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Public value governance meets social commons: community anchor organisations as catalysts for public service reform and social change?

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Abstract: Scottish public service reform, with its concern for local partnerships and participation, preventing inequalities and sustainable public finances, can be understood as part of a new international wave of state-convened *public value governance*. Scottish Government focus on community empowerment through such reform has legitimised discussions of community-led approaches and offers cautious policy support for *community anchor organisations*. In this context, the community sector and community studies scholars continue to reflect critically on the complex relations between state and community, with some now exploring a *social commons* as a distinctive aspiration for democratic governance.

In this paper, our participatory research with six community anchor exemplars and a wider body of stakeholders provides empirical material to support discussion, interpretation and analysis at ‘the frontier’ of these two respective visions of governance. In particular, we consider the potential for community anchors to offer *both* collaborative leadership to facilitate cross-sector partnership and participation *and* agonistic leadership to provide countervailing, constructive challenge to the state. We conclude by advancing a research agenda at this frontier; one where community sector leadership seeks traction for social change at times of increasing social, political, economic and ecological crisis.

Key words: community anchor organisations; public value governance; community sector and community-led; social commons; collaborative and agonistic leadership; participatory research.

1.0: Introduction

This paper uses the context of Scottish public service reform to explore the ‘frontier’ between two emerging, yet so far disconnected fields of inquiry, public value governance and social

commons; the latter a further reconfiguration of relations between state and community. Studies of public value governance inevitably place the spotlight on public sector leadership and the role of the state. Here, however, we turn to focus on the role of community anchor organisations, one key element of the community sector, and their potential for community-led leadership at this frontier. We seek to advance a research agenda that goes beyond state-centric public service provision and, drawing from the international revival of the commons paradigm, to contribute to the growing body of knowledge that explores forms of collective action aiming to transcend the dualism between state and market as dominant forms of social coordination.

In Scotland, the influential Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services or ‘Christie Commission’ (2011) continues to provide the foundations for public service reform: a ‘Scottish Approach’ concerned for a more equitable society and sustainable public finances delivered through partnership and participation (Mitchell, 2015; Cairney, Russell and St Denny, 2016; Escobar, 2017). This approach resonates with international discussions of theory and practice for *public value governance* (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg, 2014). Yet, the Commission, in highlighting citizen and community empowerment, creates increasing legitimacy for *community-led approaches* in particular as community development trusts (CDTs) that can support communities to plan and deliver ‘independent action’.

CDTs and community-controlled housing associations can act as community anchor organisations (Thake, 2001; Scottish Government, 2011a; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017).¹ They provide an alternative locus for leadership through capacities both to facilitate collaborative working *and* constructively advocate for social and systems change: the latter in effect an agonistic, countervailing force to state dominance and potentially prefigurative of wider institutional and societal change (Fung and Wright, 2003; Raekstad and Gradin, 2020).

They offer one route toward, and a related vision of, a social commons concerned for collective renewal in the face of current social, democratic and ecological crises (Mestrum, 2016).

In this paper, we consider the plausibility of community anchors in providing collaborative and agonistic leadership within the context of developing public value governance and aspirations for a social commons; and offer insights into the emerging research agenda:

In *section 2*, we explore public value governance internationally and its relevance to the Scottish context (2.1); and, the UK community anchor organisation ‘model’, related issues of theory and practice, and emerging thinking on a social commons (2.2). We conclude by generating a proposition regarding the dual leadership roles of community anchors (2.3).

In *section 3*, we outline our recent participatory research into the roles of community anchors within public service reform through six exemplar organisations and wider stakeholder dialogue (Henderson, Revell and Escobar, 2018). This deepens understanding of the empirical material considered later *and* illustrates the nature of further participatory research anticipated.

Section 4 discusses the empirical material generated: firstly, illustrating the complex relations between community anchors and the state; before using this rich picture to consider our proposition regarding anchor leadership.

Section 5 concludes by summarising the emerging issues for a cross-sector participatory research agenda on anchor leadership at the frontier between public value governance and social commons.

2.0: Community anchors at the frontier of public value governance and social commons

2.1: Scottish public service reform and public value governance?

Broadly-speaking, the ‘Scottish Approach’ to public service reform continues to be presented through the narrative of the Christie Commission (2011) (Mitchell, 2015; Cairney, Russell and St Denny, 2016). This promotes the roles of statutory multi-agency public services partnerships (aka. community planning partnerships) in pursuing ‘a more equitable society’ through local collaborative-working, participation with service-users and communities, and place-based approaches (Matthews, 2013; Weakley and Escobar, 2018). The Commission was established by Scottish Government to consider the long-term financial sustainability of public services given UK Government’s fiscal austerity programme; costly long-term impacts of health, social and economic inequalities; and, a growing and ageing population. Its recommendations, generally accepted by Scottish Government (2011b), continue to be implemented through policy and legislation, including the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and as part of a wider focus on localism, local democracy and inclusive growth. Although, this is in the context of a highly-centralised Scottish state relative to Western European norms (Bort et al., 2012; Revell and Dinnie, 2018).

Aspirations for reform in Scotland resonate with wider international thinking. Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg (2014) present an emerging international approach to public administration described variously as new public services (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015), new public governance (Osborne, 2013) and, their terminology, public value governance. Here, the local state leads as convenor, catalyst and collaborator in building partnership-working and participation across public and third sector bodies, service-users and citizens. Given a hollowing out of the state and deepening societal inequalities, these cross-sector collaborations aim to support long-term problem-solving on intractable social problems or

‘wicked issues’.

Nevertheless, Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg (2014) acknowledge the considerable political challenges to these aspirations and that service innovation may be insufficient to change systems that favour elites over citizens in determining policy priorities. Ansell, Sørensen and Torfing (2017; Ansell and Gash, 2012), in theorising collaborative governance, similarly recognise the political nature of public service design and implementation, and argue that these will be most effective when local and regional government of substance is challenged by well-organised civil society. Further, Fung (2015), in considering institutions for participatory governance and democratic renewal, e.g. participatory budgeting, mini-publics, multi-sector forums, argues that social justice will remain elusive unless actively pursued by reform champions such as political parties or, at smaller scales, non-state advocates.

The effectiveness of state-led partnership and participation in creating social and systems change continues to be questioned in UK literature. Researchers have often argued that these strategies serve the managerial priorities of policy-makers, public service agencies and neo-liberal state – and are class-orientated practices – rather than tackling uneven development, inequalities and democratic deficits (Cochrane 2007; Headlam and Rowe, 2014; Matthews, 2014; Hastings and Matthews, 2016). Others, also concerned for such power imbalances, argue for some scope for constructive change through third sector innovation and deliberative democratic practices (Sullivan and Lowndes, 2004; Sinclair, 2011; Bartels, 2015; Elstub and Escobar, 2019).

Fung and Wright’s (2004) discussion of countervailing sources of power to that of privileged interests highlights two broad strategies for creating systems change: one adversarial, often focused on wider levels of governance; and, one participatory and collaborative, often working locally. Dean (2018) in discussing counter-governance outlines the lack of agonistic

opportunities for citizen participation within institutions currently.

In this paper we assume that state-convened public value governance would require countervailing sources of power – collaborative and agonistic – to be effective in creating social and systems change; and, that non-state bodies are plausible candidates for these roles.

2.2: Community sector, community anchor and discussions of theory and practice

Community sector and community-led

The community sector refers to not-for-profit community organisations and groups working within local communities of place, interest and/or identity. These bodies vary from volunteer-run neighbourhood groups to large community organisations, some with a turnover of £10M+, e.g. community-controlled housing associations (Pearce, 1993; Thake, 2006, Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). The sector forms one key element in a wider social economy or ‘third system’ – distinct from state and market – of cooperatives, voluntary organisations, social enterprises (Polanyi, 2001; Pearce and Kay, 2003).

The community sector is well-positioned to pursue community-led approaches that can include:

- locally-controlled governance of an organisation and/or network;
- community asset ownership for local needs and income-generation e.g. land, property (Moore and McKee, 2014); and
- development of community capitals, e.g. human, social, cultural, political, economic, natural, built, finance (Emery and Flora, 2006)

This breadth of usage of the term ‘community-led’ suggests this as a developmental space for dialogue rather than precise terminology. Whilst its linkage to community empowerment

points toward progressive credentials – a more equitable, democratic society – this cannot be assumed:

- not all community initiatives are progressive (Cochrane, 2007);
- empowerment of some (affluent) communities exacerbates inequalities (Hastings and Matthews, 2015); and,
- initiatives may facilitate strategies of state withdrawal and/or marketisation (Cochrane, 2007; Moore and McKee, 2014).

Community anchor 'model'

The metaphor of an *anchor* is used variably within regeneration and place-making. In the USA, for instance, community or social anchors include public, non-profit or private sector bodies (Clopton and Finch, 2011). In the UK a distinctive community anchor 'model' has arisen since the 1990s – influenced by community development corporations in North America – resulting in a more specialised literature (Pearce: 1993, 2003; Thake: 2001, 2006; Weaver, 2009; Hutchison and Cairns, 2010; Baker et al., 2011; McKee, 2012; Henderson, 2014; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). These organisations have received some policy attention under the New Labour UK Government (1997-2010) in England (Baker et al., 2011) and, currently, the SNP Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2011a).

Building from this earlier literature, we have presented the community anchor 'model' as a heuristic supportive of dialogue through three aspirations (Henderson, Revell and Escobar, 2018):

- *community-led or controlled*: robust local community governance and community networks (social capital); and, financial self-sufficiency for core work sustained through community ownership and enterprise.

- *holistic, multi-purpose*: working across local economy and social capital; local services and partnerships; local sustainable development; community sector development; and local democratic leadership and advocacy.
- *responsive and committed to local community and context*: responding to context whether urban, rural or remote; attentive to experiences of poverty, deprivation and inequality; and, combining agility for the short term with commitment to the long-term.

Discussions of theory, policy and practice

This conceptualisation offers tentative boundaries for deepening dialogue within the community sector and across wider stakeholders. The literature highlights the following three key debates:

Sustainable independence from and mutual inter-dependence with the state ...

In pursuing community-led governance committed to local mission, Weaver (2009) argues that anchors aspire to *sustainable independence* from the local state and other powerful local interests. This is to be maintained through robust internal governance *and* financial independence via community-owned assets, trading and/or endowments. Yet, simultaneously, Weaver argues for the fundamental importance of long-term constructive relationships between anchors and state, and recognition of their inter-dependence. Aiken et al.'s (2011) research into community asset ownership in England highlights the crucial role of the state in successful asset transfer: ensuring assets are just that, not liabilities; providing capacity-building – particularly in low-incomes areas; and, supporting access to suitable finance. Paradoxically, an enlightened state is required in developing sustainably-independent community anchors from which both state and community can benefit (Hutchison and Cairns, 2010; McKee, 2012; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017).

Inherently complex anchors working across sectors and systems ...

Weaver (2009) describes the holistic aspirations of anchors as ‘inherently complex’ and this is consistent across the literature (Thake: 2001, 2006; Weaver, 2009; Baker et al., 2011; McKee, 2012, Henderson, 2014). Pearce and Kay (2003) and Hutchison and Cairns (2010) (2017) position anchors as working within and across the three systems of community (associational, social capital); public services (state); and, business/enterprises (market). Yet, this multi-purpose, locally committed focus is deeply problematic for anchors in (neo-liberal) policy contexts concerned for cost efficiencies, economies of scale, and market solutions which favour larger organisations (Weaver, 2009) and ignore structural inequalities (McKee, 2012; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017).

In responding to these dilemmas, Pearce and Kay (2003) and Danson and Whittam (2010) imagine city/district-wide networks of local bodies seeking collective solutions to issues of scale; whilst Henderson and McWilliams (2017) argue for collective community sector advocacy for social and policy change. There remains, however, a fundamental tension as to whether anchors offer opportunities for social change or become a variant of neo-liberal ‘community management’ (Cockburn, 1977; Cochrane, 2007; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). Although Teasdale and Dey (2019) suggest room for manoeuvre, presenting a dynamic in which social enterprises often mimic commitment to policy, whilst officials may value the policy innovation such tactics support.

Local commitment and responsiveness – a democratic ethos and social vision?

Central to the anchor ‘model’ is being *there-for-the-long-term* and responsiveness to the diversity of local community (Thake, 2001; Weaver, 2009; McKee, 2012). Advocates and researchers often present this thinking as informed by a local democratic ethos (Pearce, 1993; Hutchison and Cairns, 2010; McKee, 2012; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). This leads

them to considerations of wider social visions that can inform local theory and practice: Pearce and Kay (2003) argue for an community economy as part of an ecologically-sustainable cooperative economy; Henderson and McWilliams (2017) present anchors as potentially informed by a ‘progressive mutualism’ – a counter-narrative to neo-liberalism; and, Revell and Dinnie (2018) position development trusts as having potential to shape transformational change toward an ecologically-sustainable future.

A wider social vision can facilitate on-going, pluralist dialogue as to ‘direction-of-travel’ – for instance, regarding community sector, state and policy-making. We have found, in our research thus far (Henderson, Revell and Escobar, 2018), initial value in supporting discussions of anchors through emerging thinking on a *social commons* (Mestrum, 2016; Coote, 2017). This offers space for dialogue on:

- role and scope of ‘the commons’ – economic, social, cultural, natural, political;
- collective approaches to welfare, social protection and ‘eradication of poverty’;
- social, political, economic and ecological crises and sustainable development;
- deepening democracy – rights, participation, deliberation and representation.

Here, *both* the democratic state, e.g. public services, state welfare and citizens’ assemblies, *and* empowered communities, e.g. local commons, social capital, the local economy and community leadership, can be imagined meeting on a more equal footing. Such thinking moves beyond state-centric public value governance, and community anchors can have crucial roles in building local commons, creating wider public commons, and advocating for social and systems change.

2.3: Collaborative and agonistic leadership – a dual role?

The frontier of public value governance and social commons can now be imagined as a space

for dialogue in which collaborative and agonistic dynamics between state and non-state institutions are engaged constructively for local development and wider social and systems change. We, therefore, offer the following *proposition* – to be considered in section 4 – to capture the relevance of community anchors at this frontier:

Community anchors constitute non-state institutions that can both:

(i) facilitate complex cross-sector networks and partnerships relevant to developing public service reform and related social and systems change; and

(ii) lead constructive challenge to state systems in support of developing public services reform and related social and systems change.

3.0: Research methodology

The interpretation and analysis that follows in section 4 is informed by empirical material from our participatory research (Henderson, Revell and Escobar, 2018), We built from previous participatory and action research with practitioners and policy-makers to support dialogue on theory, policy and practice (Bartels and Wittmayer, 2018; Henderson and Bynner, 2018). Further, our approach was/is informed by critical policy analysis that emphasises a dialogical intersubjectivity (Wagenaar, 2007; Fisher et al., 2015) in which both appreciative and critical elements are valued (Bushe, 2012). We worked with stakeholders to generate shared understandings of the aspirations of and for community anchors, and through which critical discussions emerge given the complexities and ambiguities of practices, policies and research.

Our process involved dialogue with key stakeholders – practitioners and policy-makers – from late 2016 to publication of the research report in May 2018 with:

- six community anchors organisations as exemplars from diverse contexts;

- an advisory group of community sector bodies and policy-makers²; and,
- others from public services, community sector and policy-making.

The community anchor ‘model’ (2.2) and Christie Commission (2011) narrative informed early discussions between ourselves and the advisory group to clarify areas of shared interest for practitioners, policy-makers and researchers. These discussions also supported us in purposefully selecting exemplars – ‘critical cases’ that epitomise the object of inquiry (Flyvbjerg 2004, p. 425) – that could illustrate:

- the holistic, community-led approach anticipated;
- the relevance of anchors to public service reform themes; and
- credible working in urban, rural, remote, working class, and ‘mixed’ communities.

Preliminary desk research generated initial profiles for each exemplar relevant to the anchor ‘model’ which informed subsequent site-visits and interviews with a leading staff member in each organisation³. We used the interviews – ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Mason, 2011) – to deepen understanding of each case in relation to the ‘model’ and public service reform. Draft exemplar material was discussed with the respective interviewee and the advisory group, and sense-checked with a local public sector partner; and, further initial analysis of infrastructure for community sector development was considered with the advisory group. The resulting consultation draft report was shared with wider stakeholders from across community and public sectors⁴, advisory group and anchor participants; a consultation meeting and later learning event supported fine-tuning of themes and understandings.⁵ The report, summary and briefing provide a rich collective picture of and resource for current issues for theory, policy and practice.

4.0: Research findings

We now return to our proposition (2.3) as to the potential of community anchors to offer collaborative and agonistic leadership relevant to public value governance and social commons. In 4.1, through the exemplars we explore the anchor ‘model’ to deepen discussions of relations between anchors and state. This learning informs consideration of the proposition in 4.2. and the conclusions regarding an emerging research agenda in 5.0.

4.1: Deepening dialogue on relations between anchors and state

We have presented the community anchor ‘model’ through three aspirations and in Table 1 below these structure the summary from across the exemplars. We’ve anonymised the format to keep the focus on issues of theory, policy and practice. We use abbreviations, e.g. *Peripheral-urban CCHA* (community-controlled housing association) and *Town CDT* (community development trust), to identify individual exemplars and contexts – without suggesting each is representative of that context.

Table 1: Community anchor exemplars: governance, context and holistic approach (510 words)

Exemplars	Community-led governance – inc. community-connections and community ownership	Long-term commitment and context	Holistic and multi-purpose ('inherently complex') – areas of focus
<i>Peripheral-urban CCHA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -tenant management committee (cooperative). -other participatory committees: community centre; young people. -housing stock (ca. 1000 homes). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -formed in 1990 as part of wider local authority strategy. -neighbourhood within a wider urban working-class estate and area of multi-deprivation on the edge of a city. 	<p>Key focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -social and welfare development hub. -partnership-working across services. -local participation and leadership. <p>Also: aspirations for social enterprise development.</p>
<i>Semi-rural CDT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -management committee (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation). -volunteer network, ca. 30 core volunteers + wider informal network -currently negotiating ownership of community centre; developing a community-owned garden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -formed in 1999 as a local public service centre closed, taking over its running and roles. -‘post-industrial’, semi-rural village: now a ‘growth area’, pop. set to grow from 2500 to 4000. 	<p>Key focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -social and welfare development hub. -partnership-working across services. -local participation and leadership. <p>Also: social enterprise, local employment; local community sector development.</p>
<i>Town CDT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -charitable company: Board of local directors, local membership (ca. 400). -pool of local volunteers (ca. 50) and network of informal members. -recently secured asset transfer of large public service building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -formed in 2009, building on local environmental activism. -‘post-industrial’ town (pop. 50,000): number of deprived neighbourhoods and now a service-based economy. 	<p>Key focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sustainable development hub: integrating social and welfare, environment, local economic activity. -extensive partnership-working with services and third sector. -local participation and leadership

<p><i>Remote CDT</i></p>	<p>-9 directors and local membership (ca. 850). -not-for-profit company (limited by guarantee) with various trading subsidiaries and related committees -extensive community ownership of land, harbour and wind turbines.</p>	<p>-organisation active since 2006, building from earlier activism in early 2000s. -fragile island(s) economy (pop. ca. 3000) with under-employment, de-population and fuel poverty.</p>	<p>Key focus on: -local economic and sustainable development. -community sector development. -local participation and leadership. Also: partnership-working across services.</p>
<p><i>Rural CDT</i></p>	<p>-Board of Directors and local membership (ca. 450) and widely networked locally inc. within local community sector. -trading subsidiary and community-owned farm + wind turbine.</p>	<p>-formed in 2009 with local activists taking over local authority initiative (2005). -small rural town and surrounding districts (pop. ca.15,000); a mixed community inc. rural poverty.</p>	<p>Key focus on: -local economic and sustainable development. -local participation and leadership. -partnership-working with services. - community sector development.</p>
<p><i>Urban CCHA (with community development trust – CDT)</i></p>	<p>-management committee of tenants and residents (cooperative) and local membership (ca. 400). -other participatory work: young people; tenant/resident groups e.g. Black and Minority Ethnic group. -CDT trading subsidiary: workspace provision, employment training. -housing stock (ca. 2500 homes).</p>	<p>-formed in 1974, as part of a local and central policy initiative in response to wider urban local tenant/resident activism across a number of neighbourhoods -multi-ethnic, largely working class urban deprived community (ca.15,000+).</p>	<p>Key focus on: -social and welfare development. -extensive partnership-working with public services and community bodies (local service hub). -local participation and leadership. -local economic and social enterprise. development – and community sector development.</p>

Illustrating dynamics of sustainable independence and mutual inter-dependence

Each exemplar illustrates the broad elements of community-led governance highlighted through the ‘model’: one or more formal committee(s) and membership; wider participation (‘community-connected-ness’) through committees, groups, networks and informal social capital; and, community ownership of assets. There is, however, considerable variation in relation to these elements, as befits a ‘model’ concerned for local contexts, including: differing legal forms; diversity of participatory activity beyond formal governance; and, variability in the extent and role(s) of community ownership and enterprise.

Our research hasn’t explored anchor internal governance in suitable depth to support consideration of the robustness of their structures. However, it does suggest that such robustness needs a well-trained and supported Board or management committee⁶; wider active networks of volunteers and activists; and, aspirations for extensive engagement across the full diversity of local people, groups and organisations.

The various income-generation strategies to build financial independence from the state, at least for core functions, emerges as three trends:

Extensive social housing as ballast: the Peripheral-urban CCHA and Urban CCHA hold considerable social housing stock (asset transfer) which generates income from rent (and related benefit payments to tenants). Whilst this offers considerable organisational stability, the surplus (‘profit’) cannot be used for non-housing purposes; wider regeneration activities must be funded from other sources, e.g. grants, contracts, trading.

Extensive community enterprise: the Remote CDT has extensive community ownership of assets and income-generating capacities – including wind turbines and land ownership – and an annual turnover of £4M across complex trading operations. The Rural CDT works at a

smaller scale through community ownership of a wind-turbine, small farm and land, and these are anticipated to generate significant surplus for re-investment over the next two decades.⁷ In both cases, state and private sector investment has supported establishment of these assets.

Longer-term aspirations: the Semi-rural CDT and Town CDT are developing community enterprise activities on a much smaller scale currently, and as integrated elements within their place-making approaches rather than as primarily concerned to generate surplus. Grants and public service contracts therefore make up the majority of their present income.

Variations in levels of financial self-sufficiency so far established suggest a dynamic in which community anchor capacity and leadership and local state commitment and policy-making are *co-evolving* within local contexts and related opportunities and challenges – as would be expected given Weaver’s (2009) highlighting of the dynamic between sustainable independence and mutual inter-dependence. The Rural CDT, for instance, developed a turbine through committed community leadership, state and private (bank) investments, and local investment. A local public sector partner recognised the level of challenge and emerging benefits:

... over the last few years a lot of their energies have been working on projects which would provide the organisation with a sustainable income for the long term. Therefore, it may have been the perception that the organisation have not been contributing as much to partnership working or participation with partners as you would expect. This hard work has paid off with their wind turbine now operational and providing a sustainable income for years to come which in time will also provide a substantial income for community projects. *(written reflection on draft case-study)*

Holistic working across sectors and systems

Table 1 illustrates these anchors as each working holistically across local economic, social, political and ecological development. Yet, each also tends to have particular foci, and we highlight these as three trends:

Local economic and sustainable development: the Remote and Rural CDTs committed to local economic and, often, sustainable development including ownership of wind-turbines and land, local food production and local infrastructure.

Local services and partnerships: the Peripheral-urban CCHA, Semi-rural CDT and Urban CHHA developing local hubs for: community development and services; partnership-working with public services; and, employment training and volunteering.

Local sustainable development: the Town CDT developing a local social and environmental hub for: local food production; working against fuel and food poverty; and employment training and volunteering.

Given each anchor's diverse activities, there is an implication that each could work more broadly if suitably resourced. Arguably the Urban CCHA is most advanced with a welfare and services hub *and* a development trust focused on community-building, community enterprise and workspace provision.

The exemplars illustrate the *potential* for working within and across systems of community, state and market (Pearce and Kay, 2003; Hutchison and Cairns, 2010; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). These are most developed regarding: 'community', e.g. community-building, volunteer networks, community ownership; *and*, 'state', e.g. partnerships, state-funded employability. Yet, the significant trading activities of Remote CDT, Rural CDT and

Urban CCHA illustrates their potential for local economic development roles.

However, the state remains the key source of investment and funding for most development activity, as one local public sector partner flagged:

- Backcourts (community-building project) – funded by the Scottish Government and the Council.
- Role of Council in supporting this work - £13K two years running for [community enterprise development]
- Anchor role in supporting community development initiative through advisory group; funding-chasing; doing the foot work to get started; provide premises. But funding from Scottish Government and also Council.

(researcher interview notes)

Local commitment and responsiveness ... and wider shared social vision and ethos

Table 1 shows the exemplars as illustrating varied longevity – with the Urban CCHA over 40 years old; the Town CDT and Rural CDT now running for a decade. What is held in common is commitment from each to a multitude of on-going and developing long-term activities, and suitable economic and physical assets to make a plausible case for this to continue.

The variability and complexity of activities undertaken by the exemplars is broadly suggestive of their responsiveness to local needs, as is the scope of their work across local communities of place, interest and identity, for instance:

- Semi-rural CDT works across five neighbourhoods and previous divides between Christian denominations; and, now working with changing demographics from working-class to ‘mixed’ community.
- Town CDT working across numerous neighbourhoods – some deprived, some not;

- Urban CCHA responding to ethnic and social diversity – white working class, South Asian Scots, Eastern European immigrants, and asylum seekers and refugees.

Most of the exemplars have developed from local activism and campaigning arising through tensions with powerful local bodies, including:

- Remote CDT: de-population and economic decline related to failing private land ownership.
- Semi-rural CDT: closure of a local public services centre.
- Town CDT: ecological challenges and lack of local state and market responses.
- Urban CHHA: state plans to demolish existing housing – as part of an emerging community housing movement.

This local leadership in response to state and market failings continues: the Peripheral CHHA's community hub emerged because of UK Government welfare reform impacts on tenants and the organisation; the Urban CCHA's advocacy for local and central state intervention in the failing private rental market; and, the Remote CDT's ongoing advocacy for infrastructure and investment to reverse economic and population decline.

More developed discussion of each exemplar as aspiring to a shared local democratic ethos and wider social vision is beyond our current data. However, feedback from local public sector partners illustrates the tension anticipated between local commitment and state (neo-liberal) policy-making (Henderson and McWilliams, 2017):

... a well-respected organisation and is striving to fill the gaps within communities where local authorities either don't have the skills, knowledge, and limited budgets/priorities or are sometimes just unable to cut through the amount of red tape to expedite worthwhile projects.

(written reflection on draft case-study)

Last year [the anchor] delivered through Scottish Govt. funding, and in partnership with local primary schools, a community or participatory budgeting pilot, aimed at ‘Reducing the Cost of the School Day’. *(written reflection on draft case-study)*

4.2: Considering collaborative and agonistic leadership

Discussions in 4.1 can now inform consideration of our *proposition* (2.3):

Community anchors constitute non-state institutions that can both:

- (i) facilitate complex cross-sector networks and partnerships relevant to developing public service reform and related social and systems change; and*
- (ii) lead constructive challenge to state systems in support of developing public services reform and related social and systems change.*

(i) Collaborative leadership: facilitating cross-sector networks, partnerships and participation

These discussions are broadly supportive of anchors as undertaking complex collaborative leadership roles, e.g. partnership-working across sectors; participation across community diversity; building social capital and shared resources; local economic and sustainable development; and, participatory decision-making and advocacy. Although, the breadth and diversity of each varies in relation to local leadership and context, policy opportunity, and current organisational capacity.

More critically, it is important to recognise the limitations of our research thus far. Firstly, given the complex realities of everyday practice, these exemplars will not *always* succeed in fully modelling collaborative leadership: they work within and across complex systems in challenging contexts, with limited resourcing.

Secondly, we have used purposive sampling to select ‘capable’ community anchors in diverse

contexts. This raises questions as to whether other aspiring anchors have or can plausibly develop such capacities. Previous research in Scotland (McKee, 2012; Henderson, 2014) and in England (Hutchison and Cairns, 2010; Baker et al., 2011; Cotterill and Richardson, 2011) indicates a wider body of capable organisations, without giving a decisive sense of how widespread these are. Further, whilst highlighting differing contexts, e.g. urban, rural, remote, to surface a wider range of challenges, opportunities and dilemmas, we don't provide representative samples to support comparative analysis. Although, enlightened state investment, strategically or fortuitously, alongside persistent local leadership emerges as a common theme in each of these contexts in developing capable anchors.

We argue, therefore, that community anchors offer a plausible non-state vehicle for complex collaborative leadership ... but that there is considerable scope for deepening and widening understandings of how this does and/or doesn't happen. Here, for example, Ansell and Gash's (2012) characterisation of collaborative leaders as stewards, mediators and stewards offers one framework for deepening inquiry.

(ii) Constructive challenge and integrating collaborative and agonistic approaches

Our evidence-base is less developed as to anchor capacities to provide agonistic leadership for constructive and countervailing challenge to the state, but we offer three broad arguments in support of our proposition. Firstly, most of these exemplars are borne out of tensions with the local state or a private landowner: most often as neglect of local economic and social infrastructure. The culture of these organisations has formed through the willingness of activists to challenge more powerful local bodies and seek community-led development.

Secondly, over the longer-term the exemplars have pursued a widening range of local working with the state, and in gaps left by state and/or market failure: adversarial conflict isn't their preferred mode of engagement, more a last resort. Yet, there is evidence that they

continue to advocate for local community and related organisations interests rather than simply to support state policy-making or market development. For instance, one practitioner pointed to their struggles to sustain community priorities:

The private developer's developing new houses, the Council just over 200, and 750 by the developer. Now, we've tried to get that consortium around the table for years and years; the Council would never come round the table, basically. And we've been fighting for planning gain and community benefit, ever since it was decided that ... there was gonna be development. We've been shunned, and pushed, all over the place.

(interview transcript)

Another practitioner noted their role in mitigating impacts of UK Government welfare reform on people and organisation:

Now there's two things here. It's the right thing to do to support the local people through that process but equally, it's a business issue for us. If people get sanctioned it impacts on the housing benefit revenue for us coming through the door. *(interview transcript)*

This commitment to continue to work for local interest resonates with earlier research in England on the advocacy roles of anchors (Hutchison and Cairns, 2010) and varied strategies for working with local political leaders (Cotterill and Richardson, 2011).

Thirdly, community anchors remain challenging of wider state policy-making. Most obviously, the Urban CCHA's advocacy for local and central state investment in the community's failing private rental housing – from 2008 to actual increased state investment since 2015. Early activity included engagement with local media, the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government ministers and is understood to have influenced the development of Scottish housing policy and legislation (Harkins and Egan, 2012). One practitioner argued that:

Had those things not happened ... submitted a petition to the Scottish Parliament, these are the things that actually started the process along ... A lot of the things that we've achieved in the last couple of years have been the results of work happening a long time before. *(interview transcript)*

The Remote CDT in working for local infrastructure to support economic development has sought successfully the re-instatement of a ferry service to the mainland:

... The official ferry users' group, which is, again, it's a kind of statutory thing. We established, we took it ... and then we met some people in Transport Scotland, and others, and they said, you need to stop this being a [Remote CDT] project. So, [we] held a public meeting, and invited a ferry users' group to form, of which we would be a member. ... But prior to that, we had, they had done an event at the Scottish Parliament, with banners and things like that. *(interview transcript)*

We could, perhaps, reasonably argue that the logic of sustainable independence is supported (Weaver, 2009). Both Urban CCHA and Remote CDT have significant asset-bases, related turnover and an accompanying organisational resilience. Further the state 'needs' them to mitigate the impacts of very significant economic and social challenges. However, caution is required, given these examples of agonistic activity offer only broad, brief glimpses into leadership in complex social and political economic contexts.

We argue, therefore, that the *potential* of anchors to work collaboratively and agonistically across sectors and systems is illustrated, but recognise that how *both* can plausibly be sustained over time and in differing contexts is beyond our current data. Dean's (2018), for example introduction to participatory agonistic approaches provides an entry for deepening our inquiry; likewise, Raekstad and Gradin's (2020) consideration of prefigurative politics and tensions between working to embody change locally whilst seeking wider societal change⁸.

5.0: Conclusions: an emerging participatory research agenda ...

Across section 4 we have used the exemplar case-study data to deepen discussions of the workings of community anchors and their relations with the state – and, in fact, the market. In 4.1, the anchor ‘model’ generates discussions of a rich picture of the dynamics between:

- community leadership and state in developing financially-resilient anchors;
- complex community-led place-making and state partnership and investment;
- community sector commitment and state policy-making (political economic orthodoxies).

This picture informs discussions in 4.2 of our proposition regarding the dual leadership role of anchors, and our initial conclusions:

- anchors as plausible sources of collaborative leadership for complex cross-sector local partnership and participation – but a wider evidence-base is needed;
- anchors as potential sources of interweaving collaborative and agonistic leadership – but deepening research is needed as to how to sustain this.

We argue for three key foci currently for further participatory research with practitioners and policy-makers:

(1) *Capable anchors*: to learn more about the capabilities of community anchors more generally across different contexts to undertake both collaborative and agonistic leadership; and, crucially, how the state and community sector can actively create infrastructure to support widespread development of ‘capable anchors’.

(2) *Sustaining complex leadership*: how community anchors can sustain complex, intertwining collaborative and agonistic approaches over the longer-term: what internal structures and leadership development are needed? what levels and types of state (and other)

investment and culture change are needed? And, how can these be pursued across differing spatial, social and political economic contexts? We have noted above (4.2) scope for deepening inquiry through theoretical provocations on collaborative leadership (Ansell and Gash, 2012), participatory agonistic approaches (Dean, 2018) and prefigurative ‘local-to societal’ strategies (Raekstad and Gradin, 2020).

(3) A changing frontier? We have framed our research as at the frontier between public value governance and social commons, given their shared aspirations for cross-sector working and democratic (progressive) social change; and, a Scottish policy context, of wider international relevance, that legitimises cross-sector dialogue at this frontier. However, thus far, we’ve not actively engaged practitioners and policymakers in considering at the same time these related yet competing narratives. How can this tension constructively support cross-sector learning at a time of local-to-global social, political, economic and ecological crises? And how can this Scottish context learn from wider international experience and contexts?

Here is an emerging participatory research agenda for further appreciative, critical and action-orientated cross-sector learning and dialogue for theory, policy and practice in an era of crisis and change; and, one in which community sector and local commons must join centre-stage.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Not all community-controlled housing associations aspire to be community anchors; it is not clear if all community developments trusts seek the role or might, for instance, seek shared arrangements.
- ² From: Development Trust Association Scotland; Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations; Scottish Community Alliance; and, Scottish Government Regeneration Team.
- ³ With one organisation, two members of staff were interviewed. With another, there was a phone interview without site-visit: here two researchers were already familiar with the organisation and context through other research.
- ⁴ Report consultees from: Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities; Development Trust Association Scotland; Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; NHS Grampian; Scottish Community Alliance; Social Entrepreneurs Network Scotland; Scottish Government; and, What Works Scotland.
- ⁵ The consultation event involved approximately 10 community-controlled housing associations prior to completing the Consultation Draft. The learning event was at the point of publication of the Full Report and informed development of a Policy and Practice Briefing and developing research agenda.
- ⁶ Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations and partners provide training and support for tenants and residents on committees; Development Trust Association Scotland provides wide-ranging supports for development trusts.
- ⁷ Interviewee estimated an income of £7M over 20 years and potential to leverage further investment of twice that value.
- ⁸ Henderson and McWilliams (2017) use the term ‘re-working’ to describe this prefigurative role.