

Watch (*out for*) these spaces

Can communities make place based change happen?

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10 years of TSRC
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BVSC



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This session....

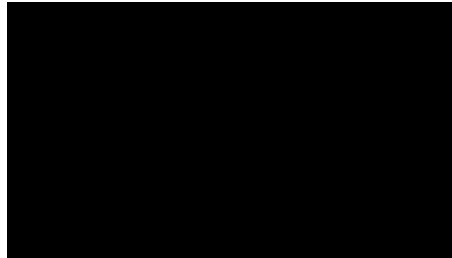
- Explores the current policy (and practice) emphasis on hyper-local community action
 - The counter-pressures on hyper-local community action
 - The consequences of ‘going local’
 - Implications for future policy, practice and research
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This session includes learning drawn from.....

- Practice
 - 10 years of 'below the radar' research
 - 5 years evaluation of Big Local: resident led change
 - Learning drawn from 4 community organising programmes 2011-present
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Starting Points 1

- [A short film](#)



- Thinking about community led change - your reflections on the film:
 - What is powerful about the film?
 - What might be missing?

STARTING POINTS 2

- *Perhaps one of the few remaining big mysteries in nonprofit sector research is the question of what we are missing by excluding those organisations from empirical investigations that are not easily captured in standard data sources.*
(Toepler: 2003 p 236)
- *“Bottom-up and community-led activities which so often bubble along under the radar are receiving new public recognition. This is in part because **we are on the threshold** of political change and deep economic restraint...” (Oppenheim et al., **2010**: 2).*
- Current policy interest in place based change

The policy context; what's not to like?

- An emphasis on community and community rights and ownership of assets
 - Devolution of power; from central to local government to communities
 - Co-production: community voice and influence
 - Hyper-localism as change/action on a human scale
 - Community *'is the solution'*
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Communities delivering policy

- Communities (people/places) delivering on:
 - Place making and neighbourhoods but also:
 - Wellbeing (NHS 10 year plan; 2019)
 - Cohesion (Integrated Communities Strategy 2018)
 - Safety (Department of Justice)
 - Sustainability (sustainable communities strategies)
 - Resilience (community resilience frameworks)....
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Quick quiz 1

- “It is my belief, after a century in which to tackle social injustice the state has had to take power to ensure social progress, that to tackle the social injustices that still remain the state will have to give away power.”
 - Who said this?
 - And for a bonus point: When?
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This is not new

- Not a new policy/Conservative administration emphasis
 - Direction of travel for (at least) 20 years:
 - Policy Action Team Reports (1998-2000)
 - Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (2001)
 - Communities in Control (2008)
 - Localism Act (2010)
 - 'Big Society'
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The warm glow of policy (assets)



More of a warm glow.....



The basis of policy and practice?

- *[You] can only make a change in the world by making change in your community'*
 - *Local places matter to many of us, perhaps even more in a digital age – to meet real people, talk eye to eye.....Healthy civil society is rooted in places,*
 - Civil Society Futures; 2018
 - But.....
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Challenges to hyper-local

- *‘Being realistic, you can’t solve poverty by setting up a little group on Tuesday nights. Community development cannot help if there is no food in the cupboard. It can improve people’s quality of life, but the only way to tackle poverty is economic investment.’*
- *‘Community members are doing everything they can to minimise disadvantage at a very basic level. There is a history of the chapels being a source of support, but the institutions that used to support people are disappearing.....*
- IVAR: Empowered Communities in the 2020s (2018)

Local Led Action: Quick Quiz 2

- Between 2014 and 2018 sector income:

increased *stayed stable* *declined*

- Since 2010, employment in the sector:

increased *stayed stable* *declined*

- As a % of sector income the importance of grants:

increased *stayed stable* *declined*

In which England region was income change most marked?

A different financial/ community context

- The counter-pressures that mitigate against hyper-localism
 - Power lies elsewhere
 - Austerity has hit the poorest communities hardest
 - The financialisation of community/public spaces spaces
 - Growing inequalities
 - Growing divisions within and between communities
 - Demonization (Jones: 2011)
 - Gentrification (Portland Road, Notting Hill)
 - Transience (Powerful Communities 2020s)
 - Connective rather than collective action (social media)
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A Different Spacial Context

Since Margaret Thatcher took power in 1979, and hidden from the public eye, about 10 per cent of the entire British land mass, including some of its most valuable real estate, has passed from public to private hands

Brett Christophers (2018) *The New Enclosure: The Appropriation of Public Land in Neoliberal Britain*

- ..and it's not just large spaces.

Consequences of hyper-localism

- Emphasis on locality – cf. communities of interest
 - Limited analysis of power/where it lies
 - Micro-responses to macro issues
 - Heads down – not seeing the bigger picture
 - Opportunities to network and learn being lost
 - Places and spaces to come together also being lost
 - Responding to need – inappropriately? From advocacy, campaigning to service delivery
 - Evidencing impact – with inappropriate expectations (wellbeing agenda)
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Future gazing 1

- *“I don’t want to predict what the future, say in five years, will look like for voluntary never mind community groups. There may be a leaner but more efficient and effective sector, a more entrepreneurial and business like sector – or just a leaner one. What we will see played out in some form is **a profound change in the relationships between people, government and the sector.**” (Development Agency Interview; 2010)*
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Future gazing 2

- Things will not change (for the better) if ***the*** focus of policy and practice is hyper-local
 - Change is about more than relationships at a hyper-local level; politics and power
 - Communities without resources and support will be left further behind (The St Matthew conundrum of localism)
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Some questions....

- Your thoughts on this analysis...
 - More widely, The Civil Society Futures Inquiry calls for voluntary and community groups to be brave – what might courage look like?
 - What are the implications of the current environment/policy and emphasis on hyper-local for
 - Practice
 - Research
 - A shared agenda?
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And finally....

- Visit

www.tsrc.ac.uk

www.ourbiggerstory.com

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