Civil Society and a Good Society: Conclusions from our Collaborative Conversations

Katy Goldstraw and John Diamond
2017

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the civil society organisations, universities and Fairness Commissions that we have worked in partnership with to develop our research and to coordinate our Meeting of Minds conference, focus groups, roundtables and art event. We would especially like to thank those organisations who helped us by co-hosting events. We would like to thank too everyone who has taken the time to participate in our research.

Contents

Acknowledgements 2
Executive Summary: Collaborative Conversations 4
Collaborative Conversations in Focus: Introduction 6
Methodology 7
  Literature Review 7
  Research with Civil Society Groups: Phase One 8
  Research with Civil Society Groups: Phase Two 9
  Research with the Fairness Commissions 10
  Our Research Approach 11
  Analysing the Research 13
Literature Review Snapshot: The Response of Civil Society to Poverty and Inequality in the UK in Recent Decades 14
  Understanding the Terms 14
  Relative Poverty 15
  Measuring Poverty 15
  Poverty Cycle 16
  Defining Inequality 16
Philosophical Perspectives on Poverty: What Is a Good Society? 17
  Capabilities and Freedom 17
  Capabilities and Constructional Principles 18
  Questioning a Good Society: Where Does the Duty to Relieve Poverty Sit? 18
A Good Society: Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector 19
  The Great Society 19
  Utopians and Realists 19
  From the Great Society to the Big Society 20
  Is a Good Society a Civil Society? 20
  A Globalised Civil Society 21
  Blurred Boundaries, Hybrid Organisations 21
  Faith and Civil Society 22
  Constructive Challengers 22
  The Voluntary Sector: Civil Society Formalised? 22
  A Third Sector 23
  Big Society and the Office for Civil Society 23
  The Voluntary Sector's Response to Market Failure 39
  Poverty Trap 24
  New Forms of Civil Society and Voluntary Organisations 25
  Voluntary Sector Challenges 26
  Summary 27
Considering our Conversations: Civil Society 28
Creating a Good Society; Listening to Those with Experience of Poverty 29
  Grassroots Voices 29
  Speaking Truth to Power 29
  Building Democratic Space 30
  Building Leadership and Empowered Voices 30
Doing Without: Poverty and Inequality 31
  Love and Money 31
  Defining Poverty and Inequality 31
  Improved Economic Vision 32
  Tackling Inequality: Minimum Income 32
  Tackling Inequality: Fair Pay Ratios 33
  Responsible and Ethical Organisations 33
  Business that Understands People 34
Approaches to Creating a Good Society: Collaboration 35
  The Changing Nature of Civil Society 35
  Collaboration as a Means of Change 36
  Creating a Collective Civil Society 36
  Creating Cross-Sector Partnerships 36
  Taking Some Risks 36
  Letting Go of Power 37
  Collaboration as Resistance 37
  A Renegotiated Collaboration 38
  Transparent and Innovative Commissioning 38
Developing a Good Society. Building a Strong Independent VCS: Poverty, Charity and Civil Society 39
  Developing Value Through Creativity and Openness 39
  Neoliberalism Is Not an Accident 40
Developing a Good Society. A Strong Voice: Building a Counter Narrative 41
  What Sort of Counter Narrative? 41
  A Counter Narrative of Virtues 41
Developing a Good Society. Reigniting Democracy: Developing the Messy Middle Grounds 42
  A Deeper, More Participatory Democracy 42
  Building Healthy Institutions 43
Returning to Human Values 44
  A Post-Capitalist Model 44
  Shared Values as Resistance 45
  Values and Reciprocity 45
  Values and Relatedness 46
Creating a Strong Counter Narrative to Neoliberalism 47
Creating Creative Alternatives: Creativity and the Arts, Philosophy and Ethics 48
  Creative Engagement With the Arts 48
  Grassroots Vision Using Creative Means 49
Phase Two of our Collaborative Conversations. 50
  Older People and Poverty 52
  Food and Poverty 54
  Equality, Fairness and a Good Society 58
Housing and Poverty 60
  Grassroots Experiences of Poverty 62
Trust and Poverty 64
Race and a Good Society 68
Arts Event; Young People 70
Summary of Winter Conversations 72
Collaborative Conversations in Focus: Fairness Commissions 73
Fairness Commissions in Focus: Case Studies and Survey 74
Fairness Commissions In Depth: Interviews with Commissioners. 75
  Significance. Voice. Action 75
  Power: Persuasion 75
  Power: Local Versus National 76
Fairness Commission Roundtables 77
  Fairness Commission Roundtable at the House of Commons 77
  Starting a Conversation: Campaigning 77
  Campaigning – With or Against the Grain? 78
  Fairness Commission Roundtable in Birmingham 78
Fairness Commission Research Summary 79
Collaborative Conversations in Focus: Conclusions 80
  What Might a Good Society Look Like? 80
  How Might We Get To a Good Society? 80
  Who Might Create a Good Society? 82
  A Good Society Isn't an Easy Solution 83
Creative Challenges 84
Appendix One: Fairness Commission Snapshots 85
Bibliography 95

Executive Summary: Collaborative Conversations

The Webb Memorial Trust commissioned Edge Hill University's Institute of Public Policy and Professional Practice to examine civil society's response to poverty and inequality as part of a wider research project examining the concepts of a Good Society. This, our final report, is a summary of our collaborative conversations. It is a continuation of our *Collaborative Conversations in Focus* document which was an interim report, published in October 2016, summarising the first part of our research project and our *Collaborative Conversations* document, published in June 2016. **This final report summarises our iterative research findings and sets out a number of creative challenges informed by our findings.**

This research, is one contribution to Sidney and Beatrice Webb's vision of a Good Society and is part of a number of separate but linked projects funded by the Trust. At the request of the Trust, we have conducted three intertwined pieces of research. Firstly (August 2015) an initial literature review, secondly working with **civil society groups,** a broader understanding of what a Good Society might look like has been developed. Thirdly members of Fairness Commissions were asked to reflect on their progress, successes and potential sustainability, and to consider how they might contribute to a Good Society.

Conversations with Fairness Commissions and civil society groups led us to conclude that a strong independent civil society can contribute to a Good Society. Our conversations with civil society groups and Fairness Commissions have **revealed three potentially mutually exclusive visions of a Good Society. The first is of a Good Society that repairs the current welfare state, restores institutions and reimagines the Webbs' extension ladder model of a Good Society.**

The second vision is of a society based on strong human values of public love, care, tolerance, respect and kindness. This vision of a Good Society reignites the philosophical debate around what a Good Society might look like. By reinvesting in democracy and developing a credible counter narrative to neoliberalism based on human values, civil society can help to build a Good Society. This vision of a Good Society argues that in creating a strong counter narrative to the political status quo, a Good Society can emerge. To create a Good Society, in this vision, we need to reconsider our understanding of society as beyond that of nation state, recognising the globalised heterogeneous world in which we sit. Conversations with Fairness Commissions and civil society groups reveal that collaboration and supportive relationships, webs of social ties, human capital, trust and kindness need to be developed within and between organisations. Here the Webbs' parallel bars model is redeveloped, with grassroots voices at its core.

The third vision of a Good Society might seem more pragmatic, as it recognises where we are in terms of welfare reform and uses the social scaffolding of civil society to temporarily alleviate the gaps in welfare provision. In a return to human values as a counter narrative to neoliberalism, a strong independent civil society offers a powerful resistance to poverty. This resistance creates ‘messy middle grounds’ (Sparke 2008) where the Webbs’ extension ladder is extended and updated into a social scaffolding of value-based organisations. In this model, a Good Society is found in strong collaborations between responsible and ethical organisations. A Good Society develops through the recognition of heterogeneity and diversity, and from a solidarity of tolerance and respect. Hybrid organisations, experienced at integrated working, that are no longer sector specialised but expert collaborators, operating within a heterogeneous globalised world, will be the ones in this vision to create a Good Society.

The homogenous vision of a socially cohesive Good Society that was espoused by the post-war welfare state represents the extension ladders imagined by the Webbs. From behind the scaffolding of civil society, in our updated analogy, a heterogeneous solidarity of globalised hybrid responsible and ethical organisations emerges. These organisations are temporarily covering the cracks in welfare provision, offering a temporary vision of a Good Society.

As part of our iterative research process considering who might create a Good Society we have developed creative challenges. These form part of our conclusion.

Collaborative Conversations in Focus: Introduction

The Webb Memorial Trust commissioned Edge Hill University's Institute of Public Policy and Professional Practice to examine civil society's response to poverty and inequality as part of a wider research project examining the concepts of a Good Society. This, the final report, is our summary of our collaborative conversations. It is the culmination of our *Collaborative Conversations in Focus* document, published in October 2016, which was an interim report summarising the first part of our research project and our Collaborative Conversations document published in June 2016, which introduced our research. **This final report summarises our iterative research findings and sets out a number of creative challenges to build a Good Society.**

This research sits within the context of Sidney and Beatrice Webb's research into a Good Society. The Minority Report (1909) 'began a new public argument about the causes of poverty, about the responsibility for preventing it and by extension, about the nature of citizenship' (Katwala 2009:2). In 1916, in their book *The Prevention of Destitution*, Sydney and Beatrice Webb set out the parallel bars/extension ladder models of voluntary action. In the parallel bars model, the state and civil society work side by side to reduce poverty. In the extension ladder model, the state and civil society hold different roles. In this model, the state provides the basic minimum for all citizens and voluntary action extends from this basic minimum. In the Webbs' (1916) model, voluntary action and civil society are not a substitute for state action; they are additional to it. The Webbs created their vision of a Good Society in 1916. **This research, one hundred and one years after their book The Prevention of Destitution, is one contribution to the Webbs' vision of a Good Society**.

We conducted three intertwined pieces of research, considering civil society's reflections on a Good Society. The first piece of research began in August 2015 with an initial literature review. This literature review is available on the Edge Hill University website. The second research focus considered **civil society** more broadly, and its contribution to creating a Good Society. The third research focus revisited the work of the **Fairness Commissions**, and it invited members of these Commissions to reflect on their progress, successes and sustainability, and to consider how they have contributed to a Good Society.

This report has developed from our Collaborative Conversations in Focus document (October 2016). As part of our **iterative research methodology**, we ran a series of focus groups during the autumn of 2016 and the spring of 2017. These focus groups specifically focussed on civil society's responses to poverty and inequality in relation to specific themes of race, housing, fairness, trust, food, young people and older people. This is **in recognition of the diversity of communities in terms of both geography and identity** (Sparke 2008) **that civil society groups represent**. The notes from these focus groups were analysed and are included in this our final report.

This report begins with our methodology before considering the research findings from the focus group discussions. We then move on to consider the findings of our research with the Fairness Commissions, before seeking to draw some conclusions from our interconnected research pieces.

[1] www.edgehill.ac.uk/I4P

Methodology

We conducted three intertwined pieces of research, considering civil society's reflections on a Good Society. The first phase of the research began in August 2015 with an initial literature review. The full version of the literature review is available on the Edge Hill University website (www.edgehill.ac.uk/I4P). We have included a snapshot of the literature review in this final report as it gives context to our research. We then conducted research with civil society groups and with Fairness Commissions.

Literature Review

A literature review can be defined as 'a systematic and thorough search of all types of published literature in order to identify as many items as possible that are relevant to that particular topic' (Gash 1999:1). The size of the research topic did not allow for a complete review of the literature. Given this limitation, a snowball approach (Ridley 2012) was taken to the literature, whereby after an initial literature search, other relevant literature was drawn from the bibliographies of existing documents.

This literature review aimed to gain a detailed picture of current policy, theory and practice (Ridley 2012; Boyd et al. 2007). In recognition of the changed political environment following the 2010 and 2015 elections, it has focussed on literature post-2010 and where possible has sought to locate as many documents published after the May 2015 General Election.
Key texts were identified (Lansley and Mack 2015, Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014; Cooper et al. 2014; Milbourne 2013; Lambie 2011; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) and the literature search was snowballed from the bibliographies of these key texts. A broader document search was also conducted using internet search engines to ensure policy and think tank publications were included in the review. Literature was broadly classified under these terms: poverty, civil society, good society and food aid. The material was analysed according to the classification context; this allowed interpretation of key issues such as poverty traps, the poverty cycle and diversity of food aid provision. The review cited over two hundred and fifty sources, made up of policy papers, academic articles, books and news articles. The literature review began by defining key terms: poverty, inequality and civil society.

Research with Civil Society Groups: Phase One

The second intertwined research focus considered civil society more broadly, and its contribution to creating a Good Society. This research took place in two phases, gathering emerging themes before returning to discuss the key issues that emerged as part of the discussions. During phase one, we held one Meeting of Minds conference attended by thirty people and seven focus groups attended in total by one hundred and twenty people.

We organised the Meeting of Minds conference in December 2015 in Manchester. Feedback and discussion from this conference were recorded alongside pre-prepared reflections submitted to the university by the participants. We conducted focus groups across the UK. We invited representatives of civil society to consider what a Good Society might look like. These focus groups were held in Belfast, Newcastle, Birmingham, Newport, Bath, London and Glasgow. At the conference, discussion and feedback from the groups were recorded alongside written reflections submitted by the participants. Recognising that these focus groups could not possibly cover the entirety of the UK an online reflection opportunity was created, so that participants who could not attend a focus group but wished to contribute could submit an online reflection. The notes from these focus groups and the pre-prepared reflections created by participants were analysed using the qualitative research computer package NViVo.

Civil Society Focus Groups	Partner Organisations
Birmingham	Pioneer Housing Group
Newcastle	Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services
Bath	Bath University
Newport	University of South Wales
	Newport Fairness Commission
Belfast	University of Ulster
London	Webb Memorial Trust
	APPG
Glasgow	Glasgow Centre for Voluntary Services

Research with Civil Society Groups: Phase Two

As part of our iterative research approach, once the findings from the first set of focus groups had been analysed and published in our *Collaborative Conversations in Focus* document in October 2016, we took the report out to a further seven focus groups across the UK for feedback. In these Winter Conversations we invited members of civil society and voluntary sector groups to help us extend our collaborative conversations. We held seven focus group meetings and one art event, attended in total by ninety-five participants. We asked participants to comment on and discuss our existing research themes from specific perspectives: Food Poverty, Race and Poverty, Young People and Poverty, Older People and Poverty, Trust and a Good Society, and Grassroots Experiences of Poverty and a Good Society.

We took a creative approach to this phase of research, deliberately varying our focus group styles in order to engage a wider variety of participants. Our focus group in Belfast, focussed on Trust, was held over afternoon tea. Our focus group on Food and Poverty linked to the End Hunger UK campaign. Members of this focus group wrote ideas to end hunger in the UK on a paper plate and added a picture of it to twitter using the hashtag #endhungerUK[2].We also used a visual artist to document our discussions at our Food Focus Group[3] in Swansea. Our Race and Poverty event was in partnership with a participatory art organisation HerArt[4], to engage participants in the creation of a craft artwork during the focus group as an expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas, linked to the concept of Native American ‘dream catchers’. Our focus group that considered grassroots experiences of poverty held a discussion after hearing testimony from a member of Chester’s Poverty Truth Commission[5] and watching the Ken Loach film *I Daniel Blake*.

Our young people’s event partnered with the Bluecoat arts centre[6] in Liverpool and artist Ruth Beale[7] to create a hybrid relational art exhibition. The event was a sustainably sourced Sunday Lunch. The participants were asked to engage in a series of games during the meal that focussed thoughts on the concepts of a Good Society, followed by a discussion and debate over coffee. The notes from these focus groups and the art event were analysed using the qualitative research computer package NViVo.

Civil Society Focus Groups	Location	Partner Organisations
Food and Poverty	Swansea	Swansea University
Older People and Poverty	Blackpool	Blackpool Fairness Commission
Equality and Fairness and Poverty	Newcastle	NCVS
Housing and Poverty	Oxford	Oxford University
Grassroots Experiences of Poverty	Chester	Poverty Truth Commission
Trust and a Good Society	Belfast	Ulster University
Race and Poverty	Manchester	HerArt
Art Event:Young People and a Good Society	Liverpool	Bluecoat arts centre

---

[2] www.endhungeruk.org
[3] https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/files/2015/10/FoodPov-ReportOct2016-OK.pdf
[4] www.herart.co.uk
[5] www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/news-and-views/campaigns/west-cheshire-poverty-truth-commission.aspx
[6] www.thebluecoat.org.uk
[7] www.ruthbeale.net

Research with the Fairness Commissions

The second research focus revisited the Fairness Commissions, reflecting on their progress, successes and sustainability and considering how they have contributed to a Good Society. In the autumn of 2015 a fifteen semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with representatives from thirteen Fairness Commissions. The Fairness Commissions were identified via contacts made as part of the Agency in Austerity research commissioned by the Webb Memorial Trust (Bunyan and Diamond 2014), and then more Commissions were identified via conversations with existing contacts, internet searches of new Fairness Commissions and the June 2015 New Economics Foundation (NEF) report. An email invitation was sent to all Fairness Commission contacts. From this initial email, telephone interviews were arranged. Notes were made during the telephone interviews and were then written up and emailed back to the interviewees, to ensure accuracy.

Fifteen semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of thirteen Fairness Commissions. They took place between October 2015 and November 2015.

Fairness Commissions Interviewed

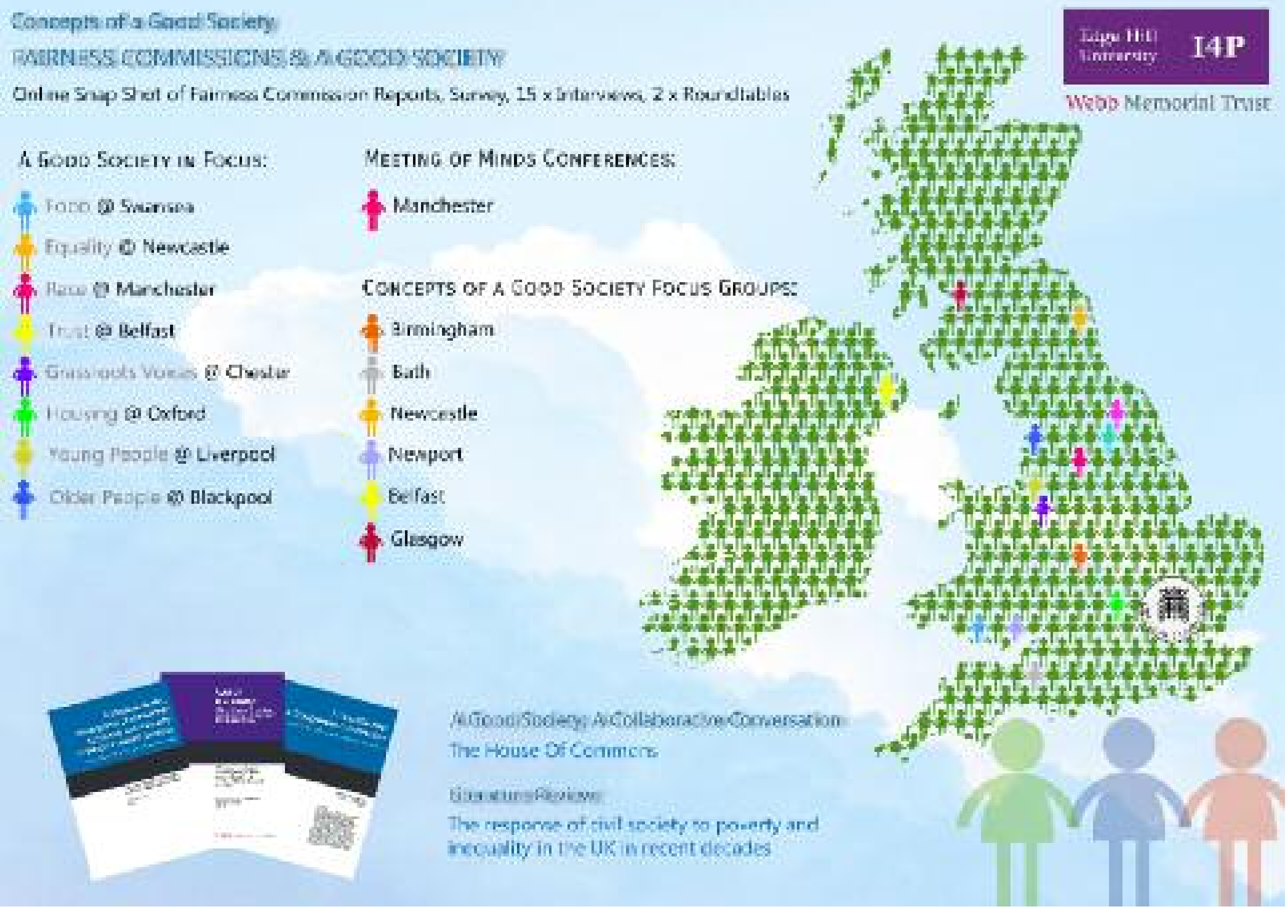
Camden Fairness Commission
Equality Trust
Greater Manchester Poverty Commission
Islington Fairness Commission
Lancashire Fairness Commissions
Liverpool Fairness Commission
Living Wage Foundation
Manchester Poverty Action Group
My Fair London
Newcastle Fairness Commission
Newport Fairness Commission
Plymouth Fairness Commission
Southampton Fairness Commission

Two questions were asked in each interview: How significant or sustainable do you think the Fairness Commissions' approach has been?; What are your thoughts on the recommendations made in the 2014 *Agency in Austerity* report? The responses to these two questions have been collated. Some Fairness Commissions had completed their work and some had completed their reports and were in the process of enacting recommendations, whilst others were just beginning the process. There was a broad mix of experience among the Commission representatives that were interviewed.

These semi-structured interviews were supported with an online survey, conducted in order that we could analyse the results using a Likert Scale, and two roundtable focus groups. The first roundtable focus group was in June 2016 at the House of Commons. The second was in October 2016, in Birmingham. Both roundtable meetings reflected on Fairness Commission best practice and discussed Fairness Commission successes and sustainability, considering how they have contributed to a Good Society.

Our Research Approach

We took a qualitative approach to the research as the concepts of a Good Society are by their nature philosophical and often require in-depth reflection. The Webb Memorial Trust, in funding this research and in asking what a Good Society might look like, created an opportunity for what as been described as 'emancipatory research (Gilchrist et al. 2015; Baker et al. 2013; Minkler and Chang 2013). Below is a visual image of our research.


Concepts of a Good Society
FAIRNESS COMMISSIONS & A GOOD SOCIETY
Online Snap Shot of Fairness Commission Reports, Survey, 15 x Interviews, 2 x Roundtables
A GOOD SOCIETY IN FOCUS:
Food @ Swansea
Equality @ Newcastle
Race @ Manchester
Trust @ Belfast
Grassroots Voices @ Chester
Housing @ Oxford
Young People @ Liverpool
Older People @ Blackpool
MEETING OF MINDS CONFERENCES:
Manchester
CONCEPTS OF A GOOD SOCIETY FOCUS GROUPS:
Birmingham
Bath
Newcastle
Newport
Belfast
Glasgow
Edge Hill University
I4P
Webb Memorial Trust
A Good Society: A Collaborative Conversation
The House Of Commons
Literature Review
The response of civil society to poverty and inequality in the UK in recent decades

Using participatory research techniques, our research methodology focussed on achieving an empowering and emancipatory function (Baker et al. 2013; Minkler and Chang 2013; Reid et al. 2009). Participation and conscientisation (Freire 1974) offer an opportunity for participants to question and to problematise their experiences as **civil society** groups. In so doing participants share experiences, build conscientisation (Freire 1974) and empower action (Clennon et al. 2015). For this reason we used participatory research techniques and embedded the research within a literature review that focuses on the response of **civil society** to poverty and inequality.

Participatory research as a theoretical and methodological perspective offers a framework for iterative research and offers an opportunity for continuous learning and revaluation of knowledge (Lewin 1951). In taking a participatory approach to our research we utilised reflexivity in recognising and engaging with notions of power, both within the research process and within the broader societal context (Reid et al. 2009). Participatory approaches are collaborative: research with people in a social context. In taking a participatory approach to our research we have committed to understanding and questioning multiple understandings of complex social systems.

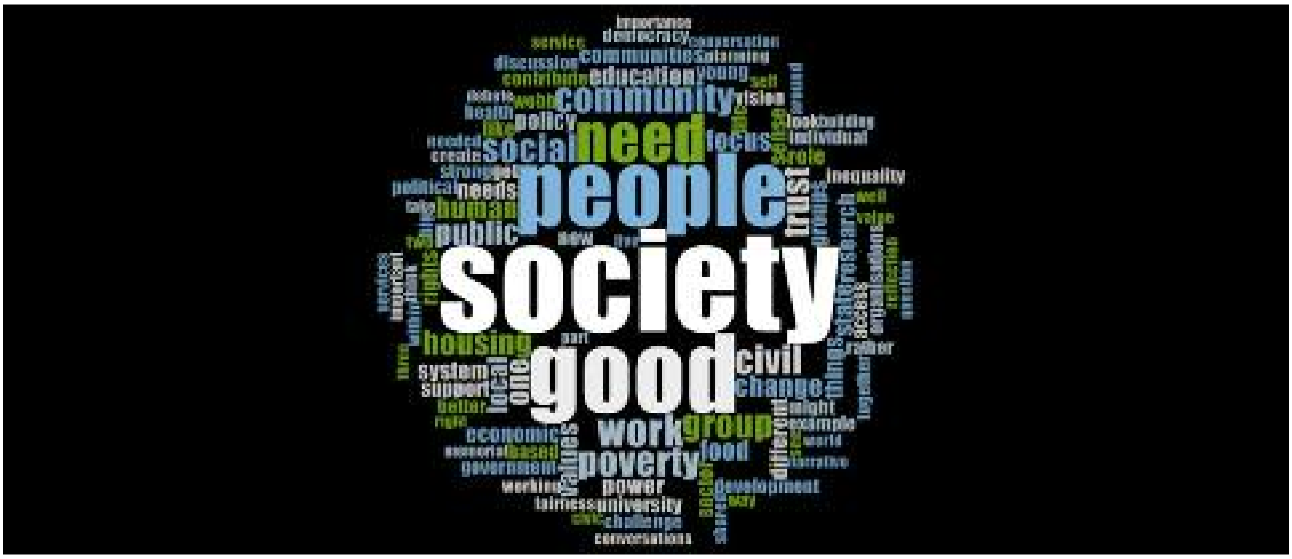
By engaging in an iterative research approach, we aim to offer interpretations for the everyday whilst also offering analysis of our research (Williams and Pierce 2015). In using our research to gather the diversity of opinions, ideas and approaches we recognise that ‘creative solutions arise out of interaction under conditions of uncertainty, diversity and instability’ (Fullan 1999:4). In engaging in collaborative conversations with civil society groups and Fairness Commissions we are attempting to open academic dialogue, believing this to be most effective when all opposing voices at the table can be heard. In developing dialogue, in having conversations where conflict is embraced we recognise that there is a need to be diverse, to have conflicted conversations (Fullan 1999).

In recognising the multiplicity of interpretations of a Good Society and reinventing them using creative means, we have chosen to use arts methodologies. Arts practice allows us to consider both discursive and non-discursive ways of knowing (Langer 1957) and to consider the emotional element of our research topic. Arts can add a plurality to research which is essential when considering such an emotive and politically sensitive topic as ‘what is a Good Society?’ with focus groups. The production of knowledge through arts becomes philosophy in action. Our research approach recognises that reflexivity is essential to validate our findings and to understanding where within an interdisciplinary setting our research fits (Bourdieu 1986). Arts offer a way of reviewing a phenomenon (Caputo 1987), of re-scrutinising through different means and lenses (Goodman 1968). Art offers the capacity to ‘vex’ (Geertz 1983) fellow conversationalists via the creation of powerful aesthetic forms. We have deliberately chosen to use a qualitative, iterative, creative conversational approach to our research in order to fully consider what a Good Society might look like from as wide a variety of perspectives as possible.

Analysing the Research

The research began with an overall aim, a ‘foreshadowed problem’ as Malinowski (1922:8–9) might have suggested, which was to consider concepts of a Good Society. The analysis has, however, been open and iterative (Williams and Pierce 2016) in its approach. The data collection began in October 2015 and was completed in April 2017. Our Meeting of Minds conference, focus groups and an art event were attended by a total of over two hundred and twenty people. We interviewed fifteen representatives of Fairness Commissions and the two roundtables were attended by a total of over twenty people.

Each research interaction, semi-structured interview, conference or focus group was recorded in note form. After each research interaction, notes were written up. Themes developed during the research process, and analysis ran parallel to the research and themes developed throughout. We developed the themes by examining the data in order to make sense of it as a cohesive narrative; a logic was then developed from the data, the ‘sculpt [ing] [of] fully contoured ideas’ (Charmaz 1990:1168). Themes emerged from the reflexive field notes, were analysed using the qualitative research computer package NViVo, and pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of civil society’s collective experience.


importance
democracy
conversation
service
discussion
communities
education
young
contribute
self
community
vision
policy
health
need
focus
lookbuilding
individual
social
create
role
trust
inequality
people
needs
political
human
well
value
public
society
research
housing
good
civil
change
system
support
local
better
economic
work
group
example
world
poverty
government
based
values
power
working
development
fairness
university
challenge
conversations
different
things
access
rather
art
one
rights

Our collaborative conversation emerged throughout the research process as a piece of iterative dialogue within and between focus groups and interviews. This final report is a summary of our analysis of the themes that emerged from our three intertwined research processes: literature review, civil society focus groups and Fairness Commission research.

Literature Review Snapshot: The Response of Civil Society to Poverty and Inequality in the UK in Recent Decades

The literature review was completed in the autumn of 2015 and the references used reflect this. The full literature review can be found at www.edgehill.ac.uk/I4P . A snapshot of the literature review is included within this report in order to give context to our qualitative research. The literature review seeks to consider the response of civil society to poverty and inequality in the UK in recent decades.

Understanding the Terms

Poverty is a difficult word to define (Unwin 2013). The UK government does not have an official definition of poverty but the Office for National Statistics (ONS) uses a monetary measure, as does the UK's Child Poverty Act 2010 (Davis and Sanchez-Martinez 2015:12). Poverty is most often defined within the boundaries of absolute and relative (Townsend 1979). There is no clear definition of the word poverty; most common definitions refer to notions of absolute poverty, relative poverty and social exclusion (Knight 2015). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2013) defines poverty as a 'situation where a person's resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet minimum needs (including social participation)' (in Davis and Sanchez-Martinez 2015:7). Most definitions separate absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty can be defined thus:

> *...the term poverty is commonly used in two ways. It is used to describe a state of affairs in an absolute sense or to describe a state of affairs relative to another. When one is described as poor in the absolute sense, one is said to be living at or below the level of subsistence. The emphasis here is on biophysical survival: if one is poor, one's needs that make living possible are not met.* (Hull 2007:9)

Hull (2007) states that absolute poverty is of greater moral importance, yet relative poverty is still important. Pogge (2007) uses the term severe poverty instead of absolute poverty. Pogge's definition of those in extreme poverty includes 'those in contract peril of being unable to meet their basic needs' (2007:2). Lotter (2011) suggests two alternative definitions of poverty: extreme and intermediate. Extreme poverty can be described as not having the ability to maintain basic needs, such as physical health. Intermediate poverty is 'demarcated by a loss of human dignity' (Lotter 2011:35). Indeed Oxfam's latest campaign uses the term extreme poverty[8]. Campbell (2007) suggests that poverty can be understood in two ways: as an injustice deriving from the relationship between the poor and affluent or as an injustice experienced by the poor in suffering and hunger. Campbell (2007) identifies the consequences of poverty as social exclusion. Sen (1999) uses a capability approach to understanding poverty, assessing people's lives in terms of what they can do and be. Sen's (1999) capability approach is discussed later in this review.

---

[8] http://www.oxfam.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2015/09/inequality-trapping-hundreds-of-millions-in-extreme-poverty

Relative Poverty

The most commonly used definitions of poverty are of relative poverty (GMPC 2013:5). Relative poverty definitions

> *emphasise the need for living in a more substantive or qualitative sense. This is because they tend to pinpoint the gap, or gulf, between those who enjoy a high standard of living and those in the same society who do not, even if they cannot be said to be poor in an absolute sense … The concept then becomes meaningfully operative only after subsistence has been achieved.* (Hull 2007:10)

Fleurbaey (2007) reminds us that poverty is not simply quantitative but is also qualitative. Relative poverty is usually described as an individual having less than sixty per cent of the median income. The sixty per cent threshold is used within the European Union. Relative poverty has clear links to inequality (Sen 1983). There are issues with the concept of relative poverty if one considers it simply in comparative terms. If poverty is defined solely in relative terms, Shaw (1988) argues that a rich but unequal society would be considered to have more poverty than one in which the majority were mostly poor. Sen (1983) uses an example of a Cadillac to demonstrate some of the conceptual difficulties with relative poverty. He argues that we would not call a person poor if they were not able to afford to purchase a new Cadillac a day when others can purchase more. Indeed, Harrison (1988) links a definition of poverty to an examination of what is desired in order to achieve a socially acceptable life.

Measuring Poverty

Income or consumption is regularly used to measure poverty, to create a poverty line: ‘a person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income levels fall below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the poverty line’ (Ravallion and Chen 2008). The poverty line differs between nation states to reflect the diversity of living standards in each country (GMPC 2013). JRF (2009) offers a definition of poverty which is inclusive of absolute and relative terms:

> *…low resources is just one indicator of poverty. A fuller picture looks at all resources, not only income. This can include access to decent housing, community amenities and social networks, and assets i.e. what people own. Somebody who lacks these resources can be said to be in poverty in a wider sense.* (JRF 2009:19)

Mack and Lansley (1985) developed an approach to mapping a poverty line by identifying the minimum acceptable way of life for Britain in the 1980s. This minimum standard has been updated throughout the decades to reflect changes in modernity, with items such as televisions and computers added to the minimum standards. More recent research has defined minimum standards for various groups such as those living in London (Padley et al. 2015) and Leicester (Hirsch et al. 2014) and single people living in shared housing (Hill et al. 2015). Poverty is, as discussed above, difficult to define as there is ‘little agreement about the means for measuring it’ (Knight 2015:9).

Poverty Cycle

Rowntree (1901) identified a poverty cycle. The impact of poverty is damaging, having both short- and long-term consequences for individuals and families (Knight 2015). Poverty results in spoiled lives of individuals, reduced life opportunities for children born to families with low incomes and costs to society in general (Knight 2015). A poverty cycle can be tracked by correlating the incomes of parents and the achievements of their children (Knight 2015). Work by Karelis (2007) considers the notion of a poverty cycle. Karelis's (2007) research is based in the USA; he concludes that 'children born in the lowest 10 per cent of families ranked by income have a fifty-one per cent chance probability of ending up in the lowest twenty per cent of adults' (2007:x). Karelis's (2007) philosophical considerations as to why this is the case, why poor people seemingly choose behaviours that sustain their poverty, are controversial (Wolf et al. 2015). However, Karelis (2007) argues that poor people need to be removed from their experience of poverty before it becomes economically efficient for them to change their behaviours, i.e. the behaviours that keep them poor. Indeed, Lotter (2011) adds to the philosophical debate around human behaviours and poverty by noting that poverty is a distinctly human characteristic. The link between dignity and poverty is developed by Wolff and de-Shalit (2007). They note that Bradshaw and Finch (2002),in their definition of poverty, offer three approaches to describing poverty, one of which is subjective. Bradshaw and Finch (2002) define poverty as related to income, standard of living and feeling poor. Wolff and de-Shalit (2007) reinforce the importance of subjective measures alongside more objective definitions.

Defining Inequality

Poverty and inequality are closely related but are distinct and different concepts (Smith 2010). Inequality provides the basis through which we can understand poverty (Titmuss 1965). Inequality is focussed on the equality of the distribution of resources throughout society as a whole: 'inequality refers to disparities between individuals, groups and nations in access to resources, opportunities, assets and income' (Ridge and Wright 2008:2). Importantly 'economic inequality is particularly significant for people's capacity to have access to and command of resources' (Ridge and Wright 2008:2). Indeed, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), in their detailed examination of the impact of inequality on society, identify a range of negative effects of unequal societies not simply on the poorest of a nation but on all social strata within a country. Piketty states 'extreme inequality is the antithesis of a good society' (2013:5). There are rising levels of inequality (Dorling 2012; Rowlingson et al. 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Inequality statistics will be examined later in this literature review. Poverty will now be discussed from a philosophical perspective, considering ideas of a Good Society.

Philosophical Perspectives on Poverty: What Is a Good Society?

Philosophical discussions on poverty centre on the currency of justice debate: the concept that if we make people equal in one respect then they may well become unequal in another. In this instance what matters the most? This debate, although drawn into current philosophical discussion by Dworkin (1981) and Sen (1980), begins with an observation that can be linked back to Marx (1867). Rawls (1971) and Dworkin (1981) argue that equality of resources matters most. Arneson (1989) argues that it is equality of welfare that matters most. Cohen (1989) argues for a hybrid of resources and welfare. Sen (1980, 1999) and Nussbaum (2000) developed the capability view, stating that what is important is not what you own, or how you feel about what you have, but what you are able to do or be. Sen (1999) offers an alternative definition of poverty which focusses on capability as opposed to wealth or income. For Sen (1999), development means the removal of various sources of unfreedoms. Development can be seen as 'an integrated process of expansion of substantive freedoms that connect with one another' (Sen 1999:XII). Resources are the means to achieve freedoms, but freedom has other determinants such as social provisions and political rights. For Sen (1999) freedoms have two roles: evaluation and effectiveness. Sen (1999) lists key freedoms: protective security, transparency guarantees, economic freedoms, political freedoms and social opportunities. These freedoms were linked; transparency, trust and reciprocity are linked to social trust and social capital.

Capabilities and Freedom

For Sen (1999) poverty is the deprivation of basic capabilities but the deprivation of capabilities is linked to low income. Any consideration of poverty, however, should focus on the capabilities and not the income. This, Sen (1999) argues, is because focussing only on income can hide other inequalities, such as gender bias, within household incomes. Capabilities, Sen (1999) argues, therefore give a better understanding of poverty. Nussbaum (2000) considers poverty in terms of human capabilities, focussing specifically on gender because gender inequality is strongly linked to poverty. Nussbaum's (2000) theory of poverty aims to set a minimum that all states should respect. Nussbaum's approach constitutes a theory of justice (JRF 2014. For Sen (1999), capabilities are a basis for comparison.

Capabilities and Constructional Principles

For Nussbaum (2000) capabilities are a basis for constructional principles. Nussbaum (2000) lists the following capabilities as essential: to have control over one's environment, to play, bodily health, bodily integrity, affiliation, practical reason, freedom of senses, imagination and thought, emotion, and to live in association with other species. The universalism of Nussbaum's (2000) approach, however, can be critiqued as paternalistic. The capabilities also rely on social and material circumstances for realisation. They require the absence of discrimination or oppression. Societal redistribution will be needed. In its focus on capability to function rather than actual functioning, Nussbaum's (2000) approach can be linked to Rawls' (1971, 2001) liberalism. It makes the approach compatible with diverse conceptions of what is a good life: respecting human reasoning and agency. For example, there is a difference between a fast for a charitable fundraiser and fasting due to lack of access to sustenance.

Sen's (1999) and Nussbaum's (2000) approaches help to capture cases of poverty that an approach that focuses purely on income or resources might miss. The advantage of their approaches is that they emphasise the role of choice. However, if a person lacks the capability to function it is always a matter of justice. Sen (1983) relates relative deprivation and capabilities. He uses Adam Smith's example of a linen shirt to make his argument; whilst having a linen shirt in itself is not an absolute need, not owning a linen shirt when your peers do creates an absolute social disadvantage in terms of public perception. A critique of capability approaches would be the question of whether we can use the capability approach without changing the meaning of what we understand by poverty. Hull (2007) suggests that poverty might be more clearly understood as resource related deprivation and that a better word for capability definitions of poverty would be deprivation.

Questioning a Good Society: Where Does the Duty to Relieve Poverty Sit?

A philosophical discussion of poverty asks where does the duty to relieve poverty sit? With the state or with the individual? Is it the duty of all, depending on their capacity to help (Campbell 2007), or is it the individual first, then the wider family and then the state (Wenar 2007)? Or if the state has not made provision, does the duty fall on the individual (Ashford 2007)? If there is poverty at home and abroad, where should a state's poverty alleviation priority sit (Shaw 1988)? Is poverty alleviation a particular responsibility of governments? Arguably, as individuals we have a responsibility towards the poor and we delegate this responsibility to our governments. In this sense political authorities are only legitimate if they increase the wellbeing of persons subject to them (Raz 1986). Hence, governments have a duty to combat poverty.

Indeed, what sort of duty do we have towards the poor? Is our duty one of justice or charity? Can poverty be considered as exluding citizenship (Rawls 2001)? Does living in poverty prevent a person from citizenship? Does it prevent them from fulfilling their role as a fully cooperating citizen participating in society? (Rawls 2001:58). If primary goods are thought of in terms of citizens' needs, then those experiencing poverty would find it more challenging than those not in poverty to act as citizens, e.g. donating to charity. Whose responsibility is poverty? Is it bad luck or choice (Arneson 1989; Cohen 1989)? Here we begin to question if all choices are equally free. The philosophical debate around poverty brings us to a discussion of what is a Good Society.

A Good Society: Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector

‘Society’ is an amorphous term. It has been used to justify a variety of political objectives, from Blair’s communitarian vision (Sage 2012) to Thatcher’s ‘there is no such thing as society’ (1987). In recent years ‘both the Conservative party and the Labour Party have begun to argue the institutions of civil society and community should be reinvigorated and strengthened’ (Sage 2012:1). The term ‘society’ can be traced back to the Roman legal phrase ‘societas’ that originally referred to small private business or associations, and was only later used with reference to larger groups such as the empire (Stein 1988, Nichols 1975). Innes (2009) argues that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Roman law began to penetrate English commercial, social and religious life. Innes (2009) states that the Roman term ‘society’ was at this point incorporated into the English language.

The Great Society

Adam Smith (1790) discussed the concept of a ‘great society’. Smith (1790) discussed the meaning of society as being a ‘man of system’ or ‘a man of public spirit’. Smith (1790) criticised the feudal system where those in poverty were dependent on their feudal masters for benefice, and advocated a ‘great society’ where the poor engaged in a marketed economy, liberating them from their feudal masters. Ishkanian and Szreter state that ‘Smith appeared to envisage a strictly limited role for private charity and benefice, other than for the totally helpless’ (2012:29). Smith’s (1790) ‘man of system’ was taken on by the mid-nineteenth century French Positivist philosophers Henri Saint-Simon and August Comte. Smith’s ‘positivist version of a great society … was also to become widely pervasive in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain among Fabien sociologists, “new liberals” and managerial conservatives’ (Ishkanian and Szreter 2012:30). Tocqueville (1835) offered a US version of the meaning of society, where new American citizens developed new styles of associational behaviour. Lippmann (1937), having discussed the concept of collectivism, rejected it in favour of what he referred to as the ‘Good Society’. Lipmann’s ‘Good Society’ was based on free competition ‘restrained and humanised by private generosity, as set out by Adam Smith’ (Ishkanian and Szreter 2012:31).

Utopians and Realists

Knight (2015) states that the debate on the Good Society has divided between the utopians and the realists. Key utopian thinkers include Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, Voltaire, Marx and Engels. Central to the utopian idea is that things could improve and progress is possible (Knight 2015). Realists perceived utopian ideas as at odds with reason; they were either resigned to the status quo or satisfied with it. Key realist thinkers include Lippman, Hayeck, Popper, Lipsett and Burke. The Webbs (1909) believed a Good Society to be a planned society, with an increased role of the state in economic and social management; ‘such an approach distinguished them from realists who believed that the “invisible hand” of the market would regulate society as needed’ (Knight 2015:15). The Webbs’ views famously influenced their research assistant on the 1909 Minority Report. Beveridge attributed much of the ideology behind his 1948 report to the influence of Beatrice and Sydney Webb (Knight 2015).

In 1916, in their book The Prevention of Destitution, Sydney and Beatrice Webb set out the parallel bars/extension ladder models of voluntary action. In the parallel bars model, the state and civil society work side by side to reduce poverty. In the extension ladder model, the state and civil society hold different roles. In this model, the state provides the basic minimum for all citizens and voluntary action extends from this basic minimum. In the Webbs' (1916) model, voluntary action and civil society are not a substitute for state action; they are additional to it. The Minority Report (1909) 'began a new public argument about the causes of poverty, about the responsibility for preventing it and by extension, about the nature of citizenship' (Katwala 2009:2).

From the Great Society to the Big Society

Adam Smith's (1759) 'great society' has been perceived as 'a powerful guideline or slogan with which to address certain concrete public policy problems at a specific moment in time ... [or] ...an almost Platonic vision of how human societies should organise themselves, if all perverse obstructions could be removed' (Ishkanian and Szreter 2012:37). The 'great society' is an ongoing dialectic between a slogan used to address policy problems and a conception of how society should organise itself if government were removed. Ishkanian and Szreter question 'how far the classic and much-contested theme of a "Great Society" bears any relation to the debate surrounding the notion of a "Big Society" at the present time' (2012:37). There are similarities in the convergence of civic, moral and economic goals between David Cameron's 2010 Big Society speech and Gordon Brown's 2002 Arnold Goodman lecture on civil society. However, there is considerable uncertainty about whether the great society fits into the Big Society; neither Blond (2010) nor Norman (2010), major contributors to the Big Society rhetoric, suggest that it does.

Norman (2010) also fails to make any suggestion that the Big Society bears any relation to the great society. Ishkanian and Szreter state that 'what is missing from all of these discussions, however, is any attempt to explain how the "Big Society" of the future will relate to the globally encircling presence of the "Great Society," one form or another has been with us for several hundred years and seems unlikely to go away' (2012:38). Indeed, how is a Good Society understood in current circumstances? This review will now consider the role of civil society and the voluntary sector.

Is a Good Society a Civil Society?

Civil society sits outside the domains of state, market and family. Civil society is a broad term; it is a 'vibrant, diverse and evolving space' (WEF 2013:5). Definitions of civil society are developing, as civil society is recognised as encompassing more than just a 'sector'. Modern civil society includes 'an ever wider and more vibrant range of organised and unorganised groups, as new civil society actors blur the boundaries between sectors and experiment with new organisational forms, both online and off' (WEF 2013:5). Bunyan and Diamond define civil society as 'the myriad of groups and institutions within society, which are distinct from the state and the market and founded on the basis of voluntary action' (2014:8). Roles are changing, and civil society actors are becoming facilitators, convenors and innovators (WEF 2013) whilst the private sector is developing a visible role in responding to societal needs. Bowles and Gintis (2005) reinforce the interrelatedness of market, state and communities: 'by a community we mean a group of people who interact directly frequently and in multi-faceted ways' (2005:381). The World Bank (2009) defines civil society as follows:

The wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society organisations therefore refer to a wide array of organisations: community groups, NGOs, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations and foundations.

Civil society will always be needed (WEF 2013:5; Carnegie UK Trust 2010:10). Organisations that are independent from state and market are essential to act as watchdogs and ethical guardians, and have a key role in monitoring and ensuring accountability of state, private and civil organisations. We need civil society to ‘play a particularly powerful role in this process as enabler and constructive challenger, creating the political and social space for collaborations that are based on the core values of trust, service and collective good’ (WEF 2013:5). UK civil society ‘has a critical role to play in bringing together marginalised groups to build global alliances around an agenda of empowerment’ (Carnegie UK Trust 2010:10)

A Globalised Civil Society

Civil society is networked and globalised. The CIVICUS *State of Civil Society 2012* report states that individuals within eighty-eight countries (home to half the world’s population) engaged in mass action during 2011. These informal networks and civil resistance movements are enabled by ever-advancing digital technology. They sit too within more traditionally organised civil society groups. Descriptions of civil society typically include volunteers and community groups, online groups such as social media activist groups, social movements of collective action, faith communities, labour unions, social enterprises, grassroots community organisations and cooperatives (WEF 2013:8). The UK over the last twenty years has increasingly become a leader in anti-poverty campaigns, through civil society based campaigns such as the multilateral developments that led to the millennium development goals and other projects such as Make Poverty History (Woolcock 2009).

Blurred Boundaries, Hybrid Organisations

As society becomes increasingly globalised, traditional boundaries between private, public and civil society are blurring. Sources of social capital are developing in a globalised, hyperactive, connected and multi-stakeholder world. Billis’s (2010) notion of hybrid organisations is relevant here. The concept of civil society as a space for social justice, where groups of individuals and organisations act for the common good, is increasingly carried out in partnership. WEF (2013:10) suggest new paradigms for development where previously separate spheres of action existed; state, business and civil society are now merged into new frameworks for collaboration, partnership and innovation resulting from increased intersections of activity. Hybrid organisations emerge: social enterprises that are profit making but with a social purpose and civil society organisations as market actors.

Faith and Civil Society

Faith and religious culture within public life have re-merged as sources of social justice values (Bunyan and Diamond 2014). The dynamism of individual faith groups, the resources that many of the larger faith groups have access to and the social capital that faith groups link into are recognised as important contributors to civil society. The application of faith to offer a critical perspective on the world is another area that faith groups can contribute to in civil society. There has been an increasingly sophisticated appreciation of the role of faith in terms of its response to extremism and conflict (WEF 2013).

Constructive Challengers

Civil society plays a valuable role in offering constructive critique. In a globalised, networked world where boundaries between sectors are blurred, the core values of civil society have ‘the opportunity to transmit many of these core values to an increasingly receptive set of business and government institutions’ (WEF 2013:34). Civil society organisations are ‘at the forefront of tackling poverty and inequality in the UK but more can be done’ (Bunyan and Diamond 2014:11). Most big civil society movements of the past, such as the anti-apartheid movement, have been led by volunteers. Today, most NGOs are staffed by employees; institutional isomorphism becomes a threat to civil society as ‘professionalization often becomes bureaucratization’ (Carnegie UK Trust 2010:11). It should be recognised that social development is as much a process of the delivery of services as of professionalism (Carnegie UK Trust 2010). The Carnegie UK Trust (2010) warn that bureaucracy and professionalism should not be at the expense of voice and action.

The Voluntary Sector: Civil Society Formalised?

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is a diverse and heterogeneous grouping. Defining the VCS is not simple, and to attempt to define it is contested space (Milbourne 2013). Definitions of the VCS have focussed on similarities between groups and the services that they offer (Halfpenny and Reid 2002; Salamon 1999; Kendal and Knapp 1994; Knight 1993; Billis 1989). Funding sources are often included in VCS definitions (NCVO 2012), as is the focus of the VCS on using volunteers (Milbourne 2013). Other defining characteristics of the VCS are independence (Knight 1993) and its social justice value base (Billis 2010, Neville 2010). However, despite commonalities in value and purpose the VCS includes a wide diversity of community groups and organisations: large and small, self-help groups, activists and service delivery organisations.

Before the 1948 creation of the welfare state, voluntary organisations played a significant role in the provision of health and welfare services (Baggott and Jones 2014). However, the creation of big government and the associated welfare services of the 1948 welfare state did not reduce the role of civil society; indeed, the voluntary sector thrived rather than declined during the era of big government (Alcock 2011; Lewis 1999). A discourse of an adaptive and responsive voluntary sector can be drawn from historical analysis (Hilton and McKay 2011). When linking today’s experience of austerity into the historical context, Beveridge’s concerns that the welfare state might crowd out voluntary action have proved unfounded. Indeed, as the state has expanded it has sought out new relationships with the voluntary sector, particularly in the form of service provision. From the 1970s onwards successive governments have developed polices that build and develop voluntary sector relationships with the state (Baggott and Jones 2014). These policies intensified with the ‘hyperactive mainstreaming’ (Kendall 2000) of the newly redefined ‘third sector’ under the New Labour Blair–Brown government. New Labour redefined the voluntary sector, including social enterprises and mutuals, within its description of ‘third sector’.

A Third Sector

The third sector under New Labour engaged in partnerships and capacity-building initiatives, and further contracted into service delivery (for purchaser–provider arrangements had begun under the previous Conservative government). A key tenet of New Labour's relationship with the VCS was partnerships (Lewis 1999), which were underpinned by the 'Compact' (Zimmeck 2010). The third sector 'understood as the whole range of informal community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises, has always been a central focus of Big Society discussions and initiatives' (Macmillan 2013a:3).

The Coalition government, initially under the now defunct notion (Corry 2012) of a Big Society and later as part of their programme of austerity measures, continued the emphasis on the importance of civil society. The Coalition adopted the term civil society (Cabinet Office 2010). This term is broader again than New Labour's third sector and includes voluntary and community groups, mutuals, cooperatives and social enterprises. As such, Macmillan (2013) argues that the newly renamed third sector, which under the auspices of the Coalition government became civil society, came to be seen as a key agent of change, 'of a recast relationship between citizen and state and reformed public services' (Macmillan 2013).

Big Society and the Office for Civil Society

The report Big Society not Big Government: Building a Big Society (BSNBG 2010) stated that the purpose of the policy is to develop a society where power and control are decentralised and people are inspired to solve their own issues within their areas. Macmillan (2013) critiques the Coalition's concept of the Big Society as risking overlooking the complex and varied nature of citizen action and volunteering. The term Big Society is no longer widely used in policy debate (Corry 2012). Civil society groups, the preferred new term (Office for Civil Society 2010), include a huge diversity of organisations. *Supporting a Stronger Civil Society* (Office for Civil Society 2010) was launched by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in 2010. Macmillan (2011) notes that its language has strong similarities to New Labour in stating the role of government 'in strengthening the capacity of neighbourhood groups, social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups to meet the challenges and take advantage of the new opportunities ahead' (Office for Civil Society 2010:3). The document focuses on support for frontline groups (2010:6), and for groups that wish to become more entrepreneurial (2010:8) and to access broader sources of support, linking more effectively with business organisations. Interestingly food banks have all taken these broad approaches on board. However, the Coalition's localism can be critiqued as neglecting social justice; arguably, 'this latest incarnation of localism is largely ineffective in solving problems requiring collective action because it neglects the important role that inequalities play in inhibiting the development of associational society' (Catney et al. 2014:715). Catney et al. suggest that 'staking environmental policy success on the ability of the local civil society to fill the gap left after state retrenchment runs the risk of no activity at all' (2014:715). This leads to a consideration of the VCS's response to the market failure argument.

The Voluntary Sector's Response to Market Failure

The voluntary sector can be considered important as a solution to well-known forms of market and state failures. The sector can also be understood in terms of supply-orientated theories, with voluntary sector organisations in this sense being seen as the result of autonomous behavioural patterns (Rose-Ackerman 1996; James 1986; Young 1980). Rose-Ackerman (1996) suggests that 'motivations for individual behaviours which cannot be understood within the standard economic framework require a richer conception of individual utility function' (1996:1). Voluntary sector organisations are successful in coordinating actions for social aims, cooperative behaviour and emergence of social trust. Supply side theories argue that ideological commitment and intrinsic human motivation can be considered the driving forces of the voluntary sector. Supply side theories state that, aside from or despite state or market failure, the voluntary sector exists built on ideologies of social justice, trust and reciprocity. Indeed, Putnam discusses the importance of 'networks of civic engagement' (1995:2) that build reciprocity and social trust. A comparative study carried out by Salamon et al. (1999) across several countries has highlighted the role of the VCS as a new institution of the economy, characterised by its own operating logic that focusses on reciprocity and social justice. This new institution (Salamon 1999) operates in a field that is independent of or complementary to the state and the market.

Poverty Trap

A role of voluntary action is clearly to meet need; 'one reason why charity has remained at the heart of the voluntary sector is that the concept enshrines the two key elements: public benefit and independence' (Fries 2014:21). The voluntary sector's economic and social impact is significant. There are approximately 161,000 registered voluntary sector organisations operating in the UK, employing 800,000 people and producing a total Gross Value Added of £11.8 billion (Jones et al. 2015:2). The sector also supports volunteering, which was recently acknowledged as a 'hidden jewel', both economically and socially, by the Bank of England's Lead Economist (Haldane 2014). The ONS has estimated that formal volunteering contributes £23.9 billion, or just over 1.5 per cent of national GDP (ONS 2013).

The voluntary sector, considered as an institution, can contribute to local development in the following ways: it sustains and transmits non-selfish preferences, it produces innovative strategies (such as for drug rehabilitation) and it favours active participation of all agents in all markets. For the VCS to efficiently contribute to local development, its benefits will only be effective if it consolidates and develops pro-social behaviour and if VCS organisations are as efficient at producing goods and services as the markets and state are (Olafsdottir et al. 2014). A strong civil society 'may be particularly beneficial to vulnerable populations such as the low income or unemployed' (Olafsdottir et al. 2014:174).

The voluntary sector is an economic sector in its own right (VSNW and CLES 2013), although it can be critiqued for working in silos and not engaging fully with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The 'voluntary and community sector is needed more than ever and yet there remains a significant disconnection between the sector and local economic thinking' (VSNW and CLES 2013:1). The voluntary sector works to overcome poverty by 'spreading behaviour based on altruism and solidarity but also by promoting investments in welfare services and human capital and by favouring the access of all agents to the various markets' (Amendola et al. 2011:850). Valentinov (2007) states that even if people are motivated to engage in voluntary work, often they are concerned with who most deserves their support and if the resources donated are correctly and efficiently allocated. Valentinov (2007) suggests that the voluntary sector can help in reducing transaction costs; this is especially important where small donations are concerned.

New Forms of Civil Society and Voluntary Organisations

Internationally, the VCS has increased its value in relation to GNP and employment, and its role has diversified alongside diversified organisational typologies. So too have VCS relationships between state and market become increasingly diverse (Amendola et al. 2011; Ben-Ner & Gui 2003; Salamon et al. 1999). The VCS is a significant economic actor in its own right. It rates thirteenth out of twenty-nine business sectors, employs disproportionately high numbers of people in areas of low economic activity, employs a high proportion of women, draws down £1.70 for every £1 of public sector investment, and is particularly good at spending money locally (VSNW and CLES 2013). Over the last fifteen years, the voluntary sector, working alongside public sector partners, has developed an economic delivery track record that could outperform other sectors (VSNW and CLES 2013; Amendola et al. 2011). Civil society at community level and the presence of social capital are important in alleviating the effects of poverty and disadvantage (GMPC 2013). The third sector has also developed complementary approaches to state welfare systems, addressing new needs and developing new organisational forms (Amendola et al. 2011). The recent rise of social enterprise and cooperatives across Europe has contributed to the third sector's increasing contribution to GDP and employment (Amendola 2011). Social cooperatives and social enterprises are 'developing as an innovative institution which acts as a driving force favouring the accumulation of social capital stock' (Amendola et al. 2011).

Voluntary Sector Challenges

The VCS is also facing significant funding cuts, with many voluntary organisations fearing for their survival (Davidson and Packham 2015; NCIA 2015; Davidson and Packham 2012; GMCVO 2012). Many voluntary and community organisations have been affected by cuts in public funding and have had to reduce their employed staff and services at the same time that demand is increasing (Davidson and Packham 2015; Davidson et al. 2014; GMCVO 2012). Research by Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services (Young 2015) revealed that VCS organisations were experiencing large funding cuts, that many VCS organisations were using reserves in this financial year and that many of these organisations had less than three to six months of running costs left within these reserves. One in five organisations had developed new areas of work in response to welfare reform changes, and as a result of a change in income levels, there has been a change in the paid staff to volunteer ratio in many voluntary organisations (Young 2015:4).

Austerity and its associated funding cuts have resulted in a lack of strategic capacity within the sector (VSNW and CLES 2013); however, the VCS has, in developing the linkages between place, economy and people, recognised that strong communities and social inclusion are both inputs to and outcomes of economic and business success (VSNW and CLES 2013). The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) (2014) states that communities and civil society are being weakened by austerity. They cite the cuts to public spending and the impact that reduced contracting has had on the voluntary sector. Indeed, the NCVO estimates that by 2018 funding for the VCS will have reduced by £1.7 billion compared with funding available for the sector in 2010. There is a real concern within the VCS about the long-term harm that the cuts will bring to the communities that they represent. There will be an impact on small organisations as a result of these cuts and a risk of losing the connection with communities that the VCS offers: ‘cuts to the voluntary sector will also erode social capital’ (CLES 2014:7). The voluntary sector is in transition, facing hard times and new opportunities (Milbourne 2013).

Research by Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services (Young 2015) found that many smaller voluntary organisations saw the future of the voluntary sector as made up of larger organisations, and that action was required immediately if the rich and diverse mosaic of VCS organisations within Newcastle was to continue to exist. A key question is ‘whether the … [voluntary] sector, as an economic interior, can help form a new culture of civil cohabitation’ (Amendola et al. 2011:864). The trust in oneself and in others that is built within the culture of social justice and reciprocity fostered by voluntary and community organisations (Sacco and Zari 2006) is ‘an important input into the efficiency of the economic system and for the improvement of human development’ (Amendola et al. 2011:866) within a community (Tabellini 2007, Sen 2000, Coleman 1988).

The National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA) has heavily criticised Coalition policy, suggesting that it has led to a situation where VCS groups are experiencing a situation of ‘fight or fright’ (NCIA 2015). Coalition policy can be critiqued as silencing the VCS (Rochester 2014) and enacting welfare reform that has increased poverty (Bunyan and Diamond 2014b, Wilkinson and Picket 2009), and as having re-focussed its relationship with the VCS into one of purchaser–provider (NCIA 2015). Larger VCS groups are developing and surviving as they have the capacity to develop and link into new funding opportunities. Medium-sized groups, NCIA argues, are being pushed out of existence as they face funding challenges and lack the capacity to become business focussed (Milbourne and Murray 2014). The future of genuine voluntary action, NCIA argues, is under threat from the combined challenges of isomorphic service delivery contracts and the government drive for privatisation:

> *The future of voluntary services, as part of authentic voluntary action, will lie in groups relying on small amounts of money and operating outside of business and contractual relationships. It is these groups which will carry the burden of change, and attempt to meet social and other needs not covered by shrinking public sector contracts.* (NCIA 2015:16)

Challenges experienced by the VCS reflect the realities of operating in a radically changed policy environment. The VCS organisations, both small and large, at national, regional and organisation levels, are facing challenges of silencing, funding and identity. Service users within the VCS are accessing services for increasingly complex needs. VCS identity has been challenged by Coalition policy. The resulting bifurcation (Fyfe and Milligan 2003) of the sector, alongside competition for contracts (Rochester 2014; Ryan 2014) and the silencing of campaign roles (Aiken 2014), has affected VCS identity. As client needs increase, the formalised voluntary sector faces unprecedented funding cuts (NCIA 2015, CLES 2014) and poverty too is increasing (Bunyan and Diamond 2014b). Increased poverty takes this review into a consideration of structure and agency and stigma before examining the demographic shifts in poverty in recent years.

Summary

This is a small snapshot of our much more extensive literature review, which is available on our website[9]. It sets the scene for our collaborative conversations with civil society groups and Fairness Commissions, questioning what a Good Society looks like, and who might achieve it, and how. From this initial literature review we began the next phase of the research project: gathering and collating voices from a range of civil society organisations, some of which are engaged in anti-poverty initiatives and others of which promote the idea of a ‘Good Society’ in their work.

---

[9] www.edgehill.ac.ek/i4P

Considering our Conversations: Civil Society

This section considers the conversations and reflections held in our Concepts of a Good Society focus groups. The conversations and reflections that occurred in these focus groups were diverse and wide ranging, reflecting the wide variety of views held by a diverse and multifaceted civil society.

As the focus group meetings were held across the UK, themes began to develop in the conversations and reflections that were being shared. From these themes an emerging narrative developed. Poverty and inequality are difficult terms to define, and understanding poverty and inequality with all their historical and modern day subtexts is a complicated task.

Emerging from an understanding of poverty and inequality is a sense that we need to listen to grassroots voices, to reinvigorate our democracy and rediscover an independent civil society capable of resisting government and market forces. Here, focus group conversations moved to creating a counter narrative to neoliberalism. Creative alternatives that reclaim humanity and renew human values of trust and kindness were considered as a means to achieve a Good Society. This section of the report will summarise the themes that emerged from the focus group discussions, offering analysis of these themes before drawing some conclusions.

Creating a Good Society; Listening to Those with Experience of Poverty

Our research suggests that creating a Good Society involves listening and recognising that the voices of those with experience of poverty need to be heard. Alongside this, developing a Good Society also recognises that poverty is about having to do without, it is about not having enough cash to buy food or fuel, and it is also about not being listened to. However you define it, poverty is about people having less: less money and less of a voice.

Grassroots Voices

The phrase *'speaking truth to power'* came up many times within the focus groups. The need to engage people who are experiencing poverty was brought up across the focus groups. The power and value of genuine community engagement were important discussion topics, especially in the Birmingham focus group. All focus groups felt that there is a need to involve those in poverty in creating the solution. This reflects existing literature: 'the deep-set problems and far reaching consequences of poverty will not be truly tackled until those living this reality are seen as part of the solution – not as part of the problem' (Lansley and Mack 2015:254).

Speaking Truth to Power

Poverty Truth Commissions (PTCs) have a mantra: 'nothing about us without us'. This puts people living in poverty in the driving seat, and the focus groups felt that this is important. The Belfast focus group noted that excluded people were not in the room and that who is in the room is important, otherwise blind spots can be created. The focus groups discussed engaging people by using the mantra doing with rather than doing to. The focus group discussions, as the Belfast and Manchester reflections below illustrate, reflect wider literature on empowering grassroots voices, that by engaging those with experience of poverty we 'empower the oppressed to... change their own oppressive realities' (Lather 1986:68).

We need to see a continuation in the culture shift towards a healthcare system which is "doing with, not doing to". Dependency is not sustainable – it is obsolete. Models of care need to be more about reciprocity: "you need me" becomes "we need each other". Glasgow Reflection

The starting place is important. There is a real need to listen to people living in poverty as a priority ... I would endeavour to establish inclusive, trusting relationships where people and organisations are encouraged to work collaboratively in their local communities. In really listening to the experts who live with poverty, resources could then be re-directed and support provided within communities where neighbours will work together. Manchester Reflection

Focus groups reinforced the importance of engaging people with experience of poverty. The Newcastle focus group worried that people do not feel involved and questioned if we know what we expect of people in the UK. Civil society has an important role to play in enabling and empowering grassroots voices. The focus groups felt that engaging grassroots voices was essential for building a Good Society. The Belfast focus group discussed the question of how to manage the voices. What do people deserve because they are people? They discussed the notion that there is creativity in everything yet we have lost the ability to confront complexity and we retreat into our protective narratives. The need for solutions can stop creativity. Here, the focus groups suggested that building democratic space can reengage creativity.

Building Democratic Space

The focus groups felt that civil society can have a powerful democratising influence. They recognised that Councils for Voluntary Services are there to support that, but there are still super NGOs that are very different to small community organisations. This reflects the existing literature. Although many small organisations operate under the radar (Alcock 2010), and therefore often are not dependent on contracts for funding, the larger and medium-sized civil society organisations are contract dependent for funding (NCIA 2015; Crowe et al. 2014; Buckingham 2009). Many civil society groups enter into contracts as they require funding for survival and legitimacy (Rochester 2013; Buckingham 2009; Smith and Lipsky 1998). As the Belfast quote below illustrates, focus groups felt that developing a strong civic voice was an important role for civil society.

Civil society must be reanimated … engage in new conversations that are more than local, more than city bound, both global and ecological; and embedded in the questions posed by the Anthropocene, the new axial moment in our civilization that is both hopeful and profoundly challenging. Belfast Reflection

Building Leadership and Empowered Voices

The Belfast focus group suggested that, in order to develop a Good Society, we need to ditch the myth of leader as hero and rather create an idea of the leader as the servant of the greater whole, and leadership as distributed to others. The Glasgow focus group supported the notion of reigniting empowered voices, as this quote illustrates, although also discussed its challenges.

The challenges of engaging or re-engaging individuals and communities should not be underestimated … the challenge of pressuring the main players and resource holders without appearing subversive: this is the real challenge of democracy and empowerment, but an area open to creative, innovative and workable solutions. Glasgow Reflection

The Belfast group suggested ideas connected to Peter Senge's (1991) systems leadership. The group reinforced the importance of community leadership; we need good people working for the common good, as this quote illustrates.

[We] need to protect civic space, to create a cohesive social justice narrative. [We] need a broader engagement from the public – to help understand what they want it to be for. [We] need a model of leadership based on service framed in love. Belfast Reflection

The Newcastle focus group spoke of the importance of community leadership. They reinforced the importance of community leadership as needing a lot of courage and drive. The Glasgow focus group also discussed the importance of community leadership and its role in investing in communities. Linked to community leadership and participatory democracy is the notion of building grassroots voices. Creating a Good Society, our research suggests, involves listening to the voices of those with experience of poverty. Alongside this, our research suggests that developing a Good Society also recognises that poverty is about having to do without, it is about not having enough cash to buy food or fuel, and it is also about not being listened to. However you define it, poverty is about people having less: less money and less of a voice. This led focus groups to a discussion of the practicalities of poverty and inequality.

Doing Without: Poverty and Inequality

Poverty and Inequality are about doing without. Definitions of what poverty and inequality are were discussed at our focus group in the House of Commons. Poverty, it was mooted, is about cash – if people have money then they will not use food banks, and delayed benefits are a real issue. Civil society, our discussions suggested, is good at ameliorating the symptoms of poverty but not so good at stopping poverty. This reflects research by Cloke et al. (2010), who argue that the VCS can be criticised as providing a sticking plaster over the complexities of poverty whilst failing to address its root causes. Cloke et al.'s (2010) critique suggests that the work of civil society organisations should be rejected because it does little more than legitimise the continued failure of government to address the structural issues. Considering a Good Society in the context of poverty, the critique was recognised within the discussion at the House of Commons. Here, food banks were discussed as a sticking plaster on a deeper problem, but it was also recognised in discussions that sticking plasters are important.

Love and Money

In the House of Commons discussion it was felt that there are deeper drivers of poverty in people's lives, and that food is the tip of the iceberg: food is a symptom of a greater poverty. Below food are insecure employment and debt. Below those issues are the issues that are much more difficult to address: the failures in hope and aspirations. These are the long-term drivers of poverty. To destroy the iceberg you need to address all these areas simultaneously. Discussion at the House of Commons suggested that we need to work with policy makers at all levels who are responsible for alleviating all levels of poverty in order to create a Good Society and destroy the iceberg of poverty. Love and money are required for change at all levels; cash is needed to make change.

Defining Poverty and Inequality

The UK government does not have an official definition of poverty but the ONS uses a monetary measure, as does the UK's Child Poverty Act 2010 (Davis and Sanchez-Martinez 2015:12). Poverty is most often defined within the boundaries of absolute and relative (Townsend 1979). There are rising levels of poverty and inequality (Lansley and Mack 2015; Dorling 2012; Rowlingson et al. 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Wilkinson and Pickett state 'extreme inequality is the antithesis of a good society' (2009:5). This was also reflected in our focus group discussions, as illustrated here by this Glasgow reflection.

Wide disparities in wealth and social separation of class by neighbourhood are all dysfunctional to the wider benefits of the Good Society. Glasgow Reflection

Birmingham Focus Group

Within many of our focus group discussions there was consideration around definitions, as understanding poverty and inequality was not a clear given. As our literature review evidences, there is no clear understanding of poverty; poverty and inequality mean different things to different people. Developing a common understanding was something mentioned in several focus groups, as this Manchester quote illustrates.

As a starting point I think there needs to be an agreed definition of what poverty actually means. This could be a "negative" definition of what absolute or relative poverty means. Or a "positive" definition of what people need in income terms to live a good and satisfying life … That is because if we don't have a shared understanding of what poverty is how can we design interventions and align our resources to tackle it? Manchester Reflection

Improved Economic Vision

Our research suggests that there needs to be better economic vision and investment in deprived areas. The Newport focus group discussed collective ownership of property and wealth: valley wind farms were given as an example of where community ownership could create community wealth. The Newport focus group suggested that a change in emphasis away from shareholding to community ownership would tackle some of the big questions around power, and how to engage the ruling elite.

Discussions within all focus groups and the House of Commons argued that we also need a more efficient benefit system, as this Manchester quote illustrates.

There is one key thing that we could do and that is to campaign around the delays to benefits being paid … it plunges people into debt as they struggle to meet their basic needs and they turn to high cost borrowing … We know that residents living in poverty can manage on very small amounts, are often the most astute at managing their budgets. It is often this issue of waiting times that tips people over the edge. Manchester Reflection

Tackling Inequality: Minimum Income

A basic minimum income was discussed by the Newcastle focus group. It was suggested that a basic income, sometimes called a Universal Income or Citizens income (Lansley and Mack 2015), would be a stepping stone to removing absolute poverty. The Glasgow focus group discussed tackling inequality as a barrier to a Good Society.

Wide disparities in wealth and social separation of class by neighbourhood are all dysfunctional to the wider benefits of the Good Society. Glasgow Reflection

Newport Focus Group

This quote reflects the Newcastle discussion that by removing absolute poverty, perhaps via a basic minimum income, a sense of community awareness can be built.

A Good Society is one where no one feels miserable or economically deprived. [I am] torn between being a rugged individualist and being a socialist. These two pull at each other, because a Good Society needs people to stand out, people who don't conform. At the same time, we need a sense of everyone aware of everyone else. Newcastle Reflection

Tackling Inequality: Fair Pay Ratios

The Birmingham focus group discussed whether a Good Society is about doing away with poverty. What is quality of life? Quality of life is not necessarily about the cash economy. It is the idea of a shared or collective sense of community. A Good Society is about the opportunity to maximise wellbeing, fairness and a safe society. It is about the opportunity for an individual to realise their true potential. The Belfast focus group discussed that there is a positive role that business can play in building quality of life. Ideas here were shared around, such as 1:10 pay ratios for business. For example, if an organisation paid the senior management £250,000 a year then it was obliged to pay its lowest paid workers £25,000 a year. Progressive taxation was also discussed by the Belfast and Newcastle focus groups as a stepping stone to a Good Society. A fairer tax system would recognise the need for sharing and engagement with others and our interdependence as societies. This discussion led into the means of creating a Good Society and of developing collaborative approaches with responsible and ethical organisations.

Responsible and Ethical Organisations

The focus groups felt that there is a real potential for businesses to promote health and wellbeing at work. The Newcastle focus group discussed a common set of values and an ethical code. The six Marmot principles and Wilkinson and Pickett's book The Spirit Level were discussed as starting points for this value code, as reflected in this quote from the Bath focus group.

[A Good Society is] one which recognises that we are all individuals with very varied motives, opinions and perceptions, so allows us freedom to express ourselves. However, we are also social animals and, in a Good Society, we have to live together harmoniously. Bath Reflection

Business that Understands People

Business ethics and responsible organisations, our research suggests, are an important part of creating a Good Society. Linked to the idea of creating businesses that understand people, discussion at the Belfast focus group considered the importance of work for wellbeing. This discussion focussed on the need for an economic model that looks at outcomes for employees as well as employers. The Birmingham, Bath and Belfast focus groups felt that work was where business and humanity intersect. Out of this discussion came a notion of a Good Society as including a minimum essential standard of living. This minimum standard does not simply focus on incomes or cash in the bank but on the range of services and support that people need to live a decent life, including their basic economic and material needs. All focus groups suggested that building responsible and ethical organisations through strong value-based collaborations was a means to create a Good Society.

Approaches to Creating a Good Society: Collaboration

Newcastle Focus Group

Collaboration was a key theme discussed by every focus group. Ideas of collaboration came from discussions of fairer public systems and more responsible organisations. Concepts of collaboration varied across focus groups, from ideas of co-production, collective ownership and assets-focussed support to organisational partnerships. The Newcastle, Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast groups discussed the role of the private sector in creating a Good Society and engaging business in conversations around making and sustaining responsible and ethical organisations

The Changing Nature of Civil Society

The changing nature of civil society was a concern for focus groups, in respect that the corporatisation of civil society had contributed to what one participant referred to as the unvirtuous cycle of exploitation. Civil society is experiencing significant challenges nationally as private sector firms take on contracts previously held by the voluntary sector (Butler 2014; Ryan 2014; Whitfield 2014; Taylor 2012; Buckingham 2009). Boundaries have become blurred between civil society organisations and the state, at the same time as civil society organisations have become more professionalised and less grassroots (NCIA 2015; Butler 2014; Milbourne and Murray 2014). Contradictory and messy ethical decisions are faced daily; an example shared at the House of Commons was of a national chain of supermarkets that donates to food banks yet their workers, who are on zero hours contracts and poorly paid, also use food banks.

Collaboration as a Means of Change

Global, cross-national collaborations based on shared values were suggested by focus groups as a means of creating a Good Society, of value-based commitments to others. The importance of the global nation versus the local community and the interrelatedness of global local structures were reiterated by focus groups, as this Glasgow reflection reveals.

A strong emphasis on co-production, on sharing power and decision making and on being accountable locally are all important building blocks for the Good Society. However, it is naïve to ignore the impact of material inequality and the corrosive power it wields. Glasgow Reflection

Creating a Collective Civil Society

The Birmingham focus group discussed whether a Good Society was about doing away with poverty; this might not simply be about a cash economy. The Birmingham focus group discussed creating a Good Society by creating a shared or collective sense of community, an opportunity to maximise wellbeing, fairness and a safe society. A Good Society in this context was about the individual having an opportunity to realise their true potential, as this Bath focus group reflection illustrates.

Change will not come about with individuals. We need to respond as a collective. Lots of change can come about without the need for government level. Bath Reflection

Creating Cross-Sector Partnerships

Discussion at the House of Commons suggested that a coordinated response to food poverty by businesses might be a stepping stone. Many supermarkets are already taking steps as part of their corporate social responsibility, yet different supermarkets are taking different approaches. Perhaps a coordinated response from supermarkets, acting within responsible and ethical collaborations, using industry organisations such as their Institute for Grocery Distribution, could lead the way in food redistribution. Discussions at the House of Commons included the idea that there is more that the state can do and areas where business, state and civil society can work together. This links to research by the Centre for Local Economic Development (CLES), a Webb Memorial Trust partner, around the notion of inclusive growth. McInroy, chief executive of CLES suggests that ‘a good local economy is one where there are strong networks across the public, commercial and social sectors’ (McInroy 2016: 2). For CLES, networks and leadership within responsible and ethical organisations that steward investment in order to build an interconnected web of economic, social and environmental benefits are important for inclusive growth. The importance of building effective value-based collaborations was reflected in our focus group discussions.

Taking Some Risks

The Manchester Meeting of Minds conference discussed the challenges of inequality around the theme of collaborative action. The conference suggested that we need an inclusive approach to a Good Society that recognises community and individual assets. The Birmingham focus group spoke of the importance of risk taking in developing collaborations. The starting point for our current discussions around collaboration exists due to decades of decision making. There has been a decade of decision making by a variety of governments that has set up government departments to be inward looking and outcome focussed. The Birmingham focus group felt that we have lost the idea of seeing and releasing the opportunities that arise from taking risks. It was felt that opportunities for risk taking were needed in partnership working. This discussion around risk taking was linked to the need to rethink resources or to be more innovative with the resources that we have. Focus groups felt that we need partnership working to do this, as this Birmingham quote illustrates.

[A Good Society is ...] vibrant neighbourhoods with cohesive communities with a social, economic mix of individuals and families who have access to good quality housing, schools and healthcare. Where civil society, public and private institutions collectively provide a safety net for the vulnerable individuals and families. Birmingham Reflection

Letting Go of Power

The focus groups wondered if people are prepared to let go of power, especially statutory organisations. They felt that for successful collaborations to emerge there needs to be a change in power. Statutory organisations, it was felt, still often have a paternalistic view of how things should be done. Linked to this discussion, a debate emerged around fairness and the emotionality of decision making. We talk of what is a Good Society as if it is something rational – but we ignore the emotional. Society is essentially emotional. Fairness and sharing are rationally right but the emotional response is a desire for power over partnerships. The Birmingham and Belfast focus groups discussed that this is often where the power of collaborations is reduced, as this quote illustrates.

Consensus-driven policy processes tend to sidestep conflict and encourage compromise. This in turn can lead to the hegemony of a certain way of framing ideas and policies that ignores or delegitimises radical alternatives within the political process … A more radical view of both the policy process and the nature of democratic process in general would argue that conflict … and disagreement are critical elements of a well-functioning political system.
Belfast Reflection

Collaboration as Resistance

Collaboration therefore should not be promoted as a panacea. Collaboration and consensus building should not be at the expense of dissent. Resistance exists in its 'messy middle grounds' (Sparke 2008:423), with a mixture of control and opposition, structure and agency, incorporation and alternativeness. Welfare provision exists within this messy middle ground:

romanticised, yet often in practice deeply unromantic; easily dismissed as merely upholding the status quo, yet powered by an urge to do something about the injustice of the status quo. (Cloke et al. 2010:43)

The Manchester conference discussed the need to create linkages between society, economy and public service, to build the messy middle ground. The conference recognised the importance of interconnectedness. Mental health was cited as an area that has experienced long-term funding cuts. The Manchester conference also discussed the cost to wider society of a person not supported correctly who is therefore unwell, and the cost of carers having to leave work to care for that person. There is good reason to link investment to prevention, the Manchester conference argued, because the assets directly link across.

A Renegotiated Collaboration

The Manchester conference discussed the concept that we are at the centre of a paradigm shift, where civil society, the community sector and the public sector are being renegotiated. We need to break down institutional barriers, and to no longer see a ‘public sector’ but a ‘public domain’. The public domain would see civil society and the public sector working together to solve problems. The Manchester focus group discussed the need for stereotypes to be disabused. This reflects the research of Compass, a Webb Memorial Trust partner, who in their recent report suggest that in order to create a Good Society we need ‘people drawn from all walks of political and civil society life, inside and outside Westminster’ (Orton 2016:1). Orton (2016) argues in Secure and Free that it is the world of ‘and’ that we need, of collaborative working between public, private and civil society sectors to build a Good Society. This, too, is reflected in our focus group discussions.

Transparent and Innovative Commissioning

The Manchester conference discussed the wider enablers of public service reform. The conference questioned how you achieve growth and success for all. Discussions suggested that we need transparent and innovative commissioning. We need to maximise social value. It is about co-production to improve the policy environment. This would improve economic growth and improve employment opportunities. The Manchester focus group felt that devolution is both a challenge and an opportunity. The group felt that we can use devolution to tackle poverty, we can use devolution to challenge austerity and we can use devolution to promote good practice.

Birmingham Focus Group

Developing a Good Society. Building a Strong Independent VCS: Poverty, Charity and Civil Society

In order to build strong collaborations developed from value-based responsible and ethical organisations, focus groups identified that power needs to be renegotiated to facilitate genuine partnerships where all participants have an equal voice. Our research here reflects the importance of a strong independent civil society. Critiques of Conservative and Coalition policies such as silencing the voice of the VCS (Rochester 2014, 2013), creating welfare policies that have increased poverty (Bunyan and Diamond 2014a, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) and refocussing the state's relationship with the VCS into one of purchaser–provider (NCIA 2015, Rochester 2013, Milbourne 2013, Milbourne and Murray 2011) are well documented. Discussions in the Belfast focus group centred on the idea that in order to create a Good Society, we need a strong independent civil society that has a sense of ownership and empowerment. It is from this position, in the context of rising poverty and inequality (Lansley and Mack 2015) and a civil society that has arguably lost much of its independence due to service delivery contracts and funding cuts, that conversations began about what a Good Society might look like (Cordelli 2012, Billis 2010, Buckingham 2011, Billis and Glennerster 1998) and how we might achieve it.

Developing Value Through Creativity and Openness

The Belfast focus group shared that a Good Society is a society where creativity and openness count. A strong independent voluntary sector can challenge politics, economics and culture. The focus groups felt that a Good Society has a voluntary sector that delivers with and for community, as this House of Commons reflection evidences.

Civil Society can look forward into what a Good Society might look like. To search in hearts where we build community and find love and care. A big State machine is not always the answer. We all have a moral obligation to express love. House of Commons Reflection

The Belfast focus group discussed the notion that civil society is affected by the same issues as the public sector, and the group felt that civil society is as affected by neoliberalism as the public sector is. The focus groups felt that there is a role for the public sector in building the Good Society and there is a role for the NHS and universities in building it too. However, we also need a strong independent civil society.

Our research reflects the literature which questions whether the contract culture espoused by successive neoliberal inspired governments has affected civil society's innovation and identity (Baring Foundation 2014; Milbourne 2013; Cordelli 2012; Buckingham 2011; Billis 2010; Billis and Glennerster 1998). The distinction between civil society and the public sector becomes clouded when civil society delivers public services: 'where money goes, control follows' (Lynn 2002:67). Wolch's (1990) concept of a shadow state, with civil society providing services previously offered by government, has, our focus groups suggest, become a reality. This consumer-driven service delivery culture that has developed within civil society was discussed by the Newport focus group, as this reflection illustrates.

Perniciously, an ideology has been internalised, its values shaping how we look upon and think about the world around us. This is nowhere more evident than in our attitudes to consumption … It is an ideology which not only acts as a driver to social and environmental problems, but is hard-wired to do so, reliant as it is on the status anxiety of consumers and the continually expanding consumption of the planet's finite resources. Newport Reflection

Neoliberalism Is Not an Accident

Our research suggests that we need to recognise that neoliberalism and the current economic system did not happen by accident. As the boundaries of larger VCS groups have blurred (Billis 2010), through the development of purchaser–provider service delivery contracts, so arguably a new shadow state (Wolch 1990) has been created. Consumerism, our Newcastle focus group stated, is functional with capitalism. The Newcastle group discussed economic justice, which relates to the growth in capitalism, prompting good growth. Our neoliberal consumerist society was heavily criticised in all focus groups. From this critique came ideas of a counter narrative that builds on a creative alternative to neoliberal ideology in order to achieve a Good Society.

Developing a Good Society. A Strong Voice: Building a Counter Narrative

Strong independent civil society organisations can create a counter narrative to a neoliberal civil society. Policy pressures have arguably eroded the very ethos of active citizenship that civil society has been championed for (Harris 2001).

The Good Society and wellbeing are profoundly democratic questions. Our democracies are broken, and – due to the influence of money and the roots of our parties in industrial/redundant paradigms – no longer speak to our postmodern condition (ecological). Belfast Reflection

Here, the focus groups suggested, as this Belfast quote illustrates, that it is important to link into notions of trust and equality, and this builds civil society's voice, which should be based on listening to communities.

What Sort of Counter Narrative?

Within many of the focus groups there was a discussion around the importance of providing a counter narrative to neoliberalism. A range of counter narratives were suggested, including collaborative or participatory democracy. The focus groups commented that sometimes we speak back to the 'system' as if it were somehow an accident. Sections of the VCS are profoundly 'neoliberal' in their service delivery functions. Our current political situation is, as the focus groups discussed, arguably not an accident. A strong independent civil society might be able to offer a counter narrative to those organisations or dimensions of the VCS that appear to have taken on the values of neoliberalism, as it also could to the public and private sectors. In considering the creation of an independent civil society, the Glasgow focus group discussed the need to improve interaction between different sections of the community, in the wake of the revival of immigration, and reinventing a sense of community. However, the focus groups recognised that not all organisations are affected by neoliberalism in the same way; some organisations are better placed than others to more effectively resist pressures.

A Counter Narrative of Virtues

Civil society, the focus groups felt, is often discussed as a homogenous group, especially in relation to the state. However, it is not homogenous (Alcock 2010; Harris 2001) and civil society groups do not all react in the same way to the same experience, for example state funding. The Newcastle focus group discussed developing our own virtues as British people by investing in people; this could be achieved through education around values and beliefs. It could develop a Good Society where individuals own a sense of fairness. The focus groups suggested that this process would involve hearing difficult, uncomfortable and inconvenient things and being sensitive to local priorities, sensitivities and dynamics. Integration and community are difficult to achieve in a world of individualisation, because we have lost a sense of collective responsibility.

Developing a Good Society. Reigniting Democracy: Developing the Messy Middle Grounds

House of Commons

The importance of local democracy was reinforced in many of the focus groups, their discussions often having a national context – Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland – or reflecting the regions around the English cities of Newcastle, Bath, Manchester and Birmingham. The focus groups discussed the need to protect civic space and the importance of civic space to create a socially just narrative. This civic space, it was felt, needs broader engagement from the public and a model of leadership based around service framed at its core. In order to create a counter narrative to the dominant narrative, the Belfast focus group reinforced the centrality of trust, both between individuals and communities and within and between those that have leadership roles.

A Deeper, More Participatory Democracy

The future of civil society, the focus groups suggested, lies in returning to authentic voluntary action to reignite democracy, and this reflects wider research (NCIA 2015). The Birmingham focus group discussed the importance of democracy and the fact that we have a mechanism for peaceful change in the UK, whilst they do not have that option in Syria. The Birmingham focus group discussed how we should value our democracy more highly and use it more often. The Birmingham focus group discussed that changes should be based more on politics – people feel disenfranchised. The group suggested that perhaps there should be more independent MPs, and an MP for Castle Vale or single-issue MPs were discussed as options. The Belfast group, too, spent a lot of time reflecting on the means of creating a deeper, more participatory democracy, as this quote illustrates.

A deeper, more participatory democracy is for me one key way to attain a better society … Participatory democracy is about the informal spaces, the non-institutionalised bits of democracy, and using creative means of engagement. This is where civil society is absolutely fundamental as both a facilitator of democracy and a check and balance on political institutions. Belfast Reflection

Building Healthy Institutions

The focus groups agreed that there is something about the health of cultural institutions, reflected in political activity in its broadest sense, that is important to a Good Society. The Newcastle group discussed power in relation to our democratic structure. Power and how to engage with our ruling elite was a theme in many of the focus group discussions. Which group has power and what kind of power were considered important in building democracy. Contributing to a Good Society and demystifying institutions were also discussed as important in building democracy. To achieve a Good Society, the focus groups argued, civil society must be reanimated, as these Belfast and Newport reflections illustrate.

Civil society must be reanimated... engage in new conversations that are more than local, more than city bound, both global and ecological. Belfast Reflection

Now my hopes lie in two directions. Firstly, through grassroots change, where changes are made through individuals and communities adopting lifestyles that reject neoliberal values and instead develop practical alternatives. Secondly, by reminding ourselves of the importance of big government, and having done so holding governments to account for what they are failing to do. Newport Reflection

A strong independent civil society, the focus groups argued, is important for creating a Good Society. The Belfast focus group discussed that there is a break down in existing civic institutions, due to the neoliberal global consensus. As a result there is a need to create strong civic institutions. The Bath focus group discussed the importance of growing our ‘civil society’ of voluntary organisations, communications media and social movements, and other interest groups. These groups arguably counterbalance the interests of government and business and reflect the wishes of citizens at the grassroots level. Strong independent civic organisations act as a powerful counterbalance to a society fragmented by welfare reform. Here, the conversation moved to the values held by institutions and organisations, and how holding strong human values as responsible and ethical organisations can develop a Good Society.

.

Returning to Human Values

Discussions within our focus groups offered an alternative value structure to neoliberalism with which to respond to social justice challenges. This alternative value structure casts aside neoliberal ideologies and instead refocuses on human kindness, care and trust. All organisations have values and they are shaped by the social worlds in which they are embedded (Conradson 2003; Knowles 2000; Parr 2000; Crang 1994; Philo 1989, 1997). Values shape how organisations and their fields, made up of other organisations and the state, operate (Chen et al. 2013). Through their actions, people constantly negotiate institutions and adapt ideas about what constitutes the organisation.

By refocussing our central government mandates of rehabilitation and change towards an ethos of empowerment, our research suggests that civil society can find a praxis (Freire 1974) of shared work, trust and care. Civil society groups can choose to step aside from service delivery and the pressures to privatise felt by the wider national and regional civil society (Milbourne 2013) in order to create a distinctive (Macmillan 2013) alternative approach to civil society.

A Post-Capitalist Model

The Belfast focus group discussed neoliberalism, austerity and capitalism. The group argued that we need systemic change. The conversation returned to concepts of a wellbeing model, and whether this would come from the state or civil society. To operate this systemic change, trust is needed. After the economic crash, there were open discussions around a post-capitalist model, but that was transitory and the world has very quickly returned to pure capitalism. What we need, the Belfast focus group mooted, is ‘social capitalism’. This social capitalism involves investment in communities.

The Belfast focus group discussed that, in a global context, suicide rates increase as the Human Development Index increases. There is the notion that you can be healthy, wealthy and unhappy, and they felt that any discussion of what a Good Society is needs to sit within this. The Western capitalist model suggests that once the basics have improved to a certain level then capitalism does not help wellbeing. The Belfast focus group felt that you cannot do anything without trust.

Belfast Focus Group

Central to creating a counter narrative, the focus groups suggested, is the notion of trust, both between individuals and the community and between those who have leadership roles. The importance of trust, the Belfast focus group suggested, relates to how people construct relationships and sustain them, and also links to values and ethics discussions. The Newcastle focus group reinforced the need to challenge neoliberal ideals with a return to human values, as the quote below reflects.

It is insufficient (though still vital) to work to ensure that all voices are heard in deliberative democratic institutions at the local level; there must also be a challenge to neoliberalism itself and to the associated outsourcing of morality to the market. Newcastle Reflection

Shared Values as Resistance

Civil society can offer a powerful counter narrative to neoliberalism by returning to human values of love, trust and kindness. In civil society, the focus groups suggested, human values can be revived to develop a shared ethos, a sense of shared work. Love, the Belfast focus group felt, is an appropriate term as it reflects the messy reality (Sparke 2008) of caring: love in the sense of shared work, of patience and of care. Within the purchaser–provider environment of neoliberal governance, creating a new value-driven approach can be understood as a site of subversion:

in coproducing neoliberal structures of welfare governance, the ethical performance of staff and volunteers ... rework and reinterpret the values and judgements supposedly normalised in the regulatory frameworks of government policy, bringing alternative philosophies of care into play. (Williams et al. 2012:1496)

Values and Reciprocity

A return to human values in the creation of a Good Society offers a unique way of understanding the response of civil society to austerity. The focus groups felt that there is a need for a broader engagement from the public – to help to understand what they want a Good Society to be for. The Belfast focus group suggested a need for a model of leadership based on service framed in love. Indeed, as hooks (1984:5) states:

the moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others.

A return to human values led the Newport focus group into a discussion around reciprocity: the need to provide public–private arenas and not just in paid work. We have the right to work and to contribute, the Newport focus group shared. Reciprocity has a cultural element in a Good Society, and the focus groups felt people should be open to receiving benefits from others and willing to enter into relationships with others that are open and humble. Our self-esteem links to our ability to contribute and to be an active citizen and to the ability of community to include ‘others’. The Newcastle and Newport focus groups also discussed the creation of enlightened self-interest and the need to ask big questions regarding reciprocity and imagination, with the current system seeing consumers rather than citizens, as the quote below from Newcastle illustrates.

Relatedness may be understood in terms of social justice, an ethic of care to insider and outsider, so encompassing provision of welfare, education, health care and shelter as of right. Newcastle Reflection

Values and Relatedness

The Bath focus group discussed collaboration and relatedness in relation to housing. Perhaps, they mooted, the way that young people are choosing to buy houses together, choosing cooperative activity over individual focus, is changing expectations. The Manchester group discussed that maybe something of a Good Society is springing from the housing crisis. As the quote below illustrates, maybe the cause does not matter if it contributes to the different ways that people live.

We need a new social contract: social economy and public economy. We need to reignite the social neighbourliness, the informal caring within communities … The new social economy would build solidarity … [a] new social contract would be created from forms of business citizenship and progressive public sector procurement. Manchester Reflection

The big narrative is important and was discussed by all focus groups. The focus groups considered how to get to a better society, to create a new narrative: an alternative to privatisation. There was discussion around the fact that this will be messy, but we need to create the appetite for conversation.

Creating a Strong Counter Narrative to Neoliberalism

The focus groups discussed creating a strong counter narrative to neoliberalism. The Collaborative Conversation at the House of Commons discussed that we have tried to create a society by the state and we have tried using market forces, and that we need something in between. The discussion suggested that we need something that recognises that market forces cannot solve all problems, and the conversation must go on now. The focus groups felt that business has an important role in creating this counter narrative. The Belfast focus group suggested that in building this counter narrative we need to consider the public's and individuals' capacity for love, as this quote illustrates.

The issue, as I see it, is that welfare states have always played second fiddle to economic growth… Put simply, a Good Society is where we invest in development, not in economic growth. Where we invest in people, not in profit. Belfast Reflection

The Belfast group referred to the United Nations model of freedom: freedom from fear and freedom from want. There was a suggestion that people need to be able put forward suggestions even if they are in danger of being ridiculed. Here, the notion emerged of developing creative, risky alternatives as a means of envisaging a Good Society.

Creating Creative Alternatives: Creativity and the Arts, Philosophy and Ethics

Education was a theme discussed within all the focus groups. They agreed that there is a strong role for wisdom and knowledge in developing a Good Society. The basic point of education is acquisition of knowledge and understanding how to use it. The Bath focus group discussed creating a Good Society by developing changes in education that encourage more support for the Good Society, and that create a better understanding of it philosophically and of the institutions which might help to achieve it.

The Newcastle and Bath focus groups spent a lot of time focussing on this theme, with slightly different approaches to their conversations. Bath focussed on the importance of education as a facilitator for change and empowerment. Opening up education to all for longer periods of the day, inviting families to join school children for a hot evening meal and engaging children from age two in nursery education were discussed as having powerful emancipatory and community benefits. Newcastle discussed the power of education in opening up philosophical and ethical debates. Whilst citizenship is taught within the curriculum, it was felt that opening up citizenship into broader philosophical and ethical arenas would be a powerful tool for creating a more open, ethical and philosophical society.

Creative Engagement With the Arts

The focus groups argued that creative engagement with the arts could contribute to people’s sense of self: connecting people physically and spiritually. They felt that creativity and the arts are essential to creating a Good Society, and this reflects the wider literature (Adler 2015; Wagner & Compton 2015). The focus groups shared the importance of the arts in increasing empathy. The arts were suggested as a means whereby collectively as a society we can take responsibility for the health, welfare and education of citizens in order that each person can prosper, with self-esteem.

The focus groups expressed a feeling that there is creativity in everything yet we have lost the ability to confront complexity, retreating into our protective narratives. The need for solutions, the focus groups felt, can stop creativity. A place of power can be found in the things people love to do, the voluntary arts. People are motivated to do things for themselves, for their own pleasure, yet in engaging in arts they are also doing things for the community. Access to the arts is an important entitlement. In the UK they are seen as a discretionary luxury, as this Bath focus group quote illustrates.

A Good Society must give opportunities to people to be sufficiently resilient in order that they can enjoy society. Why not teach philosophy in schools? Bath Reflection

Grassroots Vision Using Creative Means

The Bath focus group suggested that a society focussed on young people, developing and growing young people, is a Good Society. This moves away from top-down visions of society and hands over to a grassroots vision empowered by young people's education. The Bath focus group argued that a Good Society is one that is law-based, where individuals can live a happy fulfilling life with unselfish behaviours from citizens. A strong education system is needed that considers and includes alternative views, as these Bath focus group reflections illustrate.

A Good Society requires a strong education system that teaches people to think rationally and objectively, to consider and evaluate alternative viewpoints, and reach fair and balanced decisions. Bath Reflection

Education is the foundation of a Good Society. It is an individual and collective response to a Good Society and instils proper confidence and self-esteem. Bath Reflection

Education, the focus groups felt, is a proactive response to inequality and poverty, and this reflects the wider literature (Kirshner 2015; Lansley and Mack 2015; Friere 1972). The Bath and Birmingham focus groups discussed that education can remove children from deprivation, and offer food, education and community space, as illustrated in this reflection. [A Good Society includes …] sound access to education that instils principles of neighbourliness, volunteering and personal responsibility. Birmingham Reflection

The Belfast focus group discussed the role of universities in creating and building a Good Society. There is a role for the public sector in building the Good Society, just as there is a role for the NHS and universities. These roles are linked by notions of trust, although we must be aware that universities, too, are couched in neoliberal agendas, as the following Belfast quote discusses.

[There is a…] role for universities in achieving 'Good Society' or participating in the debate about Good Society … There is a danger that universities, and the research they produce, are becoming increasingly institutionalised within the neoliberal, consensus-driven policy agenda, feeding into the existing policy framework and reinforcing the hegemony of the existing way of doing things. Belfast Reflection

This section has summarised the key themes that have emerged from our collaborative conversations focus groups. These themes have developed a sense of what a Good Society might look like, with a reinvigorated democracy, a return to human values and a clear counter narrative to neoliberalism, and how it might get there using collaborations, creative arts, ethics and philosophy to develop civil society's independent voice. The next section will summarise phase two of our iterative research with civil society groups before considering our research with the Fairness Commissions and developing some recommendations.

Phase Two of our Collaborative Conversations.

As part of our iterative research process we continued our conversations with civil society groups, returning to some locations and continuing the conversations through connections made in new locations with new partners. These conversations were developments of themes that emerged as part of our initial research. We held focus groups themed around older people, younger people, people with grassroots experiences of poverty, food and poverty, race and poverty, trust and fairness and equality. As part of our interim report we developed creative challenges, and we wanted to discuss and debate these challenges as our research progressed, to ask the second phase of focus groups if they reflected their experiences and what they thought about our emerging conclusions around collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations.

Our Challenges...

CHALLENGE ONE: ALL PARLIAMENTARY ANTI-POVERTY GROUP

- Listen to individuals involved in anti-poverty work on the practical steps that are needed to support individuals and families, from benefit advice to a right to quality education and housing.
- Learn from the model of the PTC and respect individual voices/knowledge and experience.
- Hold meetings/listening events outside London.

CHALLENGE TWO: TRADES UNION CONGRESS

- Draw on your network of regional and local representatives to support local initiatives like the PTC to highlight the experiences of local people.
- Continue to support the living wage campaign.

CHALLENGE THREE: PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

- Recognise that the PTC or Fairness Commissions are necessary but are not sufficient initiatives to highlight poverty and inequality, and supporting such ideas does require action.
- Ask the Local Government Association and individual local authorities to publicly report on progress that has been made to address pay differentials and the living wage.

CHALLENGE FOUR: THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTORS

- Commit to establishing a national coordinating network to promote joint activity and to disseminate information.
- Support local anti-poverty campaigns.
- Link up to existing networks, from the Equality Trust to Church Action on Poverty, to promote ideas, activity and local initiatives.

CHALLENGE FIVE: ACADEMICS AND FUNDING AGENCIES

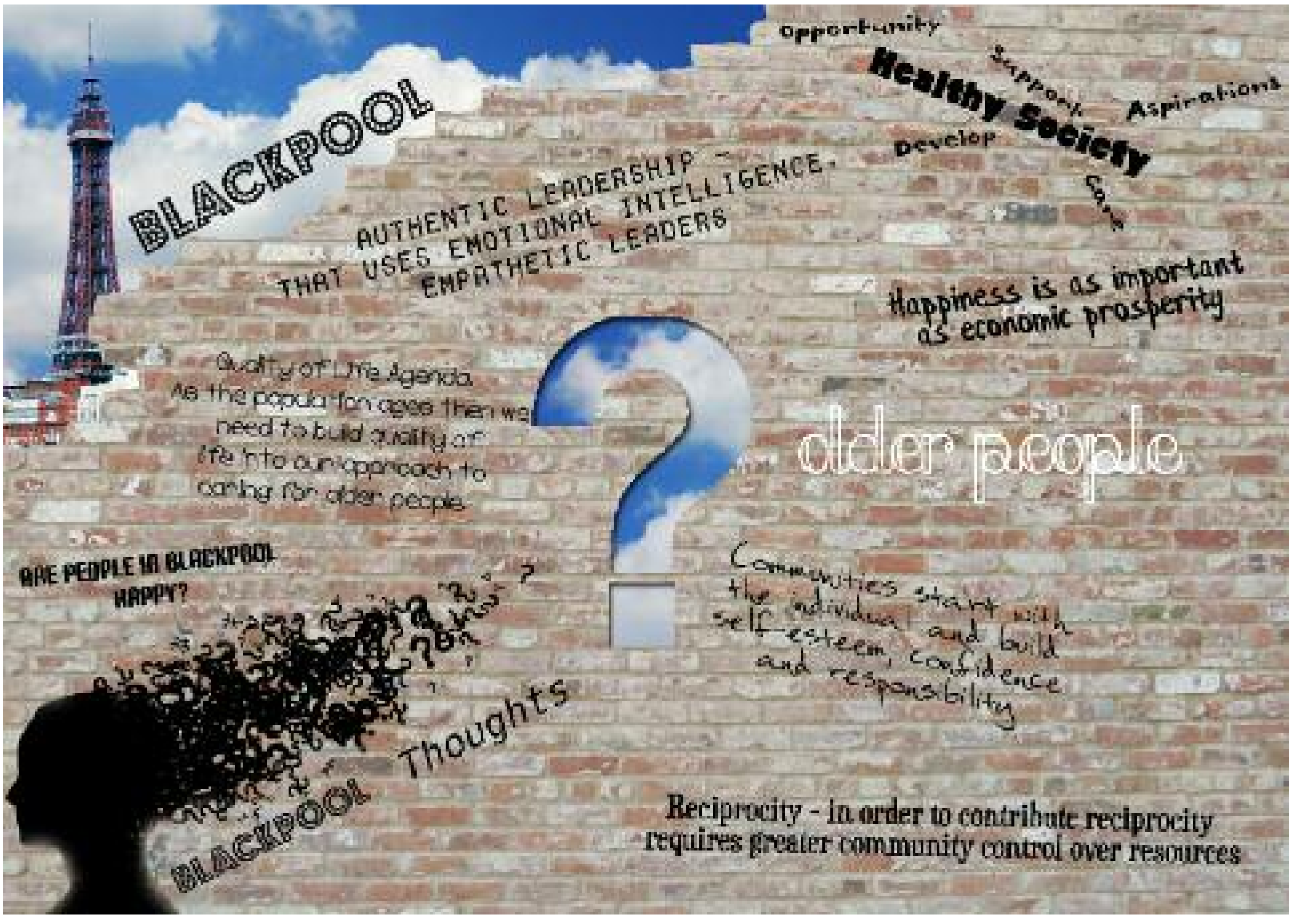
- Expect that those social policy/social sciences associations who study poverty commit to sponsoring events at their annual conferences to listen to testimonies on the experience of poverty.
- Demand that funding bodies (from the JRF to the Arts and Humanities Research Council) expect that individual ‘voices’ on poverty are heard – respectfully – in work that they commission.

CHALLENGE SIX: WHAT CAN WE DO?

We took this challenge out to our focus groups and art event, asking participants to contribute ideas. The next section of this report will summarise our Winter Conversations with civil society. They offered reflections on what is a Good Society in respect to the themes identified and reflections on our creative challenges.

Older People and Poverty

This focus group was set up in partnership with Blackpool Fairness Commission and considered what a Good Society might look like in relation to older people and poverty. One point six million pensioners live in relative poverty and nine hundred thousand live in severe poverty (Norton and West, 2014). Roughly one in ten households with high to medium income before retirement fall into low income brackets after retirement (Norton and West, 2014). A key work area for Blackpool Fairness Commission is older people and poverty, which is why we co-hosted the focus group with Blackpool Fairness Commission.


BLACKPOOL
AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP – THAT USES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. EMPATHETIC LEADERS
Opportunity
Healthy Society
Support
Aspirations
Develop
Care
Happiness is as important as economic prosperity
Quality of Life Agenda. As the population ages then we need to build quality of life into our approach to caring for older people.
older people
ARE PEOPLE IN BLACKPOOL HAPPY?
Communities start with the individual and build self-esteem, confidence and responsibility
Thoughts
BLACKPOOL
Reciprocity - In order to contribute reciprocity requires greater community control over resources

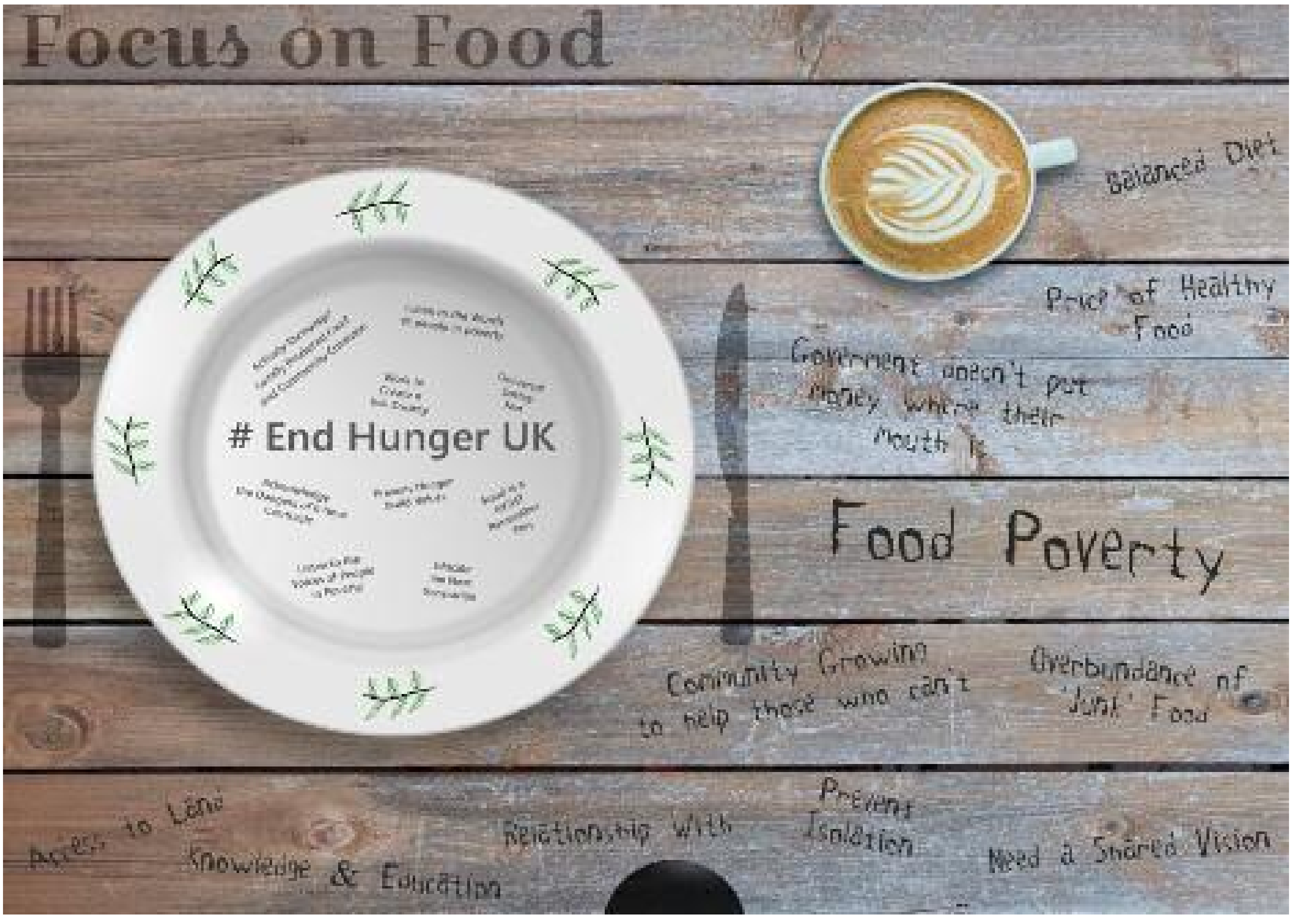
The discussion at the focus group was about creating a Good Society by returning to our natural human values of empathy and compassion. An anecdote was shared about visiting civil servants from London, who spoke in terms of ‘fiscal consolidation’, failing to recognise the human impact of welfare reform and benefit cuts. The local authority took these civil servants to a House of Multiple Occupation in Blackpool to see how people were forced to live. This removed the euphemisms used in politics and reinforced the humanity that is needed to make welfare decisions. In terms of older people and a Good Society, discussion focussed on community. Communities start on a small scale with individuals, a building of personal empowerment and responsibility. Community exists in a micro space, to meet people’s needs. In terms of generational differences, the focus group felt that it was necessary to give people the confidence and the opportunity to enact compassion, empathy and care.

Here collaborative working between sectors was discussed. There are ethical and cultural differences between the sectors; public, private and civil society. The focus group in Blackpool suggested that we need guardians of these values, and there was a concern that in creating collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations we might lose some of the compassion and care espoused by the voluntary sector. An example was shared of commercial social care companies, and the focus group asked whether in merging sectors – public, private and civil society – do you merge values? There was a debate over whether in merging sectors the public and civil society sectors might be corrupted with the corporate world's profit making objectives. The opening up of public services has resulted in the contracting out of public services to private companies who then subcontract out to the VCS. This concerned the focus group who felt that these purchaser–provider subcontracted relationships led to a corruption of values in order to cooperate with corporate objectives.

The Blackpool Fairness Commission considered both the idea of a Good Society and older people's experience of poverty and reflected on our emerging conclusions regarding how a Good Society might be built from a collaboration of responsible and ethical organisations. The notion of values was debated, with reflection regarding the power of civil society to resist the neoliberal values of the private sector.

Food and Poverty

The focus group on Food and Poverty was led in partnership with Swansea University and linked to the Church Action on Poverty's End Hunger UK campaign[10]. Food poverty is a continuing issue experienced by a significant and increasing number of people (Garratt et al. 2016; Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014). Having focussed the initial literature review on food poverty we felt that it was important to further develop the theme in our second series of focus groups. We worked with a visual artist to create visual notes from the event; these are available on our website[11]. We invited the Chief Executive of the Trussell Trust, Adrian Curtis, who had spoken at the House of Commons event in June and who had helped launch the End Hunger UK campaign in Westminster the previous day, to open the focus group. The End Hunger UK campaign is starting conversations across the UK around food poverty, and is asking people to contribute ideas via social media around what people could do to tackle poverty. The focus group wrote ideas on paper plates as part of their considerations around food, poverty and a Good Society.


Focus on Food
# End Hunger UK
Balanced Diet
Price of Healthy Food
Government doesn't put money where their mouth is
Food Poverty
Community Growing to help those who can't
Overbundance of 'Junk' Food
Access to Land
Knowledge & Education
Relationship With
Prevent Isolation
Need a Shared Vision

---

[10] End Hunger UK http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/endhunger

[11] https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/i4p-webb-memorial-trust/

The Food and Poverty session covered a huge spectrum of conversations. The focus group talked through problems in terms of corporate agri-business, industrial food, and how obesity and poverty not at odds with each other, but are intimately entangled.

What could be done to tackle food poverty and civil society's contribution to a Good Society was discussed. The importance of civil society's role in protest and campaigning was voiced and the importance of civil society working within the locality, as well as recognising the variety of different types of civil society groups that can do something different. Collaborative approaches were considered important: community food, community agriculture and community cooperatives were examples of collaborative working between organisations. Collaborative approaches were very much valued, and the ethos of cooking clubs was shared as an example of positive collaborative working. Cooking clubs are organisations where people trained in cooking skills can cook together across social divides in Swansea. Sharing an activity together, focussing on what we have in common rather than on whether or not we identify as a service user or recipient, is a way that collaboration could be used.

The focus group felt that in this way collaboration could enable us to consider how we change the role of civil society from an ethos of charity to an ethos of solidarity, to collectivise the way that we think about food. Conversations turned to civic responses to food poverty, to collaborative, cross-sector responses of responsible and ethical organisations, such as community supermarkets, community allotments and cooperatives.

The focus groups discussed food habits and how we avoid a culture which blames the individual and how we consider the structural elements of food poverty. There was a discussion around the insidious notion of food that people do not appreciate, in terms of the biological chemically addictive qualities of sugar and processed food. It was recognised that food poverty is not just about a about lack of money but that it is also about poverty of understanding. Eating to promote good health was discussed. Here the focus group began talking about structural factors, questioning if our attitude to food is based on individual agency or the broader political and commercial structures that sit around us. The discussion suggested that the structural aspects of life impact the micro level decisions made by people in their everyday lives. Food poverty is a symptom of the UK-wide austerity policy, but the focus groups considered that only concentrating on policy level issues meant missing out the fact that food poverty is lived out daily by communities, in everyday lives in their perceptions of themselves and those around them. Food poverty is about people's everyday circumstances and relationships to their family. Globalisation is not going to mean much to the person experiencing poverty and using food banks.

The discussions agreed that a Good Society in relation to food is one where food is regarded as a right. It was agreed that many societies are worse off than the UK but distribute food better and have better access to food than we do, partly because we do not see food as something to which we are entitled. We see food as another commodity or we have it placed it wrongly in the hierarchy of what is important. The food focus group discussed the idea of food and a Good Society and felt that the idea of collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations to create a scaffolded response to poverty was positive. However, they recognised the limitations in the power of civil society when trying to negotiate food poverty solutions with big business.

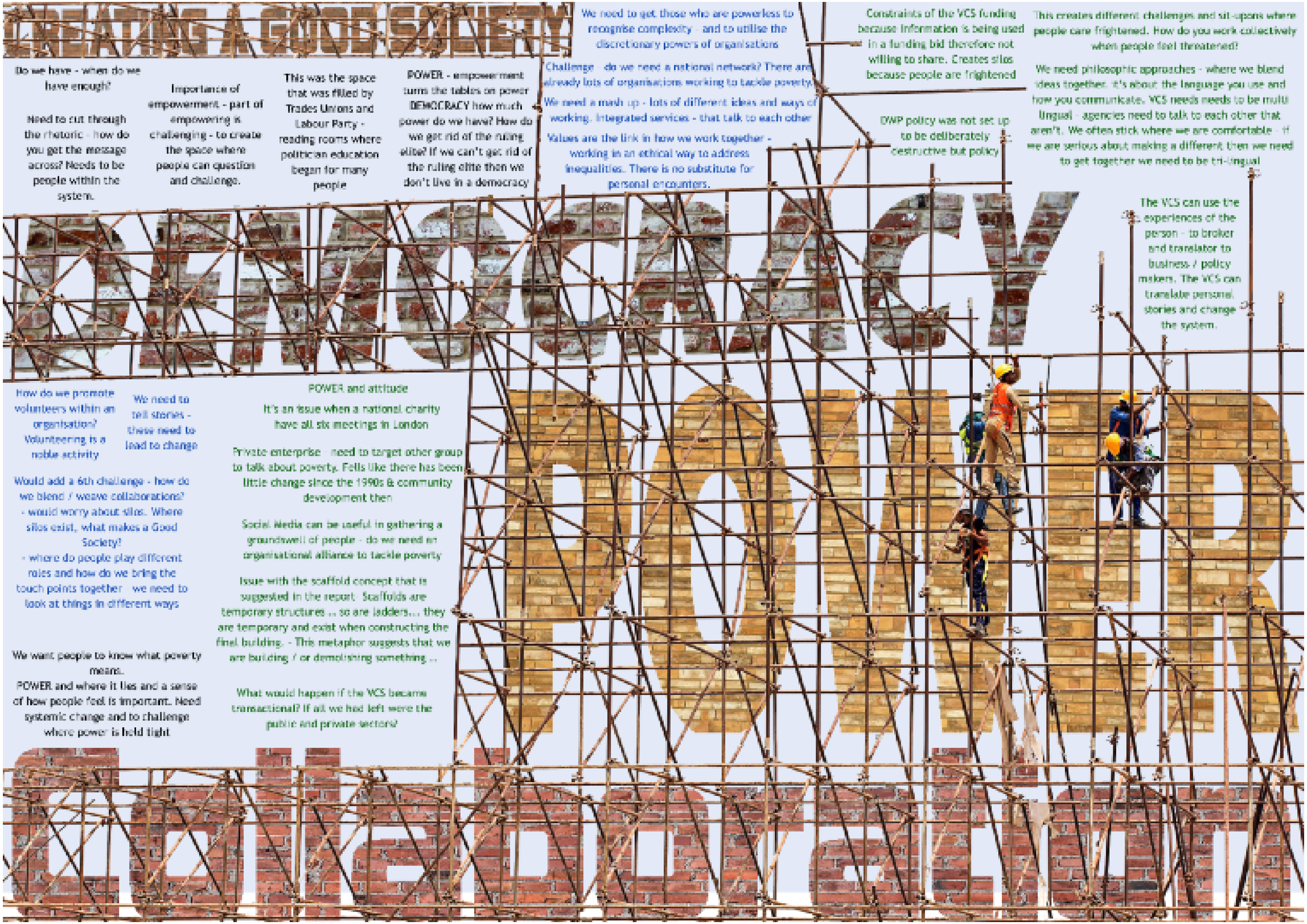
TACKLING INEQUALITY
Listen to Communities + Families to End Hunger #Endhungeruk
FOOD IS A RIGHT
WORK TO CREATE A FAIR SOCIETY # ENDHUNGER UK
Educate the next generation! #endhungeruk
ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE LOCALLY-PRODUCED FOOD AND COMMUNITY COHESION
Acknowledge the dangers of O HOUR CONTRACTS #ENDHUNGERUK
PREVENT HUNGER BUILD VALUES #END HUNGER UK

Equality, Fairness and a Good Society

This focus group was held in Newcastle in partnership with Newcastle CVS and it considered Equality, Fairness and a Good Society. This discussion focussed on power and questioned some of the conclusions around collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations being the way we might reach a Good Society. The focus group discussed the importance of empowerment: that part of empowerment is challenging and that we need to recreate the space where people can question and challenge. The focus group discussed that in the past this space was filled by trade unions and the Labour Party, and traditional reading rooms existed, which were where political education began for many people. Through becoming empowered, power can be reclaimed and democratic rights can be understood and engaged with.

Developing the Webbs' extension ladder metaphor into scaffolding was challenged by this focus group. The scaffolding image was cited because scaffolding is a temporary structure, as are ladders, so they exist only when constructing the building. The metaphor suggests that we are either building or demolishing something. In engaging the private sector in collaborative conversation we can create another conversation. Perhaps, in using stories to open up the experiences of people in poverty to the private sector, we can reignite the human values of business. The VCS was discussed as being adept at making policy personal, of linking with people who experience poverty and using their human experience to broker and translate client experiences to business and policy makers. The VCS can provide a voice in its translation of personal stories and can challenge the system. By recognising power, and where it lies, it can be challenged and channelled to address poverty. However, within this conversation a concern was raised around the reduction of civil society's values if it merged with the private sector. The VCS is already heavily reliant on service delivery contracts, and the question was asked about whether the VCS would become purely transactional.

The challenges of the service delivery purchaser–provider contracts were discussed further. The competition for contracts was discussed as creating silos which prevent collaborative working. To work across sectors, to build collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations, barriers need to be broken down, and this is difficult when organisations are fearful of funding cuts or about sustaining funding and organisational stability.



Do we have - when do we have enough?

Need to cut through the rhetoric - how do you get the message across? Needs to be people within the system.

Importance of empowerment - part of empowering is challenging - to create the space where people can question and challenge.

This was the space that was filled by Trades Unions and Labour Party - reading rooms where politician education began for many people

POWER - empowerment turns the tables on power DEMOCRACY how much power do we have? How do we get rid of the ruling elite? If we can't get rid of the ruling elite then we don't live in a democracy

We need to get those who are powerless to recognise complexity - and to utilise the discretionary powers of organisations

Challenge - do we need a national network? There are already lots of organisations working to tackle poverty.

We need a mash up - lots of different ideas and ways of working. Integrated services - that talk to each other

Values are the link in how we work together - working in an ethical way to address inequalities. There is no substitute for personal encounters.

Constraints of the VCS funding because information is being used in a funding bid therefore not willing to share. Creates silos because people are frightened

DWP policy was not set up to be deliberately destructive but policy

This creates different challenges and sit-upons where people care frightened. How do you work collectively when people feel threatened?

We need philosophic approaches - where we blend ideas together. It's about the language you use and how you communicate. VCS needs needs to be multi lingual - agencies need to talk to each other that aren't. We often stick where we are comfortable - if we are serious about making a different then we need to get together we need to be tri-lingual

The VCS can use the experiences of the person - to broker and translator to business / policy makers. The VCS can translate personal stories and change the system.

How do we promote volunteers within an organisation? Volunteering is a noble activity

We need to tell stories - these need to lead to change

Would add a 6th challenge - how do we blend / weave collaborations?
- would worry about silos. Where silos exist, what makes a Good Society?
- where do people play different roles and how do we bring the touch points together - we need to look at things in different ways

We want people to know what poverty means.
POWER and where it lies and a sense of how people feel is important. Need systemic change and to challenge where power is held tight

POWER and attitude

It's an issue when a national charity have all six meetings in London

Private enterprise - need to target other group to talk about poverty. Fells like there has been little change since the 1990s & community development then

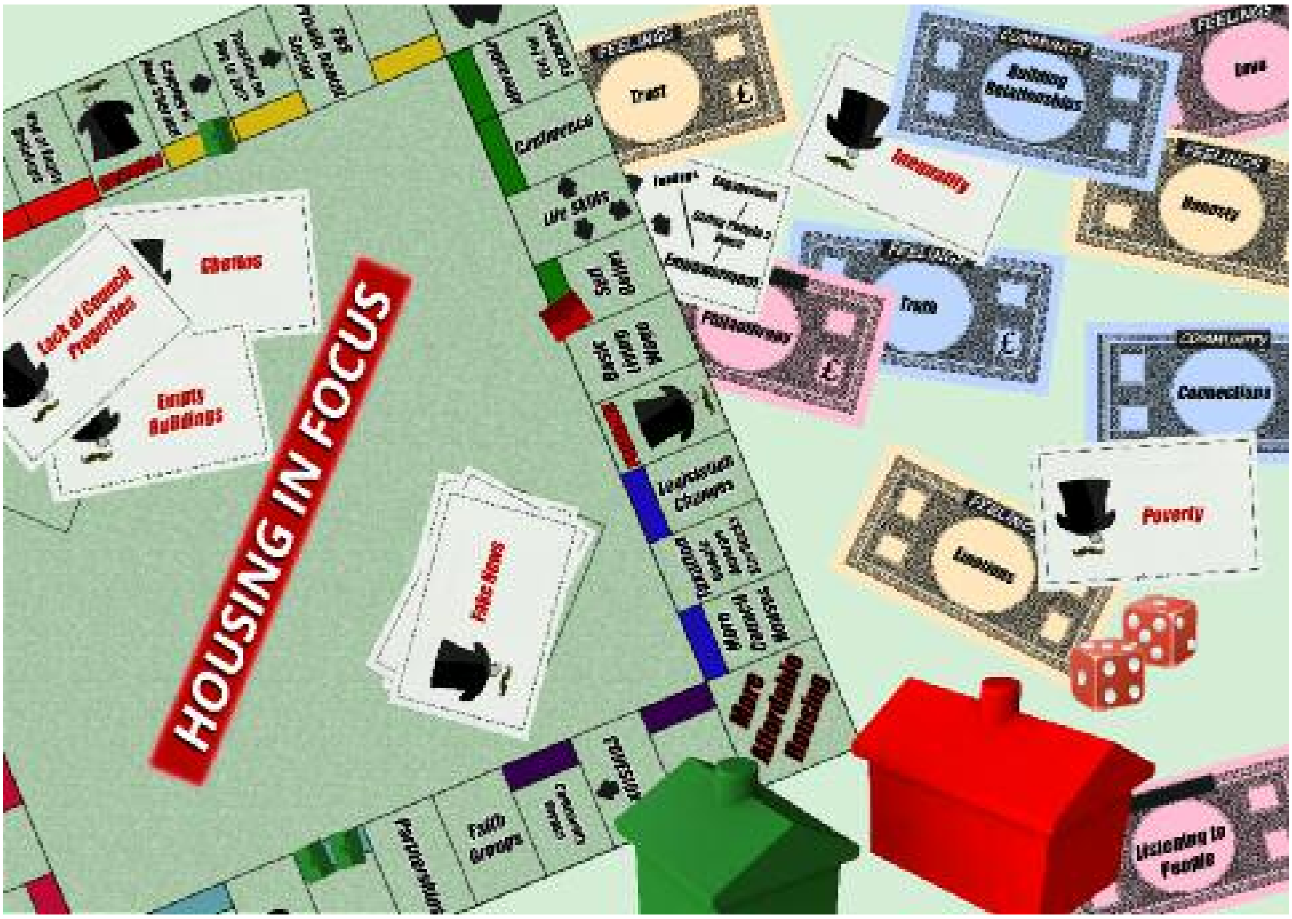
Social Media can be useful in gathering a groundswell of people - do we need an organisational alliance to tackle poverty

Issue with the scaffold concept that is suggested in the report. Scaffolds are temporary structures ... so are ladders... they are temporary and exist when constructing the final building. - This metaphor suggests that we are building / or demolishing something ...

What would happen if the VCS became transactional? If all we had left were the public and private sectors?

Housing and Poverty

The focus group on housing imagined a Good Society where people had the right to unconditional housing, to live without the threat that housing might be removed if they did not comply with the rules or requirements of landlords. Housing was a recurring issue in our collaborative conversations and the link between housing and poverty is well documented (Stephens and Leishman 2017). For this focus group the notion of the scale of collaboration was key. In terms of activism, of civil society voice, there is a difficulty of scale, as there are folk politics style initiatives, with many interventions being small scale or temporary, community gardens or community land use projects. Activism does not always need to be formalised on a grand scale; it can be individualised in one person cooking another a meal if they need it. As civil society gets larger, then civil society organisations need more accountability; here the focus group questioned how to scale up being good. What scale is a Good Society supposed to be on? There was a conversation about a project in Oxford that involved the takeover of disused buildings into a squat community. This community was set up along utopian lines yet had ben critiqued for also choosing to exclude some members, which led to a conversation within the focus group around whose good is a Good Society for.


HOUSING IN FOCUS
Lack of Council Properties
Charities
Empty Buildings
Fake News
Conference
Life Skills
Legislation Changes
More Affordable Housing
Faith Groups
Partnerships
FEELINGS
Trust
COMMUNITY
Building Relationships
Love
Inequality
Honesty
Philanthropy
Connections
Poverty
Listening to People
£

The notion of a collaboration for a Good Society was discussed, and the focus group suggested the need for a shift from contracts to cooperation, a move to more localised and sustainable communities. The creative challenges were reflected upon and the specificity of separate sector challenges were discussed as a positive. If groups are going to specialise there may be skills sets and partnerships that will work within specific sectors. The focus group discussed that there are overarching themes that correspond to all sectors that have changed in recent times and could be changed again. The focus group debated this concept and considered that there is a value in trying to find overarching challenges, because one of the challenges is the lack of joining up across different levels. The focus group came up with the idea of interconnected challenges across sectors. These interconnected challenges corresponded to the first principle of a Good Society: to recognise the unconditional right to housing and what that means at the national political level and at the level of community groups. What the community groups can do to achieve that will be different but the challenge will act as a connective tissue between various sectors. The focus group also discussed that it was important to involve excluded people – homeless people or people in food poverty – to shape the solutions.

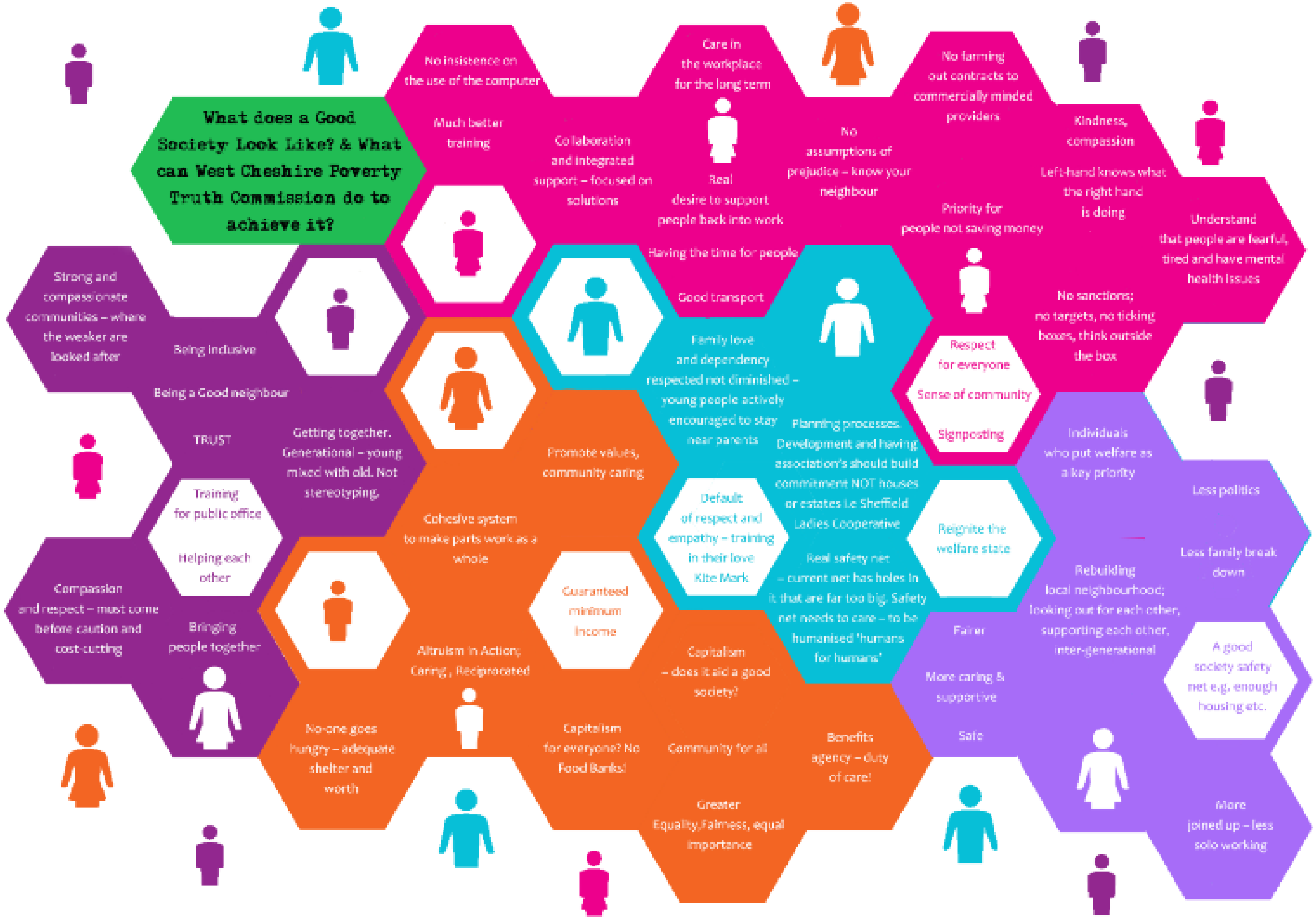
The terminology of creative challenges was positively received by the focus group. The term ‘challenge’ was positively received, as the group felt that we need political challenge, that we need a more cooperative progressive politics and an emphasis on mending inequality and poverty. The first stepping stone in creating this challenge, the focus group felt, was to try to model something good in order to demonstrate that and to argue from it; you can then persuade the small minority. The focus group asked about demonstrating examples, as there are good things happening, and then they discussed how they should flag up these positive examples of a Good Society and use them to bring pressure on governing structures. The focus group discussed that in order for things to progress there needs to be risk, there needs to be failure, and we need to take a chance. Austerity, the focus group argued, continues because no one will admit that it is not working. As long as we have the same government then austerity will not be challenged.

The housing focus group debated notions of a Good Society in terms of housing but also discussed and debated our creative challenges, liking the specificity of the sector challenges but feeling that they needed to be interconnected too.

Grassroots Experiences of Poverty

The focus group in Chester was facilitated in partnership with West Cheshire PTC and was held after they had heard a testimony and watched a film viewing with community inspirers (people within the Commission who have experience of poverty) and civic business leaders. The focus group had watched the film I Daniel Blake, by Ken Loach, after hearing a testimony from one of the community inspirers who shared her experience of poverty. The focus group asked what does a Good Society look like and what can West Cheshire PTC do to achieve a Good Society?

The group reflected on the emerging conclusions around collaboration and felt that a return to human values of care, respect and empathy were important in service delivery organisations, especially in areas that delivered welfare reform, such as the Job Centre Plus. There were discussions about how values could be reignited within public services. Integrated and collaborative cross-sector solutions were felt to be a positive move towards a Good Society. There was, however, a concern regarding contracting public services out to commercial providers, as values needed to be integrated into all service delivery not simply public or civil society service providers. Here the notion of power was considered again, and the power of neoliberal marketised values was a concern. The power of neoliberal marketised values was considered a threat to the values of public love, care and respect.



What does a Good Society Look Like? & What can West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission do to achieve it?

No insistence on the use of the computer

Much better training

Collaboration and integrated support – focused on solutions

Care in the workplace for the long term

Real desire to support people back into work

Having the time for people

Good transport

No assumptions of prejudice – know your neighbour

No farming out contracts to commercially minded providers

Priority for people not saving money

Kindness, compassion

Left-hand knows what the right hand is doing

Understand that people are fearful, tired and have mental health issues

No sanctions; no targets, no ticking boxes, think outside the box

Respect for everyone

Sense of community

Signposting

Strong and compassionate communities – where the weaker are looked after

Being inclusive

Being a Good neighbour

TRUST

Getting together. Generational – young mixed with old. Not stereotyping.

Training for public office

Helping each other

Compassion and respect – must come before caution and cost-cutting

Bringing people together

Promote values, community caring

Cohesive system to make parts work as a whole

Guaranteed minimum income

Altruism in Action; Caring, Reciprocated

No-one goes hungry – adequate shelter and worth

Capitalism for everyone? No Food Banks!

Capitalism – does it aid a good society?

Community for all

Greater Equality,Fairness, equal importance

Benefits agency – duty of care!

Family love and dependency respected not diminished – young people actively encouraged to stay near parents

Planning processes. Development and having association's should build commitment NOT houses or estates i.e Sheffield Ladies Cooperative

Default of respect and empathy – training in their love Kite Mark

Real safety net – current net has holes in it that are far too big. Safety net needs to care – to be humanised 'humans for humans'

Reignite the welfare state

Individuals who put welfare as a key priority

Less politics

Less family break down

Rebuilding local neighbourhood; looking out for each other, supporting each other, inter-generational

A good society safety net e.g. enough housing etc.

Fairer

More caring & supportive

Safe

More joined up – less solo working

Trust and Poverty

This focus group was held in Belfast in partnership with Ulster University. The focus group centred on trust, suggesting that we need trust in communities. and in atomised societies especially. This is a crucial starting point. To build trust you need to be in the same space. Civil Society creates this same space through its various networks. Civil society is a web of networks and meta-networks, and developing and increasing trust within these networks is the major challenge. The focus group discussed that you need to create trust within the relational; people need to know each other. Civil society is made up of a web of networks of connections, and to build trust you need to build networks.

Increasing dialogue was another important step towards a Good Society. The focus group recognised that civil society organisations do not talk; people talk. Civil society is made up of people and this is about including the people within organisations. To get conversations going you need to get personal investment in conversations, and trust then develops because people have reasons to be together. Creating a Good Society, the focus group felt, involves enabling conversations to happen, and conversations are vital for trust. To develop these conversations in the same space, they have to be about something more personal.

The focus group then went on to distinguish between civic and civil society. Civil society, in terms of the more formalised voluntary sector, is experiencing a disconnection with community because it is becoming increasingly professionalised. Civil society is heavily regulated. Civic contributions and volunteering opportunities enable people to become active in democracy. This is where people become encouraged, in volunteering for their communities. The focus group discussed the role of civil society in having the capacity to build trust, in terms of relationships to decision makers and between different people in the community; in other words, building horizontal and vertical trust. Here democracy was debated.

What is a good society, specifically in relation to society in relation to civil societies response to trust and poverty?

Economic and social output... Civil society role... less opportunity for volunteering...

TRUST Without it, were not listening or being listened to...

Then we react against that... by lashing out... Its about enabling a constant conversation, people feeling listened to and connected.

I should go and talk to X politician who lives near me, who I profoundly disagree with...

And you can be surprised by people (including politicians)...

Role of civil society to not pick a side, but bring people together...

Campaigns – attempts to lobby government have made little difference to those living in poverty

Local projects can be done - energy, food, ...

But we need trust in communities... in atomised societies this is a crucial starting point...

Build trust... be in the same space... networks... civil society web of networks... meta-networks... increasing trust is the major challenge.

Create trust within the rational – people need to know each other. Civil Society is made up of a Webb of networks of connections - To build trust you need to build networks

The notion of politics... it depends on trust to be effective... people and politicians have to be able to trust each other...

NI elections - questions of trust and distrust... Ultimately politics is personal and about trust

Civil society organisations... don't talk ... People talk

Civic society = people... including people not in organisations...

How do you get conversations going? ... to get personal investment in conversations... Trust develops because people have reasons to be together.

Fake news... lack of trust in evidence...

Expertise versus elitism...

That elitism hasn't gone away... Elections don't work... electoral democracy is imperfect. RE gap between people and politicians (RE trust)

Absence of faith in technocrat...

Faithfulness... trustworthy... versus faith (based on doctrines)...

Civil society role to examine trust both in terms of relationships to decision makers

and between different people in the community re horizontal and vertical trust...

Do countering voices reinforce the system?

Lack of support structures, 8-hour working days, etc. Squeeze on people to cultivate themselves as more than workers...

We expect legislators to gain expertise...

CSO members felt this colonisation, and felt connection with grass roots becoming more remote

Something people can trust collectively...

Professional voluntary sector versus wider civil society...

Political stratum's don't like manifestations of political activity by the populous... e.g.

Greeting migrants at the airport... Political fear of engaged and active civil society.

Solidarity of human values...

Civic society versus Civil society...

Disconnection with community, due to increasing professionalised (and colonised by bureaucracy, funders, government).

Civil Society heavily regulated.

Political discourse ... civic contribution – volunteering opportunities to become active in democracy.

People encouraged: Volunteering for your community, not active in your democracy...

No more coffing the cap to the political classes...

Is the word faith the right word when people project their hopes onto someone... ?

Truth in all of this...

The focus group felt that electoral democracy is imperfect because of the gap in trust between people and politicians. They discussed their view that there is a disconnect between the elitism of politicians who are not accessible to civic society and the elitism of civil society. Elections do not work in the sense that they do not bridge the gap between the political elite and the people; the most disaffected do not engage with power. Campaigns and attempts to lobby government have made little difference to those living in poverty. The focus group discussed that we have to be able to work the system to utilise our agency for change; we need to effect change and to understand how the system works in order to have a voice within it. The focus group felt that only then can we address the democratic deficiency. The focus group discussed that we need confidence in the system and to trust in other people. Trust is often interpersonal, often earned and developed in communities and based on reciprocity. Interpersonal trust needs to be created within the system, to get things to happen.

In order to create a Good Society, the focus group suggested that we need to flatten democracy. Ideas and visions of deliberative democracy (Burall, 2015) were discussed in detail. Trust needs to be built and maintained. The focus group discussed that democracy is impoverished; we vote and then politicians make decisions that they have not had a mandate from the electorate to make. Everything depends on the act of voting, and it becomes a sacred cow. The focus group questioned how the vote gives a politician a mandate: is it for what they have said, or for what they will do or think over the next five years? The focus group debated the reduction in trust between people and politicians at the same time as there is an increase in faith in politicians, without evidence. The group discussed the link between reducing trust and increasing faith, questioning if it is because civic society is weak or if it is a yearning for the past. With a breakdown in trust, hope is important. People need hope: hence, faith. The focus group discussed that civil society is complicit in the reduction of trust, which has led to the distancing of voice. Civil society has become part of ‘the system’ and the closure of civic spaces has facilitated the depoliticisation of the economy, leaving technocrats in charge of economic policy.

In terms of the creative challenges the focus group felt that they were an interlinked whole and that any solutions looking at civil society in isolation will be problematic. The focus group questioned what civil society is here for and whether it is here for a particular purpose. Civil society is good in its ability to create space for conversation, yet the focus group felt that we should be aware of Gramsci's (1971) reflections. Gramsci (1971) was clear that civil society is not democratic, therefore the focus group reflected that perhaps anything that emerges from civil society is nothing in particular.

The focus group discussed the facilitative role of civil society, arguing that technocracy destroys trust and that we need a more charismatic civil society, but we also need good accountability to ensure trust. Self-perpetuating organisations become entrepreneurial in their ways of working, with their mergers and takeovers of civil society organisations. The focus group discussed that we need to bring together those who are in leadership positions to achieve a Good Society so they can see across the wider system, and see it from different perspectives. Civil society perhaps has a role here in brokering relationships.
The focus group felt that the creative challenges need to be based on three things to build a Good Society:

1. GROW.

Civil Society leaders should enable the growing and sustaining of a shared concern for the common good. Those in power should enable support for small, local, creative, compassionate action.

2. ENCOURAGE.

Concerted, persistent support should be offered by those with power to enable small, local, creative, compassionate organisations. This would empower the development of a broad solidarity of human values.

3. CONVERSATION.

Civil society leaders should encourage conversational culture. With local, accessible conversations the culture of conversation will be developed and dialogue will exist within civic forums.

The focus group in Belfast spent a lot of time discussing the power and values of civil society and its consequent role in creating a Good Society. In its recommendations the focus group added to and developed our creative challenges.

Race and a Good Society

Race and Poverty was a theme that arose from our first phase of focus groups. The link between race and poverty is well researched (Platt 2011), and it is important to recognise too that intersectionality is important (McCall 2005). In terms of poverty and ethnicity we recognise that there is

considerable disadvantage in many areas of life for people across many areas. There are some common experiences within and between people in these groups but also important variations between groups that are often considered as similar and within every ethnic group. (Barnard and Turner 2011:1)

This focus group worked in partnership with HerArt, which is a community interest company that provides a range of activities in the community to increase skills and knowledge and improve wellbeing. HerArt's vision is to transform the lives of disadvantaged people living in some of the most deprived areas in Manchester. The workshop was based around a craft activity inspired by the concept of a 'dreamcatcher'. Dreamcatchers originated within the indigenous cultures of North America and have since been adopted by a large number of diverse cultures. Participants sat in small groups, with large sheets of paper covering the tables. Each sheet of paper had a large circle drawn in the centre with lines coming out of it, similar to a basic drawing of the sun. As participants discussed the topic, they were asked to cut up coloured tissue paper and stick it in a pattern inside the circle. Their discussions were then summarised and written on the outer edges of the paper. They were asked to note key words in capital letters on designated lines around the circle, using coloured marker pens.

The focus group discussed the structural to the personal, and reflected on the idea of collaboration within a Good Society. Race and poverty was raised as a theme in our first series of collaborative conversations. In this focus group the linkage of race to the term poverty was questioned by participants and it is indeed important to note intersectionality (Davis 2008; McCall 2005). The topic of race was reflected upon, with justice being a key element of the discussion. The conversation was themed around difference, justice, diversity and responsibility.

Conversations around opportunity focussed on a Good Society being a place where there is opportunity for all to escape poverty with a hand up, not a hand out. The nature of opportunity was discussed in terms of democracy, and the question was asked about why we are so depoliticised. We should remember, the focus group discussed, that we, the people, are powerful, and that we live in a democracy. This was discussed alongside the notion of fear. The focus group felt that fear is often fuelled by the right-wing media who create a narrative that divides society. Responsibility was discussed by the focus group and the tools of power were listed: government, media, education, class, money and knowledge. The conversation then considered the role of individual responsibility, the responsibility of individuals to take their own small steps towards valuing themselves and contributing to society.

Diversity was discussed in terms of managing difference, of developing respect and tolerance. The focus group discussed that we are powerful if we take up our democratic rights, but right now people are disengaged. There was debate over how we might engage a generation that appears not to be interested in politics. This led into the concept of justice, and the accountability of politicians. The notion of common values was discussed as a way of framing diversity and justice. In looking for the good in the society that we have now, we as a society can promote acceptance and reconciliation. The focus group discussed the concept that we should develop a willingness to debate our views rather than embracing stark either/or propositions. The media play a part in making this happen, and a Good Society would challenge this. Human values of care, harmony and trust were discussed, as was caring for the environment, as part of creating a Good Society. Equality and the management of opportunity were also discussed; a Good Society was envisaged as being where everyone has the opportunity to pursue a career, where there is equality of parental leave and care mentoring and a variety of flexible working arrangements. The focus group discussed collaboration instead of competition. A Good Society from this perspective would be one where organisations work together, where the mission of charities is to no longer exist and where resources are shared in a community of cooperation and collaboration.

Arts Event; Young People

Good
Society
Sunday
Lunch

This was an arts event at the Bluecoat arts centre[12] in Liverpool. Young people were invited to a Sunday Lunch and a conceptual art event which was focussed around the topic of a Good Society. We defined young people as under the age of thirty. This group might also be described as millennials, although we recognise that this definition is both fluid and contested (Burnett 2016). The event was run in partnership with the Bluecoat arts centre in Liverpool and led by artist Ruth Beale[13]. Food was provided by local cooperatives Squash Nutrition[14] and Homebaked[15], using community suppliers who embraced the event's theme of community participation and ownership.

Over lunch the participants, all young people under the age of thirty, discussed what makes a Good Society, using games printed on placemats as starting points for discussion. Participants were asked to make up a top ten of what makes a Good Society and answer a key question (different for each table). Each table was given one of these questions to answer:

1. What's more important to a Good Society
   – personal social relations or social structures of governance?
2. With post-truth politics and the social media echo chamber,
   will we ever agree on what makes a Good Society? Do we need to?
3. Who is responsible for making a Good Society? Through what roles or systems?

Participants were then encouraged to engage in a game of Good Society snakes and ladders. Ladder and snake squares are listed below. The idea was that a Good Society is fragile and the conditions in which it is created are constantly changing.

---

[12] http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk/
[13] http://ruthbeale.net/
[14] http://www.squashnutrition.org/
[15] http://homebaked.org.uk/

On ladder squares:

- Your literacy rate is the highest in the world!
- You've been awarded Most Liveable City!
- Your country is ranked high on the Human Development Index!
- Standard of Living is high in your population!
- You are top of the Social Progress Index league table!

On snake squares:

- Your prison population is the highest in the world.
- Your child poverty rate is high for your GDP.
- Inequality is increasing every year.
- Your GDP per capita is down.
- Your crime rate is on the rise.

On the final activity square the groups were asked to discuss with their table: How do we measure a Good Society?

Good Society Sunday Lunch

After lunch the discussion involved the whole group and fed back on the small table discussions. Ideas of neoliberal agency were discussed alongside small scale local solutions to inequality. Feedback from the conversations highlighted the intergenerational differences in perspectives. The young people that attended the event shared their business focussed engagement in sustainable enterprises, their volunteering linked to employability skills and their commitment to a Good Society where they contributed via social enterprise, cooperatives and collaborations between private and civil society. For the young people, collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations were a natural response to creating a Good Society. Artist Ruth Beale is developing an artistic response to the feedback from the discussions and will integrate the audio recordings, visual records and placemat feedback to create an artistic piece which will be displayed on the I4P website and that of the Bluecoat when completed.

Summary of Winter Conversations

This section has summarised phase two of our iterative research with civil society group organisations. This phase of our research reflects on our initial themes and reflects too on our creative challenges. The limitations of our research conclusions were debated and considered during this phase of the research, with strong consideration given to notions of trust and power in the process of creating a Good Society. For collaborations of responsible and ethical organisations to develop meaningful steps towards a Good Society, power must be negotiated on an equal footing. Conversations within focus groups reinforced the need for trust to be extended across the public, private and civil society sectors. The power of civil society to effectively challenge the value base and neoliberal approach of the private sector was also challenged. The creative challenges were debated and developed into a notion of sector specific challenges that were linked by interlocking themes.

The next section of this report will consider our research with Fairness Commissions before drawing conclusions.

Collaborative Conversations in Focus: Fairness Commissions

This research with the Fairness Commissions builds on the 2014 *Agency in Austerity* report (Bunyan and Diamond 2014a) which examined the Fairness Commissions as a response to poverty and inequality. The 2014 report concluded that whilst Fairness Commissions had been very successful in gathering evidence around poverty and inequality at a local level, their impact in helping to reduce levels of inequality and poverty had been limited. This is not surprising. Many Fairness Commissions had no formal power to take action. They could only informally persuade. Local authorities have distinctive powers to introduce specific initiatives aimed at addressing poverty but many Fairness Commissions, set up as voluntary bodies, were limited in this respect.

In 2014, the *Agency in Austerity* report found that the Fairness Commissions had produced many in-depth reports of local poverty and inequality but had yet to take action or initiate change in their communities. Following the publication of the 2014 Agency in Austerity report, NEF produced a report in June 2015 entitled Fairness Commissions: Understanding how local authorities can have an impact on inequality and poverty. This report examined what Fairness Commissions across the country had achieved and what they had done to reduce poverty in their localities.

Our current research took place between the autumn of 2015 and the autumn of 2016. The research involved a desk-based review of Fairness Commission activity, an online survey of the Fairness Commissions, fifteen semi-structured telephone interviews with Fairness Commission members across the UK, and two roundtable meetings with representatives of the Fairness Commissions across the UK.

Fairness Commissions in Focus: Case Studies and Survey

A snapshot collection of Fairness Commissions is detailed in appendix one. These snapshots were gathered from an online search of publically available Fairness Commission Reports in June 2016 and evidence the diversity of approaches to fairness that individual Fairness Commissions have taken. The London Fairness Commission is detailed here but not individual Fairness Commissions within London. This is in order to give a broader snapshot across the UK of the diversity of approaches. We have, however, conducted semi-structured interviews with individual Fairness Commissions within London as well as the London Fairness Commission.

The boxed snapshots of Fairness Commission work demonstrate the diversity of approaches to fairness taken by different Commissions, as do the quotes from the Fairness Commissions. Our survey, interviews and roundtable research develop this theme of diversity, exploring the impact and sustainability of the Fairness Commissions.
We conducted an online survey of the Fairness Commissions, asking five questions and analysing responses using a Likert Scale. The response rate was low (just seven responses) and despite continuing to advertise the survey in the hope of gaining an improved response rate, we have not attracted further responses.

The Fairness Commissions surveyed were unclear whether they had reduced poverty in their locality, although all respondents felt that they had contributed to a Good Society. As the quotes on the previous page illustrate, this is perhaps unsurprising as the Fairness Commissions' attempts to influence policy have been limited by their lack of statutory powers. The Fairness Commissions operate as bodies of persuasion, coalitions of the willing, rather than enforcement bodies. It is therefore not surprising that without powers to enforce policy change within their localities, some Fairness Commissions feel that they have not been successful in reducing poverty within their areas.

We also asked survey respondents to add a comment on the significance of the Fairness Commissions, particularly with reference to the survey questions.

[Fairness Commission has been …] good for allowing us to be innovative and to ask new questions about new challenges, or at least from a new perspective, rather than duplicating existing efforts of different agencies and organizations. Too early to say whether FC has impacted on poverty levels, though latest deprivation index figures suggest the picture is actually getting marginally worse, so hopefully the implementation of FC recommendations will have an impact.

Our Fairness Commission was valuable as a conversation starter between sectors – valuable but not enough time/resources to follow though (yet). Also real voices of power not addressed, need real involvement of actual community, not just 'community' organisations.

It is great that we have been so diverse in our approaches ... but also there is huge scope for and potential value in showing our experiences, practices, achievements, failures, etc., etc. This hour [House of Commons Roundtable Event] was genuinely useful for that. It would be great to find ways of sustaining the sharing.

Fairness Commissions In Depth: Interviews with Commissioners.

We conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews with Commissioners from Fairness Commissions. Interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2015. We asked the Fairness Commissions 'How significant or sustainable (in your view) do you think the Fairness Commission approach has been?' The Fairness Commissions discussed the significance and sustainability of their work, which has raised a range of responses. What is clear, however, is that there is a wide diversity in the approaches taken by the Fairness Commissions to almost every aspect of their work.

Significance. Voice. Action

The majority of Commissioner interviewees felt that the Fairness Commissions have been an effective and useful framework to address local issues and a method of tackling the issue of fairness within councils in a strategic way. The Fairness Commissions were considered an exciting and significant development, and successful from two perspectives. Firstly, communities have seen the action associated with the Fairness Commissions because of the Commissions' approach. Secondly, at their core is a listening approach and therefore the understanding of their areas' needs has increased. The Commissioners interviewed felt that the Fairness Commissions have been involved in a meaningful listening exercise. The Commissioners referenced the intellectual case to reduce inequality, and many Commissions referenced *The Spirit Level* (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) as a basis for their work.

Power: Persuasion

A major challenge that the Fairness Commissions experienced was around power. The Fairness Commissions discussed the notion of independence and of voice. There is a tension around Fairness Commissions being seen as part of the local authority but wanting to position the debate in a different space. Ideas were shared that if you want to influence policy makers then you need to meet them where they are thinking: to find a space that enables them to take steps.

This research has identified the diversity of the Fairness Commissions' approaches. From this diversity, it has also identified the need for detailed, evidence-based evaluation of the work of the Fairness Commissions. The recommendations suggested in the 2014 Agency in Austerity report have been broadly followed. Yet it is unclear, especially in the case of the living wage, to what extent the work of the Fairness Commissions has impacted on the establishment of living wage policies within local councils. Here, the case for evidence-based evaluation is reinforced and the question of how much power the Fairness Commissions have to take action is raised.

Power: Local Versus National

A further challenge that the Commissions face relates to their local focus. Fairness Commissions were set up to address poverty and inequality within their locality. However, poverty and inequality are national and global issues that arguably cannot be solved at a local level. Fairness Commissions focus on what can be done locally, yet central government is making changes that affect poverty and inequality nationally. Fairness Commissions exist within a wider national-level context of welfare reform and public service reform. Austerity is resulting in national cuts, which have in turn required each local authority to reduce local budgets. The Fairness Commissions interviewed in most areas aimed to work with local authorities so that the cuts the authorities were making could be made in a fairer way. The critique of the Fairness Commissions is that they can be considered as being co-opted by national government as a means to make cuts. This is a legitimate concern. No one wants to make cuts, although some cuts are more regressive than others. The Fairness Commissions that were interviewed spoke of how they advised local authorities to make fairer decisions.

Fairness Commission Roundtables

From the interviews and survey responses it was clear that sharing best practice, ideals and principles was useful for the Fairness Commissions, whose work across the UK, whilst diverse, held to the values of fairness and anti-poverty foundations. As part of our ongoing research into the concepts of a Good Society, we held an event in the House of Commons in June 2016, inviting Fairness Commissions to share best practice and to consider their role in reducing poverty and inequality. The session identified the diversity of approaches that the Commissions had taken to fairness and the value of sharing best practice, approaches and ideas. As a result of the enthusiastic response we organised a second Fairness Commission roundtable in Birmingham. This Fairness Commission roundtable was an opportunity to hear how different Fairness Commissions have prioritized their approaches and an opportunity for discussion, listening and reflection on the work of the Fairness Commissions going forward.

Fairness Commission Roundtable at the House of Commons

The roundtable discussed the fact that the Fairness Commissions face a set of contradictory challenges in terms of how they must address and intervene in poverty locally and that central government has a part to play in changing policy.

Starting a Conversation: Campaigning

The roundtable at the House of Commons discussed that the Fairness Commissions were the start of something. It was discussed that some Fairness Commissions would have been unable to create much change by themselves, as often they were time limited so there was not enough time and power to push things through. However, the Fairness Commissions created legitimacy, which enabled some to start conversations with large corporate partners. An anecdote was shared about a large corporate partner who was of the opinion that they were doing enough, but when approached they were receptive to working with the Fairness Commission and as part of that process agreed to do more work to tackle poverty and inequality.

The discussion moved then to more difficult issues and questions: How do you move beyond Commissions based in local authorities? How do you start to involve community voices? Is the role of Fairness Commissions perhaps to keep opening up spaces for discussion with new partners? It was felt that there is something here about building the quality of public conversation. The Fairness Commissions are uniquely placed to articulate and translate different perspectives into a local framework. It was felt that the Fairness Commissions were inclusive, as people negotiate fairness in their lives. It was mooted that the Fairness Commissions come as initiatives and do not always find what is fair, and implementation can be limited.

Campaigning – With or Against the Grain?

Several Fairness Commissions have been set up as Task and Finish groups and have had a very practical action focus. There was a debate regarding whether or not to go with or against the grain in terms of policy ideas and actions. One Fairness Commission shared that they went into schools and asked pupils what fairness meant to them. The challenge is then to enact those visions of fairness by working with the council and public health. All local departments in local authorities are facing deficient budgets, and the challenge is to ask more of organisations for less funding. Employment is crucial in the focus on inequality. Fair access is crucial too.

It was mooted that to achieve any practical action the Fairness Commissions should stick with the current political narrative, work with it and try to achieve change from within austerity. This was refuted by others within the room who felt that in order to achieve lasting change the Fairness Commissions should fight policy and campaign for long-term anti-poverty goals. Common themes emerged from the roundtable discussions around public service reform, which can be seen as something other than ‘efficiency savings’ and allows opportunities for fairness and equality. This offers opportunities to be innovative and to meet the needs of communities. Other roundtable themes focussed on campaigning. It was felt that there are tensions around the Commissions’ ability to change things. The second roundtable took place on the 11th October 2016 in Birmingham.

Fairness Commission Roundtable in Birmingham

The second roundtable conversation invited Fairness Commissions to Birmingham, where a conversation was held that shared learning and reflected on the function and challenges experienced by Fairness Commissions.

Independence

Independence was an issue discussed by Fairness Commissions. All Fairness Commissions, seem to have been local authority led. There was a discussion which considered if an independent Fairness Commission might have more power to act if away from local authority bureaucratic control. Buy-in from the local authority was considered key to Fairness Commission success; where Fairness Commissions did not have that buy-in, discussions considered if independence would have been a more effective option, allowing Fairness Commissions to work with other partners.

The notion of an independent chair was also discussed, as was the range of partners involved. Very often, the partners that the Fairness Commission works with are the ‘usual suspects’, so engaging new and diverse partners to work with the Fairness Commission increases its power, independence and ability to achieve action. Discussion considered that the work of Fairness Commissions is about understanding the challenges of an area, and creating dedicated strategies to overcome the challenges. The work of a Fairness Commission is also about developing the resources. Resources are not just about finance, they are about more than that: they are about the partnerships on board.

Taking the Next Steps in Fairness

Fairness as a concept was discussed as something around which to unite. In order to maintain momentum around the concept of fairness and Fairness Commissions, the possibility of creating shared resource collaboration was discussed.

Fairness Commission Research Summary

There are a variety of issues arising from the work of the Fairness Commissions. The overwhelming feeling from those we interviewed is that they have had an impact upon the communities within which they have worked. This impact has varied across Commissions due to the diversity of the geographical areas each Commission has covered, the diversity of approaches that each Commission has taken and the interpretation that each Commission has made of its remit. Whilst evaluation and capturing the impact was built into the work of some Commissions, others simply did not have the budget to fund this. The result was that some Commissions wrote their report and then lacked the funding to manage the implementation. It is here perhaps that our learning is central. It is suggested that any future work with the Commissions should focus on evaluation.

Our research with the Fairness Commissions has evidenced the fundamental challenges experienced in attempting to tackle national/global issues at a local level. The Fairness Commissions have no legal or statutory powers to address poverty and inequality. They have operated as bodies created to persuade and influence. They cannot be critiqued for not removing poverty and inequality as they were never given the power to do so. Perhaps the critique should be of the title Fairness Commissions – they can evidence success in raising awareness of poverty and inequality, and in starting conversations around fairness, but they have no legal or statutory powers to enforce fairness. This leads us to question whether they should have been more explicit in what they could achieve (raising awareness) and what they could not (removing poverty and inequality).

Our next section seeks to draw some conclusions from our research.

Collaborative Conversations in Focus: Conclusions

This is our final report for the Webb Memorial Trust. We have analysed the themes emerging from our literature review and from our intertwined research with the **Fairness Commissions** and with **civil society** groups more broadly in order to identify what a Good Society might look like, how we might get there and who might contribute to it.

What Might a Good Society Look Like?

Conversations with the Fairness Commissions and civil society groups envisaged a Good Society where people understand what poverty and inequality mean and are able and informed enough to have philosophical conversations and debates about shaping their vision of a Good Society. In a Good Society grassroots voices are heard and democracy is reinvigorated to truly generate informed ethical debate.

How Might We Get To a Good Society?

Conversations with the Fairness Commissions and civil society groups led us to the conclusion that we get to a Good Society by creating a strong, independent civil society, one that is capable, willing and free to resist and challenge government policy and private markets. Our research suggests that a strong civil society could develop and build a counter narrative to neoliberalism that would offer a credible, more ethical alternative to the prevailing neoliberal ideology. In returning to human values of trust, care and kindness, civil society can reignite a resistance to the status quo, developing and debating an alternative vision of society based on trust, kindness and love.

Conversations with Fairness Commissions and civil society groups suggest that a strong independent civil society can contribute to a Good Society. Our conversations with civil society groups and Fairness Commissions have **revealed three potentially mutually exclusive visions of a Good Society. The first is a Good Society that repairs the current** welfare state, **restores institutions and reimagines the Webbs' extension ladder model of a Good Society**.

The second vision of a Good Society is based on strong human values of public love, care, tolerance, respect and kindness. This vision of a Good Society reignites the philosophical debate around what a Good Society might look like. By reinvesting in democracy and developing a credible counter narrative to neoliberalism based on human values, civil society can help to build a Good Society. Conversations with Fairness Commissions and civil society groups reveal that collaboration and supportive relationships, webs of social ties, human capital, trust and kindness need to be developed within and between organisations. Here the Webbs' parallel bars model is redeveloped, with grassroots voices at its core.

This vision of a Good Society argues that in creating a strong counter narrative to the political status quo, a Good Society can emerge. This vision of a Good Society considers that neoliberal ideological homogeneity creates silos of unchallenged marketised politics. This vision recognises that we are living within a siloed mentality of specialised organisations that exist within the boundaries of a simplistic, socially homogeneous nation state that harks back, in turn, to notions of the formalised division of labour. To create a Good Society, in this vision, we need to reconsider our understanding of society as beyond that of nation state, recognising the globalised heterogeneous world in which we sit.

Through the recognition of heterogeneity and diversity comes a solidarity of tolerance and respect. Hybrid organisations, experienced at integrated working, that are no longer sector specialised but expert collaborators operating within a heterogeneous globalised world will be the ones to create a Good Society. In a return to human values as a counter narrative to neoliberalism, a strong independent civil society offers a powerful resistance to poverty. This resistance creates ‘messy middle grounds’ (Sparke 2008) where the Webbs’ extension ladder is extended and updated into a social scaffolding of value-based organisations. In this model, a Good Society is found in strong collaborations between responsible and ethical organisations.

The third vision of a Good Society might seem more pragmatic, as it recognises where we are in terms of welfare reform and uses the social scaffolding of civil society to temporarily alleviate the gaps in welfare provision. The homogenous vision of a socially cohesive Good Society that was espoused by the post-war welfare state represents the extension ladders imagined by the Webbs. From behind the scaffolding of civil society, in our updated analogy, emerged a heterogeneous solidarity of globalised hybrid responsible and ethical organisations. These organisations are temporarily covering the cracks in welfare provision, offering a temporary vision of a Good Society.

Who Might Create a Good Society?

Who might create a Good Society depends on which vision of a Good Society shared by focus groups and Fairness Commissions you choose to consider. Each of the three visions requires different policy papers, framed around structure or agency depending on which understanding of a Good Society you prefer.

Vision One – Rebuild the Welfare State

This first vision is the most clearly political. Rebuilding the welfare state requires a return to New or Old Labour style politics which r**einvest in public infrastructure and rebuild welfare systems in order to rebuild the welfare state**.

Vision Two – Individual Return to Human Values

Conversations with the Fairness Commissions and civil society groups suggest that a strong independent civil society can contribute to a Good Society. In reigniting philosophical debate around what a Good Society might look like, reinvesting in democracy and developing a credible counter narrative to neoliberalism based on human values, civil society can help to build a Good Society. Conversations with the Fairness Commissions and civil society groups reveal that collaboration and supportive relationships, webs of social ties, human capital, trust and kindness need to be developed within and between organisations. This vision **prefers individual agency as the means to create a Good Society. The who is each of us, as individuals acting more effectively based on our human values of trust, public love and care**.

In 1916, in their book The Prevention of Destitution, Sydney and Beatrice Webb set out the parallel bars/extension ladder models of voluntary action. In the parallel bars model, the state and civil society work side by side to reduce poverty. In the extension ladder model, the state and civil society hold different roles. In this model, the state provides the basic minimum for all citizens and voluntary action extends from this basic minimum. In the Webbs' (1916) model, voluntary action and civil society are not a substitute for state action; they are additional to it. One hundred and one years later this public argument has developed and evolved and has re-focussed on a scaffolding of human values, ignited by a strong vocal civil society fuelled by a participatory democracy that is based on cross-sector collaboration between responsible and ethical organisations.

Vision Three – Strong Collaborations Between Responsible and Ethical Organisations

This vision recognises where we are in terms of welfare reform and offers a vision of a Good Society where civil society acts as a temporary scaffolding to patch the deficit in welfare provision. The vision of a Good Society offered from our conversations with the Fairness Commissions and civil society groups is a service delivery 'Plus' approach (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014). The social support and care offered by civil society in collaboration with responsible and ethical organisations, through a return to human values, form the side dish to a service delivery main course. In a return to human values as a counter narrative to neoliberalism, a strong independent civil society offers a powerful resistance to poverty. This resistance creates 'messy middle grounds' (Sparke 2008) where the Webbs' extension ladder is extended and updated into a social scaffolding of value-based organisations. **This is where the Good Society can be found, and indeed delivered: in strong collaborations between responsible and ethical organisations. This vision of a Good Society suggests that structure, institutions and structures between organisations are the answer to the question of who creates a Good Society**.

Hybrid organisations emerge: social enterprises that are profit making but with a social purpose and civil society organisations as market actors. It is these hybrid organisations (Bills 2010), responsible and ethical organisations, cross-collaborations between civil society, business and government, that have the power to deliver a Good Society. Resistance exists in its 'messy middle grounds' (Sparke 2008:423), with a mixture of control and opposition, structure and agency, incorporation and alternativeness. Here the Webbs' parallel bars model is redeveloped, with grassroots voices at its core.

In this vision, creating a strong counter narrative to the political status quo creates the opportunity for a Good Society to emerge. Neoliberal ideological homogeneity creates silos of unchallenged marketised politics. We are living within a siloed mentality of specialised organisations that exist in a simplistic, socially homogeneous nation state that harks back to notions of the formalised division of labour (Smith 1790; Taylor 1911. To create a Good Society we need to reconsider our understanding of society as beyond that nation state, recognising the globalised heterogeneous world in which we sit. Through the recognition of heterogeneity and diversity comes a solidarity of tolerance and respect. Hybrid organisations, experienced at integrated working, that are no longer sector specialised but expert collaborators, will operate within a heterogeneous globalised world.

The homogenous vision of a socially cohesive Good Society that was espoused by the post-war welfare state represents the extension ladders imagined by the Webbs. From the scaffolding of civil society in our updated analogy emerges a heterogeneous solidarity of globalised hybrid responsible and ethical organisations. These organisations are the social scaffolding that is patching the current deficits in welfare reform and they are already responding to our creative challenges and will continue to do so.

Good Society Isn't an Easy Solution

We recognise the critiques opened up by our iterative research. Power and trust are key to our visions of a Good Society. Developing trust in a competition-based society is challenging. We recognise that civil society does not hold power in the same way as the public and private sectors. Civil society, although not exclusively so, is challenged by funding cuts, procurement procedures and the increasing needs of clients groups, to name but a few of its primary challenges. It does, however, have a unique character, one that is value-based, and through this unique character it holds the possibility of creating and maintaining dialogue, of building a conversation towards a Good Society.

The three visions of a Good Society that we have presented in our research are all large, difficult and utopian ideas that require considerable sociological imagination (Wright Mills 2000) to envision. Reigniting democracy, challenging neoliberal ideology and empowering civil society to create modes of peaceful resistance are all dependent on power, resources and sheer strength of will. We recognise that what our research suggests is not an easy step-by-step solution but a process: a process of vocalisation, of empowerment, of reanimation of human values. The Webbs were, however, given to the innovation and promotion of big ideas, so our research leaves you with these three visions of a Good Society and some creative challenges. In doing so we offer not a manifesto but a call for dialogue, collaboration and engagement in a process of creating a Good Society.

Creative Challenges

These creative challenges were written by us in response to our analysis of the themes emerging from the first phase of our civil society research. We then sent out the challenges to the focus groups, for discussion. The Newcastle group suggested that the challenges be combined to be cross-sector challenges, in line with our collaborative conclusions. The Oxford Group liked the specificity of the challenges and felt that this was necessary to reflect the complexity of society.

CHALLENGE ONE : ALL PARLIAMENTARY ANTI-POVERTY GROUP

- Listen to individuals involved in anti-poverty work on the practical steps that are needed to support individuals and families, from benefit advice to a right to quality education and housing.
- Learn from the model of the PTC and respect individual voices/knowledge and experience.
- Hold meetings/listening events outside London.

CHALLENGE TWO : TRADES UNION CONGRESS

- Draw on your network of regional and local representatives to support local initiatives like the PTC to highlight the experiences of local people.
- Continue to support the living wage campaign.

CHALLENGE THREE : PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

- Recognise that the PTC or Fairness Commissions are necessary but are not sufficient initiatives to highlight poverty and inequality, and supporting such ideas does require action.
- Ask the Local Government Association and individual local authorities to publicly report on progress that has been made to address pay differentials and the living wage.

CHALLENGE FOUR : THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTORS

- Commit to establishing a national coordinating network to promote joint activity and to disseminate information.
- Support local anti-poverty campaigns.
- Link up to existing networks from the Equality Trust to Church Action on Poverty to promote ideas, activity and local initiatives.

CHALLENGE FIVE : ACADEMICS AND FUNDING AGENCIES

- Expect that those social policy/social sciences associations who study poverty commit to sponsoring events at their annual conferences to listen to testimonies on the experience of poverty.
- Demand that funding bodies (from the JRF to the Arts and Humanities Research Council) expect that individual ‘voices’ on poverty are heard – respectfully – in work which they commission.

CHALLENGE SIX : WHAT CAN WE DO?

We left this challenge open in the interim report. We took this challenge to our Winter Conversation focus groups. Feedback and ideas are described in the summaries of the workshops that were held, but the ideas include everything from micro level activism of community gardens and miniature acts of kindness in cooking a meal for a person who is street homeless to restructuring of institutions to remove the culture of unfair service delivery contracts with civil society and creating fairer collaborations of private and civil society organisations.

These creative challenges were written by us in response to our analysis of the themes emerging from the first phase of our civil society research. We then sent out the challenges to the focus groups, for discussion. The Newcastle group suggested that the challenges be combined to be cross-sector challenges, in line with our collaborative conclusions. The Oxford Group liked the specificity of the challenges and felt that this was necessary to reflect the complexity of society.

Appendix One: Fairness Commission Snapshots

Blackpool Fairness Commission

Summary
Three strands of work:
listening and consulting, influencing and guiding, acting and doing.

2013 Acting and Doing – 100 Acts of Kindness. Enjoy and respect campaign (Night time Economy) The Big Knit (Age UK & Innocent Smoothie) Dementia Friends North of England Fairness Conference.

Recommendations Continue work on social isolation, 10,000 acts of kindness, aim to develop a community shop, continue Blackpool dementia friendly work.

Bristol Fairness Commission

Summary
Focussed on three key areas:
a young city, sharing prosperity and healthy communities

Recommendations Five key findings and recommendations for Bristol:

1. The best place for children to grow up – a fair start in life
2. Sharing prosperity – a fair place to live and work
3. Fair wages – a living wage for all
4. Fairness for low income families
5. A happy healthy city – fair and healthy communities

Report recommends that within six months of the Mayor’s formal response to the report a fairness alliance is established in order to continue working on the five strands.

A further recommendation is to adopt fairness principles for the city of Bristol.

Dundee Fairness Commission: *A Fair Way to Go*

Summary

Aim: To make sure that Dundee is doing all it can to achieve fairness across the city.

The Dundee Partnership set up a Fairness Commission to:

- consider the nature, extent and impact of poverty in Dundee.
- identify and investigate the key causes and consequences of poverty, along with policy and practical measures to address these.
- consider evidence of what has worked elsewhere to combat poverty and inequality.
- assess the effectiveness of the efforts to date of Dundee City Council and the broader Dundee Partnership through the Fairness Action Plan for Dundee.
- seek the views and involvement of those experiencing poverty first hand.
- prepare a report for the whole Dundee Partnership with recommendations on additional priorities for action to tackle and reduce poverty in the city.

Recommendations The Fairness Commission call on the Partnership to:

- work with the people of Dundee to prepare an action plan within six months, setting out how they are going to implement our strategic recommendations relating to Stigma; Work and Wages; Closing the Education Gap; Benefits, Advice and Support; Housing and Communities; and Food and Fuel.
- demonstrate how by working together partners will more effectively reduce poverty and inequality than by acting alone.
- publish a progress report annually until at least 2022 so that there is a clear and ongoing commitment to deliver improvements.
- provide long-term funding and support to enable partners in the voluntary sector to work with people in poverty to influence the Partnership's plans by giving them an ongoing voice in efforts to tackle poverty in Dundee.
- campaign for changes to the relevant legislation to end the punitive aspects of the welfare system and to introduce employability support which will genuinely help people into the sustainable employment which will lift their families out of poverty.

The Fairer Fife Commission

Summary Commission established in September 2014 to take a strategic overview of the scale and nature of poverty in Fife and the effectiveness of activity currently undertaken to address poverty.

Create a Fairer Fife that is:
- Ambitious
- Poverty free
- Fair work
- Affordable
- Connected
- Empowered
- Skilled
- Healthier

Recommendations
- Use personal and collective data to drive change
- Move from isolated good examples to great mainstream practice
- Demonstrate clear commitment to inclusive policy making and delivery
- Fairness is everyone’s business

Greater Manchester Poverty Commission

Summary
Established by a number of Greater Manchester MPs to identify key components of poverty within the sub region and to identify practical solutions that can improve the lives of those that live in poverty.

Evidence gathered sought to gain answers to questions:
- What does poverty mean to you?
- What if anything has changed for you to be in your current situation?
- What is it like to be in poverty?
- What are the barriers and obstacles that keep individuals in poverty?
- What would need to change to alleviate poverty?

Recommendations
Sixteen detailed recommendations split into themes:
- Fuel finance and food
- Access to services
- Jobs and growth
- Maintaining momentum for action on poverty

Lancashire Fairness Commission

Summary
The Commission used the principles of the Marmot Review to examine how greater equality can help people to maximise their potential and create healthier, wealthier communities.

Increasing fairness in Lancashire means making sure we help people to help themselves and free up public resources for those most in need.
Recommendations therefore focus on rights that they expect from the state and their own role in building communities that are more resilient.

Three strands of work: Starting Well, Living Well, Ageing Well

Recommendations
Twenty-seven recommendations with who has responsibility for them
(e.g. local authority/university/Ofsted)

Focussed on the three strands of work: Starting Well, Living Well, Ageing Well

Liverpool Fairness Commission

Summary
Key questions that the Commission addressed:
- How do we manage and distribute diminishing public resources in way that is equitable and fair to all and that can really make a sustainable difference?
- How do we deal with the potentially disproportionate consequences of welfare reform for those who are really struggling?
- How do we mitigate the threat of rising unemployment to avoid blighting the lives of individuals and communities for years to come?
- How do we seek to reduce the ongoing inequalities that disfigure our city and the continuing inequality that exists between Liverpool and more prosperous cities?
- How do we place common values at the heart of how we make policy?

Recommendations
Next steps centre on:
Coming together for people
- Coming Together for Prosperity – Enterprise
- Coming Together for the Future – Young People
- Coming Together for Liverpool – Legacy

The Liverpool Fairness Charter: Ten Steps to Achieving Greater Fairness.

London Fairness Commission

Summary

The London Fairness Commission was established to organise conversations across the city in response to the question 'Is London Fair?'

Three phases of work:

- June-September 2015: Questions: What is fairness? Is London fair? How could London be a fairer city?
- Interim report, debate at the Guildhall, further discussion of ideas.

March 2015–March 2016 Commissioners began to construct policies to address unfairness.

Recommendations

Recommendations under ten headline areas:

1. Costs of living in London
2. Tie for a higher minimum wage in London
3. Protecting homes for Londoners
4. A fair deal for renters
5. More homes for Londoners
6. Making property tax fair
7. Keeping London honest
8. A fair chance for every young Londoner
9. Making wealth work for Londoners
10. Keeping fairness under the microscope

Newport Fairness Commission

Summary

Four parameters and focus points for fairness:

1. Equal treatment whilst recognising difference
2. Mutual obligations between citizen and local government
3. Interdependency and reciprocity within community relations
4. Trans agency and accountability in decision making.

Recommendations

The Commission sees its role primarily as facilitating a critical reflection on policy rather than being a recommender of policy.

Newcastle Fairness Commission

Summary

Aims:

- Setting out strong principles of how fairness could be given practical effect in Newcastle, in a way that would secure broad endorsement from across the city.
- Critically assessing the evidence of the degree of fairness, cohesion and equality within Newcastle.
- Identifying the critical policies and 'civic contract' that would need to be put in place to create and secure a fairer city and to challenge us all to implement them.

Four dimensions of fairness:

- Fair Outcomes (Fair Share)
- Fair Process (Fair Play)
- Fair Opportunity (Fair Go)
- Fair Participation (Fair Say)

Recommendations

Policy recommendations connected to the four dimensions of fairness:

- Fair Outcomes (Fair Share)
- Fair Process (Fair Play)
- Fair Opportunity (Fair Go)
- Fair Participation (Fair Say)

Oldham Fairness Commission

Summary

Three strands of work and evidence gathering focussed on

1. Tackling Inequalities in Education
2. Tackling Inequalities in Employment
3. Tacking Inequalities in Income

Recommendations

Specific policy recommendations focussed on

1. Tackling Inequalities in Education
2. Tackling Inequalities in Employment
3. Tacking Inequalities in Income

Next Steps:

Fairness Conference to define and refine action plans and road map for work streams

Plymouth Fairness Commission

Summary

Summer of listening, to discover what people in Plymouth felt poverty was actually like.
Call for evidence: findings from the summer of listening and using principles of fairness.
Used what Plymouth residents told the Commission to identify eight key areas:

1 Strengthening communities
2 Individual and family wellbeing
3 Young people and young adults
4. Discrimination
5 Escalating cost of living
6 Strengthening cost of living
7 Housing
8 Implications of an ageing population

Recommendations

Eighty-five specific policy recommendations.

Themed around:

- Principles of fairness
- A new approach to leadership
- Strengthening local communities
- Individual and family wellbeing
- Young people and young adults
- Discrimination
- Escalating cost of living
- Strengthening cost of living
- Housing
- Implications of an ageing population

The Fairness Commission reconvened in July 2015 to assess the progress made against the recommendations.

Sheffield Fairness Commission

Summary

The Fairness Commission was established by the city council to make a non-partisan, strategic assessment of the nature, causes, extent and impact of inequalities in the city and to make recommendations for tackling them.

The Commission used a parliamentary select committee model for its work with a call for evidence from individuals or organisations with an interest in Sheffield.

Ten principles which are intended as guidelines for policy makers and citizens:
- Those in greatest need should take priority
- Those with more resources should make the biggest contributions
- The commitment to fairness must be long term
- The commitment to fairness must be city wide
- Prevention is better than cure
- Be seen to act in a fair way as well as acting fairly
- Civic responsibility among all residents to contribute to the maximum of their abilities and to ensure all citizens have a voice
- Open continuous campaign for fairness in the city
- Fairness must be a matter of balance between different groups, communities and generations in the city

The city's commitment to fairness must be both demonstrated and monitored in an annual report.

Recommendations

Specific policy recommendations under themes:
- Health and Wellbeing for All
- Fair Access to High Quality Jobs and Pay
- Fair Access to Benefits and Credit
- Aspiration and Opportunities for All
- Housing and a Better Environment
- A Safe City
- Transport for All
- What Citizens and Communities Can Do

Progress against these recommendations will be assessed and made public every year.

Southampton Fairness Commission Report

Summary

The Southampton Fairness Commission is an independent and entirely voluntary body.

It was set up in December 2013 to look into how to make the city a fairer and equal place to live and work. The Commission undertook an extensive programme of consultation and engagement over 2014/2015. It used a range of methods including collection and analysis of 'fairness' data (and commissioning additional research where there were gaps), visiting local groups, undertaking face-to-face interviews and surveys, attending discussions, debates and events, and holding a series of public meetings covering key themes.

Recommendations

The Commission has identified thirteen recommendations covering the following themes:

- Fairer Employment
- Fairer Living
- Fairer Organisations
- Fairer Communities

Thurrock, Essex

Summary

In September 2013, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with cross-party support, agreed to establish a Task and Finish review: "To look at ways other local authorities deploy equality commissions within budgetary constraints and progress equality issues within their localities. The panel would make recommendations on the relevance of a Commission for Thurrock, other alternatives, as well as any costs involved."

Key aims:

1 The group will explore the plans and strategies that are already in place to reduce inequalities in Thurrock.
2 To build a clearer picture of the realities of inequality in Thurrock.
3 To liaise with other Overview and Scrutiny Committee colleagues to see how inequality is being addressed in these forums, for example Health and Wellbeing, Cleaner Greener Safer boards.
4 To review the work of Fairness Commissions in other parts of the country and examine best practice.
5 To examine the alternatives to a Fairness Commission.
6 To evaluate whether a new structure is needed and if so to discuss how this could look for Thurrock.
7 To liaise with key stakeholders (Police, NHS, Academies, Head Teachers, Voluntary Sector), evaluate current policies on inequality in Thurrock and to determine whether there would be any "buy in" for a Thurrock Fairness Commission or similar alternative.
8 To consider the resourcing implications of any recommendations.
9 To produce a report of findings in respect of current strategies and make recommendations as to how the Council can further commit to addressing inequality in Thurrock going forward.

Recommendations

- Thurrock establishes a Thurrock Fairness Commission to progress equality issues within the Borough.
- That no more than fifteen Commissioners form the membership of Thurrock Fairness Commission.
- That the work of the Thurrock Fairness Commission is progressed within existing resources.
- That the work of the Thurrock Fairness Commission is regularly reviewed and that a final report is received to Cabinet, and/or Council, one year after its inception.

Bibliography

Aiken, M. (2014) *Voluntary Services and Campaigning in Austerity UK: Saying less and doing more?* London: NCIA .

Alcock, P. (2010) ‘A strategic unity: defining the third sector in the UK’. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 1(1), pp. 5–24.

Alcock, P. (2011) Voluntary Action, New Labour and the Third Sector. In M. Hilton and J. McKay (eds.) *The Ages of Volunteerism*. Oxford: OUP. pp.158–179.

Amendola, A., Rosaria Garofalo, M. and Nese, A. (2011) Is the Third Sector an Emerging Economic Institution? Social Preference Versus Poverty Traps. *Non Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 40 (5) pp. 850–872.

Arneson, R. (1989) ‘Equality and equal opportunity for welfare’. *Philosophical Studies*, 56(1), pp. 77–93.

Ashford, Elizabeth (2007) The Duties Imposed by the Human Right to Basic Necessities. In Thomas Pogge (ed.), *Freedom From Poverty as A Human Right*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Baggott, R. and Jones, K. (2014) The Voluntary Sector and Health Policy: The role of national level health consumer and patients’ organisations in the UK. *Social Science and Medicine*, 123 (2014) pp. 202–209.

Baker, E. A., Motton, F., Barnidge, E. K. and Rose F. (2013). Collaborative data collection, interpretation, and action planning in a rural African American community: Men on the move. In B. A. Israel, E. Eng, A. J. Schulz and E. A Parker (eds.), *Methods for community-based participatory research for health* (2nd edn). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. pp. 435–462.

Baring Foundation (2014) *Independence undervalued: the voluntary sector in 2014*. London: Baring Foundation.
Barnard, H. and Turner, C. (2011, May) *Poverty and Ethnicity: An Evidence Review*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

Ben-Ner, A. and Gui, B. (2003)The theory of nonprofit organizations revisited. In H. K. Aneier and A. Ben-Ner (eds.) *The study of nonprofit enterprise: Theories and approaches*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum. pp. 3–26

Billis, D. (1989) *The Theory of the Voluntary Sector: Implications for policy and practice*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

Billis, D. (2010) *Hybrid organisations and the third sector: challenges for practice, theory and policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Billis, D. and Glennerster, H. (1998) ‘Human services and the voluntary sector: towards a theory of comparative advantage’. *Journal of Social Policy*, 27(1), pp. 79–98.
Blond, P. (2010) *Red Tory: How Left and Right have broken Britain and how we can fix it*. London: Faber and Faber.

Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. (2005) Social community, moral sentiments and community governance. In H. Ginis, S. Bowles, R. Boyds and E. Fehr (eds.) *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. pp. 379–398

Boyd, A. T., Geerling, T. Gregory, W. J., Kagan, C. Midgley, G. Murray, P. and Walsh, M. P. (2007) ‘Systematic evaluation: a participative, multi-method approach’. *Journal of Operational Research Society* (2007) 58, pp. 1306–1320.

Bradshaw, J. and Finch, N. (2002) *A comparison of child benefit packages in 22 countries*. Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No.174. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

Buckingham, H. (2009) ‘Competition and contracts in the voluntary sector: exploring the implications for homelessness service providers in Southampton’. *Policy and Politics*, 37(2), pp. 235–254.

Buckingham, H. (2011) ‘Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector: what can we learn from homeless organisations in the UK?’ *Voluntary Sector Review*, 2(3), pp. 157–175.

Burnett, D. (2016) What does ‘millennial’ mean? Is it vague, lazy and meaningless? *The Guardian*. 15 April.

Bunyan, P. and Diamond, J. (2014a) *Agency in Austerity: A Study of Fairness Commissions as an Approach to Reducing Poverty and Inequality in the UK*. Project Report. Webb Memorial Trust and Edge Hill University.

Burall, S. (2015) *Room for a View: Democracy as a Deliberative System*. London: Involve.

Butler, P. (2014) Privatise child protection, Department for Education proposes. 16 May. *The Guardian*. [Online] [Accessed on 12.10.15] http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/may/16/privatise-child-protection-services-department-for-education-proposes

Cabinet Office (2010) Building The Big Society. Cabinet Office, London.

Campbell, T. (2007) Poverty as a Violation of Human Rights: Inhumanity or Injustice. In Thomas Pogge (ed.), *Freedom From Poverty as a Human Right*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Caputo, J. D. (1987) *Radical Hermeneutics*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

Carnegie UK Trust (2010) Global Civil Society: The role of UK Civil Society in a rapidly globalising world. Carnegie UK Trust, March 2010.

Catney, P., MacGregor, S., Dobson, A., Hall, S. M., Royston, S., Robinson, Z., Ormerod, M. and Ross, S. (2014) Big society, little justice? Community renewable energy and the politics of localism. *Local Environment*, Vol 19, No 7, pp. 715–730.

Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) (2014) *Austerity Uncovered: Final Report*. Prepared by CLES for the TUC, December 2014.

Charmaz, K. (1990) ‘“Discovering” chronic illness: using grounded theory’. *Social Science and Medicine*. 30(11), pp. 1161–1172.

Chen, K. K., Lune, H. and Queen, E. L. (2013) ‘How values shape and are shaped by nonprofit and voluntary organisations: the current state of the field’. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 42(5), pp. 856–885.

Clennon, O. D., Kagan, C. Lawthom, R. and Swindells, R. (2015) ‘Participation in community arts: lessons from the inner-city’. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, DOI:10.1080/13603116.2015.1047660

Cloke, P., May, J. and Johnsen, S. (2010) *Swept up lives: reinvisaging the homeless city*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cohen, G. A. (1989) On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice. *Ethics*, 99(4), pp. 906–944.

Coleman, J. (1988) ‘Social capital in the creation of human capital’. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, pp. 85–120.

Conradson, D. (2003) ‘Spaces of care in the city: the place of a community drop-in centre’. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 4(4), pp. 507–525.

Cooper, N., Purcell, S. and Jackson, R. (2014) *Below the Breadline: The Relentless Rise of Food Poverty in Britain*. Oxfam.

Cordelli, C. (2012) ‘How privatisation threatens the private’. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 16(1), pp. 65–87.

Corry, D. (2012) ‘Giving their all’. *Public Finance*, October 2012.

Crang, P. (1994) ‘It’s ShowTime: on the workplace geographies of display in a restaurant in southeast England’. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12(6), pp. 675–704.

Crowe, D., Gash, T. and Kippin, H. (2014) Beyond big contracts. Commissioning public services for better outcomes. Institute for Government. [Online] [Accessed on 12.10.15] http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Beyond%20Big%20Contracts.pdf

Davidson, E. and Packham, C. (June 2012) Surviving, Thriving or Dying: Resilience and small community groups in the North West of England. Manchester Metropolitan University, Community Audit and Evaluation Centre, Community North West.

Davidson, E. and Packham, C. (2015) Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Resilience and small Community Groups in the North West revisited. Manchester Metropolitan University, Community Audit and Evaluation Centre.

Davidson, E., Packham, C. and Goldstraw, K. (2014) A Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis of Small Voluntary Organisations. Manchester Metropolitan University, Community Audit and Evaluation Centre.

Davis, E. P. and Sanchez-Martinez, M. (2015) *Economic Theories of Poverty*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, June 2015.

Davis, K. (2008) ‘Intersectionality as buzzword: a sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful’. *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 9, No.1, pp. 67–85

Dorling, D. (2012) *The case for austerity among the rich*. London: Institute for Public and Policy Research.

Dworkin, Ronald (1981) ‘What is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare’. Philosophy & Public Affairs, In, A (2000) Freedom rationality and social choice: The arrow lectures and other essays. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press 10(2), pp. 228–240.

Fleurbaey, Marc (2007) Poverty as a Form of Oppression. In Thomas Pogge (ed.), *Freedom From Poverty as A Human Right*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin Press.

Freire, P. (1974) *Education for critical consciousness*. London: Sheed and Ward Ltd.

Fries, R. (2014) Voluntary Action is not a cost cutting policy. *New Statesman*, 2–8 May 2014.

Fullan, M. (1999). *Change Forces: The Sequel*. London: Taylor & Francis/Falmer

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1997) *Young people and social change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fyfe, N. R. and Milligan, C. (2003) Space, citizenship, and voluntarism: critical reflections on the voluntary welfare sector in Glasgow. *Environment and Planning A* 35(11) pp. 2069–2086.

Garret, E., Spencer, A. and Ogden, C. (2016) Still Hungry: Who is hungry, for how long and why? West Chester Food Bank www.westcheshire.foodbank.org.uk/about/ourresearch/stillhungry

Gash, S. (1999) *Effective Literature Searching for Research* (2nd edn). Aldershot: Gower Publishing Ltd.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge*. New York: Basic Books.

Gilchrist, P., Holmes, C., Lee, A., Moore, N. and Ravenscroft, N. (2015). ‘Co-designing non-hierarchical community arts research: the collaborative stories spiral’. *Qualitative Research Journal,* 15(4), pp. 459-471.

GMCVO (2012) An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cuts. October 2012.

Goodman, N. (1968) *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.

Greater Manchester Poverty Commission (GMPC)(2013) *Recommendations Report*. January 2013.

Haldane, A. (2014) In giving, how much do we receive? The social value of volunteering. A pro bono economics lecture to the Society of Business Economists, London, UK, 9 September 2014. London: Bank of England.

Halfpenny, P. and Reid, M. (2002) 'Research on the Voluntary Sector: an Overview'. *Policy & Politics*, Vol 30, no4, pp. 533–50.

Harris, M. (2001) 'This charity business: who cares?' *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 12(1), pp. 95–109.

Harrison, G. A. (1988) *Famine*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Hill, K., Hirsch, D. and Padley, M. (2015) *Minimum budgets for single people sharing accommodation*. CRSP Working Paper 642. Loughborough: Centre for Research in Social Policy.

Hilton, M. and McKay, J. (2011) *The Ages of Volunteerism; How we got to the Big Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hirsch, D., Padley, M. and Valadez, L. (2014) Making ends meet in Leicester. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
hooks, b. (1984) *Feminist theory: from margin to centre*. Boston: South End Press.

Hull, Richard (2007) *Deprivation and Freedom*. London: Routledge.

Innes, J. (2009) *Inferior politics. Social problems and social policies in eighteenth century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Iqbal Shah, J. (2014) Poverty Trap: Who are responsible and how to get release from it? *The Dialogue*, Volume IX Number 2.

Ishkanian, A. and Szreter, S. (eds.) (2012) T*he Big Society Debate: A new agenda for social welfare?* USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Inc.

James, E. (1986) How nonprofits grow: a model. In S. Rose-Ackerman (ed.) *The Economics of Nonprofit Institutions: Studies in Structure and Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 185–195.

Jones, G., Meegan, R., Kennett, P. and Croft, J. (2015) The uneven impact of austerity on the voluntary and community sector: A tale of two cities. *Urban Studies*, 1–17.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)(2009) *Reporting Poverty in the UK*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)(2014) *Reducing Poverty in the UK: A Collection of Evidence Reviews*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Karelis, Charles (2007) *The Persistence of Poverty*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Kendall, J. (2000) 'The mainstreaming of the Third Sector into public policy in England in the late 1990s: Whys and Wherefores'. *Policy and Politics* 28 (4), pp. 541–562.

Kendall, J. and Knapp, M. (1994) *The Voluntary Sector in the UK*. Manchester.

Kirshner, B., 2015. *Youth activism in an era of education inequality*. NYU Press.

Knight, B. (1993) *Voluntary Action*. London: Centris.

Knight, B. (2015) *The Society we Want*. Webb Memorial Trust.

Knowles, C. (2000) 'Burger King, Dunkin Doughnuts and community mental health care'. *Health and Place*, 6(3), pp. 213–224.

Lambie, H. (2011) *The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network: Exploring the Growth of Foodbanks Across the UK*. Coventry University.

Lambie-Mumford, H., Crossley, D., Jensen, E., Verbeke, M. and Dowler, E. (2014) *Household Food Security in the UK: A review of Food Aid* (February 2014). DEFRA.

Lansley, S. and Mack, J. (2015) *Breadline Britain: The rise of mass poverty in the UK*. London: OneWorld Publications.

Langer, S. K. (1957). *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons New York.

Lather, P. (1986) 'Research as Praxis'. *Harvard Educational Review*: September 1986, Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 257-278.

Lewin, K. (1951) *Field theory in social science; selected theoretical papers*. D. Cartwright (ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Lewis, J. (1999) 'Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s'. *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, 10, 3, pp. 255–270.

Lewis, J. (2005) *The Voluntary Sector: Comparative perspectives in the UK*. London: Routledge.

Lipmann, W. (1937) *The Good Society* (2005 edn) New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Lotter, H. P. P. (2011). *Poverty, Ethics and Justice*. University of Wales Press.Cardiff

Lynn, L. E. Jnr. (2002) 'Social services and the state: the public appropriation of private charity'. *Social Service Review*, 76(1), pp. 58–82.

Mack, J. and Lansley, S. (1985) *Poor Britain*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

MacMillan, L. (2010) *The intergenerational transmission of worklessness in the UK*. Working Paper No. 10/231. Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation, University of Bristol.

Macmillan, R. (2011) 'Supporting the voluntary sector in an age of austerity: the UK coalition government's consultation on improving support for frontline civil society organisations in England'. *The Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol 2 No1 2011, pp. 115–24.

Macmillan, R. (2013a) *Distinction in the third sector*. Working paper 89. Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre.

Macmillan, R. (2013b) *Making Sense of the Big Society: perspectives from the third sector*. TSRC, January 2013.

Malinowski, B. (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.

Malthus, T. R. (1798) *An essay on the principle of population*. Printed for J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Church Yard, London.

Marx, K. (1977) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol 1. New York, NY: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1867.)

McCall, L. (2005) 'The complexity of intersectionality', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 1771–1800.

McInroy, N. (2016) *Forging a Good Local Society*. Centre for Local Policy Studies, June 2016

Milbourne, L. (2013) *Voluntary Sector in Transition: Hard Times or New Opportunities*. Policy Press, University of Bristol.

Milbourne, L. and Murray, U. (2011) 'Negotiating interactions in state-voluntary sector relationships: competitive and collaborative agency in an experimental workshop'. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 22(1), pp. 70–92.

Milbourne, L. and Murray, U. (2014) *Does size Matter?* Papers 1 and 2. London: NCIA.

Minkler M. and Chang C. (2013). Participatory research and action. In I. Kawachi (ed.), *Oxford handbook of public health practice* (3rd edn). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. pp. 198-202

National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA) (2015) *Fight or Fright: Voluntary Services in 2015: A Summary and Discussion of NCIA Enquiry Findings*. NCIA.

Neville, A. (2010) 'Drifting or Holding Firm? Public funding and the values of third sector organisations'. *Policy and Politics*, Vol 38, no 4, pp. 531–46.

Nichols, D. (1975) *The Pluralist State*. London: Macmillan.

Norman, J. (2010) *The Big Society: The anatomy of the new politics*. Buckingham: The University of Buckingham Press.

Norton, M. and West, S. (2014) *Age UK Evidence Review: Poverty in Later Life*. Age UK.

Nussbaum, Martha (2000) *Women and Human Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Office for Civil Society (2010) *Supporting a Stronger Civil Society: An Office for Civil Society consultation on improving support for frontline civil society organisations*. London: Cabinet Office.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2013) *Household Satellite Accounts: Valuing Voluntary activity in the UK*. www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_345918.pdf [accessed 5 December 2014].

Olafsdottir, S., Bakhtiari, E. and Barman, E. (2014) 'Public or Private? The role of the State and Civil Society in health and health inequalities across nations'. *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 123 (2014), pp. 174–181.
Orton, M. (2016) *Secure and Free*. Compass, April 2016

Padley, M., Marshall, L., Hirsch, D., Davis, A. and Valadez, L. (2015) *A Minimum Income Standard for London*. London: Trust for London.

Parr, H. (2000) 'Interpreting the hidden geographies of mental health: ethnographies of inclusion and exclusion in semi-institutional places'. *Health and Place*, 6(3), pp. 225–237.

Philo, C. (1989) 'Enough to drive one mad: the organisation of space in nineteenth century lunatic asylums'. In J. Wolch and M. Dear (eds.) *The power of geography: how territory shapes social life*. London: Unwin Hyman. pp. 258–290.

Philo, C. (1997) 'Across the water: reviewing geographical studies of asylums and other mental health facilities'. *Health and Place*, 3(2), pp. 73–89.

Piketty, T. (2013) *Capital in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Platt, L. (2011) *Inequality within ethnic groups*. York: JRF.

Platt, L. (2007) *Poverty and ethnicity in the UK*. York: JRF.

Pogge, Thomas (ed.) (2007) *Freedom From Poverty as A Human Right*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Poppendieck, J. (1994) 'Dilemmas of Emergency Food: A guide for the perplexed'. *Agriculture and Human Values*, Fall, pp. 69–76.

Putnam, D. (1995) 'Bowling alone: America's declining social capital'. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 65–78.

Ravallion, M. and Chen, S. (2008) *The developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty*. Policy Research Working Paper Series, No 4703. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
Rawls, J. A. (1971) *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rawls, John (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Raz, Joseph (1986) *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reid, C., Brief, E. and LeDrew, R. (2009). *Our common ground: Cultivating women's health through community based research.* Vancouver: Women's Health Research Network.

Ridge, T. and Wright, S. (eds.) (2008) *Understanding Inequality, Poverty and Wealth: Policies and Prospects*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ridley, D. (2012) *The Literature Review; A step by step guide for students*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Rochester, C. (2013) *Rediscovering Voluntary Action: the beat of a different drum*. Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Rochester, C. (2014) *The impact of contracting and commissioning on volunteers and volunteering in voluntary services groups*. London: NCIA.

Rose-Ackerman, S. (1996) 'Altruism, nonprofits and economic theory'. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 34, pp. 701–728.

Rowlingson, K., Orton, M. and Taylor, E. (2010) 'Do we still care about inequality?' In A. Park, J. Curtice, E. Clery and C. Bryson (eds.) *British Social Attitudes: the 27th Report*. London: SAGE Publications.

Rowntree, B. S. (1901) *Poverty: A Study in Town Life*. Macmillan and Company.

Royal Commission on Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (1909) *The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission*. London: Printed for the National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law.

Ryan, L. (2014) *Outsourcing and the voluntary sector*. London: NCIA.

Sacco, P. L. and Zarri, L. (2006) 'Because there is a non-profit sector?' *Filosofia e Questioni Pubbliche*, 1, pp. 43–70.

Sage, D. (2012) 'A Challenge to Liberalism? The Communitarianism of the Big Society and Blue Labour'. *Critical Social Policy*, 22 May 2012

Salamon, L. M. (1993) 'The Marketization of Welfare; Changing Nonprofit and For-Profit Roles in the American Welfare State'. *Social Service Review*, 67:16–39.

Salamon, L. M. (1999) *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer* (2nd edn). New York: Foundation Centre.

Sen, A. (2000). Social exclusion: concept, application and scrutiny. Social Development Papers. Manila Asian Development Bank: 54.

Sen, A. K. (1983) ‘Poor, Relatively Speaking’. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 35(2), pp. 153–69.

Sen, A. K. (1992) *Inequality Re-examined*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Sen, A. K. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Senge, P. (1991) *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.
Shaw, Brenda (1988) ‘Poverty: Absolute or Relative’. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 5(1), pp. 27–36.

Smith, A. (1790) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Library of Economics and Liberty. Retrieved 22 June 2015 from the World Wide Web: http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smMS.html

Smith, N. (2010) ‘Economic inequality and poverty: where do we go from here?’ *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 30, No. 3/4, pp. 127–39.

Smith, S. R. and Lipsky, M. (1998) *Nonprofits for hire: the welfare state in the age of contracting* (3rd edn). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sparke, M. (2008) ‘Political geographies of globalisation (3) resistance’. *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(1), pp. 1–18.

Stein, P. (1988) *The character and influence of the Roman Civil Law: Historical Essays*. London: Hambledon.

Stephens, S. and Leishman, C. (2017): ‘Housing and poverty: a longitudinal analysis’. *Housing Studies*

Tabellini, G. (2007) *Culture and Institutions* (CESifo, Munich Working Paper No.1492). Milan: Innocenzo Gasparini Institute for Economic Research, Bocconi University.

Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The Principles of Scientific Management*. New York and London: Harper & brothers

Taylor, M. (2012) ‘Surviving over time and space? The experience of the English compact’. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 3(2), article 3.

Thatcher, M. (1987) Interview for *Woman’s Own* (‘no such thing as society’) 23.9.87 http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689

Titmuss, R. (1965) ‘Poverty vs. inequality: diagnosis’. *The Nation*, Vol. 200, 8 February, pp. 130–3.

Tocqueville, A. de. A Democracy in America. In J. P. Mayer (ed.), trans. George Lawrence, vol. 1, part 2, Conclusion, final paragraphs, pp. 412–413 (1969). Originally published in 1835–1840.

Townsend, P. (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom: a survey of household resources and standards of living*. London: Penguin.

Unwin, J. (2013) *Why Fight Poverty?* London: London Publishing Partnership.

Valentinov, V. L. (2007) Some reflections on the transaction cost theory of nonprofit organisations. *Zeitschrift für öffentliche und gemeinwirtshaftliche Unternehmen*, 30 (1), 52–67.

Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW) and Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) (2013) *Thriving Places; Developing the Voluntary ad Community Sector’s Role in Local Economies and the Life of Local Places*. CLES, VSNW.

Wagner, T. and Compton, R. A. (2015) *Creating innovators: The making of young people who will change the world*. Simon and Schuster.

Wang, V. (2015). Art, Research and Society: New Ecology: The Affective Power. In *Arts, Research, Innovation and Society*. Springer International Publishing. pp. 75-99

Webb, S. (1910). The Minority Report. *The Eugenics Review* 2 (3), p. 233.

Webb, S. and Webb, B. (1916) *The Prevention of Destitution*. London and New York: Longmans.

Wenar, Leif (2007) 'Responsibility and Severe Poverty'. In Thomas Pogge (ed.), *Freedom From Poverty as A Human Right*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Whitefield, D. (2014) *The Ideological Context*. London: NCIA.

Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level*. London: Penguin Books.

Williams, A., Cloke, P. and Thomas, S. (2012) 'Co-constituting neoliberalism: faith based organisations, co-option and resistance in the UK'. *Environment and Planning*, 44(6), pp. 1479–1501.

Williams, O. R. and Pierce, J. (2016) Iterative parallelism as research praxis: embracing the discursive incommensurability of scholarship and everyday politics. Area, 48: 222–228. doi:10.1111/area.12258

Wolch, J. (1990) *The shadow state: government and the voluntary sector in transition*. New York: Foundation Centre.

Wolff, J. and de-Shalit, A. (2007) *Disadvantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wolff, J., Lamb, E. and Zur-Szpiro, E. (2015) *A Philosophical Review of Poverty*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, June 2015.

Woolcock, M. (2009) *Global Poverty and Inequality: A Brief Retrospective and Prospective Analysis*. The University of Manchester, Brooks World Poverty Institute.

World Bank (2009) *World Bank – Civil Society Engagement: Review of Fiscal Years 2007–2009*. Washington DC: World Bank.

World Economic Forum (WEF) (2013) *The Future Role of Civil Society*. World Scenario Series, World Economic Forum, January 2013.

Wright Mills, C. (2000) *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Young, D. R. (1980) *Entrepreneurship and the behaviour of non-profit organisations: Elements of a theory* (PONPO Working Paper No.4). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Young, S. (2015) *Taking the Temperature: The State of Play of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Newcastle*. Newcastle CVS, June 2015.

Zimmeck, M. (2010) 'The Compact 10 years on: government's approach to partnership with the voluntary and community sector in England'. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 1 (1) 125–33.

The Authors

Katy Goldstraw
Dr Katy Goldstraw works as a research assistant within the Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice at Edge Hill University Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice at Edge Hill University. Her PhD focussed on voluntary sector responses to austerity. She has worked in higher education and the voluntary sector throughout her career, writing on VCS assets, feminist responses to austerity and sustainable livelihoods.

John Diamond
Professor John Diamond is the director of the of the Institute for public policy and professional practice at Edge Hill University. In 2014 he contributed to the Voluntary Sector North West Report - Devolution, Our Devolution. He also worked with Paul Bunyan on the Webb Memorial Trust funded project on Fairness Commissions. John has worked with the North West Regional Youth Work Unit on a number of different initiatives, from compiling a dictionary of new terms and language for working across agencies to their Youth Parliament project and their report into youth employment, Simple Truths (2014). A long term trustee of the Association for Research with Voluntary and Community Organisations (ARVAC), in 2015 he was invited to give the Annual Keib Thomas Memorial Lecture in London.

Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice (I4P)

I4P is Edge Hill University's cross-disciplinary research and knowledge exchange initiative established in 2013. The Institute is committed to exploring the opportunities for cross sector collaboration and co-operation and to draw on the experience of practitioners as well as academic researchers to inform new ways of working and learning.

E: I4P@edgehill.ac.uk
W: edgehill.ac.uk/i4p
T: twitter.com/I4PEHU

The Webb Memorial Trust

The Webb Memorial Trust have pursued the intellectual legacy of Beatrice Webb (1858-1943) who together with her husband Sydney (1859-1947) embarked on a vigorous programme of social reform. Since 1944, the Webb Memorial Trust has worked to advance education and learning with respect to the history and problems of government and social policy.

W: webbmemorialtrust.org.uk

Edge Hill
University

I4P
Institute for
Public Policy and
Professional Practice

Webb Memorial Trust