

Are local councillors fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interest in contemporary urban regeneration schemes The case of the Colville Estate, Hackney

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Are local councillors fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interest in contemporary urban regeneration schemes?

The case of the Colville Estate, Hackney

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MSc Urban Regeneration

Being a dissertation submitted to the faculty of The Built Environment as part of the requirements for the award of the MSc Urban Regeneration at University College London: I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, data and images, as well as direct quotations, drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.

[Rose Sharkey]

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	4
Abstract	5
1. Introduction	6
1.1. Aims and objectives:	7
2. Context.....	8
2.1. English Council System.....	9
2.2. The role of the councillor	10
3. Literature review.....	11
3.1. An introduction to 'governance'	11
3.2. From 'governance' to 'network governance'	12
3.3. The concept of representation	14
3.4. Councillors as local democratic representatives in the UK planning system	15
3.5. Conclusion and further areas of research	16
4. Methodology.....	17
4.1. Single-case study design	18
4.2. Data collection	19
4.3. Documentation	19
4.4. Semi-structured interviews.....	19
4.5. Qualitative data analysis	20
4.6. Research ethics	21
5. Colville Estate.....	22
6. Discussion about relevance	24
6.1. Interest.....	25
6.2. Willingness	27
6.3. Capability.....	31
7. Interpretation of findings.....	36
8. Conclusion	38
8.1. Summary of findings.....	38
8.2. Limitations of research.....	39
8.3. Further research.....	40
Bibliography.....	41
Appendix A: Interview questions for councillors	50
Appendix B: Interview questions for resident	52
Appendix C: Risk Assessment Form	53

List of Figures

Figure 1 Traditional model of representative democracy

Figure 2 Map of Colville Estate, Hackney

Figure 3 Network governance structure

Figure 3 Causal diagram of variables affecting councillor's responsiveness

Table 1 Key events in the regeneration project

Table 2 Channels of communication

Abstract

This dissertation aims to assess whether local councillors are fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interest in contemporary urban regeneration schemes by specifically investigating the single-case study of the Colville Estate regeneration in Hackney. The investigation describes relevance as whether councillors are interested, whether they are willing and whether they are capable of representing local interests, given the context of network governance structures, privatisation and austerity. Through conducting in-depth interviews with local councillors, a cabinet member and an estate resident, as well as consulting a wide range of academic literature and documentation, this dissertation concludes that councillors are highly interested and willing to represent local interest, however they lack the capability and affiliated skills needed to successfully engage, influence and negotiate in complex network arrangements, thereby undermining their relevance as a local representative. The dissertation calls for further research into developing the required capabilities to enhance their relevance and for an investigation into the potential role for councillors in an institutional structure between representative government and network governance, notably what the 'meta-governor' role for councillors would entail in a local context.

Key words: local representative democracy, network governance, urban regeneration, councillor

1. Introduction

Local democracy is representative democracy in the English context. A key role of councillors, locally elected representatives, in a system of representative democracy is to ensure that constituents' interests are translated into collective decisions (Denters, 2017, p.786). In an age marked by the pressures of localism, marketisation and austerity, alongside increasing demands on public services and growing participatory pressure within a representative system, amplified demands and competing pressures have been made on local government and elected representatives (Copus, 2015, p.19). The shifts 'from government to governance' and 'managerialism to entrepreneurialism' have resulted in new opportunities for the private sector to deliver infrastructure and housing (Pawson et al, 2015). As a consequence of central governments' neoliberal growth agenda, themes such as participation and accountability within increasingly complex governance structures pose a vast challenge to the implementation of urban regeneration projects, as democratic practices are difficult to exercise within an unequal agenda (Friedmann et al, 1973, p.10). In this market-centred urban planning system, democratic governance looks much like it did 50 years ago, despite consistently low turnouts in local government elections and the increased role of the private sector and quasi-market mechanisms (Pierre, 2009, p.591). Given recent government reforms, and the emphasis on delivery and growth, urban development is increasingly perceived to be an economic process, rather than a social process, creating more equitable and just localities (Fainstein, 2010).

The democratic legitimacy of councillors has been challenged by the emergence of participatory forms of representation and network governance structures (Pycock, 2017). Academic discourses and government policy describe a 'deficiency narrative' when referring to the role of the councillor, as they are perceived to be 'behind the times', lacking managerial skills and suffering from the 'wrong' personal attributes (Barnett et al, 2019, p.776). Existing studies do not examine the 'political work' of the councillor nor offer a critical grasp of what it is that councillors actually 'do' when undertaking their everyday practices as a local representative (Barnett et al, 2019, p.789). According to McAllister (2005), satisfaction with local democracy is primarily a matter of how constituents feel about how well they are represented. Therefore, this dissertation offers an empirical investigation into whether

councillors are relevant as democratic structures, and how they practice relevance as a representative of local interest in contemporary urban regeneration schemes, as we make the assumption that elected representatives need to be relevant to the needs of their community in order to be 'fit for purpose'.

1.1. Aims and objectives:

By studying a single in-depth case study, the Colville Estate, this dissertation aims to assess whether local councillors are relevant in representing local interest and explore the ways in which local representatives represent local interest in contemporary urban regeneration projects, given the context of complex governance structures and devolved powers. The investigation describes relevance as whether councillors are interested, whether they are willing and whether they are capable of representing local interests. The methodology chapter will explain how the three concepts of interest, willingness and capability will be assessed.

This dissertation seeks to achieve the research question and objectives through first explaining the English planning context, the Council system and role of the councillor. The paper will then present a literature review and introduce the theory of network governance and the concept of local representative democracy. Chapter 4 will introduce the methodological framework, which describes how the aforementioned objectives will be measured and will comprise the qualitative data collection methods, including interviews with local councillors and a resident and analysis of relevant documentation. Chapter 5 will include a background to the case study and Hackney Council information, to contextualise the investigation. The paper will then discuss and interpret whether local councillors are fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interests in the Colville Estate regeneration scheme, based on the interview findings, documentation and academic literature. Finally, the dissertation will provide a reflective conclusion, outlining the key findings and limitations of the research and highlight areas of further study.

2. Context

The English planning system, since the 1980s, has been steadily deregulated and marketised and is in a 'near constant rate of seemingly ideologically driven institutional shifts', marked by regular planning reforms (Shepherd, 2018, p.499). The localism agenda of the coalition government 2010-2015 dismantled the regional planning tier and aimed to free local government from central control to make it more directly accountable to local communities. In a speech to the Local Government Association Annual Conference, Secretary of State for Community and Local Government, Eric Pickles, concluded that the Localism Act 2011 was 'taking power away from Whitehall and putting it back in the hands of councillors and Councils' (Pickles, 2011). In the executive summary, local actors are described as 'those best placed to find the best solutions to local needs' (HM Government, 2010, p.2). It is important to note the diversity of local needs, as they are heterogeneous and disputed and often derive from decisions made beyond local boundaries, resulting in inherent governance tensions within the localism agenda (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013, p.13).

The localism agenda went hand in hand with severe public sector austerity measures, given the global financial recession, as revenue funding to local government was cut by 26% in real terms, and capital funding was cut by 45% within the same time period (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013, p.12). Key features of austerity comprised 'leaner local states', as the costs of austerity measures fell disproportionately on subnational governments, resulting in 'fire-sale privatisation' efforts to sell off public-sector assets and the contracting-out of service management to deliver urban development schemes (Peck, 2012, p.19). This resulted in an ongoing conflict between localism and national development priorities, designed to promote housebuilding and economic growth. Consequently, local authorities have been placed under intense top-down pressure to accept new development, maximise planning return gains and act in an 'entrepreneurial manner', as local policy continues to be set at the national level, given the centralised governance structure of the English planning system (Shepherd, 2018, p.496).

The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 further transformed the English planning system, as financial viability assessments and the 'deliverability' of

development schemes took precedence over social and environmental planning goals, reinforcing the asymmetry in the relationship between private developers, local authorities and communities (Colenutt et al, 2015, p.453). The most controversial aspects of viability assessments are the lack of guidance on what constitutes a 'competitive return' to developers, and the confidentiality clauses surrounding the calculations, preventing public scrutiny and the capacity for local councillors to challenge developers' sums (Wainwright, 2015). The influx of private-led development, coupled with rising land values, has resulted in a 'state-induced rent gap', with vast capital accumulation potential (Harvey, 2008). This has led to many local authorities selling off their disinvested housing stock to private developers, as exemplified by the regeneration of Heygate Estate and the Robin Hood Gardens Estate in London, further exacerbating the capital's housing crisis and the potential for displacement in urban regeneration schemes (Watt, 2013, p.102).

2.1. English Council System

The English Council system is a dual-purpose unitary system based on top-down parliamentary sovereignty, providing an additional level of political representation, engagement and democracy to that delivered by central parliamentary politics (Copus, 2015, p.10). Local government allows for community opinion and involvement, as those elected to serve on Councils, councillors, have a mandate to represent their fellow citizens (Copus, 2015, p.10). The Local Government Act 2000 formalised the cabinet structure of the Council to comprise a leader and up to nine councillors to speed up decision making processes and improve public transparency and accountability (Copus, 2015, p.140). Councils provide the framework for making local decisions as well as delivering central governments' policies for the development of public services and the economy (Copus et al, 2013, p.390).

2.2. The role of the councillor

There are 18,000 councillors across England, each elected for four year terms via the first past the post electoral system (MHCLG, 2019). The role of councillors is to contribute to the representation of citizens, and get involved in local decision making via their position within the full Council, on various committees as either executive or as non-executive councillors, and often mediated via the operation of party groups (Sweeting and Copus, 2013, p.125). Councillors operate at different scales, most notably within the context of their wards; the electoral sub-division of the Council which is represented by up to 3 councillors. A unique feature of the office of the councillor is the proximity to their constituencies; distinguishing them from elected representatives at other levels of government (Copus, 2015, p.87).

In the context of planning, the role of councillors will vary depending on whether they sit on a planning committee, which makes decisions on planning applications. All councillors however have a role in representing the views of local residents in the process of plan-making and applications affecting their ward (DCLG, 2015, p.6). Local authority officers support councillors with the planning process, with most decisions on planning applications being delegated to officers, however, at planning committees, officers advise and councillors decide (LGA, 2017, p.7). Figure 1 demonstrates the decision-making process in the traditional model of representative democracy.

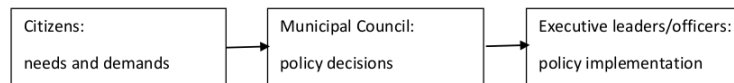


Figure 4 Traditional model of representative democracy (Denters, 2005, p.423)

3. Literature review

This chapter introduces the theory of network governance and the concept of local representative democracy. By analysing the discourse of governance and the development of network governance theory, this literature review will evaluate their impact on understandings of local representative democracy, specifically investigating whether local democratic structures are still relevant given the context. For the purpose of this study, councillors are referred to as the democratic structures that represent local interests in urban regeneration projects. Finally, this literature review will identify areas where further research is required, thereby providing the foundation for the study. The review is organised into the following sections:

- An introduction to 'governance'
- From 'governance' to 'network governance'
- The concept of representation
- Councillors as local democratic representatives
- Conclusion and further areas of research

3.1. An introduction to 'governance'

The concept of 'governance' has received an increasing attention from urban scholars and policy makers since the 1980s. Recent literature has focused on the shift 'from government to governance', representing a structural change in governing from the sole role of local authorities to the adoption of a partnership approach, involving a multitude of associations, actors and both public and private entities, all participating in urban policy making and decisions (Hansen, 2005, p.219). These moves towards partnerships and governance arrangements have been much criticised in democratic terms, as such changes have obscured traditionally vertical lines of responsibility, accountability and participation (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Rhodes, regarded the system of 'governance' as comprising 'self-steering inter-organisational networks that are no longer under direct democratic control' (Rhodes, 1997, p.199). According to Rhodes, 'governance' arrangements result in 'the hollowing out

of the state', as autonomous organisations interdependently share resources and act independently from local government (Rhodes, 1996, p.661). As a consequence, many academics share the view that the shift from 'government to governance' weakens the role of elected representatives in urban policy and subsequently undermines their ability to function as a 'democratic linkage' between their constituents and urban development (Hanssen, 2010, p. 716).

Many scholars view contemporary forms of 'governance' as integral to the post-political era, as accounts of 'governance' and increased community and private actor participation in local government have led to a complex institutional landscape resulting in, in some cases, weakened local authorities and strengthened private sector and civil-society organisations (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013, p.14). Burns, in 2000, asked the critical question, 'can local democracy survive governance?', concluding that 'governance is here to stay, and local democra(cies) will proliferate' (Burns, 2000, p.972). The general consensus among academics is that different forms of local democracy have emerged as a result of the shift to 'governance', namely network, market, participatory and representative democracy (Haus and Sweeting, 2006). From the literature, it is apparent that the role of elected representatives deserves closer examination within the increasingly complex institutional landscape, specifically between local representative democracy and network governance structures.

3.2. From 'governance' to 'network governance'

The impact of 'network governance' on local democracy is one of the more contentious aspects of the 'governance' discourse (Davies, 2000, p.417). In the opinion of many academics, 'governance' is essentially 'network governance', as networks encourage the participation of different actors in public-policy making, coordinate activities and often reject local governmental influence and control (Nyholm and Haveri, 2009, p.111; Rhodes, 1996, p.659). According to Stoker, 'Networks – central to so much of governance – are by definition exclusive and closed', as they comprise actors with 'qualified' interests to specific policy areas, thereby excluding divergent points of view and compromising the role of representation in

decision making (Stoker, 2000, p.10). In more recent literature on 'network governance', the challenges and tensions posed to local representative democracy have been increasingly recognised, however, less well documented is the impact of the complexity of the networks on the activities and interactions undertaken by locally elected representatives and the pressures they experience in representing their local community (Copus, 2015, p.3).

Many researchers have expressed concerns over the democratic functioning of 'network governance' structures, as some take the view that 'network governance' suffers from a democratic deficit in terms of lack of transparency and problems of accountability (Hansen, 2005, p.221). Rhodes contends that 'accountability disappears in the interstices of the webs of institutions which make up governance' (Rhodes, 2000, p.78-79). 'Network governance' has been widely criticised as the contemporary mode of public governance, as principles of equality, accountability and diversity are difficult to manage without the overarching structure and influence of local representative government (Hansen, 2005, p.222; Bogason, 2006, p.20). Sørensen (2002) perceives local representative democracy and 'network governance' to be potentially incompatible, as the emergence of 'network governance' fundamentally reconstructs the concept of political representation as it becomes a complex and contested landscape between a plethora of actors and organisations. Sørensen argues that traditional theories of representative democracy realise a separation between the political system and society, which is challenged by 'network governance' and its potential to engage multiple actors, thereby blurring the boundaries between the local state, markets and civilians (Sørensen, 2002).

From the perspective of local representative democracy theorists, it is clear that 'network governance' lacks and desperately needs democracy (Hansen, 2005, p.221). The new multi-level system of governance and local authority provides 'grounds for real concern', as non-elected, unaccountable and non-representative actors can freely participate in the political sphere (Andersen, 2004, p.2). To be entitled to participate in 'network governance' arrangements, most academics agree that actors must possess some kind of resource or qualifying factor of importance related to the policy area in question (Schmitter, 2002, p.62). Copus contends that councillors are faced with the struggle of delivering effective engagement and influence within these complex network structures. To overcome this challenge, councillors must be able to deliver a degree of 'government' into 'network

governance', to remain a credible local representative and to exert some democratic control (Copus, 2015, p.150). The majority of the literature on the emergence of 'network governance' is centred around themes of accountability, democratic governance, effective citizen engagement and the quality of local democracy, and consequently how elected representatives should conduct their role in governing, decision-making and representation of the local community (Berg and Rao, 2005).

3.3. The concept of representation

Within the complex landscape of 'network governance', many scholars contend that the political, governing and representative role of elected representatives is best understood in reference to democratic theories and models of representation (Sharp, 1970; Pitkin, 1972; Hill, 1974; Bulpitt, 1983). In 1997, Plotke defined the discourse as 'the opposite of representation is not participation. The opposite of representation is exclusion. And the opposition of participation is abstention... representation is not an unfortunate compromise between an idea of direct democracy and messy modern realities. Representation is crucial in constituting democratic practices' (Plotke, 1997, p.19). The definition of representation is a contested area among academic scholars and problems of representation have been traditionally bypassed within deliberative democratic theory. Burke, a prominent philosopher, famously questioned the role of representatives and argued that they should serve as 'trustees' of voters' interest as 'virtual representatives', rather than serving as delegates. He contended that they should be allowed to use their autonomous judgement within the context of institutions representing the public interest (Burke, 1968). Conversely, Habermas (1996) went beyond this standardised account of representation and researched the correlation between the decisions deriving from institutionalised platforms of representation and moments of disjunction leading to extra-parliamentary forms of representation, resulting in practices such as urban social movements and the establishment of citizens' associations. Habermas argued that these disjunctions are essential to the functioning of representative democracy (Habermas 1996; 1989).

The most broadly recognised account of representation within contemporary democratic theory is Pitkin's 'The Concept of Representation' (1967). Pitkin argued that for representatives to be 'democratic', they must achieve three objectives: they must first be authorised to act, they must act in manner that promotes the interests of those represented and finally, constituents must be able to hold their representatives accountable for their actions (Pitkin, 1967). Pitkin contended that representatives have the 'ethical obligation' to be responsive to their constituents' interests and needs, a view corroborated by Newton, who agreed that elected representatives should take into account 'the interest and well-being of those he or she represents' (Newton, 1976, p.115). However, both accounts of representation divulge little on how representatives should act, how they should define the interests of those they are representing or indeed what the representative actually represents (Copus, 2015, p.6). There is near-universal agreement in political theoretic literature that the aim of representation is to expand the possibilities and significance of the term as broadly as possible; in some cases, where academic scholars perceive democracy to be in crisis mode and for others, as a response to the transformation of democracy into new forms (Schweber, 2016, p.383). Given the complex landscape of democracy and the increasing dominance of 'network governance' structures, it is widely agreed that neither the standardised model of representation nor the participatory ideal can include and involve all those affected by decisions (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p.406).

3.4. Councillors as local democratic representatives in the UK planning system

The representative role of the councillor as an advocate for communities in contemporary planning has not been fully recognised, as research has long been dominated by communicative planning theories. Recurring themes surrounding the role of the locally elected councillor describe the position as disconnected from those being represented and at a lower level of governing capacity and ability in comparison to central government; demonstrating a disregard for local representative democracy as a fundamental component of the wider democratic state (Copus, 2015, p.2). Much of the literature written from a neoliberal perspective undermines the position of councillors and reduces local politics and representative democratic structures to markets, as under the premise of 'governance',

partnerships and networks are promoted as 'apolitical service oriented processes' (Copus et al, 2013, p. 391; Bozeman, 2002; Geddes, 2006). However, despite the complexity and growth of governing networks, Copus argues that councillors have a vital role in shaping what unelected and often unaccountable networks do (Copus, 2015, p.59).

From a normative, democratic perspective, arguments have been put forward for a reconciliation between local representative government and 'network governance', and for elected councillors to act as 'co-governing guardians of democratic values of openness, publicity and an 'all'-embracing inclusiveness in network governance' (Hansen, 2005, p.222). Embodied within the function of representation are the questions of 'who is represented' as well as 'how are they represented' (Dalton et al, 2011). Jones, in 1975, noted the distinctions in councillors' representative focus when it comes to the act and process of representing, as the councillor may act as a representative of a wide section of the community, a particular organised group or even individual citizens (Jones, 1975). Finally, it is evident from the literature that themes of accountability and responsiveness of local elected representatives are widely considered to be the main determinants of the democratic quality of representation (Pitkin, 1967; Bovens, 2007; Urbinati and Warren, 2008).

3.5. Conclusion and further areas of research

The emergence of 'network governance' has fundamentally altered local representative democracy and the role of the councillor, as more actors and private interests are now involved in the governance of urban regeneration projects. To find out whether local elected representatives are relevant given the growth and increasing complexity of 'network governance' structures, this study proposes an investigation into the ways in which councillors in the context of UK local government can approach local representation and if they are willing and able to advocate for local interest in urban regeneration projects. More broadly, there appears to be a need for further research into the role of councillors within the institutional structure between local representative governance and 'network governance'. The findings of such research will either underpin or undermine the notion of local representative democracy.

4. Methodology

In order to assess whether local councillors are fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interests in contemporary urban regeneration schemes, this dissertation will draw on work from Copus (1999; 2003) and Hanssen (2010; 2012). I have chosen to investigate the concept of relevance in relation to councillors, as they are assumed to be advocates of the communities they represent, elected on the basis of pursuing local interests and concerns (Copus, 2003, p.33). Hanssen, specifically asked 'to what extent are local politicians able and willing to channel and ensure the interests of citizens and local community actors in contemporary market-oriented land-use planning practices?' in her study discussing the role of local politicians in representing, mediating and balancing growth interests and local community interests in Norway, a country pursuing market-oriented planning reforms similar to England (Hanssen, 2010, p.714). For this dissertation, the concept of relevance has been translated from the literature into three categories of (1) whether councillors are interested, (2) whether councillors are willing and (3) whether councillors are capable in representing local interests. Relevance is based on the process of representing, not the outcomes, with the focus on councillors, not whether residents perceive the process as relevant to their own interests.

The category of interest was selected as the literature regards 'being interested' as a fundamental factor in enhancing the councillor's status within the community and bringing local residents closer to the concerns of the councillor and their party, thereby increasing their relevance as a representative (Copus, 1999, p.97). Pitkin (1967, p.55) asserted that representing means acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to their needs; therefore, a degree of interest in being a representative is imperative to being relevant. In order to be able to promote the interests of those represented, the representative should be well-informed about the needs of their constituents and accessible to communicate with them. Therefore, willingness was chosen as a factor of relevance as councillors should be both aware of the preferences and concerns of residents and be willing to express these in public and to the Council and prepared to justify the Council's decisions back to local communities (Pitkin, 1967, p.55). In addition, given the physical proximity of

councillors to their constituents, councillors must be willing to be approachable and responsive to resident's needs (Hanssen, 2010, p.716).

The third category of capability was selected given the inherent tensions in the role of councillors, the emergence of network governance structures and the current UK planning context (Lepine, 2008, p.2). Such tensions include relationships with local residents, local responsiveness and national priorities and the political and managerial roles that councillors assume (Sweeting and Copus, 2012, p.22). Capability can be assessed through having a thorough knowledge of processes, information and networks, to make well-founded judgements and decisions (Hanssen, 2012, p.25). In order to assess the three categories and to answer the overall research question, they have been broken down into the following tangible metrics:

- Interest: the extent to which local councillors know about/are informed/are prepared with information about the local community and area
- Willingness: how approachable are councillors to local residents? How do they demonstrate intention?
- Capable: do councillors have enough knowledge/time/financial resources? How well developed is their network?

4.1. Single-case study design

The single-case study approach seeks to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, p.18). This research method was selected as the Colville Estate represents a critical case in testing the theoretical identification of the effects of network governance on local representative democracy, as the regeneration project was developed by Hackney Council with private actors contracted for specified works (Yin, 2009, p.47). The single case study can confirm, challenge or extend theory to determine whether local councillors are relevant as the democratic structures representing local interest in urban regeneration schemes. Furthermore, as this dissertation is investigating the ways in which councillors represent local interest, the use of a single-case study will contribute to planning knowledge of organisational, group and political phenomena (Yin, 2009, p.4). Small sample

sizes can achieve comprehensive in-depth research, however, a limitation of this approach is its potential to undermine opportunities to draw useful generalisations or make broader policy recommendations (USC Libraries, 2020).

4.2. Data collection

The case study approach is valuable in carrying out an investigation due to its ability to draw on a range of sources and employ a combination of research methods (Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2007). A more holistic understanding of the phenomena being researched can therefore be achieved through data triangulation, the mixed methods approach, as richer data can be collected in comparison to a single method research (Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2007). For this dissertation, data was collected from various sources of documentation, evidence and interviews.

4.3. Documentation

Documents are a vital source of evidence as they offer a broad coverage of references, names and details of events, they can be reviewed repeatedly and crucially are not created as a result of a case study (Ying, 2009, p.102). A major strength of documentation as a data collection method is that it can “corroborate information from other sources” and can therefore be used to form the basis of interview questions (Yin, 2009, p.103). The documents used in this dissertation included academic papers, local government archival records, Hackney Council meeting minutes, newspaper articles and other media content.

4.4. Semi-structured interviews

One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview (Yin, 2009, p.106). The semi-structured interview approach was selected as they can provide in-depth

information, perceptions and reasonings of the individuals involved in a case study (Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2007). A semi-structured interview follows a line of inquiry but has the advantage of being flexible and fluid, thereby allowing the interviewee to elaborate and develop an idea (Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2007). Interviews lasted for 1 to 1.5 hours and took place remotely between May and July 2020. The virtual environment gave me the opportunity to develop a rapport with interviewees to ask follow-up or probing questions based on their responses to pre-written questions (Turner III, 2010, p.755). Well-informed interviewees can provide important insights into the case study and help identify further sources of evidence or corroborate existing knowledge. A 'snowballing technique' was used to acquire the contact details of additional councillors as interviews took place (Yin, 2009, p.108). Limitations of the interview approach include poor recollection of events and reflexivity, where the interviewee shares information based on what the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2009, p.102). As advocated by Becker (1998, p.58-60), 'how' questions were asked in order to avoid defensiveness of 'why' questions on the interviewees' part. Interview questions were based on the aforementioned category metrics and can be found in appendices A and B. For this study, 3 current and former ward councillors (executive and non-executive members) were interviewed as well as a cabinet member and a Colville Estate Residents Association member.

4.5. Qualitative data analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to undertake qualitative data analysis. Content from the interviews were aligned with the dissertation aims and objectives under sub-headings, to connect segments of data together based on opinions and experiences of interviewees (Dey 1993). Information and insights from the interviews were organised into the three categories of interest, willingness and capability to draw meaningful data extracts and to identify patterns and themes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). This analysis was used to manage and reduce large volumes of data without losing its context. It also helps focus on the interpretation of the themes to build a descriptive analysis grounded in the case study (Lapadat, 2013, p.2). The categorisation of themes enabled broad conclusions and recommendations to be made as, by using a single-case study, a detailed understanding may

be gained of how behaviour and processes are being influenced among a limited number of individuals.

4.6. Research ethics

Ethical considerations applied to each stage and aspect of the dissertation research process. Prior to each interview, participants were provided with information outlining the purpose of the study and a consent form to sign and complete. The consent form provided confirmation that the background information was understood, that the interview would be recorded for transcription purposes and that participants could withdraw their data up to four weeks after the interview. To protect the data of all interviewees, all transcriptions and audio recordings were kept securely and will be permanently deleted following submission of the dissertation. Interviewees will be anonymous in the analysis of the research to avoid participants unwittingly being put in any undesirable position, however no sensitive, personal or political information was shared (Ying, 2009, p.73).

5. Colville Estate

The Colville Estate, located next to the Regent's Canal, in the Hoxton East & Shoreditch ward is one of Hackney's largest regeneration schemes (GLA, 2020a; Hackney Council, 2020c).



Figure 5 Map of Colville Estate, Hackney

The 18 year phased redevelopment will deliver 925 new homes, replacing 438 existing homes built in the 1950s, and will provide an additional 100 Council homes. The scheme will run a phased decant system, meaning that no residents will be placed offsite during demolition and reconstruction. Upon completion, the tenure blind development will be split equally between 50% social rent/intermediate tenure and 50% privately owned housing (RIBA Architecture, 2019). Hackney Council is the developer and land owner of the Colville Estate regeneration scheme, part of a wider programme of housing projects spearheaded by the Council to tackle the borough's affordable housing and Council housing crisis (Moore, 2018).

Table 1 shows the key events and completed phases (highlighted in yellow) surrounding the project:

Key events

Late 1990s	Hackney Council collapsed (Hetherington, 2000)
2002	Jules Pipe elected as firstly directed elected mayor of London Borough of Hackney (2002-2016) (GLA, 2020b)
2004	Colville Estate earmarked by GLA for regeneration (GLA, 2011, p.2)
2009	Estate regeneration initiated (Elmer, 2019)
2011	Approval of estate masterplan by Council's planning sub-committee (Karakusevic Carson Architects, 2011)
2011	Completion of Phase I – demolition of Bridport House (20 properties replaced by 41 council homes for social rent) (HBD, 2015)
2013	Colville regeneration programme agreed with CETRA (Hackney Council, 2017)
2016	Philip Glanville elected Mayor of Hackney (reelected May 2018) (Hackney Council, 2020a)
2018	CPO approved by Secretary of State (Hackney Council, 2018)
2018	Completion of Phase III – construction of One Parkside developed by Anthology – 198 homes for private sale (Hackney Council, 2020c)
2019	Completion of Phase II A & B – construction of 70 social rent properties, 11 shared ownership and 25 for private sale (Hackney Council, 2020c)
2028	Estimated end date – remaining 184 social rent homes to be constructed over phases IV – VIII (Hackney Council, 2020c)

Table 1 Key events in the regeneration project

Colville Estate has been referred to as a 'model regeneration scheme' by several prominent media outlets, as Hackney Council worked closely with the pro-active resident steering group, the Colville Estate Tenants and Residents Association (RIBA Architecture, 2019). The Observer hailed the project as 'some of the best Council housing ever built' and the Financial Times concluded that the scheme was exemplary (Moore, 2018; Heathcote, 2019). However, the regeneration has been criticised by others for turning public land into private profit, as properties built in phase III by developer Anthology, on a 200-year lease, are on sale for between £730,000 and £2.45 million, to cross-subsidise the social housing units (Elmer, 2019). The regeneration is co-funded by Hackney Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Greater London Authority (Elmer, 2019). The structure of Labour-controlled Hackney Council comprises a directly elected Mayor, 52 Labour councillors (of which 9 are cabinet members) and 5 Conservative councillors covering 21 wards (Hackney Council, 2020b). Figure 3 shows the key actors involved in the regeneration project.

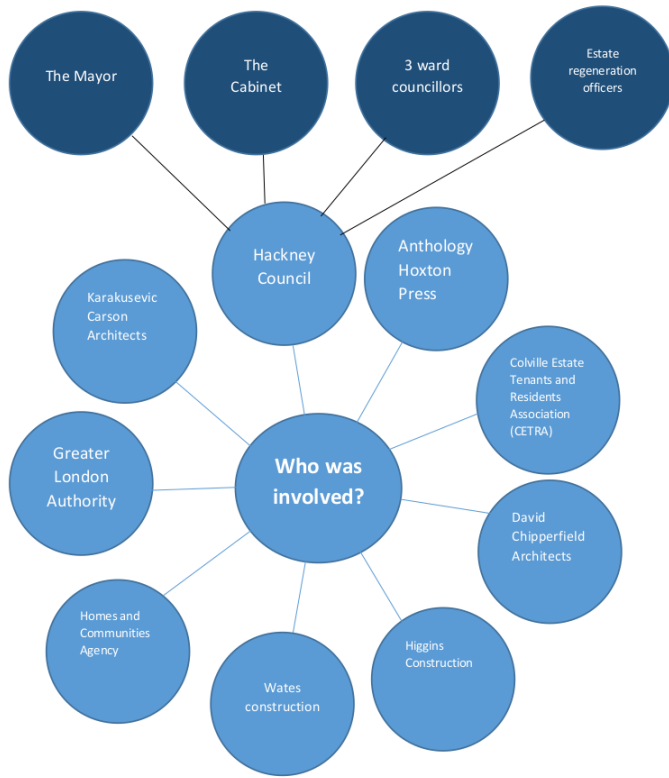


Figure 3 Network governance structure

6. Discussion about relevance

This chapter will discuss the three themes of interest, willingness and capability based on the responses obtained in the interviews with local councillors in their role as representatives of local interest for the Colville Estate regeneration project. An estate resident member of CETRA, was also interviewed as a sounding board to assess the councillors' claims. The information from the interviews has been analysed against documentation and academic literature to ascertain whether local councillors are fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interest in the regeneration scheme. The discussion will unpack the ways in which local councillors portray relevance and how they have represented local residents throughout the project.

6.1. Interest

This section responds to the first research objective, whether councillors are interested in representing local interests in the Colville Estate regeneration. In the interviews, councillors were asked to express what being interested in local interests would look like and how they would describe representing these interests. In response to the first question, one councillor responded that *"people get involved in local politics because of community representation, (councillors have) very few real powers, so much is about facilitation, working with resident groups and working with networks. You have to like people, if you're not genuinely interested in getting to know people in your ward you should just try something else."* The 2010 Local Government Association (LGA) census of councillors in England revealed that the most common reason for standing as a councillor was a desire to 'serve the community', with 88% of respondents stating that as their primary reason for standing as a local representative (NFER, 2011, p.11). Another councillor corroborated the census' finding by stating that, *"you don't become a councillor unless you are genuinely interested in improving the lives of communities and residents- it can get hard when you are directly challenged and people say that isn't your motivation."* Kroeber (2018, p.253) supports the notion that interest in

representing local needs can be improved by increasing the amount of time representatives invest in working on topics related to their constituent's needs.

The strong expression of interest in representing local needs was corroborated by a third ward councillor, who stated that their reason for standing as a local representative stemmed from concerns about the effects of gentrification on Shoreditch and Hoxton, *"one of my objectives was for local people to benefit from that wealth creation"* and to maintain the established community in the area. Since November 2008, Hackney Council have worked with residents to develop the urban design framework for the estate regeneration (Hackney Council, 2013, p.12). All councillors interviewed agreed that the duration of the project and the stages of demolition, rebuild and decanting added increased pressure on delivering effective resident engagement and maintaining local interest and resilience throughout the scheme, as residents were often more concerned with the immediate issues and building works, rather than longer-term planning schedules. Given the long duration of the project, one ward councillor described representing local interests as a role of guidance, to help residents articulate what they want and ask them questions they don't realise they want to ask. The councillor said that as this guiding role isn't the responsibility of the planning officers, councillors can support residents through the planning and development process around issues such as letting policies or the funding envelope, in areas where officers explicitly cannot get involved due to their political nature.

In terms of how councillors represent local interests, all councillors mentioned both the informal and formal channels of engagement to enhance their relationships with residents (see table 2). One councillor shared that *"residents recognise my bike, so they know when I am about, it's about relationships and facilitation at the local level to build trust over time, you know people and people come to you. I advocate for my residents and this takes loads of different shapes."* The regeneration steering committee was mentioned by all councillors as a main formal channel for representing local interests. One councillor spoke at length about their role on the committee, *"my job is to be on top of what's going on, where we are in the process...walking the line between holding officers to account to doing the right thing for existing residents and understanding the Council's political strategy."* They continued that, as a councillor, they are the interface between the Council and the residents, and as the Council is a political and bureaucratic institution, they have to ensure that residents are buying into

the political steer, whilst simultaneously representing residents' views back to the Council when decisions appear to be unjust. Klok and Denters (2013) corroborate the view, that as local representatives, councillors have to strike a balance between an external-facing set of roles towards their constituents and an internal set of roles regarding the actions of the Council, each with their own associated behaviours and perceptions.

From the documentation and interview material, it is apparent that councillors have a strong interest in representing local residents and perceive themselves to be advocates for local communities when representing their interests during the Colville Estate regeneration scheme. The resident agreed that their ward councillors are interested in making Hackney a better place, however acknowledged that to achieve that depends on personal attributes. Interviewed councillors describe their relevance as pursuing and promoting local interests and concerns to a range of other bodies, with the aim of facilitating delivery at the local level (Copus, 2003, p.33).

6.2. Willingness

To assess whether local councillors are willing to represent local interests in the Colville Estate regeneration, councillors were questioned about their levels of proactivity, responsiveness and approachability towards local residents. The table below shows the formal and informal modes of communication mentioned by the councillors and a description of their role, in their own words, for each channel.

Channel of communication	Frequency of occurrence	Councillors' role
Regeneration Steering Committee	Monthly	1 councillor attends and a former councillor chairs. Role is to gather residents views
Councillor Surgery	Monthly	Residents come with concerns, councillor gives information to appropriate service and informs constituent of response
Town Hall Phone Number	N/A	Constituents can phone member services at the Town

		Hall to leave a message for a councillor
Roving Surgery	Monthly	Get in touch with residents, gather opinions and answer questions
Meeting with contractor (architect/estate management etc.)	Per development schedule	Not usually in attendance due to volume of meetings
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission	Councillor attends only when necessary	Councillors raise issues about housing, gentrification, unemployment, ageing etc. Commission then makes a recommendation
Hackney Council	Councillor attends only when necessary	Councillor can escalate a question to cabinet member/Mayor for response for residents
Email	N/A	Answer questions and escalate any issues
Facebook Group	N/A	Council set up group – residents, officers, contractors and councillors interact on group
Planning Committee	Councillor attends when necessary	Represent residents views and work closely with officers

Table 1 Channels of communication

A recurring theme throughout the interviews is the councillors' role in escalating their constituents' needs to relevant services and committees. Two of the councillors agreed that their position is a balancing act, to judge reasonable and non-reasonable residents' demands, with the former being escalated to the Council. One councillor commented that Hackney Council is more efficient when they ask for a specific task to be completed. They shared that their course of action is to first write an email to the planning officer, where in 50% of cases the issue is resolved, and if not, they organise a telephone conversation. The councillor then commented that in situations where officers can't resolve the issue, usually concerning a political matter around a finite resource, they escalate the concern to the cabinet where they state the problem, the residents' views and their own judgement. They concluded that a successful resolution would depend on their relationship with the cabinet, as cabinet members have the ability to make decisions without having to go through the formal public structure of the full Council, "*as this takes forever and tends to be mostly theatre, in my experience*". The resident mentioned the relationship between the councillor and the cabinet

and stated that they often feel like councillors are “keeping an eye on us on behalf of the mayor.” According to De Groot et al, this relationship with executive members and officers is vital for the democratic accountability of representative local governance (De Groot et al, 2010, p.405).

In terms of councillors’ portrayal of approachability, one councillor perceived themselves to be significantly more approachable than their colleagues as they live locally to the estate, “people knock on my door, it’s a 24/7 job. If I go outside someone will stop me, I don’t have a break, it’s not like I’ve finished work today and you can’t talk to me, they know my wife, they know my kids – so if they don’t see me, they’ll tell my wife, my son, my daughter to tell me something.” They divulged that they give out their personal phone number and residents knock on their door until 10pm at night. When questioned about responsiveness, one councillor strongly advocated for the need to possess ‘soft skills’ such as actively listening to residents and responding directly to questions, rather than giving a prepared answer with soundbites and clichés. According to the literature, these ‘soft skills’ help to improve networking and coalition building, which are ‘now the fundamental competencies for a more fragmented system of local governance’ (Barnett et al, 2019, p.784). These competencies support the development of the ‘neoliberal’ councillor, where leadership, networking and individual responsibility are fundamental values of the role (Barnett et al, 2019, p.784). The majority of councillors interviewed agreed that to improve relationships with residents, councillors must be honest and accessible in responding to constituents’ needs, clear in explaining the Council’s approach and aware of the community dynamics. The figure below demonstrates the variables affecting councillors’ responsiveness to constituents, widely supported by the interviewed councillors.

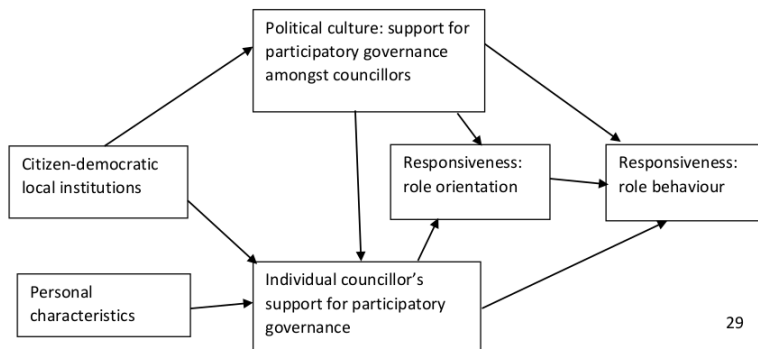


Figure 6 Causal diagram of variables affecting councillor's responsiveness (Denters and Klok, 2013, p.666)

In response to questions regarding proactivity, all councillors mentioned the difficulty in balancing their role as a community representative with their full time employment. One councillor stated that they put in place routines to prepare for meetings, to be more informed of resident's needs. The two channels of communication mentioned by councillors to increase proactivity were door knocking and telephone conversations with more prominent residents, however they noted the benefits of having discussions with less vocal constituents as, *"often those not shouting have more important opinions"*. When asked if approachability could be improved, one councillor admitted that the monthly steering committee meeting was not publically advertised, despite being 'open' for all residents to attend. This is corroborated by an exchange between a resident and a ward councillor on the De Beauvoir ward councillors' BlogSpot, where the resident wrote that they had had no contact from anyone involved in the regeneration steering committee, to which the councillor shared the meeting details and suggested they send an email to the resident's committee to get involved (Hackney Labour, 2013). The 'private' nature of the Colville Estate regeneration steering committee risks limiting resident's voices to the usual participants, notably those who are retired or have more time, thereby potentially distorting councillors' perception of wider local opinions, in spite of Hackney Council's assurances of all residents being encouraged to participate in consultation exercises (Hackney Council, 2013, p.7).

The councillors interviewed appeared to be very willing and approachable to represent local needs during the Colville Estate regeneration. This was corroborated by the resident who expressed that they are appreciative that councillors balance their duty alongside employment and family life, and acknowledged that some meetings finish after 9pm. They further commented that they are very approachable and do listen to resident's views, however if their views conflict, they feel like their objections are *"brushed off"* in favour of the Hackney Council's position as *"they are very wedded to the idea that drives the regeneration"*.

6.3. Capability

Capability is argued to be the most important indicator of relevance in representing local interests in urban regeneration schemes, given the current context of network governance and privatization. During the interviews, councillors were asked about their networks and the tools they use to get in touch with constituents and their involvement in the project, to decipher whether they had sufficient knowledge and resources to successfully represent local interests.

From the interviews, the majority of the councillors agreed that they had little direct power in the regeneration process and concluded that their role was to act as a facilitator by working closely with residents and officers, addressing and escalating issues and aiming to resolve them. One councillor revealed that *“there are limited areas where you can affect change, regular people do not understand the limitations of the power of local authorities...the basic level of knowledge is difficult to contend with.”* Another councillor corroborated this view by stating, *“in reality we don’t have much power other than on statutory committees”*, however, to be a member of a planning committee, experience is not required. There is a strong argument that network-oriented practices have reduced councillors’ capability to give direction and take well-founded decisions in regeneration projects (Hanssen, 2012, p.40). Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) support the view that local politicians do not possess the incentives or skills required to undertake a strategic leadership role deemed necessary within a market-oriented system. When asked about the ways in which they do represent local residents, two councillors shared that they support constituents by informing them of the instruments they can use to get their voices heard, such as helping them shape their opinions, writing a casework on their behalf or delivering a petition to the Council. They noted that they have to be honest with residents about what they can realistically influence and what is out of their control. The resident agreed by stating that on an individual level it’s good to have access to the Council, however *“Hackney is in the thrall of big developers (and) councillors don’t really challenge them, which is personally very disappointing”*. One councillor divulged that with their ward colleagues, topics such leaseholder offers, housing management and maintaining the existing stake between social and private housing are discussed when talking about the representation of local needs during the project. However, when asked about the

Colville lettings policy during the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission in February 2012, a councillor couldn't give precise details, 'but had a sense' of decant numbers (Hackney Council 2012c).

The process of creating and revising the Leaseholder and Freeholder Options Documents generated a notable tension between Colville Estate residents and the Council (Hackney Council, 2016a). The policies were discussed through various Steering Group meetings, attended and chaired by councillors, however in November 2016 a group of CETRA members attended full Council to voice their concerns about the buy-back process and eligibility for the shared equity offer, as in their view, these issues had not been resolved by the committee. During the meeting, a resident stated that "CETRA in no way believe that the policy represented a fair deal for leaseholders and freeholders and therefore could not offer its support to the policy" (Hackney Council, 2016a). The residents acknowledged that despite working with the Council for 18 months, they remained apprehensive of the proposals due to ambiguity around issues such as Council tax, service charges and succession (Hackney Council, 2016b). This failure in negotiation undermines councillors' capability in representing local interests during the scheme. Furthermore, the decision to use compulsory purchase powers as a "last resort" to acquire the interests of remaining leaseholder and freeholders for phase 2 and 3 of the project was taken as "settlement through negotiation has not been successful" (Hackney Council, 2012a). This further weakens the ward councillors' ability to represent local interest, as many residents openly objected to the compulsory purchase decision.

During the interviews, councillors were asked about their relationship with other actors participating in the governance structure of the Colville Estate regeneration. Two councillors agreed that the regeneration is a community-led project, as residents have been involved in each stage, attending meetings and often going to directly to cabinet or planning committee meetings; a view strongly disputed by another councillor who believed the scheme is "*diplomatically-led*". In November 2012, a group of Colville residents attended the planning sub-committee meeting to object to the scheme based on the way it had been handled by the Council and over fears of displacement, "*we the residents... are still in a high state of anxiety about what is happening*" (Hackney Council, 2012b). As an outcome of the deputation, the residents requested a face-to-face minuted meeting between the tenants, leaseholders and relevant cabinet member, thereby undermining the capability of councillors

as local representatives, as the cabinet member was perceived to be more influential in decision-making (Hackney Council, 2012b). It is apparent from the Hackney Council documentation that ward councillors are conducting political representation with an electorate 'growing in: assertiveness, willingness to take action, and a belief in its effectiveness' (Copus, 1999, p.89). This was corroborated by the resident who stated that it would depend on the problem who they would approach; on bigger or more contentious issues they would go directly to the Mayor. They shared that they would go to councillors on minor issues such as cyclist behavior and site traffic, and added that they do listen and come and view the problem but, *"you don't always get achieved what you want, as the Council takes so long to resolve things, but their intentions are always good"*. One councillor shared that a major challenge in representing constituents is managing the *"sharp elbow residents"*. Councillors agreed that residents only become interested in local government when an issue directly affects them, and two respondents displayed a skeptical attitude towards community motivation for participation. They commented that to assert themselves as a capable councillor, they had to knock on doors, to understand local opinions and unheard voices, and make an effort to get involved, as *"Council members and officers don't necessarily loop you in"*, as this is not expected in their job role.

During the interviews, only one councillor mentioned the role of PPCR, the Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Adviser (ITLA), employed by the Council to impartially advise residents on rehousing and redevelopment works. In addition, no interviewees mentioned the role of Soundings, commissioned by Karakusevic Carson Architects to provide consultation support for residents. All councillors confirmed they had no relationship with Anthology, the developer procured for phase 3, reasoning that the site had been sold on a 250-year lease. On the PPCR website, in February 2016, Anthology were seeking a Resident Liaison Officer to 'deal with resident queries (and) work closely with key stakeholders in the area, including CETRA, Colville residents, the Council, ITLA and elected Members,' for a three-year role, described very similarly to that of the ward councillor during the regeneration process (PPCR, 2016). From the interviews, the councillors agreed that within network governance structures, part of their role is to be *"the voice of institutional decisions"*, and therefore their degree of influence *"is only contingent on relationships with the cabinet and mayor."* One councillor stated that within the complex governance structures of regeneration

projects, a major challenge is misinformation. They shared that as ward councillors, they are increasing their information gain with "*frequent comprehensive communications*" to secure trust between the Council and residents.

As local representatives, part of the role of the ward councillor is to manage representative-participative tensions and to reconcile opposing views and solutions to the same local problems (Copus, 2015, p.4). During the interviews, one councillor spoke about the challenge of balancing their own views against residents' views, "*it doesn't stop me if I don't agree with their opinion, I say the view I am holding and why these are my objections, but I will take it and try to solve their problem.*" This challenge was emphasized by Eulau and Wahlke (1959), who stressed that representatives are constantly balancing demands by constituents against their own judgements. Several councillors spoke of the tensions as an elected representative in determining who is an 'affected stakeholder' in the regeneration based on 'communities of fate' versus a wider territorial community of citizens, as people may be affected to various degrees (Hansen, 2005, p.222). Tensions mentioned included the trade-off between representing current and future residents, listening to residents needs whilst acknowledging the borough's housing waiting list and balancing the need for intermediate and private housing to make the project financially viable. Several councillors spoke of the challenge of representing the unspoken voices in the community, such as the those living around the estate, the private renter or those in homeless shelters. They concluded that to improve their capability in representing constituents, these voices should be heard in the debate, however they acknowledged that this would require significantly more time and financial resources, which is incompatible with their full time employment and the lack of Council funding. The resident added that to improve their capability as a representative, councillors should challenge the Council's position and development model, to deliver more affordable units.

It is clear from the interviews and documentation that councillors are struggling to understand and carry out their role between representative institutions and market actors, given the context of more active citizenship and network governance structures. There are notable constraints and tensions surrounding the role, however the councillors interviewed appeared to be willing to deploy available tools to represent residents' views, but seemed less capable in effectively undertaking their role as other actors appeared to be more impactful, within the network structure. The councillors' lack of direct power in decision-

making has undermined their capability and influence in representing residents' needs during the regeneration project.

7. Interpretation of findings

The interview findings and documentation material support the consensus that the landscape of democratic representation is increasingly clouded by a growing complexity of issues straining the powers of local representatives and consequently undermining their capabilities to stand for and act on the interests of those they represent (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p.390). It is apparent that the relationship between the role perceptions and role behaviour of councillors is complex, as it is clear from the interview responses that councillors are very interested and willing to represent local interests and perceive themselves to be advocates of the communities they represent, as they actively pursue local needs and concerns to try to resolve any issues, however they lack the capability to negotiate the competing demands of the Council and constituents. The source of disjuncture between the perception and behaviour of their role can be found in factors such as responsibilities, personal qualities and abilities of councillors, the executive and non-executive distinction between councillors and their relationship with cabinet members in order to influence decisions (Copus, 2015, p.31). From the academic literature, interview responses and documentation material, it can be argued that local councillors appear to be suffering from a legitimacy crisis due to a stronger and more professionalised executive, the new challenges presented by participatory democracy and network governance and a more vocal and proactive electorate, thereby challenging their position as a democratic structure representing local interest in regeneration schemes (Bussu, 2015, p.841).

The network governance structure of the Colville Estate regeneration scheme has placed a notable pressure on councillors to act as a democratic representative, as they are left as just one actor in a complex system, requiring them to invest in new skills in order to be relevant as a local representative (Barnett et al, 2019, p.779). This was recognised by interviewed councillors, who stated the importance of 'soft skills' such as actively listening to residents, putting in place routines to generate proactivity and being accessible and willing to respond to constituents' needs. During the regeneration scheme, part of the councillors' role is to simultaneously represent and negotiate competing demands of the Council and their constituents, however, according to documentation from Hackney Council meetings, councillors appear to be lacking the capability to steer decision-making processes and

influence residents' views, as residents regularly acted as self-representatives supported by an active Tenants and Residents Association (Copus, 2015). To fulfill their role as a relevant democratic structure within a complex network system, councillors are required to adjust to changing modes of service delivery and societal expectation to foster practices of co-production and adopt more facilitative roles (Barnett et al, 2019, p.779). This role adjustment was recognised by the councillors during the interviews, however it is apparent that work needs to be done to necessitate the move to a more 'relational' role, to enhance councillors' capability in representing local interest in an interactive governance system.

To conclude, for councillors to be fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interest in the Colville Estate regeneration scheme, they must gain stronger interaction and negotiation skills in order to shape the preferences of the network participants, as currently much governing through networks takes place without democratic input (Copus, 2015, p.9). As network-oriented instruments have a larger potential for directing than traditional hierarchical steering practices, political steering is crucial to ensure that councillors are capable to respond to emerging local needs, to secure the legitimacy of local government (Scharpf, 1994). To ensure local democratic legitimacy, some academic literature argues for councillors' to become 'metagovernors', to take up the role of 'oversight politician' in creating and influencing local networks (Sorensen and Torfing, 2009). In addition, given the growth of participatory processes, councillors should strengthen their steering capacity to re-engage with the local community, to ensure 'that the plurality of opinions and interests have voice opportunities and that no one is excluded from the decentered processes of public opinion and decision-making', to deliver effective governance (Hansen, 2001, p.121). It is clear from the interviews that councillors have a strong interest in and are willing to represent local interest in the Colville Estate regeneration scheme, however there is a need to increase their steering and negotiation capabilities to establish their influence in network governance arrangements.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Summary of findings

This dissertation set out to answer the question of whether local councillors are fit for purpose as the democratic structures representing local interest in contemporary urban regeneration schemes by specifically investigating the Colville Estate, Hackney. To achieve this, the dissertation aimed to assess whether councillors are relevant as democratic structures and examine how they practice relevance as a representative of local interest in regeneration schemes, given the context of network governance and market-oriented planning practices. The investigation described relevance as whether councillors are interested, whether they are willing and whether they are capable of representing local interests. Through conducting a thorough analysis of academic literature, relevant documentation and undertaking interviews with councillors and a resident member of the Colville Estate Tenants and Residents Association, the paper concludes that councillors are both interested and willing to represent local interest, however, they face a struggle to engage, influence and negotiate in a complex series of networks, thereby undermining their capability and overall relevance as a local representative.

It is apparent from the academic literature and interview findings that the context of austerity, privatization and the emergence of network governance structures has fundamentally altered local democracy. Therefore, to be relevant as representatives of local interest, councillors must focus on developing governing capacity to direct, shape and influence network actors and mediate between the Council and participatory democracy, given the presence of more vocal and active constituents (Copus, 2015, p.150). To secure a linkage between the Council and the constituents they represent, councillors could play a role in injecting a degree of 'government' into governance networks, to reconcile local government and network governance and deliver the democratic values of transparency and accountability into the planning process (Hansen, 2005, p.234). In times of crisis, communities increasingly rely on their councillors as a source of local knowledge, and for that reason, councillors should take this opportunity to develop their capabilities to improve their

relevance as representatives of local interest. Developing these capabilities to effectively institute an adapted governance role for elected councillors will be a major challenge, given Council budget constraints, a lack of resources and the fact that councillors often balance their role with full time employment and other responsibilities, however it is imperative, to safeguard the democratic quality of local government processes.

8.2. Limitations of research

This dissertation focused on the role and activities of councillors when practicing their relevance as local representatives; an area of research that has been widely under communicated in academic literature, where the emphasis tends to be on planners, the Council as an institution or private actors. The recurrent themes that underpin the literature surrounding the role of the councillor describe the position as under-developed, disconnected, and in need of constant reshaping; neglecting what it is that councillors actually 'do' in their day –to-day role (Copus, 2015, p.2). Thus, this paper aims to contribute to the discourse and increase the understandings of the role of locally elected representatives as democratic structures representing local interest in contemporary urban regeneration schemes.

Given the context of undertaking a major research project during the Covid-19 global pandemic, fieldwork and face-to-face research was impossible. Conclusions are based on the experience of one case study and the views of ward councillors, and therefore are not reflective of the wider experiences of all councillors, as the sample size for data collection was small. Emails and follow-up emails were sent to additional ward councillors and residents, however no response was received. To mitigate these limitations, a vast amount of academic literature and documentation was consulted to gain a strong understanding into how councillors practice their relevance as a representative of local interest in urban regeneration schemes.

8.3. Further research

The findings from this research indicate that councillors perceive themselves to be advocates of the communities they represent, yet their representative role within network governance structures has not been fully recognised. Therefore, research into developing the community advocate role and the aforementioned required capabilities to enhance their relevance would be interesting, to find out what the potential role could be for locally elected politicians in an institutional structure between representative government and network governance. Conducting research into what meta-governance would mean in a local, public context would be beneficial to understand where councillors should exercise more power and what mechanisms are available for steering the range of interests within the network governance structure. Finally, it would be interesting to conduct a similar research study once the incoming planning reforms have been enforced, to see how they have affected the representative role of the councillor in urban regeneration schemes, as public consultation will be abolished at the planning application stage (Quinn et al, 2020).

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Appendix A: Interview questions for councillors

1. Describe a bit for yourself what being interested in local interests would look like?
2. How would you describe representing local interests – how do you define that?
3. How did you get in touch with community groups?
4. Which tools did you use to get in touch- existing networks, leaflets etc.
5. How proactive are you in representing local interests? Are you willing to speak to residents?
6. How many meetings do you attend, do you read all background material?
7. Were you ever involved in discussing community interest with your colleagues/other officers – how did you do that?
8. Give me an example of how Colville Estate has gone through the decision making process – what was your role as a representative in this?
9. How were you approachable to residents, what does approachable mean to you?
10. Given the opportunity to speak did you? Did you speak at committees/did you speak formally/informally to decision makers?
11. How do you balance the relationship between representing local residents and the decision making processes with the executive and the Council?

Appendix B: Interview questions for resident

1. How well represented did you feel by your councillors during the regeneration process?
2. How did they practice representation?
3. How could you approach them? – what tools did they use to get in touch?
4. Did they seem willing to represent your interests? How proactive were they?
5. Did they seem interested in representing your interests?
6. Did they seem capable/able to represent your interests?
7. If you had an issue – who would represent it? CETRA? Councillors? Officers?
8. How could representation be improved?

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM



FIELD / LOCATION WORK

The Approved Code of Practice - Management of Fieldwork should be referred to when completing this form

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates/safetynet/guidance/fieldwork/acop.pdf>

DEPARTMENT/SECTION

LOCATION(S) **REMOTE/ONLINE**

PERSONS COVERED BY THE RISK ASSESSMENT **Rose Sharkey**

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK remote interviews with local councillors

Consider, in turn, each hazard (white on black). If **NO** hazard exists select **NO** and move to next hazard section.

If a hazard does exist select **YES** and assess the risks that could arise from that hazard in the risk assessment box.

Where risks are identified that are not adequately controlled they must be brought to the attention of your Departmental Management who should put temporary control measures in place or stop the work. Detail such risks in the final section.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this hazard

e.g. location, climate, terrain, neighbourhood, in outside organizations, pollution, animals.

Examples of risk: adverse weather, illness, hypothermia, assault, getting lost.
Is the risk high / medium / low ?

NO

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- work abroad incorporates Foreign Office advice
- participants have been trained and given all necessary information
- only accredited centres are used for rural field work
- participants will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the specified environment
- trained leaders accompany the trip
- refuge is available
- work in outside organisations is subject to their having satisfactory H&S procedures in place

OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

EMERGENCIES Where emergencies may arise use space below to identify and assess any risks

e.g. fire, accidents Examples of risk: loss of property, loss of life
NO

CONTROL MEASURES Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- participants have registered with LOCATE at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/>
- fire fighting equipment is carried on the trip and participants know how to use it
- contact numbers for emergency services are known to all participants
- participants have means of contacting emergency services
- participants have been trained and given all necessary information
- a plan for rescue has been formulated, all parties understand the procedure
- the plan for rescue /emergency has a reciprocal element
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

EQUIPMENT Is equipment used? NO If 'No' move to next hazard
If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

e.g. clothing, outboard motors. Examples of risk: inappropriate, failure, insufficient training to use or repair, injury. Is the risk high / medium / low ?
NO

CONTROL MEASURES Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- the departmental written Arrangement for equipment is followed
- participants have been provided with any necessary equipment appropriate for the work
- all equipment has been inspected, before issue, by a competent person
- all users have been advised of correct use
- special equipment is only issued to persons trained in its use by a competent person
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

LONE WORKINGIs lone working
a possibility? YESIf 'No' move to next hazard
If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess
any
risks*e.g. alone or in isolation
lone interviews.*

Examples of risk: difficult to summon help. Is the risk high / medium / low?

REMOTE ONLINE INTERVIEWS

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	the departmental written Arrangement for lone/out of hours working for field work is followed
<input type="checkbox"/>	lone or isolated working is not allowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	location, route and expected time of return of lone workers is logged daily before work commences
<input type="checkbox"/>	all workers have the means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency, e.g. phone, flare, whistle
<input type="checkbox"/>	all workers are fully familiar with emergency procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

ILL HEALTH

The possibility of ill health always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this Hazard.

e.g. accident, illness,

Examples of risk: injury, asthma, allergies. Is the risk high / medium / low?

personal attack, special personal considerations or vulnerabilities.

NO

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- an appropriate number of trained first-aiders and first aid kits are present on the field trip
- all participants have had the necessary inoculations/ carry appropriate prophylactics
- participants have been advised of the physical demands of the trip and are deemed to be physically suited
- participants have been adequate advice on harmful plants, animals and substances they may encounter
- participants who require medication have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

TRANSPORT

Will transport be required

NO

X

Move to next hazard

YES

Use space below to identify and assess any risks

e.g. hired vehicles

Examples of risk: accidents arising from lack of maintenance, suitability or training

Is the risk high / medium / low?

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- only public transport will be used
- the vehicle will be hired from a reputable supplier
- transport must be properly maintained in compliance with relevant national regulations
- drivers comply with UCL Policy on Drivers http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college_drivers.php
- drivers have been trained and hold the appropriate licence
- there will be more than one driver to prevent driver/operator fatigue, and there will be adequate rest periods
- sufficient spare parts carried to meet foreseeable emergencies
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

DEALING WITH THE

Will people be

If 'No' move to next hazard

PUBLIC

dealing with public

YES

If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

e.g. interviews, observing

Examples of risk: personal attack, causing offence, being misinterpreted. Is the risk high / medium / low?

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- all participants are trained in interviewing techniques
- interviews are contracted out to a third party
- advice and support from local groups has been sought
- participants do not wear clothes that might cause offence or attract unwanted attention
- interviews are conducted at neutral locations or where neither party could be at risk
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

FIELDWORK**3**

May 2010

WORKING ON OR

Will people work on

NO

If 'No' move to next hazard

NEAR WATER

or near water?

If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

e.g. rivers, marshland, sea.

Examples of risk: drowning, malaria, hepatitis A, parasites. Is the risk high / medium / low?

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- lone working on or near water will not be allowed
- coastguard information is understood; all work takes place outside those times when tides could prove a threat
- all participants are competent swimmers
- participants always wear adequate protective equipment, e.g. buoyancy aids, wellingtons

- boat is operated by a competent person
- all boats are equipped with an alternative means of propulsion e.g. oars
- participants have received any appropriate inoculations
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

MANUAL HANDLING (MH)	Do MH activities take place?	NO	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks
-----------------------------	-------------------------------------	-----------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

e.g. lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy equipment, physical unsuitability for the task.

Examples of risk: strain, cuts, broken bones. Is the risk high / medium / low?

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk
-------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- the departmental written Arrangement for MH is followed
- the supervisor has attended a MH risk assessment course
- all tasks are within reasonable limits, persons physically unsuited to the MH task are prohibited from such activities
- all persons performing MH tasks are adequately trained
- equipment components will be assembled on site
- any MH task outside the competence of staff will be done by contractors
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

SUBSTANCES

Will participants work with

 NOIf 'No' move to next hazard
If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

substances

e.g. plants, chemical, biohazard, waste

Examples of risk: ill health - poisoning, infection, illness, burns, cuts. Is the risk high / medium / low?

CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

- the departmental written Arrangements for dealing with hazardous substances and waste are followed
- all participants are given information, training and protective equipment for hazardous substances they may encounter
- participants who have allergies have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
- waste is disposed of in a responsible manner
- suitable containers are provided for hazardous waste
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

OTHER HAZARDS

Have you identified any other hazards?

 NOIf 'No' move to next section
If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks*i.e. any other hazards must be noted and assessed here.*

Hazard:

Risk: is the risk

CONTROL MEASURES

Give details of control measures in place to control the identified risks

Have you identified any risks that are not adequately controlled?

 NO X

Move to Declaration

Use space below to identify the risk and what action was taken

Is this project subject to the UCL requirements on the ethics of Non-NHS Human Research?

 NO

If yes, please state your Project ID Number

For more information, please refer to: <http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/>

DECLARATION

The work will be reassessed whenever there is a significant change and at least annually. Those participating in the work have read the assessment.

Select the appropriate statement:

- I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that there is no significant residual risk
- I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above

NAME OF SUPERVISOR

ELENA BESUSSI

FIELDWORK 5

May 2010