pp26-27.

<sup>168</sup> Blaikie (2000), p114. This research strategy is rarely discussed in methodology and methods texts. Its



characteristics of the abductive approach are explored. Five, in particular, are worth mentioning. Firstly, the 'raw data', the accounts given to the researcher by the social actors, are expressed in the actors' own language. The data contain the concepts and ideas by which their social reality is structured. Secondly, it is assumed that 'much of the activity of social life is routine and is conducted in a taken-for-granted, unreflective manner'. Thirdly, it is only when forced or encouraged, by change or enquiries from social researchers that actors begin to think about how they construct, interpret, and understand their social reality. Fourthly, the researcher has the task of facilitating reflection on the part of the social actors in order to uncover further their constructions and interpretations. Finally, the researcher has to 'make sense' of these reflections, by first presenting and describing them and then constructing an understanding of these accounts utilising specialised language and concepts.<sup>169</sup>

Before I move on to discuss how these principles influence my research strategy and approaches to data collection, I would like to clarify an important point. It would be wrong to tie my research strategy too strongly to the abductive approach: it *broadly* follows an abductive strategy. Some aspects of my research, the use of non-participative observation, for example, do not fit comfortably within this ideal research strategy. The important point here is that my approach to researching democratic engagement in Mossbank is coherent and carefully planned, utilising in a discerning way a battery of data gathering tools. It is a *practical* application of the abductive strategy tailored to a specific context.

#### - Adopting Appropriate Language

Encouraging social actors to reflect on and communicate their perceptions and interpretations of their social world makes qualitative research methods - collecting raw data as words - invaluable.<sup>170</sup> Qualitative methods are particularly useful because they offer the best ways of capturing, in detail, social actors' views of their social world.<sup>171</sup>

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inclusion in my discussion makes a neat link between epistemological and ontological debates and the design and implementation of research strategies.

<sup>169</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp116-117.

<sup>170</sup> Blaikie (2000), p276.

<sup>171</sup> Harrison (2001), p79.

Since my research in Mossbank involves, for the most part, qualitative research methods, I wish to discuss some methodological issues regarding qualitative approaches focusing on language / terminology and the influence of positivist assumptions and principles.<sup>172</sup> There is also, within my research design, a small component of quantitative data gathering and it is necessary to justify this combination of data-as-words and data-as-numbers, again, in methodological terms.

The use of terminology that reflects the epistemological and ontological preoccupations of positivism in relation to evaluations of qualitative research methods is common, even when non-positivist or post-positivist approaches have been adopted. I have taken care to use language that fits with my constructivist approach. Using positivist language and, by doing so, adopting without question positivist preoccupations and assumptions can blunt the advantages of a social constructivist approach and abductive research strategy. To avoid such pitfalls, I have adopted a more appropriate set of terms. Table 3.1 presents such a vocabulary.

- *Credibility over Internal Validity*. Internal validity - whether a researcher is measuring what he or she claims to be measuring - is strongly associated with positivist outlooks and quantitative research methods.<sup>173</sup> 'Credibility', on the other hand, refers to the accurate description of the accounts derived from the social setting under study. Throughout data collection, analysis and interpretation, the research should remain 'credible' or close to the accounts derived from the social setting.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> My approaches to data collection are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>173</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp247-248.

<sup>174</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), p145, and Blaikie (2000), p247.

**Table 3.1: Equivalent Positivist and Constructivist Terminology<sup>175</sup>**

<b>Positivist Terminology</b>	<b>Constructivist Terminology</b>
Generalisability	Relatability
Internal validity	Credibility
Objectivity	Confirmability
Reliability	Dependability
Replication	Replicability

- *Dependability over Reliability.* Positivist notions of reliability, again common in quantitative approaches to research, assume an unchanging social world where replication of social research, if undertaken, is deemed unproblematic. The term ‘dependability’ reflects an alternative ontology of a dynamic, changing social world.<sup>176</sup> There is an emphasis on recording events, change, experiences and interpretations through a flexible research design. Dependability is in tension with the idea of replication: can research be replicated if the social world is so dynamic? Some advocates of qualitative methods see replication as inappropriate.<sup>177</sup> I agree that replication may be difficult. However, carrying out research that is *open to replicability* confronts this tension: research should be carried out as if replication were a distinct possibility. All aspects of the research process should be rigorously recorded and planned. Raw data should be, if possible, retained.<sup>178</sup>

- *Confirmability over Objectivity.* Positivist approaches consider objectivity on the part of the researcher, if not realisable, then a principle worth striving towards. The researcher, as far as possible, ought to separate their values and prejudices from the ‘facts’ and what

<sup>175</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), pp145-147, and Blaikie (2000), p222.

<sup>176</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), pp146-147.

<sup>177</sup> Blaikie (2000), p250. Blaikie also points out that actual replication of social research is rare.

<sup>178</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), p148, and Flick (2002), pp220-221.

is 'real'.<sup>179</sup> Constructivist epistemology rejects this traditional and widely accepted view of objectivity. In its place the term 'confirmability' can be used, which emphasises neutrality and whether other studies could confirm the findings. Measuring 'objectivity' shifts from the character of the researcher to the data.<sup>180</sup>

- *Relatability over Generalisability*. In Chapter 1, I defended my choice of Mossbank as my research locale. Related to this is the requirement to justify the adoption of a single case study as part of my research strategy. The notion of a case study refers to a bounded social unit viewed as a whole.<sup>181</sup> Although I agree with Stake when he argues that 'a case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied', a justification of this decision can, again, be made from a methodological perspective.<sup>182</sup>

There are two important and interlinked issues central to the usefulness of case studies, and these have a direct bearing on my decision to focus on one case. These issues are 'typicality' and 'generalisability' (or 'external validity'). Typicality relates to the choice of locale, whether or not the case is similar in certain aspects to other cases.<sup>183</sup> Generalisability has to do with extending or applying findings from the case to wider and more abstract contexts.<sup>184</sup>

To generalise by first seeking out a 'typical' case is inappropriate on two counts. Firstly, it is difficult to show that a case is in fact 'typical' and, secondly, typicality is not essential for the successful employment of case studies in research. In contrast to the seeking out of typical cases, I favour the use of a 'least likely' case.<sup>185</sup> A setting such as Mossbank, where, democratic engagement is considered to be less likely to flourish, highlights more readily barriers to democratic engagement and inclusion.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Sarantakos (2005), pp92-93.

<sup>180</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), p147, Sarantakos (2005), pp95-96.

<sup>181</sup> Blaikie (2000), p215.

<sup>182</sup> Stake (2000), p435.

<sup>183</sup> Blaikie (2000), p222.

<sup>184</sup> Flick (2002), pp230-232.

<sup>185</sup> Blaikie (2000), p222.

<sup>186</sup> What makes Mossbank a 'least likely' case is discussed in Chapter 2.

‘Transferability’, or ‘relatability’, are alternatives to generalising. Relatability can be left to others - the researcher’s audience and academia - and not the original researcher.<sup>187</sup> To a point this conclusion is reasonable, but the originator of the research has also, in my view, to do some of the work. It is as important to be able to transfer my findings to other relevant contexts - indeed this is crucial if I am to respond to my research questions. The researcher should attempt to relate his or her research to similar contexts and settings. This enhances the contribution of the research to academic debates and is altogether more appropriate to the logic of case studies.<sup>188</sup>

Mossbank as a case study is relatable to other relevant case studies and this is enhanced by my emphasis on ‘thick’ description - as presented in Chapter 2 - as an aid in the making of judgements about the ‘fit’ of my case to other contexts.<sup>189</sup> Thinking about case studies in terms of relatability instead of generalisability distances the researcher from positivist prejudices that favour quantitative and statistical approaches (such as used in surveys) that are actually inappropriate for case studies.<sup>190</sup>

In this section, I have highlighted my social constructivist world view and the influence this has had on my research strategy. Qualitative methods predominate, but I argue that there is space for quantitative research methods within a multi-method approach. Throughout this section, I have been consistent in my constructivist position (although I have not allowed this to limit my choice of data gathering methods - an issue I explore later in this chapter). This is most strongly felt in my reconfiguration of the language and terminology of research away from positivism and towards constructivist and qualitative preoccupations and expectations. The parallel themes of consistency and flexibility continue in the next section, where I present, discuss and justify the research methods that I employ in Mossbank.

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<sup>187</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), pp145-146.

<sup>188</sup> Blaikie (2000), p222 and Schofield (1993), p209.

<sup>189</sup> Schofield (1993), p210.

<sup>190</sup> Blaikie (2000), p223.

## Research Methods

Questionnaires, interviews, observation, and analysis of documents - all these feature in my *multi-method* approach to data gathering. Firstly, I discuss my use of a multi-method approach before moving on to outline how I have utilised each particular data collection method in my research.

### - Adopting a Multi-Method Approach

Saying that my research design is ‘multi-method’ suggests a number of questions. In what way is it multi-method? How do the methods combine? What advantages does a multi-method design bring? Each method, with the partial exception of the questionnaire, is concerned with the collection of qualitative data. Data gathering through questionnaires, interviews and non-participative observation - occurred in two main phases (after a small piloting of the questionnaire). This is summarised in Table 3.2. Each stage differs primarily in the sort of individuals in which I was interested. In Phase 1, I concentrated on gathering data from those who are least involved or who have a slight, episodic, or prior involvement in the democratic institutions and processes in Mossbank. In Phase 2, I focussed on those closest to the ‘official’ forms of democratic engagement, the members of the management committee. Within each of these phases, a two-stage design was followed, one following the other.<sup>191</sup>

In the first stage of Phase 1, I focussed on the distribution and initial analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from questionnaires. This initial stage began the process of raw data collection, but was also to an extent exploratory, preparing the way for the second stage. Data from the questionnaires, especially those derived from closed questions create a tension within my predominantly constructivist approach: the residents’ constructions remain unexplored. There is though, scope for ‘interpretation’.<sup>192</sup> For example, data derived from non-participative observation can be used to enhance, and contrast with the residents’ perceptions and meanings highlighted in the interviews. The advantages of flexibility and imagination, so important in research design, are, as much as possible, reconciled with my constructivist epistemology.

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<sup>191</sup> Read and Marsh (2002), pp239-240.

<sup>192</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp274-275.

**Table 3.2: Phases of the Research**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Pilot	Piloting the questionnaire	January - February 2004
1	Collection of data from 'less engaged'	April - September 2004
2	Collection of data from 'more engaged'	July - December 2005

Two main advantages in adopting a multi-method approach can be isolated: it allows the researcher to explore research questions more fully and from different angles, and it can be used to enhance the validity or credibility of data and findings, usually through a process of 'triangulation'.<sup>193</sup> I have already discussed the first of these. Now I want to comment on the second.

'Triangulation' is too often associated with positivist preoccupations and assumptions, especially the goal of internal validity. In social research, the idea of triangulation is generally accepted, and is included in research designs as a matter of course. As a result, it is sometimes discussed and utilised with inadequate consideration of epistemological and ontological issues. How can triangulation be defined and operationalised within a socially constructivist approach and within my own research?

Blaikie argues that 'genuine users' of the abductive research strategy would view triangulation, when defined as the use of 'dissimilar methods to measure the same unit or concept' to iron out bias and increase internal validity, as being in tension with their core assumptions about social reality.<sup>194</sup> For constructivists, because they view the social world as constructed in multiple ways, there is less stress on the questions of bias and validity in the production of a single account. Instead, I prefer to focus on the *credibility* of the accounts derived from Mossbank. Does triangulation have a role to play in this?

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<sup>193</sup> Read and Marsh (2002), p237.

<sup>194</sup> Blaikie (2000), pp263-268.

Silverman, quoted in Blaikie, contends that the ‘mistake’ made by constructivists is to employ triangulation to “‘adjudicate between accounts’”.<sup>195</sup> This leaves the purpose and point of triangulating data open to interrogation and refinement. In my research, data triangulation, especially data derived from the qualitative methods that I use, can be used for checking and comparison. This process has at least three useful functions. Firstly, ‘corroboration’ - developing the validity or, in my case, the credibility of the research by checking the consistency of accounts. Secondly, ‘elaboration’ - the development of understanding through an increase in the amount and sources of data highlighting different perspectives. The third useful function is ‘initiation’ or ‘illumination’. Here non-convergent data is utilised to produce new insights and interpretations.<sup>196</sup> Importantly, the goal of triangulation is not necessarily to arrive at one, consistent view of a social phenomenon or incident: data may converge, but it may also diverge - and this can throw up useful insights.

Rather than simply pay lip service to the notion of triangulation, I have taken care to question and analyse the concept and to isolate a version that is useful in my research, and that sits comfortably with my constructivist position and objective of understanding. However, I do not employ triangulation purely to increase the validity or credibility of my research. Rather, I embrace the multiple, and sometimes conflicting, accounts and perspectives that my multi-method approach helps to unearth. My understanding of triangulation allows the use of these multiple perspectives in the development of my understanding of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Now is the appropriate place to outline and discuss the component parts of my multi-method approach to data gathering in Mossbank.

#### - Questionnaires

I distributed three sets of questionnaires in Mossbank: a small pilot, and Phase 1 and 2 questionnaires. In this section, I outline the design of the questionnaires, their role, and their distribution. Following on from this discussion, I give an account of the problems of using questionnaires as data collection instruments in Mossbank and my attempts to deal

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<sup>195</sup> Blaikie (2000), p269.

<sup>196</sup> Marshall and Rossman (1989), p146, Blaikie (2000), p267, and Patton (2002), p559.



with these.

I piloted the questionnaire in Mossbank primarily to ‘test’ its content and method of distribution.<sup>197</sup> After consideration of the responses, I made a small number of alterations relating to the wording of specific questions and general presentational aspects. The most significant change related to my decision to encourage participants to include their written comments beside *any* of the questions. Minor changes have been made to the Phase 2 questionnaires. Re-wording of some questions was necessary to make them applicable to members of the management committee (the ‘targets’ of the second phase of data collection). Appendix A reproduces the questionnaires used in Phase 1 and highlights the small number of changes deemed necessary for Phase 2.

There are twenty three questions in the questionnaire. Table 3.3 summarises the topics touched on by the questions. Within my multi-method approach, questionnaires have a number of purposes. The data collected in these questionnaires provides information on the attitudes of Mossbank residents to democratic institutions and processes, particularly in relation to the regeneration project and the residents’ association. Other data collected through the questionnaires consist of demographic information, and views relating to the concept of ‘democracy’. Such information is not available from any other source. The questionnaires have another, more pragmatic, role: to screen those willing to be interviewed. Each questionnaire invites participants interested in being interviewed to include their name and contact details in the completed questionnaire. Within my broadly constructivist approach, the questionnaire data are of limited use. The data are used mainly as ‘background’ information, helping to enhance the interpretation of data collected using qualitative methods. However, the content of Chapter 5, an exploration of residents’ concepts of democracy and democratic engagement, is based on data derived from the questionnaires.

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<sup>197</sup> van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001), p2.

**Table 3.3: Questionnaire Topics**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Topics</b>
1 - 9	Individual characteristics and circumstances
10a - 11b	Involvement in the Mossbank regeneration initiative
12a - 16b	Involvement in other associations; other 'political' activities
17a - 17b	The idea of 'democracy'

The approach to questionnaire distribution used in the pilot is retained for Phase 1. Households are selected using a systematic sampling procedure, each address receiving two questionnaires.<sup>198</sup> In Phase 2, my focus is on the membership of the management committee, the group of people in Mossbank I take to be most closely engaged. Distribution is handled differently due to the small number of committee members: I handed out questionnaires at the end of management committee meetings. No additional methods were used to distribute questionnaires in this Phase as the response rates were satisfactory.

Problems related to the collection of data using questionnaires in Mossbank are associated almost entirely with the first phase of data collection. Here I was primarily interested in collecting data from those residents with little or no current or prior engagement with the regeneration initiative or the residents' association / management committee. Careful design of the questions, response sets and the overall appearance of the questionnaires, culminating in piloting and final refining, produced a questionnaire free from any conspicuous faults that might have an impact on response rates. Despite such preparations, I experienced problems in collecting sufficient completed questionnaires using a systematic sampling approach to distribution. In order to address

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<sup>198</sup> Blaikie (2000), p200: 'If the population elements can be put in a list, they can be counted and a sampling ratio decided to produce the desired sample size'.

this problem I employed additional data collection methods and tactics. Follow-up letters, distributed two weeks after delivery of the questionnaires were of some use in encouraging people to complete and return the questionnaires. Follow-up letters resulted in two additional questionnaires being returned.

Other sampling methods were also used to increase the number of completed questionnaires. The seeking out of individuals willing to complete the questionnaire was extended to the adoption of snowball sampling. In the case of this particular project, this involved approaching gatekeepers of organisations across Duncairn. These included the Royal British Legion and other town-wide initiatives and clubs. Where access had been secured, I visited these organisations with the aim of meeting Mossbank residents.

Using documents, such as the residents' association newsletter and minutes and reports of AGMs allowed me to isolate particular individuals. This second non-probability approach to sampling, known as judgemental or purposive sampling, involves the selection of particularly interesting cases or individuals.<sup>199</sup> Specifically, this method allowed me to get in touch with Mossbank residents who had in the past been members of the management committee and, for whatever reasons, had subsequently left.

In Table 3.4, I summarise the 'success' of the questionnaires as data collection tools in terms of the number that were completed and returned. Almost half of completed questionnaires in Phase 1 can be linked to the adoption of 'other means' of distribution, that is the use of snowball and judgemental sampling. Reacting imaginatively and flexibly to the relatively low response rates generated by systematic sampling in Phase 1 reaped rewards over and above increasing the overall response rate. I identified, and made contact with, ex-members of the management committee. These people, with a *past* involvement in the residents' association / management committee, promised valuable insights and experiences regarding engagement in Mossbank. Furthermore, I made face-to-face contact with Mossbank residents to an extent greater than I had initially planned. This actually developed into an advantage, as it led more quickly and directly into the

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<sup>199</sup> Blaikie (2000), p205.

collection of data-as-words through interviewing.

Self completion questionnaires are a relatively efficient tool for the collection of data to do with peoples' attitudes, views, perceptions and beliefs. However, there are two weaknesses associated with questionnaires that are worth mentioning because they are particularly relevant to the research. The first relates to the personality and cognitive abilities of the respondent that may affect the quality of the data, despite efforts on my part to make the questionnaire accessible. Some may be less able and willing than others to complete certain questions. Secondly, respondents may not, whether unconsciously or by design, report their views accurately. They may try to second guess what the researcher is looking for.<sup>200</sup> These problems are particularly relevant to my analysis of questionnaire question 17a undertaken in Chapter 5.

**Table 3.4: Number of Questionnaires Distributed and Returned**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Distributed</b>	<b>Returned</b>
Pilot	Delivered to Addresses: 40 (two per household)	6
Phase 1	Delivered to Addresses: 120 (two per household)	22
	Distributed by Other Means: /	19
		Total: 41
Phase 2	Handed-out at Meetings: 14	9

<sup>200</sup> Robson (2002), p233.

## - Interviews and Conversations

Interviewing Mossbank residents is part of the second stage in each of the phases of data collection. Interviews generated a rich supply of data relevant to answering my research questions. In the interviews, different interpretations of events and change in Mossbank were forthcoming. Interviewing is particularly useful as a way of uncovering *individual* meanings and interpretations of events and phenomena in Mossbank.<sup>201</sup> It is an important element of the corroboration, elaboration and illumination inherent in my multi-method approach. Face-to-face, in depth interviews tap into a fresh source of data, namely the 'hidden' meanings and interpretation of individual Mossbank residents.

My approach to interviewing can be described as 'semi-structured'. This approach operates with no standardised set of questions. Instead, a schedule is used as a reminder of relevant points and topics to bring up during the interview. This approach balances flexibility with focus and direction. Each interview developed differently, depending on the input of the interviewee, but was as far as possible carefully controlled by the interviewer.<sup>202</sup> Before each interview I drew up a separate schedule based on information in the relevant questionnaire, events in Mossbank, and my own reflections. The template schedule can be found in Appendix B.

In most cases, digital audio recordings have been made of the interviews to capture clearly and preserve the richness of the data, invaluable for data analysis. Notes of my initial thoughts and impressions, as well as any comments made by the interviewee after the recorder has been switched off, were written down as soon as possible afterwards, and are counted as part of the interview data.

I conducted 14 interviews with Mossbank residents: six of these involved members of the management committee. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes and two hours, the average length being one hour. In Phase 1, finding people willing to take part in an interview was a problem, one that was not satisfactorily resolved. My attempts to deal

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<sup>201</sup> King cited in Robson (2002), p271.

<sup>202</sup> Robson (2002), p270.

with this problem overlapped with my adoption of snowball and judgmental sampling adopted in relation to questionnaires. The resulting face-to-face encounters with individuals, for instance, as I met ex-members of the management committee on their doorsteps, made recruiting for and arranging interviews more straightforward. Although I was not wholly able to address problems of recruitment for Phase 1 interviews, making the acquaintance of potential interviewees, and encouraging their participation in other ways over and above the request placed at the end of the questionnaire would have, on reflection, led to more interviews.

In Phase 2, by contrast, most of those who returned a questionnaire were willing to be interviewed. I would have liked to have been able to choose interviewees with reference to issues of representativeness, based on relevant categories such as sex and age. However, in relation to Phase 1, the difficulty I had in finding people to interview meant that I had to 'make do' with whoever came forward. In Phase 2, an attempt to make a representative sample of people to interview was also a problem - again I had to interview all those who were interested. Compulsion was out of the question! However, despite these difficulties I can claim a reasonable degree of representativeness in some categories (such as sex) and less in others (age, for example) - see Tables 3.5 and 3.6. There are a number of reasons that could account for these difficulties, and the extent of representativeness. Evidence cited by Bechhofer and Paterson, suggests that women and the better educated are more likely to be interested in taking part in interviews. Those not working, who spend more time at home, for example people who are retired from work, may also be more likely to agree to be interviewed.<sup>203</sup>

Organising and arranging the interviews across Phases 1 and 2 tended to take up much time. Interview had to be at the convenience of the interviewees. On occasion, appointments were changed at the last minute or were not kept. Perseverance and patience were therefore required on my part. Actually conducting interviews with Mossbank residents presented a number of problems, most of which I anticipated beforehand. This allowed me to avoid a number of problems that would have had a

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<sup>203</sup> Bechhofer and Paterson (2000), pp38-39.

detrimental influence on both the data collection process and the actual raw data. These revolve around issues of rapport building and developing a 'conversation' that will yield useful data. Dealing with these potential problems additionally required consideration of context.

Given the socio-economic profile of Mossbank - outlined in Chapter 2 - the experience of taking part in an in-depth interview would be for residents a novel and potentially intimidating, experience. Work, education and other experiences, combined with cognitive abilities and communication skills would each have an impact on the success of interviews as data collection endeavours.

I placed great emphasis on building rapport, especially in the early stages of the interview. This involved a number of tactics focussed on putting the interviewee at ease. This started from the moment we would meet. Small talk, explaining the purpose of the interview, using the term 'conversation' in preference to 'interview', showing the interviewee the recording equipment, talking through the informed consent paperwork, all had a part to play in the development of rapport between myself and interviewees. Each interview started with a relatively straightforward topic, one designed as much to put the interviewee at ease as much as to illicit data. In most cases, this took the form of encouraging the interviewee to relate a general account of their years in Mossbank. A specific tactic worth highlighting, due to its adaptation of an administrative aspect of interviewing to rapport building, relates to the issue of power in the interview process. Here the interviewee is given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym by which they would be known in the research.<sup>204</sup> This proved particular popular with interviewees. Many took pleasure in choosing a name, this contributing to putting them at ease.

In all cases across Phases 1 and 2, the above mentioned tactics were beneficial. Even though, particularly in relation to Phase 1 interviews - with the focus on those least engaged with the regeneration process - individuals tended to take time to 'warm up' and settle into the experience. Here the emphasis given to rapport building and context helps

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<sup>204</sup> Grinyer (2002).

create the environment in which individuals can relax into the experience of interviewing. Although I set out to limit each interview to about an hour, in a few cases - again involving Phase 1 interviews - this was not possible, as some individuals seemed to grow uncomfortable within that time. Others, most particularly those interviewed in Phase 2, seemed quite content to continue beyond the hour. However, I found that beyond this time, the quality and richness of the data tended to diminish, and in such cases I steered the interview towards a conclusion.

**Table 3.5: Representativeness of Those Interviewed by Sex (Phases 1 and 2)<sup>205</sup>**

	<b>Mossbank</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
Male	48%	7
Female	52%	8

**Table 3.6: Representativeness of Those Interviewed by Age (Phases 1 and 2)**

	<b>Mossbank</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
16 - 44	41%	4
Over 44	32%	11

- *'Elite' interviews*. By 'elites', I mean individuals not resident in Mossbank who, nevertheless, still have a high profile, and possess the ability to exercise influence regarding Mossbank and the regeneration initiative. Two elites have been interviewed: a leading official of one of the main regeneration partners, and the local councillor whose ward includes Mossbank. The purpose of these interviews is to generate interview data that 'balanced' views from inside Mossbank.

<sup>205</sup> There are 15 interviewees and 14 interviews because one of the interviews involved two members of the management committee, namely Daniel and Sandra.



The experience of interviewing these elites stands in contrast to that of interviewing Mossbank residents. Invitations to take part in an interview were readily accepted. Due to their well developed communication skills and experience, controlling the direction of the interview, rather than probing and encouraging talk, were my main concerns.

Data obtained from interviews can be criticised as being ‘contaminated’ by bias: loaded questions (on the part of the interviewer) and unreliability, ‘pleasing strategies’, and so forth (on the part of the interviewee), for example. An awareness of such pitfalls is necessary. My multi-method approach acts as a check, confirming, where possible, information gained from interviews. This enables me to make informed judgments about what an interviewee utters, and whether I should view it as reliable or dependable.<sup>206</sup> In this research, interviews provide a rich source of data, allowing a glimpse into various perceptions and constructions of democratic life in Mossbank. Most particularly, the efforts made to find people who are less engaged in the regeneration initiative opened up an otherwise inaccessible and hidden set of experiences and perceptions to analysis.

#### - Observation

The Mossbank residents’ association management committee is an important aspect of my exploration of Mossbank. My observations of the management committee meetings allowed me access to an otherwise closed aspect of democratic life in Mossbank. The management committee meetings are democratic arenas, the most visible, constant, and the only formally constituted within Mossbank. Here observation of the management committee meetings can contribute to data triangulation - the checking and comparison of data derived from different methods - discussed earlier in this chapter.

Observation is included in my multi-method strategy as a way to gather data from inside the management committee meetings. In particular, I am interested in finding out more about the conduct of the meetings, in addition to accounts obtained in the Phase 2

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<sup>206</sup> Bechhofer and Paterson (2000), p58.

interviews. Following ideal-types used by Bryman, I categorise my approach to observation as tending towards being 'unstructured' and 'non-participative'.<sup>207</sup> The management committee meetings are closed and actual membership is limited to elected, or co-opted, Mossbank residents. The costs of my joining and participating in the committee are outweighed by the benefits of merely witnessing the meetings. Thus, I ruled out 'participative' observation and adopted, instead, a non-participative approach, an approach that is rarely used in political research.<sup>208</sup>

A broadly unstructured approach to observation is preferred because its inbuilt flexibility allows me to notice unexpected occurrences and to follow interesting developments. I decided to temper my unstructured approach with the use of an observation schedule, primarily as an *aide memoire*. The schedule is reproduced in Appendix C. After negotiating permission from the committee, I observed six monthly meetings and an AGM, positioning myself in the meeting room in order to be able to see and hear the meeting but remaining as unobtrusive as possible. An audio recording was made of each meeting, this proving useful during analysis. To complement the recordings, I made notes during, and immediately after each meeting. Throughout, I was interested in the visual, as well as the spoken aspects of these meetings.<sup>209</sup>

Rather than being 'a fly on the wall' - so often cited as the role of the non-participative observer - I was noticed but familiar, rather like a piece of furniture.<sup>210</sup> The ideal of invisibility - being a 'fly on the wall' - in non-participative observation, is achievable and desirable in some circumstances, for example, observation of mother and baby interaction using one way mirrors and video cameras. However, in the context of observing the management committee, such approaches are impracticable and ethically questionable. Rather, working towards a position of *familiarity* in the setting as opposed to invisibility balances the practical limitations of observing in the context of the management committee meetings with concerns that my presence influences the behaviour - what the

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<sup>207</sup> Bryman (2004), p167.

<sup>208</sup> Moug (2007).

<sup>209</sup> Silverman (2000), pp61-62.

<sup>210</sup> Moug (2007), p112.

members say and do - during the meetings. Familiarity is achieved through a combination of getting to know committee members before and during my period of observation, being aware that becoming familiar in the setting will take time, and is maintained by adopting a flexible approach whilst observing. For the vast majority of the time when observing the meetings, I was familiar but unobtrusive like a piece of furniture. However, such close contact with a setting is likely to result in some degree of participation. I experienced such instances, convincing me that a flexible reaction to such occurrences through participation of a minimal kind is on occasion unavoidable and even necessary. Occasionally, for example, the management committee would invite guests to their meetings. Introductions would be made and I found that I would be included in these. Paul, the chairperson of the committee would introduce me to the guest, thus: 'Peter's here observing for his studies. Just to let you understand he's not part of the meeting'. In this particular instance, my response was as brief and unobtrusive as possible: I simply nodded to the guest.<sup>211</sup> Such moments are fleeting and very rare. I am convinced that I did not affect the conduct of the individual members or the meetings in any significant way.

#### - Documents

Documents have two uses in this research. The first is as a source for my description of Mossbank - see Chapter 2. For example, documents created by members of the regeneration partnership, the Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland provide important background and contextual detail about Mossbank's story and the wider policy and political context in which Mossbank is situated. In addition, statistical information, particularly derived from census data provides additional background information and detail that contributes to the description of Mossbank.

The second, substantive, use of documents relates to my analysis of democratic engagement in Mossbank, presented in Chapters 6 and 7. 'Official' documents of the residents' association and management committee are considered particularly useful. These include, the residents' association constitution, the residents' newsletters, an assortment of letters and flyers, and reports of residents' association AGMs. These

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<sup>211</sup> Moug (2007), p112

documents are used for checking and confirming the timing of events, as well as a source of original insight concerning the ‘official’ voice of the residents’ association and management committee. This latter use is particularly important. These documents are ‘receptacles’ of particular norms and values as well as durable agents in themselves, propagating particular perspectives.<sup>212</sup> These documents, ‘precisely because [they are] not overt, self-conscious speech, may give deeper insights into the internal meanings according to which people lived their lives’.<sup>213</sup> I have adopted an ‘informal’ approach to analysing these documents, meaning that I do not adhere strongly to any analytical approach, although in broad terms my approach is a form of qualitative discourse analysis. This informal approach involves researchers ‘reading and rereading their empirical materials [trying] to pin down their key themes’ contributing to an understanding ‘of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen’.<sup>214</sup>

My approach to the analysis of documents fits in with my constructivist assumptions. I am interested in highlighting underlying meanings and intentions, hidden in the content of the documents.<sup>215</sup> What do these documents reveal about the ‘official’ construction of democracy and engagement? These documents are the most reliable sources of the ‘official’ construction of engagement and inclusion in Mossbank. This can be contrasted with and compared to individual accounts and experiences. My approach to interpreting documents is further influenced by hermeneutics. This approach is concerned with understanding a text, including documents, from the perspective of those who produced it, and in relation to the context in which it was created. It is an approach particularly associated with constructivist approaches, and supplements qualitative content analysis.<sup>216</sup>

I have outlined the data gathering methods used in my research. I have shown how these methods combine and interrelate in a particular fashion to form a cohesive and effective

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<sup>212</sup> Prior (2004), p76.

<sup>213</sup> Hodder (2002), p274.

<sup>214</sup> Perakyla (2005), p870.

<sup>215</sup> Sarantakos (2005), pp299-300.

<sup>216</sup> Bryman (2004), pp394-395 and Sarantakos (2005), pp312-313.

strategy of data collection. In addition, I have reflected on some of the problems I anticipated and confronted whilst data gathering in Mossbank. In the concluding chapter, I return to some of these problems (especially those linked to context) and discuss the extent to which they shed light on democratic engagement in Mossbank. In the next section, I describe my approach to, and experiences of, data analysis.

### Data Analysis

#### - Quantitative

The place and role of quantitative methods in my research means that data reduction and manipulation is of the most basic kind, orientated towards description.<sup>217</sup> The raw data derived from my questionnaires is manipulated by the collating of responses and the presentation of these in tables for ease of interpretation. Quantitative data from other sources, the UK census and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), for example, are also straightforwardly manipulated - see Chapter 2.

#### - Qualitative

Before analysis of the interviews could begin in earnest, 'full' transcriptions of each had to be made (excluding, for the most part, pauses, sighs, vocal inflections, except when, in my opinion, they were relevant).<sup>218</sup> The process of transcription allows me to begin a close engagement with the data, reflecting on the words of the interviewees.<sup>219</sup> Having paper versions of the interviews to work from as well as the original recordings, allows for a more comprehensive and closer analysis of the interview data.<sup>220</sup>

I have adopted a 'holistic' approach to data analysis.<sup>221</sup> Data obtained from interviews, fieldnotes, questionnaires (written responses), documents, and observation are organised and analysed using a common set of categories. This approach facilitates the simultaneous focussing of the data towards dealing with the research questions. Using the

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<sup>217</sup> Robson (2002), p450.

<sup>218</sup> Sabine and O'Connell (2004), p250.

<sup>219</sup> Fielding and Thomas (2001), p135.

<sup>220</sup> Sabine and O'Connell (2004), p248.

<sup>221</sup> Holliday (2002), p103.

QSR N6 qualitative data analysis package, I evolved a set of categories and codes designed to organise the data into a form that relates to answering my research questions, but that also remains grounded in the meanings and perceptions contained in the data.

The construction of analytical categories is an ongoing, iterative process of refinement, reflecting on emerging themes and insights that emerge from the data. Initially, the categories are easily altered and discarded. However, over time my categories become more firmly defined and the analysis more refined.<sup>222</sup> Eventually, I am able to extract expected *and* unexpected insights from the re-ordered / manipulated data.<sup>223</sup> The fruits of this analysis are used to develop my understanding of democratic engagement and inclusion in Mossbank, as shown in Chapters 6 and 7.

### Ethical Considerations

Careless or thoughtless handling of research participants and data can have serious legal, moral and research-related consequences.<sup>224</sup> Rapport and trust built up over time can be lost if confidentiality and anonymity are compromised, especially when assurances were given to the contrary. A professional attitude and approach to ethical issues in research is essential.

Two factors, in particular, influence my response to ethical issues: my research methods, and the small scale of the research area. Most of my research methods aim to uncover detailed information regarding an individual's perceptions and views that may touch on private details and sensitive issues. Given the characteristics of Mossbank (its small population in a relatively small area, in particular) it is necessary to respect the privacy of individuals. Four considerations spring from this: giving participants, and potential participants, adequate information about the research, the researcher and the relevant method of data collection; ensuring informed consent; respecting the confidentiality of individual research participants; and preserving the anonymity of these individuals and of

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<sup>222</sup> Dey (1993), pp44-45.

<sup>223</sup> Schmidt (2004), p255

<sup>224</sup> Grinyer (2002), p2.

the research area.

In the case of the questionnaires, interviews and observation, information is given to participants in the form of a coversheet (or a letter and spoken introduction in the case of observation) introducing myself (as the researcher) and outlining the purpose of the research and the aims of the data gathering tool. Giving such information to participants and potential participants is necessary, from an ethical perspective, to help the participants understand why I am interested in them.<sup>225</sup> It also has the pragmatic purpose of creating an interest in, and a feeling of being part of, the research that may encourage participation.

Related to this, is the giving of informed consent. The practical reason for seeking informed consent is to receive from participants their *written* permission to collect and use data derived from their utterances and actions. Before interviews, I would take the time to go over the informed consent form with the participant to make sure that he or she understood its contents.<sup>226</sup> Formal, written consent is asked for only in relation to the interviews. In the case of observation, a letter from the management committee accepting my request to observe is deemed to convey informed consent.<sup>227</sup>

Part of the agreement implicit in informed consent is that I undertake to respect the confidentiality of participants. Confidentiality, in the context of this research, means information given by a participant is not attributable to that individual, and records of such information are carefully stored.<sup>228</sup> I extended this undertaking to all my data gathering. Anonymity and confidentiality are closely related. In this research, anonymity refers to my efforts to protect the identity of participants (and places) by separating data from a real name and replacing the real name with a pseudonym.<sup>229</sup> Whenever possible, I let participants choose their own pseudonym, rather than simply allotting them one

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<sup>225</sup> Kent (2000), p82.

<sup>226</sup> Kent (2000).

<sup>227</sup> This letter came in reply to a letter send by me to the committee outlining what to expect when I started observing the meetings.

<sup>228</sup> O'Reilly (2005), p65.

<sup>229</sup> O'Reilly (2005), p65.

myself. Giving participants ‘ownership’ of this part of data collection helps to foster a sense of trust between the researcher and the participant. Participants generally took pleasure in choosing their pseudonyms. The use of pseudonyms is preferable to the use of letters or numbers to refer to individuals. Using names reminds both myself and the reader that the participants are real people and not just sources of data.<sup>230</sup> Practically, this meant compiling a list of names to help participants make their choice, and taking care not to end up with more than one participant choosing the same name.

I decided to disguise the research locale using another set of pseudonyms. This disguise involves not only the adoption of ‘Mossbank’ as the name of the research locale, but also involves the changing of street names, the town (to ‘Duncairn’) and the local authority in which it is situated.<sup>231</sup> I decided to do this for two main reasons. The first relates to individuals living in and associated with a small area such as Mossbank. The second relates to the elite interviews. These individuals, even if referred to by their role would be easily identified - there is, for example, only one local councillor for Mossbank. A similar argument can be made in relation to Mossbank residents, for example office bearers on the residents’ association management committee. In fact, the small population of Mossbank, combined with the detailed data I collect and use throughout the development of the thesis, requires such a wholesale approach to preserving anonymity.

As well as carrying out ‘ethical’ research, I have also tried to use a concern with ethics to enhance the relationship between myself, as researcher, and those who participated in my research. A concern with ethics need not be a barrier to the work of a researcher. In fact, there is a close link between an interest in ethical issues and the development of a closer, more trusting relationship with research participants. In both cases, this facilitates ‘good’ research.

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<sup>230</sup> See Grinyer (2002) for a discussion of such issues.

<sup>231</sup> I wanted to retain a Scottish flavour to the place names in order to preserve a sense of place and context. So, I turned to Scottish literature as the source of the assumed names. I borrowed fictional place names used by Lewis Grassie Gibbon in *A Scots Quair*, *The Speak of the Mearns* and in the short story ‘Greenden’; and by Robert Louis Stevenson in *Kidnapped*, *Catrina*, *Weir of Hermiston*, and *The Master of Ballantrae*.



## Conclusion

In this chapter, I reject as inappropriate a set of terms with strong associations with positivism and quantitative research. I have filled this epistemological vacuum with an alternative set of terms that fit more easily with social constructivist assumptions and highlight the particular strengths of qualitative methods. I have outlined my particular approach to the use of different research methods in this research, with special attention being paid to the issue of triangulation. The individual methods that I employ in this multi-method approach were then discussed separately. I explored the reasons for including each in my research, my particular approach to collecting data using these methods, the contribution each made, and my experience of using these methods in Mossbank. Moving from issues of collection to analysis, I then outlined my approach to data analysis. Finally, I discussed ethical issues relevant to this research. As well as emphasising legal and moral implications of ‘unethical’ research, I have established links between ethical research practices and successful data gathering.

This chapter, and the two preceding it, have presented the aims and objectives of the research, a description of the place and people of Mossbank, and an account of my research methods. The next chapter opens by engaging with theoretical issues and debates surrounding democracy and democratic engagement. The chapter continues with a presentation of a theoretically informed analytical framework.

## Chapter 4

### Exploring Democratic Engagement in Mossbank

This thesis explores perceptions and experiences of democratic engagement. It highlights modes, opportunities and relationships through which Mossbank residents engage and (sometimes) influence decision making. All this takes place in an actually existing, small scale and essentially democratic setting. This chapter has two purposes pertinent to the development of the thesis. The first is to present a single theoretical position that is the foundation of my exploration of democratic life in Mossbank. The second is to present an analytical framework that can be seen as a ‘bridge’ between my theoretical position and the actual exploration of democratic life in Mossbank contained in Chapters 6 and 7.

#### A Theoretical Framework: Towards a Deliberative Position

Hay (2002) ties theory closely to the analysis of real world phenomena:

theory is a guide to empirical exploration, a means of reflecting more or less abstractly upon complex processes of institutional evolution and transformation [...]. Theory sensitises the analyst to the causal processes being elucidated, selecting from the rich complexity of events the underlying mechanisms and processes of change.<sup>232</sup>

Consequently, the notion of a theory - real world dialogue, introduced in Chapter 1, is developed in the first part of this chapter. The objective of understanding is further enhanced because through the instigation of a theory - real world dialogue, the research becomes ‘theoretically informed’, that is guided in its direction, analysis and conclusions by theoretical insights.<sup>233</sup> The nature of the dialogue - mainly, at this point, from theory to real world - is made clear during the chapter. Characterising this research as theoretically informed aims to develop the thesis along a number of lines. Firstly, through an engagement with ideal accounts of democracy. Ideal accounts of democracy ‘are distinguished by features that are abstract and ideal: no actual regimes correspond

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<sup>232</sup> Hay (2002), p47.

<sup>233</sup> Hay (2002), pp46-47.

perfectly with the types' and 'most actual regimes are composite and combine features from each type'.<sup>234</sup> Exploring such ideals allows a theoretical position to be arrived at that is relevant to the research aims. Most particularly, this relates to the relationship between democracy and engagement. Secondly, the three components (namely, communication, participation and representation) that I argue are required to be considered when discussing democratic engagement are considered with reference to relevant theoretical debates. Later I give each a distinct definition, and discuss the relationship of each to my emerging theoretical standpoint. Developing this sophisticated understanding of these components paves the way for their incorporation into the analytical framework introduced later in the chapter.

#### - Ideal Accounts of Democracy

I do not attempt to put forward an overarching definition of 'democracy'. This would be of little relevance to the development of the thesis. Instead, I consider ideals of democracy, progressing towards the presentation of my theoretical position. Dryzek (2004) lists fifty four adjectives associated with the term 'democracy'. Many refer to ideals.<sup>235</sup> I have rejected discussing almost all of the ideals mentioned in Dryzek's list because this would make for a cumbersome and unnecessarily long diversion in the development of the thesis. Instead, I want to focus on the ideals of liberal democracy and deliberative democracy. A particular version of the latter corresponds to the theoretical position adopted in this research. As a first step in the presentation and justification of my theoretical standpoint, it is necessary to highlight the broad distinctions between these two prominent ideals. Liberal and deliberative democracy are what Dryzek calls 'the two main polls in contemporary thinking about democracy'.<sup>236</sup> I take the labels 'liberal democracy' and 'deliberative democracy' to refer to two distinct groupings sharing broadly similar norms and values. In fact, as will be made clear later, these ideals are actually dynamic and open to change and variation - a point important in the presentation of my theoretical position.

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<sup>234</sup> Barber (1984), p140.

<sup>235</sup> Dryzek (2004), p143.

<sup>236</sup> Dryzek (2000), p151.

- *Liberal Democracy*. Liberal democracy is a ‘portmanteau construct’.<sup>237</sup> It is

an attempt to articulate, at the same time, both liberal and democratic judgments on political institutions. The liberal judgment [...] holds that there are aspects of an individual’s life, including certain of his actions, which are private and with which others can never rightfully interfere. The democratic judgment holds that what society does should be a function of each individual’s choice for what society ought to do, where these choices are aggregated according to some ‘democratic’ collective choice rule<sup>238</sup>.

Cunningham elaborates on the core characteristics that define democratic ideals as ‘liberal democratic’ in nature. These include liberal aspects such as the protection of individual freedoms of thought and speech, movement and association, minimal state interference, the rule of law, constitutional limits on the state; and the privileging of the individual and his or her preferences over notions of a collective or common good. Features relating to democracy interact with these and focus on formal political equality within representative political institutions and processes.<sup>239</sup> These defining aspects introduce the main channels along which variation occurs. I focus on variations most closely related to democratic engagement.

There is strong consistency amongst liberal democratic theorists for representation as the basis of democratic engagement. This is noticeable in the work of theorists such as Schumpeter and Dahl.<sup>240</sup> Beetham argues that this close association is founded on pragmatic and practical considerations rather than on a purely theoretical stance. Representation has a prominent place in ideals of liberal democracy primarily through issues of scale and time: it is an efficient and effective way to manage democratic decision making processes and the job of governing in ‘mass democracies’ that sits easily with core liberal democratic norms and values.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Beetham (1993), p56.

<sup>238</sup> Levine (1981), p93.

<sup>239</sup> Cunningham (2002), ch3.

<sup>240</sup> Schumpeter (1942) and Dahl (1970 and 1989).

<sup>241</sup> Beetham (1993), p63. Levine (1981), on the other hand, argues that liberal democracy ought to be associated most strongly with direct decision-making because, ‘individual interests are best served [...] when each individual, considered the best judge of his [*sic*] interests, figures equally in the determination of

Cunningham argues for the inclusion of ‘participation’ as a facet of liberal democracy because many theorists strongly associated with liberal democracy make room for some level of engagement in politics outside of the choosing of representatives.<sup>242</sup> Normative accounts of liberal democracy can be positioned on a continuum from being hostile of the idea of ‘engagement’ (except for the taking part in elections to choose representatives), to being disposed to a more substantive view of engagement, limited only by the core defining traits of liberal democracy. In order to illustrate the range of attitudes to engagement in ideal accounts of liberal democracy, I have isolated three localities on the continuum. Roughly speaking, two tend towards the extremes and the third lies nearer the midpoint. These illustrations are based on terminology borrowed from Dryzek - see Figure 4.1 - and subsequently adapted to relate more clearly to democratic engagement - Figure 4.2. The first, ‘liberal minimalism’ or a ‘minimum capacity for democratic engagement’, recognises the need for only minimal degrees of engagement by the mass of the population in democratic processes (limited to the choosing of representatives). Schumpeter’s theories can exemplify this disposition towards democratic engagement.<sup>243</sup> The second, still holding to the core characteristics of liberal democracy, but taking a critical stance against liberal minimalism, makes conceptual space for a limited degree of engagement in decision making as set out in, for example, the later writing of Robert Dahl.<sup>244</sup> The third variety moves closest to deliberative democratic thinking. Dryzek views this disposition as an ‘assimilation’ or ‘reconciliation’ of deliberative democracy to liberal democracy.<sup>245</sup>

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social choice’. There is, in my view, conceptual space for both representation and direct decision making in ideals of liberal democracy.

<sup>242</sup> Cunningham (2002), p29.

<sup>243</sup> Schumpeter (1943).

<sup>244</sup> Dahl (1970, 1985 and 1989)

<sup>245</sup> Dryzek (2000), p79-80.

**Figure 4.1: 'Varieties' of Liberal Democracy (1)**<sup>246</sup>

- 1) 'Liberal minimalism'
- 2) Limited place for engagement
- 3) 'Assimilation' of deliberative democracy to liberal democracy  
(Next 'stage': deliberative democracy as a 'critical alternative' to liberal democracy)

**Figure 4.2: 'Varieties' of Liberal Democracy (2)**

- 1) Minimal capacity for engagement
- 2) Limited capacity for engagement
- 3) Maximum capacity for engagement

The notion of formal political equality - enshrined in the right to vote - is deeply engrained in contemporary theorising on liberal democracy.<sup>247</sup> Positions relating to social and economic inequality on the other hand, vary amongst theorists of liberal democracy. Some liberal democratic theorists, including Rawls and Dahl link liberal democracy to economic and social egalitarianism.<sup>248</sup> Others, such as Berlin, are less comfortable with the view that liberal democratic ideals ought to 'insist on politics favouring social and economic equality'.<sup>249</sup>

The ideal of liberal democracy, though definable with reference to certain core values, is not a monolithic, static ideal account of democracy. Within the broad ideal, there is considerable scope for how democratic engagement can be conceptualised, and by extension, practiced in actually existing settings.

- *Deliberative Democracy*. Ideal accounts of deliberative democracy coalesce around the central role of discussion and dialogue in democratic decision making, and the value of inclusion, that all affected parties ought to be part of the process<sup>250</sup> 'Reasoned argument'

<sup>246</sup> Dryzek (2000) and (2004), p149.

<sup>247</sup> Cunningham (2002), p30.

<sup>248</sup> Rawls (1999) and Dahl (1985).

<sup>249</sup> Berlin (1959) and Cunningham (2002), p29.

<sup>250</sup> Pettit (2003), p139.

encapsulates the mode of discussion and dispositions that deliberators ought to adopt. Through discussion and dialogue those in conflict or disagreement ‘arrive at a decision not by determining what preferences have greatest numerical support, but by determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best reasons’.<sup>251</sup> What is envisioned here is ‘an orderly chain of reasoning from premisses to conclusion’.<sup>252</sup> Deliberators set out to persuade one another by defending and justifying their position. Crucially, this also requires a capacity to be open to persuasion.

Ideals of deliberative democracy sit on a foundation of what Young refers to as ‘normative ideals for the relationships and dispositions of deliberating parties’ - deliberations ought to be ‘inclusive’, ‘equal’, ‘reasonable’, and ‘public’.<sup>253</sup> All affected parties ought to be *included* in democratic decision-making processes. They also ought to have equal and meaningful opportunities to express their points of view and to react to views put forward by others. All should have *equal* opportunities to express their views, to ask questions of others, in an environment free of domination.<sup>254</sup> A *reasonable* disposition in deliberative settings refers to being willing to listen to others respectfully, to accept criticism, to aim for agreement, to have an open mind, to be open to persuasion, and not to judge too quickly.<sup>255</sup> *Publicity* concerns how deliberators ought to hold themselves accountable to one another for what they say and do. They must be prepared to justify their views and at least aim to make their views acceptable to others.<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, the information that deliberators use to justify their views must also be public.<sup>257</sup>

The accounts of liberal and deliberate ideals of democracy presented above, though brief and rudimentary, nevertheless serve to show contrasting positions regarding engagement. In essence, ideals of liberal democracy tend to view engagement as privileging private and individual relationships with democratic processes. Thus, engagement is mediated

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<sup>251</sup> Young (2000), p23.

<sup>252</sup> Young (2000), p37.

<sup>253</sup> Young (2000), p23.

<sup>254</sup> Young (2000), pp23-24.

<sup>255</sup> Young (2000), pp24-25.

<sup>256</sup> Young (2000), p25.

<sup>257</sup> Gutmann and Thompson (1996), p95.

through formally equal, aggregated and (usually) representative forms of authorisation and accountability. In contrast, deliberative ideals emphasise *public* notions of decision making. Here discussion and dialogue, based on argument, provide the basis of the decision making process and outcome.

- Iris Young's Account of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy has been explored by a number of theorists.<sup>258</sup> However, in this thesis I focus on Iris Marion Young's normative account of deliberative democracy. Young's normative account is rooted in her groundbreaking emphasis on *democratic inclusion*. Young links the values of inclusion and equality to produce an ideal relationship of 'democratic inclusion' which 'allows for maximum expression of interests, opinions, and perspectives relevant to the problems or issues for which a public seeks solutions'.<sup>259</sup> Young's account is based on a critique of established accounts and assumptions of deliberative democracy and how these carry with them visible and hidden sources of exclusion. This allows Young to develop a sensitivity to the extent that exclusive tendencies can permeate even what on the surface may look like an inclusive ideal or process. Young's own account is characterised by responses or counters to these forms of exclusion but is still firmly identifiable as a deliberative ideal.

As already mentioned, the theoretical position on which my analysis of democratic engagement in Mossbank is based is a particular ideal of deliberative democracy. Choosing an ideal of deliberative of democracy, as opposed to, say, a liberal ideal as the theoretical foundation of this research facilitates a comprehensive exploration of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Whilst not discounting the formal and private aspects of democratic processes in Mossbank, deliberative theorising focuses on the ongoing, relational aspects of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Young's particular ideal of deliberative democracy is especially relevant to the research because, as discussed in Chapter 1, it is grounded in the 'real world'.<sup>260</sup> Additionally, the emphasis on issues of exclusion and inclusion in Young's account is relevant to exploring

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<sup>258</sup> Including Habermas (1996), Dryzek (1990), and Gutmann and Thompson (1996).

<sup>259</sup> Young (2000), p23.

<sup>260</sup> However, the extent to which Young does this is critically assessed in Chapter 8.



a 'discouraged community' such as Mossbank, where disengagement (beyond formal and familiar activities) is likely to be the norm. Related to this, Young's explicit linking of socio-economic inequalities - such as 'cultural intolerance, racism, sexism, economic exploitation and deprivation' - as factors that account for democratic exclusion again is relevant to a neighbourhood such as Mossbank.<sup>261</sup> The remainder of this chapter aims to present Young's normative ideal in more detail and to demonstrate how this account is operationalised as the basis of the analytical framework.

In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young reviews other interpretations and assumptions common in discussions of deliberative democracy, namely 'unity', face-to-face encounters, and 'order'. These are worth mentioning briefly because they serve to highlight other aspects of deliberative democracy besides 'talk' and argument. Young also uses these, along with argument, as starting points in the development of her own ideal - see later in this chapter. 'Unity', or a notion of 'common beliefs [and] values', can refer to either the outcome of deliberation - that personal interests ought to be trumped by wider interests - or to the situation prior to deliberation, based on a 'shared understanding'.<sup>262</sup> Secondly, there is the assumption that deliberation has to take place in 'face-to-face' contexts. Finally, some views of 'civility' or 'order' are favoured over others in deliberative forums. This may take the form of a rigid view of what count as 'civil' and 'acceptable' forms of expression, ruling out as 'disorderly' noisy demonstrations during deliberation, whilst being more accepting of 'prepared statements calmly delivered'.<sup>263</sup>

Having introduced Young's account, it is necessary to explore in greater depth how this ideal relates to democratic engagement. The following section approaches this by focussing on the three components of engagement - namely, communication, participation and representation - and critically assessing how Young considers these.

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<sup>261</sup> Young (2000), pp13-14.

<sup>262</sup> See Barber (1984), p224, and Mansbridge (1980), especially ch8.

<sup>263</sup> Young (2000), pp37-51.

### Engagement as Communication, Participation and Representation

In Chapter 1, I argue for a 'holistic' approach to understanding the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank, taking in communication, participation and representation as aspects of engagement. The following critical account and later operationalisation of Young's ideal of deliberative democracy follows this guide.

#### - Political Communication

Viewed as a component of democratic engagement, communication refers to interacting and interaction between parties inside a democratic setting or forum. It assumes that access has been achieved, but does not assume that inclusion in decision making processes is equal to all parties and interests. The 'quality' of political communication therefore depends to a large extent on its inclusiveness. I use the term 'political communication' in a different sense to when it is applied in relation to communication management by governments, political parties, and other 'political' organisations.

Communication is necessary to the functioning of democracy. It is tied up in the defining norms and values of all ideal accounts of democracy. In the case of ideals of deliberative democracy, particularly that put forward by Young, communication is of primary importance. The 'quality' of communication is closely linked to issues of justice and legitimacy. In the previous section, I briefly discussed what Young sees as the defining characteristics of established ideals of deliberative democracy. In this section, I explore in greater depth Young's normative conception of inclusive political communication that lies at the centre of her ideal of deliberative democracy.

To Young, argument is the primary mode of communication. However, Young points out that

[g]iven the heterogeneity of human life and the complexity of social structures and interaction [...] the effort to shape arguments according to shared premisses within shared discursive frameworks sometimes excludes the expression of some needs, interests, and suffering of injustice because

these cannot be voiced with operative premisses and frameworks.<sup>264</sup>

Responding to this, Young has developed ‘an expanded theory of political communication’ designed to highlight, ‘more inclusive possibilities of attending to one another in order to reach understanding’.<sup>265</sup> This expansion takes the form of three ‘modes of communication’ that can supplement argument to produce

[a] more complete account of modes of political communication [that] not only remedies exclusionary tendencies in deliberative practices, but more positively describes some specific ways that communicatively democratic processes can produce respect and trust, make possible understanding across structural and cultural difference, and motivate acceptance and action.<sup>266</sup>

Young calls these modes ‘greeting, or [...] public acknowledgement’, ‘affirmative uses of rhetoric’, and ‘narrative and situated knowledge’. These modes, according to Young, supplement argument to produce an inclusive form of political communication that acknowledges difference.<sup>267</sup> A fuller picture of what communication can entail is possible by considering these modes.

- *Narrative*. Narrative is an alternative form of communication to argument. The emphasis is on the communication of ‘meanings and experiences when groups do not share premisses sufficiently to proceed with an argument’.<sup>268</sup> To Young, ‘political narrative’ can help to include sidelined groups and individuals by, ‘foster[ing] understanding among members of a polity with very different experiences or assumptions about what is important’.<sup>269</sup> To Young, such an application of narrative represents the ‘political function of storytelling’, meaning that narrative is about getting a point across by relating an experience or incident rather than entertaining or amusing the other members of the

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<sup>264</sup> Young (2000), p37.

<sup>265</sup> Young (2000), p56.

<sup>266</sup> Young (2000), pp56-57.

<sup>267</sup> Difference is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>268</sup> Young (2000), p5.

<sup>269</sup> Young (2000), p 71.

forum.<sup>270</sup> Young outlines five ways in which political narrative could ‘further discussion across difference’.<sup>271</sup>

First, the terms by which a perceived injustice can be expressed may be lacking, or not in accordance with prevailing norms of communication, and so this injustice continues, effectively excluding those who are affected by it. Young cites the example of sexual harassment: ‘[b]efore the language and the history of sexual harassment was invented [...] women usually suffered in silence, without a language or forum in which to make a reasonable complaint’. But when women started to relate their experiences in the form of narratives (personal stories representing the experiences of other women) the issue of sexual harassment became defined and more likely to be discussed and dealt with.<sup>272</sup> So, the use of political narrative revealed forms of exclusion that were previously unspoken.

Secondly, in ‘mass democratic societies’ debate and discussion are usually dispersed amongst ‘local publics’. By local publics, Young means ‘a collective of persons allied within the wider polity with respect to particular interests, opinions, and / or social positions’. To Young, narrative is an important way in which these temporally and geographically dispersed groupings can find out about one another and learn more about their own ‘situated experiences’. These narratives become useful in ‘politicising their situation, by reflecting on the extent to which they experience similar problems and what political remedy [...] they might propose’. Young cites, as an example, ‘consciousness raising’ in the women’s movement and how this raises issues such as sexual harassment or physical abuse and makes them into recognised and acknowledged issues to be discussed and debated.<sup>273</sup>

Thirdly, narrative can play a part in countering exclusion by bridging the gulf between the assumptions, experiences and values of one group of people (even one individual) and the ‘stock of empty generalities, false assumptions, or [the] incomplete and biased

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<sup>270</sup> Young (2000), p 72.

<sup>271</sup> Young (2000), p72.

<sup>272</sup> Young (2000), pp 72-73.

<sup>273</sup> Young (2000), p 73.

pictures of the[ir] needs, aspirations, and histories' that another group (or individual) may hold. These 'pre-understandings' are often little more than crude stereotypes. Young employs the example of disabled people who, whilst attempting to make themselves heard and understood, relate stories of the experiences of their 'physical, temporal, social, and emotional' barriers in order to try to let those who are differently situated understand their point of view. Also, disabled people have to respond to narrow stereotyping of their lives, and one way to do this would be through political narrative / storytelling.<sup>274</sup>

Fourthly, political narrative can be important in showing the particular situated 'practices, places, or symbols' that are important to a group, or individual. Through narrative, those outside the group may come to understand the values of another group and the views that they hold. Young gives the example of '[i]ndigenous people in Anglo settler communities [who] too often encounter incredulity, mockery, or hostility from whites, when they try to make major political issues out of holding or regaining control over a particular place'.<sup>275</sup>

The fifth comment that Young makes in relation to narrative is that it can be used to communicate a particular group's, or individual's 'total social knowledge'. 'Each person and collective has', according to Young, 'an account not only of their own life and history, but of every other position that affects their experience. Thus listeners can learn about how their own positions, actions, and values appear to others from the stories they tell'. The combination of these narratives can constitute a 'collective social wisdom not available from any one position' and allows a group or individual to look beyond narrow self-interest and consider the experiences, assumptions and values of others differently situated.<sup>276</sup>

In summarising political narrative, Young views its 'general normative functions [...] in political communication' as being to do with 'teaching and learning':

democratic communication assumes that all participants have something to

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<sup>274</sup> Young (2000), p 74.

<sup>275</sup> Young (2000), pp 75-76.

<sup>276</sup> Young (2000), p76.

teach the public [...]. It assumes as well that all participants are ignorant of some aspects of the social or natural world, and that everyone comes to a political conflict with some biases, prejudices, blind spots, or stereotypes.<sup>277</sup>

- *Greeting*. 'Greeting' or 'public acknowledgement' is defined by Young as 'communicative political gestures through which participants in democratic discussion recognize other specific groups as included in the discussion'. These gestures 'acknowledge that they are together with those they name, and that they are obliged to listen to their opinions and take them seriously'.<sup>278</sup> Greeting gestures are often based on ritual and habitual aspects of everyday communication, including, for instance, manners, politeness, treating others with respect, and making people feel welcome.<sup>279</sup> The purposes of greeting, when linked to the development of an inclusive democratic process, 'are to assert discursive equality and [to] establish or re-establish the trust necessary for discussion to proceed in good faith'.<sup>280</sup> However, such gestures can be minimal, 'automatic', and superficial and thus fail to have any meaningful role in drawing others into the discussion. No sense of 'being together' is created.

Greeting is not about the content of communication; it is about recognising others outside of the issues. Young states this well when she describes greeting as 'the gesture of opening up to the other person where the speaker announces "Here I am" for the other, and "I see you"'.<sup>281</sup> Young argues that 'situations of political communication, in which participants explicitly acknowledge the other participants, are more substantively inclusive than those that do not'.<sup>282</sup> Furthermore, Young sees 'the moment of greeting' as a one off preliminary to discussion.<sup>283</sup>

- *Rhetoric*. Young's use of the term 'rhetoric' moves beyond the generally accepted usage of a set of devices used in speech to 'manipulate [listeners'] thought[s] and feelings in

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<sup>277</sup> Young (2000), p 77.

<sup>278</sup> Young (2000), p 61.

<sup>279</sup> Young (2000), p59.

<sup>280</sup> Young (2000), p60.

<sup>281</sup> Young (2000), p 58.

<sup>282</sup> Young (2000), p 57.

<sup>283</sup> Young (2000), pp 61 and 79.

directions that serve the speaker's own ends'.<sup>284</sup> Instead, Young argues for rhetoric as having inclusive as well as exclusive dimensions. In other words, how something is said can have a positive contribution to the fostering of inclusive communication.

This mode of communication is concerned with *how* something is said over *what* is said. This includes 'emotional tone' (passionate or dispassionate, for example), figures of speech (simile, metaphor, hyperbole, puns and so on), styles of speech involving, for example, humour, playfulness, and solemnity, and instances of point making that are not exclusively verbal. Young cites 'visual media, signs and banners, street demonstrations, guerrilla theatre, and the use of symbols in all these contexts' as examples of non-verbal rhetoric<sup>285</sup>. Finally, rhetoric ought to be designed for a specific audience and the 'orient[ation] of one's claims and arguments to the particular assumptions, history, and idioms of that audience'.<sup>286</sup>

Young views rhetoric as an unavoidable part of speech or discussion - the goal of a 'neutral' exposition of the arguments is simply impossible. So-called dispassionate speech is actually not 'neutral'. By appearing dispassionate, emotionless, and reasoned such a speaker, as Young points out, displays 'the rhetorical nuances of particular situated social positions and relations, which social conventions do not mark as rhetorical and particular in the same way that they notice others'.<sup>287</sup> In other words this is an example of a particularly exclusionary form of rhetoric, which can be used by those who wish to take and maintain positions of authority. As well as highlighting such exclusionary aspects of rhetoric, Young argues that rhetoric can also make a positive contribution to the fostering of democratic inclusion.<sup>288</sup> Such a stance, Young points out is not about 'a submission to the constraints and necessities of real life that ideally ought to be otherwise' but is rather a more 'positive claim' that rhetoric can have a real role to play in the fostering of inclusion in political communication.<sup>289</sup> Young defends this position in three parts.

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<sup>284</sup> Young (2000), p63.

<sup>285</sup> Young (2000), p 65.

<sup>286</sup> Young (2000), p65.

<sup>287</sup> Young (2000), p 63.

<sup>288</sup> Young (2000), p 64.

<sup>289</sup> Young (2000), p 66.

Firstly, ‘rhetorical moves’ would get an otherwise neglected issue discussed. Outside of the dominant, powerful figures in a forum, other views and issues may not be taken seriously, or even discussed. Outwardly, the silver-tongued and eloquent may produce an image of a forum characterised by ‘order’, however, this could disguise the exclusion of affected parties from having a voice. In such a situation

[d]emonstrations and protest, the use of emotionally charged language and symbols, publicly ridiculing or mocking exclusive or dismissive behaviour of others, are sometimes appropriate and effective ways of getting attention for issues of legitimate public concern, but which would otherwise not be likely to get a hearing, either because they threaten powerful interests or because they particularly concern a marginalized or minority group.<sup>290</sup>

Importantly, Young does not give the above *carte blanche*: ‘not every issue, position, or discourse that individuals or groups insist on having heard by speaking emotionally or engaging in rowdy demonstrations is legitimate’. Such ‘moves’ would be illegitimate if they did not live up to the values and norms that defined the deliberative forum.<sup>291</sup>

The second use of rhetoric relates to how a speaker presents his or her arguments or claims to a particular audience within a particular context. Young links this to a ‘public’ disposition. As a reminder, publicity refers to ‘openness’ in decision making arenas. Utterances must be ‘acceptable’ in the sense that the speaker does not impinge on the ‘worth and dignity of others’. How arguments, views and claims are framed and expressed, and even whether they count as legitimate, depends on how the speaker expresses him or herself, that is, how he or she employs rhetoric.<sup>292</sup> The third of Young’s ‘positive’ uses of rhetoric links the *process* of deliberation to the *outcome*. The ‘good rhetorician’, according to Young should be able to create a move on the part of the listeners from deliberation and reflection to action. Arguments, views and claims should all be presented in terms that attempt to ‘steer’ the rest of the forum towards developing

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<sup>290</sup> Young (2000), p 67.

<sup>291</sup> Young (2000), p 67.

<sup>292</sup> Young (2000), p 68.



an opinion, making a judgement, and coming up with a solution. The arguments should be presented and the forum should decide.<sup>293</sup>

Young's notion of an expanded approach to communication not only enlarges the scope of communication in deliberative settings, it also challenges many assumptions regarding relations and dispositions in such settings. In particular, Young is critical of prevailing assumptions relating to deliberative ideals that privilege 'unity', 'order', and that restrict deliberative communication to face-to-face interactions. I also raise an aspect of communication largely ignored by Young, namely listening.

- *Unity*. Regarding the assumption of 'unity', Young is critical of this on two counts. The basis of these criticisms are each relevant to issues of who is, or is not, part of the deliberative process. Firstly, a determination that unity has to be created or protected can affect what is discussed: 'thorny' issues, meaning those that could create division, may be avoided in order to maintain the appearance of unity. Some issues, views, interests, groups and individuals may be, to a greater or lesser extent, excluded from deliberation in order to preserve this image.

The second criticism relates to Young's view that in pluralist and structurally differentiated societies (and actually existing developed democracies can be described as such) the capacity for any degree of *genuine* common understanding may be limited. Pluralist societies, even at the small scale, are characterised by differences of many kinds. Young's thinking here is influenced by the idea of 'difference'. To Young, 'problem solving' in deliberative forums should not be weighted towards a striving for 'shared interests or common good', which may not have a direct bearing on 'solving conflicts in democratically acceptable ways'. A political context characterised by difference over unity would reflect more accurately the differentiated nature of people living together in what Hirst calls 'communities of fate'.<sup>294</sup> Thus, Young proposes difference as central to an inclusive conception of deliberative democracy. Inclusion is fostered through a

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<sup>293</sup> Young (2000), pp 69-70.

<sup>294</sup> Hirst (2002), p411.

recognition of differences in social position, power and culture. The notion of difference encapsulates the view that individuals belong to a network of group identities which help to constitute their unique identities, interests and outlooks. This can be thought of as a *resource* for successful deliberation as it allows alternative, perhaps previously excluded and hidden, experiences, to be heard and to contribute to problem solving.<sup>295</sup> However, according to Young, a minimal or occasional conception of unity is still required to sustain deliberation: ‘workable democratic politics requires of citizens some sense of being together with one another in order to sustain the commitment that seeking solutions to conflict under circumstances of difference and inequality requires’.<sup>296</sup>

- *Norm of Order*. According to Young, the assumption of a norm of order in many ideal conceptions of deliberative democracy can lead to the exclusion of those, who for whatever reason, do not adhere to prevailing and dominant norms of deliberation. Normative ideals of deliberative democracy that privilege argument as the cornerstone of deliberation can lead to a (mis)interpretation of the core meaning of inclusive deliberation. People - and their views - become divided into those who are decent, moderate and acceptable, and those who are ‘extreme’. Extremists can thus be categorised not only by their views but by how they express themselves.<sup>297</sup> Young argues that a model of deliberative democracy privileging particular modes of expression and behaviour is actually sanitising democratic deliberation by removing or sidelining what may be unorthodox, innovative forms of communication that promote inclusiveness.

- *Face-to-Face Encounters*. Young is critical of the assumption that face-to-face encounters are the only acceptable context for deliberation. She points out that ‘[m]any contemporary theorists of deliberative democracy at least implicitly assume that deliberations occur in a single forum where deliberators face each other directly’. Young argues that deliberative theorists are ‘bewitched by the image of small-group face-to-face interaction’, and this tends to blind them to thinking in terms of ‘large-scale politics’, of cities and states, which, according to Young are the places where ‘discussion-based

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<sup>295</sup> Young (2000), pp81 and 102.

<sup>296</sup> Young (2000), p110.

<sup>297</sup> Young (2000), p47.

democratic theory' ought to be focussing.<sup>298</sup> Another aspect of this focus on small-scale face-to-face interactions involves a 'centred' view of democratic processes, where 'a single deliberative body, say, a legislature or a constitutional convention, can take the society as a whole as the object of its deliberations, and discuss the best and most just way to order its institutions and make its rules'.<sup>299</sup> Young instead argues for a 'decentred' conception of political communication where '[t]he norm-guided communicative process of open and public democracy occurs across wide distances and over long times, with diverse social sectors speaking to one another across differences of perspective as well as space and time'. Thus, 'democratic politics must be thought of as taking place within the context of large and complex social processes the whole of which cannot come into view, let alone under decision making control'.<sup>300</sup>

- *Listening and Reflection*. There is another aspect of Young's conception of communication that she only partly explores and this is listening. Young discusses listening in relation to deliberative processes primarily as a way to notice and counter deceptive and manipulative actions. Young calls this 'critical vigilance'. When abuses are noted through listening they ought to be made known: '[t]he only cure for false, manipulative, or inappropriate talk is more talk that exposes or corrects it'.<sup>301</sup> The capacity to exercise critical vigilance may vary: some may be better able to listen attentively, decipher, and see through acts that run counter to inclusive deliberation.

Despite Young's discussion of critical vigilance, she, in common with many deliberative theorists, pays insufficient attention to listening as a mode of communication. In order to rectify this shortcoming it is necessary to turn to other democratic theorists. Bickford argues strongly for a close, 'equal' relationship between speech and listening. 'In taking listening seriously', Bickford contends, 'we need not elevate listening over speaking [...] but rather understand their interdependency, the dynamic between them, and the necessity for engagement in both modes'.<sup>302</sup> To Barber, listening, when *empathic* and *active* (that is,

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<sup>298</sup> Young (2000), pp44-45.

<sup>299</sup> Young (2000), pp45-46.

<sup>300</sup> Young (2000), p46.

<sup>301</sup> Young (2000), p79.

<sup>302</sup> Bickford (1996), p144.

actually making an effort to understand what is being communicated from the perspective of the speaker) can contribute to the making of a more inclusive forum in addition to critical vigilance. It would have a role in bridging differences of understanding, '[t]he empathic listener becomes more like his interlocutor as the two [speaker and listener] bridge the differences between them'.<sup>303</sup>

Listening is about the *reception* of communication and is therefore an aspect of communication. In a deliberative forum, exclusion could occur when people simply do not listen, or they pretended to listen. Not listening would undermine the efforts of those who were attempting to communicate across a gulf of difference. Those who did not listen would also remain aloof to such perspectives, thus excluding themselves. At any point in a deliberative process, the majority of those involved ought to be listening (that is, attempting to take in and understand what is being communicated). Listening is an integral part of a communicatively inclusive forum.

Related to listening is reflection. Again, Young has little to say about this.<sup>304</sup> Perhaps this is because 'deliberation within' seems to contradict the idea of deliberation as 'interpersonal engagement'. However, as Goodin and Niemeyer argue, reflection - through the exercise of imagination and empathy - can supplement 'talk'.<sup>305</sup> Without time for internal reflection, perhaps away from the immediacy of the deliberative forum, 'there is' according to Barber 'only the babble of raucous interests and insistent rights vying for the deaf ears of impatient adversaries'.<sup>306</sup> In a similar vein, Goodin argues for a place for empathic 'internal-reflective dialogues' as part of an inclusive ('communicatively present') democratic process: '[w]e make sense of others, their utterances and their actions, by mentally "putting ourselves in the other's place" in some sense or other'.<sup>307</sup> This suggests that active listening requires an element of reflection (and vice versa). This is because, as Goodin points out,

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<sup>303</sup> Barber (1984), p175.

<sup>304</sup> Young (2000), p68.

<sup>305</sup> Goodin and Niemeyer (2003), pp627-628.

<sup>306</sup> Barber (1984), p175.

<sup>307</sup> Goodin (2003), p61.

[i]n ordinary conversation [and in ‘political’ settings], people do not tediously elaborate complete syllogisms. (Nobody listens, if they do.) Instead, people characteristically talk more or less “loosely”. [...] “Catching the other’s drift” in ordinary conversation is substantially a matter of completing the other’s syllogism in your own mind, working out the various “implications” contained within the other’s utterances.<sup>308</sup>

There is, in other words, space for listening to, and thinking about, what others say as part of a conception of democratic communication.

As argued earlier in this chapter, communication is an aspect of all ideals of democracy, most notably those of a deliberative turn. Young’s conception of communication opens up all aspects of communication and sheds new light on the meaning and scope of political communication. A second aspect of democratic engagement, participation will be discussed next. What do ideals of deliberative democracy, Young’s in particular, have to say about participation?

#### - Political Participation

In Chapter 1, I explored how the terms ‘political participation’ and ‘engagement’ are often used interchangeably. In this thesis, the former is taken to be an aspect of the latter. Now I explore theories and applications of ‘political participation’, relating these to this particular usage of the term, whilst at the same time highlighting the place of participation in Young’s ideal account.

- *Theorising Political Participation*. Theories of political participation orientate around two poles. Parry *et al* see these theories being based around ideals of ‘participatory democracy’ and ‘realist’ theories of participation.<sup>309</sup> The former can be associated with participatory norms and values inherent in accounts of deliberative democracy, and the latter can be linked to a greater or lesser degree with ideals of liberal democracy. The discussion focuses on deliberative ideals, the theoretical foundation of my analysis of

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<sup>308</sup> Goodin (2003), p61.

<sup>309</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p5.

democratic life in Mossbank.

Deliberative ideals, including Young's own account, do not necessarily dismiss or ignore participation. Aspects of participation, such as voting, perhaps *the* act of participation in actually existing developed democracies, are discussed by Young.<sup>310</sup> To Young, at least, voting is an unavoidable requirement, especially in contexts involving large numbers of people and / or large geographical areas. However, normative accounts of democratic engagement in democratic processes are still primarily focussed on communication, with questions of participation relegated to questions of access to decision making forums. This is shown in Young's notion of 'external exclusion', where 'individuals and groups that ought to be included are purposely or inadvertently left out of fora for discussion and decision making', for example, the timing and location of decision making meetings can be serious barriers to participation.<sup>311</sup> Also, the formation of 'exclusive self-appointed committees that deliberate privately', and the domination of decision making forums by the better off, the silver tongued, the educated, and the experienced also count as instances of external exclusion.<sup>312</sup> All this can occur in a context of formal political equality, but other inequalities of a social and economic nature influence who can gain access to decision making processes. In such situations, usual in actually existing developed democracies, affected parties are unjustly denied access to decision making processes.

To what extent are acts of participation legitimate, acceptable and necessary in deliberative ideals? Deliberative processes may exist but can be exclusive, inhibiting access of some individuals, groups and views to decision making processes. Issues of access and the ability to 'do' and 'get' become important. Here, participation outside and against the deliberative forum - countering perceived forms of external exclusion - can be compatible with deliberative values and norms. In this vein, Young argues that

the deliberative democrat will likely join the activist to protest outside

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<sup>310</sup> Young (2000), p22.

<sup>311</sup> Young (2000), pp53-54.

<sup>312</sup> Young (2000), pp53-55.

exclusive and private deliberations. She exhorts the activist to join her call for deliberations whose proceedings are public, accountable and inclusive, and she allies with the activist in regarding deliberative processes as illegitimate unless they meet these conditions. She may consider activist protest a healthy means of deepening democracy, of creating open and inclusive settings of deliberative democracy.<sup>313</sup>

However, the approach to such participation has to be compatible with deliberative values. The activist has to be able and willing to justify his or her activities to others, in terms of highlighting the exclusiveness of a particular decision making process, and in the adoption of a ‘reasonable’ approach to such actions.<sup>314</sup>

Defining political participation has now become necessary. Not only is it necessary to separate the concept of political participation from concepts such as ‘engagement’ and ‘communication’, a more concrete understanding is required that is useful in the development of an analytical framework based on a theoretical position that is founded on Young’s account of deliberative democracy.

- *Defining Political Participation*. The term ‘political participation’ is so broad and encompassing that it is necessary to clarify its definition and utilisation within any particular context.<sup>315</sup> There are three points that should be considered when thinking about political participation in the context of this research. These considerations, along with the shorthand definition, are summarised in Figure 4.3.

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<sup>313</sup> Young (2003), p109.

<sup>314</sup> Young (2003), p107.

<sup>315</sup> Verba *et al* (1987), p46.

**Figure 4.3: Defining Political Participation**

- Political participation involves:
  - Accessing modes and opportunities of democratic engagement
  - Political participation is about 'doing' (process)
  
- Participation as an aspect of actually existing democratic engagement
  - Acknowledgement and accommodation of a wide variety of forms of political participation
  - Including less or non-democratic forms of political participation
  
- Political participation has the instrumental objective of 'getting' (outcomes)
  - Goal orientated
  - 'Successful' participation involves empowerment

Firstly, following Parry *et al*, I see participation as being concerned with acts and action.<sup>316</sup> It concerns democratic engagement that involves 'doing'. To participate requires some *action* or *acts* on the part of participators. However, there are 'acts' such as reading newsletters and newspapers, and taking part in informal discussions amongst friends, families and neighbours that I argue do not count as participation. To Parry *et al*, such acts, termed 'potential participation', are of interest only in relation to how close such 'passive' behaviours, and individuals, are to actual participation.<sup>317</sup> Such instances of potential participation - and here I agree with Parry *et al* - have little to do with acts of doing and getting, and gaining access and so cannot be considered as forms of political participation. I contend, however, that so-called potential participation is more appropriately discussed under another aspect of engagement, namely communication. Newspaper readers *receive* messages, for example. Whilst this may not count as an act linked to accessing, doing or getting, it certainly is an important part of communication.

In addition, I contend that participation involves accessing modes and opportunities of engagement. My inclusion of 'access' in the definition of political participation requires some elaboration as it adds to the more usual acts and activities-based definitions. Young

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<sup>316</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p6.

<sup>317</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), pp16 and 422-423.



discusses issues of access but in the context of her ideal of deliberative democracy. More precisely, Young discusses access in relation to what she terms ‘external exclusion’, referring to ‘the many ways that individuals and groups that ought to be included are purposely or inadvertently left out of fora for discussion and decision-making’.<sup>318</sup> Dealing with, or challenging external exclusion really has more to do with participation than with other aspects of engagement. It is, as Young alludes, *prior to* communication and representation, and involves acts - ‘struggles’ and ‘tasks’, for instance - orientated to ‘exposing and criticising’:

[m]any of the struggles within formal democracies concern efforts to expose such exclusion and press for institutional changes that will better ensure the real inclusion of more affected people in decision-making processes. One task of democratic civil society is to expose and criticize exclusions such as these.<sup>319</sup>

Secondly, it is necessary to remember that this research is concerned with exploring democratic engagement in Mossbank, an actually existing setting where there is likely to be a wide variety of forms of political participation. Therefore, the definition of political participation must be broad in scope. This is partly about acknowledging the developing scope of modes or forms of political participation in developed democracies.<sup>320</sup> This broadening of the scope of political participation within actually existing democratic settings involves two developments in particular. The first leans towards democratic innovation and new avenues of political engagement, and the other is characterised by a managerial or consumerist approach to political participation. The former emphasises activities outwith formal and established political processes, such as participation in single issue campaign or pressure groups as well as ‘experiments’ and ‘techniques’ that ‘offer citizens a chance to engage and influence those in power through deliberation and collective decision-making’.<sup>321</sup> The managerial approach is associated with consultation exercises, surveys, and opinion polls, running within, or parallel to, established forms of

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<sup>318</sup> Young (2000), pp53-54.

<sup>319</sup> Young (2000), p55.

<sup>320</sup> Wilks-Heeg and Clayton (2006), p102.

<sup>321</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp105-110.

participation. Here the emphasis tends to be on the achievement of results and less on drawing people into participative decision making networks.<sup>322</sup> Later in the chapter, I integrate notions of managerialist and innovative approaches to participation and engagement into an analytical framework. Additionally, ‘real life’ political participation can also include modes that are incompatible, or at least in tension, with democratic norms and values. For example, Verba *et al* discuss ‘ceremonial’ or ‘support participation’, where acts of participation such as ‘marching in parades, working hard in developmental projects, participating in youth groups organised by the government, or voting in ceremonial elections’ are orchestrated by political elites.<sup>323</sup> Whilst such forms of political participation are unlikely in micro-settings in developed democracies, it raises the possibility of other similarly ‘undemocratic’ forms of political participation taking place in such settings. These could include elites manipulating or dominating participative processes to ‘rubber stamp’ or ‘nod through’ ready-made decisions. This definition of political participation, even though influenced by deliberative preoccupations, has to acknowledge that real life participation will not always reflect deliberative or other democratic ideals.

Thirdly, I view participation in essentially instrumental terms. As well as ‘doing’, it is about ‘getting’. Outcomes of participation can be presented in broad terms.<sup>324</sup> People participate to preserve or improve desired outcomes. These can include narrowly self-interested goals or outcomes that encompass wider concerns, or even a mixture of both. To achieve an outcome is a sign of success, a sign that participation has paid off, that access has been gained, and ‘doing’ has become ‘getting’. It means that an individual is in a position to exercise power and influence.

Empowerment is closely related to how, and to what extent, an individual is engaged in processes of political participation. Routes to empowerment are, however, not equally accessible. Differences in resources, motivations and other factors amongst (potential) participants can affect who can be empowered in a given context. The exercise of power,

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<sup>322</sup> Newman (2001), p130.

<sup>323</sup> Verba *et al* (1987), p47.

<sup>324</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p9.

achieving empowerment, and meaningful participation is dependent on how individuals relate to the 'rules of the game' that shape political participation.<sup>325</sup> This can take the form of whether individuals can access and operate within the 'official' opportunities for participation, resist and change them, or circumvent them altogether. These 'rules' may mean that agendas are controlled by elites or that approaches to participation reflect established, taken-for-granted approaches. The extent to which individuals can access and meaningfully take part in established participative structures relates, at least partly, to Lukes' three dimensional view of power.<sup>326</sup> Here the emphasis is on the ability of one group (for example, elites, leaders and core activists in a small scale setting) to make decisions, control what issues are considered important, and create and embed norms of participation and democratic engagement that block others (for example, 'ordinary' people) from meaningful participation. Lukes' insights focus on issues of 'power over', the ability of one group to dominate another.

Within Lukes' view of power there is the possibility that power can be 'generated', that it is a 'fluid' and ubiquitous concept, that those without power have the potential to gain it. This involves not only a consideration of the extent to which one group can directly affect the actions, behaviours and attitudes of another, but also involves how power relations shape context, that is 'the capacity of actors to redefine the parameters of what is socially, politically and economically possible for others'.<sup>327</sup> Even this view of power still acknowledges the difficulties of challenging deeply engrained and taken-for-granted 'facts' of how to participate and engage.<sup>328</sup> However, the agency of the individual or group, an awareness of the constraints created by structure or context and their mutability, can make resistance and circumvention more likely: '[w]e make structural forces as well as being shaped by them. [We] can work to make changes by changing the rules, changing the flow of resources and, most significantly, changing the way we think about things'.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Taylor (2003), pp122-123.

<sup>326</sup> Lukes (2005), ch1.

<sup>327</sup> Hay (2002), p185.

<sup>328</sup> Taylor (2003), p89.

<sup>329</sup> Healey, cited in Taylor (2003), p92.

Power is required in order to gain outcomes from the efforts of participation. Except for those who fit comfortably into established modes of participation, this is a challenge. Power, however, is more than domination of one group by another. There is also scope for the powerless to resist, challenge, and even change approaches and assumptions about participation and engagement that perpetuate their exclusion, and in so doing to become empowered.

*Routes to Empowerment.* The notion of empowerment as an aspect of political participation can be developed through Hirschman's three categories of empowerment: exit, voice and loyalty. Exit is associated with the idea that 'empowerment is best developed through enabling people to exercise personal, individual control'. Exit refers to an individual either leaving a neighbourhood, an organisation and moving or joining another one. Voice refers to 'people being able to influence decisions within organizations and using that ability to exercise power'.<sup>330</sup> Voice can be developed and exercised either individually or collectively. It can refer to an actor within an organisation working to improve or alter how it works and what it does. Loyalty is 'that special attachment' to a place or organisation that reduces the urge to exit.<sup>331</sup> The extent to which an actor can exercise voice is, I contend, related to how included he or she is in a process, and by extension how 'inclusive' that setting is. Here I extend the idea of 'inclusion' beyond communicative contexts as an evaluative criterion measuring the 'quality' of democratic participation.

Taylor discusses how Hirschman's model can be adapted to a geographical context, for example, a neighbourhood or community.<sup>332</sup> I adopt this application of Hirschman's model, with some adaptations. People can become empowered through voice (with some being motivated by loyalty), and by exiting. There is a fourth aspect. It is variously referred to as 'neglect' and 'alienation'. In this case, an individual is disengaged from any form of political participation within the geographical area. Using my own terminology, as presented in Table 4.1, this would mean an individual retreating to a stage of, or

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<sup>330</sup> McLaverty (1999), p25.

<sup>331</sup> Hirschman (1970), p77-79.

<sup>332</sup> Taylor (2003), pp98-99.

finding him or herself in a position of, ‘non-engagement’. Although becoming disengaged is reminiscent of exit, it differs primarily because it disempowers. Hirschman’s idea of exit is empowering in the sense that exiting can bring change or improvement.

Across ideal accounts of democracy, the scope for empowerment differs, particularly in the case of voice. In liberal democratic ideals, voice may be confined to activities such as voting for representatives and taking part in consultations. In *genuinely* deliberative settings, the scope for the exercise of voice is expanded to pleas for access to and recognition in deliberative forums. Thus, opportunities to access and utilise voice in deliberative forums go beyond the limits of formal equality and are sensitive to economic, social and context-specific factors that would otherwise mean reduced opportunities to participate and the likelihood of ‘non-engagement’.

The definition confirms my conviction that participation is an aspect of engagement. Furthermore, I have augmented a basic definition - ‘doing’ and ‘getting’ - with additional criteria that create a dynamic and flexible concept of participation. It is a definition that is at once grounded in Young’s deliberative ideal and acknowledges ways in which participation has evolved in actually existing settings.

#### - Political Representation

The essence of the idea of representation concerns ‘the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact’.<sup>333</sup> In a strong sense this ‘something’ - perhaps an individual, a group, or an interest - is excluded from decision making because it is not actually present. However, in another sense, people and interests are indirectly present. ‘Making present’, can be thought of in terms of the relationship between the representatives and represented. There are a number of approaches to conceptualising this relationship. First, I discuss what I term ‘weaker’ ideas of representation, where the bond between the representative and the represented in

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<sup>333</sup> Pitkin (1967), pp8-9.

relatively weak and undeveloped. Usually, such relationships are associated with liberal democratic ideals, but are included in this discussion because they often are strong features of actually existing democratic engagement in developed democracies. Next, I explore how Young incorporates the idea of representation into her deliberative ideal through a 'stronger' representative-represented relationship.

- *'Weaker' Notions of Representation as Relationship.* Representatives, in ideals of liberal democracy can be described as 'trustees'.<sup>334</sup> The representative is still charged with the role of 'making present' the interests of the represented in the decision making assembly. However, the representative is able to use discretion and judgement when deliberating in the assembly as to the wider interests of those he or she represents. The representative, in a sense, already should have a clear idea of the common *interests* of the represented, and this could override the *opinions* of the represented.<sup>335</sup> The practice of 'party representation', particularly noticeable in contemporary developed democracies, is an important adjunct of this 'weaker' form of representation. Here, the representatives are aggregated into competing partisan groups bound by party discipline. There can be a tension on the part of the representative between the demands of being a trustee and of submitting to party discipline.<sup>336</sup>

Issues of proportionality regarding the extent to which representatives 'mirror' the characteristics of the represented do not register strongly in situations where there is a weaker relationship between representatives and those they represent. 'Mirror', or microcosmic, representation emphasises the composition of the representative assembly in relation to the represented. Importance is attached to how groups are 'made present' in a representative body through 'some correspondence between the social characteristics of the population at large and the membership of the legislature'.<sup>337</sup> Whether a representative body can be considered 'representative' in this sense rests not in some correspondence

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<sup>334</sup> Representatives can also be 'delegates', acting as spokespersons for those they represent. The relationship is based on a restricted notion of the scope of action open to the representative. The representative's role is to act as an advocate for the interests of those he or she represents, and to achieve goals set out by those who are represented. Birch (2001), p95.

<sup>335</sup> Judge (1999), pp49-50.

<sup>336</sup> Judge (1999), ch4.

<sup>337</sup> Judge (1999), pp21-22.

between individual representatives, who, as individuals cannot possibly mirror in totality the characteristics of a group of people. It rests, rather, on the 'representativeness' of the assembly as a whole. Arguments that favour paying attention to questions of mirroring or proportionality turn on the view that composition has an influence on the performance, activities, and decision making of representatives.<sup>338</sup> Phillips, in her argument for 'a politics of presence' draws attention to the lack of correspondence between representatives and certain groups (particularly centred on sex and ethnicity - the 'particularly urgent instances of political exclusion') in developed democracies.<sup>339</sup> Thus this interest in composition becomes bound up with the nature of the representative - represented relationship, the responsiveness of representatives to excluded people, and the presence of (usually excluded) social groups in the body of representatives. The greater the correspondence, the greater is the likelihood that the performance, activities and decision making of the representative body will correspond to, or take account of, the interests, opinions and perspectives of the represented.<sup>340</sup>

Liberal democracy, according to Phillips, emphasises a 'politics of ideas', that representatives are primarily concerned with 'a congruity in political beliefs and ideals, combined perhaps with a superior ability to articulate and register opinions. [...] The messages will vary, but it hardly matters if the messengers are the same'.<sup>341</sup> This attitude is reflected in contemporary developed democracies, where the social characteristics of the wider population, most notably in the areas of sex and ethnicity, tend not to correspond with the make up of representative assemblies. Deliberative ideals, whilst not necessarily embracing a 'politics of presence' unreservedly, can incorporate a 'stronger' approach to representation. I develop this point in the next section.

*'Stronger' Notions of Representation as Relationship.* Young uses the phrase 'representation as relationship' in a strong sense in relation to her ideal of deliberative democracy. It is an interpretation that leans towards a close, communicative and inclusive relationship between representatives and represented.

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<sup>338</sup> Judge (1999), p22.

<sup>339</sup> Phillips (1995), p47.

<sup>340</sup> Young (2000), p133.

<sup>341</sup> Phillips (1995), p6.

In her ideal, Young acknowledges the necessity of representation. To Young

[r]epresentation is necessary because the web of modern social life often ties the action of some people and institutions in one place to consequences in many other places and institutions. No person can be present at all the decisions or in all the decision-making bodies whose actions affect her life, because they are so many and so dispersed.<sup>342</sup>

Young identifies, correctly in my view, that representation is an unavoidable, even necessary, aspect of a democratic polity, whatever its size.<sup>343</sup> Representation is a feature of actually existing small scale democratic settings, such as workplace co-ops where ‘some delegation of responsibilities usually occurs in co-operatives larger than 15-20 members, when collective processes become less practical’.<sup>344</sup> Dahl, using simple arithmetic, gives a compelling illustration of this argument and how representation would occur as a practical necessity amongst small numbers of people:

[c]onsider a village [...] where the entire adult population consists of, say, one hundred persons, all of whom attend the meetings of an assembly. Suppose each is entitled to a total of ten minutes [speaking time]. That modest amount would require two eight-hour days - not impossible but surely not easy to bring about!<sup>345</sup>

Furthermore, even small political or decision making units grow and as they do so representation as an institution becomes even more necessary for the fostering and maintenance of democracy.<sup>346</sup>

Young’s stronger conception of ‘representation as relationship’ builds on the notion of trusteeship: ‘the specific function of legitimate representation consists in exercising

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<sup>342</sup> Young (2000), p124.

<sup>343</sup> Young (2000), pp124-125

<sup>344</sup> Carter (2006), p417.

<sup>345</sup> Dahl (1998), pp106-107.

<sup>346</sup> Young (2000), p124.



independent judgment but in knowledge and anticipation of what constituents want'.<sup>347</sup> Importantly, it also acknowledges concerns to do with group representation. However, Young moves away from a rigid conceptualisation of groups - as put forward by theorists such as Phillips - to a view that is more 'relational' and fluid. Here, 'any group consists of a collective of individuals who stand in determinate relations with one another because of the actions and interactions of both those associated with the group and those outside or at the margins of the group'.<sup>348</sup>

In order to include the many and differentiated views and perspectives within a constituency (that is, those who are represented), representatives should foster connections through establishing a 'mediated relationship both among members of a constituency, between the constituency and the representative, and between representatives in a decision-making body'.<sup>349</sup> Rather than rejecting the ideas of authorisation and accountability out of hand, Young argues that a close, inclusive relationship entails a '*cycle of anticipation and recollection in moments of authorization and accountability*' (italics added).<sup>350</sup> Young's point is that during processes of authorisation and holding to account all sides in the relationship should be aware that past and present actions affect the future of the relationship. '[I]n the representative relationship each carr[ies] traces of the history of relationships that produced it, and its current tendencies anticipate future relationships'.<sup>351</sup> Also, the representative 'ought to recollect the discussion process that led to his authorization and anticipate a moment of being accountable to those he claims to represent'.<sup>352</sup> Young advocates a separation of holding to account from processes of authorisation through inclusive and discussion-based processes of account-holding such as 'civic review boards, implementation studies, and periodic official participatory hearings'. Additionally, Young states that other means, separate from these 'official' processes, and founded in civil society, 'can further

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<sup>347</sup> Young (2000), p128.

<sup>348</sup> Young (2000), p89.

<sup>349</sup> Young (2000), p129.

<sup>350</sup> Young (2000), p129.

<sup>351</sup> Young (2000), p127.

<sup>352</sup> Young (2000), p131.

accountability by means of independent questioning, praise, criticism, and judgment’.<sup>353</sup>

In this first part of Chapter 4, I set out to explore the concepts of communication, participation and representation, each being a facet of democratic engagement. I framed the discussion around Young’s ideal deliberative democracy. This particular ideal account of deliberative democracy, offers, in my view, a strong theoretical foundation from which to develop a framework to explore democratic engagement in Mossbank. The theoretical discussion that has so far dominated this chapter has to be utilised to create an analytical framework. Presenting and justifying the operationalisation of Young’s theorising forms the remainder of the chapter

#### An Analytical Framework: Levels, Themes and Pathways

Within the thesis, the analytical framework can be seen as a ‘bridge’ between the theoretical discussions featured earlier in this chapter and exploration of Mossbank’s democratic life explored in Chapters 6 and 7. This requires that this section deals with issues of operationalising, or adapting and expanding, theoretical and normative standpoints expounded earlier on in the chapter. Throughout I emphasise links to the theoretical framework and at the same time look forward to its application namely the analysis of democratic engagement in the ‘discouraged’ micro-level setting of Mossbank.

The framework consists of two linked parts. The first provides a vocabulary and a qualitative measure of democratic engagement (in the shape of different ‘levels’ of engagement) to supplement my thematic approach to analysis. This thematic approach forms the second part of the analytical framework. It is based on the holistic conception of democratic engagement introduced in Chapter 1. Each theme, communication, participation and representation, becomes an analytical tool through the development of guiding ‘pathways’. These two aspects of the analytical framework allow a comprehensive, and theoretically informed assessment of the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank.

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<sup>353</sup> Young (2000), p132.

- Levels of Democratic Engagement

This part of the analytical framework is concerned with providing a consistent, comparable language that describes an individual's democratic engagement in Mossbank. It can be used in relation to the description and evaluation of individuals' engagement in the Mossbank regeneration initiative, or as part of the analysis of individuals' specific experiences of particular forms of engagement.

A brief outline of the development of my approach to measuring democratic engagement is necessary in order to place it in the context of Mossbank and to link it to other attempts to describe and measure engagement. Originally, it seemed feasible to focus on the Mossbank residents' association management committee, as this is the main route for residents to engage. Figure 4.4 shows this relatively simple categorisation of engagement.

**Figure 4.4: Simple Categorisation of Mossbank Residents**

<b>Label</b>	<b>Degree of Involvement</b>
Office bearer	Greatest ↑
Ordinary committee member	
Non-member	↓ Least

I reject this categorisation as too simplistic and restrictive. It is based on the 'official' aspects of the residents' involvement in the regeneration initiative and ignores the possibility of other forms of engagement. The categorisation assumes the management committee to be the only form of engagement. There is no allowance for individuals to move or change their approach to being involved over time. It also assumes that all those in each categorisation have a similar commitment to being involved in the residents'

association. For instance, all office bearers have the strongest engagement in the regeneration initiative, and that the other committee members and non-members have less. In other words, there is a strict, fixed hierarchy of engagement. Adapting theoretical perspectives linked to democratic engagement setting is a more fruitful approach.

I am also critical of Arnstein's often cited 'ladder of participation' model.<sup>354</sup> This model presents democratic engagement as a number of hierarchical levels. Those who participate ought to be striving towards the top of this ladder to achieve what Arnstein terms 'citizen control'.<sup>355</sup> This approach oversimplifies the relations individuals have with different levels and forms of engagement. Rather than viewing all individuals as striving for the top of some metaphorical ladder, I follow other conceptualisations of engagement that emphasise 'appropriate levels of entry' and engagement. Such approaches have greater relevance because they acknowledge that engagement can vary according to the issue, and the experience, abilities, and circumstances of individuals.<sup>356</sup>

What is required is a categorisation that is also able to capture the scope and dynamism of residents' engagement *across* the regeneration initiative over time, whilst maintaining a distance from any specific institution, form of engagement, or event. In [Table 4.1](#), I set out an appropriate and relevant approach to categorising engagement in Mossbank.

The left hand column in Table 4.1 shows six levels or stages of engagement. The right hand column gives substance to the labels by defining them with reference to the Mossbank setting. I derive four of the six stages from other reflections on engagement in small-scale democratic processes. The 'no engagement' stage is drawn from attempts to adapt Hirschman's model of empowerment to small-scale, geographically defined contexts. Another strategy is added to exit, voice, and loyalty, variously called 'alienation' and 'neglect'. I choose instead to use the term 'no engagement', it being contextually relevant to the framework and the research.<sup>357</sup> In order to reflect the distinctions between potential and actual participation (discussed earlier on in this

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<sup>354</sup> Arnstein (1969).

<sup>355</sup> Taylor (2003), p117.

<sup>356</sup> Taylor (2003), pp117-119. These approaches include Lupton *et al* (1998), and Jackson (2001).

<sup>357</sup> Hirschman (1970). This adaptation of exit, voice and loyalty is introduced earlier in the chapter.

chapter), and an expanded notion of political communication (expounded later in the chapter), I have also included the category ‘peripheral engagement’. This acknowledges the existence of a relatively ‘passive’ stage of engagement.

**Table 4.1: Stages of Democratic Engagement**

Stages	Definitions
Non-Engagement	Entrenched, ongoing non-engagement. A complete retreat from any engagement
Peripheral	Engagement tending towards being latent, or passive in nature
Reactive	Engagement is intensive, but temporary and issue-based
Arms Length	Can be passive but also includes elements of active engagement
Mainstream	Engagement more extensive and active than arms length engagement
Core	Active, ongoing and committed engagement

Some aspects of Bang’s discussion of ‘everyday makers’ are relevant to the definition of the ‘arms length’ stage, particularly *ad hoc*, impulsive, ‘hit and run’ approaches to engagement. However, Bang’s reflections are based on data from an inner city area of Copenhagen with a well established set of voluntary institutions, and a history of grassroots politics.<sup>358</sup> All this is in contrast to Mossbank - see Chapter 2. Other insights from Bang are relevant in the development of the ‘mainstream’ and ‘core’ categories, namely his category of ‘expert activist’. An expert activist, according to Bang is an ‘activist’ possessing necessary experiences and abilities, a cooperative attitude to working with elites, and with a focus on problem solving.

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<sup>358</sup> Bang (2005), p163.

Verba and Nie’s classification of the relation of individuals to political participation is, on the surface, similar to my developing categorisation.<sup>359</sup> It reflects different levels or stages of engagement. Table 4.2 summarises this typology. Though initially appealing, it is not entirely applicable to the micro-level, it being orientated towards engagement in ‘formal’ meso and macro-level politics. However, Verba and Nie’s typology does assist in filling the remaining gap between ‘non-engagement’ and ‘arms length engagement’. Here, the category of ‘parochial participants’ is useful. In my own categorisation, I use the corresponding term ‘reactive engagement’.

**Table 4.2: Verba and Nie’s Typology of Political Participation<sup>360</sup>**

Type of Participation	Definitions
Inactives	Little or no participation
Voting specialists	Voters only
Parochial participants	Participate in relation to specific issues only
Communalists	Occasional participation on broad issues
Campaigners	Participate heavily in campaigns
Complete activists	Participate widely

Missing so far is an explicit yardstick by which to measure the ‘quality’ of engagement. Here I adopt, and adapt, Young’s norm of democratic inclusion, introduced earlier on in this chapter. Young presents democratic inclusion as a ‘strong’ vision of inclusion and political equality, and is the foundation of her ideal account of deliberative democracy. This norm of democratic inclusion can be operationalised to act as the basis of a

<sup>359</sup> Verba and Nie (1972).

<sup>360</sup> Verba and Nie (1972), pp118-119, also Pattie *et al* (2004), p145.

qualitative evaluation of engagement in Mossbank. This requires that its scope is extended in two directions. Firstly, there is an extension of the concept, taking in participative as well as communicative aspects of democratic practice. Thus, democratic inclusion can be used to assess not only ‘process[es] of discussion and decision making’, but also the degree to which individuals are included in participative (and representative) aspects of democratic life, such as joining committees and attending meetings.<sup>361</sup> The second aspect requires an acknowledgement of ‘weaker’ and ‘non-ideal’ forms of inclusion and political equality existing in actually existing democratic settings. The notion of democratic inclusion - regardless of whether it is ‘weaker’ or ‘stronger’ in nature - is generally considered to possess positive qualities, even becoming part of the core of ideal accounts of democracy, or central characteristics and attributes of actually existing democracies.<sup>362</sup>

As this categorisation of levels of engagement unfolds, its particular applicability to Mossbank becomes apparent. Firstly, it is able to capture other forms and sites of engagement that are alternatives to, and even rivals or in conflict with, engagement through the management committee. Engagement, ranging between ‘core’ and ‘non-engagement’, can occur outside, as well as inside, the orbit of the management committee. Secondly, the categorisation can also describe the movement of individuals between different levels of engagement over time, with an accompanying assessment of how this affects an individual’s inclusion in Mossbank’s democratic processes.

This template for the description and assessment of democratic engagement is not intended to make judgements about individuals or different stages or forms of engagement as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Rather, the categorisation provides a consistent set of terms that facilitates analysis of democratic engagement in a given setting. It acts as an adjunct to the second part of the analytical framework that organises the analysis into a set of themes and pathways.

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<sup>361</sup> Young (2000), p23

<sup>362</sup> Young (2000), pp11-14.

#### - Themes and Pathways of Democratic Engagement

The three aspects of democratic engagement, namely communication, participation and representation are here reconstituted as analytical ‘themes’. Each of these themes is in turn divided into a series of ‘pathways’. The pathways delineate more relevant aspects of democratic engagement. The analytical framework is summarised as a diagram in Figure 4.5. The communication theme is the most important of the three themes, highlighted by my adoption of a deliberative or ‘communicative’ theoretical position. But participation, as well as representation, are still important in facilitating a comprehensive exploration of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Representation, as an aspect of democratic engagement contains elements of both communication and participation, and it’s ubiquitousness in developed democracies justifies its inclusion as a separate theme. I prefix communication, participation and representation with ‘political’. They are ‘political’ in the sense that each refers to aspects of engagement taking place in a context of uneven distributions of opportunities, resources and power and involving competing claims to change or preserve such distributions.<sup>363</sup>

The separation of the themes within the framework is somewhat artificial. In real world settings, democratic engagement is not experienced in this way: communicating, participating and representation crisscross. However, this is an *analytical* framework so such a separation is justified. It allows a clearer, more coherent exploration, analysis and presentation of data and findings. Throughout the analysis, presented in Chapters 6 and 7, I do not lose sight of their connectedness and overlapping relationship, the nature of which will become apparent as I introduce each of the themes.

The design of this framework, particularly the detail of the pathways, is guided by six criteria. These criteria - presented in Figure 4.6 - check the relevance of the framework in the development of the thesis and embeds the framework in the Mossbank setting. The framework assumes that Mossbank is essentially democratic, a point I discuss in Chapter 1. Related to this, the framework recognises the likely existence of less or non-democratic tendencies. Issues of scale - in terms of a relatively small number of people in a

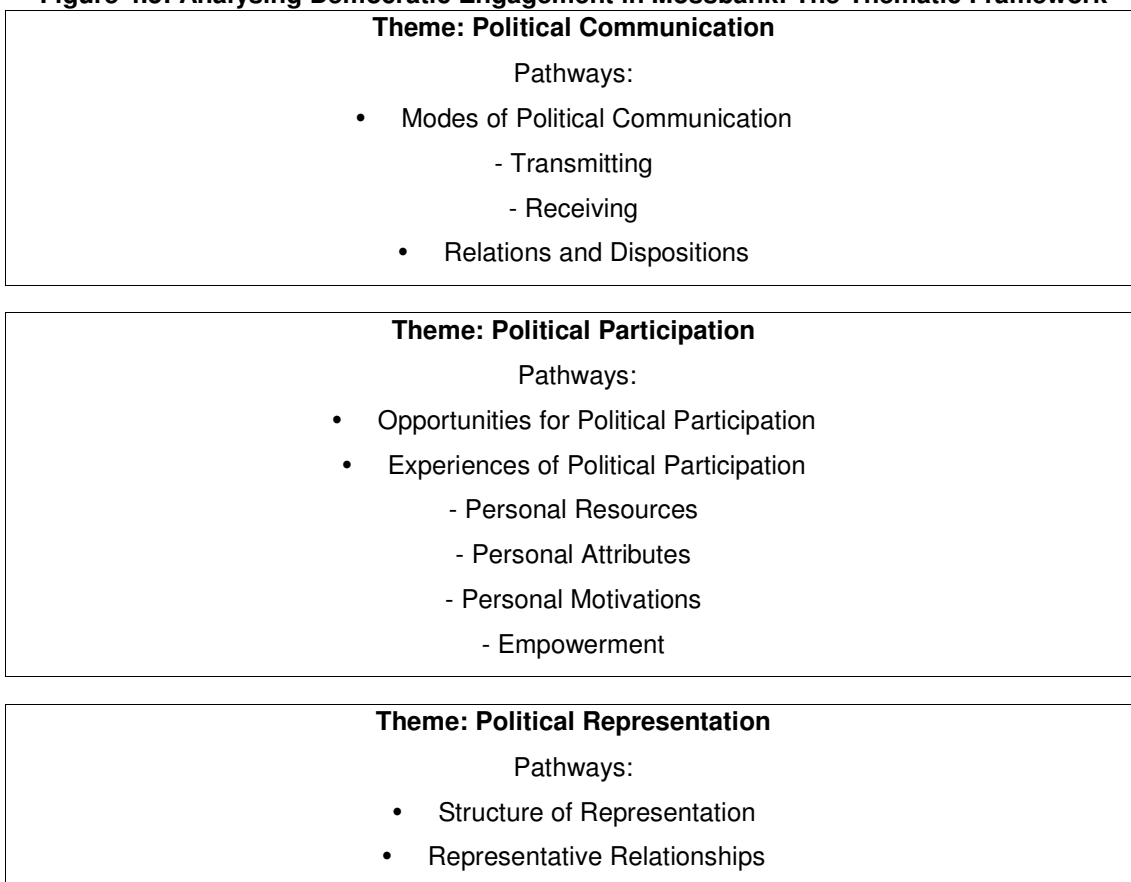
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<sup>363</sup> Young (1990), p9 and Hay (2002), p73.



geographically defined area - is an important consideration in the design of this framework. Sometimes the differences between small-scale settings and ‘mass democracies’ are stark, but in many cases these differences are more nuanced: the analytical framework acknowledges these different views. Not least, the existence of a number of arenas through which people can engage with democratic processes is assumed even in small scale settings.

**Figure 4.5: Analysing Democratic Engagement in Mossbank: The Thematic Framework**



The last of these guiding criteria concerns the role of structural and agential factors in the analysis of political engagement in Mossbank. To McAnulla, ‘[a]gency refers to individual or group abilities (intentional or otherwise) to affect their environment’. Hay points out that agency also implies ‘free will, choice or autonomy’. McAnulla relates

structure to ‘context; to the material conditions which define the range of actions available to actors’.<sup>364</sup> Analysing engagement from a broadly structural perspective concentrates on structurally determined ‘resources’ and constraints, and tends to underplay the role of ‘incentives’ and abilities (agential based explanations of engagement).<sup>365</sup> A focus on agential factors underplays the influence of structure and context. The framework reflects my contention that both structure and agency should be considered in my analysis. This builds on the idea that structure and agency, as analytical tools, are in fact intimately related.<sup>366</sup> This analysis thus assumes an interplay between, and the co-existence of, structural and agential factors as characterising democratic engagement in Mossbank.

**Figure 4.6: Guiding Criteria for the Design of the Thematic Framework**

1. Mossbank is embedded within an actually existing mature democracy
2. The acknowledgement of less- or non-democratic aspects of engagement in the regeneration initiative
3. An emphasis on all aspects of democratic engagement
4. Mossbank is a small or micro scale context
5. Within the Mossbank setting there are various democratic arenas
6. A consideration of structural and agential aspects of engagement

The basic structure of the analytical framework has been introduced: three themes designed to encompass engagement in actually existing democratic processes, supplemented by a series of pathways acting to initiate, but not overly constrain, the scope of analysis. However, a detailed explanation of the analytical framework is still required. It is important to be clear about the meaning of these themes and their related pathways: how do they facilitate my investigation into democratic engagement in Mossbank?

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<sup>364</sup> McAnulla (2002), p271, and Hay (2002), pp94-95.

<sup>365</sup> Pattie *et al* (2004),p147.

<sup>366</sup> Hay (2002), p116.

- *Political Communication*. Young's normative account of communication and her theorising on relations and dispositions in deliberative settings are operationalised - through a process of expansion and adaptation - in the analytical theme of 'political communication'. This process is influenced by two factors. Firstly, it reflects some aspects of my critique of Young's account of deliberative democracy, and secondly the requirement to turn the elements of an ideal account into components of an analytical framework.

The theme of political communication is divided into two initial pathways, 'modes of political communication', and 'relations and dispositions'. Even within a micro-level context such as Mossbank, there is scope for modes of political communication occurring in a number of arenas using different forms of expression. Linked to this is the forking of the pathways into 'transmitting' and 'receiving' elements, reflecting my contention that communication is not restricted to 'talk'. 'Transmitting' refers to the aspect of communication to do with conveying information, messages and perspectives to others, and can include speaking as well as non-verbal communication. The 'receiving' of such information refers to aspects of communication to do with being exposed to, and the target of, information, messages and perspectives. It can refer to listening and other forms of non-aural receiving. The second main pathway, 'relations and dispositions' brings in to the scope of the analysis the actual behaviour and attitudes of individuals towards one another whilst engaged in democratic processes or activities. The political communication theme and pathways are summarised in Figure 4.7. The process of adaptation and expansion of Young's ideal into this set of analytical pathways has to be spelt out and justified.

*Argument*. Young is critical of the significance given to argument in many understandings of deliberative democracy. Argument, in some circumstances may well be *the* mode of communication that facilitates inclusive deliberation. However, in other situations, where particular norms of articulateness, dispassionateness and orderliness dominate, it may harbour exclusive tendencies.<sup>367</sup> Despite these misgivings, Young still

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<sup>367</sup> Young (2000), p56.

places argument at the centre of her ideal. The problem lies in encouraging *inclusive* forms of argument.<sup>368</sup> I accept Young's views about argument: that it is a necessary component of political communication but that there are conceptions of argument that, however inadvertently, may foster exclusion. However, I have other views on argument that I want to incorporate into my thematic framework because, alongside Young's ideas, they relate to how argument, as a mode of political communication, exists within the real world of democratic practice.

In my view, it is necessary to move away from the ideal of argument given by Young as a *smooth* process of reasoning that lies between a premise and an outcome. It is also necessary to rethink processes of argument, or involving argument, as they can take place in arenas that are not necessarily based on talk. Argument in actually existing democratic contexts may take place in different arenas. Processes of argument may thus exist in different forms. The process of argument may be a drawn out affair, and may be intermittent. Furthermore, parts of the process may be 'hidden' and occur as part of informal relations and exchanges. Even the outcome may not be clear-cut or represent an endpoint. For example, the argument may not be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, or the process may have been curtailed. The argument may disappear only to reappear later, and, rather than reaching an outcome, it may be ongoing. I also want to make more than Young does of the interplay between different modes of communication. For instance, processes of argument may include, or intermingle with, emotional outbursts, the telling of stories and so on. There may even be occasions when 'argument' disappears altogether, being replaced by another mode of communication such as narrative.

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<sup>368</sup> Young (2000), p37.

**Figure 4.7: Political Communication: Analytical Themes and Pathways**



‘Good’ argument, resembling Young’s ideal, may take place, but just as likely, there may be processes of argument that are coloured by other modes of communication or distorted to favour selfish and strategic ends. Argument may also occur in a number of different arenas (some more visible than others), taking place through speech and / or the written word. These aspects of argument are part of this pathway.

*Communicating Perspectives.* Narrative, the expression of views using devices such as storytelling and the relating of experiences is, according to Young, an approach to transmitting otherwise unheard perspectives to others in the deliberative arena. Adapting this to the analytical framework requires an orientation to the actual existing setting and those within it who are tentatively attempting to communicate their views. Most particularly, this relates to those who are the subjects of what Young calls ‘pre-understandings’, that is, ‘empty generalities, false assumptions, or incomplete and biased

pictures of the needs, aspirations, and histories of others'.<sup>369</sup> I find Young's term 'narrative' too tied to 'talk'. 'Communicating perspectives', on the other hand, is a more suitable label for this pathway because it recognises that this bank of unheard experience could also be expressed non-verbally.

*Ignoring and Acknowledging.* This pathway expands and adapts Young's notion of 'greeting' or 'public acknowledgement'. The core idea of 'greeting' as an explicit acknowledgement of others in democratic discussion is, I contend, too rooted to Young's ideal of deliberative democracy. Operationalising greeting requires an acknowledgement of the possibility that it may occur in both verbal and non-verbal forms. I argue that the analytical framework has to assume a wider utilisation of greeting gestures. For example, Young argues that greeting precedes deliberation.<sup>370</sup> However, in an actually existing context this may not necessarily be the case. Greeting may occur throughout interactions between individuals. Symbolising this shift away from ideals of greeting (as verbal and preceding deliberation) towards the possibilities and uncertainties of being acknowledged in actually existing political communication, I call this pathway 'ignoring and acknowledging'.

*Language and Tone.* Young discusses rhetoric - the tone and manner in which a message is communicated - solely in relation to talk. Although she does mention 'visual media [and] signs and banners' and other forms of non visual aspects of communication that do not directly involve talk, Young actually has little to say about these forms of communication in relation to rhetoric.<sup>371</sup> In my adaptation, I emphasise the scope of communication in which rhetoric can exist, expanding it to take in written and other visual forms of communication. I agree with Young when she argues that rhetoric can be a positive factor in inclusive political communication.<sup>372</sup> However, I also wish to incorporate the opposing perspective, that rhetoric can also benefit self interested, strategic and exclusionary motivations in political communication, thus excluding others from democratic processes. Rhetoric is a somewhat misleading term to apply to this

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<sup>369</sup> Young (2000), p74.

<sup>370</sup> Young (2000), p79.

<sup>371</sup> Young (2000), p65.

<sup>372</sup> Young (2000), p66.

pathway. The notion of rhetoric is expanded by Young as a tool to give a voice to excluded people and perspectives, but all within the context of speech. It is less associated with other forms of communication such as the written word. Therefore, 'language and tone' is a more appropriate title for this particular pathway.

*Paying Attention.* I have spent some time setting out one side of political communication, namely modes that *transmit* views, perspectives, interests and ideas. There is another side to political communication that I want to include in the analytical framework, the *receiving* of political communication. How, and to what extent, messages are received has a bearing on the state of political communication and, more broadly, the state of democratic engagement in an actually existing setting. Messages may be transmitted, but are they received and digested?

As has already been pointed out, this aspect of political communication has been relatively neglected in both theoretical and empirical debates on deliberative democracy. However, following Bickford and her attempts to raise the profile of listening, and theorising on reflection - as discussed earlier in this chapter - I want to make space in the analytical framework, through the 'paying attention' pathway, to allow for an analysis of an expanded notion of listening.<sup>373</sup>

The 'paying attention' pathway includes listening and reflection in face-to-face contexts. To what degree does listening contribute to the quality of political communication in a given setting? In actually existing contexts, those who are not speaking may, or may not be listening. Perhaps they are not interested in what the speaker has to say; perhaps they deem what the speaker has to say and / or how they are saying it as unacceptable, so they 'switch off'. There may be an element of pretence at work, those who are not speaking may only be giving the impression of listening. Those who are not speaking may be actively listening, attempting, for example, to empathise with the speaker and to reflect. In any democratic forum there is, I contend, at any one time, a mixture of these degrees of listening.

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<sup>373</sup> Bickford (1996), Goodin (2003) and Goodin and Niemeyer (2003).

Bickford restricts her theorising on listening in democratic / political situations: 'Let me stress [...] that my goal in this project is to analyze listening as a distinctive activity and not as a metaphor for a variety of related activities - reading, writing, or interpretation'.<sup>374</sup> In this thesis, I expand the notion of listening to include 'related activities' that occur outwith face-to-face contexts in what I assume to be micro, but decentred, democratic settings. This expansion includes, for example, active reading and watching of printed media and events, including gossip and rumours. 'Listening' becomes less appropriate as a label for this pathway: one cannot 'listen' to a newsletter, for example. The term 'paying attention' adequately includes listening and reading and other ways that communication can be received. Of course, people may simply ignore, or scan such communications in a way analogous to not listening and are thus not 'paying attention'.

*Publicity and Accountability.* 'Public' relations and dispositions in relation to deliberative democracy have already been outlined in this chapter and emphasise accountability, justification of views, and a 'form and content' of messages that should 'aim to be understandable and acceptable' to others.<sup>375</sup> However, this is an 'ideal' view of publicity. In actually existing settings, such values may hold less sway - less importance is attached to being open and accountable for what is communicated. As well as 'ordinary' people, this is also the case for elected representatives. Such individuals are involved in regular, formal processes of accountability, justifying their past utterances and actions. Such reflections are internalised in this pathway, specifically the idea that notions of publicity and accountability may be weaker and dispersed in actually existing micro settings.

*Respecting Others.* Reasonableness, according to Young, is based on intimate and sustained forms of political communication with the purpose of creating a respectful relationship between deliberating parties. In actually existing democratic settings, other dispositions exist that are hostile to reasonableness. 'Politics' can be understood as an essentially private concern - '[c]itizens never have to leave the private realm of their own interests and preferences to interact with others' - with little or no requirement, or

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<sup>374</sup> Bickford (1996), pp2-3.

<sup>375</sup> Young (2000), p25.



motivation, to acquire or exercise reasonable dispositions towards others.<sup>376</sup> Furthermore, if discussion is replaced with the aggregation of private preferences, then being willing to listen, to accept criticism and to be open to transformation of views and perspectives can be construed as intrusive and disrespectful, and even as unnecessary in decision making processes. If there is room for reasonableness, it is limited to respecting this private space. However, it is possible to find an aspect of actually existing democratic settings, which may be more accommodating of Young's idea of reasonableness. Here I refer to the dispositions of representatives to one another and to those they represent. This relates to how representation can be conceptualised as a relationship and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. I call this pathway 'respecting others', reflecting the scope of what can count as 'reasonable' in an actually existing setting.

*Order to Disorder.* Young is critical of the assumption, often associated with deliberative ideals, that certain modes of communication are more acceptable than others in deliberative democratic settings. She makes particular mention of the privileging of 'civil' or 'moderate' forms of political communication as normatively superior to those forms that challenge, upset, or are different to these prevailing approaches to communication.<sup>377</sup> Here, deliberation is linked to 'orderly' forms of political communication and other forms are unacceptable, out of order, or are branded 'extreme'. Such an emphasis, according to Young, can inhibit communication. Those attempting to communicate their views can be categorised according to how they express themselves and this may mean the difference between being included in, or excluded from, decision-making forums and networks.

Young's insights, once again, need to be adapted. In actually existing situations, 'orderliness' or 'disorderliness' can take a number of forms ranging from the use of language to personal behaviour. Rather than focussing exclusively on prevailing norms of order in the various arenas of political communication in Mossbank, I assume that there are also underlying, alternative views about what are acceptable approaches to communication. In particular, I am interested in 'disorderly' relations and dispositions

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<sup>376</sup> Young (2000), p20.

<sup>377</sup> Young (2000), p47.

and how they are not necessarily detrimental to the quality of communication.<sup>378</sup> I take ‘orderly’ and ‘disorderly’ communication to be within the boundaries of *democratic* engagement because they have, to different degrees, concerns with how communication ought to be conducted. Also, breakdowns of any norm of order, an ‘anything goes’ state of affairs could occur, moving beyond the inclusive potentials of disorderly communication.<sup>379</sup> Such ‘messiness’ may have causes of a mundane nature such as inexperience, lack of awareness of norms or rules, lack of leadership or guidance, and fear of too much ‘order’. Here the boundary between ‘democratic’ and ‘undemocratic’ is crossed. In a setting that is essentially democratic - such as Mossbank - the collapse of norms of order marks a shift away from *democratic* engagement towards non- or anti-democratic processes, where notions of democratic inclusion come under threat.<sup>380</sup>

Regarding this particular pathway, I am interested in highlighting and analysing both the most ‘orderly’ instances of communication and those forms classifiable as ‘disorderly’, whilst also acknowledging the possibility of ‘non-democratic’ communication ‘beyond’ order and disorder. Reflecting this, I have opted to call this pathway ‘order, disorder and messiness’.

*Unity, Difference and Conflict.* Related to Young’s criticisms of a norm of order are her criticisms of assumptions of ‘unity’ in ideals of deliberative democracy. Young is critical of the emphasis on unity in processes of deliberation and as an outcome of deliberation, because it makes it more likely that some interests are kept off the agenda.<sup>381</sup> Attempts to create and maintain genuine, meaningful and substantive unity are difficult, even counter productive, to the fostering of inclusive deliberation.

Young’s emphasis on ‘difference’ over unity allows views that would otherwise be sidelined to come forward and be heard. Young develops this argument further by suggesting that difference, although laying bare all manner of disagreements and

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<sup>378</sup> Young (2000), p49.

<sup>379</sup> Young (2000), p48.

<sup>380</sup> My case for Mossbank being ‘essentially democratic’ is made in Chapter 1.

<sup>381</sup> Young (2000), pp41-44.

conflicts, is actually a resource that makes for just and inclusive outcomes.<sup>382</sup> Although Young argues that difference has an important role in an inclusive deliberative democracy, she does not discount notions of unity as a foundation of deliberation.

How do Young's insights regarding unity and difference relate to the analytical framework? When Young talks about unity and difference, she is saying something about the ways that people ought to interact in collective decision making. People can work from some sort of pre-existing set of common understandings, or they can work towards some shared goals or interests. Also, by embracing difference as a resource, people can work towards outcomes in which they are aware and take account of the multiple perspectives that exist within a particular context. Alternatively, unity can be imposed on a setting, masking conflict and denying difference. This sort of 'unity' is exclusionary and contrasts with the idea of common or shared understandings and outcomes. For the sake of 'unity', contrary interests are excluded. Reflecting such possibilities, this pathway is labelled 'unity, difference and conflict'.

Developing the analytical theme of political communication has involved an operationalisation - adaptation and expansion - of aspects of Young's ideal of deliberative democracy. Young's modes of communication, and relations and dispositions may not necessarily always relate to actually existing democratic processes - as the process of operationalisation underlines - but they still stand as the measure of what inclusive political communication can mean.

Analysing and understanding the state of democratic engagement in a particular setting requires more than an examination of political communication. In actually existing democratic settings, people also 'participate'. The next theme, 'Political Participation', is concerned with facilitating an analysis of 'accessing', 'doing', and 'getting' in actually existing democratic processes and settings.

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<sup>382</sup> Young (2000), p115.

- *Political Participation*. The theme ‘political participation’ is included to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of aspects of democratic engagement to do with accessing democratic institutions and processes, and attempts to act in and around such arenas with the aim of achieving a desired outcome. More so than in research into engagement in larger scale contexts, an approach to analysis is required that can capture the fine grained and detailed aspects of political participation in Mossbank. Two pathways, pointing towards opportunities and experiences of participation, begin this process.

*Opportunities for Political Participation*. Understanding political participation in a particular setting requires a knowledge of the opportunities provided, and created, for participation.<sup>383</sup> This relates to the ‘accessing’ and ‘doing’ stages of participation. Table 4.3 presents an indicative rather than comprehensive categorisation of modes or opportunities of participation in actually-existing developed democracies according to whether they are ‘conventional’, ‘managerial’, ‘less or non-conventional’, ‘less- or non-democratic’, or ‘innovative’. The placement of modes within particular categories does not necessarily indicate a fixed position for these modes. Context (that is, a particular situation at a particular time) is an important factor in deciding whether a mode is, for example, conventional or less- or non- conventional.<sup>384</sup> In structuring Table 4.3, I have in mind Mossbank, although it is also indicative of the scope of opportunities for political participation, and hence of democratic engagement, that can be associated with micro level contexts more generally.

In the literature relating to political participation in developed democracies, these categories are used to differentiate between different modes or opportunities of political participation. ‘Conventional’ is linked to prevailing, ‘traditional’, forms of political participation in contemporary developed democracies. These opportunities are relatable to democratic norms and values that lean towards formal conceptions of political equality and a weaker relationship between representatives and represented. Less- or non-conventional modes of political participation, although not in themselves particularly new or innovative, can be considered alternatives to conventional forms of political

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<sup>383</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p5.

<sup>384</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p18.

participation. Less- or non-democratic modes of political participation cannot be discounted in an actually existing, ostensibly 'democratic' setting. My guiding criteria - see Figure 4.3 - are designed to encourage, rather than inhibit, a full analysis of political participation and engagement. Sometimes individuals and groups will, and do, resort to illegal, or democratically illegitimate acts in order to achieve their goals. Including only 'democratic' and legal activities may overlook, and thus exclude from the analysis, those who will not, or cannot, 'play by the rules' of political participation in a given situation.

The 'managerial' and 'innovative' categories require some explanation. Arguably, the modes of participation that fall into this category are also 'conventional'. However, this category represents a relatively recent development in political participation linked to the idea of 'governance'. The term 'governance' can describe ways in which governments and governing have adapted, and continue to do so, in the face of developments in contemporary society. 'Governance' can also be used in a normative sense, but here I restrict the discussion to descriptive accounts of governance.<sup>385</sup> The relationship between state and civil society has altered and continues to do so, because of a growing perception that the state needs to enlist elements of civil society to carry out its obligations effectively, and because of the increasing unacceptability of 'top down' styles of policy making and implementation.<sup>386</sup> Governance can be visualised as a process of changing relationships between 'government' and 'the governed'. Different forms of governance can exist even within the same context.<sup>387</sup> There are three basic dimensions of governance. The first covers hierarchical, or top down, forms of governance. Secondly, managerialism refers to the adoption of market based methods in the development of participation in decision making. Thirdly, governance can refer to the development of policy networks, emphasising cooperation and collaboration in the shaping and implementation of public policy.<sup>388</sup> Within modes of political participation under the managerial category, 'ordinary' people tend to be viewed as 'customers' of policy makers and service providers and these customers are kept at a distance, having no direct and

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<sup>385</sup> Newman (2001), p16.

<sup>386</sup> Pierre and Peters (2000), p4.

<sup>387</sup> Newman (2001), p17.

<sup>388</sup> Pierre and Peters (2000), p7, Rhodes (2000), p56, and Newman (2001), pp4 and 17, and Bonney (2004).

binding say in policy decisions. Such notions of governance have, I argue, a part to play in categorising and accounting for the opportunities for political participation made available and created in Mossbank.

**Table 4.3: Opportunities for Political Participation in Micro Level Democratic Contexts<sup>389</sup>**

Category	Opportunities
Conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- voting for representatives</li> <li>- voting in a referendum</li> <li>- writing letters to newspapers</li> <li>- contacting representatives</li> <li>- attending AGMs</li> </ul>
Managerial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- taking part in consultation exercises</li> <li>- taking part in surveys</li> <li>- taking part in area forums</li> </ul>
Less- or Non-conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- signing or organising a petition</li> <li>- going on a public demonstration</li> <li>- joining a residents' group</li> <li>- attending public meetings</li> <li>- taking part in consultation exercises</li> <li>- taking part in surveys</li> </ul>
Less- or Non-democratic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- taking part in illegal acts</li> <li>- using physical force or violence</li> <li>- 'behind-the scenes' decision-making</li> </ul>
Innovative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- taking part in citizen forums</li> </ul>

There is another strand of political participation that I want to include, namely *innovative* forms of political participation. This strand of political participation emphasises a

<sup>389</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), Pattie *et al* (2003), Wilks-Heeg and Clayton (2006)

collective, cooperative approach to participation and democratic decision making, often making a conscious effort to introduce deliberative values and norms. Within developed democracies there is evidence that such approaches are on the increase.<sup>390</sup> Following Smith, I have used the term ‘citizen forums’ to refer to a number of similar forms of innovative political participation including deliberative opinion polls, citizens’ juries and consensus conferences.<sup>391</sup> However, associating deliberative ideals and processes with this developing strand does not necessarily mean that deliberation, or deliberative approaches, are unknown in the other categories of political participation as set out in Table 4.4.

At any given moment in a real world setting, not all of these opportunities presented or suggested in Table 4.4 are necessarily available or considered. This pathway highlights one way in which opportunities for political participation can be categorised. These opportunities are open to change over time and place, and this point is integral to the utility of this pathway. The growth in opportunities for political participation in developed democracies points to more entry points and ways of ‘doing’.<sup>392</sup> However, the growth in opportunities to access and take part in democratic processes does not necessarily translate into a highly engaged population. With this point in mind, there is another dimension of participation, namely how actual opportunities are experienced within the analytical framework, and whether ‘doing’ translates into ‘getting’. This is the focus of the second main pathway of the political participation theme.

*Experiences of Political Participation.* This pathway - presented in detail in Table 4.4 - draws into the analysis experiences of actual opportunities for political participation. What do residents make of the opportunities for political participation that are offered and created in Mossbank? What factors shape these experiences? How ‘successful’ are residents in these experiences? This pathway forks in four directions, inviting exploration of personal resources, personal attributes, personal outlooks in relation to empowerment or the extent to which attempts to access and ‘do’ result in successful outcomes. Each of

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<sup>390</sup> Power Inquiry (2006), p106.

<sup>391</sup> Smith (2001), pp81-82.

<sup>392</sup> Norris (2002).

these branches of the ‘experiences of political participation’ pathway widens and deepens the scope of my exploration.

**Table 4.4: ‘Experiences of Political Participation’ Pathway**

<b>Forks in the Pathway</b>	<b>Content</b>
Personal Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- educational qualifications</li> <li>- wealth / income</li> <li>- time</li> <li>- experience and knowledge</li> <li>- employment</li> <li>- networks</li> <li>- capacities</li> </ul>
Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sex</li> <li>- age</li> <li>- mobility /health</li> <li>- outsider / insider</li> </ul>
Personal Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- optimism and pessimism</li> <li>- trust and distrust</li> <li>- political efficacy</li> <li>- interests</li> </ul>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- voice</li> <li>- exit</li> <li>- loyalty</li> <li>- non-engagement</li> </ul>

Looking at the ‘content’ column of Table 4.4, some of the terms, ‘trust’ and ‘networks’ in particular, draw this part of the analysis towards the concept of ‘social capital’. In particular, it draws close to Putnam’s development of the concept.<sup>393</sup> Putnam orientates social capital towards participation in democratic processes. To Putnam, social capital refers to the ‘features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.’<sup>394</sup> This includes democratic institutions and processes: ‘The performance of our democratic institutions depends in measurable ways upon social capital’.<sup>395</sup> Largely as a result of Putnam’s work, social capital has become a topic much debated, utilised and criticised amongst social theorists

<sup>393</sup> See Putnam (2000), for example.

<sup>394</sup> Putnam, cited in Schuller *et al* (2000), p9.

<sup>395</sup> Putnam (2000), p349.



and researchers, therefore it is necessary to justify my rejection of social capital as a distinct feature of the analytical framework.

The popularity of the concept of social capital within and outwith social research is in a sense somewhat surprising given that there is considerable debate surrounding its definition and application. Many writers express concern on this matter.<sup>396</sup> Schuller expresses the nub of the concern thus: does social capital have ‘sufficient coherence and resilience to sustain the weight of expectation and interpretation placed upon it’ and ‘are there so many ways of interpreting social capital that they cannot be reasonably grouped under a single heading?’<sup>397</sup>

Central to such concerns is the view that social capital groups together a set of pre-existing concepts such as trust and networks (and sometimes norms, reciprocity and obligations) into a new concept. Schuller argues ‘there is no doubt that many of the essential features of social capital have been discussed by authors who never used the term as such, but who deal in a variety of contexts with the key components of trust, norms and networks’.<sup>398</sup> There is another related reason for rejecting social capital as an analytical tool in this research. It is acknowledged as a concept with wide application and scope and this raises the question of whether social capital has ‘sufficient coherence and resilience to sustain the weight of expectation and interpretation placed upon it. [A]re there so many ways of interpreting social capital that they cannot be reasonably grouped under a single heading?’<sup>399</sup> Maintaining as far as possible a separation between concepts or factors that contribute to the scope of participation in Mossbank is preferable to subsuming them under one label. Identifying which factors, or parts of the pathway, affect the scope of participation, remains possible. Furthermore, rather than sharpening the analysis, the adoption of social capital in the analytical framework would introduce into the analysis controversies and debates over the definition, application and utility of the concept. It is important not to let the current popularity of social capital stand as the

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<sup>396</sup> For example, Woolcock (1998), Schuller *et al* (2000), Fine (2001), and Smith and Kulynych (2002).

<sup>397</sup> Schuller (2000), p29.

<sup>398</sup> Schuller (2000), p28.

<sup>399</sup> Schuller (2000), p29.

justification for its use in this research. Rather, it is better to ask what social capital, however defined, operationalised and criticised can give to the analysis.

*Resources, Attributes, and Motivations.* The focus on personal resources, attributes and motivations is influenced by the approach adopted by Parry *et al.*<sup>400</sup> Here the focus is on structural explanations, factors related to the context that individuals find themselves in. As components of the analytical framework, these facilitate an analysis of the mainly structural reasons behind individuals' experiences of the opportunities for political participation existing in Mossbank. As well as factors relating directly to actual opportunities for political participation, socio-economic factors and context-specific issues to do with, for instance, space and boundaries can be included. Importantly, my recognition of the nature of the structure - agency debate (discussed earlier in this chapter), does not exclude from the analysis agential based factors shaping experiences of political participation.

'Personal resources' refers to material and non-material resources that individuals possess that affect individual ability to participate and their overall experiences of participation.<sup>401</sup> Here, following Parry *et al.*, I include education and training, wealth and income, experience, knowledge and skills, employment, time and networks. I have chosen to give less emphasis to wealth and income in my analysis because Mossbank is, according to data presented in Chapter 2 (Tables 2.11 to 2.14, and 2.17) an area where incomes tend to be less than is typical in Scotland. Therefore, it is harder to contrast the ways that richer and poorer people are engaged and included. The second aspect of my approach to analysing experiences of participation group together characteristics to do with individual attributes.<sup>402</sup> Gender, age, mobility, health and perceptions of being 'local' are counted as particularly relevant. The third aspect of this pathway, 'personal motivations', relates to the drive or impulse to participate. What triggers the impulse to participate, and just as importantly, why are such impulses absent in so many?<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), part II.

<sup>401</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), pp64-65 and Pattie *et al* (2004), p162.

<sup>402</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p143.

<sup>403</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), ch8.

*Empowerment.* 'Empowerment' through political participation is an important aspect of the experience of participation. When viewed in instrumental terms, becoming empowered - being able to exercise influence - is a measurement of success: 'accessing' and 'doing' has reaped the harvest of 'getting'. Only some individuals achieve such a position, and this may not necessarily be sustainable over time. An individual's endowment of personal resources, attributes and motivations play a defining role in their experiences of participation. How empowerment is achieved, and who manages to do this, within particular opportunities for participation, are important factors in assessing the state of political participation in an actually existing setting such as Mossbank. The 'empowerment' pathway reflects the adaptation of Hirschman's model presented earlier in this chapter.

- *Political Representation.* There are two pathways associated with the theme of 'political representation', 'structure of representation' and 'representative relationships'. The first pathway points towards the formal and 'official' mechanisms of representation in Mossbank, namely becoming a representative, the duties and obligations of being a representative, and the expectations of the represented. The second pathway relates to actual experiences of being a representative and a 'constituent'. These pathways invite exploration of both the formal and informal aspects of being a representative, of being represented and of the relationship between these roles.

As I have previously argued, representation is a 'special' aspect of engagement in developed democracies. It is a relationship, whatever its state, that is defined and carried on through communication and participation. Earlier in this chapter, I presented different theoretical conceptualisations of representation, from trustee-based relationships, to Young's sketch of a 'mediated relationship'. The correspondence between representatives and the represented, in terms of how the former 'mirrors' certain demographics of the latter was also discussed. The two pathways, particularly the second, are designed to use these theoretical debates as tools to analyse representation in Mossbank. Different conceptualisations of representation share the assumption that representation is only of importance, or even exists, in larger scale contexts. The analytical framework, not least in

relation to the 'political representation' theme, is geared towards an analysis of a micro-level context. The concerns and issues voiced by theorists of representation may not necessarily tally with concerns that emerge during the actual analysis. Present in these pathways, and in the analytical framework more generally, is this idea that the micro-level can be 'different'.

### Conclusion

This chapter sets out both the theoretical and analytical frameworks of the thesis. A case was made for Young's account of deliberative democracy as the theoretical standpoint of the thesis. The relationship of this normative ideal to engagement was then explored through a close examination of the place of communication, participation and representation within her theory.

The three analytical themes, and the related pathways, have been presented, supported by a vocabulary of description and assessment. Together these are the foundations of my analysis of the state of political engagement in Mossbank. The themes are tied to relevant theoretical debates, but at the same time are orientated as much as possible to an actually existing micro level context. In this way, the analysis and resulting understanding of the state of engagement in Mossbank remains 'theoretically informed'.

Considered in its entirety, the analytical framework prepares the way for the exploration of aspects of engagement in Mossbank 'beneath' the formal and visible. For instance, the framework enables a structured and penetrating exploration of communication across Mossbank, aware that receiving, as well as transmitting, can influence the 'quality' of engagement. It also facilitates an investigation of the factors shaping the scope of opportunities for participation, and how those who are supposed to take part react to them. Additionally, the framework, by thinking in terms of representation as relationship, guides me towards exploring the state of representation in Mossbank by analysing its formal foundations and the effect these have on the deeper, less obvious experiences of those who are representatives and represented. Finally, the framework assumes that

analysing engagement in an actually existing setting has to allow for, and even recognise, the importance of the dynamic, 'messy' and unpredictable elements of an actually existing democratic setting.

Chapters 6 and 7 present my exploration of democratic engagement in Mossbank utilising the analytical framework. Chapter 6 considers participation and representation in Mossbank. Chapter 7 focuses on political communication, that element of engagement that provides the most valuable insights into democratic life in Mossbank. Within each of the chapters, the analysis and discussion are organised around the relevant pathways. However, before moving onto wider and deeper analysis of democratic engagement in Mossbank, the following chapter sheds light on Mossbank residents' understanding of the scope and possibilities of democracy and democratic engagement that supports my choice of adopting Young's account of deliberative democracy as my theoretical position in this thesis.

## Chapter 5

### Ideals of Democratic Engagement in Mossbank

This thesis is primarily concerned with exploring and understanding actually existing democratic engagement in Mossbank. This chapter takes a slightly different approach. It is concerned with shedding light on the meanings that Mossbank residents attach to the *concept* of democracy, to democratic engagement in particular. People living in close association with, or desiring, democratic institutions and processes must also have ideas about the way democracy *ought to be*. To what extent do *normative* conceptions of democracy held by Mossbank residents correspond to actually existing developments? Does the degree of correspondence, or the extent of divergence, indicate the influence of constraining and limiting factors on the shape of democratic engagement in Mossbank? The data presented in this chapter - data collected from Mossbank residents - highlights more strongly than any arguments so far put forward for giving deliberative democracy such a central position in this thesis because it indicates that Mossbank residents have a (suppressed) normative leaning towards deliberative forms of democratic decision making.

The chapter is divided into a number of sections. First, I discuss the source of the data on which this chapter concentrates. Next, I present and analyse the data. The remainder of the chapter is taken up with interpreting the data, and how the findings contribute to the development of the thesis.

#### The Question

The data presented in this chapter is derived from question 17a included of the questionnaire distributed to Mossbank residents, as reproduced in Appendix A. The question has been designed to encourage residents to think about the *idea* of democracy in abstract, 'ideal' terms. The question presents a spectrum of normative positions in simple, though not simplistic, language. The question asks respondents to react to eleven statements by ticking a box beside those they agree with. Respondents were invited to

tick as many boxes as they felt appropriate. They were also asked to include additional written comments.<sup>404</sup> Including such a question in this questionnaire was a bold step, for at least two reasons. Compared to the other questions in the questionnaire, question 17a is long and complex. The mere appearance of the question and its preamble risked a high incidence of non-completion on the part of respondents. Secondly, how many people are willing, or able, to think so abstractly about such a taken-for-granted term? This is especially the case in Mossbank with the socio-economic profile of its population.<sup>405</sup> Less developed cognitive capacities, less (formal) education, lower feelings of efficacy, and less experience of thinking abstractly or normatively could affect the amount, and quality, of data generated by question 17a. My doubts about including this question, however, have been unfounded. Residents who completed the questionnaire seemed to have taken question 17a in their stride. As is shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, approximately ninety percent of those who returned a questionnaire responded to this question.

As well as having concerns about including such a question in the questionnaire, I also had concerns about its length and complexity. In designing question 17a, I had to balance conflicting requirements. On the one hand, the question had to be understandable to the intended audience, but at the same time, I could not put too much distance between the statements and their normative / theoretical roots. My approach to reconciling these needs involved ‘translating’ a series of normative positions, from liberal democratic and deliberative democratic accounts, into a set of statements presented in ‘everyday’ language. The statements grouped according to ideal accounts are presented in Figure 5.1. The statements are divided almost equally between those pointing towards more participative and deliberative norms and values and those echoing key liberal democratic norms and values.

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<sup>404</sup> Very few additional written comments were made and so are not considered.

<sup>405</sup> Refer to Chapter 2 for an account of Mossbank’s socio-economic profile.

**Figure 5.1: The Statements in Questionnaire Question 17a in Relation to Ideal Accounts of Democracy**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Liberal Democracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I think democracy should be about having a say in matters that affect me</li><li>- I think democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of the ones that are no good</li><li>- I think democracy should be about going along with the views of the majority<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I think democracy should be about everybody having the vote</li><li>- I think democracy should be about political parties competing for votes</li></ul></li><li>- I think that in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Deliberative Democracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I think democracy should be about co-operating with others</li><li>- I think democracy should be about reaching agreement through open discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I think that democracy should be about letting everybody have an equal say</li><li>- I think that democracy should be about making room for minority viewpoints</li></ul></li><li>- I think that in a democracy each person should try to think about the good of the community rather than about their own good</li></ul>
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The division of these statements into those associated with liberal democracy and deliberative democracy relates to an argument put forward in Chapter 4. These two terms encapsulate in a streamlined manner the terrain of contemporary democratic theorising. Liberal democracy tends towards views of political equality and engagement that are more formal; deliberative democracy contains values and norms that see democratic equality and engagement in more substantive terms. The ‘fit’ of these statements into these two categories is a matter of interpretation, depending on how one views the nuances of meaning inherent in each statement. However, the division of the statements shown in Figure 5.1 is, in my view, generally uncontroversial.



### The Responses

The data is best presented in two tables. The first - Table 5.1 - presents responses from those who are not members of the management committee. Table 5.2 summarises how management committee members responded to the questions. I have chosen not to combine the data to avoid the over representation of responses from management committee members, and to highlight differences in the responses between committee members and 'ordinary' residents.

For a number of reasons, the data linked to these statements can be used to create no more than an *impression* of how Mossbank residents think normatively about democracy and democratic engagement. Firstly, the sample is small, approximately three percent of Mossbank's adult population - too small to make substantive claims about the character of normative conceptions of democracy amongst Mossbank residents. Secondly, the interpretation of these statements by both the individual residents and me, the researcher, could differ. As I have already mentioned, the statements can be criticised as being open to various interpretations. Finally, there are limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from one question and eleven statements concerning such a complex and nuanced area as normative conceptions of democracy. However, this data is still worth exploring because it may highlight a 'gap' between what 'is' and conceptions of what 'ought to be'.

My approach to interpretation ties the discussion of the data closely to the argument introduced in Chapter 1 and further discussed in Chapter 4 for a 'holistic' notion of democratic engagement. The contention that engagement consists of communicative, participative and representative aspects is at the centre of my approach to analysis. Continuing this approach here allows comparisons to be made with the actual 'reality' of democracy in Mossbank as explored in Chapters 6 and 7 and the responses to question 17a. As Figure 5.2 shows, I have organised the statements into four groups. The first group concerns engagement, particularly motivations to 'take part'. The remaining groups are arranged according to the three aspects of engagement.

**Table 5.1: Responses to Statements in Questionnaire Question 17a: Mossbank Residents**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Number of Responses Agreeing with Statements</b>
I think democracy should be about having a say in matters that affect me	21
I think democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of the ones that are no good	12
I think democracy should be about cooperating with others	13
I think democracy should be about going along with the views of the majority	4
I think democracy should be about reaching agreement through open discussion	25
I think that democracy should be about letting everybody have an equal say	24
I think democracy should be about everybody having the vote	15
I think that democracy should be about making room for minority viewpoints	12
I think democracy should be about political parties competing for votes	4
I think that in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders	3
I think that in a democracy each person should try to think about the good of the community rather than about their own good	26

Total number of questionnaires: 41

Number of questionnaires with no response to this question: 4

**Table 5.2: Responses to Statements in Questionnaire Question 17a: Management Committee Members**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Number of Responses Agreeing with Statements</b>
I think democracy should be about having a say in matters that affect me	8
I think democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of the ones that are no good	1
I think democracy should be about cooperating with others	4
I think democracy should be about going along with the views of the majority	4
I think democracy should be about reaching agreement through open discussion	6
I think that democracy should be about letting everybody have an equal say	7
I think democracy should be about everybody having the vote	6
I think that democracy should be about making room for minority viewpoints	3
I think democracy should be about political parties competing for votes	3
I think that in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders	1
I think that in a democracy each person should try to think about the good of the community rather than about their own good	5

Total number of questionnaires: 9

Number of questionnaires with no response to this question: 0

**Figure 5.2: Statements in Questionnaire Question 17a Thematically Organised**

<p><b>Motivation for Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I think democracy should be about having a say in matters that affect me</li> <li>- I think that in a democracy each person should try to think about the good of the community rather than about their own good</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I think democracy should be about going along with the views of the majority</li> <li>- I think that democracy should be about reaching agreement through open discussion</li> <li>- I think that democracy should be about letting everybody have an equal say</li> <li>- I think that democracy should be about making room for minority viewpoints</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I think democracy should be about cooperating with others</li> <li>- I think democracy should be about everybody having the vote</li> <li>- I think democracy should be about political parties competing for votes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I think that in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders</li> <li>- I think democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of the ones that are no good</li> </ul>

My approach to analysing this data involves presenting a set of comments relating to each of the four sets of statements and the corresponding levels of responses. It is important that the statements be not considered in isolation. Instead, a clearer impression is arrived at by discussing the data in each thematic category together.

- Motivation for Engagement

Table 5.1 shows that about half of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘democracy should be about having a say in matters that affect me’. Almost all the management committee members agreed with this statement - see Table 5.2. The second statement in this category - ‘in a democracy each person should try to think about the good of the

community rather than about their own good' - received a response from almost two thirds of residents. The rate of responses from members of the management committee is slightly lower: five out of the nine members agreed with the statement.

#### - Communication

The four statements in this group relate to different aspects of communication. The statement 'I think that democracy should be about going along with the views of the majority' refers to ideas of majoritarianism and the aggregation of preferences as ideal approaches to decision making - communication is limited to the expression of views. Table 5.1 shows that just ten percent of respondents agreed with the statement. However, almost half of respondents from the management committee linked this idea to their normative ideal of democracy. In each case, however, less than half of respondents were attracted to the statement. The statement 'democracy should be about making room for minority viewpoints' suggests a greater role of communication in democratic engagement, raising the idea of 'difference as a resource', an idea discussed in Chapter 4. In relation to 'ordinary' residents, about one third of respondents agreed with this statement. A similar proportion of members of the management committee indicated their agreement with this statement.

The idea of democratic inclusion as an integral part of democratic decision making is alluded to in the statement, 'democracy should be about reaching agreement through open discussion'. Table 5.1 shows almost two thirds of respondents viewed this statement as part of their ideal of democracy. Table 5.2 indicates a proportionate number of management committee members agreed with the statement. A second statement touches on inclusion, this time in relation to the actual process of communication - 'I think that democracy should be about letting everybody have an equal say'. The responses to this statement, from both 'ordinary' residents and members of the management committee are broadly similar to the previous statement.

#### - Participation

The statement 'I think that democracy should be about political parties competing for

votes' suggests a Schumpeterian view of democratic participation, one that is essentially 'passive', limited to choosing in a competition for votes between potential representatives. Table 5.1 shows a low level of agreement with this statement, just ten percent. A slightly higher proportion of management committee members agreed with the statement.

A more participative and less individualistic view of participation is raised in the statement 'democracy should be about cooperating with others'. About one third of 'ordinary' residents agreed with this statement. A slightly greater proportion of committee members supported the statement.

Formal political equality in a democratic context, captured in the statement, 'democracy should be about everybody having the vote' attracted a surprisingly low level of support - a point I return to later in this chapter. Table 5.1 indicates that less than forty percent of respondents agreed with this statement. A greater proportion of management committee members - a firm majority in fact - supported the statement.

#### - Representation

The statement 'I think that democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of ones that are no good' points to a representative relationship built solely around occasional but regular moments of authorisation and accountability. Twenty nine percent of 'ordinary' residents agreed with the statement. Table 5.2 indicates an even lower level of agreement from members of the management committee - just one respondent indicated support. The second statement that 'in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders' suggests a trustee or delegate role for representatives between moments of authorisation and holding to account. Again, just one respondent from the management committee agreed with the statement. The response amongst 'ordinary' residents was also low at just seven percent, or three responses out of 41.

### An Interpretation

What claims can I make about Mossbank residents normative conceptions of democracy and democratic engagement based on the preceding analysis? As already stated, I want to interpret this data with a view to gaining an impression of Mossbank residents' normative conceptions of democratic engagement. Overall, these data show that the residents' normative account of democracy is complex. The data reveals a certain degree of contradiction as well as continuity. I shall highlight these contradictions and continuities, before arriving at a view of the general nature of residents' normative conception of democratic engagement.

In relation to motivations for engagement, responses to the two statements reveal no clear cut leaning towards a normative conceptualisation based on self-interest or more civically minded impulses on the part of either 'ordinary' residents or members of the management committee. A shared notion of what ought to drive participation is not obvious from the data. Perhaps, ideals according to self-interested and civically minded impulses coexist, or there may be a split amongst residents regarding what ought to motivate participation. Within the management committee, there is stronger evidence for the claim that self interested and civically minded motivations ought to coexist.

The first pair of statements that I have linked to communication, those to do with 'going along with the views of the majority' and 'making room for minority viewpoints' throw up seemingly contradictory responses that require comment. Both statements attract a relatively small number of responses. Therefore, it would seem that they do not have a strong influence on how Mossbank residents see ideals of democratic engagement. But what is puzzling is that the direction of normative ideals suggested by the responses point in opposing directions, towards a liberal democratic view, and a deliberative democratic account. Both statements are, I claim, unattractive for paradoxical reasons. One - 'going along with the views of the majority' - is easily associated with established democratic processes and is therefore seen as somehow defective and limited. The other - 'making room for minority viewpoints' - may undermine deeply engrained notions of majoritarianism. The structure of the questions does not allow respondents to explore the

relationship between these statements. Responses to the two statements relating to inclusion reflect a relatively consistent aspect of residents' normative ideals. Across both 'ordinary' residents and management committee members, there arises again the possibility of a split amongst residents concerning substantive inclusion in a normative conception of communication.

The low level of responses to the statement, included in the 'participation' category about 'everybody having the vote' is, as I noted earlier, surprising considering that Mossbank exists in an developed democracy where political equality, especially through equal access to the vote, is firmly embedded. Therefore, the relatively low level of responses to this statement cannot be taken on face value, that the majority of respondents (and Mossbank residents) do not include 'everybody having the vote' in their normative conception of democracy. I can raise at least three possible explanations for this response that only further research can support or dismiss. Firstly, respondents were focussed on aspects of their normative accounts 'beyond' formal political equality; secondly, formal political equality, though necessary is considered not to be the endpoint of democratic development; and thirdly, the statement had been misinterpreted by some respondents. Perhaps my use of the word 'everybody' is too wide ranging and open to various interpretations.

The other two statements in this category, together with their responses, to do with 'cooperating with others' and 'political parties competing for votes' again raise apparent contradictions. The responses to these statements indicate a consecutive rejection of both liberal democratic and deliberative democratic approaches to participation. As I have already stated, understanding these responses fully will require further research. Now I can only speculate that in the former statement respondents were reacting to a relatively unfamiliar idea in democratic processes, that of cooperation. It may be that other research strategies would provide more meaningful data here. The 'alternative' to cooperation, being a 'peripheral' participant, had an even lower response amongst residents. I have more confidence that this response is a clearer reflection of residents' ideals as the statement refers to familiar concepts.



The responses to the two statements linked to representation show the most consistent and clear cut leaning towards a particular normative view of democratic engagement. Each relates to the 'traditional' and familiar in actually existing representative relationships. Low levels of agreement with the statement that 'democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of the ones that are no good' point to normative conceptions of representation 'beyond' moments of authorisation and accountability. The responses to the statement 'that in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders' support this claim. The low level of responses here point to an alternative, a stronger, normative relationship between representatives and represented.

### Conclusion

The analysis of data from question 17a reveal a tension between residents' normative views of democracy and democratic engagement, and actually existing democratic life in Mossbank. This tension exists in relation to the way that normative and actually existing democracy contains elements that point in different directions. Normatively, Mossbank residents lean more to deliberative norms and values; in terms of actual institutions and processes, there is a distinct leaning towards 'traditional', familiar and formal norms and values.<sup>406</sup> Of all the influencing factors that shape democratic engagement in Mossbank, ideas of what 'ought to be' are hidden, almost unspoken, overshadowed by factors very much rooted in the 'real world'. However, what is important to note here is that the data presented in this chapter connects the real world setting of Mossbank to Young's ideal account of deliberative democracy. In so doing, it provides a strong justification for the focus given in this research to deliberative democracy. The idea of deliberative democracy exists in the minds of Mossbank residents. There is, in this real world setting, a subdued, suppressed interest in, or valuing of, deliberative ideas. The 'practical limitations of democratic engagement in Mossbank' referred to in the first of the main research questions (presented in Chapter 1) can therefore refer to barriers that inhibit the

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<sup>406</sup> This latter point is highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7.

emergence and realisation of deliberative norms and values.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> The research questions are presented in Chapter 1.

## Chapter 6

### Political Participation and Representation in Mossbank

The analysis presented in this chapter corresponds with two of the three analytical themes discussed in Chapter 4, namely participation and representation. Taken together, these themes facilitate a close examination of democratic structures and ‘who does what’ in Mossbank. As well as contributing to an understanding of the nature of democratic engagement in Mossbank, this analysis additionally prepares the way for the analysis of political communication, presented in Chapter 7, by highlighting the context, the environment in which Mossbank residents communicate. This chapter is divided into two main sections, each dealing with the themes of participation and representation. The first section focuses on participation - how residents experience and understand the accessing, ‘doing’ and ‘getting’ aspects of democratic engagement. The second section, concerning representation, explores the formal structure of representation in Mossbank, and how Mossbank residents perceive and relate to these structures.

#### Political Participation

The analysis takes the form of a fine grained exploration of different experiences of modes of participation in Mossbank. Attention is given to non-participants as much as to participants. I am particularly interested in isolating factors related to individuals and their attributes, resources and motivations that make them more or less likely to participate. I confirm that participation in Mossbank is a minority pursuit, and build a case arguing that ‘successful’ participation in Mossbank requires certain ‘qualifications’, the possession of which is relatively rare. The presentation of the analysis is based on the ‘pathways’ highlighted in Figure 4.6, focussing first on opportunities for political participation and then on how residents have experienced these opportunities.

#### - Opportunities for Participation in Mossbank

Here I explore opportunities that are presented to, or created by, residents as routes to ‘accessing’, ‘doing’ and ‘getting’ in the regeneration of Mossbank. The categorisation presented in Chapter 4, summarised in Table 4.3, serves as the starting point for the

analysis. Here, forms of participation are divided according to whether they are broadly 'conventional', 'less or non- conventional', 'undemocratic', or 'innovative'. This analysis ranges across 'official' and 'unofficial' opportunities for political participation.

- *Official Participation.* 'Official' opportunities for participation are part of the residents' association / management committee structure. From the perspective of the management committee, these are the routes available to residents if they want to participate in the residents association and the regeneration of Mossbank. Residents can either join the management committee or take up opportunities to enter in to a representative - represented relationship with the committee members. To what extent do these opportunities actually include residents in processes of democratic engagement?

*Participating in the Residents' Association.* Although the residents' association constitution assumes all Mossbank residents over the age of fourteen to be members of the residents' association, the demands of membership are light.<sup>408</sup> Whilst 'selling' the expansion of the residents' association to Newlands residents, the management committee sum up what being a member of the residents' association entails:

[j]oining the Residents Association places no obligation on any member to do anything unless they are happy and wish to volunteer. Also, there is no charge for membership.<sup>409</sup>

The presumption is that the majority of people will not wish to participate, they can be 'sleeping' members; there are no 'costs', financial or otherwise, attached to being a member. This suggests that the management committee favour an arrangement where they take on the 'burden' of the work of the residents' association on the tenants' behalf.

Official participation in the residents' association centres on the relationship between committee members (as representatives) and residents (as represented). All residents can

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<sup>408</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 3, paragraphs a to c.

<sup>409</sup> Leaflet sent to Newlands residents concerning proposals to expand the Mossbank residents' association.

attend residents' association AGMs and put themselves forward as prospective members of the management committee. I present my analysis of residents' participation in Mossbank's representative structure later in this chapter. However, participation inside the residents' association management committee can be explored here.

*Participating in the Management Committee.* Table 6.1 summarises who various members of the committee consider to be the 'core' of the management committee, in terms of who participates most extensively. There is no consensus on this point. Excepting the CDW, all of those cited as core members are office bearers. However, what is significant is that this is never mentioned as a reason for categorising an individual as a core member. Carol, Daniel, *et al* are viewed as core members but not because they are office bearers. The quotations in Table 6.1 hint at some of the 'qualifications' that allow them to be perceived as core members. I explore these factors more thoroughly later. In all cases, Carol is mentioned and thus can be regarded as the individual most closely involved with the work of the committee. My own views of the meetings and wider work of the committee confirm this.

Sometimes the core members are described disparagingly as a 'clique', Table 6.1 illustrates two instances of this. This suggests that core committee members are viewed as possessing exclusive access to decision making, agenda setting, information, and a special relationship with the other partners in the regeneration partnership. Daniel is particularly aggrieved, probably because he is the vice-chairperson, 'without the committee being involved in it, some of the big decisions, all of a sudden this is happening. Who said that? How did that happen? And you know nothing about it'.<sup>410</sup> Randall's use of the phrase 'these people' when referring to other committee members highlights his feeling of a 'clique' within the committee, able to access connections and choose what information the other members receive:

[t]hese people are attending all the meetings that they are invited to, they are invited to this and they are invited to that; and they are going to this and they are going to that. But I feel that we're only getting told bits of it. But then

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<sup>410</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

that's perhaps a bit unfair because the majority of the others members like my self have too many other things on the go.<sup>411</sup>

However, Randall tempers his view with an acknowledgement that having the opportunity to be a core member has to do with one's personal circumstances.

**Table 6.1: Views of Who Are the 'Core' Members of the Management Committee**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Perceptions of Core Members</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Carol	Carol (secretary), Paul (chairperson)	'[Paul's] a business man and I've been involved in doing this a long time.' Interview: Carol.
Daniel	Carol, CDW	'I think there's a clique down there. And it's what [CDW] and [Carol] come up with down in the office. [...] I don't even know that's going on' Interview: Daniel and Sandra.
Katie	Daniel (vice-chairperson), Carol, Member C (treasurer)	'And [Carol] and [Member C's] there most of the time. I know [Daniel] pops in [to the Drop-in Shop] now and again.' Interview: Katie.
Randall	Carol, CDW, Daniel, Paul	'It's like a bit of a clique. Like those people that are particularly available [...] and of course [CDW] is there full-time.' Interview: Randall.
Vicky	Carol and CDW	'Him and [Carol] are the two that are really in there'. Interview: Vicky

Recruiting, and keeping, committee members has been of concern to the management

<sup>411</sup> Interview: Randall (16 November 2005).

committee. The membership of the management committee has seldom reached its maximum membership for any sustained period - a point noted in Chapter 2 in Table 2.19. Reacting to a drop in membership (see the figure for October 2003 in Table 2.19), the front page of the November 2003 issue of the residents' newsletter features an article bemoaning the 'apathy' of the Mossbank residents regarding their participation in the residents' association and management committee:

[i]s apathy reigning in [Mossbank]? Recently the Association of Residents asked for nominations for people to work with them on the Association's Management Committee. We were delighted that three people put their names forward but this is not enough to fill the 5 vacant places.<sup>412</sup>

The proposed tenants' sub group, designed to give local authority tenants an opportunity to participate more closely in the stock transfer process, is reported as having had just one nomination:

[w]e appealed for [Guthrie] Council tenants to come forward and help form a residents' association tenant sub group that would be responsible for representing tenants during discussions about the stock transfer. Unfortunately, we have had only one person who has responded and nominated themselves for the group.<sup>413</sup>

In the same newsletter article it is claimed that this 'shows a certain amount of apathy' and that '[t]he problem is that they [local authority tenants] do not realise the importance of being involved'.

The management committee emphasises 'apathy' as the 'cause' of the lack of uptake. Other causes are not considered. In effect, the residents are 'blamed' for the low levels of 'official' participation. Apathy cannot be entirely discounted as a factor colouring the

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<sup>412</sup> Newsletter: issue 7 (November 2003).

<sup>413</sup> Newsletter: issue 7 (November 2003).

state of democratic engagement in Mossbank: some residents may simply ‘not care’, and no amount of developments of more participative and inclusive forms of engagement will make a difference. However, resorting to this ‘explanation’, in the way that the management committee do, masks other reasons, in many cases linked to exclusive tendencies in the *structure* of opportunities to participate in Mossbank. Perceiving problems of participation purely in terms of apathy constrains both the actual scope, and future development, of democratic engagement in Mossbank: the ‘problem’ is always the residents. Later in the chapter, I uncover other factors that colour and constrain political participation in Mossbank.

- *Unofficial Participation.* Acts of political participation to do with the aims of the residents association / management committee, but that take place outside its influence are rare in Mossbank. In some cases, these ‘unofficial’ actions help to define how ‘ordinary’ residents relate to their ‘representatives’. I explore these forms of participation later in this chapter. There is another case that I want to explore here because it sidesteps the residents’ association / management committee; it is the story of the petition to ‘save’ Balquhiddar Road Park.

Hazel, a Mossbank resident, organised a petition in opposition to plans to build houses on the park.<sup>414</sup> It was a successful venture insofar as it focussed attention on the future of the park and confirmed that house building was not an option. Initially, Hazel approached the management committee for support:

But only one of them said they would back me on it, and they would say yeah, we need a play park. [...] The rest, all of them sat on the fence. Not one of them would turn around and say, yeah I agree with you one hundred percent, you know, I’ll help your fight, and all the rest of it. None of them.<sup>415</sup>

Hazel did not feel that the committee were interested in acting on her concerns: ‘They [the management committee] wanted to wait and see what the opinions of other folk were

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<sup>414</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>415</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).



before they would actually make a stand and say what they felt'.<sup>416</sup> It was only after this apparent rejection that the idea of a petition came about. Hazel turned away from official avenues of political participation only after she felt that the committee did not support her in an issue that she felt passionately about.<sup>417</sup>

Opportunities to participate in the regeneration initiative are limited and, for the most part, conventional. In contrast with the informal and relatively non-hierarchical nature of management committee meetings - a point raised in Chapter 7 - actual participation in the work of the management committee / residents' association is differentiated, most tellingly through the existence of a 'core' of members. Generally, little is expected of residents regarding participation. However, shortcomings in residents' participation, when opportunities offered by the committee are not taken up, tend to be 'explained' as 'apathy', which criticises the residents rather than the opportunities to participate. There have been rare instances of 'unofficial' forms of political participation, circumventing the management committee, Hazel's petition being the most visible example.

#### - Experiences of Political Participation in Mossbank

This pathway is concerned with accounts of how people have experienced political participation in Mossbank. These perceptions come from individuals with actual experiences of 'taking part', or, just as importantly, of *not* participating. Exploring different experiences of participation helps to develop an understanding of the factors that constrain the 'inclusiveness' of political participation, and engagement, in Mossbank.

- *Personal Resources*. To what extent does the possession of, or lack of, relevant individual resources colour experiences of political participation for Mossbank residents? As stated in Chapter 4, I focus on non-material resources. From the list of resources listed in Table 4.4, I have chosen to focus on time, networks, capacities, and experience and knowledge.

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<sup>416</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>417</sup> The depth of Hazel's feeling regarding the 'saving' of Balquhiddar Road Park are explored later in this chapter.

*Time.* Perceptions that time is a resource that affects the level and intensity of political participation for those closer to and at a distance from participation is evident, particularly in the interview data. Audrey, an ‘ordinary’ resident with very little history of engagement in Mossbank, discusses her experiences of struggling to get ready to attend a public meeting held in the early days of the regeneration initiative:

It was a quarter to seven, seven o’clock. Well, I went with my neighbour next door and my husband. Well, I had to just come home [from work], go without my tea, you know what I mean? I just had to go as I was when I came home. And people, maybe other people are the same, they’re working at nights and things like that.<sup>418</sup>

For Audrey, preparing for the meeting clashed with her working hours. She has to break her routine and make sacrifices to attend. It is evident that even though she did go to the meeting, the timing of these meetings creates a barrier for Audrey: she has to make special efforts. Similarly, Daniel relates how a resident left the committee because ‘she was a nurse, she was on different shifts [...] and it was very difficult for her to come back and forward’.<sup>419</sup> To Daniel this individual’s occupation, the working hours in particular, excluded her from membership of the committee.

Paul, although he is the chairperson of the residents’ association, feels that he cannot commit as much time to the affairs of the committee as he would like. Paul, like Audrey and the nurse, has other commitments that limits the amount of time, and constrains when he can participate:

Paul: I personally don’t have a lot of time to do things because I run my own business. I’ve got fourteen people employed, that takes a lot of my time. And also being a part time fire fighter until recently.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Interview: Audrey (27 August 2004).

<sup>419</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

<sup>420</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

Randall, another management committee member, relates in some detail his many commitments that prevent him from participating more fully in the work of the committee. These centre on his wife, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, and son:

now tomorrow, we'll be in [ ] all day tomorrow. She's away to the hypobaric. She gets hypobaric oxygen treatment. On Monday, I had to take my son [...] who is a paraplegic; he's in a wheelchair. Well, I had to take him to the dentist. And of course, there's the normal run of the mill messages, go messages for this and messages for that. There's always something, always something on the go.<sup>421</sup>

Interestingly, despite such commitments Randall still manages to remain a committee member, albeit an arms length member.

Vicky, again a member of the residents' association management committee, also feels that she has other, more immediate calls, on her time that limit her commitment to the committee. Vicky, in common with some members, recognises others have more time to participate in the work of the committee, especially between meetings:

Vicky: I would say I maybe don't put in enough time to be an activist [laughs]. I'm more of on the fringe.

Researcher: Yeah.

Vicky: Whereas [the CDW] and [Carol] are probably more able to do that than the rest of us.

Researcher: Yeah.

Vicky: We're just committee members.

Researcher: So you really don't do much between the meetings?

Vicky: No. I haven't really got that much time at the moment. I've got my degree [studies].<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Interview: Randall (16 November 2005).

<sup>422</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

Demands on time, for instance, work commitments, looking after family members, and so on, make it more difficult to take part in political participation. Lack of time can exclude - other commitments come before membership of the management committee. However, sometimes, as the above data highlight, lack of time does not necessarily lead to withdrawal or non-engagement. Committee members, including those at or near its core, have other commitments but they still 'make time'. For this minority of Mossbank residents, other factors must influence their ability to access, 'do' and 'get'.

*Networks.* Social networks in small-scale contexts can take a number of forms. Stafford et al (2003) isolate four forms: family ties, friendship ties (both being informal in nature and existing within the setting / neighbourhood), membership of formal organisations, and the extent of ties outwith the neighbourhood.<sup>423</sup> This latter form of social network can take in both formal and informal interactions - friendships, acquaintanceships and membership of organisations.<sup>424</sup> I focus on two stories that highlight, in different ways, relationships between social networks and experiences of political participation in Mossbank.

The first of these concerns Daniel and Sandra's stories of how they came to join the management committee.

Daniel: What happened with me was my neighbour next door [ ]. She went to one meeting and she said to me you might be interested in this, come along to the next meeting. So I did and that's how I got stuck with it, got lumbered with it [laughs]. And then we formed the committee.

Researcher: If [ ] hadn't come through and said to you, you'd never have thought of going down would you?

Daniel: No, it was [ ] that sort of dragged me down.

Researcher: Would you have gone down otherwise?

Daniel: I knew nothing about it. I knew nothing about it.

Researcher: It's only because somebody said this might be interesting.

Daniel. The steering group. What's the steering group? A committee for the area.

Sandra: Otherwise, I don't suppose you would have gone down.

Daniel: No, I wouldn't have gone.

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<sup>423</sup> Stafford *et al* (2003), pp1460-1461.

<sup>424</sup> Putnam (2000), p94.

Sandra: And I wouldn't have joined if you hadn't dragged me into it either. Because I was about a year after you were on it. I was quite happy to sit back and let you do it.<sup>425</sup>

Paul utilises his considerable network of formal and informal contacts outside Mossbank as the basis of his particular approach to participation. So strong are his contacts that Paul was invited to take part in the setting up of the steering group (the precursor to the residents association and management committee) before other residents were involved.

Paul: [The Headteacher of the local secondary school] got in touch with me. Look, we're thinking of getting people together at the school to have a chat about doing the area up and so on and so forth, getting a steering group. So I chatted to some people; a crowd of us went along. They spoke to different people. And there were people from all the area came in about. And then we had another meeting. And I attended a few meetings prior to this [ ] with some of the councillors regarding what was going on. And then I was invited along to this meeting at [Newlands School] and we had a couple of discussions and then we got together and we put a committee together and that's how it stemmed from there. So I have really been involved for a long time.<sup>426</sup>

As the steering group gave way to the residents' association and management committee, Paul continues to use his network of contacts as his way of contributing to and participating in the work of the committee. He sees this as countering or compensating for his lack of time:

And I try to do as much as I possibly can, because I can't be there day in day out. So I do other things as well. And when I get a chance, through my business, when I'm speaking to certain people in the council, oh what about this, and an e-mail comes through.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

<sup>426</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

<sup>427</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

Paul's account highlights his unique position amongst committee members (and Mossbank residents in general) in having access to informal networks of local elites. Having access to privileged knowledge through these networks places Paul close to the core of the committee. He acts as a conduit between the management committee and the other members of the partnership board. However, there have been occasions when Paul, as a trusted member of these networks, has had to keep information back from the other committee members and the residents. Despite this, Paul's position and contacts has been of use to the committee.

Daniel's introduction to taking part in the regeneration of Mossbank came about through his informal friendship ties to his neighbour. It was because of her recommendation that he even contemplated participating. Sandra joined the residents' committee some time after this. This is an instance of how family and neighbourhood networks can be associated with facilitating participation. Without the influence of Daniel, Sandra may never have become included in the management committee and the regeneration of Mossbank.

*-Gaining and Using Experience.* Capacity building, according to Mayo and Taylor, goes beyond merely training residents in how regeneration initiatives work. It 'includes building the capacity effectively to challenge, as much as to understand the rules of the regeneration game'. Importantly, capacity building also relates to the powerful learning to work with, and include, those with less developed capacities 'in new and less dominating ways'.<sup>428</sup> Referring to Mossbank and its residents, knowing how to access and work in a committee setting, utilising previously gained experience and capacities, is a resource that can be immediately used over the long term.

Outside the management committee, Hazel's experiences of organising and carrying out her campaign to 'save' Balquhiddar Park raises some interesting insights regarding capacity building. Hazel's account and views of her experience as a capacity building exercise can be summarised in the following set of quotations.

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<sup>428</sup> Mayo and Taylor (2001), p43.

So the more I started speaking to folk, the more they were against this play park getting built on. So I went to [the CDW] and he says, well, he says, maybe if you get a petition or that, he says, but he says that is totally up to you.<sup>429</sup>

So I got the petition and handed it back to [CDW] and I sent a copy to [the Director of Housing, Guthrie Council].<sup>430</sup>

So I sent him a copy of the petition and the letter and that, and I sent it to [the local councillor] as well, if I remember correctly. So only then did [the local councillor] get on the bandwagon and she sent out flyers to everybody that had signed the petition asking them a few questions, you know, where would they like to see a play park, would they like the existing play park to be there. And that's when I think she realised how strong folk felt about this play park. So that's when eventually they started backing down. But, oh, the meetings at [Mossbank Hotel] that I'd went along to, and we voiced our opinions and that there, but it was like sometimes you were banging your head against a brick wall.<sup>431</sup>

I contacted the National Playing Fields Association in Edinburgh and spoke to them as well. And they sort of advised me as well what way to go about it and I communicated with them and they said that if ever I needed help at these meetings they would get somebody down to speak on my behalf. Once I had been to a couple of them, I thought, no, that's ok. I can handle this, I can speak up.<sup>432</sup>

I've learned now to look at small details and things and the little key things underneath, to pay more attention to things like that.<sup>433</sup>

Hazel's capacity to be an effective participant in the regeneration of Mossbank, when and if she ever decides to participate, has been enhanced by her experiences of reacting to what she saw as a threat to Balquhiddar Road Park.

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<sup>429</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>430</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>431</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>432</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>433</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

Capacity building, as part of the development of a more inclusive decision making process, is usually spoken of as a relatively slow moving process mediated by the state or some other elite organisation through training programmes.<sup>434</sup> Hazel's perceptions of organising her petition to save Balquhiddar Road Park suggest that capacity building with the aim of facilitating accessing, doing and getting can be relatively quick and largely self-motivated, and focussed on a reactive, issue-based approach to participation. When pre-existing avenues of political participation are considered unsatisfactory, an individual can take an active role in learning for themselves and challenging existing, taken for granted and exclusionary, forms of participation. With the park 'saved', Hazel retreated to her previous position of non-engagement, showing that capacity building does not necessarily lead to sustained engagement. It is consequently uncertain to what extent Hazel's experiences and capacities will remain with her to be utilised if or when she becomes engaged in the future.

Amongst the committee members, there are those who have knowledge and experience of either committee membership or participating in neighbourhood organisations, as well as those who have little or no such experiences. Individuals with these contrasting backgrounds are formally 'equal' participants on the committee. However, given the variety of levels of experience and knowledge amongst committee members, actual equal access and inclusion can be problematic. Carol, a long standing committee member, is aware of at least some of the problems and tensions created by these differences.

Carol: [Paul's] a businessman and I've been involved in doing this a long time. You'll often find people either back [Paul] or they'll back me. It's awkward. It really is awkward. We'll do what [Paul] wants to do this time; no, we'll go with [Carol]. It causes us a bit of conflict at times. There's one or two of them, I keep saying to them look, say what you think, speak up. But they don't. There's not really a lot you can do about that.<sup>435</sup>

Carol's comments show that there is a tendency in the committee (particularly, those

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<sup>434</sup> Chapman and Kirk (2001), p25.

<sup>435</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).



members who have an arms length involvement) to defer to those who are considered to be the most experienced and knowledgeable. Given that many of the decisions made by the committee are of a relatively uncontentious nature, it may be the most straightforward and least costly approach to dealing with such issues, but in doing so these committee members are less likely to develop their capacities. Those with relevant experience and knowledge are expected to carry the burden of the committee.

In terms of actually accessing the committee, Carol's account of her first meeting in Mossbank, and Vicky's comment regarding the difficulties that the committee has had over the years in gaining new members, are illuminating.

Carol: I introduced myself at that meeting and I said to them that I had done this kind of thing before. Because I had actually been involved in setting up a community business [in another town]. [...] So I explained to them that one, if you're going to do something like this you really need to give it your all because it can become very time consuming. Two, if you really weren't interested, there's no point in being involved because you just wouldn't pay attention to what's going on. And three, it's not an easy thing to do.<sup>436</sup>

Vicky: So there'll be folk who may want to join but who think that they're not clever enough to join. It'll be too high faluted for them.<sup>437</sup>

Carol is able to access the steering group meeting and quickly make her views known. Her account highlights her knowledge and confidence. Her 'advice' to the fledgling committee betrays her highly committed, but also exclusionary, approach to participation, with no space for different forms and levels of participation and engagement.<sup>438</sup> Vicky highlights a contrasting view to Carol's. Some Mossbank residents might have an image of committee meetings as places where debate is conducted according to strict rules, where they may make fools of themselves, where their views may be mocked or ignored, and where they are not 'qualified' - through lack of appropriate experience and knowledge - to be members. Andrew, a volunteer, has been asked to join the committee,

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<sup>436</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>437</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

<sup>438</sup> Such as those listed in Table 4.3 in Chapter 4.

but has refused. Even though he has had some experience of being a member of committees before he came to Mossbank, his views of committees reflect Vicky's comments:

I mean you get embarrassed and you think, I won't say that in case I make a fool of myself. [...] And they think that to be on the committee you'll probably have to be some kind of brain, brain of Britain, you know. They have that fear that they must know what they're talking about.<sup>439</sup>

This points to perceptions of lack of experience and knowledge as inhibiting participation in the management committee. Perceptions of inadequacy, as much as actual experience, can inhibit residents from joining the committee. Inside the committee, those with least relevant experience and knowledge are less likely to be identified as core / mainstream members. The possession of relevant experience and knowledge makes accessing the committee and assuming a core or mainstream level of involvement easier to achieve.

An individual can learn, and gather resources and support over a relatively short period of time, as Hazel's 'successful' bout of participation demonstrates. In Mossbank, an individual participating to such an extent as Hazel outside the orbit of the management committee / residents' association has not reoccurred. This supports the view that 'capacity building rarely takes place without some form of facilitation'.<sup>440</sup> However, as has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, Hazel resorts to this form of participation only after she felt the management committee were not sufficiently interested or supportive. In this case, Hazel's period of 'unofficial' participation and learning was, if not facilitated, then instigated by her experiences of exclusion. Divisions in the management committee according to knowledge and experience influences who is closer to the 'core' of the committee. This division is acknowledged within the committee's membership, most importantly from core /mainstream members like Carol. Within the core of the management committee, there is an awareness of different

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<sup>439</sup> Interview: Andrew (4 August 2004).

<sup>440</sup> Chapman and Kirk (2001), p25.

capacities amongst other committee members and the residents in general. However, there seems to be no movement towards facilitating or encouraging capacity building.

- *Personal Attributes*. Here I group together ‘personal’ factors that can affect experiences of participation in Mossbank. I have chosen to focus on three, two of which are not usually considered in research on political participation (accent and health), and one that is regularly discussed (age). Each explores particular, context specific, experiences of how inherent attributes can affect attitudes to, and experiences of, political participation.

*Accent*. Andrew, as well as being a volunteer with the residents’ association, also helps out with the ‘street football’ project, which regularly visits Mossbank.<sup>441</sup> He has particularly strong views about why he does not wish to become a member of the management committee. Knowing something of Andrew’s background and origins, and how this has shaped his attitudes, is necessary to understand his point of view.

Andrew: I know I was born in [a Scottish city] but I were brought up in England. [...] When I first moved back to [Scotland] years ago, yeah, I did get a bit of flak because I was speaking [with an] English [accent]. And I mean it was annoying then for the fact that I were born there. [...] But actually, it's not that. It's just actually thinking it on my own terms. If somebody Welsh came to the door and tried telling me, you know, I'm only picking that out of the air. [...] But if somebody from Wales come and told me, you know, how to run me house, and what's best for your area. [...] Yeah, I'd probably take it more negative than somebody local who's been here for years and saying look, we can have something done, you know?<sup>442</sup>

Even though members of the committee have encouraged him to join the committee, Andrew has not done so. Justifying his decision Andrew states, ‘it wasn’t really my cup of tea. Plus I think it would be a bit hypocritical for the simple reason I’ve got an English

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<sup>441</sup> ‘Street football’ is a ‘mobile football pitch’ which ‘can be erected on any surface and gives young people the opportunity to play football in a safe environment. However, there are special rules that teaches [*sic*] good behaviour and discipline’. Newsletter: issue 9 (May 2004).

<sup>442</sup> Interview: Andrew. (4 August 2004)

accent'.<sup>443</sup> Elaborating on this, Andrew felt that 'some characters from the area' would

find it easier to get over the message than an outsider would. Because they would know them, they would speak to them. If you think about it, the old people come to the door and as soon as you open your mouth they'd think you were trying to sell them something, boof, the door would shut in your face. They would assume that you're not from here, they would assume you're from outside. They're very untrusting. Where it's a local they've grown up with as well, you know, they've known them as kids, they'll go and say, what is it and they'll take the time to sit and listen to it.<sup>444</sup>

To Andrew, being perceived by other Mossbank residents as an outsider primarily on account of his accent contributes to his view that he is not 'qualified' to become a committee member. Being a volunteer does not involve 'selling' the idea of the regeneration or community involvement to the residents.<sup>445</sup> Being seen, or just as importantly, being heard to be 'a local' is associated in Andrew's mind with being believed and trusted in Mossbank, especially in relation to the regeneration initiative. In other words, he is of the view that Mossbank residents would find it difficult to trust him because of his accent and that consequently he would not make a suitable committee member.

To a point, Andrew's view is valid. Mossbank's population is relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnic and national origins, therefore most of the population are likely to speak with Scottish / local accents (see data presented in Chapter 2). However, evidence supporting Andrew's claim that possessing an English accent is an undesirable attribute that inhibits participation in Mossbank is not supported by other data. Data from the questionnaire relating to trust, see Table 6.2, indicates that Mossbank residents are more trusting than distrusting of other residents. Also, there are committee members with non-local accents. Andrew sees his accent as a burden, an unfortunate consequence of his upbringing. This is felt even more strongly now that he has returned to Scotland. It is,

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<sup>443</sup> Interview: Andrew. (4 August 2004). Andrews's use of the word 'hypocritical' can be interpreted as referring to pretending to 'belong' when one is actually an 'outsider'.

<sup>444</sup> Interview: Andrew (4 August 2004).

<sup>445</sup> For more on the role of volunteers in the residents' association, refer to Chapter 2.

therefore, a powerful factor that influences his perception of how he is viewed by other Mossbank residents. Although he has propensities to ‘take part’ (note his involvement in the street football project amongst other activities) he feels unqualified, despite invitations from the management committee, to engage with democratic processes associated with the residents’ association and the management committee in particular.

Andrew’s perception that his accent excludes him from being a committee member is compounded by his misrepresentation of what committee members do. That questions of accent arise at all in relation to accessing a political process in a developed democracy is interesting. However, Andrew’s perception is not supported by other data. It is highly unlikely that Andrew’s accent would exclude him from committee membership. Nevertheless, Andrew’s views are strongly held. The ‘fact’ of Andrew’s accent - a ‘personal’ attribute or characteristic - acts as a potent barrier to Andrew’s participation in Mossbank. It is Andrew’s perception that his accent is an issue, rather than any structural bias within Mossbank’s democratic institutions, that contributes to his non-engagement.

**Table 6.2: Trust in Other Mossbank Residents<sup>446</sup>**

	Number
Most People in Mossbank Can Be Trusted	7
Only Some of the People in Mossbank Can Be Trusted	19
Most of the People in Mossbank Cannot Be Trusted	2
Nobody Living in Mossbank Can Be Trusted	0
Don’t Know	11
No Answer	2

*Health.* Accessing political participation usually requires, or assumes, that individuals can actually arrive at the site of participation at the required time. Health can be a factor

<sup>446</sup> Questionnaire: question 16a.

affecting the ability of some Mossbank residents to attend sites of political participation. Lucy and Katie express views about participating in the regeneration of Mossbank that concern issues of health and mobility. Lucy, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, acknowledges that attending meetings can be a problem and that her health is a factor in this: 'No, I've never been to any of the meetings because I can't get out very much. I find it difficult getting out'.<sup>447</sup> Katie is a committee member. She lives quite close to the Drop-in Shop where the management committee has its monthly meetings.

Katie: My problem is that it's a bit of an ordeal for me to go along there sometimes. See for years I was bothered with acrophobia. I was under the doctor. [...] At one point, I couldn't have even gone out the door for this terrible anxiety I had. I do feel it's a wee bit of an ordeal, not an ordeal, but I'm just good getting there some days. That's the truth.<sup>448</sup>

Health and mobility issues can constrain an individual's ability to participate, especially when their physical presence is required, at AGMs and management committee meetings, for example. For those who find 'getting out' difficult, access, whilst not necessarily ruled out, becomes a challenge that others may not fully appreciate. Mobility issues related to health have been overlooked by the committee as a factor that may make participation problematic. Thus, those with health and mobility problems may be inaccurately labelled 'apathetic', masking a form of exclusion.

*Age.* Advanced age is mentioned by some Mossbank residents as a personal characteristic affecting their level of participation. Lucy, who has never participated in the residents' association, thinks that participation in the regeneration ought to be left to 'younger' residents:

Researcher: Is it something you've thought you would like to go and get involved with, or are you happier maybe just to stay back a wee bit?

Lucy: No, I would stay back a wee bit, let the younger ones do it.

Researcher: Yeah. You think this is really a thing for younger people?

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<sup>447</sup> Interview: Lucy (7 August 2004).

<sup>448</sup> Interview: Katie (16 November 2005).

Lucy: I think the younger ones, aye, because they'll be. I mean, we'll all be away soon, and it's the younger ones that'll be living here.<sup>449</sup>

This view, that participation is for 'the younger ones' is echoed by other older residents (over the age of 65): 'I'm an OAP let the young ones decide.' and 'the project should be in the hands of the younger generation'.<sup>450</sup>

The particular context of participation in Mossbank, that is the regeneration initiative, somewhat paradoxically, adds to barriers that exclude some older people. The term 'regeneration', the slow rate of change in Mossbank, and the increasing emphasis on the long-term, reinforce one another to justify the perception that older people have no stake in it and therefore, ought not to be involved. It is, however, certainly not the case that all individuals over the age of 65 hold such views. Within the committee, two long-standing members are over the age of 65.

I have explored three personal attributes that have influenced how people react to, and experience participation within the particular context of Mossbank. For political participation outwith the Mossbank context, these attributes would not necessarily be an issue, at least in the ways described by residents. Although some residents perceive these attributes to be obstacles to participation, they cannot be said to be obstacles to all those with similar attributes. Perceptions differ and other factors combine with personal attributes to colour the experience of political participation in Mossbank.

- *Motivations*. Assessing the inclusiveness of opportunities of political participation in Mossbank requires an appreciation of the motivations or impulses that lead people to participate.

Two aspects of participating in the regeneration initiative are of interest here. The first concerns why people join, and carry on being members of the management committee, and the second involves Hazel's reasons for organising the petition to 'save' Balquhiddar

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<sup>449</sup> Interview: Lucy (7 August 2004).

<sup>450</sup> Questionnaire: written responses to question 10b.

Road park.

*Motivations of Committee Members.* The residents' association management committee have an official standpoint regarding the motivations of the members. In one issue of the residents' newsletter, it is expressed thus:

[o]ur reason for serving on the management committee is to try and represent the communities [*sic*] views when dealing with statutory agencies especially during the regeneration process. However, our long term goal is to live in an area which people can be proud of and where the community looks after vulnerable people and especially the young people of the area.<sup>451</sup>

This elaborates on the aims of the residents' association as set out in the residents' association constitution. It is a statement that portrays the committee members as selfless representatives, dedicated to improving the 'community' of Mossbank. Individual accounts, as opposed to 'official' accounts, regarding motivations indicate a more complex set of reasons for participating in the management committee. The motivations for joining, and indeed remaining a member of the committee, are expressed in various ways by Vicky, Carol and Randall.

Vicky: I suppose for work experience if you like, would maybe be my major motivation. It's what I'm going to be doing as a job, and I need to get as much experience as possible. So I may as well do it locally. Plus it would be nice to see the area lifted up a bit. I own my own property, so it's in my own interest to see [Mossbank] come out of it.<sup>452</sup>

Vicky, a university student with aspirations to join the civil service, sees being a committee member as useful job training. Additionally, Vicky makes a link between her self-interest as a resident and homeowner and the general improvement of the area.

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<sup>451</sup> Newsletter: issue 3 (February 2003).

<sup>452</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).



Carol: I think it's just to do with trying to get what's best for you and the people around you. There are selfish reasons there as well, sort of like nice houses. I'd like to live in a nice area and things like that. So there are selfish reasons. But I've always tried to better an area that I'm living in, if I can. And if there are groups about, I've always got involved with them. And it's not just that. It's trying to build confidence in the people that you are with all the time as well.<sup>453</sup>

Again, Carol expresses her motivations in terms that relate to both self-interest and altruism. Carol is also aware that other residents question the motivations of those who participate in the regeneration initiative, especially if they are members of the committee. For example, she feels that it is difficult 'trying to get people to realise that you're involved in a group like this to benefit your community and not for personal gain'.<sup>454</sup>

Randall has been a committee member since it was constituted. He expresses his motivations for joining and remaining a member thus:

Initially there was a lot, you know, talk talk talk about this and things in the press, whatever. And I just thought to myself as both [his wife] and myself attended these meetings, all of the meetings, the public meetings that were held, and we listened and looked at the drawings and that, and the plans that they had for the area and we thought, a. that it was a good thing, and b. you know, thank Christ something's happening at last. The fact that we're trying to become a part of it, at least we would know then what was going on. And we could always say if there was anything we didn't approve of and suggest alternatives. That was one of the main, probably a sixty percentage selfish attitude in as far as we wanted to know what was happening and what sort of road they were wanting to go down.<sup>455</sup>

Randall actually quantifies his self-interested and altruistic motivations. He recounts his sense of relief that the regeneration was beginning and a wish to have access to information on the regeneration and to have an influence in its development.

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<sup>453</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>454</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>455</sup> Interview: Randall (16 November 2005).

These motivations to participate in the management committee can be viewed as a mix of self-interest and a desire to improve the area. In the cases of Vicky, Carol and Randall, these motivations intermingle. Even in Vicky's case, where she sees joining the committee as relevant to her future career prospects, she nevertheless recognises that her interests as a homeowner coincide with the interests of Mossbank as a whole. There is also an element of wishing to be as close as possible to decision making if only to represent one's own interests. There is the possibility that Vicky, Carol and Randall are keen to emphasise their selflessness and to downplay their self-interested motivations. However, the local councillor feels that self-interest has been a strong impulse for residents to participate, especially in the early days of the regeneration initiative:

I think in the early days they came with quite a lot of self interest, some of them. To get them to gel into a committee wasn't an easy task to start of with. I think there were one or two who came along to protect themselves: if I know what's going on, then I'll be in a better position for me.<sup>456</sup>

Carol echoes this view. According to Carol, in the early days of the management committee a lot of attention had been on Shaws Drive as the initial area of physical regeneration.

Carol: Personally, I can't speak about anybody else, but for me, once that problem was solved [...], although they're still on the management committee, they still come to their monthly meetings, the rest of the month you don't see or hear from them. They've had their problem solved, so they'll just show up once a month for the meeting.<sup>457</sup>

It is Carol's view that some committee members remain members simply to be close to developments in case they should be directly affected.

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<sup>456</sup> Interview: the local councillor (13 March 2006).

<sup>457</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

*Motivations of Hazel, the Reactive Participant.* To recap, Hazel organised a petition to ‘save’ Balquhiddar Road Park before returning to a position of non-engagement. What were her motivations for wanting to save this park and for participating in this particular way? Hazel saw her reasons for wanting to save the park in the following terms,

I thought, the kids need some place to play. You know, they’re on about child obesity, you know, kids staying in their houses, and all the rest of it; the dangers of kids wandering away from home, you know, getting abducted; and all the rest of it. So with me having my son, I thought, no, no, they’re not on.<sup>458</sup>

As before, the motivations for participating are a mix of self-interest and the wider welfare of the area, namely, the welfare of her son and of other children. In other matters, Hazel would have been content to remain outside of any form of participation, being content to be ‘paying attention’ from the periphery because other issues do not, in her view, threaten her interests. In connection with the future of the park Hazel remembers how

because it was close to me and how strong I felt about it, I just wanted, you know, it stopped straight away. And I felt they [the residents’ association management committee] couldn’t help me, they didn’t want to help me, so I had to do it myself. I thought if you’re not going to do it for me, then I’m bloody sure I’m going to do it. I felt that strongly about it that I knew I just had to go and do it myself. You know, it was something that I had to go and do. [...] I was determined that there was no way they were getting to build on that park.<sup>459</sup>

The impulse to participate can be understood essentially as ‘instrumental’ in nature. People participate because they expect it to bring worthwhile benefits, in defending or promoting their perceived interests. What these interests actually are can vary widely. They can be self-interested, or orientated to include the wider ‘community’. In Mossbank,

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<sup>458</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>459</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

however, impulses to participate tend to be a combination of these.

So far in this chapter, I have explored how residents relate to political participation in Mossbank. Some individuals are able to access opportunities of political participation more easily than others. Again, others seem able to establish themselves as core participants more effectively than others. Hazel's approach shows that participation is not necessarily about 'making do' with 'official' opportunities, and that individuals' levels of participation are open to change over time. Individuals are, to different degrees and in various ways, 'empowered' if they are able to exercise power and influence through 'successful' political participation. They are, in effect, 'included'. However, others, though included in a formal sense - as, say members of the management committee or audience members in a public meeting - are not empowered. In the next section, I aim to understand why political participation in Mossbank leaves some more empowered than others.

- *Non-Engagement, Voice and Loyalty*. In *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, Hirschman makes clear the interplay and interrelationship between his three aspects of empowerment.<sup>460</sup> This notion is evident in Mossbank in ways that relate to the particular context of a geographically defined community. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

*Voice and Loyalty in Mossbank*. Voice does not operate independently of exit: the former can be a temporary - albeit long term - substitute for the latter. Voice is utilised because exit (that is, moving out of Mossbank) is not an immediately viable option. Vicky, a member of the residents' committee, would 'move away tomorrow' but circumstances prevent this, not least her university studies.<sup>461</sup> Vicky would like to move away from Mossbank and Duncairn but cannot, so she replaces this with attempts to exercise voice through an involvement with the residents' committee.

In relation to loyalty, Paul's account of why he, a successful businessperson, still lives in

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<sup>460</sup> Hirschman (1970).

<sup>461</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

Mossbank (a 'deprived' and 'discouraged' neighbourhood) is particularly interesting.

Paul: If the new housing hadn't happened, I wouldn't have been staying here. I would have been out of here myself. I think the regeneration has helped the area. And what I know and what I see has happened and what I know is going to be happening and what I feel is going to be happening will help the area as well.<sup>462</sup>

Paul: I could go out of here tomorrow, today, tonight and go and buy a house anywhere in [Duncairn]. I could go into some of the private estates round and about. I don't want to. [...] But since we have got things sorted out, it's so peaceful, quiet, relaxing. The kids play altogether, they speak to you in the streets now, and there's not the vandalism going on.<sup>463</sup>

Paul has considered leaving Mossbank. However, he rejects this option because of what he sees as positive changes in Mossbank brought about by the regeneration initiative. Paul's participation in Mossbank, particularly as the chairperson of the residents' association management committee, is founded on his loyalty or 'special attachment' to the area. He has lived in Mossbank for most of his life (the basis of Paul's loyalty) and he is motivated to be involved in improving the area. Hirschman's comment regarding loyalty as the basis for voice is particularly relevant to Paul and contributes to an understanding of just why he participates in the way that he does, in a way that centres on the use of voice: '[a] member with a considerable attachment to a product or organization will often search for ways to make himself influential, especially when the organization moves in what he believes is the wrong direction'.<sup>464</sup>

Of course, Paul is not the only long term resident of Mossbank. There are others who have a more intermittent or non-existent engagement with the regeneration initiative. Living in Mossbank for many years does not necessarily engender 'loyalty'.

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<sup>462</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

<sup>463</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

<sup>464</sup> Hirschman (1970), pp77-78. Replacing 'a product or organization' with 'Mossbank' and 'the wrong direction' with 'towards social and physical degeneration' makes Hirschman's comment more directly applicable to Mossbank.

*Non-Engagement in Mossbank.* Disengagement from political participation to a position of non-engagement can occur in a number of ways.<sup>465</sup> I discuss two that took place in Mossbank. In each case, the individual returns to a position that offers no opportunity of empowerment. Firstly, Audrey recounts how she was witness to, and a participant in, a walkout from a public meeting held in the early days of the regeneration initiative.

Audrey: Then he [the chairperson] said, do you wish to join the committee, and I said I most certainly do not. And after that, well there were other folk answering questions, like wanting to know what was going on, but nobody was saying anything, giving them a direct answer, so everybody just went out and said they wouldn't come back.<sup>466</sup>

Audrey is recounting an incident of a shift from a position of engagement to one of non-engagement. The conduct of the meeting had been to Audrey unsatisfactory because 'doing' (attending the meeting) did not achieve outcomes (finding out 'what was going on'). The use of 'voice' as a route to empowerment, seems to have failed for some in the audience at this meeting. Audrey feels that she, and others, were, apart from being able to attend the meeting, effectively excluded from the process. They were left voiceless, excluded and disempowered. Walking out of the meeting simply symbolised this state of affairs and represented a literal retreat to non-engagement.

Secondly, Hazel sums up her attitude to participating in the regeneration initiative after her petition activities by stating that, 'I've given up now [laughs] [...] As long as they [the local authority / regeneration partnership] don't build on that play park. I'm sick of just going round and asking them things. They can't tell you anything anyway'.<sup>467</sup> Hazel withdraws from her successful reactive participation. When the development of Balquhiddy Road park was raised, she became a reactive participant utilising voice in the

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<sup>465</sup> As pointed out in Chapter 4, non-engagement differs from exit in that the former cannot lead to empowerment.

<sup>466</sup> Interview: Audrey (27 August 2004).

<sup>467</sup> Interview Hazel (10 August 2004).

form of a petition, which was successful (the park was 'saved'). After this outcome, she resumed her position of non-engagement, quite content to return to a position of disempowerment now that her goal had been reached.

In practical terms, voice predominates, sometimes supported by loyalty, as the route to empowerment. Non-engagement, or peripheral engagement, is the alternative to utilising voice. As Hazel and Audrey show, there is scope for an individual to move between levels or stages of engagement, although the movement is not necessarily due to a failure to become empowered.

It is important to understand why residents such as Audrey and Hazel move between positions of non-engagement and attempts to exercise voice, and why Paul, for example, remains in a position of empowerment. Additionally, why are other residents seemingly cut off from exerting such influence? In short, why are some Mossbank residents more empowered, and thus more influential, than others? The degree to which an individual is able to access and harness power in Mossbank through 'voice' hinges on his or her particular set of resources, attributes and outlooks. Some individuals can comfortably operate in the participative structures. Others are able to operate less fully and for shorter periods of time. Still others, in the case of Mossbank, the majority of residents, are unable to participate to any significant degree. Opportunities for accessing, doing and getting in Mossbank are easier for those with suitable 'qualifications'.

#### - Qualified to Participate?

Whether, to what degree and in what ways, an individual participates depends initially on whether they identify an interest that is worth defending or promoting and (over the course of participation) whether that individual has the resources to 'fit in' with what is available and possible as opportunities to participate. In this chapter, I have explored a number of these factors that relate to 'fitting in'. No single factor can be said to be instrumental in understanding why only some people - a minority - participate, and the form and intensity of this participation. Rather, it is the combination of these factors, and

how they equip an individual to participate in a particular, unique context that is important.

In essence, this analysis of political participation has been concerned with the exercise of voice within a particular set of forms of participation in one location.<sup>468</sup> This analysis reveals that the exercise of ‘voice’ is the only viable way towards successful and substantive participation in Mossbank. By extension, the ability or capacity to utilise voice in the context of political participation in Mossbank determines the extent to which an individual is able to ‘do’ and ‘get’. An individual’s ability to utilise voice in a particular context depends to a large degree on his or her set of personal resources, attributes and outlook. In Mossbank, the scope for political participation is limited. Inclusion in these forms of participation, of a sort that goes beyond formal opportunities, requires that an individual seeks to become ‘empowered’ (by maximising his or her access to democratic processes by ‘fitting’ their actions to established modes, and / or learning how to exercise voice outwith ‘official’ opportunities). However, many residents are insufficiently ‘qualified’ to act in these ways. Within a context dominated by conventional and familiar forms of participation, ‘fitting in’ and ‘playing by the rules’, or having the ability to create alternative forms of participation that ‘work’, dictates who can participate and the extent of this participation.

### Political Representation

Following on from my adaptation and development of aspects of Young’s normative thought, political representation can be considered in relational terms, as a ‘relationship’ between representatives and representatives.<sup>469</sup> In an actually existing situation, such a relationship can be distant and slight (meaning that the represented are, in all but formal terms, cut out of an input into decision making), or it can be maximally inclusive in the sense that the represented and representatives are involved in a close, ongoing

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<sup>468</sup> Fung and Wright (2003), p27 also recognise a link between voice and participation. In their discussion of experiments in ‘empowered participatory governance’ they argue that these ‘experiments increase participation [...] by adding important channels for participation to the conventional avenues of political voice such as voting, joining pressure groups, and contacting officials’.

<sup>469</sup> I engage with Young’s ideas of representation as an ongoing mediated relationship between representatives and represented in Chapter 4.



communicative relationship. Uncovering the nature of representation in Mossbank and its influence of democratic engagement begins with an examination of the formal, 'official' representative structures, and is followed by an analysis of actual experiences of representation in Mossbank.

#### - The Structure of Representation in Mossbank

In this section, I take a step back from the voices of individual Mossbank residents and focus on the formal, 'official' structure of the representative relationship. The main source for my analysis is the constitution of the Mossbank residents association. It is in this document that the formal structure of the relationship between the representatives and the represented is presented.

Analysing the constitution reveals the foundation, the starting point, for representation in Mossbank. The importance of documents such as the constitution in my analysis is discussed in Chapter 3. The constitution is, in a sense, prior to actual experiences of representation because it was established before the relationship between representatives and the remainder of the residents. This analysis also highlights the extent to which this foundational view of representation is reproduced and confirmed, particularly through the 'official' communications and views of the management committee. As well as highlighting the core and unchanging aspects of this structure, I also highlight relevant changes within the constitution that have occurred since the beginning of the residents' association. The constitution may be the formal foundation of representation in Mossbank, but that does not necessarily imply that this foundation is unchanging.

The following questions guide and structure this part of the analysis:

- How is the representative relationship presented and defined?
- What is expected of people as representatives and represented?
- How are representatives chosen, authorised and held to account?
- How are representatives and represented expected to relate to one another?

- *Foundational and Official Notions of Representation.* The constitution of the residents'

association states that the purpose of the management committee is to ‘carry out the business of the association’.<sup>470</sup> This ‘business’ relates to fulfilling the aims of the association. Amongst these aims one is of particular relevance: ‘to *represent* the [Mossbank] residents on specific issues’ [italics added].<sup>471</sup> In this way, the idea of committee members as representatives of the Mossbank residents becomes enshrined in the constitution. Following on from this, representation has been, and continues to be an important facet of the management committee. In the early days of the regeneration initiative, for example, residents are urged to attend a ‘public meeting’ to ‘formally launch the association’, including the founding of the management committee. Here the idea of representation is prominent:

[i]t is essential that the community have a means to express itself with a united voice [...]. One of the ways of doing this is to have a residents association that is strong and active that can truly represent the views of local people.<sup>472</sup>

A number of years later the ‘Chairman’s Report’ in the 2005 Annual Report of the residents’ association states that, ‘[t]he Residents Association is a representative body and the committee is elected by the membership’.<sup>473</sup> The management committee are here characterised in terms closely bound to notions of representation.

There is no explicit elaboration of the meaning of representation or the nature of the representative relationship in the constitution. However, on closer reading, the constitution does contain directions on the organisation of the residents’ association that reveals a more detailed conceptualisation of representation. The very fact that this is ‘hidden’ in the constitution indicates how taken for granted and uncontroversial a version of representation it is assumed to be.

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<sup>470</sup> Residents’ association constitution: section 4, paragraph a. This ‘business’ is summarised in Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2.

<sup>471</sup> Residents’ association constitution: section 2, paragraph c.

<sup>472</sup> This quotation comes from the leaflet, sent to all Mossbank residents by the residents steering group, publicising the meeting.

<sup>473</sup> Residents’ association annual report, 2005.

- *Authorisation and Accountability*. The mechanisms presented in the constitution to authorise representatives and to hold them to account are the same. These mechanisms stand at the beginning and end of annual cycles in the ongoing representative - represented relationship. Despite their seemingly peripheral position in the representative - represented relationship, these mechanisms are important features of this formal conceptualisation of representation.

There is one way of being authorised to become a member of the management committee or for a member to be held to account: the election process at an AGM. Residents' association members are formally notified of the 'date of the meeting not less than 21 days in advance of that meeting'.<sup>474</sup> At an actual AGM the moment of authorisation and holding to account begins, according to the constitution, with the 'resignation of all committee members' followed by the election of 'a new committee'.<sup>475</sup> For residents, the AGMs contain the 'moments' of authorisation and holding to account. Outside of these annual events, no other mechanisms or processes are specified in the constitution where representatives and represented can meet. The most high profile event in the relationship is concerned with beginnings and endings and not with the development of the relationship itself.

Actual AGMs reflect, rather than challenge or circumvent, formality. All residents, as members of the residents' association, are entitled to attend AGMs, but as Table 6.3 shows, very few do. The official voice of the management committee expresses disappointment at this. In reports of the AGM, it is mentioned only in passing, 'Only 20 residents attended the meeting which included the existing nine members of the management committee and three prospective members', and 'The meeting was small with only 3 people from outwith the Management Committee in attendance'.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 7, paragraph c.

<sup>475</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 7, paragraph b II. This part of the constitution and another which states that '[c]ommittee members will serve for a period of two years' (section 4, paragraph j) are in contradiction. Given that individuals have joined the committee at different times, at each AGM only *some* of the committee would have to go through the authorisation process.

<sup>476</sup> Newsletter: issues 7 (November 2003) and 11 (November 2004).

**Table 6.3: Attendance at Residents' Association AGMs**

<b>AGM</b>	<b>Non-Committee Members in Attendance</b>
2003	11
2004	3
2005	4

From my own observation of the 2005 AGM, if it was following the pattern of the previous two AGMs, these meetings are somewhat ‘dry’ affairs, dominated by the formal procedures as set out in the constitution. The meeting starts with the reading of the ‘Chairman’s Report’, which has already been provided in written form. There was a short explanation of the state of the accounts of the residents’ association, again already provided in written form. Next, a list of those wishing to re-nominate themselves, or to nominate themselves for the first time, as members of the management committee is read out. No objections were forthcoming to these people becoming the representatives. Motions to do with changes to the constitution to accommodate the expansion of the residents’ association are then read out and each was voted on. This is a flavour of these AGMs: the reading voice of the chairperson dominating proceedings, punctuated with a series of votes. There was little opportunity for discussion. Residents who attend these meetings act as witnesses rather than participants. Within the AGMs, there is no demand or desire for a stronger version of the representative relationship from either the committee members or the wider membership of the residents’ association.

- *Co-option*. There is another aspect of the formal structure of representation as presented in the constitution that is of relevance here. As a subsidiary mechanism to that of election, the constitution allows for ‘co-option’: ‘[v]acancies on the committee may be co-opted at

a general meeting or at the discretion of the committee'.<sup>477</sup> In effect, individuals can join the committee without being authorised by the residents. Co-option shows a pragmatic side of the constitution. Co-option is permitted because it allows 'new blood' to join the committee immediately, rather than having to wait until the next AGM.

The constitution stipulates that all representatives / committee members must be elected.<sup>478</sup> However, to date no committee member has ever had to take part in an election. The election process requires more prospective representatives than available positions, and this has yet to occur. The constitution makes no provision for such an eventuality. Prospective members instead nominate themselves and if no objections are forthcoming they become committee members. In a similar way to co-option, self-nomination is used as pragmatic tool, this time to prevent an impasse. In this case, the provision for self-nomination is, strictly speaking, unconstitutional. However, the formal arrangements set out in the constitution are shown to be inadequate in that they do not allow for a dearth of prospective representatives. This 'unconstitutional' self-nomination is, however, concerned with avoiding such a constitutional bottleneck and ensuring the survival of the management committee: it is an expedient necessity. It offers no substantive challenge to the way that representation is conceptualised in the constitution.

Authorisation and holding to account (and in the case of Mossbank, co-option and self-nomination) are 'pieces in an incomplete jigsaw puzzle', they do not include in any substantive sense the actual relationship between representatives and represented.<sup>479</sup> My analysis continues with an exploration of the formal foundation of representation in Mossbank between the periods of authorisation and holding to account.

- *Expectations*. What responsibilities, obligations and duties does the constitution expect from representatives and the represented? What do these expectations say about the nature of representation as set out in the constitution?

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<sup>477</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 4, paragraphs e.

<sup>478</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 4, paragraphs a and c.

<sup>479</sup> Pitkin (1967), p59.

*Being a Representative.* Information regarding how committee members ought to act as representatives appears at various points in the constitution: ‘The committee and office bearers shall carry out the duties given them by a general meeting of the association’; ‘[s]hould any committee member fail to attend three consecutive meetings without tendering apologies, the committee at its discretion can terminate that person's committee membership’; ‘[t]he committee shall meet not less than 8 times per year, in addition to the Annual General Meeting. The committee shall determine which of these meetings will be general meetings; and ‘[t]he quorum at a meeting of the committee shall be 6 including at least two office bearers’.<sup>480</sup>

Only the first quotation refers directly to being in a relationship with the rest of the residents because it refers to ‘general meetings’ or AGMs. The other quotations are concerned with the duties and obligations of representatives as members of the management committee. In AGMs, the residents, as those being represented, decide what the committee and its members actually do: representatives are given their ‘duties’ at general meetings and they must enact the expressed, ‘united’ views of residents. In this situation, the representatives are acting as ‘delegates’. In practice, this takes the form of the committee members acting on votes taken at AGMs. The vote, taken at the 2005 AGM, in favour of going ahead with the expansion of the residents’ association, taking in the adjacent area of Newlands, is an example of the committee being presented with a ‘united’ view, that the expansion should go ahead. It is the ‘duty’ of the representatives to carry forward the expressed and ‘united’ wishes of the residents. This is the extent to which the constitution guides the role of being a representative in the representative relationship.

However, the committee members do not act purely as delegates. In the months between AGMs, they also act as ‘trustees’. I explore how committee members see their roles as representatives later in the chapter. As trustee representatives, committee members judge for themselves the best interests of the represented. During, and between, the monthly meetings, the committee members make decisions that, on the surface at least, are

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<sup>480</sup> Residents’ association constitution: section 4, paragraphs f, d, h, and i.

concerned with advancing the good of Mossbank and its residents. The formal role of the representative, being a delegate, is accompanied by the additional of trustee. In practice, being a representative, especially in a 'political' context such as the Mossbank residents' association, includes both roles.

*Being Represented.* The residents have a role in authorising and holding to account members of the management committee through an election process. Additionally, the role of residents in directing the activities of their representatives on the management committee is similarly limited to voting. Residents present at an AGM can 'vote on any recommendations / motions and any amendments to the constitution'.<sup>481</sup> The constitution limits 'ordinary' residents' input into the representative relationship to attending the AGM to elect committee members / representatives and to vote on any proposed motions and constitutional changes. Challenges to this formal basis of the representative relationship on the part of residents are explored later in this chapter.

The formal structure of the representative relationship presented in the constitution is 'unrealistic'. It does not fully reflect the role that the representatives in Mossbank want to assume. Representatives challenge the letter of the constitution by adopting trustee roles between the formal AGMs. This extension of their role is, for representatives, and for the represented, a taken for granted aspect of being a representative. Reflecting the uncontroversial nature of this extension, there have been no calls to amend the constitution to include the trustee role. The constitution and challenges to it introduced and tacitly accepted by the residents suggest a relationship that does not see representation as an inclusive relationship. Opportunities for representatives and represented to communicate are limited, and there is no sense of representatives fostering mediated relationships, drawing in different views, perspectives and interests of Mossbank residents into a more inclusive representative relationship.

The 'story' of representation in Mossbank does not end here. Representation, as practised in Mossbank, as opposed to the formal foundation of representation based on the

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<sup>481</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 7, paragraphs b II and, b III.

constitution, has still to be explored. To what degree do ‘everyday’ expressions of the representative relationship in Mossbank allow access and foster inclusion?

- Actual Representation in Mossbank

My exploration of representation in Mossbank now moves onto analysing the actual representative relationship in Mossbank. I now delve beneath the formal representative structure, to explore how representation actually *is* in Mossbank. The following questions serve to structure my analysis:

- What does being a representative mean?
- Who are the representatives?
- What is it like being represented?
- How do the representatives and the represented relate to one another?

- *Being a Representative*. How do members of the management committee perceive their role as representing Mossbank residents in the regeneration initiative? I want to focus, in particular, on the views of three committee members, namely Carol (secretary and ‘core’ member of the committee), Daniel (vice-chairperson with a less central role in the day-to-day work of the committee), and Vicky (a relatively new ‘general’ committee member). These views capture the range of perceptions of what being a representative means to committee members.

Carol, whilst reflecting on her role as a representative states that, ‘I hope I take everybody else into consideration as well. I know that there’s a few people up here think that I do listen to what everybody else is saying and I do deal with it to the best of my capabilities’.<sup>482</sup> Daniel has a similar view to Carol’s: ‘If anybody came to me with a complaint I would certainly take it up’.<sup>483</sup> To Vicky, being a representative ought to include an element of communication with the residents but actually ‘[y]ou don’t really get much interaction with people outside about it [the activities of the residents’ committee]’. However, Vicky still attempts ‘to think of what is best for the area in

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<sup>482</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>483</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).



general' in her representative role.<sup>484</sup>

In addition to the formal delegate functions and aspects of being a representative, committee members associate being a representative with trustee-type roles. The delegate role is not rejected or challenged - it remains a tacitly accepted part of the residents' association constitution - but the notion of being a trustee is uppermost in committee member's understandings of being a representative. Throughout these reflections, committee members do not conceptualise their roles as representatives in a way suggestive of Young's idea of a stronger representative - represented relationship.

- *Who are the Representatives?* Understanding the nature of the representative relationship in Mossbank requires more than appreciating the *roles* that representatives adopt. Here I am interested in exploring the degree to which the management committee 'mirror' the residents of Mossbank. So far, I have explored the 'action' side of representation. Now I consider the 'composition' aspect. How do issues of microcosmic representation relate to engagement in the representative - represented relationship? My choice of 'identities' around which this exploration of mirroring is based is in itself worth highlighting. I have included a characteristic usually discussed in debates on proportionality, namely the degree to which the representatives 'mirror' the residents according to one of what Phillips calls 'those particularly urgent instances of political exclusion', namely sex.<sup>485</sup> The other identities I discuss are of particular relevance to the Mossbank context, and these are tenancy and geographical area.

*Sex.* Table 2.1 in Chapter 2 shows that at the time of the 2001 census the population of Mossbank was made up of fifty two percent women and forty eight percent men. Table 2.19, again in Chapter 2, gives a set of snapshots of the composition of the membership of the management committee according to sex. Here women have consistently outnumbered men. The proportion of women in the committee has been between just over half to over three-quarters of the membership. It is also revealing to note the

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<sup>484</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

<sup>485</sup> Phillips (1995), pp5 and 47. I do not discuss ethnicity, the other form of exclusion emphasised by Phillips, because as I make clear in Chapter 2, Mossbank is an ethnically homogeneous area.

relationship between this numerical domination of the committee and the proportion of men and women as office bearers.<sup>486</sup> Throughout the existence of the management committee, men have held the positions of chairperson and vice-chairperson, and women have acted as secretary and treasurer. Formally, the positions held by the men are more 'important' and 'senior'. Norms of serving the community and 'helping out' are also important in understanding the number of women who have been committee members.<sup>487</sup> Carol's motivations can be at least partially understood in such terms. More explicitly, Sandra, a 'general' committee member views her membership as primarily about 'helping out' by boosting the membership of the committee: 'It [the membership] went down to about eight or nine or something. OK, I'll join until you get enough people and if you get more people I'll step back'.<sup>488</sup>

In terms of numbers, women are proportionately represented, in the management committee and amongst the office bearers. This is quite a different state of affairs to the situation in regional and national legislatures in developed democracies, where women tend to be under-represented. In European and North American national legislatures, women account for less than a quarter of elected representatives. In the United Kingdom, women make up just less than twenty percent of the House of Commons. Women make up almost forty percent of representatives in the Scottish Parliament.<sup>489</sup> In Mossbank, women have a relatively strong presence amongst representatives. The effects of this are less apparent in the representative relationship, but can be observed in the management committee meetings. The incident of Carol's granddaughter being present and accepted at a meeting, discussed in Chapter 7, being a particularly powerful example.

*Tenancy.* In Chapter 2, Table 2.9 shows that that just over half of the houses in Mossbank are rented from the local authority, whilst just over one third are owner-

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<sup>486</sup> As I argue in Chapter 7, being an office bearer does not mean that one is automatically in a position of power and influence, the actual situation is altogether more complex. Becoming an office bearer is often, but not always, a result of being able to 'fit in' and 'play by the rules' rather than the reverse. Participating and communicating in the management committee can also be considered with reference to what degree members are core /mainstream members as defined in Table 6.1.

<sup>487</sup> Lister (2003), pp145-146.

<sup>488</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

<sup>489</sup> The Inter-Parliamentary Union; and the Scottish Parliament.

occupied. Houses rented from housing associations account for just over five percent, but this can be assumed to have grown since the demolition of council flats and their replacement with housing association houses. The figures relating to tenancy are subsequently open to change over time, with the number of *local authority* tenants subject to a slow reduction. However, the rate of this change is slow: local authority tenants remain a large group in Mossbank. Table 6.4, however, reveals that owner-occupiers predominate on the management committee, and local authority tenants are under-represented. So, in terms of tenancy, the committee can be said *not* to mirror the wider population of Mossbank. Furthermore, none of those who have been office bearers on the committee have been local authority tenants.

**Table 6.4: Type of Tenancy of Management Committee Members<sup>490</sup>**

Tenure	Number
Owner-occupier	5
Housing association tenant	2
Local authority tenant	2

Type of tenancy is particularly important in Mossbank because of the role that local authority tenants have in deciding the outcome of the stock transfer process. Furthermore, the outcome of this process has important implications for the long-term social regeneration of Mossbank. Issues relating to stock transfer are discussed in Chapter 2. The management committee have attempted to encourage more local authority tenants to join the management committee, even mooting the idea of a tenants' sub-group to deal specifically with matters relating to the stock transfer. However, little interest has been shown. This failure to encourage tenants to become representatives, to participate in the management committee, can be understood when the obstacles to democratic engagement

<sup>490</sup> Questionnaire: question 9.

are highlighted.

In Chapter 7, I give examples of the management committee's 'official' views of the stock transfer process. The committee that communicated such pronouncements, views directed primarily at local authority tenants, is itself one on which the tenants are under-represented. This under-representation of local authority tenants on the management committee makes their needs and interests as local authority tenants less visible, views from the perspective of local authority tenants are to a significant degree excluded.

*Area of Mossbank.* To some residents, Ballantrae Road divides the area in to two 'neighbourhoods'. Those who recognise this division live in what they see as the part of Mossbank that does not require regeneration.<sup>491</sup> The regeneration initiative, at least the physical aspect (demolition and house building), is concentrated on the other side of Ballantrae Road, around Shaws Drive. So, the impact of the regeneration initiative is not distributed equally across the regeneration area. To what extent does the committee reflect this division?

Seven of the nine members, for which relevant data are available, reside on the Shaws Drive side of Ballantrae Road, whilst two stay on the Balquhiddier Road side - see Map 2.1 in Chapter 2. When compared with the population of these two parts of the regeneration area, the membership of the management committee does not reflect this distribution - see Table 6.5.

The majority of management committee members reside in the least populous side of Ballantrae Road. In terms of 'presence' in the in the management committee, those living on the Balquhiddier Road side of the division are under-represented. However, in the particular context of Mossbank, how much weight can be attached to this when assessing the inclusiveness of the representative relationship? It reflects a perception that one area

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<sup>491</sup> See Hazel's views presented elsewhere in this chapter and Chapter 7. This division is based on perceptions of the Shaws Drive side of Mossbank being a 'problem area' in terms of physical appearance and its reputation as a 'trouble spot'. However, the SIMD data, discussed in Chapter 2, reveals no significant difference between the two sides of Ballantrae Road.

does not require regeneration and is unaffected by the progress of the initiative. Those living on the Balquhiddier Road side of the division are more likely to be indifferent to the regeneration initiative because it is not ‘their’ management committee and regeneration initiative. The composition of the committee according to area has not been identified as a ‘problem’ by the committee, to the same degree as composition according to type of tenancy. This reflects the prevailing official view, and individual views of many committee members, that this split has no significance and no relevance to their vision of the regeneration. Mossbank is assumed one united ‘community’ or ‘neighbourhood’ that requires a rejuvenation of ‘community spirit’. Furthermore, even to advocates of ‘identity politics’, to talk of two distinct groups in Mossbank that require separate representation is questionable: not all residents on the Balquhiddier Road side of the division see themselves as ‘outside’. But some degree of feeling resembling a ‘them’ and ‘us’ frame of mind regarding the regeneration accounts for this noticeable under-representation of one geographical part of Mossbank.

**Table 6.5: Population of Mossbank on Each Side of Ballantrae Road.**<sup>492</sup>

<b>Area of Mossbank</b>	<b>Total Resident Population</b>	<b>Total Resident Population Over 16</b>
Shaws Drive side	574	430
Balquhiddier Road side	1000	717

Some identities have a stronger presence than others. Women have a greater presence on the management committee than in other representative assemblies at national and regional levels in developed democracies. This reflects the voluntary / ‘serving’ nature of committee membership in Mossbank. Consequently, Mossbank’s management committee, to a greater degree than representative forums at regional and national levels, is more open to women’s involvement. Context raises the profile of other identities such

<sup>492</sup> UK Census.

as type of tenancy. Local authority tenants are under represented in the management committee. This absence results in the management committee being less likely to anticipate, appreciate and recognise the interests and needs of local authority tenants, particularly in relation to the stock transfer process. Geographical area as a genuine 'identity' that is systematically excluded is open to doubt. Where it does appear as an issue amongst Mossbank residents concerns the actual structure and progress of the regeneration initiative. It also serves as a reminder that social differences in Mossbank can be hidden, ignored and misrepresented if individuals are categorised solely according to essentialist 'identities' or 'attributes', '[w]hether imposed by outsiders or constructed by insiders'.<sup>493</sup>

Whether the representatives who sit on the management committee mirror certain attributes of the wider Mossbank population cannot be seen as decisive in assessing the inclusiveness of representation in Mossbank. However, it cannot be dismissed entirely because issues of proportionality affect the activities of the representative forum. As Phillips argues, the presence of certain (previously excluded) identities and attributes in representative assemblies create conditions for (future) inclusion of previously excluded interests and needs.<sup>494</sup> In actually existing situations, 'politics of ideas' and 'presence' co-exist and interact. But, when assessing actually existing democratic engagement, in the end what counts is what the representatives (and represented) actually do.<sup>495</sup> The remainder of the analysis returns to the 'activity' of being in a representative relationship.

- *Inside the Relationship*. Here the focus is on actual events and instances that occur outwith the authorisation and accountability aspects of representation, which highlight the activities of representatives and represented. Particular attention is given to attempts to foster relations between representatives and represented. In other words, I am interested in highlighting aspects of the development of the representative-represented relationship between AGMs. Three of these incidents concern attempts made by the representatives to 'reach out' to the residents: the use of 'surgeries', the 'Give Us Your Views Day', and

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<sup>493</sup> Young (2000), pp87-88.

<sup>494</sup> Phillips (1995), pp81-83.

<sup>495</sup> Phillips (1995), pp24-25, and Judge (1999), p22.

ongoing ways that residents get in touch with representatives. Another is a particularly interesting instance of the representatives *not* fostering a relationship with residents, namely, a visit made by a group of representatives to community facilities in another area. Finally, I discuss approaches made by residents to the representatives that are outwith both the constitutional and representatives' notions of being represented.

*Surgeries.* Soon after the constitution of the residents' association and the formation of the management committee in 2002, the first issue of the Mossbank newsletter is issued. A section of this newsletter is devoted to 'How to Get in Touch with the Management Committee'.<sup>496</sup> 'Surgeries' are introduced as a form of interaction between representatives and residents:

To make sure that the residents of [Mossbank] have access to their Management Committee they will be holding regular weekly surgeries at the [Drop-in Shop]. Commencing on Tuesday 8th October and thereafter every Tuesday between the hours of 10am and 12 noon there will be members of the Management Committee available for consultation.

At the same time, contacting representatives outside such arrangements, at home, for example, is discouraged. Appearing in the same section of the newsletter but in large, bold type was the following statement: '[u]nless extremely urgent the committee would ask that you do not contact them at their home'.

A few months later, these surgeries are extended: 'commencing from 8th May onwards each Thursday representatives from the committee will be available at the [Drop-in Shop] from 6.30pm till 7.30pm'. The reasons given for this are:

The committee have been conscious that many of the association members work and do not have access to the day surgery held on Tuesdays. Hopefully, they will now have an opportunity to speak with the committee if they wish

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<sup>496</sup> Newsletter: issue 1 (October 2002).

to.<sup>497</sup>

However, mention of surgeries in the newsletter eventually disappear. Katie's thoughts on taking her turn as a committee member at these surgeries suggests why they were quietly abandoned:

Katie: At one point we had a rota going in there for folk coming there asking about it [the regeneration initiative]. Nobody came in. I think we did two hours a week each of us.

Researcher: Yeah.

Katie: You just went in and sat. Counted the collection box. It could have been counted in two minutes sometimes. Not so bad with the big bucket with pennies now. But I'll tell you it was grim.<sup>498</sup>

The 'surgeries' stand as the first attempt by the committee to foster a relationship between the representatives and represented. They can be viewed as an attempt by the management committee to allow residents to access and 'have a say' in the work of the management committee (by attending the surgeries) and to interact with the representatives (through face-to-face communication). These surgeries failed because no residents attended. What the management committee saw as the way to create the relationship was not attractive to the residents. It shows a particular, quite limited understanding of what the representative relationship ought to be. It would have been a relationship controlled by the representatives: residents would have been able to 'consult' representatives only at certain times. Whilst the actual meetings themselves never took place, the language used to promote the meetings (particularly associations with the word 'surgery') echo traditional and established relations between representatives and represented at regional and national levels. Local councillors, MSPs, MPs, and MEPs hold surgeries. It is interesting to note that the local councillor whose ward includes Mossbank receives very few 'consultations' at her surgeries, which coincidentally, are held

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<sup>497</sup> Newsletter: issue 4 (April 2003).

<sup>498</sup> Interview: Katie (16 November 2005).



in the Drop-in Shop.<sup>499</sup> This point supports my argument that ‘surgeries’ are unattractive to residents as an approach to building a relationship with the management committee / representatives.

*The ‘Give Us Your Views Day’.* The ‘Give Us Your Views Day’ is an event organised by the management committee to gather views from residents on how the money generated by the stock transfer process (if the vote goes in favour of a transfer of council housing stock) could be spent. A leaflet distributed by the management committee outlines the idea: ‘[t]he [Mossbank] Association of Residents Management Committee have ideas on how the money could be spent but we want to hear your views on what the money could be spent on’.<sup>500</sup> The residents are invited to come ‘for an informal chat’ to ‘give us your views and ideas and [h]ear the [residents’ committee’s] ideas’ on a Saturday between 10am and 2pm.<sup>501</sup>

The ‘official’ assessment of the management committee ‘Give Us Your Views Day’ is recorded in the Chairman’s Report in the 2005 Annual Report of the Residents’ Association:

The community was invited to attend an open morning in the [Drop-in Shop] one Saturday in June to give their views on how the stock transfer money could be spent. We were disappointed with the turnout and eventually it was the [management committee’s] view that went forward to Council officials. We have decided it would be beneficial for the community to have a Community Facility situated in [Greenden Park] where events and activities could take place for people of all ages but especially focussing in on things for young people.<sup>502</sup>

A more candid assessment of the ‘Give Us Your Views Day’ is made by the CDW in the July 2005 meeting of the management committee: ‘we did try and ask people to come in

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<sup>499</sup> Interview: local councillor (13 March 2006).

<sup>500</sup> This leaflet was distributed to all households in Mossbank publicising the ‘Give Us Your Views Day’.

<sup>501</sup> Newsletter: issue 13 (May 2005).

<sup>502</sup> Residents’ association annual report: 2005.

and tell us what they wanted [...], but nobody came in'.<sup>503</sup> It is interesting to note that no discussion took place within the management committee regarding this 'disappointment'. No further formal attempts have been made by the committee to communicate and exchange views regarding how the money raised by stock transfer could be spent.

The 'official' voice of the management committee lays the 'blame' for this lack of interest on the residents. However, such events are actually offered with little thought as to whether they really are applicable and attractive to residents. The notion of creating and maintaining a relationship with the residents to facilitate the exchange of views is at least acknowledged by the management committee. In relation to the Give Us Your Views Day, as well as the surgeries, the importance attached to this is limited. Including residents between AGMs in an active representative relationship is not considered essential or necessary to representation in Mossbank.

*Ongoing Ways of Contacting Representatives.* Throughout the existence of the residents' association / management committee structure, other ways for residents to contact committee members have been publicised. The fifth issue of the newsletter is the last occasion that such a list is communicated to the residents. Alongside information about the surgeries and underneath the heading 'How to get in touch' three additional ways of contacting the 'Residents' Association' (and *not* the representatives) are given:

You can contact the Residents Association by a number of methods.  
By calling in anytime to the [Drop-in Shop] and speak [*sic*] with [...] the Community Development Worker.  
By letter addressed to the Secretary of the [Mossbank] association of Residents and handed into the [Drop-in Shop].  
By telephone on [...].<sup>504</sup>

Here residents are invited to contact the residents' association rather than the representatives directly. Two of the three options are mediated by the CDW, placing a greater distance between the representatives and the represented. Over time, especially

<sup>503</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: July 2005.

<sup>504</sup> Newsletter: issue 5 (June 2003).

after 2003, less emphasis is given to publicising these ways of making contact due to a gradual increase of residents visiting the CDW in the Drop-in Shop.<sup>505</sup> Initially, due to local authority and housing association logos appearing in the window the Drop-in Shop was, in the view of the CDW, felt by residents to be a branch office of either the local authority or the Guthrie Housing Association.<sup>506</sup> Removing these helped to encourage residents to come in. Daniel and Vicky noted this increasing willingness on the part of the residents to use the Drop-in Shop and the CDW as the point of contact. Daniel states that, 'they are starting to use it now because they know now, or they've been told, that it's not a council building'.<sup>507</sup> Vicky: 'I don't think people are backward about coming forward in to the shop if they've got a problem'.<sup>508</sup>

To the residents, the CDW is as well known, if not more so, than the representatives. The CDW, as a paid employee, spends a lot of time in the Drop-in Shop interacting with members of the management committee and residents. To the management committee, he is a guide, adviser, expert, organiser, manager, fundraiser, and intermediary between the residents' association and other organisations.<sup>509</sup> To residents, he is familiar, and an easily accessible source of advice and information. Vicky jokingly comments that 'they [the residents] mostly speak to [the CDW]. He's head of the residents' committee, no he's not'.<sup>510</sup> Though said in jest, this comment reflects a perception that the CDW, to a greater extent than the representatives, is the 'face' of the residents' association / management committee. He is very much at the centre of the activities of the residents' association and has a deep understanding of the regeneration initiative and the activities of the residents' association / management committee.

The number of residents visiting the Drop-in Shop to talk to the CDW, from a slow start, has become an important dimension of the representative relationship in Mossbank.

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<sup>505</sup> The CDW does not keep a record of the number of residents who visited the Drop-in Shop. Therefore, there are no quantitative data recording this increase.

<sup>506</sup> Fieldnotes.

<sup>507</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

<sup>508</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

<sup>509</sup> I observed the CDW acting in these roles during my observation of the management committee meetings.

<sup>510</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

However, residents are seldom in direct contact with any of the representatives unless a member such as Carol happens to be in the Drop-in Shop. In the context of the representative relationship, the CDW sits *between* the representatives and the represented. Representatives and represented relate to on another through the CDW. The CDW has become a convenient and efficient lynchpin in the development of representation in Mossbank. However, this points towards a separation between representatives and represented. In Young's normative account of inclusive representation, 'a representative process is worse [...] to the extent that the separation tends towards severance, and better to the extent that it establishes and renews connection between constituents and representative'.<sup>511</sup> The CDW prevents a further slide towards severance, but at the same time institutionalises and embeds separation. Furthermore, the notion of a 'mediated relationship' central to Young's account of representation as relationship is undermined by the CDW's position as mediator: he is neither a resident or a member of the management committee.<sup>512</sup> The creation and future development of communication between the representatives and the represented is disrupted by the presence of the CDW.

Countering these shortcomings, measured against Young's normative account, are the practical, context-dependent 'realities' of democratic engagement in Mossbank. The CDW fills a space in the relationship that the representatives often cannot or will not. All the representatives are volunteers with other interests and demands on their time and resources. Most are not 'experts' at the intricacies of the development of the regeneration initiative or the activities of the residents' association / management committee. Relative to other forms of relating to representatives, visiting the Drop-in Shop to speak to the CDW 'works'. It suits, and is acceptable to, both residents and representatives. This arrangement has parallels in regional and national representative relationships. For example, constituents may prefer to approach a local authority department or paid official rather than communicating with their elected representative directly at a surgery or by

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<sup>511</sup> Young (2000), pp129-130.

<sup>512</sup> Young's notion of a 'mediated relationship' concerns only representatives and constituents: '[r]epresentation consists of a mediated relationship, both among members of a constituency, between the constituency and the representative, and between the representatives in a decision-making body' - Young (2000), p129.

letter.<sup>513</sup>

*Visit to the Community Facilities.* In order to find out more about the latest development in the provision of community facilities, the management committee arranged to visit established community facilities in a Scottish city. The purpose of such a visit as stated in the 2005 Annual Report, was to ‘see first hand the benefits they gave to their local communities’ and to learn about the ‘difficulties of running them both in terms of personnel and finance’.<sup>514</sup>

Who went on this trip? In the July and August meetings of the management committee it was decided to ‘extend invitations’ to individuals connected to elite members of the partnership. The following individuals made the visit: ‘several members of [Mossbank’s] Management Committee’, officials from Guthrie Council Housing Department and the local councillor.<sup>515</sup> Other than representatives from the management committee, no other Mossbank residents attended. At no point during discussions of who should be invited on this trip were Mossbank residents mentioned. Inviting elites and officials from other partners in the regeneration partnership, whilst not without justification and benefit, is in sharp contrast to a missed opportunity to foster the representative - represented relationship by inviting some of the residents to view these community facilities, perhaps as an alternative to the unsuccessful ‘Give Us Your Views Day’ and surgeries.

*Approaches Made to Representatives By Residents.* Accounts given by members of the management committee about being approached by residents vary in detail. Some are general perceptions and others focus on actual incidents. These accounts tend to refer to brief, informal, even spontaneous instances. In this section, I include comments from two management committee members on being approached by residents in ways that circumvent the norms of representation as set out in the constitution and the opportunities put forward by the management committee.

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<sup>513</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p44, and Pattie *et al* (2004), p78 acknowledge and measure incidences of contacting the ‘town hall’ and ‘public officials’ in their empirical studies of political participation in the United Kingdom.

<sup>514</sup> Residents’ association annual report: 2005.

<sup>515</sup> Newsletter: issue 14 (August 2005).

Carol: Well, I really can't speak for everybody else, but certainly, I mean people will stop me now. It can actually get a bit annoying at times because you can't go into shops now. And they'll be going oh, I meant to ask you about this and can you do something about this. But it's good, because there have been problems at the shops and we've dealt with them quite quickly.<sup>516</sup>

Carol's annoyance, and her view that being approached was 'good', indicates the burden of being a representative who has some interest in fostering a relationship with those he or she represents. Encroachment into her private life may sometimes be a nuisance, but there is a realisation on Carol's part that this is an inevitable part of being a representative. Furthermore, Carol also realises that tolerating such approaches produces dividends in the form of practical outputs.

Daniel recounts an actual experience of being approached by residents. He relates an incident to do with the construction of the new houses in and around Shaws Drive:

There was an old woman stopped me down at the bottom of the street. She says are you on that committee? And I says to her, what committee would that be, just out of curiosity. That committee, you know, you're on it [laughs]. And I says, right fair enough. I says I'm on the committee. She was asking something about getting the roads swept; they're causing an awfy stoor. And I says, they are meant to sweep the road off. She says that you should be up there making sure that they do. I said that I would go up and have a chat with [...] the site manager. I'll go up and have a chat with [the site manager] and ask him what's happening. And if you put your name and address in the [Drop-in Shop] I'll get in touch with you. But she never did.<sup>517</sup>

Daniel's account reinforces the point that for representatives, dealing with residents circumventing prescribed entries into the representative relationship is hard to avoid. However, these approaches offer opportunities to contact the members of the committee

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<sup>516</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>517</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005). Stoor: 'dust in motion, flying, swirling dust; (a layer of) dust', Robinson (1985), p675.

in a way that AGMs and Give Us Your Views Days, surgeries, and even visiting the CDW cannot. Residents initiate the encounter, on a topic that interests them, where and when it suits them. However, the ‘distance’ between representative and represented is apparent in Daniel’s account and is typical of this relationship. Rather than offering to continue the relationship directly, Daniel instead directs the resident to the Drop-in Shop. This distances Daniel from the woman and, in effect, stops any development of a closer representative - represented relationship. The interaction in terms of being a ‘relationship’ is instead a ‘dead end’. These approaches are just too fleeting to be considered actual or embryonic instances of a substantive and enduring representative relationship. For representatives, they are to be tolerated rather than embraced.

- Inclusive Representation?

Young compresses her normative ideal of an inclusive representative - represented relationship into the following statement:

Establishing and maintaining legitimate and inclusive processes of representation calls up responsibilities for both officials and citizens. Citizens must be willing and able to mobilize one another actively to participate in processes of both authorizing and holding to account. Representatives should listen to these public discussions and diverse claims, stay connected to constituents, and be able to convey reasons for their actions and judgements in terms that recollect their discussions. Such mobilizations, listening, and connectedness can be either facilitated or impeded by the design of representative institutions.<sup>518</sup>

This statement can act as a ‘yardstick’ of what an inclusive representative - represented relationship ought to resemble. Based on this measurement, Mossbank has a number of deep-seated shortcomings. When assessing the state of the representative relationship in Mossbank it is important to remember that inclusion is a matter of degree.<sup>519</sup> To what *extent*, given the context in which Mossbank is embedded, is the representative relationship inclusive?

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<sup>518</sup> Young (2000), p132.

<sup>519</sup> Young (2000), p129.

The structure of representation, as set out in the constitution of the residents' association, acts as the framework for representation in Mossbank. This framework sets out a *formal* view of representation. It is a framework that constrains what is possible in the representative - represented relationship. Authorisation and holding to account are concentrated in one annual 'moment', the AGM, in which very few residents take part. However, to be inclusive in any meaningful or substantive sense, the relationship has to consist of more than these annual 'moments', with regular participative and communicative elements characterising relationships between representatives and residents, and between residents themselves.

The activity of representation in between the AGMs can be coloured by who the residents are. In the context of Mossbank, sex and ethnicity, the commonly cited most significant identities that relate to improving the quality of representation do not necessarily apply. Sex and type of tenancy are more salient. Mossbank, as shown in Chapter 2 - see Table 2.3 - is ethnically homogeneous. Women are proportionately represented on the committee, but this reflects the nature of being a committee member in a micro-level context. Women find it easier to access the committee and to relate to notions of public service.

Perceptions of being a representative are mingled with other considerations. At one extreme being on the committee is about 'making up the numbers' Self-interest is also present. Being a committee member / representative does not entail privileging the idea of fostering a substantially strong representative - represented relationship. Management committee members have a limited view of representation, influenced by the constitution but augmented by taken-for-granted norms that do not privilege a strongly inclusive representative relationship. Committee members, therefore, are more easily able to disregard voices from within the wider membership.

The ways in which the management committee and residents attempt to relate to one another as representatives and represented outwith the AGMs highlight most strongly the state of the representative relationship in Mossbank. Attempts by the management



committee to 'include' the residents in the decision making processes are mostly unsuccessful, in that very few, if any, residents take part. The most successful form of residents and representatives interacting (in terms of numbers, durability and flexibility) occurs when the CDW acts as a go-between. Two points are worth noting here. Firstly, despite serious shortcomings, this form of maintaining the representative relationship actually works: residents, in particular, increasingly use this approach. Because it works, is seemingly developing, this serves to highlight the low level and poor quality of the (mediated) representative- represented in Mossbank. Secondly, this lack of engagement, though viewed with disappointment by the committee, creates no desire, on their part, to develop the relationship. There is, instead, a certain amount of hand wringing from the committee that is not translated into increased efforts to engage with the residents. By offering surgeries and so on to residents, the management committee are extending the formal nature of representation. If residents do not accept these offers the 'explanation' lies closer to resident apathy than it does to shortcomings in the form and structure of these opportunities. These opportunities are not central to prevailing representative norms in Mossbank, which are essentially rooted in and restricted to a trustee conception of representation, punctuated annually with a 'moment' of authorisation and holding to account.

Residents' attempts at engaging with the representative relationship are tied to single issues, are sporadic, and show no signs of residents 'mobilising' around issues. As much as the representatives, the residents' views and behaviours regarding representation limit it to a distant and sporadic relationship, hardly touching many residents.

The state of the representative - represented relationship in Mossbank falls short of Young's ideal. The actually existing context in which representation exists and develops is at the root of this shortcoming. Engagement in the relationship is largely confined to formal mechanisms, narrow in scope but, nevertheless, practical, which allow a representative relationship to exist, as opposed to flourish.

## Conclusion

The analysis and emerging findings, of the nature of participation and representation in Mossbank create a picture that is removed from notions of 'inclusion'. Participation and representation are deeply engrained within Mossbank's democratic life, but in forms that tend not to be conducive to the fostering of forms of democratic engagement amenable to the inclusion of 'ordinary' Mossbank residents. In Mossbank, participation of any extent requires a mix of particular 'qualifications'; and relations between representatives and their 'constituents' are distant, even awkward. Prevailing forms of participation and representation, largely controlled and developed from within the residents' association management committee, share a number of commonalities that this analysis has exposed. In a strong sense, participative and representative structures, relations and behaviours in Mossbank are conventional and familiar. There is a dominating formal element detectable in these aspects of engagement, with the division of labour regarding engagement being sharply divided between a 'passive' majority and an 'active' minority, composed of those who 'fit in' and are suitably 'qualified'. Consequently, representation and participation in Mossbank establish and embed exclusion rather than foster and develop inclusion.

In the following chapter, the nature of political communication in Mossbank is analysed. How is political communication undertaken in Mossbank and how does it relate to Young's normative account of democratic communication? As components of democratic engagement, participation and representation are closely bound up with communication, the ongoing flow of information and messages between individuals and groups within and across a setting. With this in mind, it is also necessary to pose the question, to what extent does the somewhat exclusive nature of participation and representation highlighted in this chapter colour political communication in Mossbank?

## Chapter 7

### Political Communication in Mossbank

This chapter applies the political communication theme of the analytical framework presented in Chapter 4 to the democratic institutions and processes of Mossbank. This is a detailed analysis exploring communication across Mossbank between residents and the management committee, and communication ‘inside’ the management committee. Specifically, it is an analysis of patterns of communication existing alongside and influenced by structures and practices of participation and representation in Mossbank. As well as contributing to the objective of understanding democratic engagement in Mossbank, these insights raise issues relevant to another aim of this research, that of theory building, specifically in relation to Young’s normative account of ‘inclusive’ deliberative democracy. The structure of this chapter reflects the pathways that emanate from the political communication theme - Figure 4.5 in Chapter 4 summarises these pathways. The first and second sections focus on political communication throughout Mossbank, subdivided into the transmitting and receiving elements. The third concentrates on relationships and dispositions between residents. In each of these sections I have selected particular ‘settings’, ‘sub-plots’ and ‘characters’.<sup>520</sup> These events and situations have been chosen because they represent either ‘typical’ or rare examples of communication in Mossbank.

#### Transmitting

‘Transmitting’ refers to the conveying of information, perspectives and views using verbal and non-verbal methods. Argument, narrative, ignoring and acknowledging, and language and tone, each modes of communication set out in in the analytical framework, serve as the basis, not the boundaries, of my analysis. Firstly, I explore transmitting within the management committee meetings. Next, I expand the analysis to examine transmitting *across* Mossbank, particularly between the management committee and the residents.

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<sup>520</sup> See Chapter 2 for an explanation of my use of these terms.

- Transmitting Inside the Management Committee

This section examines how 'talk' is carried out during the management committee meetings. The discussion is divided into sections that explore different facets of this aspect of communication in the committee meetings, based on pathways included in the analytical framework. Details of the structure and organisation of the management committee are given in Chapter 2. However, it is worth pointing out that the meetings are usually closed to non-committee members, but as the residents' association constitution allows, non-members are occasionally invited to attend. I include such occurrences in the analysis as they offer an interesting contrast to transmitting between members.

- *Argument in Decision Making Processes.* Within management committee meetings, does argument occur? Can transmitting in the committee meetings be characterised as an inclusive process of reason giving leading to an agreed outcome? Instances within the management committee meetings where argument, or something strongly resembling a normative ideal of argument, occur are rare but are nevertheless worth closer examination, given the importance of argument in communication. The discussion in the September 2005 meeting leading to the decision to plan a children's Hallowe'en party is one such instance:

Carol (secretary): We would have to work out what we really want to do. It's the National Lottery Day. It's the tenth year, it's birthday's this November. So on Saturday the fifth of November and on Sunday the sixth they've asked people who have had lottery funding if they want to join in the celebrations. But basically what it means is putting on something in your area for the day. And if you do, if you go on to their web site and tell them what you're doing and all the rest of it, then they'll make sure that through the media it is well publicised. So that's it. The form's here to fill in if we want to do it.

Daniel (chair): So, we've got to decide what we're going to do.

Carol: Well, it's got here under some of them, 'we would like to take part in the celebrations by holding a special event for children and young people, opening our project to the public' - which we won't be doing - 'supporting our event to be held on or around the fifth of November, or other'. So you would have to really think about what we could do, because it's not something we could charge for.

Member C: And it's not that long away either.

Member A: Do they help with the costs?

Carol: No, that's what I'm saying. Basically, all they're going to do is make sure it's well covered in the media. They'll cover all the publicity.

Member A: I was thinking of a bonfire seeing it's the fifth.

CDW: Well, don't bother thinking about a bonfire.

Carol: No.

CDW: The insurance costs for something like that are horrendous.

Member A: Then again I was thinking if we charge for it.

Carol: No, well this is it.

Member A: To cover the costs.

[Some talking over one another]

CDW: Costs. You wouldn't believe it. Apart from the insurance, the health and safety aspects of it are enormous.

Member A: Is that why there are no more bonfires?

Daniel: Even the council won't entertain them.

Carol: It's got here, 'how you can get involved. We would like you to join in the celebrations and welcome all ideas. Could you organise free activities involving children and young people; provide prizes or tickets that could be used in your local or regional media, conduct behind the scenes tours or run special promotions, organise performances or displays by children, hold an open day, link any planned activities or celebrations around November, and brand your event with National Lottery Day merchandise.' So, I mean, they're saying organise free activities.

Daniel: The only thing that I can come up with would be this street football competition.

Carol: The thing is it's going to be hard on November the fifth to get kids out. For one, it's going to be pitch black.

Daniel: It could be during the day though.

Carol: Yes, right enough, aye. It's Saturday is it?

Member C: Has it got to be a Saturday when you do it?

Carol: No, so long as it's round about that day.

Member C: What about something to do with Hallowe'en? Hallowe'en is just before that.

Carol. Could do.

Member C: With the kids.

Vicky: A fancy dress competition.

Carol: It's got here that 'we hope you will want to join in over the weekend of the fifth and sixth of November, or in the build up to National Lottery Day'. So I'd imagine, yeah.

Member C: It's only about five days before November.

Member A: How about a talent contest for the youngsters? Ask [owner of hotel] if he'll lend us the hall for, you know as it's to do with the Lottery, give us the hall for nothing.

Vicky: Free advertising.

Member A: Free advertising.

[Some talking over one another]

Carol: We could say that to him, don't charge us, you're getting free

advertising.

Member A: And the parents could use the bar.

Carol: No, because if you've kids. We've always said that from the very start, if we're running something for kids, we must not drink alcohol.

Member A: Soft drinks.

Carol: Soft drinks, yeah. Normally we supply these ourselves anyway. But I suppose we could maybe work something out with him for that.

Daniel: So what are you going to have?

Carol: I don't know.

Daniel: A Hallowe'en fancy dress seems to be good. Something different.

Member C: Would you get the kids coming to it?

Vicky: If they go door to door then round to the [hotel] that would be something for them.

CDW: You could have a Hallowe'en disco. You come dressed up and there are prizes for that. You've got the disco equipment so you could do that.

Carol: So, do you want me to start pushing [ ] and try to.

Member B: [Unclear]

CDW: That depends on [the hotel owner]. If he's giving the hall for free, you could do it for no cost. Or you could subsidise it yourselves, it's up to you entirely.

Carol: Yeah.

Member C: Or think about it for a week and see if anyone can come up with anything.

Daniel: Street football?

Carol: I mean we're now in September, so you're talking two months that we've got to get it organised.<sup>521</sup>

The discussion begins with Carol mentioning the tenth anniversary of the National Lottery and asking whether there is an interest in organising an event to coincide with this. Member C asks for clarification regarding the input from the National Lottery. A bonfire is suggested. This is rejected on the grounds of cost. The idea of a bonfire is defended - perhaps the costs could be covered if a charge were made for attending the event. A further objection to a bonfire is raised based on health and safety grounds. Carol raises a further argument for the rejection of the bonfire idea as the National Lottery requires any events to be free of charge. Daniel suggests another idea: a street football competition. Carol objects to this suggestion because it will be too dark to play football, but Daniel reminds her that it could be held during the day. This chain of argument is broken when Member C states that an event related to Hallowe'en would perhaps be a

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<sup>521</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: September 2005.

good idea. Carol checks with the National Lottery paperwork to confirm if this would be permissible. Related to this idea, another member suggests a fancy dress competition. By this stage, the idea of putting on a children's Hallowe'en party has been established.

Even in this relatively short exchange, argument is 'messy'. Argument has a tenuous position as a mode of communication. During the discussion, there are short periods of talking over one another that threaten to disrupt the chain of argument. However, shared premisses are quickly established, particularly agreement regarding the idea of organising some sort of event. From this beginning, committee members are able to go through a process in which individual members make suggestions and the feasibility of these claims are questioned and assessed through talk characterised by reason giving.

The issues under discussion are not particularly contentious - there is no sense of conflict, strong feelings or the prospect of a 'zero sum' outcome - and are relatively easy for committee members to grasp. The combination of these two factors makes argument accessible and appropriate to enough committee members to be the vehicle of transmitting for this particular issue.

In other situations, argument may not be so easily established or sustained without excluding some parties. Also, some people may find argument an inappropriate vehicle of expression. They may find it difficult to comply with the accompanying norms. In order to facilitate communication other approaches can be adopted that may reach out across such gulfs of difference. Other approaches to transmitting aiming to include otherwise hidden, alternative or misunderstood perspectives and experiences are possible. One alternative is 'narrative', or the communication of 'situated knowledge'.

- *Narrative in Decision Making Processes*. Discussions involving narrative characterise some periods of the management committee meetings. I analyse one example to illustrate how narrative has been used in the meetings. During a discussion relating to the organisation of a tombola for a fund raising stall, a member of the management committee - Member C - relates an observation to frame and support her contribution. Her point concerns deciding which tickets should win prizes, tickets with numbers ending

with a zero and / or ticket numbers ending with a five.

Daniel (chair): And are we doing the nothings and fives this time?

Member C: Now, that's what I was going to talk about, actually. Because I went to the one at [organised by a local amateur football club]. They were only doing the nothings. But they were charging three for a pound. That was a lot more expensive than if they were only doing the nothings.

Member A: What were we charging last year, was it six for a pound?

Daniel: No, five for a pound last year. Which I think isn't bad.

Member C: Which was just the nothings, which I thought was alright.

Daniel: So, what you doing this year? What are we planning to do?

Member C: Well, I would stick to what we were doing. If we do fives as well then...

Daniel: It would go quicker.

Carol: Yeah.

Member C: There's no way it would last.

Daniel: Do you reckon.

Carol: We'll go for that.<sup>522</sup>

Member C defends retaining the same arrangement for the winning tickets as in the previous year - winning numbers end with zeros and fives. By recounting her observation, Member C makes a meaningful contribution using her 'story' to support her argument. The story, in effect, illustrates her argument. Again, the issue under discussion is not contentious and there are no objections to Member C's suggestion.

Communicating experiences and perspectives through narrative is accepted within the committee as a legitimate aspect of communication. To have meaning as an instance of transmitting, Member C's story needs to be linked to the resolution of the problem, and this occurs when Member C merges narrative into argument: the story becomes the justification for her point of view. Without a return to argument (reason giving), Member C's narrative would have remained a 'story' and not part of the process of expression demonstrating and justifying her point of view.<sup>523</sup> Not only can the recounting of stories and experiences help bridge gulfs of understanding, as Young argues, they can also offer

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<sup>522</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: July, 2005.

<sup>523</sup> Young (2000), p72.



a more accessible and appealing form of expression to those who see argument as difficult and unappealing. Member C does not speak very much in the meetings, but on this occasion she has no difficulty in initiating and sustaining the transmission of her views. Even in relation to a relatively mundane issue as arranging a tombola, narrative has a part to play in including rarely heard voices and particular experiences in the decision making process.

- *Ignoring and Acknowledging in the Meetings.* Gestures of ignoring and acknowledging, as suggested in Chapter 4, can take place throughout the duration of an interaction. During the management committee meetings, such gestures occur between the committee members, and between the committee members and invited guests. In each case, the form and function of these gestures differs.

*Acknowledgement Amongst Committee Members.* Here my focus is on the extent and nature of greeting between committee members during the meetings. Acknowledging one another, in the form of small talk and general chatter occurs before the formal beginning of the meetings and sometimes continues after the start of the meeting. Sometimes these acknowledging gestures, the re-establishment of relationships between committee members, co-exist alongside the formal opening comments from the chairperson. The following, a brief exchange between the chairperson (Paul) and another committee member (Randall), is an example of this mingling of greeting and the actual content of the meeting:

Paul: Sorry for being just on time there, I kind of fell asleep.

Randall: Watching the match.

Paul: Was I thump. Anyway. Welcome everybody to the Association of Residents of [Mossbank] and [Newlands].<sup>524</sup>

Unfortunately, because such gestures of acknowledgement begin as soon as people walk into the meeting room I did not capture these as audio recordings. However, I can say that

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<sup>524</sup> Management committee meeting: December, 2005.

this pre-meeting period is characterised by chatter of a generally friendly and welcoming sort.

Members of the management committee make other gestures unrelated to the substance of the meetings. Some can be regarded as spontaneous gestures of acknowledgement, whilst others indicate a formal and ritualistic approach to the acknowledgement of other members. I discuss examples of both. During the November 2005 committee meeting, some time into the formal business of the meeting, Member A started passing round a packet of sweets. In my notes made immediately after my observation of the meeting, I am of the view that this exemplifies the generally friendly and informal nature of the meetings. Although boredom may have been a factor - at the time, the secretary was reporting on meetings with other members of the regeneration partnership - it is primarily a gesture of 'togetherness'. By passing round the sweets, Member A is making a particular acknowledgement of each committee member.

Running alongside such informal forms of greeting, there are more formal, 'traditional' gestures, such as the following. During a meeting, Carol makes a spontaneous acknowledgement of the treasurer (Member C) that was not a part of the formal agenda:

Before we could take the money from [Mossbank Residents' Association] and use it to do things, and juggle it about and put it back and maybe not put it back, it'll go there. It's been hard work for [Member C] to keep it all sorted.<sup>525</sup>

Carol is acknowledging the treasurer's efforts regarding the financial implications of the setting up of the charitable arm of the residents' association (Mossbank First).

As ignoring and acknowledging gestures occur at the beginning and during the meetings, they are also noticeable towards the end of meetings. As the meetings begin to close, signalled by notification of the date of the next meeting, members begin to prepare to

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<sup>525</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: November, 2005.

leave. No attempt is made formally to mark the close of the meetings. Members start to talk amongst themselves. However, the members are keen to go home, given that meetings are held on Tuesday evenings and are usually not finished until after 9pm. However, in the short time between the ending of the meeting and members going home, they talk amongst themselves. This is characterised by small talk and joking, often related to management committee affairs and the regeneration. The July 2005 meeting, for example, was unusually short and this was the post-meeting topic of conversation:

Daniel: [Confirming the data of the next meeting.] Right, it's the second of August, 7pm, Tuesday, next meeting.

CDW: That's the quickest meeting ever.

Carol: Yeah. [Paul's] not getting to come back.

[Laughter.]

CDW: You're lucky, you'd normally be here to about 10. Well maybe not quite as much as that.

Daniel: All the troublemakers are not here, that's what it was.

CDW: That's exactly it.

Carol: Aye.<sup>526</sup>

Here, light hearted comments were directed at absent members as the members, and the community development worker, shared in the satisfaction of leaving the meeting earlier than expected.

Acknowledgement amongst members of the management committee takes place at all stages of the meetings. It is predominantly about re-establishing and maintaining rapport and togetherness. These gestures sit comfortably in the relaxed atmosphere of the meetings. However, such gestures are most easily fostered where they are least needed. For the most part, and throughout my observation of the committee, there were no significant conflicts or disagreements due to the discussion of contentious or divisive issues. Acknowledging gestures between the committee members, as a route to closer and more meaningful discussion between parties, have not been put to the test.

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<sup>526</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: July 2005.

*Acknowledgement Between the Committee and Guests.* Guests do not take part in, or sit through, a complete management committee meeting. Usually, the meeting is planned to make the relevant agenda item as early on in the meeting as practical, after which guests leave. I explore four examples from the meetings that show the committee's approach to acknowledging non-members. Three concern guests from outside Mossbank, and the fourth a Mossbank resident. During their relatively short time in a meeting to what degree and in what ways are these interactions 'lubricated' by 'greeting' gestures. What does this suggest about the capacities of the committee members to establish an environment conducive to 'discursive equality'?

The first instance, from the August 2005 meeting, involves a representative of the Guthrie Credit Union Steering Committee. First of all, Paul, who is in the chair, acknowledges the guest's presence by asking if she is happy to give her presentation early in the meeting:

Paul: Could we miss out item number two for the moment and go onto the credit union? [ ] will that be alright for yourself?

Guest: Absolutely.<sup>527</sup>

Paul then asks if anybody on the committee knows the guest. Most present have never met her. Carol asks the guest, 'Do you want an introduction?' The guest responds by saying, 'Come on [Paul], give me an introduction'. It was actually Carol who introduces the guest to the committee by outlining who she is (her name), who she represents and what she does. Those members of the committee she does not know then introduce themselves. Before going on with the rest of the meeting, there was a short discussion of the idea of credit unions.

The other instances involving guests from outwith Mossbank occur in the September

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<sup>527</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: August 2005.

2005 meeting. The first guest is a representative of a local transport forum. The second is the owner of the local hotel. In sharp contrast to the initial reception of the credit union guest in the previous month, there is very little in the way of gestures of acknowledgement at the beginning of these encounters. The representative from the transport forum is given no introduction, even though he is a 'stranger'. The hotel owner's introduction consists of the announcement of his name and where he is from. However, the conclusions of these three encounters are similar. Acknowledgement at the end is restricted to 'goodbye' and 'thank you' gestures from members and guests.

This lack of consistency on the part of the management committee regarding how they welcome guests is surprising given that they occurred in consecutive meetings. In August, something or someone was present to begin this process, and in September, this was lacking. Here I want to highlight the role of the chairperson. In the first meeting - with the credit union guest - Paul was in the chair; in the second, Daniel was chairperson. Paul, as the more experienced and being in favour of a more formal approach to committee meetings, adheres as much as possible to traditional norms of how to deal with guests. He leads the greeting and welcoming of the guest. Daniel, on the other hand, is relatively new to the role of chairperson and is thus not as experienced and familiar as Paul in welcoming guests. When Daniel is in the chair, the committee, whilst being polite and friendly, seems less able to acknowledge guests as temporary members of the discursive relationship.

The Mossbank resident's reason for attending the October 2005 management committee meeting relates to problems regarding the installation of showers in some new houses in Mossbank. The resident is present at the beginning of the meeting. Paul, the chairperson, introduces him to the committee in the following way.

Paul: He [the resident] wrote a letter to myself and we've asked him to come along to put his point of view forward. His letter says 'I and a few other residents in the new houses in [Shaws Drive] would like permission to attend your next meeting on the 4th October because of a petition to [Guthrie]

Housing Association regarding showers'. Now can you say what you've got to say.<sup>528</sup>

Paul introduces the resident in a similar way to Carol's remarks regarding the guest from the credit union: Paul tells the committee who he is, where he lives, whom he represents and why he is present. However, in contrast to the credit union guest, no attempt is made to introduce the resident to the members of the committee individually. After the resident has spoken and committee members have asked some questions, the encounter ends quickly. The resident acknowledges the committee members with a gesture of politeness, 'Thanks very much for listening'. In return, some members uttered their acknowledgement as the resident left the room. Also, before the resident leaves, Paul, makes a humorous, light hearted remark about 'going for a pint'.<sup>529</sup> I find the rapid ending of the encounter striking - perhaps the resident could not wait to get away!

Discussion of the showers in the new houses continues after the resident has left the meeting. Here Paul's contribution is especially worth highlighting, being made minutes after the resident's departure:

They've [the residents in the new houses] came here, they've approached us, or myself, asking to be here so we've heard what they've got to say. So it would be courtesy to write to [Guthrie] Housing Association on behalf of the tenants in phase one [...] just to say, look if you can consider putting in the showers, or could you reply to the letter and explain to them why they're not putting showers in.<sup>530</sup>

Here Paul sums up the event and outlines what he thinks ought to happen next. Paul's use of 'we' and 'they', in his comments made after the departure of the resident, to denote the committee and the residents respectively indicates the limited sense of 'togetherness' that has been achieved during the encounter. The residents become 'objects' of the discussion.

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<sup>528</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: October, 2005.

<sup>529</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: October, 2005.

<sup>530</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: October, 2005.

Looking at these four instances of how the committee ignore and acknowledge their guests, 'greeting' gestures are most lacking when most needed. At the beginning of the interaction, does the resident know all, or some, or none of the committee members? - this is never established. At this point, the greeting gestures are oriented towards the committee recognising the resident, but the resident is given little opportunity to recognise or to be 'together' with the committee members. Gestures contained in the above quotation from Paul could have played a part in the establishment and maintenance of closer relations between the committee and the residents. But such gestures seem futile and hollow being made in the absence of the guest resident and the other resident more generally.

The contrast between acknowledging gestures amongst committee members, and between committee members and guests (particularly the resident) is stark. Acknowledgement gestures amongst the committee members maintain and confirm an already established and ongoing site of communication, but does so in a situation that is not characterised by conflict. Greeting gestures in this context are concerned with maintaining rather than establishing 'togetherness'. Acknowledging gestures from the committee aimed at guests tend to be most noticeable the less a guest has a 'stake' in Mossbank. Interacting with the resident shifts communication from a 'cosy chat' scenario to a situation where conflict and difference is potentially more likely. Instead of using greeting gestures to create the beginnings of more inclusive communication, the committee prefer to keep control of the interaction and wider communicative relationship through a limited recognition and acknowledgment of the 'stranger'. Although the committee invited the resident to the meeting as a 'guest', there is an undercurrent of stiffness compared to the reception of the other guests. The committee are, for a short time, face to face with a resident. This is, in effect an instance where the representatives (members of the management committee) are face-to-face with a 'constituent' (the resident). Perhaps this situation is just too close and intimate for committee members, and must be controlled to maintain the formal representative-represented relationship.

- *Appearance and Inclusion*. In Chapter 4, I discuss Young's view that rhetoric, the framing and style of speech and talk, can have a positive or 'affirmative' affect on developing inclusive political communication. I also highlight Young's neglect of non-verbal approaches to the framing and 'styling' of transmitting. Here I focus on analysing non-verbal aspects of the committee meetings, focussing specifically on the dress of committee members.

Committee members dress in a casual and informal style.<sup>531</sup> I view dress and appearance as non-verbal symbols that, like the use of metaphor and tone in speech, influences how communication is transmitted. As there is no such thing as neutral or impartial speech, there is no such thing as neutral or impartial styles of dress. For a committee member to turn up at a management committee meeting in, for example, a suit and tie, would be unusual and even inappropriate given the informality of proceedings and the 'blue collar' socio-economic profile of the area. Especially in face-to-face encounters, or where there is a visual element to communication, the wearing of a suit, or other formal styles of dress, would be the equivalent of adopting a tone of superiority, raising oneself above the other members. It may contribute to a failure to direct one's messages to the intended audience or to silence other perspectives. Within the particular context of the meetings, the wearing of casual clothing relates to how the contribution of an individual member would be interpreted by the other members. As Young points out, 'An effective contribution to public discussion engages with its audience, and reflectively includes in its mode of expression attention to the interests, assumptions, values, meanings, and situation of this particular audience'.<sup>532</sup>

Transmitting in the management committee meetings is a messy affair. This messiness relates to inconsistencies in how the members create the environment for transmitting. 'Greeting' gestures and the physical appearance of members permeate the meetings. Each plays a role in creating and maintaining a feeling of 'togetherness', but within limits. When guests are present, greeting is restricted to signalling cordiality and is not used to

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<sup>531</sup> Observation of management committee meetings.

<sup>532</sup> Young (2000), p68.



develop any sense of ‘togetherness’ either in the meeting or for any subsequent relationship. Argument and narrative co-exist as modes of communication in the meetings. The use of ‘narrative’ to communicate experiences as an alternative, and ultimately a supplement, to argument is accepted within the meetings. This makes transmitting a less formal and narrowly defined, and thus more inclusive, experience. In this way, messiness is not necessarily antithetical to notions of democratic inclusion and engagement.

- Transmitting Across Mossbank

Analysing transmitting across Mossbank, between the management committee and the remainder of the residents, necessitates special attention being paid to non-verbal aspects. Despite the small size of the regeneration area, no regular forums have evolved where residents and committee members can communicate verbally. This aspect of Mossbank is explored in Chapter 6, with reference to relations between management committee members and residents as representatives and represented respectively. Here, the analysis expands beyond Young’s normative account in order to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of communication in Mossbank. Such a necessity had been anticipated during the development of the analytical framework.

- *Argument in the Newsletter*. To recap, ‘argument’ refers to a process of reason giving. It is possible to imagine such a process as ‘inclusive’.<sup>533</sup> However, before such assessments can be made, there has to be some evidence of argument. In Mossbank, there is no formal space, actual or virtual, for argument between residents and between residents, and the management committee. The newsletter cannot qualify as a vehicle for argument. Regarding issues such as the progress towards the stock transfer ballot, the issue of stock transfer itself, the joining with Newlands, the direction of the social and physical regeneration, only the management committee’s views appear in the newsletter.<sup>534</sup> There is no ongoing argument involving the residents testing or challenging those views or raising alternative views. The opportunity to argue across Mossbank is, therefore, prevented.

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<sup>533</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>534</sup> These issues are outlined in Chapter 2.

- *Non-Verbal Acknowledging Across Mossbank*. Gestures to do with acknowledging and ignoring others in a communicative relationship can take place outwith face-to-face encounters dominated by speech. The residents' association newsletter is the only regular form of political communication across Mossbank. In this section, I explore the extent to which the management committee, as the producers of the newsletter, acknowledge the residents.

The front page of the first issue of the residents' newsletter begins with the headline, 'Residents Association Formed'. This short article informs the readers that the residents' association has been officially launched, the constitution has been adopted, and the management committee has been elected. The article goes on to list the members of the committee. On page five, there is another article entitled 'How to get in touch with the management committee'. It states that the committee 'will be holding regular weekly surgeries [and] there will be members of the Management Committee available for consultation'. Here the management committee is saying 'hello', and 'here we are' to Mossbank. The aim of these headlines and articles is not to report on the activities of the management committee or to inform the residents of the progress of the regeneration initiative, but to make a greeting gesture. This gesture is the 'first move' in communication between the committee and the residents.

There is, however, very little emphasis on the equivalent of chatter and small talk. A rare example of 'small talk' in the newsletter, which suggests what such gestures could look like in printed form, occurs annually in the issue before Christmas. For example, in issue 15, the following message appears:

The Management Committee of [the Mossbank and Newlands Residents' Association] would like to take this opportunity of wishing all their members a very merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Newsletter: issue 15 (November 2005).

This gesture may be seen as a somewhat empty and impersonal form of acknowledgement because it is cast in general terms (it is addressed to ‘their members’) and is not built upon to develop closer and more inclusive communication. It is part of the ‘ritual’ of Christmas.

These attempts to acknowledge do announce the existence of the management committee but they do not point towards, or serve to foster, communication between the management committee and the rest of the residents. In that sense, acknowledgement is limited to ‘here I am’, and does not move on to show a willingness to recognise the ‘ordinary’ residents as part of a communicative relationship. The newsletters, for the most part, are very much about being the ‘official’ voice of the residents’ association as sanctioned by the management committee.

*- Writing, Appearance and Inclusion*

The employment of language and tone in communication across Mossbank bares little relation to Young's more dramatic examples of ‘street demonstrations [and] guerrilla theatre’.<sup>536</sup> Across Mossbank, language and tone are employed in quieter ways. Three instances are highlighted. In the first case, language and tone are used to get a viewpoint across from an ‘ordinary’ resident to the management committee. In the second example, writing style is used to convey information in a way appropriate to the context. In the third, I return to the physical appearance of committee members.

A letter written by Volunteer A was handed to a member of the management committee with the request that it should be read out at the meeting. It concerns the organisation of food at a childrens’ Christmas party.

Daniel: I had a letter handed in from [Volunteer A] today about the food. She asked me to read this out to you. ‘Sandwiches are so totally boring. I did a

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<sup>536</sup> Young (2000), p65.

survey amongst the children and they said they preferred pizzas. If the committee said they will cost too much I will personally supply the pizzas, ice cream and jelly myself even though I am a poor soul'.<sup>537</sup>

In relation to language and tone, this letter operates in a number of ways. By handing this letter to a committee member with the request to read it out at the meeting, the writer is circumventing 'official' channels of communication and 'breaking in' to the meeting. This could have been achieved by attending the meeting as a guest, but would this have had the same impact? The committee agreed pizzas instead of sandwiches as the preferred option. The tone of the letter is humorous but also contains the veiled threat of taking catering arrangements out of the hands of the committee. Of course, her latter point is not meant to be taken literally but represents a use of language to communicate her strength of feeling. As a volunteer, the letter writer is well known to the committee, she is an enthusiastic 'behind the scenes' helper at social events. Volunteer A no doubt has this in mind when composing her letter. Her use of rhetoric is designed for maximum impact in the few seconds it takes to read the letter, reminding the committee of her commitment, enthusiasm, experience and knowledge of catering for social events in Mossbank.

The second use of language and tone concerns the explanation and summary of the residents' association constitution that appears in an early issue of the newsletter. This summarised version is presented alongside the full version of the constitution:

The constitution is the membership rule book. It lays out the aim[s] and objectives and how the association should be run. Remember, every person 14 years of age living in the regeneration area plus [Howard Avenue] and [Heriot Crescent] are members of the association. Please keep this copy safe as you may want to refer to it from time to time.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: December 2005.

<sup>538</sup> Newsletter: issue 1 (October 2002).

In these sentences, the concept of a constitution is explained. Also, the formal link between the residents' association and Mossbank residents is highlighted.

Concerning the dress of the management committee, there is no desire to 'dress up' when communicating to the residents. This is similar to the approach adopted in committee meetings - see the discussion earlier in this chapter. Issues nine and ten of the newsletter contain photographs of Carol. On both occasions, she is wearing a short-sleeved shirt, indicative of 'everyday' clothes. Accompanying the 'Chairman's Report' in the 2005 annual report of the residents' association there is a photograph of Paul. His attire is casual, he is wearing an open necked shirt. Whether by accident or design, the members of the management committee are attempting, through what they wear, to remind residents that they are residents as well. The committee members, by dressing casually, present themselves in ways that are appropriate to the micro-level, 'working class' context of Mossbank.

Transmitting across Mossbank can be characterised as non-verbal: the written word and printed image predominate. Symbolising this is the residents' association newsletter . Announcements, views and messages in the newsletters revolve around the 'official' voice of the residents' association / management committee. In the presentation of these communications there are attempts to be more 'inclusive', however the lack of opportunities for residents to transmit, particularly through the newsletter, limit the effectiveness of these gestures. Attempts at circumventing this state of affairs are rare. This could indicate 'apathy' amongst residents. However, this silence can be more productively thought of as being due to the lack of an arena for communication between Mossbank residents and the management committee. This limited scope for the transmitting of views is related to the formal scope of 'official' participation and representation highlighted in the previous chapter. Accessing the democratic process through the newsletter to air one's views in writing (an act of participation) is controlled by the management committee. The state of the relationship between representatives and represented is underlined here: communication between representatives and the

represented usually takes place within strictly formal and occasional settings.

In relation to the transmitting of views in Mossbank, I have shown that there are instances that suggest inclusive practices. The co-existence of argument with other modes of communication, and the gestures of acknowledgement that exist in the informal atmosphere of the meetings, make transmitting amongst committee members relatively inclusive. When residents become involved in transmitting, the process becomes increasingly asymmetrical. The resident-guest is treated less as a fellow Mossbank resident and more as a 'stranger'. Transmitting across Mossbank is dominated by the 'official' voice of the management committee, through the newsletter, with very little opportunity for, or attempts being made by, residents to transmit their views.

### Receiving

As I argue in Chapter 4, listening, or the receiving of messages, is an often overlooked aspect of political communication. I develop the notion of 'listening' in Chapter 4 to include non-verbal forms of communication - the idea of 'paying attention'. I also identify three dimensions of 'paying attention', an *active* dimension, a *critical* dimension, and a *reflective* dimension. In this section, I explore how, and to what degree, people in Mossbank 'pay attention'. Firstly, I focus on paying attention during management committee meetings. Next, I focus on the mainly non-verbal forms of paying attention across Mossbank.

#### - Receiving Inside the Management Committee

During the meetings, members of the management committee receive information and views primarily by listening.<sup>539</sup> Below I highlight various views of listening during committee meetings grouped around the active, critical and reflective dimensions.

- *Active Listening*. To what extent do management committee members listen to one another during the meetings? Vicky's feeling is that, except for some obvious occasions -

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<sup>539</sup> Members also receive information in writing through minutes, letters, and (because they are residents) newsletters.

when cycles of talking over one another prevail - most committee members do listen to what is being said.

Researcher: Do you think people pay attention when they are not speaking?  
Vicky: Most of the time [laughs]. If there's been a point maybe that they've not been quite happy about one or two of them will have a conversation with who's next to them and sometimes they'll miss the next bit. But I would say the majority of the time folk sit and listen.<sup>540</sup>

Carol, however, has a contrasting view:

Researcher: Do you think people listen to one another? They don't?  
Carol: No, not very often. People will listen to you at the time you're sitting down with them. [...] And I think maybe in a day or later if you say, remember what we were talking about, you've got to remind them. Some do and some don't.<sup>541</sup>

These views reflect my own perceptions of the meetings: a mix of listening and not listening. Throughout the meetings that I observed only sometimes do members *appear* to be actively listening to the speakers. How is it possible to tell when a person is listening? This is important because not listening, or even pretending to listen, can lead to the exclusion of the speaker and the inattentive listener. There are gestures and signs that can signify active or inactive listening. Contributing to a discussion is a sign of active listening. During a discussion of the financing of the Balquhiddy Road Park, mostly involving the community development worker explaining the implications of VAT in fundraising, I notice that some members are actively engaged because they make verbal contributions to the discussion.<sup>542</sup>

Restlessness and background talking (when an individual is speaking), are strong indicators of not listening. The September 2005 meeting of the management committee

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<sup>540</sup> Interview: Vicky (24 October 2005).

<sup>541</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>542</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: October 2005.

was exceptionally long (at over two and a half hours). Two hours in to the meeting I noticed signs of restlessness. The community development worker is communicating his views on the best venue for a public meeting regarding the proposed merger with Newlands. At the same time, a number of committee members are having another parallel discussion and are thus not paying attention. These committee members are ignoring the advice of the community development worker. Furthermore, they are making it more difficult for others to listen. The chairperson, on this occasion Daniel, does not attempt to facilitate an atmosphere conducive to active listening.<sup>543</sup>

Distractions during meetings make active listening more difficult for committee members. On one occasion Carol, whilst babysitting her young granddaughter, brought her to a meeting. Carol's granddaughter was a cause of intermittent distraction, particularly through interacting with members during the meeting. No objections or outward signs of annoyance were made.<sup>544</sup> Children can be seen as unwelcome and illegitimate 'baggage' in 'political' committees and legislatures.<sup>545</sup> Carol is not excluded or made to feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. Any difficulties caused by the child in relation to making active listening difficult are outweighed by other factors, such as the informal nature of these meetings, and the 'lightness' of the issues under discussion.

The repetition of information during a meeting and across meetings can be linked to inattentive listening or paying attention. Carol makes such a connection:

Carol: Personally to me if they did [listen] then they wouldn't have to come back to the next meeting and rehash everything. You're aware, you sit at these meetings, we could touch on an update of the play park [and] before you know where you are, you're back to where did we get the funding, how did we get the funding. So, it stands out people aren't listening.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: September 2005.

<sup>544</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: December 2005.

<sup>545</sup> Mackay (2001), pp166-167.

<sup>546</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).



A concrete example occurs in the November 2005 meeting of the management committee. It is the first joint meeting of the residents' association and Mossbank First with two consecutive agendas for each organisation. Confusion is evident amongst some members concerning the structure of the meeting. During this meeting, Carol has to go over the format of the meeting, an issue that has been discussed over previous months.

Carol: Could I just explain the reasoning behind having two agendas now. [...] We're still obviously the same management committee. What will happen is that when [Newlands] are co-opted on under the influence of [Mossbank and Newlands Residents' Association], [Mossbank First] is a totally different entity altogether.<sup>547</sup>

Carol's perception that repetition occurs because some committee members simply do not listen has validity. However, there may be other reasons behind committee members needing to be reminded of key developments. Carol, as a mainstream member, is at the centre of the work of the residents' association and management committee; she is experienced and able. Carol is, therefore, in the best position to understand the development of the residents' association and management committee. Non-mainstream members, and those with less experience of, and commitment to, the behind the scenes work of the residents' association, may find some changes genuinely confusing and difficult to grasp. Digesting developments, such as the consecutive agendas, therefore, may take longer. The need for repetition does not necessarily always relate to not listening. It may also be a sign of active listening in order to clear up confusion and to 'get up to speed' with developments.

- *Critical Vigilance*. Young's notion of critical vigilance relates to the scrutiny of how people transmit their perspectives. It relates to the fostering of democratic inclusion because, 'communication can be and often is superficial, insincere, [and] strategically manipulated to win the assent of others simply by flattery or fantasy and not by reason'.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Management committee meeting: November, 2005.

<sup>548</sup> Young (2000), p77.

Critical vigilance not only requires the recognition of such communication, the listener has also to transmit what he or she has noticed. Whether any committee members, whilst actively listening during meetings, actually noticed any instances of communication that they perceive to be, for example, manipulative, is uncertain. During the meetings I observed, no members actually objected to another member's style of communication. There are at least three reasons that taken together can account for this. First, the abilities, experience and confidence of many members to recognise communicative abuses and challenge them may be lacking. Secondly, the uncontentious nature of the issues discussed in the meetings reduces the motivation to manipulate and deceive the committee for personal / strategic gain. Thirdly, non-mainstream members tend to have a limited interest in the detail of the decision making process and are therefore less likely to spot and challenge abuses.

- *Reflection*. Thinking either about what is heard during the meeting, or afterwards, is I would argue, common amongst the more active members of the management committee. It is, to them an unacknowledged part of being so involved in the work of the committee. To less experienced members, reflection may be rarer and more consciously undertaken. Katie, one of these less experienced committee members, mentions time for reflection as an important part of her being able to understand what is discussed in the meetings, 'Well, I could come out of there and at the minute if somebody said how was your meeting, I couldn't tell you. But give me a couple of hours and then I could tell you'.<sup>549</sup>

Katie needs time to reflect after the meeting, away from the venue. She needs time to reflect on individual contributions and their meaning, to link these to other contributions, and to come to conclusions about the outcomes of the meeting. However, given the sort of issues discussed, it is doubtful if Katie, or other committee members, would need to go as far as Goodin's empathic internal dialogues, discussed in Chapter 4, to enhance inclusion in the committee meetings.

Paying attention in the management committee meetings is compromised by periods of

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<sup>549</sup> Interview: Katie (16 November 2005).

inappropriate talking and restlessness amongst the members. This has implications for the inclusion of all members of the committee as what is said may go unheard, effectively blocking the transmitting and reception of messages. This level of paying attention in the meetings can be linked to a number of causes. These include boredom during long meetings, the capacities of some members to take in what is being said and to sustain active listening, and distractions that could disturb concentration.

#### - Receiving Across Mossbank

How, and to what extent, do Mossbank residents pay attention to information that they receive regarding the progress of the regeneration initiative? In this context, paying attention relates to the reception of non-verbal forms of communication.

An early instance in the regeneration initiative that relates to paying attention across Mossbank involves the reception of the suggestions and proposals put forward by the regeneration consultants. These proposals had been presented to the residents in glossy, colourful pamphlets. Hazel's reaction is interesting because it shows elements of active, reflective and critical paying attention:

I thought at first when I looked at it, yeah, that's what it's going to be. But also, some of it was quite ludicrous I thought for the things that they were proposing. They were proposing a state of the art sports centre and everything [...] It was like they were trying to fill the community's heads with all these promises. You know, you're going to get this, you're going to get that, it's going to be brilliant, and all the rest of it. But this was to folk who weren't paying attention. When you looked more into it you realised, no, this isn't how it's going to be.<sup>550</sup>

Hazel's approach is to think about the proposals critically: what is, and is not, realistic and viable. However, a less critical perusal by residents may create misinterpretation and confusion. Hazel's critical paying attention recognises this.

In the earlier days of the regeneration initiative, rumours abounded, especially concerning

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<sup>550</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

the physical aspect of the regeneration. As Daniel comments, ‘There are some fantastic rumours’. Andrew remembers the prevalence of rumours, ‘Well, as I’ve been going round speaking to people, there are rumours and rumours everywhere [...] They always put tails on everything’. Hazel links rumours to misunderstanding:

Yeah, a lot of the folk I spoke to thought that the shops were all getting knocked down. You spoke to different folk, rumours, folk misunderstanding, or speaking to other folk and that, but everybody thought that the shops were just getting knocked down, a new shopping centre and everything.<sup>551</sup>

These rumours are, at least partly, due to some residents’ uncritical, and unreflective approach to studying the proposals.

In Mossbank, what Bickford calls ‘the practice of question-posing’ is mentioned by a number of individuals as their way of avoiding misinterpretations and countering speculation and rumour.<sup>552</sup> For example, regarding the rumours about the demolition of the shops, Hazel states that,

If you weren’t going into [the CDW] and asking him things. You know, I said are they knocking it down, no they can’t, they’re keeping the flats, they don’t know what to do with the flats, blah, blah. But everybody else that hadn’t went into the [Drop-in Shop to speak to the CDW], they were thinking well, oh this is getting knocked down, it’s going to be brilliant, you know. But not realising what is exactly happening.<sup>553</sup>

Paying attention requires effort on the part of the residents. Simply accepting the information on face value may lead to distorted communication. Active, critical and reflective paying attention makes more likely residents ‘hearing’ what is being

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<sup>551</sup> Interviews: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2004), Andrew (4 August 2004), and Hazel (10 August 2004).

<sup>552</sup> Bickford (1996), p156.

<sup>553</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

transmitted, and being able to make informed judgements about the quality of what is being transmitted. An individual's abilities to pay attention, and the degree to which he or she is already alerted to the issues being communicated, are factors that would influence whether an individual would be able to sustain the effort required to pay attention.

### Relations and Dispositions

So far, this chapter has focussed on the transmission and receiving of messages and information in Mossbank. The extent to which these processes can be described as inclusive or exclusive depends not only on the processes themselves. How people relate and are disposed to those with whom they are communicating, and the communicative process itself, are also relevant. In this section, relations and dispositions between members of the management committee are explored, followed by relations and dispositions across Mossbank.

#### - Relations and Dispositions Inside the Management Committee

The defining characteristics of relations and dispositions inside the management committee can be explored in relation to the categories of 'publicity and accountability' and 'order and disorder' discussed in Chapter 4.

- *Publicity and the Work of Running the Committee.* Some mainstream and arms length members of the management committee claim that important decisions and activities relating to the work of the management committee are carried out between the monthly meetings, away from the rest of the committee, by mainstream and core members. Katie, for example expresses such a view: 'I think there's an awful lot of the decisions all thrashed out with folk that's in the office all the time'.<sup>554</sup> Daniel holds a similar view:

I think it's just [the CDW] and [Carol]. Whatever they want to be on the agenda. But they never say that me and [Paul] can be there. We just take what's on the agenda and go through it. And there's a lot left out.<sup>555</sup>

<sup>554</sup> Interview: Katie (16 November 2005).

<sup>555</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

Much work and decision making does occur between meetings and is carried out by the CDW and the mainstream members. I observed such activities when visiting the Drop-in Shop. This exacerbates the division between core and mainstream / arms length members: a two tier committee exists. Due to this division of labour, key aspects of the work of the committee are hidden from some members. There is a tension here between harnessing the enthusiasm and skills (and other 'qualifications' enabling participation) of the mainstream members to take on the burden of the behind the scenes work of the committee, and making all aspects of the operation transparent and accessible to the rest of the members. Regarding this latter point Daniel is of the view that 'the office bearers should be brought in with [the CDW] to make up the agenda so that we know what we are talking about'.<sup>556</sup>

However, despite such misgivings, no committee members have acted to make the work of the committee more open to scrutiny. Discontent regarding the between meetings activities is countered by other factors, such as an inability or unwillingness to take on the role of scrutinising or sharing the 'burden' of committee work. Such issues highlight the close links between participation and communication - particularly how the former affects the latter. In this instance, the extent of publicity within the committee regarding decision making is limited by the ability and willingness of some members to participate between monthly meetings.

- *Talking Through One Another in the Committee Meetings*. Here I explore what committee members see as acceptable and unacceptable modes of expression and behaviour in management committee meetings. My approach focuses on impressions of the 'orderliness' of the actual meetings.

Carol, who has had a long experience of involvement in grassroots committees, expresses her overall impression of the management committee meetings thus:

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<sup>556</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

Carol: I get very infuriated at committee meetings [laughs]. I've never been to committee meetings like these in my life.

Researcher: What's different about them?

Carol: Well, I think the thing that bothers me is that they all talk through one another.<sup>557</sup>

Carol has mentioned this 'talking through one another' on at least one occasion at a meeting with specific reference to the recording of accurate minutes.<sup>558</sup> The conduct of committee members can make this task difficult:

I know it's ok everybody talking through one another like that but see when I have to sit and try and do the minutes, it is a nightmare. I can't hear half of what somebody's saying because other people are talking through. So, if we can, please, just one talker at a time, yeah?<sup>559</sup>

Did I notice instances of 'talking through one another' when observing the meetings? In my notes of the first management committee meeting I observed, I mention periods of 'disorderliness':

As the meeting progresses the 'orderliness' of the meeting relaxes. By no means does it go out of control but there are occasions where there are two or three different conversations going on at once, or there is talking over one another, etc. One specific instance of this I noticed was consecutive conversations on bouncy castles and donations for the [Sea Festival] stall. But in the context of the meeting as a whole, this is not 'typical' and lasts for only a short time. This could be a sign of people relaxing, or settling into the meeting.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Interview: Carol (31 October 2005).

<sup>558</sup> Carol, in her role as secretary, makes an audio recording of the meeting and uses the recording to help produce the minutes.

<sup>559</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: October 2006.

<sup>560</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: July 2005. The residents' association have a fundraising stall at each Duncairn Sea Festival. The stall is organised through the management committee.

In the September meeting, I again noted periods of committee members talking over one another. I also make a comment about the role of Daniel, the chair of the meeting:

quite a lot of talking over one another with the chairman doing nothing to control this ‘competition’ to be heard. I didn't notice anybody who looked as if they were put off contributing or who were excluded because of this, but it is difficult, even impossible, to know for certain.<sup>561</sup>

The image of a competition to be heard, with winners and losers, is brought to mind in my comment regarding another ‘talking over’ incident in the December meeting:

Talking over one another. [Paul] seems to have caused this by asking (in his role as chairperson) if everybody was clear about what was happening regarding the [Balquhidder Road] project. [The CDW] struggles and ‘wins’ here regarding getting heard.<sup>562</sup>

Paul, the chairperson of the management committee, expresses his dissatisfaction regarding the way in which the meetings proceed and is keen to explain how he would organise the meetings. Paul’s ‘ideal’ meeting has to be an ‘organised’ affair. When Paul gives a clearer indication of his ideal view of orderliness it is along ‘traditional’ lines in terms of designation of roles, hierarchy, the physical layout of the meeting, and how to address the other members:

Paul: Now really, if you run a proper committee they should actually be going through the chair. If they [other committee members] could come through the chair then you can say ok, you can have your say, so on and so forth, and back and forward like that. And the way it is, it’s just butt in, butt out, butt in, butt out. And that’s not the way it should be run. I know that, you know that,

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<sup>561</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: September 2005.

<sup>562</sup> Observation of management committee meeting: December 2005.



but they don't know that. [...] A proper set-up round the table. Instead of everybody sitting. Get round the table. The chairman sits there, the vice chair, the secretary and the treasurer sitting beside one another. And that's the way it should be run. That's the way it should be run. And all your office bearers round about you from there.<sup>563</sup>

Daniel's views of an 'ordered' meeting echo Paul's:

It should be put through the chairman much more than it is. I'm guilty of that myself, speaking my mind without saying mister chairman or whatever. It should be mister chairman. It should be that but down there [in the meetings] it's just a rabble.<sup>564</sup>

Daniel, although endorsing a traditional and formal view of how he and others ought to conduct themselves in the meetings, also admits to straying from such conduct. In fact, so distant are the meetings from this ideal that he describes them, or the members, as 'a rabble'.

Paul and Daniel, who each chair management committee meetings, are unwilling or unable to control such 'disorder'. Paul's reasons for this reluctance are captured in the following comment:

I don't want to upset the applecart until we have more members. [...] [T]hey haven't had the experience. It's a learning factor. But why upset them. You don't want to upset people. If we do get this money from stock transfer then we'll see big changes, if I'm still involved in it then. It should be run properly.<sup>565</sup>

Paul chooses to sacrifice, or postpone, his idea of orderliness out of a concern that

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<sup>563</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

<sup>564</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

<sup>565</sup> Interview: Paul (13 December 2005).

imposing this will clash with other views of how committees ought to be run and may alienate less experienced members from continuing to participate in the management committee. Daniel's own lack of experience and knowledge whilst participating as a committee member and chairperson, are important reasons for his inability to bring his idea of 'order' to the meetings.<sup>566</sup>

Despite these ideals and aspirations, explicit 'ground rules' for the 'orderly' conduct of the management committee meetings do not exist.<sup>567</sup> The formal structure of the committee suggests a traditional approach favoured by Paul and Daniel, but actual signs of this form of order are rare. An informal, almost casual approach - reminiscent of 'everyday' conversations in the pub or round the kitchen table - is more common. The image of a competition and the prevalence of talking over one another, characterises the conduct of the meetings. These dispositions create 'winners' and 'losers' in who has the opportunity to speak - and listen - in the meetings. Concerns over a lack of 'order' and of instances of talking over one another are more noticeable amongst 'core' members of the committee. These individuals already possess the skills, experience and knowledge (or 'qualifications') to participate in committee structures. Other members, those most likely to behave in ways that undermine formal and 'traditional' views of order, have fewer qualifications. These shortcomings in the inclusiveness of communicative relations amongst management committee members are therefore related to the wider context of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Specifically, there is a noticeable link between individuals' quotient of qualifications that facilitate participation and the ability to value 'ordered' and / or inclusive communication.

Relations and dispositions in the management committee are characterised firstly by a tension between the core members undertaking the behind the scenes work of the committee and a desire to make such activities more transparent; and secondly by a

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<sup>566</sup> Daniel's relative inexperience is discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>567</sup> Contrast this with the 'community workshops' set up as part of the consultation exercise conducted in the early days of the regeneration initiative. See in particular Figure 7.3.

frequent breakdown of the actual meetings into talking over one another. Concerns regarding the between meetings activities of mainstream members are not expressed during the meetings. These concerns are genuinely felt, but more as an irritation than as an issue to do with the publicity. The defining characteristic of the management committee meetings is the frequent eruption of talking over one another. Such occurrences are not, I argue, what Young refers to as 'disorderliness', a disposition that can be used to confront and circumvent the exclusive aspects of 'orderly' conduct. When committee members talk over one another, it is not about excluded individuals attempting to express themselves in an essentially democratic decision making process. Nor is it about manoeuvring for strategic advantage in decision making processes. This behaviour goes against any norm of order, whether it is one that favours a rigid and narrow set of permissible behaviours and views, or one that has a more open view of what constitutes 'communicative engagement'. It is a serious barrier to the development of inclusion. To separate talking over one another from notions of order and disorder this purposeless disposition can be labelled 'miscommunication'.

#### - Relations and Dispositions Across Mossbank

Communication occurs across Mossbank between the residents, and between the management committee and the residents. How they relate to each other and to the opportunities to communicate associated with the regeneration initiative and residents' association is the focus of this section.

- *Publicity and Accountability Through the Newsletter.* The analytical pathway 'publicity and accountability', as I state in Chapter 4, relates to 'openness' during political communication. Communication between the management committee and the residents requires openness, in the form of justification of views and access to information, to count as inclusive in any substantive sense.

The residents' association newsletter is the most established and regular vehicle of communication in Mossbank. The newsletter, therefore, has the potential to be a form of

‘interaction [...] in which people hold one another accountable’.<sup>568</sup> So, to what extent does the newsletter enable the management committee to explain and justify its decisions and standpoints, and for the residents to respond? I isolate two examples of the newsletter as a vehicle for the ‘official’ view of the management committee. Together they symbolise the ‘openness’ of the communicative relationship between committee members and residents. The first concerns the progress of the stock transfer process, and the second relates to the creation of a ‘joint residents association’, bringing in the Newlands area.<sup>569</sup>

In issue ten of the newsletter the headline on page one is, ‘No Plan, No Action, No Idea’. This headline summarises the official standpoint of the management committee regarding the role and attitude of the local authority towards the stock transfer process. The reasons for the management committee taking this view are based on information they received from the newly appointed Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA). The newsletter states that ‘[t]he Management Committee of [the Mossbank residents’ association] met with [the ITA] on two occasions and the results of the discussion was to say the least shocking’. The article goes on to catalogue the shortcomings of the local authority that the ITA uncovered. For example, the council ‘had not followed the correct procedures and had not undertaken a lot of the preparatory work that should have been done’. The response from the local authority is described as ‘uncoordinated and completely confusing. Basically the Council are struggling to come up with any coherent plan of action’.<sup>570</sup>

The second example concerns the proposal to expand the residents’ association by incorporating the Newlands area. In an article in the newsletter, information is given about the decision, the process, and the committee’s reasons for pursuing a larger residents’ association:

The Management Committee of [Mossbank] took a decision at their July Management Committee meeting to ask the residents of the [Newlands] area if they would like to join [Mossbank] and become a joint residents

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<sup>568</sup> Young (2000), p25.

<sup>569</sup> Accounts of the stock transfer and the merger appear in Chapter 2.

<sup>570</sup> Newsletter: issue 10 (August 2004).

association. [...] Letters have been issued to all residents and they have been invited to reply giving their views.<sup>571</sup>

A number of reasons justifying this step are given. These include the view that 'essentially the area is one community [...] and a lot of the work the [Mossbank] committee are undertaking could benefit the people living in [Newlands]'. Also, 'when it comes to applying for funding the bigger the area and population being served, the better chances of receiving money from funding organisations will be'.<sup>572</sup>

As a forum of political communication *between* the management committee and the residents, the newsletter is limited to the transmission of a single 'voice', that of the residents' association mediated through (the core of) the management committee. There is a willingness on the part of the management committee to make public their 'official' views, particularly in relation to high profile developments and events. Positions are justified by highlighting the information and reasons used to form a particular view. By recording the 'official' views of the committee in the newsletters along with justifications, the committee are making their actions 'public' and thus holding themselves accountable to the residents. There is, however, no opportunity for Mossbank residents to question, reply to, or criticise any of the content of the newsletters. There is no letters page and no invitation for residents to contribute any articles, thoughts or comments. The views of residents regarding the standpoints of the committee are excluded from the newsletter.

The detailing of the work, decisions and views of the committee in the newsletter may be 'public' to a degree: the residents are given the opportunity to learn about the views of the committee and the reasons that justify such views. However, in relation to the fostering of inclusion and democratic engagement this falls short. Residents are not able to use the newsletter to respond to these transmissions, to hold the committee to account. The newsletter would be, according to Young, only partially successful as 'a site for

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<sup>571</sup> Newsletter: issue 10 (August 2004).

<sup>572</sup> Newsletter: issue 10 (August 2004).

communicative engagement and contest'.<sup>573</sup> The newsletter is 'public' in the sense that 'anyone who understands [the] language can easily access them' but not in the stronger sense 'where individuals and groups have easy access [...] for expressing themselves'.<sup>574</sup>

- *Keeping an Open Mind About Stock Transfer*. In the 'messy' context of Mossbank, an acceptable attitude to adopt whilst involved in democratic processes can vary between something resembling Young's ideal of 'reasonableness' - a willingness to listen, to accept criticism, to aim for agreement and to maintain an open mind - to a respecting of others' private space and opinions. In the latter case, the scope for meaningful inclusion beyond formal political equality is limited. What can I say about how people in Mossbank regard and respect what others say within processes of political communication? The build up to the vote on stock transfer in Mossbank was, by December 2005, hardly underway. It is, however, interesting to note the position of the management committee and those of some of the residents who are local authority tenants. In issue nine of the newsletter, the management committee makes known its 'official' view regarding the outcome it favours:

The [Mossbank] Association of Residents Management Committee has not decided whether to support the offer or not. This is because there has been no offer. We will work with the ITA and make our mind up when we have all the details.<sup>575</sup>

On the role and attitude that tenants (and, presumably, other residents,) ought to adopt, the management committee are clear:

All we ask at the moment is that you keep an open mind to the benefits of stock transfer and absorb the information that the ITA will give you. We want to see, when it comes to the ballot [...] that the tenants make an informed

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<sup>573</sup> Young (2000), p168.

<sup>574</sup> Young (2000), p168.

<sup>575</sup> Newsletter: issue 9 (May 2004).

decision and not one based on fear, false perception, and ignorance.<sup>576</sup>

In a later issue of the newsletter, tenants are encouraged to consider both their own interests and those of Mossbank when reflecting on their decision: 'It is a tenant's right to get involved in the process and the [...] committee would encourage more tenants to get involved and to determine whether stock transfer will be good for them individually and for the area'.<sup>577</sup>

These instances of transmitting to the residents, and the local authority tenants in particular, display a 'reasonable' disposition insofar as they do not prejudge the offer from the housing association. There is a concern that the tenants ought to adopt a similar position.

In contrast to the management committee's appeals, there is a perception amongst some members of the management committee, elites and community development worker that it may be difficult to persuade the tenants to vote in favour of stock transfer because of 'unreasonable' attitudes. Katie, a member of the management committee and a local authority tenant, mentions the pre-judgements of both her neighbour and herself, 'I want to keep my house with the council I said [...] because I think the housing associations will put the rent up'.<sup>578</sup> Lucy, on the other hand seems less inclined to pre-judge, 'I'm open to change. I mean, it might be better if we were not in the council, a change of landlord. But then again, they might put the rents up again'.<sup>579</sup>

In the early stages of the stock transfer process, when the tenants are, in effect, waiting for more information, 'reasonableness' is linked to how, and to what degree, people are prepared to communicate with one another. To think in terms of the protection of ones own interests and the 'privacy' of ones views may be a 'reasonable' attitude in the

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<sup>576</sup> Newsletter: issue 9 (May 2004).

<sup>577</sup> Newsletter: issue 12 (March 2005).

<sup>578</sup> Interview: Katie (16 November 2005).

<sup>579</sup> Interview: Lucy (7 August 2004).

context of Mossbank. However, there is little scope for inclusive communication: there is no provision for interaction between tenants (and residents) before the ballot.

Unfortunately, the slow progress towards a stock transfer ballot has meant that I have been unable to collect data on the methods that the ITA intends to use to disseminate information and create discussion amongst the tenants. However, it is apparent that the ITA is aware of the likelihood of unreasonable dispositions amongst Mossbank residents regarding the idea and process of stock transfer. The task of the ITA is to supply tenants with information regarding consequences of a yes or no vote. It is also part of the ITA's remit to encourage tenants, through public meetings, information sessions and door to door visits, to reflect and deliberate amongst themselves, drawing tenants out of entrenched points of view.<sup>580</sup>

- *Unity, Disunity and the Denial of Difference*. Young's ideal of democratic inclusion values both acknowledgement of difference and a foundation of unity. To what extent is democratic engagement and communication in Mossbank based on a perception of 'unity', and is there room for an acknowledge of difference as a resource?

The constitution of the residents' association emphasises 'unity'; there is no allusion to the idea of 'difference'. One of the aims of the residents' association is '[t]o provide a united voice for all [Mossbank] residents'.<sup>581</sup> This 'official' emphasis on unity is reinforced in other written material. For example, in the 2005 Annual Report of the residents' association, within the 'Chairman's Report', Mossbank is viewed as a homogeneous whole with one voice: 'The [...] committee has attended many meetings throughout the past year and has ensured that the voice of the community is heard'.<sup>582</sup> This homogenising tendency is deeply rooted in both the 'rules' of the residents' association and the management committee's view of what 'good' processes and outcomes should look like. This view places considerable limits on the inclusiveness of relations between the committee and residents. Views and interests that challenge the united view of Mossbank are less likely to be heard and may be seen as a 'danger' to the

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<sup>580</sup> Newsletter: issues 11 (November 2004) and 12 (March 2005).

<sup>581</sup> Residents' association constitution: section 2, paragraph b.

<sup>582</sup> Residents' association annual report (2005): Chairman's Report.



progress of the regeneration.

Within the borders of the regeneration area, there are some individuals who are critical of the idea that 'Mossbank' is united in the sense of being bound together by a consistent set of common values, interests and aims. One significant sign of this involves the split along Ballantrae Road that divides the area into two approximately equal sized areas.<sup>583</sup> This split, when it is acknowledged, is seen very much in terms of 'them' and 'us'. For example, Daniel (the vice-chairperson of the management committee), going 'off-message' by acknowledging this split, understands it in such terms: 'It seems to be them and us. The bottom half of [Mossbank] seem to keep themselves to themselves and the top half seem to keep themselves to themselves'.<sup>584</sup>

Hazel, who lives in the side of the split that is perceived as most distant from, and perhaps most hostile to, being in the regeneration area, states that she was at first surprised that she was part of the regeneration:

Hazel: We all thought it was from like [Hermiston shops] up to [Shaws Drive] and that was it. [...] I says the reason we've bought our flats and houses is because we're happy with our area, because I think there's a very strong divide on [Ballantrae Road].<sup>585</sup>

There is a tension between the promotion of unity across the regeneration area promoted by the management committee and splits and divisions in Mossbank, of which the one defined by Ballantrae Road is the most significant. The management committee are keen to ignore the views of those who see the regeneration area as divided and prefer to think in terms of rubbing out the division - unity is the goal. The redevelopment of Balquhiddy Park, which is on Hazel's side of the Ballantrae division, is considered a factor in the forging of a stronger link between these two areas. Hazel, who values and attaches significance to the division, has difficulty in relating to the regeneration project and to

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<sup>583</sup> I explore this division in greater depth in Chapter 6.

<sup>584</sup> Interview: Daniel and Sandra (27 October 2005).

<sup>585</sup> Interview: Hazel (10 August 2004).

being a part of it.

Whether one recognises this division or not, the idea of utilising difference as a resource is out of the question. As Mossbank declined, feelings of being a resident of Mossbank have, for some people changed. Mossbank, according to such a perspective is now really two areas. Individuals like Hazel live in the ‘better’ part where, in their view, regeneration is not required. Unity, for those like Hazel, as a minimal foundation (to sustain communication and problem solving) on which difference can be fostered does not exist. The ‘official line’ of the management committee, most notable in the newsletter, that Mossbank is, or ought to be one area with one ‘voice’, is overwhelming. This ‘voice’ excludes, amongst other perspectives, those who are critical of the imposed geographical scope of the regeneration initiative. The desired outcome, the rebirth of a lost ‘community spirit’ and pride in Mossbank is only achievable if the image of unity is promoted from the outset. Manufacturing unity in this way is seen, perhaps unconsciously, by the management committee as a strategic necessity for the achievement of a more genuine sense of unity. To engage and recognise difference, even as a resource, is seen as threatening and counter-intuitive.

- *Acceptable Forms and Forums of Political Communication.* The norms, and actual forms, of communication that are considered acceptable and ‘out of order’ across Mossbank form the focus of this section. As has already been discussed in Chapter 4, the criteria used in a setting or context to define what can be acceptable and unacceptable affects who, and what topics, are included in political communication.

Over the existence of the residents’ association, a version of ‘ordered’ and ‘acceptable’ communication between the committee and the residents has developed. Both the committee members and the residents who communicate with the committee are generally comfortable with these forms of communication. Communication of this type forms the foundation of the representative - represented relationship, a point highlighted in Chapter 6. Furthermore, they reveal a view of order that places the committee at the centre of political communication in Mossbank. However, this view of orderly

communication has exclusionary tendencies. AGMs, surgeries, ‘Give Us Your View Days’, speaking to the community development worker, even stopping committee members on the street are perhaps too reminiscent of traditional, formal, and by extension exclusionary, approaches to democratic engagement.<sup>586</sup> The scope for ‘communicative engagement’ between people with different backgrounds and perspectives is too limited.<sup>587</sup> ‘Disorderly’, but reasonable, forms of communication, pushing at the practical limits of democratic engagement, remain largely untried in Mossbank, at least in relation to ongoing forms of political communication. An issue that precipitates such an engagement to communication, and ‘tests’ the limits of what is acceptable has still to appear.

There are, however, aspects of the consultation exercises, held in the early days of the regeneration initiative that pull away from this narrow view of order so far encountered in this chapter. They can be understood as short-term exercises designed to encourage residents to communicate with one another, and ultimately to the regeneration partnership. The consultancy gathered the views of the residents using a number of methods, which are listed in Figure 7.1. I am particularly interested in the ‘community workshops’ because they highlight an alternative view of ‘orderliness’ that actually occurred in Mossbank, albeit for a short time and in controlled circumstances. There were five themed community workshops. I focus on one, the ‘community safety workshop’. Participants in this workshop were, after a welcome from a representative of the consultancy, and an explanation of the structure of the event, divided into small groups for about 45 minutes:

each group will have a drawing of the area and a list of the issues so far which we will discuss and identify possible solutions. The group will be asked to discuss the approaches and provide feedback, comments and, if possible, a

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<sup>586</sup> These features of Mossbank’s democratic life have already been explored in Chapter 6 as aspects of participation and representation. Again, this shows both the close ties between these components of democratic engagement, particularly how structures and norms of participation and representation affect how communication is conducted.

<sup>587</sup> Young (2000), pp49-50.

ranking.<sup>588</sup>

**Figure 7.1: Methods Used by the Regeneration Consultancy to Gather Residents' Views**<sup>589</sup>

- 'Community workshops'
- Residents' postal survey
  - 'Futures Day'
  - Questionnaires
- Views of young people and school children
  - Views of residents' steering committee
    - Views of individual residents
      - Exhibition

The list of issues discussed in the workshop is reproduced in Figure 7.2. Photographs of these workshops show small groups of residents sitting around tables talking to one another. After this period of small group discussion, each group reported to the main group. The conduct of this workshop was based on a pre-prepared set of 'ground rules' designed by the consultancy, reproduced in Figure 7.3. The workshop contrasts with the management committee meetings in numerous ways. Here I want to highlight especially the presence of ground rules in the former and the lack of any equivalent in the management committee meetings. As I noted earlier in this chapter, there is no set guidance or rules regarding conduct within the management committee meetings, leading to periods of purposeless and exclusionary miscommunication. In the workshop, the ground rules express principles that echo Young's notion of democratic inclusion: 'everyone has the right to express his or her view' in a reasonable atmosphere where 'we [...] must treat each other with respect'. Within the context of issue-based, short-term 'events', statements of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable forms of communication pointing towards a greater emphasis on inclusive are more readily imposed and accepted. Perhaps Paul's concerns, highlighted earlier in the chapter, that

<sup>588</sup> Booklet given to residents who took part in the community safety workshop.

<sup>589</sup> Booklet outlining feedback from the consultation.

Mossbank residents would be put off by rules of conduct for management committee meetings, and other gatherings of residents, are open to question. The issue is, I contend, the form and content of these rules. Perhaps, contrary to Paul's view, residents would be attracted to the ongoing institutions and processes of Mossbank's democratic life if notions of acceptable and unacceptable conduct were explicit. There is even evidence to argue that rules establishing more inclusive forms of communication and engagement would be attractive. Here I refer to the normative preferences of residents identified in Chapter 5.

**Figure 7.2: List of Issues for Community Safety Workshop**<sup>590</sup>

- Fear amongst residents, especially older people, to go out at night
  - Anti-social behaviour, by other residents and by other people
    - Drugs
      - Police presence and response times
- Displacing problems from one place to another

**Figure 7.3: Consultation Exercise 'Ground Rules'**<sup>591</sup>

Everyone has the right to express his or her view  
 We must treat each other with respect  
     No interrupting  
     No put downs  
 No one should dominate the evening  
     No smoking  
     No swearing  
     No mobile phones  
 Respect the confidentiality of what people say

## Conclusion

Democratic communication in Mossbank, as an aspect of democratic engagement, is to a

<sup>590</sup> Booklet given to residents who took part in the community safety workshop.

<sup>591</sup> Booklet given to residents who took part in the community safety workshop.

great extent exclusive in nature. The picture of inclusive communication that characterises Young's ideal of deliberative democracy presented in Chapter 4 is the target that Mossbank falls short of reaching. Political communication in Mossbank, on the other hand, is not entirely characterised by purely exclusive modes, relations and dispositions. Understanding the state of political communication in Mossbank requires focusing on the *extent* to which it is exclusive, particularly with reference to long-term and ongoing democratic processes.

Transmitting and receiving modes of communication highlight the shortcomings of political communication in Mossbank. Members of the management committee are most comfortable and at ease when communicating with one another behind closed doors, at a distance from the residents. This reflects the state of the representative-represented relationship revealed in Chapter 6. An unwillingness to impose rules to control and guide communication in the meetings contributes to, and exacerbates, the low points in the cycles of communication that occur in the meetings. The pathological dispositions that I have labelled 'miscommunication' contrast with the 'ordered' periods of argument, supported by narrative and greeting, that are the inclusive highpoints of the meetings. The socio-economic profile and limited experience and resources that many members bring to the management committee (identifiable in this case as barriers to 'doing' and 'getting' within the committee) make argument, unless supported by less formidable modes of communication, not only exclusionary but also impracticable. These factors, lead to the conclusion that there are features of the management committee that point to an inclusive approach to communication, but these are overshadowed by strong exclusionary tendencies.

Communication between residents and the management committee is a state of affairs in which notions of inclusion are bound by formal and traditional views of political communication. Communication is primarily non-verbal, the newsletter being the most regular and durable vehicle. Transmitting is distinctly one sided, favouring the official view of the management committee. Any inclusive elements in this are eclipsed by the absence of any opportunity to let residents enter into a dialogue through the newsletter.

Alternative views remain unheard and unity is preserved, but at the cost of silencing and, therefore, excluding alternative voices and perspectives. The management committee speaks, and the residents are expected to listen, but are unable, without resorting to other channels, to reply. Residents, when receiving information of an important nature, to do with, for example, ideas for the regeneration of Mossbank, can contribute to the distortion of such communication by taking it on face value: rumours begin. Active, critical and reflective paying attention can avoid such distortions (whether intended or not) that can exclude people from communicative processes.

The consultation exercise, partly because of its brevity and novelty, was accepted by Mossbank residents. Here, alternative approaches to political communication are offered to and taken up by the residents. However, the consultation and the ongoing communicative processes are seen by residents to be separate and unrelated. Despite being exposed to (relatively) innovative and inclusive approaches to political communication in the workshops, and accepting and understanding how they operate, familiar and traditional (but less inclusive) processes and roles have been accepted to define and delimit the scope of political communication in Mossbank over the long term.

Ongoing, 'everyday' political communication in Mossbank, with a few exceptions, echoes the broadly exclusive tendencies of participation and representation in Mossbank. This underlines the close links between these three aspects of democratic engagement. The development and flourishing of democratic processes that are more inclusive centres on the 'quality' of communication. However, these processes are also intimately tied up in the context and structures (particularly the other aspects of engagement, namely participation and representation) in which political communication occurs. Understanding political communication in Mossbank thus requires that attention be paid to opportunities and experiences of participation and the scope of the representative relationship. In turn, arriving at a conclusion regarding the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank requires a 'holistic' approach, taking in participation, representation and communication.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions

Much effort has gone into capturing and presenting how democratic engagement in Mossbank is constrained. Important in this has been the ‘holistic’ conception of engagement, which has allowed *aspects* of engagement to be examined, but the argument is not complete. I have still to tie these factors together into a cohesive whole, to arrive at a fully developed and rounded understanding of the practical limitations of democratic engagement in Mossbank.

Surrounding these core questions are other related but supplementary questions, presented in Chapter 1. For the most part, these have already been dealt with as I developed my thesis. However, two issues have still to be adequately considered. Referring to Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1, there is the outstanding question of what does the analysis and understanding of democratic engagement in Mossbank contribute to theory building? Concerns about the relatability of the findings and the applicability of the analytical framework, voiced in questions set out in Figure 1.2 also remain unanswered. These questions push towards two of the central motifs of this research, namely fostering a dialogue between theory and real world research, and developing and extending the notion of democratic engagement.<sup>592</sup>

The ‘dialogue’ motif, introduced in Chapter 1, so useful in constructing the analytical framework, can also contribute to theory building. Specifically, this takes the form of a critique of Young’s normative account of deliberative democracy. This underlines the benefits of the establishment of closer ties between real world research and normative theorising, this time with the flow of dialogue moving from real world research to theory building. Developing points raised in Chapter 4, I contend that Young pays insufficient attention to context, scale and the scope of communication in the construction of her normative ideal of ‘communicative democracy’.

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<sup>592</sup> A discussion of the central motifs or themes of this thesis can be found in Chapter 1.



The holistic conception of democratic engagement does not discount previous definitions. Rather, it seeks to make more visible and open to analysis aspects of engagement at best only alluded to, and touched upon briefly, in previous models and research. I argue that the analytical framework used in this research, and presented in Chapter 4, has presented opportunities to explore previously neglected aspects of democratic engagement. The analysis leads to the conclusion that the limits of democratic engagement in Mossbank are dictated by factors rooted in Mossbank. I also want to contend that these ‘internal’ factors are in turn shaped by trends, decisions, and norms and values originating in the wider world of which Mossbank is a part. The presentation of this argument is supported by an alternative approach to labelling the factors shaping engagement in Mossbank. This time it is according to whether the factors are ‘generic’ - that is broadly confirming findings from previous research - or ‘specific’ - broadly refuting or challenging previous findings, or highlighting fresh insights. Figure 8.1 summarises this dual approach to categorisation.

**Figure 8.1: Democratic Engagement in Mossbank: Two Approaches to Categorising Findings**

Factors	Relationship to Previous Research
<b>External:</b> outside influences	<b>Generic:</b> broadly confirming previous research
<b>Internal:</b> context specific influences	<b>Specific:</b> broadly challenging previous research; new insights

The elaboration and defence of these arguments dictate the structure of the chapter. Firstly, I focus on presenting my understanding of democratic engagement in Mossbank and my argument that, ultimately, factors external to Mossbank have a significant influence, feeding into and moulding internal factors. Secondly, I contend that my research can offer particular insights into normative theory building as part of an ongoing

theory-real world dialogue. Next, I highlight the contribution of this project and suggest future lines of research and inquiry. Finally, I restate my thesis.

An Understanding of Democratic Engagement in Mossbank

The central argument, that democratic engagement in Mossbank is constrained and delimited by a set of interrelated factors is elaborated in this section. As already stated, these factors can be divided into two groups - ‘internal’ and ‘external’ - defined by their links to Mossbank. However, the distinction should not be overdrawn. This is an important point because it helps to develop my argument that external and internal factors are related. Figure 8.2, in its presentation of these factors, offers a clue as to the extent of overlap and similarity between internal and external factors that is developed throughout this section.

**Figure 8.2: External and Internal Factors Affecting Democratic Engagement**

External	Internal
The political and policy landscape	Plot: Institutions, processes, events, developments
Social and economic inequalities	Character: demographic and socio-economic profiles of the population. Attributes of individuals.
	Setting: Mossbank the place
Prevailing and underlying democratic norms and values	Prevailing and underlying democratic norms and values

Figure 8.2, by showing that the external and internal factors can be loosely gathered into three pairings, also provides a useful approach to elaborating and defending my argument. The first pairing focuses on the ‘environment’ in which democratic engagement exists, in terms of the wider situation, and within the borders of Mossbank. The second pair is linked by a focus on social and economic differences, particularly the

way that social and economic inequalities across the United Kingdom are reflected in Mossbank, and in turn influence who is engaged and the extent of this engagement. The final pairing, concentrates on the democratic values and norms that characterise actual democratic practice, with the assumption that change, or the potential for change, is always on the agenda.

- 'Environmental' Factors

In Chapters 6 and 7, the state of democratic engagement in Mossbank is shown to be framed within a setting of formal political equality. It is a setting that is built on an exoskeleton of formal political equality using 'conventional', 'familiar' institutions and processes of democratic engagement. Beneath this, there are hints of alternative or complementary approaches to engagement. Here I present a picture of the limits of democratic engagement in Mossbank to do with Plot. Next, I connect this to the influence of policies and political trends emanating from the macro level.

- *The Allure of a Formal Approach to Democracy*. Democracy and engagement in Mossbank have formal foundations that define the democratic structures, institutions and processes that exist in Mossbank. The residents' association constitution, explored in detail in Chapter 6, establishes formal political equality in Mossbank. The constitution sets out who are members of the residents' association and how they are each 'equally' part of that organisation, with an 'equal' say in the choosing and annual assessment of the performance of the management committee, to which all members are 'equally' entitled to put themselves forward as potential members. However, formal political equality in Mossbank runs deeper than this, particularly when the management committee organised 'consultations'.

These opportunities, most notably the 'surgeries' and the 'Give Us Your Views Day' (for discussions of these see particularly in Chapter 6) failed to engage the residents. Comments from leading members of the management committee expressing concern over the relative failure of these opportunities suggest that to them the 'problem' is not so much these essentially formal vehicles. The prevailing view amongst the management

committee is that formal opportunities to engage are not inadequate or inappropriate. The 'fault' for their relative failure lies with the residents for not taking part. The management committee, the organisation with the ability and duty to encourage residents to engage with the regeneration initiative, are tied to formal conceptions of democracy.

In contrast, the consultation exercises, held in the early days of the regeneration initiative, were well attended. The consultation events are not designed to be ongoing arenas of decision making, demanding too much time of residents. It is doubtful, therefore, if such an interest and level of engagement could be sustained over a long period, but at least this short burst of interest shows an appetite amongst residents to try out new and novel experiences of engagement. Perhaps, the residents are not so tied to formal democratic frameworks.

- *Ongoing Democracy*. A key point to grasp about the essential nature of the democratic processes I explored in this research is that they operate over the long term. After the initial flurry of activity in the early days of the regeneration project - public meetings, consultations, general excitement, and heightened expectations - there soon developed a 'morning after' feel to democracy in Mossbank. Here the role of the 'willing few' supported by the formal framework, characterises the day-to-day and year-to-year development of democracy in Mossbank.

Managing and carrying on the democratic institutions has its foundations in the formal framework set out in the residents' association constitution. Here the formal moments of authorisation and accountability, and the longer periods of representation dominate. In addition, the management committee's attempts to 'consult' through the surgeries and the 'Give Us Your Views Day' illustrate the tentative adoption of a broadly managerialist approach.<sup>593</sup>

What can be termed 'unofficial interruptions', forms of engagement created by residents outwith the influence of the residents' association / management committee, have

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<sup>593</sup> The idea of managerialism is discussed in Chapter 4.

occurred, though rarely, during the existence of the regeneration initiative. The most notable of these is Hazel's petition to 'save' the park on Balquhidder Road. In Chapter 4, I categorise this form of engagement as less or non-conventional. Hazel was strongly motivated and her activity was intense, ultimately successful, but short lived. For a short period, the ordered framework of formal engagement was upset. As I comment in Chapter 6, such forms of engagement effectively bypass the 'official' vehicles offered by the residents' association. This, as Hazel's account of her actions illustrate, indicates shortcomings in the relationship between the management committee members and the residents. As I note in Chapter 6, Hazel states that she organised the petition only after, in her view, the management committee did not listen to her and 'sat on the fence'. Tensions in relationships are both created and given a platform when an ongoing set of democratic institutions and processes exist. This, I argue is the case in Mossbank and in some cases influence the shape of democratic engagement.

- *Relations*. My analysis highlighted at least two ongoing relationships across Mossbank that affect the scope and state of democratic engagement, namely the representative - represented relationship, and the geographical divide along Ballantrae Road.

The formal framework means that opportunities to engage are limited, and by extension, this defines the relationship between representatives (members of the management committee) and represented (the remainder of the residents). As I conclude in Chapter 6, it is not a 'close' relationship. The residents' association newsletter, as I show in Chapter 7, is a particularly strong example of the state of this relationship. On the one hand, the newsletter is *the* form of communication across Mossbank, but on the other it is a distinctly one-sided conversation: the official voice of the residents' association / management committee prevails. There is no accommodation within the newsletter for a 'conversation' between residents and their representatives, no opportunity for residents to engage with the work and decision making of the management committee.

The other relationship, which is best seen as a 'split', is surprising given the size and population Mossbank, is that which divides the area along Ballantrae Road. I analyse this

split in Chapter 7. It has been a constant feature throughout the regeneration initiative. It cuts to the core of the definition of the area of 'Mossbank', and perceptions of needing to be part of a regeneration initiative. For those who live to the east of Ballantrae Road and argue that they should not be part of the regeneration area, this represents an attempt to push away, to exit, and to escape from the problems that exist a matter of metres from their doorsteps. The views and interests of these individuals are not discussed by the committee, either amongst themselves or in communications with the rest of the residents. No efforts are made to include their concerns in the agenda of the management committee. Instead the geographical boundaries of Mossbank (the regeneration area), though imposed prior to the birth of the residents' association, are viewed as a *fait accompli* by the committee, and the maintenance and fostering of unity within these boundaries is pursued with vigour. 'Unity' trumps giving voice to different, perhaps unwelcome, viewpoints.

- *Hints of Change?* The overwhelming picture of the influence of Plot is that the formal and, to a lesser extent, managerial approaches both dominate and constrain what democratic engagement means in Mossbank. However, as I have emphasised throughout the development of this thesis, democratic life in Mossbank is not static. Beneath, there are hints of interesting developments that introduce a 'third party' into notions of the representative relationship. In Chapter 6, I note a trend in the development of the representative - represented relationship. It is that the CDW (the community development worker) is developing a role as an intermediary between the residents and the management committee, especially in the passing on of concerns and information from the residents to the management committee. This development is a quiet evolution of one of the roles of the CDW, that supplements the formal mechanisms of the representative relationship in Mossbank. As I comment in Chapter 6, it paradoxically 'saves' the relationship and embeds the distance between representatives and the represented. Its impact on the democratic engagement is slight, but may develop. As such, it is an organic, pragmatic, practical, attractive, and accessible conduit of communication for residents when they need to engage in the representative relationship.

A number of policies and political trends rooted in the macro level percolate down to Mossbank. In Chapter 2, I isolate a number of factors that reach into Mossbank, including trends towards area based initiatives to tackle deep set social problems, the rise of multi-level governance and partnership working as frameworks for the organisation and management of such initiatives, and statutory requirements to involve residents in such frameworks. More fundamentally, there are the formal, 'traditional' approaches to democracy, well established and familiar, that exist at the macro level. To what extent do these external political and policy factors feed into the formation and development of democratic engagement in Mossbank?

Without the development of an area based approach to social problems and the favouring of a partnership approach including residents, there would be no Mossbank regeneration initiative and residents' association to speak of. Attempts by the management committee to supplement the formal framework of democracy in Mossbank with 'consultations' (the surgeries and the 'Give Us Your Views Day') echo criticisms that such managerial approaches can be the somewhat mechanistic, simply 'going through the motions' and paying lip service to notions of 'listening' and 'participation'. In this way, such limitations are transposed to a small scale setting and act to constrain what is possible as democratic engagement.

The established structures, and sometimes the language, used in larger scale democratic processes are in many cases set up in miniature form in Mossbank. Chiefly, this involves an importation of a formal conception of democracy based on a system of representation. Following Beetham, I agree that formal structures are the foundation of democratic processes and, as I state in Chapter 4, representation is unavoidable for the functioning of practical democratic processes in all but the very smallest of groups.<sup>594</sup> However, I contend that the privileging of formal structures (including representative mechanisms) as *the* way to practice democracy are adopted through a lack of an alternative blueprint or template. No alternatives are sought or offered to the residents that are orientated to fostering engagement in ongoing democracy in micro level, 'discouraged' communities.

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<sup>594</sup> Beetham (1993).

In this way, restrictions to democratic engagement inherent in these approaches are introduced, and enshrined in the residents' association constitution, as the foundations of democratic life in Mossbank.

- Social and Economic Factors

In this section, I argue that Setting, and particularly Character, also influence the development of democratic engagement in Mossbank. I develop this argument by establishing, as far as possible, links between wider patterns of social and economic inequalities usual in developed democracies. These external factors, I contend, have a part to play in determining the scope of ongoing democratic engagement that is possible in Mossbank. Firstly, I highlight how internal factors related to Character and Setting constrain democratic engagement. My approach here is to pull together a number of salient themes or patterns drawn from the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 7, namely the view that Mossbank residents are apathetic, that engagement is a minority pursuit, the extent of civic virtues in Mossbank, and the 'qualifications' and attributes to facilitate engagement. I support this argument by returning briefly to my experiences of data gathering in Mossbank, especially the extent to which residents engaged with this endeavour.

- 'Blaming' Apathy. It is notable that 'apathy' becomes the explanation for the low turnouts at AGMs and the failure of their consultation exercises. If opportunities to engage are formally equal, then that is enough; it is up to residents to take up these opportunities. Such a viewpoint underlines the management committee's narrow view of democracy, with its emphasis on formal equality. When residents do not engage, then the 'fault' lies with 'apathetic' residents and not with any shortcomings in the design of opportunities to engage. As I point out in Chapter 6, health and mobility problems, even senses of being 'different' on account of one's accent, when not properly acknowledged in decision making processes, will remain hidden under the catch-all 'explanation' of apathy. The existence of apathy amongst Mossbank residents, however, should not be entirely rejected. The Power Inquiry has a much more dismissive attitude to apathy in relation to disengagement, describing it as a 'red herring' - a view that I do not agree



with.<sup>595</sup> But at the same time, apathy should not become a barrier to uncovering other reasons for the state of engagement in Mossbank. The notion of ‘alienation’ - a general frustration with the constraints of formal and conventional forms of political engagement - has been of more use in the analysis. This, combined with an awareness and uncovering of structural reasons for the level and scope of engagement in Mossbank, contributes to a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the democratic engagement in Mossbank.

- The 'Willing Few'. In Mossbank, democratic engagement is undertaken by a small minority of residents. This echoes previous research insofar as engagement beyond voting is a minority pursuit.<sup>596</sup> The low turnout at residents’ association AGMs, the occasional worries about a dwindling management committee membership and the uniqueness of Hazel’s actions as a petition organiser highlight this. This indicates that barriers to engagement - including those of a socio-economic nature - are, to a greater or lesser extent, surmounted by this ‘willing few’. Meanwhile, the great majority of Mossbank residents remain on the periphery. It is my contention that the reasons for this revolve around differing senses of ‘community spirit’ and especially the trumping of socio-economic barriers by utilising or developing particular qualifications and attributes.

The conduct of the monthly meetings of the management committee raises other sets of barriers to engagement, based around communication. In Chapter 7, I conclude that the meetings go through cycles of relatively inclusive argument and narrative, supported by frequent greeting gestures, contrasted with periods of ‘miscommunication’, where the meeting descends in to disarray. Narrative acts as a mode of communication for those less able to construct their contributions as arguments. In these moments, when narrative and argument coexist and support one another, the less experienced and knowledgeable members are in a better position to transmit their views. Miscommunication is rooted in a reluctance, or fear, concerning the imposition of ‘rules’ or a norm of order onto the meetings. It is based on a concern that doing so would alienate some committee members. This concern, voiced most strongly by Paul, the chairperson, seems well founded. His vision of a formal, ‘traditional’ and hierarchical meeting would almost

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<sup>595</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006).

<sup>596</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), pp47-50, and The Hansard Society and The Electoral Commission (2004), p46.

certainly alienate those members with less experience and knowledge of ‘fitting in’ to such an approach. However, despite realising that there is a problem of miscommunication, Paul and other leading members are unable or unwilling to explore or develop alternative, less alienating, norms of order.

- 'Community Spirit'. It is my view that Mossbank residents have a limited sense of civic virtue or ‘community spirit’, particularly as a motivating factor to engage in democratic processes aimed at improving their neighbourhood. The impulse to participate, explored in Chapter 6, is essentially instrumental in nature, involving a simultaneous mixing of self interested and more community orientated motivations. Recent research on democratic engagement has little to say in relation to the extent that self-interest and wider interests motivate participation. However, Parry *et al*, state that their data suggests a similar mix of what they call ‘communal and private interests’ as motivational factors.<sup>597</sup> This instrumental approach is particularly evident in relation to the core members of the management committee and reflects their role as trustee representatives. High levels of mistrust and cynicism, after an initial period of excitement and interest, directed towards the local authority and to a lesser extent, the management committee combine to seriously limit the development of ‘community spirit’ in Mossbank. Furthermore, the imposed boundaries of the regeneration area, internal divisions (particularly along Ballantrae Road), and the expansion of the residents’ association into the adjoining neighbourhood of Newlands make for a weak sense of community spirit.

- Qualifications and Attributes. Opportunities for engagement in Mossbank, most importantly ‘official’ forms of engagement, are easier to access and interact in for some people than for others. To a degree, this is down to the narrow and formal frameworks on which it is founded and by which it is practiced. The analysis has been able to highlight other, deeper aspects of engagement in Mossbank, related to the attributes and resources of individuals in Mossbank.

To be a ‘successful’ participant in Mossbank requires certain ‘qualifications’ centred on

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<sup>597</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p357.

personal attributes and personal resources. Little or no assistance or encouragement - from external agencies or from those who are qualified - is offered, either to develop capacities or to alter processes to mitigate such sources of exclusion. The Power Inquiry comments that though time-poor, 'many are engaged with non-political and informal political activity'.<sup>598</sup> In Chapter 6, demands on time are shown to be an excluding factor, although when sufficiently motivated, individuals can 'make time', Randall's juggling of his family commitments with being a committee member is one example of 'making time'.

There is an awareness and sensitivity on the part of the management committee that open meetings, consultations and other events to which the residents are invited have to occur at times convenient to the residents. An example of this relating to the 'surgeries' is discussed in Chapter 6. Lack of time, though relevant, is insufficient on its own to constitute a serious barrier or source of constraint on who is able to participate.

Informal neighbourhood networks can propel individuals into participation and engagement, Daniel's experience being particularly interesting - see Chapter 6. Membership of elite networks is a more powerful and, in Mossbank, very rare resource that facilitates entry to the core of the management committee. Here I have in mind Paul's invitation to take part in early discussions regarding the regeneration of Mossbank. To Foley and Edwards, such informal networks act as 'brokers' facilitating access to decision making processes.<sup>599</sup> Elite networks, in particular, are exclusive in the sense that they are 'club goods' as opposed to public goods, meaning that only those with access to the network can reap the benefits.<sup>600</sup> Other than the above instances, no other residents spoke of their networks of friends, relations and contacts as easing or instigating engagement. So, networks, at least on their own, have had no significant role in shaping who engages.

Individual attributes, those that 'relate directly to the individual and his or her immediate

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<sup>598</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006), pp69-70.

<sup>599</sup> Foley and Edwards (1999), p146.

<sup>600</sup> Hall (1999), p458.

situation in life' such as age and gender also affect the shape and appearance of engagement in Mossbank.<sup>601</sup> Age is usually explored in studies of political engagement. Although there is no firm consensus, there seems to be a tendency, in the United Kingdom, at least, for middle aged people to be the most active political participants.<sup>602</sup> Also, the early seventies may be an "'Indian Summer" for participation' and 'after 75 [...] life-cycle forces seem finally to take their toll and rates plunge dramatically'.<sup>603</sup> Broadly speaking, Mossbank reflects such findings. However, the idea of 'regeneration' has a particular affect on the attitudes of some older Mossbank residents and is used to justify non-engagement. As I illustrate in Chapter 6, regeneration is associated with change over a long time and thus becomes associated with younger people. Here context - the regeneration initiative itself - becomes a factor influencing the choice to not engage. It is doubtful that perception alone turns such individuals towards non-engagement. Furthermore, this view is certainly not shared by all older people in Mossbank, as there are a number of retired people on the management committee.

I am able to argue in Chapter 6 that women are proportionately represented. I compare this favourably with the state of affairs in regional and national legislatures. Taking the management committee to be the main site of democratic engagement and inclusion, it is also possible to argue that women as a group are in a strong position regarding the inclusion of their interests and voices. Evidence for this lies not with the distribution of committee offices, but rather with a more informal approach associated with the small scale and community-based context of the management committee. Here, away from traditional political arenas, there is greater scope for women to engage. Carol, for example, is the core member not because she is the committee's secretary but because she is particularly motivated and 'qualified'. Men, though they fill the two 'senior' positions on the committee (chairperson and vice-chairperson), are not the leading, most active and most influential members concerning the behind-the-scenes work and decision making of the residents' association / management committee. In the research literature, evidence of a 'gender gap', in the United Kingdom at least, in general levels of participation is small,

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<sup>601</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p143.

<sup>602</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), pp167-170 and Pattie *et al* (2004), pp85-89.

<sup>603</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p170.

if anything suggesting men to be more active.<sup>604</sup> Therefore, broadly speaking, Mossbank reflects national UK trends. The reason for the high profile of women in the management committee, and thus in engagement across Mossbank, is based on context: democratic processes in Mossbank being small scale, community-based, and outwith the direct influence of established, male-dominated political institutions and practices chime with their experiences and concerns.<sup>605</sup>

However, it is the possession and application of existing or newly acquired knowledge and experience that is, I contend, the most important set of ‘qualifications’ concerning who is able to access and engage most successfully in Mossbank’s democratic processes. These ‘qualifications’ include experiences and knowledge directly linked, not so much to income and wealth, but to occupation and education. Notably, other routes to similar sorts of knowledge and experience have been highlighted in my analysis, including previous experience in grassroots organisations and committee work - Carol, the secretary and core member of the management committee being a salient example. Much of the literature on engagement or participation focuses on the influence of formal education, wealth and occupation. In this research, I have adopted a slightly different tack. I have also focussed on alternative ways to gain experience and knowledge. This relates to the idea of ‘capacity building’ that focuses on ‘skills development, technical support and training’ required to facilitate meaningful, empowered engagement.<sup>606</sup> However, in Mossbank, capacity building has been left largely to the individual, like Hazel and Carol, driven on by strong impulses to engage. This approach has enabled me to notice and capture the experiences of individuals, who with little or no formal education and wealth are still able to become empowered and, in cases such as Carol’s, make connections to the regeneration partnership.

By extension, the importance of these qualifications affect the scope and limitations of what democratic engagement is in Mossbank, with especial reference to who is able to

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<sup>604</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), pp144-145, Pattie *et al* (2004), pp85-86, The Electoral Commission (2004), pp21-32, and The Hansard Society and The Electoral Commission (2006), pp14-16.

<sup>605</sup> Lister (2003), pp151-152.

<sup>606</sup> Taylor (2003), p19.

access, to be heard and to influence outcomes. To exert influence, most usually through becoming a core member of the management committee, requires the individual to be motivated and to be prepared to apply existing knowledge and experience, or to be able and willing to acquire these. Non-core committee members generally are not sufficiently motivated to develop their capacities, and there is a strong impression that other residents feel that they are not qualified to join committees.

- *Engagement and Data Collecting*. In Chapter 3, I discussed problems encountered whilst collecting data in Mossbank. These challenges, for the most part, concerned methods that involved contact with the residents, particularly the questionnaires and interviews. Many of the problems I encountered whilst data gathering echo issues discussed in this section. Engagement of Mossbank residents in their neighbourhood democratic process and in my research share similarities. I draw attention to these similarities in order to highlight the scope, influence and ubiquitousness of factors that can inhibit or support engagement.

In this section, I have argued that those who engage with Mossbank's democratic processes tend to possess qualities that allow them to take part, to join the management committee, for example. For the vast majority of Mossbank residents, however, barriers exist that block engagement. In effect, this translates into engagement being confined to a 'willing few', and attracting others to take part is largely restricted to somewhat half-hearted and formal devices such as the surgeries and the 'Give Us Your Views Day'. Engagement, of a sort that extends beyond the 'willing few', is therefore a challenge yet to be successfully met.

Similarly, I found that engaging Mossbank residents in my research to be a challenge. Phase 2 of data collection, where I focussed on those already engaged, posed fewer problems of engagement. Those who completed questionnaires or took part in interviews were made up of those who already engaged in Mossbank's democratic processes. Phase 1, where the focus was on data collection from those least involved in Mossbank's democratic processes, was the area where low response rates and recruitment were most

noticeable. Here the parallels between the two phases of data collection, and the willing few and the majority of Mossbank residents are apparent: Phase 1 corresponds with the disengaged majority, and Phase 2 relates to the 'willing few'. In both Mossbank's processes of democratic engagement and my own attempts to engage with residents as a researcher, a minority are better able to take part. Meanwhile, the majority of residents are essentially written off by the management committee as 'apathetic'. For the researcher, this is not an option. As outlined in Chapter 3, an alternative approach featuring careful planning, flexibility and perseverance, allowed me to meet the difficulties of residents' engagement with the data collection process.

My experiences of data collection in Mossbank echo the ease with which the willing few can engage, as well as mirroring the barriers that stand in the way of the other residents. The 'official' view, that residents have had, and rejected, opportunities to engage with the democratic process and are therefore 'apathetic' can also be contrasted with the approach I adopted to encourage engagement. Whereas the management committee's attempts were unimaginative and short lived, my own more determined efforts yielded results - increased response rates to the questionnaires and rich interview data.

Returning to a question raised earlier in this chapter, to what extent are internal factors traceable to external factors? In Figure 8.2, I paired Character and Setting with social and economic inequalities. Apathy and alienation, low levels of engagement, and a weak sense of 'community spirit', all characteristics of the shape and scope of engagement in Mossbank, may have roots in wider, external social and economic inequalities. The analysis allows a nuanced conclusion to be reached. Some sorts of qualifications and attributes have a weaker connection with wider social and economic inequalities, such as age, time for engagement and networks. These constraints are essentially rooted within Mossbank. Others show how prevailing social and economic inequalities filter through to Mossbank, and in so doing reproduce - in some cases in altered form - problems well documented in macro level studies of democracy and engagement. The possession of appropriate knowledge and experience, and the capacity to gain it, has close connections

to inequalities surrounding formal education and employment and income. However, given sufficient motivation, these shortcomings can sometimes, though rarely, be overcome. Such impulses, in the case of Mossbank - 'saving' Balquhiddy Road play park, regaining a sense of 'community spirit' - lie within its boundaries. I can conclude that, to a significant degree, democratic engagement in Mossbank is constrained by wider, deep set socio-economic inequalities set in place and maintained at the macro level. Here, the practical limitations of democratic engagement in Mossbank are more firmly marked, being beyond the influence of the institutions and processes in Mossbank.

#### - Democratic Norms and Values

Adopting a theoretical position based on Young's normative account of deliberative democracy as the basis of the analysis of democratic life in Mossbank, throws into relief just how far removed democratic engagement in Mossbank is from such an ideal. The emphasis on formal political equality enshrined in a constitution, the front staging of representation, the regular opportunities for elections / voting, the division of 'political' labour between representatives and represented, and reactions to non-engagement are prominent features of democratic life in Mossbank. These each point towards norms and values associated with liberal democratic ideals. Such norms and values are also broadly reflected in macro level democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom, and developed democracies more generally. Representation in the United Kingdom (despite recent introductions of referendums and other forms of direct decision making) remains central to ongoing democracy.<sup>607</sup> The political 'division of labour' is based on the regular holding to account and authorisation of a minority of people cast in the role of representatives. Political pluralism, increasingly realised through interest group and single issue campaign activity, rather than through 'traditional' political parties, continues to flourish.<sup>608</sup>

Only occasionally, are norms and values of a deliberative flavour noticeable in Mossbank. Some periods of the management committee meetings, and developments in the representative relationship, for example, point in this direction. Data analysed in Chapter 5, allows me to argue, however, that the formation of democratic institutions and

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<sup>607</sup> Judge (1999), ch8.

<sup>608</sup> Beetham *et al* (2002), p298, and The Power Inquiry (2006), ch1.



processes in Mossbank have been influenced by what the residents already know and see around them, over what they view as normatively preferable.

Despite residents' normative conceptualisations of democracy, a particular take on democratic engagement has prevailed. Figure 8.2 can be reread as illustrating six - three 'internal', and three 'external' - factors delimiting the practical shape and scope of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Familiar and traditional approaches to engagement have been imported from the macro level into Mossbank and have formed the foundations of democratic engagement in Mossbank. This allows little room for the development of more substantive - but unfamiliar - approaches. In the process, little attention has been paid to the applicability of these traditional approaches to a small scale, grassroots democratic system. The limited experience, knowledge and capacities of the residents to engage, living as they are in a socially and economically discouraged area, have been trumped by the introduction and adherence of an approach to engagement that 'works', but is antipathetic to the fostering of wider and deeper communication, participation and representation.

#### Theory Building from Democratic Engagement in Mossbank

The motif of a theory-real world dialogue has so far been predominantly concerned with the influence of theory on my approach to the analysis of democratic engagement in Mossbank. Little has yet been said about the influence of the analysis and findings on theory building. In the light of the findings highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7, I argue that Young's ideal account of deliberative democracy as elaborated in *Inclusion and Democracy* contains a number of shortcomings.<sup>609</sup> It is perhaps going too far to claim that findings from a single case can justifiably amend or overturn such a normative framework. However, I can at least introduce into ongoing debates on normative accounts of democracy, certain relevant points and critiques based on the study of actually existing democracy that contribute to the development and refinement of normative accounts of deliberative democracy.

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<sup>609</sup> Young (2000).

- *Pre-Analysis Reflections*. Reflection on Young's account of deliberative democracy started during the development of my analytical framework. These early considerations, discussed in Chapter 4, influenced the structure of the analytical framework. It is necessary to gather the threads of this early appraisal of Young's account together in order to show the basis of my developed critique. Two characteristics of Young's model encapsulate its essential qualities. Firstly, Young manages to incorporate within her theorising many aspects relating to how communication functions and how deliberators, and affected parties, relate to one another. Secondly, Young recognises the importance of 'dialogue' between normative democratic theory and actually existing democratic practices, a point I acknowledge in Chapter 4.

My early criticisms of Young's normative account focus on the first characteristic. Young's thinking is marred by a number of shortcomings. I recognised these whilst developing the analytical framework. As I mention in Chapter 4, Young shifts the emphasis of her normative account of deliberative democracy away from small scale settings to larger scale contexts, such as large cities and states. Whilst an interesting direction, one that reflects real world developments, the place of the micro level in peoples' lives cannot be dismissed. Micro level democratic processes are also part of the fabric of a democratic polity.

Related to Young's refocusing of her deliberative ideal towards larger scale contexts, Young attempts to move the object of her theorising away from face-to-face interactions. To a point, this is a positive development. After all, there is more to communication than face-to-face interaction. However, as I show in Chapter 4, I am critical of Young's apparent separation of the notion of 'decentred' communication from micro level contexts. Young assumes that small scale settings are defined by single, united, unchallenged decision making processes. As a starting point, at least, a study of an actually existing democratic setting, whether large or small-scale, should assume diversity and dynamism.

The analytical pathway of Receiving features prominently in the analytical framework. It is traceable to notions of listening and reflection. As pointed out in Chapter 4, Young, though aware of these concepts in relation to deliberative and participative democratic theorising, inadequately incorporates these into her account. When thinking about the definition and scope of communication in democratic settings, I found these omissions to be particularly striking.

- *Post-Analysis Reflections*. The exploration and analysis of Mossbank both confirms and extends my pre-analysis reflections. The following discussion of shortcomings related to the communicative and relational aspects of Young's theorising supports my contention that Young's approach to utilising and exploiting a theory - real world dialogue is underdeveloped.

The analysis confirms my view that Young has a narrow conceptualisation of what can count as communication. In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young does not specify how communication takes place in her ideal, although 'talk' seems to be implied. Communication, over and above 'talk' - the form of communication most usually associated with deliberative ideals - can occur in at least two other ways, namely listening and reflection (as forms of 'receiving') and non-verbal forms of transmitting and receiving. The notion of 'critical vigilance' gives listening a place in Young's account but only as a check against strategic abuses of her norms of communication. My analysis suggests that an inclusive ideal of deliberative democracy has also to consider how information that has been transmitted is received and processed in deliberative forums. Also, non-verbal forms of communication - in the case of Mossbank, the residents' association newsletter is the salient example - takes on the role as the main vehicle of communication (even though, as I point out in Chapter 7, the newsletter is very much about the management committee transmitting their views). This raises the question of whether privileging verbal communication in Young's ideal could not be revised.

As I have already emphasised, Young is critical of deliberative ideals that focus on small scale settings. Indeed, as I show in Chapter 4, Young holds the view that '[a] discussion-

based democratic theory will be irrelevant to contemporary society [...] unless it can apply its values, norms, and insights to large-scale politics of millions of people'.<sup>610</sup> Young sees little value or interest in such levels to contemporary normative theorising. She contends that small scale settings are of little relevance to the 'big' decisions that people face. Whilst I do not dispute this position, Young is, I believe, guilty of dismissing the role that small scale democratic processes play in everyday life, and of assuming an uncomplicated set of relations between individuals. The complexity and immediacy of small scale democracy to affected parties is demonstrated in my analysis. This argument, introduced in Chapter 1 and developed in Chapter 4, underlines Young's neglect of the micro level. Young's account would be, I contend, enriched with an accommodation of the micro level - acknowledged as relevant and complex - alongside, and linked to, macro levels.

In Young's ideal account, great weight is attached to argument as the mainstay of deliberative problem solving, supported by other communicative norms such as narrative and greeting, policed through critical vigilance, and all taking place within an ordered or disordered atmosphere geared towards inclusion. In the light of my analysis, such a picture, even for a normative account, seems too 'neat' to be of relevance to 'situated' theorising. Young makes no room in her account for purposeless 'miscommunication', a term introduced in Chapter 7 to denote 'disorderly' and disruptive dispositions with no strategic goal leading to the unintended consequences of creating or aggravating exclusion. Young has no place for such behaviours that disrupt proceedings for non-strategic reasons. Linking Young's account more strongly to the messy realities of deliberative settings requires that additional aspects of communication be built into her model. Most significantly, this would mean the consideration of ways to avoid or mitigate miscommunication.

Young's insistence that 'greeting' - the 'glue' between parties that creates and maintains a sense of 'togetherness' during encounters - in her ideal ought only to occur at the beginning and end of encounters seems inadequate. The creation and maintenance of

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<sup>610</sup> Young (2000), p45.

inclusive deliberation may require greeting gestures to carry on throughout an encounter, with more formalised or ritualistic forms of greeting being left for the beginning and end. Again, this points towards the need for an acknowledgement of the ‘messiness’ of actually existing democratic processes in the development of Young’s ideal. Greeting, because it is divorced from the topic under discussion, may occur simultaneously alongside argument, narrative and even miscommunication, with the aim of fostering an inclusive forum. Examples from Mossbank that highlight examples of greeting used during meetings are highlighted in Chapter 7.

Young’s dichotomy of internal and external exclusion is criticised in Chapter 4 as introducing ‘participation’ into an essentially communicative ideal of deliberative democracy. Since it concerns issues to do with struggles to gain or block access, external exclusion, I contend, does not sit easily within Young’s account of *communicative* democracy, with its emphasis on the ‘internal exclusion’ of those already nominally part of the deliberating forum. This raises questions of whether it is possible, or advisable, to make connections between accessing and actual deliberation in an ideal such as Young presents. My view is that such an approach is worthwhile. It becomes more likely that the development of the ideal can benefit from a dialogue with real world research by acknowledging that issues of access, and actually being present in a forum, are part of the wider concept of engagement. However, in a normative account, participative and communicative elements must be clearly differentiated, whilst at the same time highlighting their links and relationships as aspects of democratic engagement.

When Young turns to a discussion of representation and how this can be related to her ideal account of deliberative democracy, she makes a clearer separation between these two aspects of engagement, whilst at the same time going to some length to establish links between these two notions. In comparison to her account of ‘inclusive political communication’ within a deliberative forum, Young’s account of ‘representation as relationship’ is, in my view, less developed, not least because it seems distanced from the real world of democracy and representation. Young’s extension of deliberative and communicative norms and values to representation is an important development in

contemporary democratic theorising. Entering into a theory - real world dialogue would be invaluable in the development of Young's account of representation. For example, the analysis of representation in Mossbank - see Chapter 6 - would help connect normative theorists to representation in an actually existing setting. The evolution of representation, the small indications of an inclusive / communication relationship, and the barriers preventing something approaching Young's ideal all provide useful, and in some cases challenging and unexpected, insights that would help refine her notion of representation as relationship. Particularly so, if such normative ideals are to not fall into the trap of being too 'abstracted from social contexts', and unable to relate to the complexity and dynamism of contemporary developed democracies, whether at the macro or micro levels.<sup>611</sup>

Young's normative account of deliberative democracy is 'situated' in contemporary developed democracies, particularly as she admits, the United States.<sup>612</sup> Despite her attempts to connect her theorising to 'real life' democracy, Young still paints with a broad brush. Her ideal account is situated to the extent that it is at best *broadly* and *roughly* related to actually existing contemporary democracy. Furthermore, she is at pains to 'move on' from the small scale, as if this level has no bearing on peoples' lives and its very smallness is proportionate to its complexity and interest. Young's understanding of what counts as communication is also too narrow, missing out aspects that are at least as prevalent as speech in many actually existing settings. Reconnecting Young's ideal with micro level settings (alongside larger scale settings), incorporating an expanded notion of communication and thinking in more relativist terms (or allowing space in the construction and presentation of the ideal for this to occur) would address the shortcomings that I have highlighted.

### Democratic Engagement: Beyond Mossbank

Through a theoretically informed analytical framework, I have developed a thesis arguing

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<sup>611</sup> Young (2000), p15.

<sup>612</sup> Young (2000), p15.

that the shape and scope of democratic engagement in Mossbank is determined by a set of factors, some rooted in Mossbank and others filtering through from the macro level. In this section, I highlight how other aspects of the project - particularly previously neglected conceptualisations and new approaches to analysis - can contribute to continuing efforts to understand democratic engagement. I also make a case for the reliability of my findings and thesis outside Mossbank.

A holistic view of democratic engagement operationalised in the analytical framework - the use of which is defended in Chapter 1 - brings to studies of democratic engagement a refined appreciation of the components of engagement, namely participation, representation and particularly communication. The operationalisation of this view of engagement as an analytical framework shows that this is a flexible, but still insightful approach to exploring engagement. This framework is amenable to utilisation, and adaptation, as the basis of explorations of engagement in other democratic settings. The emphasis on political communication that characterises this thesis, raises the profile of interpersonal relations, conduct, paying attention and notions of inclusion in relation to actually existing democratic engagement.

My approach to data collection and analysis, designed to capture in all its depth and richness, democratic life in Mossbank raises new insights that the designs and scope of previous research projects, like those discussed in Chapter 1, overlook. These studies tend to adopt quantitative approaches (using structured surveys / questionnaires) involving thousands of respondents, and have a large scale focus (primarily the national level). My approach, instead, focuses on the collection of actual accounts of experiences and perceptions of democratic (non)engagement, based on a single case. Further investigations of how actors understand democratic engagement and the role of context in shaping democratic engagement would provide a fine grained and nuanced contribution to the study of democratic engagement.

Being a case study, the extent to which my findings and conclusions can be related to other settings is limited. As I state in Chapter 3, Mossbank is a place where the socio-

economic profile of its population would make high levels of engagement unlikely. So, all examples of engagement, I would argue, are worth investigating. As I mention in Chapter 2, judgements about the relatability of this research are, only up to a point, the task of the audience. I can make some comments about the settings to which this research can relate. It relates to other small scale settings in Scotland and the United Kingdom, since I have used these macro levels as the basis of my wider policy and political landscape. More specifically, it relates to other social and physical regeneration initiatives in Scotland and the UK. However, the research can also relate to other small scale settings in developed democracies including, for example, in the workplace, small scale campaigns, and small scale contexts within larger organisations.

Evidence for a disparity between normative conceptions of democracy and democratic engagement, and actually existing democratic engagement in Mossbank, invites further investigation into ‘ordinary’ peoples’ ideal constructions of democracy and the extent to which they differ from ‘reality’. Such research would tie in with developing a deeper understanding of levels of (dis)engagement in democratic processes, and in assessing the durability and applicability of established approaches to democratic engagement.

### Concluding Comments

Ongoing democratic life in Mossbank takes place in a ‘discouraged community’, a ‘working class’ neighbourhood in post industrial Scotland, having seen better social and economic times. There is no ‘miracle’ of engagement at work in Mossbank, no exemplar for advocates of participative and deliberative democracy. Rather, this has been a story of the imposed creation, survival and glacial development of ongoing democratic institutions and processes in less than ideal conditions.

This account is broadly pessimistic in its conclusions. Perhaps, given the centrality of the experiences and perceptions of Mossbank residents in the development of the thesis, ‘realistic’ is a more appropriate term. The optimism, even naivety, of *The Power Inquiry*, as presented in Chapter 1, with its underestimation of the barriers preventing engagement,



and its eagerness to propose remedies stands in sharp contrast. The Power Inquiry's view of the causes of 'the disconnect', and especially the remedies that they put forward, fail to grasp the strength of the grip that formal approaches to political engagement exert. My conclusions, however, paint a picture of democratic engagement that is for most individuals fundamentally difficult to access and interact in. Investigating the reasons for this in Mossbank, let alone the United Kingdom, has unearthed complex and deep seated barriers to engagement. The Power Inquiry's proposals, with their emphasis on tinkering with voting ages, party funding, voting arrangements, and the rules governing media ownership highlights an inadequate appreciation of the roots of disengagement.<sup>613</sup>

My conclusion, that democratic engagement in Mossbank is essentially characterised by formal political equality and a distant representative relationship begs the question, does the Schumpeterian view broadly reflect democratic life in Mossbank? Parry et al's assessment that democracy in the United Kingdom is 'broadly Schumpeterian', though bluntly stated, still has validity, my analysis extending this observation to Mossbank.<sup>614</sup> Additionally, the reluctance, or inability, of the management committee to 'connect' with their fellow residents gives a new context for the operation of Michels' contention that democracy inevitably develops into rule by oligarchical groups because 'the mass [...] suffers from an incurable incompetence for the solution of the diverse problems which present themselves for solution [...] and therefore needs division of labor, specialization, and guidance'.<sup>615</sup>

Such views relate to Mossbank because Mossbank is an ongoing democratic process. It is created with this in mind. It has to deal with the mundane, the banal, the day-to-day difficulties and successes and failures related to improving Mossbank. In a strong sense it 'works' - outcomes are slowly building towards improving Mossbank. Its institutions and processes have to be durable and sustainable. The 'willing few' are key here. The efforts of this oligarchy sustain democracy in Mossbank. The temptation to compare this ongoing democracy with shorter lived 'experiments' in democratic decision making are,

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<sup>613</sup> The Power Inquiry (2006).

<sup>614</sup> Parry *et al* (1992), p420.

<sup>615</sup> Michels (1966), p367.

to a large extent, unfair. Many democratic innovations of a deliberative and participative sort tend to be focussed on the short term. The consultation exercise conducted in Mossbank highlights this view. It was designed to air certain high profile issues over a predetermined time. The 'community workshops' examined in Chapter 7 could not endure as ongoing democratic institutions. However, during my exploration and analysis, I have been at pains to highlight features that do not comply with the views mentioned above. These features, some surprisingly well established, give grounds for optimism, that there is (some) scope for the development of democratic engagement in Mossbank.

I began this exploration of democratic engagement with a quotation from Katie, a Mossbank resident. Katie wonders why democratic engagement in Mossbank is so difficult and strained, whereas in other places - like her Devon village - it seems so 'natural' and spontaneous. This research confirms that democratic engagement in Mossbank is a stark contrast to ideals and 'real world' exemplars of ongoing 'inclusive' democratic engagement. For the majority of residents, participation, communication and representation in Mossbank's democratic processes are limited and constrained. The sources of these constraints on democratic engagement are deep rooted and can be associated with factors internal to Mossbank and aspects of the wider world in which Mossbank is embedded. Consequently, access to, and success in, engagement requires relevant attributes and qualifications that the majority of residents either do not, or cannot, possess.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: The Questionnaire**

The questionnaires were distributed into distinct phases. The first phase focussed on those with less engagement in the formal processes of the residents' association / management committee, and the second concerned members of the management committee. There are slight differences between Phase 1 and 2 questionnaires. These concern the wording of questions 10a and 12a and making them applicable to committee members. After the reproduction of the Phase 1 questionnaire, I have included the Phase 2 versions of these questions.

- Phase One Questionnaire

### **Taking Part and Having a Say in [Mossbank]: Your Views**

My name is Peter Moug and I am a PhD student in the Postgraduate School of Social and Political Studies at the University of Edinburgh. I was brought up in [Mossbank].

My research is concerned with different ideas of democracy and how people can have more of a say in issues that affect them. Completing this questionnaire will make an important contribution to this research. It shouldn't take too long to complete and you may even find it interesting!

There are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers to the questions. Don't worry if you can't give answers to all the questions.

When you have completed the questionnaire please return it to me in the enclosed envelope as soon as you can.

This research is independent of any other organisation or project.

The information you give in the questionnaire will be treated as confidential and you will remain anonymous.

If you have any problems, queries or comments regarding this questionnaire please feel free to get in touch with me.

Thank you for your assistance.

Peter Moug  
PhD Student  
Postgraduate School of Social and Political Studies  
University of Edinburgh  
Adam Ferguson Building  
George Square  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9LL

### **Taking Part and Having a Say in [Mossbank]: Your Views**

If you have more to say in reaction to any of the questions please feel free to write down your comments beside the relevant question.

- **Q.1:** Are you male  or female ? (Please tick the appropriate box)
  
- **Q.2:** What is your age? (Please tick)
  - 18-24     45-54
  - 25-34     55-64
  - 35-44     over 65

- **Q.3:** How would you describe your cultural or ethnic background? (Please tick one box)

- Scottish
- British
- Other British
- Irish
- Any other White background
- Any other mixed background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background
- Don't know

- **Q.4:** Which of these categories best applies to you? (You can tick more than one box)

- Working (full-time)
- Working (part-time)
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Unable to work due to illness, disability or injury
- Retired from work
- Looking after the home or family
- A student
- A volunteer (unpaid)
- Other - please specify.

- **Q.5:** If you are working, what is your current job? (Please write your answer)

- **Q.6:** Can you give an indication of **your** personal annual income?

- Over £20,000
- Less than £20,000 but more than £16,000
- Less than £16,000 but more than £10,000
- Less than £10,000 but more than £4,000
- Up to £4,000
- I have no personal income
- I do not wish to answer this question.

- **Q.7:** What is the highest level of your educational / training qualifications? (Please tick one box)

- None
- School level / 'O' or 'H' Grades or equivalent
- College level / NC, HNC or equivalent
- University degree
- Other - please specify

- **Q.8:** How long have you lived in [Mossbank]? (Please write your answer).

- **Q.9:** Are you...

- An owner occupier
- A housing association tenant
- A council tenant
- A tenant of a private landlord
- None of these.



- **Q.12a:** Apart from the regeneration project, are you involved with, or a member of, any other organisations, societies or clubs - to do with, for example, sports, recreation, volunteering, politics, campaigns, charities or religion?

If you are, please list them under the heading 'organisation'.

Also, can you indicate which of these statements best applies to each of them?

- A) I know most of the members by name, or as friends or acquaintances
- B) I know some of the members by name, or as friends or acquaintances
- C) I know only a few of the members well
- D) I don't know any of the members well

**Organisation**

**Knowing members (A, B, C or D)**

1

2

3

4

5

(Use the space below if required)

- **Q.12b:** Generally speaking, how much do you trust the other local members of the organisations and clubs in which you are involved?

A great deal

Somewhat

Not at all

Don't know



- **Q.13a:** In question 12 I asked you about your involvement with formal organisations, those which you have to join. Now I want to ask whether you have any regular *informal* arrangements with people you know well where you do not become a member of a club or organisation. (Examples include things like baby-sitting arrangements, sharing transport, meeting family or friends on a regular basis, etc).

If you do, can you say what they are?

(If there is not enough space please use the other side of this page)

- **Q.13b:** Thinking about the people that you know well, which statement do you agree with the most?

- I find it easy to trust those I know well
- Sometimes I cannot take my trust in people I know for granted
- I find it difficult to trust people I know well
- Don't know

- **Q.14:** Within the last five years have you:
  - been on a demonstration or protest march? Yes No
  - contacted a MP, MSP, MEP or councillor? Yes No
  - signed a petition? Yes No
  - attended a public meeting? Yes No
  - contacted a government or council department? Yes No

- **Q.15:** On the subject of voting (for MPs, MSPs, MEPs or councillors) which one of the following statements best applies to you?

- I never vote
- I seldom vote
- I sometimes vote
- I vote most of the time
- I always vote

The next two questions are about how much you trust other people and organisations.

- **Q.16a:** Which of these statements is closest to your own view? (Please tick one box)

- Most people in [Mossbank] can be trusted
- Only some of the people in [Mossbank] can be trusted
- Most of the people in [Mossbank] cannot be trusted
- Nobody in [Mossbank] can be trusted
- Don't know

- **Q.16b:** There are a number of organisations that you may have had dealings with both as a resident of [Mossbank]. These organisations may have included [Guthrie] Council, Communities Scotland, housing associations and so on.

Overall, do you think that such organisations are trustworthy or are they likely to let you down? (Please tick one box)

- They can be trusted most of the time
- They can be trusted up to a point
- They will tend to let you down
- Don't know

- **Q.17:**An important part of my research involves thinking about the idea of **democracy**. Different people have different ideas about what democracy means. I am interested in learning something of **your** views about democracy. The following questions will allow you to express some of your views and opinions about democracy. If you wish, you can include additional comments.

**a:** The following statements are sometimes made when people think about the meaning of democracy. Remembering that different people have different ideas about democracy, which of the following statements do **you** agree with? You can tick more than one box.

- I think democracy should be about having a say in matters that affect me
- I think democracy should be about voting in politicians and getting rid of the ones that are no good
- I think democracy should be about co-operating with others
- I think democracy should be about going along with the views of the majority
- I think democracy should be about reaching agreement through open discussion
- I think democracy should be about letting everybody have an equal say
- I think democracy should be about everybody having the vote
- I think democracy should be about making room for minority viewpoints
- I think democracy should be about political parties competing for votes
- I think that in a democracy politics should mostly be left to politicians and leaders
- I think that in a democracy each person should try to think about the good of the community rather than about their own interests

**b:** It is often said that we live in a democracy. What is **your** reaction to this statement?

- I strongly agree with the statement
- I agree with the statement
- I partly agree with the statement
- I disagree with the statement
- I strongly disagree with the statement
- I don't know

### **What Did You Think of the Questionnaire?**

I would like to know what you thought of this questionnaire and the questions in it. I would be especially interested for your views on the following:

**A.** How long did you take to complete the questionnaire? (Please write your answer)

**B.** Thinking about the time it took you to complete the questionnaire, do you think that the questionnaire is...

too long

just about right

too short

**C.** Did you find the questionnaire interesting or boring?

Interesting

Just about right

Boring

**D.** Did you find any of the questions difficult to understand?

No

Yes

If you answered 'yes' could you tell me more about this, for example, which questions did you find hard to understand.

**E.** Have you any other comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaire?

### **How You Can Continue to Take Part in This Research**

Another part of my research involves having conversations with [Mossbank] residents around the topics raised in this questionnaire. This allows me to find out in greater detail your views and opinions. These conversations are relaxed and informal and can take place in your home or at another convenient location. If you think you may be interested in taking part please give me your name and contact details and I will be in touch in the near future. If you have any questions you would like to ask about this please contact me



**Organisation**

**Knowing members (A, B, C or D)**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

(Use the space below if required)

## Appendix B: The Interview Schedule

Below is the *aide memoire* used in the interviews. Before the interviews, I made extra notes of points to raise based on data from questionnaires, previous interviews and my own reflections.

Beginning.

Discuss recording.

Consent - informed consent form.

Confidentiality and anonymity.

Duration and informal, relaxed mood of interview.

Choose assumed name from list.

Any questions?

If interviewee has not completed a questionnaire, the following information is required: sex, age, ethnic background, whether working, current job, income, education, how long lived in [Mossbank], tenant or owner occupier.

Life History (for those with long residency in [Mossbank]).

When did you arrive in [Mossbank]?

Change over time - attitude of people to [Mossbank], attitude of people to one another (neighbourliness, problem solving), trust, networks).

Impressions of area and people (newer residents).

Did you attend any of the meetings, workshops, exhibitions in the early days of the regeneration?

When and where.

Prompts: who spoke?, did you speak?, did you contribute?, what was different about it compared to other meetings?, what could have been done better?

What stops [and gets] you involved in things like the regeneration project in [Mossbank]?

Prompts: age, cultural / ethnic background, employment, education / training, experience of 'taking part', trust, time, formal and informal networks, tenant / owner occupier, talking in groups.

Stock transfer (relevant only to council tenants, but still raise with owner occupiers).

Have you heard about the stock transfer?

What do you know about it?

Prompts: what are you expecting to happen?, have you made up your mind?, how open are you to changing your mind?

In [Mossbank] is there any split between tenants and owner occupiers?

Is being a tenant or owner occupier an influence on whether you participate?

Democracy.

What does 'democracy' mean? What is it about?

Is the residents' association / management committee 'democratic'?

Prompts: personal experiences, observing democracy, (un)happy about outcomes, cynicism, capacities, role of representatives, self interest, roles of discussion, role of 'experts', voting, leaving it to politicians / others.

Have you ever thought about democracy existing at micro level, involving small numbers of people?

Activism.

What is place of activism in democracy? - 'stunts', demonstrations, protests, petitions...

Prompts: expression of views, countering democracy's shortcomings, gets results.

Ending.

Any other comments you would like to make?

Copy of transcript?

Anybody else you know would like to take part?

Any questions?

Thanks.



Appendix C: The Observation Schedule

The following schedule was used as a guide when observing the monthly meetings of the residents' association management committee. A similar schedule was used when observing the residents' association AGM.

<b>Observation Schedule</b>		
	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>The Space</b>	Size	
	Blinds closed?	
	Who sits where	Diagram? Sub-groups?
	Where observer sits	Diagram?
<b>The Members</b>	How they arrange themselves	Formal or informal
	Dress	The appearance / dress of different members.
	Demeanour	Before, during and after meeting
	Who does the talking?	Specific topics, parts of the meeting
	Who does not talk?	Specific topics, parts of the meeting.
	Interruptions	
	Demeanour of those not talking	Engaged, bored?
	Conduct	What they <i>do</i> as well as what they say.
	Networks	Informal groupings noticeable during meetings?
	Duration of meeting	Who is engaged or bored.
	Process of decision-making	Are decisions made? If so, how?

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