



Empowering communities to influence local
decision making

A systematic review of the evidence



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June 2009

Professor Lawrence Pratchett, Dr Catherine Durose and Professor Vivien Lowndes,
Local Governance Research Unit, De Montfort University; Professor Graham Smith,
Professor Gerry Stoker and Dr Corinne Wales, Centre for Citizenship and Democracy,
University of Southampton

Department for Communities and Local Government

The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 020 7944 4400
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

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Online via the Communities and Local Government website: www.communities.gov.uk

June 2009

Product Code: 09LGSR05944

ISBN 978-1-4098-1470-2

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ruby Jabbar, Alexa Kellow, Tiego Piexoto, Suzanne Walker and Melvin Wingfield for their invaluable research and administrative assistance on this report.

Key findings for policy makers

This study used a robust, replicable method to systematically review the evidence base around community empowerment. The aim of the review was to make sense of variable and often competing or contrasting evidence in order to identify which mechanisms empower; in what ways, and in what contexts.

The research identifies key criteria that drive and define empowerment across six specific mechanisms: asset transfer, citizen governance, e-participation, participatory budgeting, petitions and redress.

The review shows that each mechanism is able to empower to some extent. Overall, the mechanisms selected showed the potential to empower those directly participating and to both influence and shape decision making. However, it was widely found to be more difficult to empower the community through the use of such mechanisms. Only citizen governance and participatory budgeting showed clear evidence of spill-over from individuals to the wider community.

- *Asset transfer* is a facilitative mechanism for achieving community management and/or ownership of assets and social enterprise. Asset transfer is a genuine means for achieving a degree of popular control over decision making that can boost resource utilisation and community participation. It is important however to provide ongoing support to individuals and communities interested and involved in asset transfer, both to avoid setting transfers up to fail and overloading volunteers and staff.
- *Citizen governance* is a mechanism covering the role of citizen or community representatives on partnerships, boards and forums charged with decision making about public services and public policy. Citizen governance is a flexible mechanism with broad relevance and with potentially wide reaching empowerment effects. Citizen governance can also importantly buttress existing more traditional forms of representation. The report presents a useful typology of citizen governance reflecting its broad potential application. In order for citizen governance to have the widest empowerment reach, it is important that initiatives are open, supportive and facilitated. Two particularly significant forms of citizen governance – ‘local representation’ and ‘local knowledge’ – emerge according to the link to formal decision making. Both types are able to empower the wider community and shape decision making along with empowering those directly participating.
- *Electronic participation* for example, e-forums and petitions is a mechanism for offering substantively different forms of engagement, and alternative or complementary channels for participation. Whilst policy interest in e-participation is now long-standing, the links between e-participation and community empowerment are largely unproven. E-participation was found to have positive empowerment effects on those directly taking part. Here moderation and the presence of a highly salient issue were found to be important success factors. However e-participation seems to be particularly limited in terms of its spill-over effects to the wider community. Where there

is evidence of broader community empowerment, moderation, clear links to decision making and the consideration of highly salient issues appear to be the most significant combination of design factors. In addition, the digital divide further inhibits the reach of e-based forms of engagement.

- *Participatory budgeting* is a form of deliberative participation in communities, facilitating decision making on devolved budgets. Participatory budgeting is a tool for empowerment that can have a significant impact in a range of contexts and settings. What is clear from our analysis, however, is that a tokenistic expression of PB is not going to have an effect of any magnitude. The adoption of PB techniques does not lead to quick-fix changes in embedded political, citizen and bureaucratic cultures. It is important that PB be part of a wider strategy to renew decision making. Successful participatory budgeting has to be open, supported and tied to salient issues and be set within a broader context and willingness for transformational political change.
- *Petitions* enable citizens and community groups to raise concerns with public authorities and give some sense of the support for the proposition amongst the wider population. It is a mechanism that is understood by elected members, officers and the community alike. Petitions differ in the extent and manner in which they are connected to formal decision making processes. Some petitions are not linked to a meaningful formal response mechanism from public authorities. Where citizens see no relationship between their participation and outcomes, not surprisingly, such petitions have the least impact on community empowerment and may even be considered disempowering. Other petitions require a formal response from the public authority. Where it is clear that the authority has given due weight to the proposition, the potential for empowerment increases: the device exhibits the potential for impact on decisions, thus providing a rationale for increased political efficacy and activity amongst civic organisations.
- *Redress* is a mechanism for citizens to register complaints, have them investigated and receive feedback and response. Evidence suggests that complainants are often drawn from the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society. Developing citizen centred systems of complaint and redress within a broader effort to build trust in institutions and focus on customer satisfaction has significant potential for wide reaching empowerment. Systems of complaint and redress need to be more 'bottom up', reflexive, responsive to citizens and inclusive and supportive of their contribution. The evidence base shows that making a complaint rarely induces an automatic response, nor is it linked to formal decision making processes. The potential to empower through redress is there, but it needs to be part of a broader strategy of change.

In order to enhance the findings from the systematic review and fill gaps in the existing evidence base, the research team convened a series of workshops with expert practitioners who were asked to reflect on three key delivery issues: who benefits and engages with empowerment; the cost effectiveness of empowerment; and the potential risks of empowerment.

- Practitioners suggested that the opportunities to engage – and then gain the benefits of empowerment – are currently being taken up by those in the community with the existing capacity to do so. Whilst there is awareness and

enthusiasm from practitioners about the need and value of engaging 'hard to reach' groups and new communities, there is a lack of both strategic thinking and skills in how to do so. Practitioners also suggested that working with the community and voluntary sectors, in particular drawing on community development techniques, is crucial in delivering on this agenda.

- In terms of measuring cost-effectiveness, practitioners emphasised the importance of offsetting cost against wider, indirect benefits that may accrue over time. In order to deliver cost-effectiveness, practitioners highlighted the importance of minimising costs and being clear about aims and objectives; for many practitioners, the specific objectives of government are not clear.
- Empowerment is difficult to achieve and as such there are clear risks of failure and disempowerment along with risks in managing the process of empowerment. Untried mechanisms clearly present more risks, but newer mechanisms provide qualitatively different opportunities – for example with mechanisms of e-participation, asset transfer and participatory budgeting – and so perhaps present a risk worth taking.

These simple messages imply the need for developing accessible, inclusive and facilitated strategies for empowerment. The community and voluntary sector and specifically community development techniques have an important role to play here.

It is also important however to pay attention to the perspectives of public sector organisations, their staff and elected members. The need for ongoing learning, training and capacity building is clear.

This research has also shown the importance of integrating mechanisms into an overarching strategy for empowerment that is set within a mainstreamed agenda of building trust with the public at every opportunity.

Executive summary

In February 2008, Communities and Local Government commissioned De Montfort University and the University of Southampton to undertake a systematic review of the published evidence around community empowerment. Although independent of the 2008 White Paper *Communities in Control*, the review was nonetheless designed to explore and develop evidence which might support its subsequent implementation.

The aim of the review was to identify, quality assess and subsequently synthesise existing domestic and (where appropriate) international evidence with a view to drawing out useful policy implications. It sought to make sense of variable and often competing or contrasting evidence in order to identify which mechanisms empower; in what ways, and in what contexts.

Methodology

The key project objectives were:

- Stage 1: to prepare a map of existing research/analysis in order to ascertain the breadth and quality of the citizen engagement and community empowerment evidence base.
- Stage 2: to produce a series of tightly-defined research syntheses on six mechanisms for empowerment – asset transfer, citizen governance, e-participation, participatory budgeting, petitions and redress.
- Stage 2a: to produce a report on the six mechanisms focusing on practical delivery implications of local initiatives to empower communities, based on workshops convened with expert practitioners.
- Stage 3: to pool the learning from each component of the study in order to support the development of evidence-based lessons aimed at policy-makers and practitioners.

This report draws on Stage 1 but focuses on Stages 2/2a.

Following the Stage 1 mapping exercise (see Appendix 1), the research team selected six specific mechanisms for more detailed analysis:

- **Asset transfer** and other facilitative mechanisms for community management and/or ownership of assets and social enterprise.
- **Citizen governance**, covering the role of citizen or community representatives on partnerships, boards and forums charged with decision making about public services and public policy.
- **Electronic participation** for example, e-forums and e-petitions as a means of offering substantively different forms of engagement, and alternative or complementary channels for participation.

- **Participatory budgeting** as a form of deliberative participation in communities facilitating decision making on devolved budgets.
- **Petitions** as a mechanism for citizens and groups to raise issues of concern.
- **Redress** as a mechanism for citizens to register complaints, have them investigated and receive feedback and response.

For each mechanism, around 20 of the best cases were selected for detailed analysis. These cases were then compared systematically (using a methodology known as Boolean Reduction) to establish the relationship between a range of influencing factors and the ability of the device to contribute to empowerment.

This methodology relies on the identification of criteria that drive and define empowerment success and systematically draws out cause-and-effect relationships. This approach allows qualitative researchers to go beyond the usual claims of 'suggest', 'indicate' and 'appear' to identify the conditions for 'empowerment success'.

Much of the evidence base on community empowerment is qualitative and case based. The Boolean approach is viewed as a key method in developing systematic findings in comparative case study research.

Defining empowerment success

The recent Communities and Local Government white paper, *Communities in control: real people, real power* (2008), identified a series of mechanisms which had the potential to empower citizens and communities and change the way decisions are made.

Different mechanisms may offer different forms of empowerment. For there to be comparison both within and across the syntheses, it is necessary to have a common set of factors that can be used to understand how empowerment is defined, and success evaluated. This research identified three key factors defining empowerment success; these outcome factors are:

- **Effect on participants involved in the process**

This factor refers to the extent to which participants have developed skills linked to empowerment (e.g. confidence, social networks, specialist policy knowledge) and whether they have increased their sense of internal political efficacy (the perception that they can influence their local place and services).

- **Effect on communities**

This factor refers to whether the mechanism has led to any improvements in a community's level of political efficacy, social capital and social cohesiveness.

- **Effect on decision making**

This factor refers to whether participants and communities are now able to exercise more influence on decision making and if a sustained shift in power has taken place (towards communities and, in particular, previously excluded groups).

Identifying influencing factors

Alongside the criteria for 'empowerment success' it is also necessary to identify those factors that are likely to drive or inhibit empowerment in different circumstances. These criteria, in effect, constitute the influencing factors in the analysis (see Appendix 3 for further detail). While these factors vary across the different syntheses (to reflect the characteristics of each mechanism), certain core elements are investigated across all the syntheses. A generic set of influencing factors is presented below:

Design of mechanism/intervention

- Open to all
- Support mechanisms
- Links to formal political decision making

Further detail on defining these factors is provided in Appendix 3.

Context of mechanism/intervention

- Low resource base
- Ethnic diversity
- Political 'buy-in'
- Bureaucratic 'buy-in'
- Highly salient issue

Further detail on defining these factors is provided in Appendix 3.

Key findings

Asset transfer

Asset transfer is a mechanism for achieving community ownership or management of public resources. Asset transfer is a genuine means for achieving popular control over decision making and empowering citizens by enabling them to positively influence the development of resources and services in their area.

Political efficacy and skills of citizens directly participating can be enhanced through asset transfer. However, asset transfer is an often complex and highly demanding form of empowerment and there is a danger of overloading volunteers.

It is important to manage the process of transition and offer ongoing support, capacity building and relevant training in order to assist and develop community groups interested in managing assets.

There is concern that the 'assets' that are up for transfer, for example, community centres, are often liabilities and as such community groups feel like they can be 'set

up to fail'. There is a need for local authorities and other public sector organisations to 'let go' of assets and 'trust' citizens and community groups whilst supporting them through the process.

Where community anchor organisations are able to access sustainable funding sources and support to develop their organisational capacity, asset transfer can lead to both increased financial investment in an under-used or derelict asset and community empowerment.

The development of such an asset can be the spur for further activities on the part of the community anchor organisation and provide a resource for other community, social or private enterprises to develop their activities. It is important that consideration is given to the extent to which the initial transfer and subsequent activities are of benefit to, and are representative of, the community as a whole.

The evidence base on asset transfer needs to be further developed if the relationship between community ownership and management and aspects of community empowerment is to be better understood.

Citizen governance

Citizen governance refers to the role of citizens or community representatives on partnerships, boards and forums charged with decision making about public policy and services. Citizen governance is a form of civic activity that is flexible and relevant to a variety of policy settings. Citizen governance involves a significant number of citizens in comparison to other forms of citizen participation.

Citizen governance is a mechanism with potentially wide reaching empowerment effects for the participants, the wider community and local decision making. By broadening understandings of representation, the more traditional structures of elected representation can be supported through citizen governance.

Much of the evidence shows that whilst opportunities for citizen governance are nominally open to all, in practice, opportunities come to those with pre-existing contact with such an initiative, with relevant experience or from a specific constituency (e.g. tenant or parent).

The support given to those directly participating in citizen governance varies. Many practitioners argue that more support is needed to achieve a meaningful and sustained commitment from citizens. It is important that citizen involvement in governance has to be both facilitated and mediated to allow a range of community perspectives to be heard. Some cases relied on the pre-existing experience and expertise of participants and their capacity was not questioned.

Analysis was able to establish particular combinations for empowerment success. The patterns which emerge from these combinations allow the development of a typology of forms of citizen governance.

Type 1 – Local representation

Here citizens act as representatives of a wider community, speaking for and accountable to this constituency. The primary goal is more democratic decision making. This can be considered the 'ideal type' of citizen governance (open to all, supported, linked to decision making, with political and bureaucratic buy-in), leading to the empowerment of representatives themselves and the wider community, and able to shape decision making. Local representation appears to be effective as a form of empowerment both in areas of deprivation and in areas with a higher resource base. Cases were present across three of the four policy sectors considered here: local governance, regeneration/housing and education.

Type 2 – Local knowledge

Here citizens provide input to decision making based on their views and expertise as local residents, members of the community or users of public services. The primary goal is better decision making. This type of citizen governance leads to the empowerment of individuals and communities, and has an impact on decision making. In these cases, there is no formal link to decision making (or the link is not relevant in driving empowerment); support mechanisms to facilitate meaningful engagement of citizens vary; and participants have a low resource base and/or are from an area of socio-economic deprivation; political and bureaucratic buy-in is only important when there is a link to decision making. It is notable that the 'local knowledge' form of citizen governance works well in areas with a low resource base, with possible distributional implications.

Type 3 – Organisational proxy

This type of citizen governance refers to situations where voluntary or community sector organisations act as a proxy for citizen representation. Although there are outcomes in terms of the empowerment of those directly involved, there is no impact on the wider community.

Type 4 – Semi-professional

This type of citizen governance refers to cases which are not open to all, there is an absence of support mechanisms, yet there is a link to formal decision making and evidence of political and bureaucratic buy-in. Like Type 3, this form of citizen can empower individual representatives and impact upon decision making, but there is a lack of spill-over effects in the sense of empowering the community more widely.

The typology is not a league table: it doesn't rank forms of citizen governance. Rather it allows us to think about 'fitness for purpose' within an empowerment strategy.

All four types of citizen governance lead to empowerment for the representatives themselves and in terms of achieving citizen and community input to decision making. Types 1 and 2 are of particular significance because they also lead to the empowerment of wider communities. The different types of citizen governance are potentially relevant to different policy settings. They may also form important links in a 'chain of representation' that links citizens and policy-makers – through electoral and non-electoral mechanisms.

Each form of citizen governance is associated with a specific set of challenges in terms of institutional design and policy development. 'Local representation' requires that attention is paid not just to the factors considered in this report, but also to the mechanisms for choosing representatives and the means by which they can keep in touch with those they represent – so that they can be kept informed and also held to account. Citizen governance of the 'local knowledge' type, requires effective mechanisms for identifying individuals and groups that have a perspective on the policy issues at stake, and then developing deliberation processes that are able to surface different perspectives and enable learning among participants – citizens, officers, politicians and other partners (e.g. from business). 'Organisational proxy' and 'semi-professional' modes of citizen governance are common in public services and, given their limited empowerment effects, should not be confused with mechanisms closer to 'local representation' and 'local knowledge'.

E-participation

E-participation, particularly e-forums and e-petitions, is a different but complementary mechanism for citizens to participate in discussions and decisions about public policy and public services.

E-participation is a long standing area of interest for policy makers. Yet, the evidence base to understand the impact of e-participation initiatives is limited. Where evidence is available it shows that the links between e-participation and community empowerment are surprisingly weak.

E-participation is most successful in relation to the empowerment of individual participants. Yet, e-participation is notably less effective in empowering the wider community and e-forums and even e-petitions, have only a very limited impact upon decision makers.

In terms of e-participation empowering individuals, two factors were critical. First, moderation is important. Moderation can improve the quality of discussion and provide a constructive environment for participation. Second, the presence of a highly salient issue is also important. To some extent, this finding is not surprising, as salient issues can be expected to lead to a generally more interesting and lively discussion than arcane or irrelevant ones. However, the official sponsorship and buy-in of e-participation is not a crucial factor.

Forms of e-participation appear to be less successful in terms of the spill-over from individual empowerment to enhancing social capital or collective efficacy (i.e. broader community empowerment). Where there is this broader community empowerment, moderation, clear links to decision making and the discussion of highly salient issues appear to be the most significant combination required.

It is notable that very few e-forums have a direct impact upon decision making, except for where they have been specifically designed to do so. This finding reflects the discursive and deliberative nature of online devices, many of which do not have a specific focus on outcomes. However, it is also notable that even e-petitions do not always have a direct and sustained influence on decision making.

These findings need to be considered alongside the realities of limited take-up of most online participation initiatives, and the enduring problems of the digital divide in ensuring equality of access. There is also concern about the capacity of local authorities to 'keep up' with technological developments and to provide opportunities in a way that citizens will be interested in.

Nevertheless, e-participation can be seen to have a positive effect on empowerment in many contexts, especially in relation to individuals. The key challenge for Government is to reflect upon how the generally individualistic nature of online participation fits with its wider ambitions for community level empowerment.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a mechanism for deliberative citizen engagement in decision making about the use of devolved budgets for public services. Participatory budgeting (PB) is a tool for empowerment that can have a significant impact in a range of contexts and settings and the potential to provide transformational political change. The initial Porto Alegre scheme in Brazil stands out as an exemplar of PB having a transformative effect.

The Porto Alegre scheme has been followed in name as much as substance in Latin America, North America and Europe. What is clear from our analysis, however, is that a tokenistic expression of PB is not going to have an effect of any magnitude. The adoption of PB techniques does not lead to quick-fix changes in embedded political, citizen and bureaucratic cultures. It is important that PB be part of a wider strategy to renew decision making. To achieve a shift in the pattern of state-citizen relations means confronting public, political and official inertia and that challenge may be very difficult to meet. Failure is possible.

In all cases, a mixed range of factors contributed to the achievement of empowerment outcomes. There is not one route to PB success. But given the range of factors that might have been involved in driving PB we were able to identify a limited number of patterns.

In only four cases did participatory budgeting empower participants, the wider community and impact on decision making. In these cases, PB can be seen to have achieved a transforming impact on local politics and decision making. The key factors in driving these across the board successes were: the openness to all citizens in the design of the scheme, strong political buy-in, issues of high importance at stake and a framework of national policy support.

In nine out of nineteen cases there was evidence of empowerment of those involved in terms of gains in skills and a sense of efficacy. The key factors in achieving this outcome are: a good facilitation process for PB, openness to all citizens and the salience of the issues at stake.

In only seven out of nineteen cases was there evidence of an impact on the empowerment of the wider community. The key factors driving success were political buy-in and the salience of the issues at stake.

To show a demonstrable impact on decision making was possible in eight of the nineteen cases of PB considered. No factor stood out as driving this outcome.

Participatory budgeting (PB) can be a very effective way to empower citizens by enabling them to make funding decisions that affect their everyday lives. However, it is important to be able to describe the process in an accessible way in order to be as inclusive, engaging and non-competitive as possible. It is important to manage expectations with regard to the scale of decision making open to the community and the scope for expansion into mainstream budgets.

Petitions

Petitions enable citizens and community groups to raise concerns with public authorities and give some sense of the support for the proposition amongst the wider population. It is a mechanism that is understood by elected members, officers and the community alike.

Petitions differ in the extent and manner in which they are connected to formal decision making processes. Some petitions are not linked to a meaningful formal response mechanism from public authorities. Where citizens see no relationship between their participation and outcomes, not surprisingly, such petitions have the least impact on community empowerment and may even be considered disempowering.

Other petitions require a formal response from the public authority. Where it is clear that the authority has given due weight to the proposition, the potential for empowerment increases: the device exhibits the potential for impact on decisions, thus providing a rationale for increased political efficacy and activity amongst civic organisations.

The evidence on empowerment for petitions that are linked to a formal review process and official response from a public authority is relatively thin. There is most systematic evidence of impact on different aspects of community empowerment when petitions are linked to popular votes, particularly where these are binding. This can take the form of indirect initiative or popular referendum, where the public authority has the opportunity to respond to the petitioners, or the direct form where the proposition goes direct to a popular vote.

The overall finding from this synthesis is that the most effective petitions (whether or not linked to a popular vote) embody a similar characteristic: a clear relationship between the petition and decision making is critical for achieving community empowerment.

While there are significant differences between the institutional devices analysed, there are some common findings. The most significant appears to be the positive effect on empowerment of a visible response to the petition. This might take the form of active consideration by committees or the petition leading to a popular vote. While the evidence is stronger for the latter arrangement, it appears to be a strong determinant of community empowerment for all forms of petition. This reflects a general finding in the literature on political participation: where public authorities

take citizen inputs seriously, this has a positive impact on community empowerment broadly conceived.

The evidence suggests that the institutionalisation of petitions should only take place where public authorities are willing and able to establish meaningful mechanisms to respond to propositions. This is a simple insight, but one often overlooked in the desire to establish engagement mechanisms.

Ensuring effective communication and response to issues raised in petitions can be a positive way of building trust in local authorities. Petitions can also be a way for local authorities and elected members to develop their community leadership role and partnership working and therefore the scope of petitions should not be restricted to local government's purview.

Local authorities need a mandate to promote petitioning and resources to meet the consequent increases in demand for the mechanism and to respond effectively.

Redress

Redress is a mechanism for citizens to register complaints, have them investigated and receive feedback and response. Redress is a mechanism usually associated with the complaints process, such a narrow focus perhaps distracts from its empowerment potential.

Practitioners strongly emphasise the importance of providing redress before an issue escalates to a formal complaints process. As such, redress should be a means for early intervention, dialogue with the community and an opportunity to build trust between citizens, elected members and the local authority. It is important to understand the role that all local authority staff can play in the redress process and to empower staff to engage with and satisfy customers.

One concern for a systematic review in the area of redress is that, whilst such mechanisms have been developed in the public sector, notably at the local level, it is rare for such mechanisms to have the specific aim of empowering either complainants or the wider community. The evidence base reflects the absence of such a link and so there is limited evidence of the empowerment potential for systems of redress and complaint.

In many cases the complainants are likely to come from ethnic minority communities and/or be facing social disadvantage and/or be users of services likely to include the most vulnerable in society. Yet these complainants are often not supported sufficiently in making a complaint, for example through mediation or advocacy services and could be further disempowered by the process. Indeed, complainants were rarely included in the system of complaint and redress in a meaningful way, throughout the process.

In order to develop the empowerment potential of complaint and redress, such systems need to be part of a wider, serious attempt to build trust in public services and in democratic institutions. It is also important to recognise the often strong emotional component of complaint and redress and respond to that, often 'a simple apology' can go a long way.

Complaint and redress can provide a basis for building customer satisfaction with services and informing service improvement. Systems of complaint and redress need to be more 'bottom up', reflexive, responsive to citizens and inclusive and supportive of their contribution. The evidence base does show that making a complaint rarely induces an automatic response, nor is it linked to formal decision making processes. The potential to empower through redress is there, but it needs to be part of a broader strategy of change, which is by implication resource intensive.

Implications for policy delivery

The systematic review of evidence on community empowerment provided important insights on the critical success factors and empowerment potential of each the six mechanisms. However, the scope of the evidence available did not always fully draw out the policy implications for delivering local initiatives to empower communities. Practitioners with experience in delivering these mechanisms provide an important source of expertise, feedback and reflection for government and policy development. Practitioner experiences have also been captured in this research and add significant value to it.

Within this research framework, practitioners were asked to reflect on three key delivery issues around: who benefits and engages with empowerment; the cost effectiveness of empowerment; and the potential risks of empowerment.

Who engages, who benefits?

A central concern in attempting to deliver empowerment is to consider who engages and who benefits from empowerment. The underlying objective in raising this question is to assess the re-distributive potential of the mechanisms.

Across the mechanisms, those that engaged were those in the community who had the capacity and skills to do so or, through existing involvement in governance or community activities, were well placed to take advantage of community empowerment opportunities.

Practitioners demonstrated an awareness of the value of engaging with 'hard to reach' groups (including black and minority ethnic communities, the socially disadvantaged, disabled people and older people) and new communities (including asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants). Practitioners were also enthusiastic about the benefits for empowerment for both those directly participating and the wider community. However, there seemed to be some difficulties in terms of the strategy to improve the 'reach' of empowerment and skills required to achieve these aims.

Practitioners conveyed the importance of including the following aspects in a local strategy for empowerment:

- opportunities that are qualitatively different to what has gone before; and
- perhaps most importantly, support/advocacy for citizens, both in a simple sense of using accessible language but also drawing in learning and techniques from the community and voluntary sectors and from community development.

In terms of comparing across mechanisms, the greatest potential 'reach' for a mechanism was seen to be influenced by how long standing the mechanism was within the community; how formal it was and the style of engagement that was required. On these terms, the novelty, deliberative nature and scope for decision making that participatory budgeting provides is an attractive prospect for empowering hard to reach communities.

How to measure/assess the cost effectiveness of empowerment mechanisms?

In a context of budgetary restraint and limited resources, an assessment of the relative cost effectiveness of delivering different mechanisms of community empowerment is important.

However, it was emphasised that alongside costs there was a range of tangible and intangible benefits, which may include for example, transferable training and skills for staff and communities; increased voluntary activity; and a contribution to tackling anti social behaviour and building community cohesion.

Several useful strategies for minimising cost were suggested, these include early intervention and developing strategies of appropriate response.

The relative cost effectiveness of mechanisms is at its core a question of the extent of empowerment that a mechanism can bring (at a given cost). As such, the mechanisms of citizen governance and participatory budgeting, whilst incurring relatively high start-up costs and inherently long term in their planning and measurable impact, have, according to the evidence base the greatest potential to 'spillover' to the community and should be at the centre of strategies for empowerment.

What are the risks of empowering?

Delivering community empowerment is a difficult task and so risks are clearly apparent. However, a risk-averse approach is unlikely to yield success.

The most apparent risks are failure and further potentially disempowering citizens. Other risks include overburdening citizens, reinforcing the position of the 'usual suspects', challenging the position of elected members, a lack of sustainability, managing community expectations and exacerbating community divisions. Many of these risks can be pre-empted.

Attempts to mitigate risks imply that local authorities should continue to pursue mechanisms they are already confident in delivering, for example citizen governance, redress and petitions. However, it is only by drawing on more innovative mechanisms for empowerment that qualitatively different opportunities for citizens and communities can develop. As such, asset transfer, e-participation and participatory budgeting are mechanisms perhaps worth taking risks on.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report provides useful insights into existing practice and delivery around community empowerment. However, the community empowerment agenda is still in a nascent stage. Local practitioners are a crucially important resource in developing this agenda and bringing it towards fruition.

It is important that government clarify the objectives of empowerment and give a sustained commitment to an agenda that may take a while deliver notable successes.

These simple messages imply the need for developing accessible, inclusive and facilitated strategies for empowerment. The community and voluntary sector and specifically community development techniques have an important role to play here.

It is also important however to pay attention to the perspectives of public sector organisations, their staff and elected members. The need for ongoing learning, training and capacity building is clear.

This research has also shown the importance of integrating mechanisms into an overarching strategy for empowerment that is set within a mainstreamed agenda of building trust with the public at every opportunity.

1. Introduction

Community empowerment is an issue of long standing concern in policy and academic literature. As such, there is an extensive and diverse evidence base. This research provides a systematic review of the evidence focusing on key mechanisms for empowerment in order to identify which mechanisms empower; in what ways, and in what contexts.

The research, a joint project between the Local Governance Research Unit (De Montfort University) and the Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (University of Southampton), does not undertake primary research but, instead, develops a robust and systematic analysis of the existing academic and policy literature on community empowerment.

Although independent of the 2008 white paper *Communities in control: real people, real power*, the review was nonetheless designed to explore and develop evidence which might support its implementation. The aim of the review is to identify, quality assess and subsequently synthesise existing domestic and (where appropriate) international evidence with a view to drawing out useful policy implications.

The key project objectives were:

- Stage 1: to prepare a map of existing research/analysis in order to ascertain the breadth and quality of the citizen engagement and community empowerment evidence base.
- Stage 2: to produce a series of tightly-defined research syntheses on six mechanisms for empowerment.
- Stage 2a: to produce a report on the six mechanisms focusing on practical delivery implications of local initiatives to empower communities based on workshops convened with expert practitioners.
- Stage 3: to pool the learning from each component of the study in order to support the development of evidence-based lessons aimed at policy-makers and practitioners.

This report builds on the outputs from the Stage 1 mapping exercise but focuses on Stages 2/2a. Following the mapping exercise, six mechanisms were chosen for more detailed analysis:

- **Citizen governance**, covering the role of citizen or community representatives on partnerships, boards and forums charged with decision making about public services and public policy.
- **Participatory budgeting** as a form of deliberative participation in communities facilitating decision making on devolved budgeting.
- **Electronic participation** for example, e-forums and e-petitions as a means of offering substantively different forms of engagement, and alternative or complementary channels for participation.

- **Asset transfer** and other facilitative mechanisms for community management and/or ownership of assets and social enterprise.
- **Redress** as a mechanism for citizens to register complaints, have them investigated and receive feedback and response.
- **Petitions** as a mechanism for citizens and groups to raise issues of concern.

This report focuses on these mechanisms for empowerment and provides an analysis of the mechanisms in terms of critical success factors. It also looks at impact on individuals, communities and decision making.

The report draws on a detailed and systematic search for evidence on each of the specific mechanisms and uses UK and international evidence from both academic and wider sources. In order to fill gaps in the existing literature, this report also draws on the wider knowledge of the research team and on expert opinion gathered from a series of specially convened workshops.

This report provides an overview of the methodology for a systematic review of qualitative case based material. In order to interpret the evidence that follows it is important to read and understand the methodology section.

The report draws together stand-alone reports on each of the mechanisms listed above. Further supporting evidence is available in the technical annexes to some chapters and in the appendices.

2. Methodology

This research aims to undertake a systematic review of the evidence around community empowerment in order to identify which mechanisms empower (in what ways, and in what contexts) and how government can most appropriately intervene in order to maximise empowerment and the influence that communities can exert on local decision making.

A systematic review is deemed necessary in this policy area due to the unwieldy nature of the evidence-base which includes large numbers of evaluations, good practice case studies and guidance documents. This evidence varies in quality, with poorer quality literature rarely providing sufficient information on context, intervention design/implementation and impact. Where evidence on impact is provided, it is not always supported by attributable evidence. This combination of volume and quality variation makes it difficult to decipher policy implications for evidence-based policy making.

Systematic reviews are widely recognised as the most robust method for identifying quality assessing and synthesising both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The method utilises systematic and explicit techniques to perform a thorough literature search and critical appraisal of individual studies in order to identify valid and applicable evidence. Evidence from high quality studies is subsequently combined with a view to answering stated research questions.

A systematic review of the evidence is an approach often taken in pure science disciplines; it pulls together evidence from a range of studies to reach overarching conclusions that span the full range of the studies. In relation to community empowerment much of the evidence is drawn from qualitative case studies. It is possible to conduct a valid review of more qualitative case study material by using the particular meta-analytical technique of the Boolean approach (Peters 1998, Ragin 2000). The Boolean approach is a key method in developing systematic findings in comparative case study research.

2.1 Our approach

The initial stage of the review involved mapping the evidence base around community empowerment drawing on a range of academic and policy related sources (see Appendix 1). This stage provided an evidence base of over 3500 articles and reports of relevance to the review. Preliminary coding of the evidence base marked over 1800 articles as 'strongly empirical' – relying extensively on empirical case study material.

This evidence base has been refined as further definitional clarity for the research syntheses has been obtained. The evidence base, whilst extensive, varied across the specific mechanisms. As such, the evidence base has also

been added to in order to reflect particular focus and scope of the research syntheses. The re-constituted evidence base has then been refined again to locate approximately twenty articles per mechanism which refer to at least one of the criteria to be used for evaluating 'empowerment success'.

2.2 Defining empowerment success

The recent Communities and Local Government white paper, *Communities in control: real people, real power* (2008), identified a series of mechanisms which had the potential to empower citizens and communities and change the way decisions are made.

Different mechanisms may offer different forms of empowerment. For there to be comparison both within and across the syntheses, it is necessary to have a common set of factors that can be used to understand how empowerment is defined, and success evaluated. This research identified three key factors defining empowerment success; these outcome factors are:

Effect on participants involved in the process

This factor refers to the extent to which participants have developed skills linked to empowerment (e.g. confidence, social networks, specialist policy knowledge) and whether they have increased their sense of internal political efficacy (the perception that they can influence their local place and services).

Effect on communities

This factor refers to whether the mechanism has led to any improvements in a community's level of political efficacy, social capital and social cohesiveness.

Effect on decision making

This factor refers to whether participants and communities are now able to exercise more influence on decision making and if a sustained shift in power has taken place (towards communities and, in particular, previously excluded groups).

2.3 Influencing empowerment success

Alongside criteria for 'empowerment success' it is also necessary to identify those factors that are likely to drive or inhibit empowerment in different circumstances. While these factors vary across the different syntheses (to reflect the characteristics of each mechanism) certain core elements are investigated across all the syntheses (e.g. whether the mechanism is open to all citizens, whether it links to formal decision making). See Appendix 3 for full details.

The factors considered to drive empowerment (set out below) are actually composite factors, built from a number of sub-features. Appendix 3 shows the more detailed coding frame, which includes references to more detailed indicators for each synthesis. This process of reduction allowed for a more succinct analysis and effective use of the Boolean technique.

The ‘influencing factors’ fall into two main categories: aspects of the design of the mechanism; and aspects of the context in which the mechanism has been used. A generic set of influencing factors is presented below:

Design of mechanism/intervention

- Open to all
- Support mechanisms
- Links to formal political decision making

Context of mechanism/intervention

- Low resource base
- Ethnic diversity
- Political ‘buy-in’
- Bureaucratic ‘buy-in’
- Highly salient issue

Further detail on defining these factors is provided in Appendix 3.

2.4 Analysing the evidence base: developing and using Boolean ‘truth tables’

The Boolean approach converts case study evidence into a form suitable for the analysis and comparison of key factors.

For each mechanism, around 20 of the best cases were selected for detailed analysis (Appendix 1 provides a list and description of the cases identified in each synthesis). The cases were then coded against the influencing and outcome factors described above; where ‘1’ indicates the presence of a condition and ‘0’ its absence.

For each mechanism a truth table was produced:

	Influencing Factor 1	Influencing Factor 2...	Outcome Factor 1	Outcome Factor 2
Case 1				
Case 2				

This approach has the advantage of drawing on empirical case study material while also being able to examine systematically cause-and-effect relationships. This allows qualitative researchers to go beyond the usual claims of 'suggest', 'indicate' and 'appear' to identify conditions for 'empowerment success'. The Boolean approach is both robust and replicable.

2.5 Boolean minimisation: qualitative computerised analysis (QCA)

The production of a 'truth table' is the first stage in the Boolean analysis. Where the evidence is available the second stage of the research begins to test more complex relationships between influencing and outcome factors in order to identify 'critical success factors' and combinations thereof. This process is termed 'Boolean minimisation'. The second stage analysis is facilitated by expertise within the research team in qualitative computerised analysis (QCA).

As noted, the evidence on community empowerment is qualitative and varied. Only in the syntheses on citizen governance, participatory budgeting, e-participation and petitioning has the evidence been sufficient to allow Boolean minimisation to be undertaken. In the remaining two syntheses – asset transfer, and redress – the evidence on empowerment success is too limited to allow Boolean minimisation to be undertaken and so the identification of critical success factors is more difficult.

3. Asset transfer

3.1 Asset transfer: a definition

Over the past year, community asset transfer has gained impetus in policy from two influential sources: the Quirk Review report *Making assets work*, published in May 2007 and Communities and Local Government's *Community Empowerment Action Plan* from October 2007. These reports indicate the extent of the government's interest in community management and ownership of assets. The Quirk report states, 'there are no substantive impediments to the transfer of public assets to communities. It can be done; indeed it has been done, legitimately and successfully in very many places' (2007: 7). Examples of community asset transfer can be found from across the UK with such assets including village halls and community centres, disused swimming baths and under-used sports centres, old hospital sites, closed-down shops, derelict pubs, etc.

Community asset transfer may be a potential means of empowering citizens and communities to take 'ownership' of community renewal and may act as an effective method of engaging communities. The Quirk Review report goes as far as stating that 'the starting point is the recognition that optimising the use of public assets is not the primary objective: the overriding goal is community empowerment' (2007: 3).

The Government's framework for building capacity in communities, *Firm Foundations* states that 'community anchor organisations' are community groups that are relatively large, networked and multi-purpose (Thake 2007). 'Community anchor organisations' have at least four common features, they:

- are controlled by local residents and representatives of local groups;
- address the needs of their area in a multi-purpose, holistic way;
- demonstrate commitment to the involvement of all sections of their community, including marginalised groups; and
- facilitate the development of the communities in their area (Home Office 2004: 19).

This synthesis will use the available evidence base on asset transfer to consider whether community anchor organisations exhibit these characteristics and the extent to which asset transfer affects community empowerment. The synthesis will also consider how government can intervene to minimise possible risks in asset transfer.

3.2 Evidence base

There is a scarcity of relevant academic material in the area of asset transfer and its impact on community empowerment. Where case study material on asset transfer is available, it is typically found in reports written for the government – for example, the Quirk Review *Making Assets Work* (2007) and *Community Assets* (2006) by Stephen Thake – or by non-governmental organisations such as the Development Trusts Association and the Improvement and Development Agency.

A decision was made (in consultation with Communities and Local Government) to systematically analyse this material as the only available source of evidence on asset transfer and to supplement the analysis with reflections on the academic literature on community-based housing organisations and social economy/enterprise. It is important to recognise the limitations of this evidence base on asset transfer. First, it is written by those involved in promoting asset transfer and/or working in community anchor organisations. Thus there is a danger of ‘boosterism’ (although we must also recognise that this is prevalent to a certain degree in some academic texts). Second, the case studies tend to be fairly short and descriptive and do not always provide evidence on the factors that are central to this study. However, while recognising these limitations, there are good reasons to subject these cases to a systematic analysis since they are regularly appealed to by proponents of asset transfer. Our analysis will allow us to (at least) answer the question: what evidence do advocates provide that asset transfer enhances community empowerment?

The analysis of these case studies is supplemented by discussion of relevant findings from the academic literature on community-based housing organisations and social economy/enterprise. The former literature has some relevance because it shares at least two characteristics with current concerns with asset transfer. First, there are a number of studies of significant housing assets being transferred from local authority to community management and in a small number of cases these include discussions of community empowerment. Second, for both housing and the current interest in asset transfer more generally, the primary policy driver has arguably not been community empowerment per se. Even though the Quirk Review states that ‘the overriding goal is community empowerment’ (2007: 3), the primary policy driver for both housing and asset transfer has arguably been the desire to access non-governmental investment (financial and otherwise) in a political climate where local authorities have been unable and/or unwilling to invest (Daly et al. 2005; Malpass and Mullins 2002). In both cases, the potential for community empowerment has been recognised later in the day. The second literature on social economy/enterprise is worth considering as community anchor organisations are a sub-set of this broad category of community organisations that engage in productive activity. Lessons for community empowerment may be drawn from other parts of the social economy.

A full list of the case sources, references and outlines is provided at the end of the chapter.

3.3 Findings

Table 3.1: Boolean 'truth table': all cases coded against all factors – asset transfer (NB: “–” equates to missing data)

Case descriptor	Influencing Factors						Outcome Factors			
	Open to all	Support	Control of assets	Professional staff	Low resource base	Political 'buy-in'	Impact on participants	Impact on community anchor organisation	Impact on communities	Impact on decision making
1 Action for Business (Bradford) Ltd	–	–	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	1
2 Amble Development Trust	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	1
3 The Arts Factory	1	1	1	–	1	0	–	1	1	1
4 Berton Street Project	–	–	1	–	–	1	–	1	1	1
5 Blacon Community Trust	–	–	0	1	1	0	–	1	–	1
6 Bootstrap Enterprise	–	–	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	1
7 Community Action Furness	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	1	1	1
8 Community Links	–	–	1	1	–	1	–	1	1	1
9 Ealing Community Transport (buses)	–	–	1	1	–	1	–	1	–	1
10 Env Trust (Chicksand Citizens Forum/Workspace)	–	1	1	–	–	1	–	–	1	1
11 Gamblesby Village Hall	1	1	–	0	1	1	–	–	1	1
12 Glyncorrwg Action Group	1	–	–	1	1	–	–	1	1	1
13 Goodwin Development Trust	1	–	1	1	1	1	–	1	–	1
14 Greenwich Leisure	1	–	–	1	–	1	–	1	1	1
15 Halifax Opportunities Trust	–	1	1	1	–	1	–	1	1	1
16 Heywood MAGIC	–	–	0	–	–	0	–	–	1	1
17 High Trees Community Trust	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	1	1
18 Hunworth and Stody Village Hall	–	–	1	0	–	–	–	–	1	1
19 Millfields Community Economic Development Trust	1	–	1	1	–	1	–	–	1	1
20 Moseley Community Development Trust	1	1	–	–	–	0	–	–	1	1
21 Moor End Development Trust	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
22 The Pavillion	–	–	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	1
23 Renewal Trust	–	–	–	1	1	1	–	1	–	1
24 Southmead Development Trust	1	–	1	1	1	1	–	1	1	1
25 St Werburghs Community Centre	1	1	0	–	–	1	–	–	1	1
26 Vassall Centre Trust	–	–	1	1	–	1	–	1	1	1
27 West Itchen Community Trust	–	–	1	–	1	1	–	1	1	1
28 Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust	1	–	1	1	–	1	–	–	1	1

In Boolean analysis, data is initially presented in a 'truth table' where the scores for influencing and outcome factors are presented. For further detail on coding see Appendix 3. Table 3.1 is such a truth table for the asset transfer case studies drawn from official documents and materials from non-governmental organisations (see Section 3.2). The truth table is striking in two respects. First, there is a significant amount of missing data across many of the factors where it proved impossible to code '0' or '1'. Where data is missing to such an extent, it is impracticable to run the qualitative computerised analysis (QCA) and thus difficult to recognise patterns and relationships between factors: to ascertain necessary and sufficient conditions. Second, where data is available it is typically coded '1'. This is no doubt because of the nature of the source material: authors have been keen to promote the positive aspects of asset transfer.

The truth table is useful in highlighting where the current asset transfer evidence base is lacking: there are next to no detailed descriptions of the conditions under which asset transfer is (or just as importantly, is not) effective. The current state of the evidence base means that it is impossible to make strong inferences about the impact of particular organisational, process or contextual factors on aspects of community empowerment. The truth table indicates where sustained primary research is most needed.

Even though the data is limited, each of the outcome factors that capture aspects of community empowerment will be discussed in more detail below, drawing relevant lessons from the housing and social economy/enterprise literatures. However, it is worth making some comments about the state of evidence on the influencing factors that were selected as potentially affecting community empowerment through asset transfer (see Appendix 3). This might guide future research strategies. Evidence is most abundant in relation to the type of control (e.g. leasehold, freehold, etc.) exercised by community anchor organisations (factor c) and the extent to which organisations employ staff (factor d). There is limited availability of data on the extent to which the local authority (or other relevant organisation) supported the transfer of assets (factor f) – more detail would clarify difficulties with coding. A limited amount of information is available on the funding that organisations access, but it is not reported in a consistent manner in the case studies such that it could be coded as a factor suitable for Boolean analysis.

Most obviously missing from the case studies offered in the policy literature is reasonable evidence on two potentially significant factors. First, the governance structure of community anchor organisations, in particular the extent and manner in which these organisations engage and involve the broader community in decision making (factor a); second, the support mechanisms – for example individual and organisational capacity building and feasibility studies – that may be accessed by organisations (factor b). Further, the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the locality in question are rarely presented. It is the lack of data on these sorts of factors that makes it difficult to draw inferences on community empowerment.

3.3.1 *Recognisable impact on participants involved in process*

There are good reasons to assume that management and ownership of a community asset will increase political efficacy and the skills base of participants directly involved in the running of community anchor organisations. First, if political efficacy is understood as the feeling that ‘individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties’ (Pateman 1970: 46), then the process of transferring and then managing an asset could reasonably be said to create the conditions where individuals involved in the process have confidence that their input will have an effect on how the asset is utilised. Second, participants have ample opportunities to learn and practice technical (e.g. financial and managerial) and political skills, both in relation to negotiating the transfer of an asset and then its day-to-day management. However, as the relevant column (factor g) in the truth table indicates, there is no empirical evidence available from case studies to indicate whether these propositions hold in practice.

While data on the outcome factor (political efficacy/skills) is lacking, so is information on two of the influencing factors associated with the governance structure (factor a) and support mechanisms (factor b). With regard to governance structure, it is not enough to assert that an organisation is ‘community-based’ for it to generate a positive effect on participants. Even from the cursory data provided in the case studies it is clear that governance structures vary considerably: amongst the examples are development trusts of various forms, mutuals and cooperatives. Detail of how these different organisational forms operate in practice is lacking, in particular who from the community is engaged, in what capacity and to what extent. We might look to the social enterprise literature for some guidance here, but instead find the same problem: the variety of legal forms (community interest companies (CICs), industrial and provident societies (IPS), etc.) and practices adopted by social enterprises (Snaith 2007; Borzaga and Derfourny 2001; Evers and Laville 2004; Nyssens 2006) make it difficult to draw more than the most general conclusions. Affirming this point, Ash Amin and his colleagues find evidence to suggest that social enterprises ‘have been able to demonstrate, again above and beyond the more usual concrete outputs, a contribution to building the capacity of individuals for self-realisation’, but warn that empowerment ‘cannot simply be assumed to follow from the imposition of the social economy “model”’ (Amin et al 2002: 46–47).

Looking back at the more established academic literature on workers’ cooperatives helps us to understand the variety of factors we would need to consider if we are to begin to unravel the relationship between the structure and practice of community anchor organisations and the development of political efficacy and skills. Drawing on a range of studies in particular the work of Edward Greenberg (1986; 1996) in the US, Neil Carter isolates seven factors that affect opportunities and experience of participation in co-operatives, and thus potentially have a profound effect on political efficacy and skills (Carter 2006: 416–22). These are:

1. Origins – endowed, defensive, alternative and job creation.
2. Size – extent to which organisation relies on forms of representation rather than direct participation of members.
3. Forms of informal control – extent to which openness is achieved in practice.
4. Member expectations – extent to which members expect to be able to have an influence.
5. The external economic environment – impact of economic conditions beyond the control of the enterprise.
6. Job autonomy – extent to which individuals have control over their own area of work.
7. Conflict – extent to which there is conflict in the workplace.

While these factors have emerged from the study of workers' cooperatives, many of them will be significant in considering the structure and day-to-day operation of community-based organisations that manage and/or own community assets. The fact that we lack evidence in relation to these sorts of factors in the generic social enterprise literature and the more specific studies of asset transfer, explains why there is so little understanding of the nature of the link between governance structure and political efficacy and skills.

Carter's work also indicates a potential failing in the way that political efficacy is often conceptualised and researched. The discussion to date has been primarily focused on the extent to which participants have the confidence that they can affect collective action *within* the community anchor organisation itself. But this should not be confused with a more general sense of political efficacy towards the political system. Policy makers are not simply interested in whether participation in community anchor organisations increases participants' 'local' efficacy and skills, but also whether this 'spills over' into more general political efficacy and capacities. This hope on the part of policy makers resonates with a long-standing claim within theories of participatory democracy that activity in local institutions – for example participation in workers' cooperatives – will have a positive effect on other forms of political activity (Pateman 1970). While this is a well-worn claim, Carter (2006) finds that there are few relevant empirical studies and evidence is – at best – mixed. The seven factors we outlined above play a crucial role in whether organisational specific efficacy and skills translate into the broader political realm. In some cases there is an increase in political efficacy; in others a decrease. Robert Dahl provides evidence that in some circumstances (for example, where participants are dominated by professional managers), participants in self-management are more alienated from, and frustrated about, the wider political process than non-participants (Dahl 1985: 97). We need to be careful about linking participation in community anchor organisations (and also social enterprises) with claims about their effect on participants' more generalised sense of political efficacy.

A slightly different series of lessons can be drawn from the literature on community-based housing organisations (CBHOs), which again can take

a variety of forms (for example tenant managed cooperatives, estate management boards, etc.). First, in relation to the development of relevant skills, tenants are typically engaged in a fairly long and intensive training and development process so that they have the relevant capacities to manage assets. Such institutionalised capacity building (in management, financial and other organisational skills) is not systematically built into the asset transfer process – there are examples where relevant training has been provided, but it is fairly ad-hoc and evidence is lacking (factor b). The need for such support and guidance is recognised by community groups themselves and is highlighted by the Quirk Review as one way that the risks associated with asset transfer can be better managed.

Second, there is evidence that participation in CBHOs can generate both political efficacy and skills amongst participants directly involved in the management of the organisation (Barnes et al 2007; Tunstall 2001). However, in her study of CBHOs in Scotland, Rebecca Tunstall argues that ‘the effects of empowerment appeared to be ambiguous’ for residents. She continues:

Many residents faced a heavy voluntary workload. They might be exposed to unwanted or excessive responsibility, to challenges to their representativeness or legitimacy, or to temptations to or allegations of corruption. Many residents found it difficult to reduce their roles because of lack of suitable replacements. These processes could have ambiguous effects, they could not be stopped or reversed and residents could not have predicted or explicitly chosen them. All residents interviewed enjoyed at least some aspect of their involvement; these processes mean it cannot be assumed that benefits to resident board members always outweighed costs. The prevalence and extent of these impacts on active residents appeared to outweigh those found in available evidence on most other forms of tenant participation. (Tunstall 2001: 2510)

This is a sobering finding that has direct relevance to community anchor organisations where there is often a small enthusiastic core of activists and staff who take the project forward. It is not clear the extent to which they fully understand the demands they are placing on themselves and whether there are willing volunteers to step into their shoes when they wish to step away from the organisation. This is a highly relevant question in relation to the long term sustainability of asset transfer and also indicates the importance of feasibility studies (both financial and organisational) before asset transfer progresses – another area of concern to the Quirk Review.

3.3.2 *Recognisable impact on activities of community anchor organisation*

This outcome factor was included in this synthesis to investigate the claim that management and ownership of assets could be a stepping-stone to further activity on the part of the community anchor organisation. This can be an increase in the provision of services by the organisation itself and/or the management and ownership of further assets. Both of these increases in activity can be linked to the capacity of the anchor organisation to generate further capital on the basis of the original asset.

The case studies provide evidence of increased activity in over half of the organisations once they had gained control over the relevant asset. In a small number of impressive cases, the management and ownership of one asset provided the collateral and confidence for organisations to engage in further asset transfer into the community sector. The evidence suggests that an expansion of activities is less likely for smaller organisations that manage and own village halls, organisations that only manage (and not own) an asset and those organisations with a very specific mission. In the latter case there is some evidence that missions can be expanded once the potential of owning an asset is realised by the organisation. A more sophisticated analysis of the conditions under which activities increase on the part of community anchor organisations is not possible because of the extent of missing data and there are no relevant comparisons to be made with the housing and social enterprise literatures.

3.3.3 *Recognisable impact on communities*

Data is simply not available on whether the community management and ownership of assets has an effect on two of the factors relating to impact on communities, namely aggregate level political efficacy and social cohesion. Where there is some indicative data is in relation to social capital, here understood as an increase in activity and/or density of associations (apart from the anchor organisation itself). In all but four of the cases, some evidence was provided that the anchor organisation promoted the activities of community groups and social and/or private enterprises by providing them with space or other facilities. The evidence base is limited in the sense that it is unclear whether the existence of the anchor organisation is essential for these activities or whether the groups or enterprises could have found other venues for their activities.

Research carried out by the Urban Institute in the US indicates the potential impact of what they term 'pro-social places', which would include many of the community assets that are being transferred in the UK. Their report found that the number of pro-social places is related to the level of organisational participation in a neighbourhood as well as to the level of residents' satisfaction of the neighbourhood in which they live (Roman and Moore 2001).

In a related finding from the housing literature, David Clapham and Keith Kintrea offer evidence from Scotland that residents have more positive views of their CBHO than local government. Drawing from the 1994 Household Survey they show that residents have a consistently more positive view towards their CBHO in relation to whether they have a say in decision making, whether they are in touch with ordinary people, whether they care for people like themselves and whether they can be trusted to do what's right. Using the same source of data, the researchers also provide evidence that there is a higher degree of confidence in the community organisation compared to other local organisations, including schools, religious organisations and the legal system – political institutions, including the local

authority and Westminster, and private businesses and industry score poorly (Clapham and Kintrea 2000: 541–43).

3.3.4 **Recognisable effect on decision making (factor j)**

Where community anchor organisations have a clear advantage over other forms of community engagement is in relation to popular control. It is often difficult to ascertain a direct link between participation and decision making. Not so in these cases because the organisation has direct control (whether in terms of management or ownership) over the asset.

Where we lack information is in relation to *who* is able to exercise control and this takes us back to the lack of an evidence base on the governance structure and practice of community anchor organisations. While there is limited evidence in a small percentage of the cases of attempts to engage the broader community in some way, there is no evidence about the extent to which decision making is inclusive in the sense that politically-marginalised groups such as the young, the old, low socio-economic groups, minority-ethnic groups and women are fully engaged and able to exert influence. While demonstrating ‘commitment to the involvement of all sections of their community, including marginalised groups’ is one characteristic of the government’s definition of community anchor organisations, there is no available data to confirm whether such an ambition is being achieved in practice.

3.4 Conclusions

While there is a shortage of data on influencing factors relating to asset transfer and its impact on community empowerment, it is possible to draw out a number of implications for policy development and implementation from the analysis and findings presented in Section 3.3.

It is reasonable to expect that a policy of asset transfer can make a contribution to community empowerment in various ways. Affording the opportunity to local residents and representatives of local groups to control (either through the transfer of management or ownership) a significant community asset can:

- increase political efficacy and skills
- enhance activity on the part of the community anchor organisation
- provide a resource for increased activity by other community, social and/or private sector enterprises

There are, however, caveats that need to be borne in mind in terms of policy development and implementation. First, the governance structure and practices of organisations are likely to have an effect on this aspect of community empowerment. But this is an area where the evidence base is weak.

Second, management and ownership can place great burdens (often unexpected) on volunteers and staff. Government (both national and local) needs to consider how feasibility studies can be made more easily accessible for potential transfers and how individual training and development opportunities can be put in place so that participants gain relevant organisational and financial skills and understand the responsibilities they are taking on and the demands they can place on them. Possible good practice may be drawn from the community-based housing sector.

Third, the state of the evidence base makes it particularly difficult to make judgements or recommendations in relation to the distributional effect of asset transfer. While community anchor organisations are generally run entirely or predominantly by members of the local community, we are not in a position to understand the extent to which marginalised social groups participate in the governance of the organisation or benefit from its activities. Given that such a commitment is explicitly stated in the government's own definition of community anchor organisations, this is an unfortunate state of affairs. How it can be ensured that anchor organisations are and remain inclusive of the wider community is a question that deserves further policy attention.

Asset transfer policy is not solely (or even primarily) driven by the community empowerment agenda. It can, for instance, be driven by a desire to access non-governmental capital funding to develop assets that are in a state of disrepair and/or disuse. Given the current political climate, it is unlikely that local authorities will be in a position to invest heavily in such assets (in fact policy is operating in the opposite direction). In this sense, asset transfer policy can be seen as highly cost-effective: a method of investing increased non-governmental resources into local assets. Fiscal and community empowerment policy may be complementary in this instance.

Finally, the most important finding from this research synthesis is arguably that further research is needed, in particular on aspects of the structure and practices of community anchor organisations as well as contextual factors such as local authority involvement. Without more detailed data on these issues it is difficult to draw strong conclusions on the necessary and sufficient conditions for effective community empowerment through asset transfer.

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Case sources and outlines: asset transfer

A total of 28 cases were selected for the synthesis that provided at least some evidence on community empowerment. These cases represent a wide range of forms of management and ownership and types of asset, including business workspaces, community centres, village halls, sports facilities, community transport and a cinema. The case studies are drawn from one or more of the following sources:

1	Action for Business (Bradford) Ltd	<p>Thake, S. (2006) <i>Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership</i> (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.39–40</p> <p><i>Research is based in Manningham Bradford; example of community ownership and the benefits it provides for local people. The ABL transferred a complex into 100s of small units which it rents out to the public and community sector. The profits generated are used to fund other community and cultural activities.</i></p>
2	Amble Development Trust	<p>Development Trusts Association (date not stated) 'Amble Development Trust', http://www.dta.org.uk/activities/campaigns/communityassets/casestudies/developinganassetbasecasestudy1.htm Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>Study is based on the regeneration of a former coal mining town. By acquiring a range of attractions and community spaces for social enterprise initiatives, the ADT is able to use the profits for community development and regeneration projects.</i></p>
3	The Arts Factory	<p>Development Trusts Associations (date not stated) 'The Arts Factory', http://www.dta.org.uk/activities/campaigns/communityassets/casestudies/developinganassetbasecasestudy3.htm Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>Research explores The Arts Factory's acquirement of a derelict church which it then redeveloped into a multi use community facility.</i></p>

4	Berton Street Project	<p>Author not stated (2007) <i>Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets</i> (London, HM Government) pp.16</p> <p><i>This example of community ownership looks at how the people of Berton, Sheffield turned a disused school into a thriving social enterprise. Through its services the Berton Street Project has contributed to the economic regeneration of the city.</i></p>
5	Blacon Community Trust	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Chester: Blacon Community Trust', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7694404 Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>Example explores how the Blacon Community Trust is delivering childcare, youth work and business support from a former primary school. The success of the Trust has allowed it to expand its services in response to local demand.</i></p>
6	Bootstrap Enterprises	<p>Hart, L. and Bell, D. (2001) <i>Developing an Asset Base</i> (London, Development Trusts Association) pp.14</p> <p><i>The Enterprise works with unemployed residents in four London council estates. It operates from a former warehouse; the services provided include information and advice about jobs and training, use of stationery and CV creation. The enterprise has acquired the adjacent building which will be rented to generate income.</i></p>
7	Community Action Furness	<p>Hart, L. and Bell, D. (2001) <i>Developing an Asset Base</i> (London, Development Trusts Association) pp.9</p> <p><i>The organisation was formed to help young people to develop their skills and employment abilities. Community Action Furness has drawn over £4.2m into the local economy and has helped many young people into employment or further training.</i></p> <p>Thake, S. (2006) <i>Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership</i> (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.7–9</p>

8	Community Links	<p>Thake, S. (2006) <i>Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership</i> (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.7–9</p> <p><i>Community Links is a multi purpose, community development and wealth creating organisation. Its activities include advice around debt, benefits and housing which it delivers to over 50 outreach venues. The organisation operates from several properties which it leases from the council.</i></p>
9	Ealing Community Transport	<p>Mayo, E. and Moore, H. (2001) <i>The Mutual State: How Local Communities Can Run Public Services</i> (London, NEF) pp.18</p> <p>Mayo, E. and Moore, H. (2001) <i>The Mutual State: How Local Communities Can Run Public Services</i> (London, NEF) pp.16</p> <p><i>The study focuses on Ealing Community Transport and how it has grown to run a successful client transport and recycling service in eight local authorities.</i></p>
10	The Environment Trust – Project 2 – Checksand Citizens Forum Greatorex Street workshop	<p>Hart, L. and Bell, D. (2001) <i>Developing an Asset Base</i> (London, Development Trusts Association) pp.15</p> <p><i>The Checksand Citizens Forum provides a supplementary school for mainly Bangladeshi children. In partnership with the Environment Trust the CCF made a bid for a partially built multi storey garage which it now operates from.</i></p>
11	Gamblesby Village Hall	<p>Author not stated (2007) <i>Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets</i> (London, HM Government) pp.14</p> <p><i>The study explores the successful campaigning of local villagers in reclaiming the local village hall from the council. The project has contributed to restoring pride in the community. It has created a focal point for social activities.</i></p>
12	Glyncorrwg Action Group	<p>Thake, S. (2006) <i>Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership</i> (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.6–8</p> <p><i>Example focuses on the commercial success that community ownership can have. A Welsh village through the acquirement of village flood plain has managed to regenerate itself. The plains were used to create a fishing lake, caravan park, bike trail and visitor centre which has attracted tourists to the local area. This has had a positive effect on local businesses.</i></p>

13	Goodwin Development Trust Ltd	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Hull: Goodwin Development Trust Ltd', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=7694104 Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>Study is based on the experience of community ownership in Hull. Having acquired an old people's home, the Goodwin Development Trust went on to transform itself into one of the city's main employers with assets over 10 million pounds. The Trust provides various services to the community including Sure Start Programmes, Community Warden Scheme and nursery.</i></p>
14	Greenwich Leisure	<p>Mayo, E. and Moore, H. (2001) <i>The Mutual State: How Local Communities Can Run Public Services</i> (London, NEF) pp.16</p> <p><i>The example explores community ownership as a way to cutting local authority expenditure. The focus is on Greenwich Leisure centre which has managed to treble its income to more than 9 million pounds.</i></p>
15	Halifax Opportunities Trust	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Calderdale: Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=7694040 Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>The trust was set up as a community based regeneration charity. The Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre was developed in response to a need for high quality, intensive business support. The trust operates from a disused mill from where it provides managed workspace for start up businesses. It also provides business support, training and help for people entering employment.</i></p> <p>Development Trusts Association (date not stated) 'Halifax Opportunities Trust and Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre (Yorkshire)', http://www.dta.org.uk/activities/campaigns/communityassets/casestudies/halifaxcasestudy.htm, Accessed 5 June 2008</p>
16	Heywood MAGIC	<p>Author not stated (2007) <i>Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets</i> (London, HM Government) pp.17</p> <p><i>Heywood market traders took over the management of their markets. Threatened closure led to the formation of a community led trust. The training facility is used by a range of groups which helps to generate profits which is used by the Trust to make yearly community grants.</i></p>

<p>17 High Trees Community Development Trust</p>	<p>Hart, L. and Bell, D. (2001) <i>Developing an Asset Base</i> (London, Development Trusts Association) pp.13</p> <p><i>High Trees Community Development Trust is an umbrella organisation helping individual residents and groups to set up projects and activities for the benefit and enjoyment of the community. The trust provides support with the administration and management of projects. It operates from a former library where various other facilities and services are offered.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Development Trust's Association (date not stated) 'High Trees Community Development Trust', http://www.dta.org.uk/activities/campaigns/communityassets/casestudies/developinganassetbasecasestudy2.htm Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>The Trust was set up to encourage individuals and small groups of residents on St Martins Estate and neighbourhood to develop and run projects for the benefit of all sectors of the diverse community. The Trust's main asset is a former library which is used as an IT facility as well as providing various courses such as ESOL and basic skills.</i></p>
<p>18 Hunworth and Stody Village Hall</p>	<p>Thake, S. (2006) <i>Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership</i> (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.50–51</p> <p><i>Example focuses on the renovation and management of a dilapidated church hall which has been restored and run entirely by volunteers. The hall hosts coffee mornings, adult education class, health activities and private parties. The hall now has a turnover of £5,000 per year.</i></p>
<p>19 Millfields Community Economic Development Trust</p>	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Plymouth: Millfields Community Economic Development Trust', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7694409 Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>Millfields Trust was set up to help regenerate St Peter's ward in Plymouth. The trust enables local people to get involved in the regeneration process and management of the trust. The trust acquired various buildings from the council which it has successfully converted into workspaces for the rental market. The income from the lettings has led to investment in local community organisations.</i></p>

20	Moseley Community Development Trust	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Birmingham: Moseley Community Development Trust', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=7694412 Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>Example focuses on the Moseley Trust's efforts in regenerating Moseley through social, economic and environmental projects. The trust operates from a former post office. The Moseley CDT is having a positive effect on the daytime economy of Moseley mainly by tenants and room hire facilities. It has also benefited local people and organisation by developing many local projects, such as the Moseley street wardens.</i></p>
21	Moor End Development Trust	<p>Author not stated (2007) Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets (London, HM Government) pp.20</p> <p><i>Example explores the transfer of Butterworth Hall from the local authority to the local community. The hall provided facilities to over 350 people a week who faced losing their premises. The Moor End Development Trust holds the lease on behalf of all the service users.</i></p>
22	The Pavilion	<p>Thake, S. (2006) Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.42–43</p> <p><i>The study focuses on the restoration of a derelict cinema which has come into community ownership. The project has contributed to the regeneration of the immediate area. The cinema has benefited the local people and is also a great venue for local art groups.</i></p>
23	The Renewal Trust	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Nottingham: The Renewal Trust', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=7694088 Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>The Renewal Trust was formed to improve the quality of life of people living in St Anne's and Sneinton areas. Nottingham City Council transferred an old school complex to the trust which became the Sycamore Centre. The facilities at the centre include youth and community centres, a refurbished sports hall and a business centre.</i></p>

24	Southmead Development Trust	<p>Hart, L. and Bell, D. (2001) <i>Developing an Asset Base</i> (London, Development Trusts Association) pp.17</p> <p><i>The study explores Southmead Development Trust's role in improving the lives of the local community. The main role is to maximise employment opportunities for residents by identifying and providing facilities, support and attracting funding. The Trust operates from a former secondary school which has been redeveloped into the Greenway Centre. Capital generated from the centre is spent on projects around the Southmead Estate.</i></p>
25	St Werburghs Community Centre	<p>Hart, L. and Bell, D. (2001) <i>Developing an Asset Base</i> (London, Development Trusts Association) pp.10</p> <p><i>Example focuses on St Werburghs Community Centre Association's refurbishment and management of the local community centre. Through community consultations the Association takes into account the needs of the local people.</i></p>
26	Vassall Centre Trust	<p>Thake, S. (2006) <i>Community Assets: The Benefits and Costs of Community Management and Ownership</i> (Whetherby, CLG Publications) pp.31–32</p> <p><i>Research explores the benefits the Vassall Centre has had for the disabled community. The Centre provides workspace for community organisations and voluntary groups working with and for disabled people. The centre attracts 15,000 users and visitors per year and acts as an anchor for disabled people across the Bristol area.</i></p>
27	West Itchen Community Trust	<p>Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Southampton: West Itchen Community Trust', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelD=7694071, Accessed 5 June 2008</p> <p><i>The West Itchen Community Trust was created to improve the economic environment of the local area. Aside from its role as a property developer, the trust is a local infrastructure body offering support to local businesses and the third sector. The trust offers financial support by sponsoring community events, running a small grants fund and offering interest-free loans to small local businesses.</i></p>

28	Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust	Author not stated (2007) Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets (London, HM Government) pp.23
		<i>The trust was formed mainly due to the need in the area for employment, facilities and new business opportunities. The acquisition of a derelict site with development funding provided an opportunity. The trust manages two business parks and two community centres which have generated substantial profits.</i>
		Development Trust Association (date not stated) 'Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust (Plymouth)', http://www.dta.org.uk/activities/campaigns/communityassets/casestudies/wolseleycasestudy.htm , Accessed 5 June 2008
		Improvement and Development Agency (2007) 'Plymouth: Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust', http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7694388 , Accessed 5 June 2008

4. Citizen governance

4.1 Citizen governance: a definition

Citizen governance involves a variety of mechanisms, operating in diverse contexts, aimed at engaging citizens in decision making about public services and public policy. As members of partnerships, boards and forums, community representatives work collaboratively with statutory and other agencies to develop joined-up approaches to some of the most demanding policy challenges – school achievement, urban regeneration, community safety, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Although these are among the most demanding roles (in terms of time, energy and responsibility), they attract a surprisingly large number of citizens vis-à-vis other forms of participation. Communities and Local Government's 2007–8 Citizenship Survey established that 10 per cent of the population are involved in civic activism, which is defined as involvement either in direct decision making about local services or issues, or in the actual provision of these services by taking on a role such as a councillor, school governor or magistrate. There is also evidence that citizen governance reaches groups of citizens who are traditionally marginalised from decision making, including ethnic minorities and young people (John 2008).

Citizen governance can take many forms, but the concept of 'representation' is central. We tend to associate representation with voting, elections and political parties, but representative processes also play an important role in the practice of citizen participation and community empowerment. Representation can be defined as the 'substantive acting for others' (Pitkin 1967) – it does not actually *require* election. Many settings for citizen empowerment involve some form of non-electoral representation – whether through appointment, co-option, invitation or a representative simply 'coming forward'. Parent representatives are key players in the governance of SureStart programmes; tenants' representatives are part of the decision making machinery of community-led housing associations; 80 per cent of LSP boards have a 'faith representative' (CUF 2006); and representatives of community and voluntary organisations are present on every regeneration partnership.

Sometimes elections are used to select representatives but are not mediated by political parties in the traditional way – as in street elections for resident representatives to regeneration boards, community elections for representatives to Foundation Hospital Trusts, or school based elections for parent governors. In all these cases, those who find themselves in decision making or advisory roles are 'standing for' other citizens who are unable or unwilling to be present. This may sound obvious, but all too often a simplistic distinction is drawn between 'participatory' and 'representative' governance,

with little attention paid to the mechanisms of selection and election involved in empowerment initiatives.

Understanding the dynamics of these varied forms of representation is important as new forms of 'citizen governance' increase in significance, and popular disillusion with traditional forms of representative government spreads. Indeed, such an understanding can throw light upon shortcomings (and opportunities for improvement) in both traditional and new forms of electoral representation, and – most importantly – how different forms of representation can be *combined* in the pursuit of citizen empowerment.

In this study we look at new forms of citizen representation on boards and partnerships in a range of policy areas, including regeneration, housing, estate management, health and education. Existing research tends to focus on individual policy initiatives. Moreover, some initiatives are well researched (like NDCs and their forerunners in regeneration), while others are hardly studied at all – notably parent governors, which ironically is the biggest category of involvement.

This synthesis fills an important gap in the evidence base by taking a cross-cutting look at the use of representative mechanisms across different varieties of citizen governance. More specifically, it aims to establish whether representative mechanisms actually *empower* citizens. There are, after all, other possible effects of involving citizens in governance bodies – like better informed decision making. Analysing a set of cases identified through the Stage 1 mapping (and informed by the broader evidence base), the synthesis looks at the impact of citizen representation on the individuals involved, wider communities, and final decision making. The report also seeks to establish which factors need to be present, in which combinations, to achieve these outcomes.

4.2 Evidence base

4.2.1 *Quality of the evidence base*

Whilst the academic literature provides extensive material around citizen governance, much of it does not provide sufficient case study detail for the Boolean analysis utilised here. The academic literature provides useful contextual material for analysis and provides an important part of the wider evidence base for this topic.

The evidence around citizen governance has been a long standing concern of social and public policy and extensive evidence has been produced by bodies such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Much of the work is strongly empirical and has proved very useful for the form of analysis adopted in this synthesis.

4.2.2 Selection of cases

Citizen governance is a wide ranging issue that incorporates both elected and non-elected forms of representation and a range of different contexts and specific initiatives. Aiming to reflect this diversity, cases have been drawn from the areas of housing and regeneration, local governance, health and education, including both UK and international examples.

A total of 20 cases have been selected from the evidence base for the synthesis (see case sources and outlines at the end of the chapter).

4.2.3 Coding the evidence base

The Boolean approach relies on the identification criteria that define and drive empowerment success (see Methodology and Appendices 2 and 3 for a full definition of each factor). Each case has been coded in relation to the absence or presence of a series of influencing and outcome factors:

Influencing factors:

- a. Open to all
- b. Support mechanisms
- c. Links to formal political decision making
- d. Low resource base
- e. Political and bureaucratic 'buy-in'

Outcome factors:

- f. Effect on participants
- g. Effect on communities
- h. Effect on decision making

4.3 Findings

In the 'truth table', each factor is coded either as 0 (where the factor is absent in the case) or 1 (where the factor is present). For further detail on the coding of factors see Appendix 3. Findings for each factor are discussed below.

Table 4.1: Boolean 'truth table': all cases coded against all factors – citizen governance

Case	Description	Influencing Factors					Outcome Factors		
		Open to all	Support	Links to decision making	Low resource base	'Buy-in'	Impact on participants	Impact on community	Impact on decision making
1	Non-executive board members, UK	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
2	Community regeneration partnerships Wales, UK	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
3	BME women in partnerships West Midlands, UK	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
4	Local service partnerships, UK	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
5	Resident representatives on council estates, UK	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
6	Estate regeneration partnerships, UK	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
7	Governance of neighbourhood regeneration, UK	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
8	Parent involvement in SureStart, UK	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
9	Citizen involvement in LSP boards, UK	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
10	Foundation hospital board, UK	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
11	Community led housing association, UK	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
12	School parent governors, US	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
13	School parent governors, UK	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
14	Rural regeneration partnerships, UK	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
15	Disabled citizens in care partnerships, UK	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
16	Participation in Health Impact Assessment, Sheffield, UK	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
17	Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
18	Faith communities in regeneration, UK	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
19	Faith communities in regeneration, Lewisham, UK	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
20	Under-represented groups in school governance, UK	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1

4.3.1 *Analysis of influencing factors*

a. Open to all

The factor, 'open to all', considers whether the opportunity for involvement in citizen governance is available to all individuals.

Of the 20 cases, only 8 were coded as being 'open to all'. The 'closed' nature of many cases reflects that many opportunities to participate in citizen governance are mediated by personal contact. For example, in a regeneration area, an individual may be asked to take a position on the board of the initiative if they are the chair of a tenants and residents group, or if they have actively been involved in the initiative or such initiatives before and so have had personal contact with the representatives of public sector agencies already on the board (for example, cases 2, 5, 6, 14 and 16).

In other cases, the opportunities to be involved in forms of citizen governance are only open to a specific constituency. For example, in the cases of SureStart and parent school governors (cases 8, 12 and 13) representatives have to be parents or carers with children at the school or living in the area of the initiative.

In the case of non-executive board members in Primary Care Trusts or Foundation Hospitals, individuals are expected to have experience in health or business in order to succeed in being elected (cases 1 and 10).

b. Support mechanisms

The factor, 'support mechanisms', refers to whether participants are assisted in their involvement in citizen governance. For example, are individuals given training; are boards and meetings conducted in an accessible (perhaps less formal) way; is the process of engagement facilitated; are participants given full and open access to information?

Of the 20 cases, 12 displayed some evidence that support was provided to participants in citizen governance. In some cases (for example, 1 and 10, both in health), citizen representatives were included because of their expertise or experience, so it may follow that additional support was considered unnecessary.

In many other cases where support was not provided, this seemed to follow from a lack of consideration for the needs of citizen representatives (e.g. vis-à-vis board members from other sectors). The cases (and wider evidence) note that many community representatives lack experience of formal proceedings on boards and committees and find the dominant culture intimidating. This is a particular concern when involving citizens from groups with low socio-economic resources, as is often the case in regeneration areas (for example, cases 6 and 7) where issues frequently arise about experience, capacity and confidence to engage. These issues are also relevant when considering the involvement of citizens from other groups traditionally marginalised from decision making, for example, black and minority ethnic communities, women and disabled people (cases 3, 15 and 20).

c. Links to formal decision making

This factor indicates a link between the deliberations of boards and partnerships with formal decision making concerning public services or public policy. This would be in contrast, for example, to a forum that only has advisory or consultative powers.

Of the 20 cases, there was evidence in 13 of a link between citizen governance and formal decision making. This is a relatively low figure, given the nature of the initiatives under investigation (i.e. citizen governance mechanisms rather than, for example, public meetings or visioning exercises). The finding substantiates the concern articulated by participants in some citizen governance settings that their presence is simply a means of legitimating the decisions made by the bodies they are involved with. But, less cynically, there are also citizen governance initiatives which aim more at harnessing the specialist 'local knowledge' of citizens, based on their experiential understanding of local issues, rather than securing a specific input to decision making (see Barnes et al 2008). As we shall discuss later, a clearer distinction between these purposes – and their differential link to empowerment – may be helpful.

d. Low resource base

Of the 20 cases, 18 took place in contexts characterised by a low resource base. This finding is, of course, indicative of the fact that citizen governance initiatives tend to be focused on areas of high deprivation – in areas of regeneration (cases 1, 7, 14, 18 and 19), estate and housing management (cases 5, 6 and 11) and health inequalities assessment (case 16). This clustering reflects the association of citizen governance with new approaches to tackling 'wicked issues', where multi-agency approaches and community engagement are considered central to the development of effective and sustainable interventions. However, the finding also reminds us that policy-makers often impose burdens on people in deprived areas, expecting them to put time and energy into citizen governance roles. It also resonates with messages in the literature concerning the dangers of 'participation fatigue' among poorer communities, and with the need for the type of support mechanisms discussed above.

Where citizen governance opportunities arise in the broader context of governance of a particular public service, citizen representatives often have a high resource base, being skilled and educated with a well developed capacity for engagement (as in health board representatives – cases 1 and 10). The demographics of those individuals involved in citizen governance were not mentioned in most of the cases, unless it was an explicit focus of the initiative (for example, case 3 on the experience of BME women on partnerships). This is a potentially important gap in the evidence base.

e. Political and bureaucratic buy-in

Of the 20 cases, 18 indicated political and/or bureaucratic support for citizen governance. This factor refers to the commitment to citizen governance from

elites, specifically politicians and officers in statutory agencies. Commitment might involve the allocation of resources to an initiative or may relate to less tangible matters such as taking seriously outcomes from citizen governance in decision making.

This is a complex issue as many examples of citizen governance (cases 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11 and so on) do not involve elected members in their day-to-day operation. We know from the wider literature that elected politicians often feel threatened by non-elected community representatives (Lowndes et al 2006a). Yet local politicians may play an important role chairing formal boards, and national politicians are responsible for establishing the policy and legislative frameworks for most of the initiatives studied.

Local government officers and those who work for other statutory agencies are more likely than politicians to be involved in the day to day running of citizen governance initiatives. Again, the wider literature voices concerns about bureaucratic resistance to new forms of participation, but it seems that the types of initiative under investigation here have now become an established feature of policy-making and service delivery, with widespread political and bureaucratic buy-in.

The capacity of politicians and officers to engage effectively with community representatives (e.g. by offering appropriate support) may still be an issue of concern, even when the 'box is ticked'. Citizen governance mechanisms are, by definition, likely to be better integrated into broader ('mainstream') governance structures than some other empowerment mechanisms. As such, they may form a particularly important bridge in linking the empowerment agenda to other aspects of democratic renewal (e.g. the role of elected councillors, and citizen-focus within service delivery).

4.3.2 Analysis of outcome factors

In considering each of the criteria of 'empowerment success' individually, the truth table shows:

f. Recognisable impact on individuals

This factor refers to the recognisable impact on participants in citizen governance. It includes impact on participants' sense of political efficacy – their confidence or feeling that they could have an influence on collective actions if they chose to do so. Impact also includes the development of skills (e.g. articulating a point of view, negotiating, partnership working, being able to reflect critically on the process and the ability to make judgements), and improved understanding of the political process and the issues under consideration.

Of the 20 cases, 15 indicated evidence of a positive impact on the participants. It is important to acknowledge citizen governance as an effective means of empowerment for those involved.

g. Recognisable impact on the wider community

This factor refers to change in the sense that, at the aggregate level, members of the community could have an influence on decision making. It relates also to the expansion of social capital – an increase in associational activity, the density of social networks, or an increase in trust between different social groups.

Of the 20 cases, only 6 provided evidence that citizen governance had a recognisable impact on the wider community. This figure could reflect the difficulties in measuring such an impact, which may also occur over a long time frame. But it is important to note the lack of evidence of the wider empowerment impact of citizen governance. Given that this mechanism works through individual representatives, the finding is perhaps not surprising, but it does point to the need to develop additional mechanisms for linking representatives to their wider constituencies.

h. Recognisable impact on decision making

This factor refers to the impact of citizen governance on decision making about public services and public policy. Of the 20 cases, 17 indicated evidence of an impact of citizen governance on decision making. The factor does not measure whether decision making changed with the involvement of citizens in governance, but simply that citizen representatives contributed to the decision making process. It is interesting to note that only 13 cases displayed a link to formal decision making in their design (factor c), and yet in 17 there was an impact on decision making. This finding suggests that less formal avenues of influence can be important, as well as formal or statutory provisions to enable citizen input to decision making.

Overall, citizen governance appears to be a useful mechanism for empowering those individuals directly involved and influencing the process of decision making, but appears to be less successful in impacting on the wider community.

4.4 Analysis

4.4.1 Which factors drive which outcomes?

The qualitative computerised analysis (QCA) allows for the systematic analysis of the relationship between 'influencing factors' and different empowerment outcomes. The analysis identifies different combinations of factors that act together to produce a specific outcome (combinations may include the absence of a particular factor). Where a factor is present, the letter code is presented in upper case; where it is absent, it is presented in lower case. Full detailed analysis is presented in the appendices.

Impact on individuals (skills, personal efficacy)

There are four combinations of influencing factors that lead to empowerment of individual citizen representatives, which together cover the great majority of the cases. The range of combinations suggests that attention to these factors is important *per se*, but their specific arrangement is of less significance in seeking the goal of individual empowerment. The analysis confirms the earlier point that citizen governance is a particularly effective means of empowering individual community leaders and representatives.

Table 4.2 Factors that drive empowerment for individual representatives in citizen governance¹

Factors ²	Summary	Cases	Type of citizen governance
aBD	Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base	2: Community regeneration partnerships, Wales, UK 8: SureStart, UK 12: School governors, US 13: School governors, UK 14: Rural regeneration partnerships, UK	Local knowledge Organisations as proxy
bcDE	No support mechanisms No link to formal decision making Low resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	6. Estate regeneration partnerships, UK 7: Neighbourhood regeneration, UK	Local knowledge
abCdE	Not open to all No support mechanisms Link to formal decision making High resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	1: non-Executive board members, UK	Semi professional
ABCE	Open to all Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making Political and bureaucratic buy-in	9: LSP, UK 11: Community led housing association, UK 17: Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa 19: Faith communities and regeneration, Lewisham, UK	Representation of community interests IDEAL TYPE

¹ BME women/Foundation Hospital (DV=1) is not reported because it has the same IV pattern as Disabled Citizens/HIA (DV=0) and Faith Comms and Regen, Lewisham (DV=1) is not reported because it has the same IV pattern as Local service partnership (DV=0)

² Upper case denotes necessary presence of a factor; lower case necessary absence of a factor

Impact on communities (social capital, collective efficacy)

Only a few of the cases succeed in empowering communities more widely. The combination of influencing factors most likely to produce this effect is where, in disadvantaged areas, representatives are elected or selected from specific constituencies (parents, residents) and provided with support. Interestingly, these cases are not 'open to all', yet they do lead to empowerment benefits for the wider community. The clear focus of the representative role, and the commitment to capacity building, may be key factors in ensuring that empowerment effects 'spill over' into the wider community.

Table 4.3: Factors that drive empowerment for the wider community¹

Factors	Summary	Cases	Type of citizen governance
aBD	Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base	5: Resident representatives on council estates, UK 12: School governors, US 13: School governors, UK	Local knowledge
ABCdE	Open to all Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making High resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	18: Faith communities and regeneration, UK	Representation of community interests IDEAL TYPE

¹ Community led housing and Community partnership, South Africa (DV=1) are not reported because they have the same IV pattern as LSP (DV=0)

Impact on decision making

There are five combinations of factors that lead to an impact on decision making, which cover the vast majority of the cases considered. The range of combinations suggests that citizen governance initiatives are, almost by definition, particularly effective in achieving this sort of outcome.

Table 4.4: Factors that drive impact of citizen governance on decision making¹

Factors	Summary	Cases	Type of citizen governance
ADE	Open to all Low resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	4: Local service partnerships, UK 9: LSP, UK 11: Community led housing association, UK 17: Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa 18: Faith communities and regeneration, UK 20: Under-represented groups in school governance, UK	Local knowledge
abCdE	Not open to all No support mechanisms Link to formal decision making High resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	1: non-Executive board members, UK	Semi professional
ABCE	Open to all Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making Political and bureaucratic buy-in	9: LSP, UK 11: Community led housing association, UK 17: Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa	Representation of community interests IDEAL TYPE
BCDE	Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making Low resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	6: Estate regeneration partnerships, UK	Representation of community interests IDEAL TYPE
aBDe	Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base No political and bureaucratic buy-in	14: Rural regeneration partnerships, UK 5: Resident representatives on council estates, UK	Organisations as proxy for community, for example voluntary sector organisations/Local knowledge

¹ Sure Start, UK (DV=1) is not reported because it has the same IV pattern as Comm Regen Wales (DV=0). Similarly, Foundation Hospital, Disabled Citizens and HIA also have DV3=1, but they have the same IV pattern as BME Women (DV3=0)

4.5 Four types of citizen governance

Looking at the clustering of factors across cases, it is possible to develop a typology of different forms of citizen governance. These we call: local representation; local knowledge; semi-professional; and organisational proxy. The typology is helpful because it cuts across specific policy sectors and

initiatives and allows us to focus on the link between particular combinations of factors and particular empowerment outcomes. The typology is not a league table: it doesn't rank forms of citizen governance. Rather it allows us to think about 'fitness for purpose' (Leach and Lowndes 2006). If we are seeking 'local representation', what factors need to be present in the design and context of the initiative, and how is this different from that associated with 'local knowledge' or 'semi professional' forms of citizen governance?

The detailed analysis which shows the application of the Boolean algebra from which these categories are derived is presented in the technical appendices. The key points are discussed below.

Type 1 – Local representation

We draw here on a distinction developed by Marian Barnes and colleagues between local representation and local knowledge. They use the term 'local representation' to refer to settings in which citizens 'are there to represent a wider community, and to speak for and be accountable to this constituency' (Barnes et al 2008, p 4). The goal is to make decision making more democratic and to empower citizens and communities.

Here we use 'local representation' to refer to cases in which all empowerment indicators are present: where there is empowerment of individual representatives and of the wider community, and where there is a clear impact on decision making. This can be considered the **ideal type** of citizen governance.

As indicated in the technical annex to this synthesis, it is shown that such cases are characterised by the presence of the following factors: the initiative is open to all; support is provided to participants; there is a formal link to decision making; and political and bureaucratic buy-in is present. It is notable that local representation works as a form of empowerment for communities and in shaping decision making in areas of deprivation. In such areas, communities are often perceived as excluded; however, with support participants are able to engage in decision making with positive outcomes for themselves, their community and the decision making process.

This form of citizen governance is present in cases across three of the four policy sectors considered in this synthesis: local governance, regeneration/housing and education – health is absent. Specific cases include representation on local strategic partnerships; community led housing associations; faith communities' involvement in regeneration; school governors; and community partnership grant programmes.

Specific cases of 'local representation' taken from the evidence considered here include:

- A study of a local strategic partnership (LSP) – a non-statutory multi-agency body coterminous with a local authority boundary – aiming to bring together at the local level different public, private, and voluntary and community sector organisations (case 9).

- An example of a housing stock transfer from a local authority to a new social housing organisation – the Community Housing Association where all residents in the area became members of the Community Housing Association (case 11).
- An example of involving the community as a partner in developing local grant programmes (case 17).
- An example of the potential contribution of varied faith communities – Christian, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish – to urban regeneration in case studies from NW, West Midlands, London and Yorkshire (case 18).
- An example of a specific locality's attempt to involve faith communities in partnerships around urban regeneration (case 19).

Type 2 – Local knowledge

In this type of citizen governance, 'citizens are there to provide their views and expertise as people who live in a community, have particular needs or interests, or use specific public services' (Barnes et al 2008, p 4). The primary goal is better decision making – deliberation that is informed by citizens' own experience and leads to new understandings between citizens, professionals, managers and politicians. This is no less an important goal than that of local representation, but it is different (Barnes et al 2008, p 5). Too often there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of citizen governance and the specific role of citizen representatives.

This analysis shows that more than half of the cases under consideration fall into the local knowledge category. In this type of citizen governance, there are no formal links to decision making or the link is un-important; support mechanisms to facilitate meaningful engagement of citizens vary; and participants have a low resource base and/or are from an area of socio-economic deprivation; and political and bureaucratic buy-in is only important when there is a link to decision making. It is notable again that the 'local knowledge' form of citizen governance works well in areas with a low resource base, linked to possible distributional effects.

This form of citizen governance is evident in: local governance, regeneration/housing, and education. Cases include parent governors in schools; resident representatives on housing estates; and parental involvement in SureStart.

Specific cases of 'local knowledge' taken from the evidence considered here include:

- 'Communities First' programme in Wales as an example of an early attempt by Government to promote direct community involvement in a programme of regeneration policy and to influence change at a local level (case 2). As implied, Communities First is a programme based in socio-economically deprived areas.
- An example of the attempts of service delivery partnerships to actively engage local residents and local authority staff in shaping services (case 4).

- Examples of ten estate regeneration partnerships which involved the local community. The case studies covered a range of organisational models drawn from a number of British cities and included Scottish 'New Life' Partnerships, Community Development Trusts, a Housing Action Trust and an Estate Management Board (case 6).
- One example of a local case study of a national initiative – Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs). SSLPs were introduced in 1999 to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. Parental involvement in the governance arrangements was expected, and programmes were also expected to implement other ways of engaging children, families and communities. Parents and carers have been involved in some aspect of the management in most programmes, and the majority of partnerships included parent representatives (case 8).
- An example of how reforms of school governance have really handed over power to minority parents based on primary research in Chicago with implications for UK policy (case 12).
- A study of how representative school governance bodies are in respect of different parent constituencies. It argues for greater democratic governance in schools (case 13).
- A study of the demographics of individuals involved in school governance, highlighting difficulties for groups such as black and minority ethnic communities and women (case 20)

Type 3 – Organisational proxy

The distinction between local representation and local knowledge doesn't exhaust the clusterings of factors revealed by the Boolean analysis. We have identified two further categories of citizen governance initiatives: organisational proxy; and semi-professional. Although this analysis identifies very few cases of Type 3 and 4 citizen governance, the categories themselves resonate with our knowledge of the wider evidence base, and the distinctions have potentially important policy implications.

'Organisational proxy' refers to a type of citizen governance in which voluntary or community sector (VCS) organisations act as a proxy for community members. Cases of this type are not, obviously, open to all, but they do have support mechanisms for representatives. In these cases, there is an impact in terms of individuals' skills and sense of efficacy, but no impact on the wider community. This points to the limitations of what Lowndes and Sullivan (2003) have called 'local corporatism' in which assumptions are made about the capacity of umbrella organisations to speak for citizens and empower communities. The presence of support mechanisms is in line with corporatist practice in which the capacity and legitimacy of supposedly 'representative organisations' is developed as a proxy for wider empowerment. Interestingly, the link to formal decision making does not appear as a significant factor, perhaps confirming the 'talking shop' critique sometimes directed at corporatist-style arrangements.

Cases falling into this category include urban and rural regeneration partnerships. As the wider literature indicates, VCS organisations are frequently asked to take up the role of ‘community representative’ on such partnerships. Sometimes they object themselves to being asked to articulate the views and priorities of the community as a whole. At the same time, such representatives are often dismissed as ‘the usual suspects’. This analysis links this type of citizen governance to areas of deprivation, where individual citizens may lack the skills (or willingness) to participate directly as representatives.

Specific examples taken from the evidence considered here include the role of the voluntary and community sector infrastructure in promoting and supporting community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships (case 14).

Type 4 – Semi-professional

In this type of citizen governance, individual community members are selected to serve on boards (or apply through a competitive process), on the basis of their personal knowledge and/or experience. Such individuals are ‘of the community’ rather than ‘for the community’. They may make an important contribution to governance but are perhaps better described as part of what John Stewart has called the ‘new magistracy’, rather than as ‘citizen representatives’ (1995).

Unsurprisingly, the case that falls into this category shows an impact on the individuals involved and on decision making itself, but does not link to the empowerment of the wider community. In this way Type 4 is similar to Type 3, although they differ in that Type 3 operates through organisational representatives and Type 4 through ‘freelance’ individuals. The scope for improving the link to community empowerment is likely to be greater with Type 3.

Looking at the cluster of factors, we see that this case is not open to all, there is no support for the representative, but there is a link to formal decision making, and evidence of political and bureaucratic buy-in.

Non-executive board members provide an example of this type of citizen governance. Representatives themselves have the opportunity to develop further their sense of efficacy and skills (indeed, these roles are a popular part of some ‘portfolio careers’). There may be no obvious need for support mechanisms because these citizen representatives already share many of the characteristics of the existing decision making elite (education, social skills, networks). The existence of political and bureaucratic buy-in also points to a ‘joint elite’ model of decision making.

Specific examples taken from the evidence considered here include non-executive members on boards in agencies such as City Challenge; Urban Development Corporations; Housing Action Trusts; Training and Enterprise Councils; Careers Service Pathfinders; District Health Authorities; and NHS Trusts (case 1).

Table 4.5: Types of citizen governance according to factors and cases

Type of citizen governance	Factors for empowerment	Cases	Policy sector
Local representation IDEAL TYPE	Participants: ABCE Open to all Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making Political and bureaucratic buy-in	9: Citizen involvement in LSP boards, UK 11: Community led housing association, UK 17: Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa 19: Faith communities in regeneration, Lewisham, UK	Local governance Regeneration/housing Local governance Regeneration/housing
	Communities: ABCdE Open to all Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making High resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	18: Faith communities in regeneration, UK	Regeneration/housing
	Decision: ABCE Open to all Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making Political and bureaucratic buy-in	9: Citizen involvement in LSP boards, UK 11: Community led housing association, UK 17: Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa	Local governance Regeneration/housing Regeneration/housing
	Decision: BCDE Support mechanisms Link to formal decision making Low resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	6: Estate regeneration partnerships, UK	Regeneration/housing
Local knowledge	Participants: aBD Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base	2: Community regeneration partnerships, Wales, UK 8: Parent involvement in SureStart, UK 12: School governors, US 13: School governors, UK 14: Rural regeneration partnerships, UK	Regeneration/housing Local governance Education Education Regeneration/housing
	Participants: bcDE No support mechanisms No link to formal decision making Low resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	6: Estate regeneration partnerships, UK 7: Governance of neighbourhood regeneration, UK	Regeneration/housing Regeneration/housing

Table 4.5 (cont'd): Types of citizen governance according to factors and cases

Type of citizen governance	Factors for empowerment	Cases	Policy sector
	Community: aBD Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base	5: Resident representatives on council estates, UK 12: School parent governors, US 13: School parent governors, UK	Regeneration/housing Education Education
	Decision: ADE Open to all Low resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	4: Local service partnerships, UK 9: Citizen involvement in LSP boards, UK 11: Community led housing association, UK 17: Community partnership grant programmes, South Africa 19: Faith communities in regeneration, Lewisham, UK 20: Under-represented groups in school governance, UK	Local governance Local governance Regeneration/housing Local governance Regeneration/housing Education
Organisational proxy	Participants: aBD Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base	14: Rural regeneration partnerships, UK	Regeneration/housing
	Decision: aBDe Not open to all Support mechanisms Low resource base No political and bureaucratic buy-in	14: Rural regeneration partnerships, UK 5: Resident representatives on council estates, UK	Regeneration/housing Regeneration/housing
Semi-professional	Participants: abCdE Not open to all No support mechanisms Link to formal decision making High resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	1: Non-Executive board members, UK	Health
	Decision: abCdE Not open to all No support mechanisms Link to formal decision making High resource base Political and bureaucratic buy-in	1: Non-Executive board members, UK	Health

4.6 Conclusions

Citizen governance is a mechanism with significant and wide reaching potential to empower citizens, communities and shape decision making. This report has emphasised three key features of citizen governance as a mechanism for empowerment. First, it is a form of civic activity that is flexible and relevant to a variety of policy settings; second, it involves a significant number of citizens vis-à-vis other forms of citizen participation; and third, by broadening understandings of representation, the more traditional structures of elected representation can be supported through citizen governance.

This synthesis has drawn on a wide evidence base together with specific and detailed analysis of cases of citizen governance. From this, we have identified four different types of citizen governance: local representation; local knowledge; organisational proxy; and semi-professional. All these types of citizen governance lead to empowerment in some form, whether for the representatives themselves, the wider community, or in terms of achieving citizen and community input to decision making. These different types of citizen governance are potentially relevant to different policy settings. They may also form different links in what Saward (2008) calls the 'chain of representation' that links citizens and policy-makers – through electoral and non-electoral mechanisms.

As a form of citizen governance, **local representation** aims at the direct representation of community interests. 'Local representation' has the potential to deliver all three types of empowerment: individual, community and decision making. This can be considered the 'ideal type' of citizen governance (**open to all, supported, linked to decision making, with political and bureaucratic buy-in**), leading to the empowerment of representatives themselves and the wider community, and able to shape decision making. Local representation appears to be effective as a form of empowerment both in areas of deprivation and in areas with a higher resource base. There are many examples of this 'ideal type' of citizen governance in contemporary governance, and many opportunities to develop and share good practice.

Local knowledge is another form of citizen governance that has widespread empowerment effects, impacting on participants, communities and decision making. Citizen governance of this type may have important distributional implications as it is particularly workable in socio-economically deprived areas and with participants drawing on a low resource base.

Here citizens provide input to decision making based on their views and expertise as local residents, members of the community or users of public services. The primary goal is better decision making. This type of citizen governance leads to the empowerment of individuals and communities, and has an impact on decision making. In these cases, there is **no formal link to decision making** (or the link is not relevant in driving empowerment); **support mechanisms** to facilitate meaningful engagement of citizens vary; and participants have a **low resource base** and/or are from an area of socio-

economic deprivation; political and bureaucratic buy-in is only important when there is a link to decision making.

‘Designing for local knowledge’ requires effective mechanisms for identifying individuals and groups that have a perspective on the policy issues at stake, and developing deliberation processes that are able to surface different perspectives and enable learning among participants – citizens, politicians and managers alike (Barnes et al 2008, 18).

There are potential difficulties with this form of citizen governance. As there is no formal link to decision making, citizens may feel their involvement is simply a means of legitimising existing decision making processes; or that their involvement is tokenistic, possibly leading to cynicism and disillusionment about the process. This ‘engagement fatigue’ is acknowledged in the wider evidence base, particularly in areas that have undergone repeated cycles of regeneration and government intervention. It is important therefore to emphasise the value of local knowledge to governance and the decision making process. This form of citizen governance may also be seen as an opportunity for capacity building, as part of a prior stage to local representation.

Organisational proxy and **semi-professional** are further forms of citizen governance. The typologising of these forms of citizen governance rests on the **closed** nature of initiatives, a **lack of support** for participants, yet a **link to formal decision making**. In the specific cases, participants were either voluntary or community organisations acting on behalf of citizens or ‘expert’ citizens selected on the basis of their existing knowledge and expertise of the issues involved. These types have less extensive empowerment effects and do not impact on the wider community. However, the quality of decision making about public services is likely to be improved through the contribution of individuals and organisations experienced in the particular issues at stake. Although our synthesis only identified a few cases within these categories, they are pertinent across many areas of public policy – and relevant to current debates about extending citizen representation in areas like education and criminal justice. Their limited empowerment effects need to be taken into account in order to avoid any confusion between initiatives of this sort and mechanisms closer to local representation and local knowledge.

Citizen governance provides a means of empowering not only representatives themselves but also, in particular forms, the wider community. It is widely used in different policy areas, and is particularly widespread as part of a response to ‘wicked’ issues like regeneration, educational achievement and healthy lifestyles. Citizen governance is an important ingredient in the empowerment mix, and serves to highlight the scope for effective representation beyond – but in conjunction with – traditional electoral forms.

Each form of citizen governance is associated with a specific set of challenges in terms of institutional design and policy development. **‘Local representation’** requires that attention is paid not just to the factors considered in this report, but also to the mechanisms for choosing

representatives and the means by which they can keep in touch with those they represent – so that they can be kept informed and also held to account. Citizen governance of the **'local knowledge'** type, requires effective mechanisms for identifying individuals and groups that have a perspective on the policy issues at stake, and then developing deliberation processes that are able to surface different perspectives and enable learning among participants – citizens, officers, politicians and other partners (e.g. from business). **'Organisational proxy'** and **'semi-professional'** modes of citizen governance are common in public services and, given their limited empowerment effects, should not be confused with mechanisms closer to 'local representation' and 'local knowledge'.

The typology is not a league table: it doesn't rank forms of citizen governance. Rather it allows us to think about 'fitness for purpose' within an empowerment strategy. The different types of citizen governance form important links in a 'chain of representation'.

This synthesis focuses on factors related to the 'internal' design of citizen governance initiatives. But policy-makers need also to think about 'external' links – the quality of the representational infrastructure that connects representatives with their constituencies. Attention needs to be paid to the mechanisms for choosing representatives (election or selection) and the means by which they can keep in touch with those they represent.

Local representation, whilst the 'ideal type' in terms of empowerment, can be particularly resource intensive, requiring capacity building not just among citizen representatives but also among officers and elected members who may be unused to working with citizen representatives or operating outside normal decision making conventions (Lowndes et al 2006b). This form of citizen governance may prove particularly provocative to elected members who can feel their democratic mandate threatened by non-elected representatives. Citizen representatives themselves face the challenge of maintaining the 'authenticity' of their perspective, as they become more embedded in public policy discourse and practice. The danger of co-option reflects what Saward (2008) calls the 'paradox of ordinariness'.

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Case sources and outlines: citizen governance

Case	Description
1	<p>Skelcher, C. and H. Davis (1995) 'Opening the boardroom door: the membership of local appointed bodies' <i>Local and Central Government Relations Research</i> Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Local Government Chronicle</p> <p><i>Research based on non-executive members on boards in eight types of agency City Challenge; Urban Development Corporations; Housing Action Trusts; Training and Enterprise Councils; Careers Service Pathfinders; District Health Authorities; and NHS Trusts.</i></p>
2	<p>Adamson, D. and B. Bromiley (2008) <i>Community empowerment in practice: lessons from Communities First</i> York, JRF</p> <p><i>Study based on Communities First programme in Wales as an example of an early attempt by Government to promote direct community involvement in a programme of regeneration policy and to influence change at a local level.</i></p>
3	<p>Rai, S. (2008) <i>Routes and barriers to citizen engagement</i> York, JRF</p> <p><i>The study explored the reasons for civic engagement, routes taken and the personal challenges faced by participants. It also examined views on governance leadership and barriers preventing wider involvement. The sample included 50 women of black and Asian backgrounds from Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Nearly all were active within formal and/or informal governance structures in the education, regeneration and health sectors.</i></p>
4	<p>Gregory, S. (1998) <i>Transforming local services: partnerships in action</i> York, JRF</p> <p><i>The study explored the attempts of service delivery partnerships to actively engage local residents and local authority staff in shaping services.</i></p>
5	<p>Power, A. and R. Tunstall (1995) <i>Swimming against the Tide: Progress or polarisation on 20 unpopular estates</i> York, JRF</p> <p><i>Each of the twenty estates included in this research were visited in 1982, 1988 and again in 1994 to establish what resident perceptions about the problems on and changes on the estates and how residents' representatives and staff felt about their involvement in estate management.</i></p>

6	<p>Hastings, A, A.McArthur and A. McGregor (1996) <i>Less than equal? Community organisations and estate regeneration partnerships</i> Bristol, Policy Press/JRF</p>
	<p><i>The research focused on ten estate regeneration partnerships which involved the local community. The case studies covered a range of organisational models drawn from a number of British cities and included Scottish 'New Life' Partnerships, Community Development Trusts, a Housing Action Trust and an Estate Management Board.</i></p>
7	<p>Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) <i>Social cohesion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods</i> York, JRF</p>
	<p><i>Four research projects in Teesside, London, Liverpool and Nottingham have studied the physical and social qualities of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the interaction between them. They considered the factors affecting social cohesion within neighbourhoods and how this might be strengthened through partnership working. They looked at what residents themselves felt about their neighbourhoods; the impact on the area of regeneration initiatives and how they had been involved in the regeneration.</i></p>
8	<p>Barnes, M., C. Skelcher, H. Beirens, R. Dalziel, S. Jeffares and L. Wilson (2008) <i>Designing citizen centred governance</i> York, JRF</p>
	<p><i>The report draws on four case studies of citizen governance to examine the different objectives of citizen governance and opportunities for shared useful practice.</i></p>
	<p><i>This example is a local case study of a national initiative. Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs) were introduced in 1999 to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. Parental involvement in the governance arrangements was expected, and programmes were also expected to implement other ways of engaging children, families and communities. Parents and carers have been involved in some aspect of the management in most programmes, and the majority of partnerships included parent representatives.</i></p>
9	<p>Barnes, M., C. Skelcher, H. Beirens, R. Dalziel, S. Jeffares and L. Wilson (2008) <i>Designing citizen centred governance</i> York, JRF</p>
	<p><i>A local strategic partnership (LSP) is a non-statutory multi-agency body coterminous with a local authority boundary. The aim of the LSP is to bring together at the local level different public, private, and voluntary and community sector organisations.</i></p>

10	<p>Barnes, M., C. Skelcher, H. Beirens, R. Dalziel, S. Jeffares and L. Wilson (2008) <i>Designing citizen centred governance</i> York, JRF</p> <p><i>The governance design of NHS foundation trusts was intended to strengthen local accountability for health services and provide an alternative to centralised ministerial control. A foundation trust is a new form of public organisation called a 'public benefit corporation'. It is based on a traditional NHS board arrangement to which is grafted a membership structure. The membership arrangements were inspired by those used in the co-operative movement and by mutual societies (Department of Health, 2002), and are intended to enable local people, patients and other stakeholders to be represented in decision making and accountability.</i></p>
11	<p>Barnes, M., C. Skelcher, H. Beirens, R. Dalziel, S. Jeffares and L. Wilson (2008) <i>Designing citizen centred governance</i> York, JRF</p> <p><i>The study provides an example of a housing stock transfer from a local authority to a new social housing organisation – the Community Housing Association. All residents in the area became members of the Community Housing Association.</i></p>
12	<p>Blackledge, A. (1995) 'Minority parents as school governors in Chicago and Britain: Empowerment or not?' <i>Educational Review</i>, Vol 47, No 3, p 309ff</p> <p><i>This study looks at whether reforms of school governance have really handed over power to minority parents. It is based on primary research in Chicago, and implications for UK policy are drawn.</i></p>
13	<p>Ranson, S. Et al (2005) 'The participation of volunteer citizens in school governance', <i>Educational Review</i>, Vol 57, No 3, pp 357–370</p> <p><i>This study considers how representative school governance bodies are in respect of different parent constituencies. It argues for greater democratic governance in schools.</i></p>
14	<p>Osborne, S. Et al (2006) 'The impact of local voluntary and community sector infrastructure on community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships', <i>Public Money and Management</i></p> <p><i>This study reviews the role of voluntary and community sector infrastructure in promoting and supporting community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships.</i></p>

15	<p>Barnes, M. (2002) 'Bringing difference into deliberation? Disabled people, survivors and local governance' <i>Policy and Politics</i> 30(3), 319–331</p>
	<p>Barnes, M. (1999) 'Users as citizens: collective action and the local governance of welfare' <i>Social Policy and Administration</i> 33(1), 73–90</p>
	<p><i>Looks at disabled groups and the tensions of their own self-organisation and 'top down' user involvement initiatives introduced by the government from the mid 1990s. The former have asserted the importance of their own experiential knowledge and its value to developing partnerships in welfare.</i></p>
16	<p>Greig, S., N. Parry and B. Rimmington 'Promoting sustainable regeneration: learning from a case study in participatory HIA' <i>Environmental Impact Assessment Review</i> 24, 255–267</p>
	<p><i>The study focuses on an example of a participatory form of health impact assessment on determining priorities for economic regeneration in a deprived area of Sheffield.</i></p>
17	<p>Adams, C.E., M.E. Bell and T. Brown (2002) 'Building civic infrastructure: implementing community partnerships grant programmes in South Africa' <i>Public Administration and Development</i> 22, 293–302</p>
	<p><i>This research looks at examples of involving the community as a partner in developing local grant programmes.</i></p>
18	<p>Furbey, R., A. Dinham, R. Farnell, D. Finneron and G. Wilkinson with C. Howarth, D. Hussain and S. Palmer (2006) 'Faith as social capital: Connecting or dividing?' JRF/The Policy Press</p>
	<p><i>Research looking at the potential contribution of varied faith communities – Christian, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish – to urban regeneration in case studies from the North West, West Midlands, London and Yorkshire.</i></p>
19	<p>Furbey, R., A. Dinham, R. Farnell, D. Finneron and G. Wilkinson with C. Howarth, D. Hussain and S. Palmer (2006) 'Faith as social capital: Connecting or dividing?' JRF/The Policy Press</p>
	<p><i>Research looks at an example of a specific locality's attempt to involve faith communities in partnerships around urban regeneration.</i></p>
20	<p>Furbey, R. and M, Macey (2005) Religion and urban regeneration: a place for faith? <i>Policy and Politics</i> 33(1), 95–116</p>
	<p><i>Research looks at an example of a specific locality's attempt to involve faith communities in partnerships around urban regeneration.</i></p>

5. E-participation

5.1 Electronic participation – e-forums and e-petitions: a definition

The term 'electronic participation' (or e-participation) captures a wide range of different devices through which citizens might engage with government. Indeed, most forms of offline political engagement have been replicated online, while new forms of engagement, especially through social networking technologies, have also been pioneered. The Council of Europe's ad-hoc Committee on e-Democracy (CAHDE), for example, identifies nearly 30 different types of generic online devices currently in use across its member states (2008) which could be used for democratic purposes.

The concepts of e-democracy and e-participation have captured the interest of both policy makers and academics. There has been a wide range of policy led experiments and an equally diverse range of studies to complement them. In England, the local e-democracy national project invested £4.5 million in developing a range of e-tools and techniques to support e-democracy, conducted a number of pilot implementations and generally raised the profile of such initiatives within communities. More recently, the European Union and the Council of Europe have both developed programmes of research and experimentation in supporting the take-up of e-participation devices. In practical terms, therefore, 'e-democracy has transitioned from speculative futurology to piecemeal experimentation and embryonic policy' (Coleman and Norris 2005, p 70).

From the outset it is important to distinguish the broader concept of e-democracy from the more specific study of e-participation devices. While there is clearly an overlap between them, e-democracy is generally taken to involve all technology based devices which might be deployed in the functioning of democracy; from the activities of politicians and parliaments to grass-roots activity within communities and from e-voting through to online campaigning through social networking sites (Chadwick 2006). In contrast, the term e-participation is normally used to refer to a narrower set of devices which facilitate the direct engagement of citizens in the policies and decisions of government bodies, whether at the central or local level. Rather than cover the full range of devices that might be included in this category, this synthesis focuses on the two forms of e-participation that have received the most academic and policy attention in recent years; e-forums and e-petitioning.

e-Forums, also known as online discussion forums, are online spaces where individuals can engage in some form of dialogue through threaded discussions that can take place at different times (a-synchronously) and across a range of issues. Individuals post their thoughts and reflections

in response to previous threads, although they do not have to be online at the same time. The claims of e-forums for participation are significant. First, they are often deemed to be able to create greater opportunities for deliberation in the 'public sphere' (Dahlberg 2001). Second, e-forums 'can facilitate large-scale discussion of the kind often considered unrealistic' (Wright 2006, p550). At the same time, however, e-forums are also criticised for comprising mainly of 'titillation, gossip and slander, superficial banter and other kinds of lowest-common-denominator exchange' (Dahlberg 2001, p618), for encouraging flaming (the activity of being overtly and aggressively antagonistic towards previous posts) and for being dominated by a just a few individuals. As a mechanism for empowerment, therefore, they hold great promise through their reach and potential for deliberation but, also, significant limitations in terms of the way they may be used.

e-Petitions provide the opportunity for citizens to petition their governments through an online facility, normally hosted by the government itself. Citizens can normally raise their own petition on the system or add their names to existing petitions. In the most advanced cases (for example, the Estonian national system, TOM, discussed in more detail later), the e-petition system has a formal set of rules on how long a petition is open for, whether individuals have to be registered on the system to raise a petition or to add their name to a list, whether there is any moderation of petitions, and how the government is expected to receive and respond to them. In contrast to e-forums, e-petitions have the potential for community empowerment because they offer a low-cost (especially in terms of an individual's time) and widely accessible method through which citizens can seek to influence decision-makers. However, where they focus on trivial requests, or petition governments on issues over which they have only limited ability to take action, they may also have negative effects on empowerment.

Those who advocate e-participation make a number of claims about its advantages:

- *It offers more opportunities for participation* – because they are not anchored in time or place, e-participation mechanisms mean that people can engage as and when they want, without being bound by conventional meeting places and times. This advantage is especially important among communities that are geographically distant or have significant pressures on time.
- *It allows for a greater range of participants* – because gender, ethnicity, age and so on are not immediately apparent in an online environment, participation is relatively easy, especially for groups that are traditionally excluded from political engagement. It is more inclusive, therefore, than offline mechanisms.
- *It increases the number of potential participants* – because they are not constrained by physical parameters, online engagement has no barriers to the number of people who can participate. Mechanisms, therefore, can allow whole communities to engage if they so desire.

- *It facilitates 'better' participation* – because new technologies allow participation to be linked to a whole range of information resources, the quality of engagement can be much higher than in more traditional spheres.

These claims have led to a number of counter-hypotheses around the negative effects of new technologies. Such counter-hypotheses include concerns that e-participation creates 'thinner' forms of engagement because people engage with a wider range of issues but give less attention to all of them; and concerns that the 'digital divide', in which access and use of the internet is skewed towards younger and more affluent socio-economic groups, will perpetuate forms of social exclusion rather than overcome them.

What is missing from existing accounts, however, is the understanding of how such advantages and problems affect the empowerment of individuals or communities, or how it leads to greater community influence over decision-makers. At the core of this analysis, therefore, is the question of how and whether different online mechanisms really do empower communities to influence decision making by looking at the impact of e-forums and e-petitions on the individuals involved, wider communities and final decision making. We also seek to establish which factors need to be present, in which combinations, to achieve these outcomes.

5.2 Evidence base

While there is extensive academic literature on this topic, the case based evidence is actually quite limited. Much of the literature focuses on exploring particular normative accounts of deliberative or representative forms of democracy, tends to be highly descriptive in relation to its handling of particular cases and is 'boosterist' in relation to e-democracy's potential more generally. Moreover, there are only a limited number of examples of the internet being used for policy deliberation, and these are often experimental in nature. Despite the boosterist nature of the claims, take up of the devices is often quite small, with only a limited number of people registering, contributing or even 'lurking' in e-forums while, beyond highly publicised successes, e-petitions have not been actively used by citizens.

The biggest problem with the literature, however, is that much of it is not concerned directly with seeking to understand or evaluate the impact of devices on empowerment. Research on e-Forums, in particular, focuses on the more direct questions of the type and quality of the deliberation taking place, and the effect of such features as moderation of discussion. There are only a limited number of cases where the wider issues of community empowerment can be identified.

In relation to e-petitions, academic evaluation is even more limited, and there are even fewer cases to examine. This synthesis, therefore, draws upon grey literature to fill the gaps in the academic cases.

The absence of a large number of high quality cases has meant that the focus has been on selecting a range that covers the different types of initiative. The synthesis, therefore, compares government sponsored initiatives with those that are more bottom-up but nonetheless focused on influencing public decisions. Where possible, we have also sought to compare UK experience with that from elsewhere in the world. In terms of outcomes, we have also included three cases which, on the surface, would appear to have characteristics in common with most e-forums but which, in practice, failed to deliver any empowerment. Consequently, we offer negative evidence on empowerment as well as positive. Alongside positive experiences of empowerment, this evidence may have important lessons by exploring those factors that might militate against empowerment in the online world. For full references, see case sources and outlines section at the end of this chapter.

5.3 Findings

In the 'truth table', each factor is coded either as 0 (where the factor is absent in the case) or 1 (where the factor is present). For further detail on the coding of factors, see Appendix 3. Findings for each factor are discussed below.

Table 5.1: Boolean 'truth table': all cases coded against all factors – e-participation (– = no data available for this factor)

Case	Descriptor	Short name	Influencing Factors						Outcome Factors		
			Government sponsored	Moderation	Links to decision making	Political 'buy-in'	Bureaucratic 'buy-in'	Salient	Impact on participants	Impact on community	Impact on decision making
1	Downing street policy forum	No 10 forum	1	1	0	–	–	1	1	0	0
2	Citizen space e-dem forum	Hansard forum	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
3	Young people go online ePal	epal	1	1	0	–	–	0	0	0	0
4	Thai women online	siamWEB	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
5	Minnesota e-democracy	Minnesota	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
6	City planning game Tampere	Tampere	1	0	1	–	1	1	0	0	1
7	New housing Esslingen	Esslingen	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
8	Paris 3rd airport forum	Paris	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
9	Guildford forum	Guildford	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
10	Denmark official site	Nordopol	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
11	Denmark politik	Politik	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
12	Citizenspace UK	Citizenspace	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
13	Communications Bill forum	Commbill	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
14	The future of Europe debate	Futurum	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
15	Hamburg DEMOS debate	Hamburg	0	1	1	–	–	1	1	1	1
16	French municipal forums	France	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
17	Tampere Citizens web	Citweb	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
18	Estonia Today I Decide	Estonia TOM	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
19	Bristol e-petition	Bristol	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
20	Ask Bristol forum	Ask Bristol	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0

5.3.1 Findings: influencing factors

a. Government sponsored

This factor reflects whether the initiative is 'owned' by a government body, or is a more grass-roots community-led initiative. In most instances the distinction is between where the e-forum or e-petition was hosted (for example, on a '.gov' website). However, there are some instances where the initiative has been hosted or run by another body on behalf of a government. For example, the 'Young People Go Online' initiative (case 3) was a 'government sponsored pilot website for the Greater Manchester area, funded by a scheme called *Venture Capital for the Public Sector* as part of

the UK-wide Connexions project' (Livingstone 2007, p168). In this instance, it has been coded as being government 'owned' despite its website address being www.epal.tv.

Of the 20 cases considered, 14 are 'owned' by an official government body or politician, and 6 are based within a community. This distinction is potentially important to the empowerment analysis because the type of ownership is often deemed to matter in the study of e-forums. Dunne's analysis of 148 local forums across the world, for example, concludes that government run discussions are rarely successful and are unlikely to trigger effective deliberation. In contrast, some community 'owned' forums can host effective deliberation that at least meets the criteria of some 'cross-cutting discussion' even if it does not live up to Habermas' ideals of the perfect public sphere (Dunne 2008). Such conclusions raise questions over whether government 'owned' forums can promote individual or community level empowerment.

b. Moderation of content

Moderation of content is a major concern in the discussion of e-forums although it is also relevant in relation to other devices, such as e-petitions. The argument runs in two directions. On the one hand, 'moderation is generally considered to be significant (and positive) in shaping the quality and usefulness of online debates' (Wright 2006, p551), helping to avoid offensive, antagonistic or aggressive behaviour online. It can also help to channel debates, thereby improving the quality of deliberation. On the other hand, moderation can also be seen as a form of censorship, inhibiting free speech and manipulating the agenda to ensure that only some issues are open to discussion. Wojcik for example, in her analysis of French municipal forums (case 16), describes e-forums as 'subjugated spaces' to indicate the impact of moderation and control often on behalf of the authorities initiating the forum; this control occurs in the sense of both setting the agenda for the forum and organising the exchanges (Wojcik 2007). As a design feature, therefore, moderation might be expected to have a significant effect on the capacity of e-forums and e-petitions to empower communities.

Of the 20 cases, only four do not have an explicit form of moderation built in (cases 4, 6, 11 and 17). Interestingly, while three of these cases are non-government sites; one non-moderated site is also government hosted (the City Planning Game in Tampere, Finland). Equally, there are three examples of non-government 'owned' sites which are nonetheless moderated. The ownership of the site, therefore, is not always an indicator of the extent of moderation involved.

Because of the binary nature of the truth table, it cannot show the nature or extent of moderation. In the case of the Downing Street policy forum (case 1), for example, moderation was supposedly directed at preventing foul or abusive language but crept over into addressing criticisms of the government from time to time (Wright 2006). In other examples, however, the moderation is a more active form of mediation, seeking to shape and build discussion. The truth table, therefore, only offers a blunt interpretation

of what, in the literature, is often seen as a much more sophisticated and nuanced process (Edwards 2002).

c. Links to formal decision making

This factor focuses on the extent to which the device is linked to formal decision making. Surprisingly, the mix is quite eclectic. At one extreme, some forms of e-petition have very explicit links to formal decision making. Estonia's Today I Decide system (case 18), for example, requires an official government response within a set number of days to each completed online petition. Bristol's e-petition system (case 19), although having formal links to the Council's decision making mechanisms, appears to have a much lower level of responsiveness.

Among e-forums, the direct links to decision making are also present in some instances. The German examples of Esslingen (case 7) and Hamburg (case 15) were both designed to facilitate citizen input to policy developments. However, in many 'officially owned' forums, the links to decision making are tenuous. In 13 of the cases it is unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or there is clearly a low impact on decision-makers, including eight of the government sponsored initiatives. Not surprisingly, non-government sponsored initiatives generally have few direct links to decision making.

One obvious criticism of e-forums, therefore, is that many of the initiatives are more a means of allowing participants to air their views, or to legitimate policy decisions by giving the appearance of engagement, rather than offering a direct influence on decisions. A more positive conclusion, however, might stress the broader experiential learning and knowledge transfer that is implicit in many forums. What is not clear from any existing studies is whether there is any spill-over from online activity to other forms of participation and engagement.

d. Political 'buy-in'

This factor is interested in whether the initiative has widespread (and cross-party where relevant) political support. For example, do politicians take part in online forums or, sometimes, initiate or support e-petitions or, in contrast, are they largely ambivalent to online activities or even openly hostile towards them? Much of the literature suggests that politicians are among the hardest to engage in online participation (Pratchett, Karakaya-Polat et al., 2006). The cases replicate this observation in many instances; only eight suggest there is political 'buy-in' while nine offer, at least some indication, that politicians are resistant, or opposed, to the use of the technology for this purpose.

e. Bureaucratic 'buy-in'

Bureaucratic 'buy-in' works in much the same way as political 'buy-in'. However, it is important to distinguish the technical sponsors of e-participation initiatives, many of whom have a vested interest in promoting it, from those with responsibility for specific services or policies. Bureaucratic 'buy-in', in this context, refers to this latter group of public servants who are

involved in the delivery of services or shaping policy; it is taken as given that there is technical 'buy-in', especially where the forum or petition is 'owned' by a government organisation.

As with politicians, the split between support on the one hand, and ambivalence or opposition on the other, is divided evenly; nine on either side. Of greater interest, however, is the observation that the two are not coterminous and do not always overlap. There are four cases where there is evidence of bureaucratic 'buy-in' despite no clear evidence of political support (4, 6, 8 and 16), including both of the French cases. Similarly, there are two cases where there is political 'buy-in' but no clear bureaucratic support (cases 13 and 14). This observation suggests that different forums have very distinct political or bureaucratic relevance.

f. Highly salient issue

The ability of online mechanisms to facilitate engagement with salient issues is clearly of relevance. In most of the cases (16 in total), the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern or importance to the community. Such a finding is not surprising, especially given the boosterist nature of much of the literature. Perhaps of more interest, however, are the four that don't focus on salient issues. The Guildford forum (case 9), for example, lacked salience at first due to resistance from officers in the council. However, even when more salient issues such as levels of Council Tax were added, the forum had little success in attracting engagement. The saliency of the issue, therefore, may be important but is not the only defining factor in influencing empowerment.

5.3.2 Findings: outcome factors

The literature around e-participation broadly neglects discussion of impact, preferring instead to focus on process. This neglect reflects, at least in part, the difficulties in ascertaining impact, especially in relation to online devices. However, it may also acknowledge the limited impact of such mechanisms. For example, in three cases (3, 9, 12), there is no empowerment success evident, despite the presence of many of the influencing factors. This section considers each of the three outcome factors in turn.

g. Recognisable impact on individuals

This factor refers to the recognisable impact on participants who are engaged through e-forums or e-petitions. It includes impact on participants' internal sense of political efficacy – their confidence or feeling that they could have an influence on collective actions if they chose to do so. Impact also includes the development of skills (e.g. articulating a point of view, weighing up competing views, negotiating, adapting their perspectives and, being able to reflect critically on their contributions), and improved understanding of the political process and the issues under consideration.

Of the 20 cases, 16 could be seen to have some positive impact upon individuals in terms of empowerment. These include¹:

1	<i>A case study of Downing Street's Speaker's Corner and Policy Forum, a British central government online discussion forum.</i>
2	<i>A case study of Citizen Space's E-Democracy Forum, a British central government online discussion forum.</i>
4	<i>An online network of Thai women from across the world debating issues of concern to their identity.</i>
5	<i>One of the longest standing online communities in Minnesota which has developed over two decades into a range of forums.</i>
6	<i>Case study of an experimental interactive web-based city planning game in Tampere, Finland which aims to allow citizens to influence planning schemes and decisions.</i>
8	<i>A forum established specifically to debate the siting and consequences of a third international airport in Paris.</i>
10	<i>A case study of a county-government sponsored initiative in Northern Denmark aiming at creating a democratic dialogue via the internet.</i>
11	<i>A case study dk.politik, one of Denmark's most established Usenet group forums for online political discussions.</i>
13	<i>Forum established specifically to debate the clauses of the communications bill involving both politicians and citizens.</i>
14	<i>A case study of 'Futurum', the online discussion forum linked to the Convention on the Future of Europe.</i>
15	<i>A case study of an online deliberation in Hamburg as part of the DEMOS project.</i>
16	<i>A study of thirty French local authorities and the discussion forums hosted on their websites.</i>
17	<i>Exploration of a deliberative forum in Tampere, Finland.</i>
18	<i>A case study of the 'Today I Decide' (TOM) initiative in Estonia, where online petitions were developed as means of influencing decision making.</i>
19	<i>e-Petitioning system for Bristol established through funding from the Local e-Democracy National Project.</i>
20	<i>Online forum in Bristol established through funding from the Local e-Democracy National Project.</i>

¹ For full reference details see Appendix 1

h. Recognisable impact on the wider community

This factor refers to change in the sense that, at the aggregate level, members of the community could have an influence on the well-being of the wider community. It relates also to the expansion of social capital – an increase in associational activity, the density of social networks, or an increase in trust between different social groups. It questions, therefore, the extent to which there is a spill-over effect from the specific participants in the process to a wider sense of empowerment within communities.

The evidence is more limited in this context; only five cases could be seen to have this type of effect:

4	<i>An online network of Thai women from across the world debating issues of concern to their identity.</i>
5	<i>One of the longest standing online communities in Minnesota which has developed over two decades into a range of forums.</i>
11	<i>A case study dk.politik, one of Denmark's most established Usenet group forums for online political discussions.</i>
15	<i>A case study of an online deliberation in Hamburg as part of the DEMOS project.</i>
17	<i>Exploration of a deliberative forum in Tampere, Finland.</i>

This finding perhaps reflects the individualistic effect of engaging through new technologies more generally and has significant implications, therefore, for how online forms of engagement should be sequenced with offline activities to effect community empowerment.

i. Recognisable impact on decision making

This factor refers to the impact of e-forums and e-petitions on decision making about public services and public policy. Given general experience of e-participation initiatives, it is not surprising to note that only six of the cases analysed had a clear impact upon decision making:

2	<i>A case study of Citizen Space's E-Democracy Forum, a British central government online discussion forum.</i>
7	<i>Case study of a web-based interactive discussion of local environmental and planning issues in Esslingen, Germany aiming to detract criticism of housing plans and strategies.</i>
10	<i>A case study of a county-government sponsored initiative in Northern Denmark aiming at creating a democratic dialogue via the internet.</i>
13	<i>Forum established specifically to debate the clauses of the communications bill involving both politicians and citizens.</i>
15	<i>A case study of an online deliberation in Hamburg as part of the DEMOS project.</i>
18	<i>A case study of the 'Today I Decide' (TOM) initiative in Estonia, where online petitions were developed as means of influencing decision making.</i>

In the case of e-forums this finding is not necessarily a problem; the aims of many are to create a more general environment for discussion and reflection, rather than to establish direct links into decision making, although five do seem to have facilitated that process as well (cases 2, 6, 10, 13 and 15). In these cases the forum had been constructed explicitly to support decision makers. The Communications Bill forum (case 13), for example, was designed to allow citizens to interact with politicians in negotiating its passage through Parliament. In the case of e-petitions, there is a clear expectation that the device should have some impact upon decisions. It is notable, therefore, that the Bristol e-petition (case 19) did not have any evidence of such effects.

5.4 Analysis

Qualitative computerised analysis (QCA) allows for the systematic analysis of the relationship between 'influencing factors' and different empowerment outcomes. The analysis identifies different combinations of factors that act together to produce a specific outcome (combinations may include the absence of a particular factor). The key point about this type of analysis is that it does not reveal just one pattern as being most successful but, rather, indicates different combinations of influencing factors which, when combined in particular ways, can lead to empowerment.

Where a factor is present, the letter code is presented in upper case; where it is absent, it is presented in lower case. For the Boolean analysis, the absence of the influencing factor is as important as its presence (for example, the presence or absence of moderation in an e-forum). It is the way that presence and absence is combined that matters. The detailed analysis is presented in the technical annex.

5.4.1 *Impact on individuals (skills, personal efficacy)*

The capacity for e-forums and e-petitions to positively influence individual skills and sense of personal efficacy appears to be good. Indeed, there are significantly more examples of e-forums empowering participants than examples of empowering either communities or decision making.

Table 5.2: Factors that drive empowerment (individuals)¹

Factors ²	Summary	Cases	Type of e-participation
BCF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – clear statement of how the initiative will be used by decision-makers – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Esslingen 8. Paris 13. Commbill 15. Hamburg 18. Estonia TOM 19. Bristol e-petition 	Controlled link to decision making
ABc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the forum, petition, blog etc is hosted (i.e. owned) by an official body or elected politician – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No. 10 Forum 10. Nordopol 14. Futurum 16. France 20. Ask Bristol 	Legitimizing
BcDEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers – the initiative has widespread (and cross-party where relevant) political support – the initiative has widespread bureaucratic support beyond the technology department – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Citizen space 	Legitimizing
abcEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hosted/run by an individual or community group, or commercial interest – issues and content are generated by citizen-users, with no or only very limited intervention from sponsors (e.g. to avoid libel charges etc) – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers – the initiative has widespread bureaucratic support beyond the technology department – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. siamWEB 6. Tampere 	Outsider constructive
acdeF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hosted/run by an individual or community group, or commercial interest – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers – indication that politicians are resistant or opposed to the use of the technology for this purpose – evidence of bureaucratic resistance – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Minnesota 11. Politik 	Outsider critical

¹ Denmark official site (DV=1) is not reported because it has the same IV pattern as The future of Europe debate (DV=0). Estonia Today I Decide (DV=1) is not reported because it has the same IV pattern as Bristol E-petition (DV=0).

² Upper case denotes necessary presence of a factor; lower case necessary absence of a factor.

The Boolean analysis reveals five different patterns, two of which capture a number of different cases at the same time. Two influencing factors stand out as being significant.

First, moderation seems to be important to individual empowerment; it features as a factor in three of the five patterns and covers 12 of the 16 successful cases. This finding fits with the broader literature on e-forums in so far as moderation is seen to improve the quality of discussion and, supposedly, deliberation within such environments. However, it is also necessary to make a conceptual connection from moderated discussion or, even, deliberation on the one hand, and empowerment on the other. The most likely explanation for this connection is that where genuine discussion (as opposed to ranting, flaming and so on) takes place, participants are more likely to feel happy with their contribution and to have some sense of how they have influenced its development. More reflective individuals may also have some sense of what and how they have learned from the process. Moderation, especially where it proactively shapes a free discussion and inhibits abusive or aggressive contributions, appears to have a positive effect on the empowerment of individuals. However, as the fourth pattern in the Boolean analysis shows, the absence of moderation can also lead to successful empowerment. Moderation, therefore, must be seen as an important but not essential condition for the empowerment of individuals.

Second, the presence of a highly salient issue is also important. Four of the five patterns highlight saliency. To some extent, this finding is not surprising, as salient issues can be expected to lead to a generally more interesting and lively discussion than arcane or irrelevant ones. Nevertheless, the finding is also important in so far as it recognises that individuals seek to debate important issues online.

A more surprising finding is that the nature of 'ownership' appears to be less important than might have been expected. Individual empowerment takes place in both government 'owned' and community generated forums, and in some of the patterns it is not important at all. In addition, political and bureaucratic 'buy-in' to the initiative do not appear to have a significant effect in most cases. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that what takes place on an e-forum is more important in shaping individual empowerment than the way it is linked into particular formal organisations or individuals.

5.4.2 Impact on communities (social capital, collective efficacy)

Forms of e-participation appear to be less successful in terms of the spill-over from individual empowerment to enhancing social capital or collective efficacy.

Table 5.3: Factors that drive empowerment: communities			
Factors¹	Summary	Cases	Type of e-participation
BCF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – clear statement of how the initiative will be used by decision-makers – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Esslingen 8. Paris 13. Commbill 15. Hamburg 18. Estonia TOM 19. Bristol 	Controlled link to decision making
abcEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hosted/run by an individual or community group, or commercial interest – issues and content are generated by citizen-users, with no or only very limited intervention from sponsors (e.g. to avoid libel charges etc) – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers – the initiative has widespread bureaucratic support beyond the technology department – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. siamWEB 6. Tampere 	Outsider constructive
acdeF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hosted/run by an individual or community group, or commercial interest – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers – Indication that politicians are resistant or opposed to the use of the technology for this purpose – evidence of bureaucratic resistance – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Minnesota 11. Politik 	Outsider critical

¹ Upper case denotes necessary presence of a factor; lower case necessary absence of a factor

To start with, only a limited number of cases support this type of empowerment (10 cases in total). Furthermore, only three patterns deliver this type of empowerment. Of those, the combination of moderated content; a link to decision making and a concern with salient issues (BCF) is the dominant pattern, involving six of the ten cases that support community empowerment. Moderation, clear links to decision making and the discussion of highly salient issues, therefore, appear to be the most significant combination for delivering broader community empowerment

It is also notable that government 'owned' initiatives do not feature as a positive factor in influencing community empowerment. Two of the three patterns require ownership to be outside of government control, while the third (dominant pattern) does not see it as relevant. This finding suggests that governments can do little to promote wider community empowerment

if they seek to run their own forums. To effect this type of outcome governments would need to find ways of supporting more grass-roots types of online activity.

Finally, the salience of the issue stands out as not only a sufficient but also a necessary condition for broader community empowerment, as it features in all three of the patterns. Forums or petitions need to be addressing an important issue to deliver the spill-over effects into social capital and collective efficacy.

5.4.3 Impact on decision making

The impact of e-forums and e-petitions on decision making presents a much more mixed pattern from the Boolean analysis.

Table 5.4: Factors that drive empowerment (decisions)			
Factors¹	Summary	Cases	Type
BCeF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – clear statement of how the initiative will be used by decision-makers – evidence of bureaucratic resistance – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	13. Commbill 15. Hamburg	Undermined by bureaucracy
aBCF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hosted/run by an individual or community group, or commercial interest – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – clear statement of how the initiative will be used by decision-makers – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	15. Hamburg	Controlled link to decision making
BcDEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the owner – unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision-makers – the initiative has widespread (and cross-party where relevant) political support – the initiative has widespread bureaucratic support beyond the technology department – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	12. Citizen space	Legitimizing
AbCEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the forum, petition, blog etc is hosted (i.e. owned) by an official body or elected politician – issues and content are generated by citizen-users, with no or only very ltd intervention from sponsors (e.g. to avoid libel charges etc) – clear statement of how the initiative will be used by decision-makers – the initiative has widespread bureaucratic support beyond the technology department – the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 	6. Tampere	Democratic decision making

¹ Upper case denotes necessary presence of a factor; lower case necessary absence of a factor

Four different combinations of factors emerge but none of them dominate. This outcome is partly because so few of the case studies have a clear and effective impact on decision making, as discussed in the section above. However, there are still a few factors that stand out as important.

Not surprisingly, clear links to decision-makers emerges as a common thread in most of the patterns. Moderation is also key to most of the initiatives. Once again, however, it is the salience of the issue which emerges as not only a sufficient but also a necessary condition for e-forums and e-petitions to have an effect on decision making. It seems that e-participation initiatives are effective ways of mobilising some citizens and do have an effect upon important decisions.

5.5 Conclusions

The links between e-participation and community empowerment are surprisingly weak. Despite a growing interest in electronic forms of participation and, indeed, electronic democracy, the ways in which the wide range of devices actually empower individuals or communities, and the extent to which they have a direct influence on decision making, is often ignored. Although there is a large literature on the topic of e-participation and e-democracy, the actual evidence base on which to understand this topic is quite limited.

This report, therefore, addresses an important gap in the literature. While most studies have tended to focus on process aspects, our attention on empowerment outcomes enables us to examine the relevance of these processes and devices to different aspects of empowerment. In combining and comparing cases through the Boolean approach, therefore, we are able to offer new insights into e-participation. We focus here on four broad conclusions which come from our focus on e-forums and e-petitions.

First, **e-participation is most successful in relation to the empowerment of individuals** and is notably less effective in empowering the wider community. Of our 20 cases, 16 had a positive impact upon individuals, seemingly increasing their confidence, contacts or specialist knowledge in relation to particular policies and, therefore, enhancing their perception that they can influence their local place and services. In contrast, only five cases supported wider community empowerment in terms of enhancing social capital or improving collective engagement.

How might this distinction in empowerment outcomes be explained? One explanation is the individualistic nature of participation in online environments. Most participants will be sat at isolated computers in their bedrooms, dining rooms and so on, creating a sense of individual engagement rather than collective participation. There is no sense in the online world of geographic proximity to other contributors to a forum or petition. Indeed, contributors may, literally, be continents apart. Moreover, the asynchronous nature of e-forums which is deemed a major benefit in

many contexts (because it facilitates participation at any time of the day or night) may also heighten this sense of isolation because there is often no immediate feedback to a contribution; responses may take hours or even days to emerge. The apparent anonymity of online forums also plays a part here. On the one hand, such anonymity breaks down typical stereotypes and prejudices based around gender, age or race, because they are often not apparent. Discussion can be liberated from any preconceptions or assumptions about an individual's background or biases. On the other hand, this anonymity makes it hard to seek out people whom we might consider to be similar to ourselves and with whom, therefore, we might assume some common ground.

All of these factors combine to create a much more individualistic form of engagement. Interestingly, however, such individualism does appear to enhance a person's sense of political efficacy. Especially where there is effective moderation of discussions, individuals seem to gain positive feedback from participation. A stronger focus on online forms of participation, therefore, is likely to yield greater levels of individual empowerment but, the diversion of resources this may lead to could possibly mean this increased individual empowerment is at the expense of developing mechanisms that may lead to wider community empowerment.

Second, **e-forums and, even, e-petitions, have only a very limited impact upon decision-makers.** The link between individual empowerment, especially in terms of internal political efficacy, and a direct impact upon decision making, seems to be largely unimportant in the online world. Only 6 of our 20 cases appear to have had a direct impact upon decision making, and the majority of those have occurred because that influence has been explicitly built in to the design of the initiative.

This general absence of impact upon decision making can, perhaps, be best explained by reference to the way in which most online participation works and the reasons why individuals engage with e-forums. The attention which the existing literature gives to deliberation is arguably over-stated, especially given the findings of many that such deliberation is hard to find on most e-forums. Moreover, the common observation that most forums tend to be dominated by a few active posters casts further doubt on their deliberative nature. Nevertheless, e-forums and e-petitions do provide opportunities for individuals to air their views on a diverse range of issues that they feel are important. For many, it is the activity of posting their views, rather than the assumption that they will have some influence on decision-makers, that is the motivating factor for participation. This argument also helps to explain the predominance of so-called 'lurkers' (individuals who read contributions but do not make any posts themselves) on many e-forums. Indeed, lurkers are thought to comprise the majority on most e-forums. If e-forums are seen as arenas in which views can be aired and competing perspectives viewed and understood, rather than direct attempts to influence policy makers, then it is not surprising that they have little impact on decision making. Indeed, this separation from decision making may well be a virtue of such forums;

individuals may not be as willing to express their views or engage in a debate if they feel that they could some way be implicated in the final decision.

Third, a few key factors stand out as being the main influencing factors in delivering individual and community empowerment and, indeed, in impacting upon decisions. Of these, **the presence of a highly salient issue in the online environment stands out** as being a necessary condition to effect empowerment. The presence of effective moderation of discussions and clear links to decision-makers seem to exist as sufficient conditions in many of the cases.

The saliency of the issue is significant not only in relation to decision making but also in supporting the empowerment of individuals. Such a finding can possibly be explained by the wider feedback that such issues create online. Hot topics are more likely to provoke a vibrant discussion and encourage a range of opinions to be brought forward. Where there is careful moderation of the discussion and even mediation to encourage preference formation and change, it seems plausible to suggest that individuals will see more rewards from their participation than when their posts are left ignored. In addition, by engaging in a salient topic, individuals will enhance their own knowledge of the issues and feel a growing sense of engagement with its outcome. It follows, therefore, that a highly salient issue is likely to be more rewarding and, ultimately, enhance an individual's sense of internal political efficacy. Conversely, arcane or irrelevant posts are likely to draw negative or aggressive contributions from other participants, or will be ignored entirely. This situation is unlikely to enhance a person's self esteem or sense of efficacy and, indeed, may have a negative effect upon it. Well moderated discussions of salient issues, therefore, can be seen to be the key target for empowerment through online devices.

Fourth, **official sponsorship of e-participation does not appear to play an important role** in affecting empowerment outcomes; neither the presence of official sponsorship nor its absence. Some online initiatives appear to benefit from being 'owned' by statutory bodies. Others appear to be equally successful because they have emerged from, and are 'owned' by, the community, with little or no involvement from government. The overall finding, therefore, is that type of ownership is not a significant factor in influencing empowerment; it is other design or contextual factors that matter more. This finding is surprising because the type of 'ownership' or 'sponsorship' of forums is generally deemed to affect the quality of participation, especially in terms of deliberation.

There are, of course, some wider caveats to these findings. The selection of the cases for the Boolean analysis may have biased the results, although every effort was made to avoid such bias. Furthermore, the 'boosterist' nature of the literature, combined with its emphasis upon normative debates around democracy and deliberation and its concern with particular processes, limits the ability to draw conclusions on empowerment through e-participation. There are, of course, many other examples of e-forums

and e-petitions but these have not been subject to evaluation in a way that makes them suitable for Boolean analysis.

The wider context of e-participation is also significant. Few of the initiatives studied facilitate widespread participation, despite the claims which many make for the technology. Most e-forums attract a disappointingly small number of participants and, among those participants, only a much smaller number are actively engaged. Online petitions suffer from a similar criticism. Beyond the few high profile examples (the road-pricing e-petition on the Number 10 website being the most obvious), most e-petitions attract only a small number of signatures. Given the relatively small numbers of individuals that are routinely engaged through these online devices, it is important not to be overly dependent upon the technology to empower. Of course, this position may change as engagement through Web 2.0 social networking technologies becomes more popular, although sufficient cases do not yet exist within the literature to enable their inclusion in this analysis.

Nevertheless, e-participation can be seen to have a positive effect on empowerment in many contexts, especially in relation to individuals. The key challenge for Government is to reflect upon how the generally individualistic nature of online participation fits with its wider ambitions for community level empowerment. The solution may lie in careful sequencing of online participation with other, more robust forms of offline engagement. In other words, the Government cannot depend solely upon e-participation for empowerment but must ensure that it is part of a wider suite of empowerment initiatives. To reap the benefits of online engagement it is not only helpful but also necessary to balance it with other empowerment initiatives. Such balance would also ensure that the vagaries of the digital divide, in which certain disadvantaged sections of society do not have access to, or the skills to make use of, new technologies, are not excluded from empowerment initiatives.

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Case sources and outlines: e-participation

Case	Source and Summary
1	<p>Downing Street policy forum</p> <p>Wright, S. (2006) 'Government-run online discussion for a: moderation, censorship and the shadow of control' <i>British Journal of Politics and International Relations</i> 8, 550–568</p> <p><i>A case study of Downing Street's Speaker's Corner and Policy Forum, a British central government online discussion forum.</i></p>
2	<p>Citizen space e-dem forum</p> <p>Wright, S. (2006) 'Government-run online discussion for a: moderation, censorship and the shadow of control' <i>British Journal of Politics and International Relations</i> 8, 550–568</p> <p><i>A case study of Citizen Space's E-Democracy Forum, a British central government online discussion forum.</i></p>
3	<p>Young people go online ePal</p> <p>Livingstone, S (2007) The challenge of engaging youth online: contrasting producers' and teenagers' interpretations of websites <i>European Journal of Communication</i> 22(2) pp165–84</p> <p><i>A case study of website aimed at encouraging young people to become more engaged in Greater Manchester.</i></p>
4	<p>Thai women online</p> <p>Enteen, J. (2005) Siam remapped: cyber-interventions by Thai women <i>New Media and Society</i> 7(4) pp457–82</p> <p><i>An online network of Thai women from across the world debating issues of concern to their identity.</i></p>
5	<p>Minnesota e-democracy</p> <p>Chadwick, A (2006) <i>Internet Politics: States, citizens and new communication technologies</i> Oxford: Oxford University Press pp96–99</p> <p><i>One of the longest standing online communities which has developed over two decades into a range of forums.</i></p>

Case	Source and Summary
6	<p>City planning game Tampere</p> <p>Coleman, S. and J. Gotze (2007) <i>Bowling Together: online public engagement in policy deliberation</i> London, Hansard Society</p> <p><i>Case study of a web-based interactive discussion of local environmental and planning issues in Esslingen, Germany aiming to detract criticism of housing plans and strategies.</i></p>
7	<p>New housing Esslingen</p> <p>Coleman, S. and J. Gotze (2007) <i>Bowling Together: online public engagement in policy deliberation</i> London, Hansard Society</p> <p><i>Case study of an experimental interactive web-based city planning game in Tampere, Finland which aims to allow citizens to influence planning schemes and decisions.</i></p>
8	<p>Paris 3rd airport forum</p> <p>Monnoyer-Smith, L (2006) Citizens' deliberation on the internet: an exploratory study <i>International Journal of Electronic Government Research</i> 2(3) pp58–74</p> <p><i>A forum established specifically to debate the siting and consequences of a third international airport in Paris.</i></p>
9	<p>Guildford forum</p> <p>Dunne, K. (2008) <i>The value using local political online forums to reverse political engagement</i> Unpublished PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, University of Surrey</p> <p><i>A forum established in collaboration with the local authority as a deliberate experiment to study how forums might work in the local context.</i></p>
10	<p>Denmark official site</p> <p>Jensen, J.L. (2003) Public spheres on the internet: anarchic or government-sponsored – a comparison <i>Scandinavian Political Studies</i> 26(4), 349–374</p> <p><i>A case study of a county-government sponsored initiative in Northern Denmark aiming at creating a democratic dialogue via the internet.</i></p>
11	<p>Denmark politik</p> <p>Jensen, J. (2003) Public spheres on the internet: anarchic or government sponsored – a comparison <i>Scandinavian Political Studies</i> 26 (4) 349–374</p> <p><i>A case study dk.politik, one of Denmark's most established Usenet group forums for online political discussions.</i></p>

Case	Source and Summary
12	<p>Citizenspace UK</p> <p>Coleman, S., N. Hall and M. Howell (2003) <i>Hearing voices: The experience of online public consultations and discussions in UK governance</i></p> <p><i>General forum to allow individuals to discuss policy relevant issues of concern to them.</i></p>
13	<p>Communications Bill forum</p> <p>Coleman, S., N. Hall and M. Howell (2003) <i>Hearing voices: The experience of online public consultations and discussions in UK governance</i></p> <p><i>Forum established specifically to debate the clauses of the communications bill involving both politicians and citizens.</i></p>
14	<p>The future of Europe debate</p> <p>Wright, S. (2007) 'A virtual European public sphere? The Futurum discussion forum' <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> 14(8), 1167–1185</p> <p><i>A case study of 'Futurum', the online discussion forum linked to the Convention on the Future of Europe.</i></p>
15	<p>Hamburg DEMOS debate</p> <p>Albrecht, S. (2006) 'Whose voice is heard in online deliberation? A study of participation and representation in political debates on the internet' <i>Information, Communication and Society</i> 9(1), 62–82</p> <p><i>A case study of an online deliberation in Hamburg as part of the DEMOS project.</i></p>
16	<p>French municipal forums</p> <p>Wojcick, S. (2007) 'How does eDeliberation work? A study French local electronic forums' in A. Avdic, K. Hedstrom, J. Rose and A. Gronlund (eds) <i>Understand eParticipation: Contemporary PhD eParticipation research in Europe</i> Orebro University Library</p> <p><i>A study of thirty French local authorities and the discussion forms hosted on their websites.</i></p>
17	<p>Tampere Citizens web</p> <p>Lehtona, P (2007) 'Citizens' web as a public space: Developing community practices in the framework of eParticipation in A. Avdic, K. Hedstrom, J. Rose and A. Gronlund (eds) <i>Understand eParticipation: Contemporary PhD eParticipation research in Europe</i> Orebro University Library</p> <p><i>Exploration of a deliberative forum in Tampere, Finland.</i></p>

Case	Source and Summary
18	<p>Estonia Today I Decide</p> <p>Glencross, A. (2007) E-Participation in the Legislative Process: Procedural and Technological Lessons from Estonia (working paper on EU e-participation project)</p> <p><i>A case study of the 'Today I Decide' (TOM) initiative in Estonia, where online petitions were developed as means of influencing decision making.</i></p>
19	<p>Bristol e-petition</p> <p>Local e-democracy National Project (2005) <i>'From the top down' An evaluation of e-democracy activities initiated by councils and government</i> Bristol City Council</p> <p><i>e-Petitioning system for Bristol established through funding from the Local e-Democracy National Project.</i></p>
20	<p>Ask Bristol forum</p> <p>Local e-democracy National Project (2005) <i>'From the top down' An evaluation of e-democracy activities initiated by councils and government</i> Bristol City Council</p> <p><i>Online forum in Bristol established through funding from the Local e-Democracy National Project.</i></p>

6. Participatory budgeting

6.1 Participatory budgeting: a definition

Participatory budgeting (PB) provides a useful mechanism to focus on because it is, probably, one of the most developed forms of explicitly deliberative participation, which also offers a direct form of empowerment for citizens. PB started its existence as a form of engagement in Porto Alegre, Brazil in the late 1980s but by 2004 it is estimated that over 250 cities or municipalities practiced some version of it (Cabannes 2004). The term has come to carry quite a broad range of meanings but the essence of PB rests on an opportunity for citizens to engage in the processes of public spending decision making focused on their neighbourhood, locality or a particular public agency. The amount of the public budget involved varies but the bite in PB is that it is not a simple consultation device but an exercise in deliberative participatory democracy that empowers citizens to make a significant contribution to public spending decisions. Participatory budgeting is about deliberative mechanisms set-up to delegate power or influence over public budgets and investment priorities to citizens.

The main argument put forward by proponents of PB is that services can be tailored to local needs as people take more “ownership” in their own neighbourhood/community of public spending and investment decisions. Beyond that, key empowerment benefits for citizens include:

- Building the capacity of individuals in the complexities of public budget setting and political skills more generally
- Enhanced impact on local decision making, reducing the so-called 'democratic deficit'
- For deprived neighbourhoods PB can provide a better focus on issues of *social exclusion* and neighbourhood renewal, bringing clear benefits to the poorest neighbourhoods

There may also be wider empowerment benefits:

- Improving relations between the citizen and the council (both officials and councillors) and, associated with this, raising level of positive perception of the council
- Bringing diverse people together (community cohesion)
- Cost-efficient *improvements* in service delivery

The synthesis will concentrate on assessing and understanding those impacts associated with citizen empowerment.

As practice of PB has transferred from Porte Alegre in Brazil, the variety and range of characteristics and features of PB has expanded, leaving some to doubt what should be counted under the umbrella of PB and fearing that the label is used in such a loose way to make comparison meaningless. It is necessary to put some boundaries around the practice of PB beyond the simple idea of the engagement of citizens in the allocation of public budgets and investments.

In the most systematic study of PB outside Latin America so far, Sintomer et al. (2008) identify five core features:

- (1) The discussion should be on the budget process and deal with the problem of limited resources
- (2) The process needs to stretch beyond the neighbourhood level to link to higher level decisions
- (3) It has to be a repeated process
- (4) The process must include some form of public deliberation within the framework of specific meetings/forums set up for the purpose
- (5) Some accountability for the output is required

This report uses these five criteria to judge whether the cases are offering a complete or developing practice of PB. Most of the Latin America schemes examined meet the criteria in full, but some schemes elsewhere fail to meet one of the criteria and therefore could be classified as examples where PB practice is developing.

6.2 Evidence base

This stage of the project draws on the initial mapping exercise (see Appendix 1) together with additional literature searching to address the more specialised nature of the topic definitions now developed. An evidence base has been collated that identifies case study examples of the mechanisms selected and how they link to empowering communities to influence local decision making.

6.2.1 *Quality*

This study of PB in practice reviews some of the available empirical studies of PB drawn from experience in Latin America, North America, Continental Europe and the UK. Given the way that PB has spread and developed in different parts of the world, it is valuable to draw cases from a number of locations, some with cultures more similar to that of the UK than others. Cases have been chosen where some evidence is available in the English language so that policy makers and practitioners can more easily engage in more detailed investigation if interested. Given that PB is a tool initially developed in Brazil and in particular Porto Alegre, focus is given to that case but also on how far and to what extent its practices have been effectively

transferred to the UK and other settings. Practices of PB even in Brazil have achieved mixed outcomes (see Wampler, 2007 for extensive evidence on this point). This finding suggests that cultural setting alone is not the key to success and this analysis brings into focus a variety of other factors relating to support for PB, its design. By examining a variety of experiences in a range of countries this research is able to judge how these factors play out in a range of cultural settings.

6.2.2 Case selection

A total of 19 cases have been selected as a basis for the synthesis from an evidence base that provides only a limited number of detailed English language cases. But with the aid of specialist language help, cases from several European countries drawing on written materials only available in French, Italian and Spanish have been included. The cases selected reflect the most detailed evidence available (a full list of sources and case descriptions is provided at the end of this chapter).

6.3 Findings

Conducting a Boolean analysis of the 19 cases identified leads to a basic 'truth table', presented in Table 6.1. In the 'truth table', each factor is coded either as 0 (where the factor is absent in the case) or 1 (where the factor is present). For further detail on the coding of factors see Appendix 3. What is clear from an initial examination of the table is the variety in the cases presented, both in terms of the range of empowerment that has been achieved and the key driving factors. The analysis identifies those factors that can increase the chances of success.

Table 6.1: Boolean 'truth table': all cases coded against all factors – participatory budgeting

Country	Case	Influencing Factors							Outcome Factors		
		Support mechanisms	Commitment to openness	Political buy-in	Bureaucratic buy-in	Salient	External partnership	National political support	Impact on participants	Impact on community	Impact on decision making
France	1. Morsang	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
	2. XXeme	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
	3. St. Denis	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	4. P-de-Claix	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Italy	5. XI Rome	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
	6. Grottamare	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
	7. P Emanuele	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Spain	8. Cordoba	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
	9. Puente Genil	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	10. Sevilla	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
LA	11. Porto Alegre	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
	12. Belo Horiztone	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
	13. Villa el Salvador	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
	14. San Juan de Miraflores	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
	15. Sao Paulo	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
UK	16. Bradford	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	17. Salford	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Canada	18. City of Guelph	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
	19. Toronto Community Housing	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1

The table demonstrates that the Porto Alegre scheme has been followed in name as much as substance in Latin America, North America and Europe. What is clear from this analysis, however, is that a tokenistic expression of PB is not going to have an effect of any magnitude. To achieve a shift in the pattern of state-citizen relations means confronting public, political and official inertia and that challenge may be very difficult to meet; failure is possible. Indeed the achievement of empowerment across all three of the areas identified in this report (citizen, community and decision making) was the exception rather than the rule. Indeed in only four out of nineteen cases was a positive impact on all three facets of empowerment achieved: Grottamare (case 6), Sevilla (case 10), Porto Alegre (case 11) and Belo Horizonte (case 12).

6.3.1 *Explaining transformational empowerment success*

What were the factors in play in the four cases where all three elements of empowerment were achieved? Sevilla in Spain (case 10) presents an interesting case where the key success factors were relatively few: the basic open design of the scheme, strong political support and an effective external partnership. The presence of these factors indicates that success was driven through a range of strong policy commitments to connecting PB to empowerment. In the case of Grottamare in Italy (case 6) a wider range of factors appears to be relevant to the success of the scheme with only bureaucratic buy-in and external partnership not present. Belo Horizonte in Brazil (case 12) again presents a different mix of factors. In this case one of the more detailed case studies attributes success to the willingness of citizens, PB delegates and community organisations to use contentious and challenging tactics to 'publicly pressure' their local government to increase the level of time, effort and resources that they devoted to PB.

It is perhaps worth focusing at greatest length on the Porto Alegre case (case 11) – the founding example of PB. Needless-to-say, it demonstrates impact across all three of the outcome factors; it has achieved empowerment across the board. Table 6.1 shows that what has driven success in Porto Alegre is the presence of all the key factors we have identified as important, with the exception of any major role for external partners. It would seem reasonable to further suggest that if policy-makers are looking for a Porto Alegre-style effect, if they adopt PB, they should be aware of the both the sustained political and bureaucratic support that the scheme has had in Porto Alegre and its complex, sophisticated and radical design (the analysis below draws extensively on Smith, 2008).

The structure of PB in Porto Alegre has evolved over a number of years. The process takes place on an annual cycle with citizen engagement occurring at three distinct levels: popular assemblies at neighbourhood and regional level (regional here referring to districts of the city which are made up of a number of neighbourhoods); regional budget forums; and the council of the participatory budget (COP), also known as the municipal budget council. It is the regional popular assemblies that attract the highest level of participation. These assemblies are open to all residents, whether or not they are members of officially-recognised civic organisations.

The role of popular assemblies falls into three parts. The first is overview and scrutiny: holding the administration to account. Senior officials from the administration, including the mayor, review the implementation of projects within the region from the previous years' budget allocation and then are directly questioned by citizens about their record and policies (often beyond the realm of the budget). Second, participants vote on the priority issues for investment in the region as a whole, e.g. sanitation, paving, health care, etc. Third, the assemblies elect citizens to their respective regional budget forum and the COP. The method of selection for delegates to the sixteen regional budget forums provides a significant incentive for citizens to participate in the popular assemblies. The radical rule is: the more votes by citizens, the more representation for a neighbourhood in the decisions about investment

priorities. Selection of candidates for the COP follows a different logic – each region elects two councillors (with two alternates). There is equality of representation on the COP for each region, regardless of size, wealth or any other factor. A parallel process of thematic city-wide popular assemblies were established in 1994 and are organised at the same time as their regional counterparts.

The structure of the budgeting process means that citizens do not simply make demands for investment, but are also involved in prioritising these demands and creating and applying the rules that guide distribution of resources across the city. These are the functions of the regional and thematic budget forums and the COP.

Each of the 16 regions has a budget forum in which delegates review the investment priority lists presented by neighbourhoods and draw up an overall list of investment priorities for the region as a whole, in line with the broad priorities established by the regional popular assemblies. Although some regions use explicit needs-based criteria, most of the decisions are made through discussions and negotiations between delegates. This is why the mobilisation of citizens in each regional assembly is crucial – the larger the presence from a particular neighbourhood, the more delegates on the forum arguing the case for their preferred investments. Forum delegates are given training by the administration on issues of technical feasibility and make visits to neighbourhoods to inform their decision making. Although the administration can question the technical feasibility of projects, the Forums can overrule their advice. The Forums are also responsible for on-going negotiations and monitoring implementation of projects by the various city agencies. Forum meetings are open to all citizens to attend, but only the delegates have voting rights. Similar processes are established in the thematic budget forums.

The final element of PB is the COP (also known as the municipal budget council) which consists of the two elected budget councillors from each region (regardless of its population size), two from each thematic area and one representative each from the union of neighbourhood associations (UAMPA) and the municipal employees union (SIMPA). The COP plays two main functions. The first is to produce the budget for investments prioritised by the budget forums. While the Council is charged with reviewing the whole of the city's budget, it has a specific duty to decide the relative distribution of resources among the various regions and between the various city agencies. Decisions are guided by a set of distributional rules. Councillors are also responsible for making decisions on investment decisions proposed by the executive. Once the budget has been accepted by the mayor and presented to the city's legislative assembly, the COP attends to its second function: to reflect and decide on the rules that will guide the distribution of resources in the following year. In all of these tasks the Council works closely with officials from the administration. To defend against the abuse of power by particular citizens, councillors can only be elected for two consecutive terms of office and are subject to immediate recall. As with the budget

forums, the meetings of the COP are open, although the public only has observer status.

The operation of the participatory budget has required significant administrative restructuring with both significant change in technical departments and the creation of a new community relations division. Finally, the administration invested in a computerised project management system that provides information on the status of projects and the budgets of city agencies. This allows citizens to keep abreast of developments and undertake research on the administration's activities.

The scale, sophistication and depth of the Porto Alegre case is not replicated in any of the other cases included in Table 6.1. Yet, the table shows that many of these cases can claim some impact on some of the empowerment outcomes measured, and in three other cases, all of the measures that are a focus of concern in this report (cases 6, 10 and 12).

Part of the aim of qualitative computerised analysis (QCA) is to encourage a way of looking at cases that respects their complexity by identifying the configuration of different factors that are present in different cases. It is assumed that it is unlikely that any single cause or factor will explain everything, rather it is the mix that matters. It would appear that when examining the four cases that different mixes were indeed at play. We have already noted that Sevilla (case 10) presents the most unusual case where the presence of only three factors—openness, political buy-in and external partnership led to an across the board successful outcome.

If we leave aside Sevilla and look at the other cases we can nevertheless begin to highlight key messages. Using the approach of Boolean minimization (Wickham-Crowley, 1991) which compares cases that have identical outcomes and sees where they differ by only a single factor and then drops that factor as not decisive, it is possible to begin to simplify and focus on key factors. Using this pairing and elimination process and focusing only on those elements where their presence was viewed as having a positive impact we find that the dominant elements for achieving citizen empowerment are a commitment to openness, widespread and deep political buy-in; salient issues and national political support (in Boolean terms, BCEG – where an upper case letter denotes the presence of a factor).

An examination of Table 6.1 helps to explain the logic behind this finding. In three out of four cases that were characterised by openness in the design of PB (B) and political buy-in (C), high salience (E) for the issues at stake and national level policy framework (G) were also present. From the point of view of policy makers, these findings suggest that the openness of the PB scheme to all citizens and political buy-in by the local authority are factors that are almost always present in successful across the board empowerment and that salience and a national policy structure are usually important as well.

6.3.2 Analysis: Exploring citizen, community and decision making empowerment

One way of taking this analysis further and to introduce more cases is to loosen the criteria for success and focus not on across the board achievement of empowerment but look individually at the three empowerment impacts achieved in relation to, respectively, citizen, community and decision making empowerment. Using qualitative computerised analysis (QCA) allows an examination of these impacts and how they are being created through different combinations of factors; but also helps us to identify the factors that are emerging as the dominant ones.

These findings are presented in Tables 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 and discussed below. For further detail on the coding of influencing and outcome factors, see Appendices 2 and 3.

Table 6.2: Citizen empowerment impact: strong evidence that engaged citizens have gained sense of efficacy and new skills						
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Support/ Facilitation	Openness	Political Buy-in	Bureaucratic Buy-in	High salience	External partnership	National Legal/Policy Frame

Case	Influencing factors ¹
2. XXeme	A b C D E f g
4. P-de-Claix/18. City of Guelph	A B c E F g
5. XI Rome/12. Belo Horizonte	a B C D E G
6. Grottamare/11. Porto Alegre	A B C E f G
8. Cordoba	A b c d e F g
10. Sevilla	a C d e F g
15. Sao Paulo/18. City of Guelph	A B c D E F
18. City of Guelph/19. Toronto Community Housing	A B c D E g

¹ higher case factor present, lower case absent

Table 6.2 suggests that there are several ways in which PB initiatives have achieved an impact on citizens' skills and sense of political efficacy. Different cities or locations have found different routes to the same end goal. In this way Boolean analysis captures and then simplifies the complexity of the cases (Ragin 2000). If you have seven factors that can be either absent or present then the logically possible number of combinations is equal to 2 to the power of 7 (i.e. 128 combinations). So although Table 6.2 indicates that different cases have achieved citizen empowerment in several different ways the processes are not as mixed as they could logically have been. Sevilla (case 10) again emerges as a case where only the presence of a limited number of factors – political buy-in and external partnership – are present. Cordoba (case 8) also in Spain has only two factors in play with again external partnership featuring but in this case the extra drive coming from the

presence of support and facilitation. Again, the Spanish cases seem to reflect a particular policy environment at the local as opposed to the national level.

In the nine other cases where citizen empowerment was achieved at least four factors are present. Using the pairing and elimination process described earlier and focusing only on those elements where their presence was viewed as having a positive impact we find that the dominant elements for achieving citizen empowerment are in Boolean terms: BCDE. That is our cases suggest that it is the presence of openness, political and bureaucratic buy-in and the salience of what is at stake that matters most. If the goal is increasing the efficacy and skills of citizens, these factors can be positive contributors.

This process of simplification can be pushed one stage further by looking for the factors that are more present than others across all cases. But a note of caution should be sounded here as the Boolean approach suggests that the interdependence of factors in context is the key and therefore it is problematic to extract them from their case. But parsimony is a key virtue in explanation so it is worth exploring a little further using this technique.

A careful look at Table 6.3 reveals that some factors most commonly present than others: A=6; B=5; C=4; D=4; E=5; F=3; G=2. This shows that the strongest requirement is for support/facilitation, openness and salience if the goal is to increase empowerment skills and capacities of individual citizens. The least relevant factors are for national guidelines and partnership with an external body. In short for policy makers we could conclude that support/facilitation is more likely to be present than not in achieving citizen empowerment but that no other factor achieves the designation of being a necessary or sufficient factor.

Table 6.3: Community empowerment: evidence of aggregate impact on political efficacy, skills, social capital and cohesion of community

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Facilitation/ Support	Openness	Political Buy-in	Bureaucratic Buy-in	High salience	External partnership	National Legal/Policy Frame

Case	Influencing Factors
2. XXeme	A b C D E f g
5. Rome	a B C D E G
12. Bele Horizonte	
6. Grootamare	A B C E f G
11. Porto Alegre	
10. Sevilla	a C d e F g
15. Sao Paulo	A B c D E F

To have a major impact on a community appears to be harder to achieve than advancing the skills of those citizens that do engage. Only 7 out of 19 cases present evidence of impact on community and again it appears that a mix of different factors lies behind these successes. Eleven out of 19 cases were able to record an impact on individual empowerment. Again in the case of Sevilla (case 10) only two key factors were at play – political buy-in and external partnership – but in most other cases it was wider mix of factors. Applying the principles of Boolean minimization, again, produces a Boolean line of BCDEG. This suggests that in terms of having an impact on community empowerment then a mix of openness, political and bureaucratic buy-in, salience and a national policy has the greatest impact.

Using again the alternative approach to simplification a closer inspection of Table 6.3 reveals those factors that are present on a more regular basis: A=3 B=3 C=4 D=3 E=4 F=1 G=2. This finding indicates that Political Buy-in and Salience are the most important factors and that external partnership is the least important factor to have present when the goal is community empowerment. Only political buy-in and salience can be identified as factors that are more likely to be present than not.

Finally we see in Table 6.4 the evidence for the impact of PB on decision making. This achievement has again been met with a mix of different factors present in different cases. Success in the case of Bradford (case 16) would appear to have been primarily the result of bureaucratic buy-in and a process of support and facilitation. In other cases, for example Porto Alegre (case 11) a much wider mix of factors would appear to be at work. This finding may reflect the extent of the decision making options at stake in the two cases with Porto Alegre having a system with a much wider impact.

Table 6.4: Empowered decision making: Evidence of redistribution and impact of decision making choices

Key influencing factors						
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Facilitation/ Support	Openness	Political Buy-in	Bureaucratic Buy-in	High salience	External partnership	National Legal/Policy Frame

Case	Influencing Factors
6. Grottamare	A B C E f G
11. Porto Alegre	
10. Sevilla	a C d e F g
12. Belo Horizonte	a B C D E G
16. Bradford	A b c D e f g
17. Salford	A b C D e F g
18. City of Guelph	A B c D E g
19. Toronto Community Housing	

Using Boolean minimization techniques in the case of decision making impact produces no simplification; all the factors remain in play. Using the alternative method the most common factors present are: A=4; B=3; C=4; D=4; E=2; F=2; G=2. This analysis suggests that support/facilitation, political and bureaucratic buy-in are crucial and that salience, partnership and national policy framing the least important. But no factors can be described as more likely to be present than not given that there are 8 cases.

6.4 Conclusions

The research findings suggest that it is not necessary to attain the extraordinary sophistication and radical restructuring achieved in Porto Alegre to achieve some valuable gains through the introduction of PB. The Porto Alegre experiment stands apart as a transformative political model. But what the findings also show is that in order to achieve any impact with PB it is vital to move beyond a tokenistic expression and mix together a range of factors in both the design and backing given to the programme. Impact is not guaranteed. Across all the cases, and all three of the empowerment effects, we found evidence of success but also evidence of failure.

The mechanisms of the PB in Porto Alegre are clear, though complex, and not always followed to the letter in PB initiatives elsewhere for understandable reasons given differences in context. As Wampler (2007) points out this may mean that other PB initiatives do not achieve the transformational impact of PB as practised in Porto Alegre. Wampler suggests that there have to be three crucial elements in place for PB to have a major impact. One, a political authority committed to delegation, two, civic organisations enable to support a positive response from citizens, and three, the right structure of rules and incentives in the design of the PB process. After their careful study Sintomer et al (2008: 175) conclude:

the importation of Porto Alegre into Europe has been a highly differentiated process. On this continent, participatory budgeting does not rely on one procedure but rather on a multitude of devices. ... However, with regard to the situation in Europe, participatory budgeting has not (yet?) produced those results that politicians and activists hoped to achieve. Is this just a matter of time and of different political circumstances?

This research endorses these sober assessments. The adoption of PB techniques does not lead to quick-fix changes in embedded political, citizen and bureaucratic cultures. But, as we have seen, some successes in empowerment can be claimed and above all this analysis has moved things forward by helping to differentiate and identify the moving factors behind an empowering PB practice.

Seven factors were identified (see Appendix 3) that could be seen as relevant to achieving an impact on empowerment with PB. In only four cases did across the board empowerment emerge as an outcome of a PB process.

The Sevilla case (case 10) emerges an interesting example of an initiative that appears to have been driven by the presence of some strong local policy inputs with an open design, strong political buy-in and an external partnership. In the other three cases, openness and political buy-in were joined by the salience of the issues under discussion and the presence of a national policy framework as key factors.

When the wider number of cases that achieved at least one element of empowerment were considered, neither external partnership nor a national policy framework were key factors. Rather the secrets of success are more local and internal to the design, agency and citizens engaged in PB. To empower the skills and efficacy of citizens through PB requires the practice to be supported, open to all and focused on issues of salience. To achieve an even larger sense of impact at a community level in terms of shifting a sense of political efficacy or fostering cohesion requires the presence of political buy-in and salience, in particular. Finally to have an empowering impact on decision making the key factors are less easy to discern but support/facilitation, political and bureaucratic buy-in are present in at least half the cases.

Participatory budgeting is a mechanism for deliberative citizen engagement in decision making about the use of devolved budgets for public services. Participatory budgeting is a tool for empowerment that can have a significant impact in a range of contexts and settings and the potential to provide transformational political change. In order for such transformational change to be achieved, PB has to be open to all, focused on a meaningful and important issue and be part of a wider dynamic of change that enjoys support both locally and within a national framework.

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Case sources and outlines: participatory budgeting

Case	
1	<p>Morsang (France)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
2	<p>XXeme (France)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
3	<p>St Denis (France)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
4	<p>P-de-Claix (France)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
5	<p>XI Rome (Italy)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
6	<p>Grottamare (Italy)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>

Case	
7	<p>P.Emanuele (Italy)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
8	<p>Cordoba (Spain)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
9	<p>Puente Genil (Spain)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
10	<p>Sevilla (Spain)</p> <p>Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/(accessed 17.06.08)</p>
11	<p>Porto Alegre (Brazil)</p> <p>Acharya, A. et al (2004) 'Civil society Representation in the Participatory Budget and Deliberative Councils of Sao Paulo, Brazil', <i>IDS bulletin</i>, 35.2</p> <p>Avritzer, L. (2006) 'New Public Spheres in Brazil: Local Democracy and Deliberative Politics' <i>International Journal of Urban and Regional Research</i>, 30(3), September 2006, 623–637.</p> <p>Goldfrank, B and Schneider, A (2006) ' Competitive Institution Building: The PT and Participatory Budgeting in Rio Grande do Sul' <i>Latin America Politics and Society</i> Volume 48, Number 3, Fall , pp. 1–31</p> <p>Harvard University (2005) <i>Assessment of Participatory Budgeting in Brazil</i> Harvard University: Center for Urban Development Studies</p> <p>Hordijk, M (2005) 'Participatory governance in Peru: exercising citizenship' <i>Environment and Urbanization</i>, 17, 2005, 219–236</p> <p>Wampler, B. (2007) <i>Participatory Budgeting in Brazil</i> Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press</p>

Case	
12	Belo Horizonte (Brazil) As for 11.
13	Villa el Salvador (Peru) As for 11.
14	San Juan de Miraflores (Peru) As for 11.
15	San Paulo (Brazil) As for 11.
16	Bradford (UK) Participatory Budget Unit Report (2007) <i>Participatory Budgeting in the UK: an evaluation from a practitioner perspective</i> , Manchester: the PB Unit. Available at: http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/Downloads/PB%20from%20a%20practitioner%20perspective%20report%20June%202007.pdf (accessed 19.06.08) Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/ (accessed 17.06.08)
17	Salford (UK) Participatory Budget Unit Report (2007) <i>Participatory Budgeting in the UK: an evaluation from a practitioner perspective</i> , Manchester: the PB Unit. Available at: http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/Downloads/PB%20from%20a%20practitioner%20perspective%20report%20June%202007.pdf (accessed 19.06.08) Sintomer, Y., C. Herzberg, Anja Röcke (Eds.) <i>Participatory Budgets in a European comparative approach: Perspectives and Chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe. Volume II (Documents)</i> Available at http://www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de/ (accessed 17.06.08)
18	City of Guelph (Canada) Babcock C. et al (2008) 'Western Participatory practices' March 10–14, 2008, African regional seminar on PB, Durban SA Lerner, J. and E. Van Wagner (2006) <i>Participatory Budgeting in Canada: Democratic innovations in strategic places</i> Available at http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?page=newpol-docs_pbcanada (accessed 19.06.08)

Case

- 19 Community Housing (Toronto)
Babcock C. et al (2008) 'Western Participatory practices' March 10–14, 2008, African regional seminar on PB, Durban SA
Lerner, J. and E. Van Wagner (2006) *Participatory Budgeting in Canada: Democratic innovations in strategic places* Available at http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?page=newpol-docs_pbcanda (accessed 19.06.08)

7. Petitions

7.1 Petitions: a definition

In its most basic form, a petition allows citizens to raise concerns to relevant public authorities. Those who initiate a petition invite other citizens to support their proposition and hope that it will have some effect on the political decisions of the relevant public authority.

Petitions have a long provenance in the UK as a means for citizens to raise concerns to public authorities and demonstrate the weight of sentiment towards particular courses of action. At the same time, however, petitions have rarely been accorded any formal institutional place in public decision making. Their role as a mechanism in the UK, therefore, has been limited. The proposals for more formal petitioning systems contained in the *Communities in Control* White Paper may offer new opportunities for petitions to achieve a more formal status.

If we were to only focus on the use of petitions in the UK, we would have a limited understanding of their potential. At present, petitions are only used in two main forms: petitions that have no obvious relationship with the formal institutional decision making of public authorities; and those that require a formal institutional response.

If we look wider than the UK, we find that petitions are part of broader institutional devices that can have a more profound impact on political decision making processes.

In a small, but significant, number of polities (from local through to national level), petitions are connected to popular votes. How they are connected varies and is a significant factor for the analysis in this report.

We can thus distinguish between a number of devices in which petitions are significant. Unfortunately, different polities as well as academics and policy analysts, use different definitions to describe similar institutional devices. In this report, the following terms are used:

- Petitions with no significant formal response – a facility exists for citizens to put forward a proposition and collect signatures, but there is no clear relationship with the decision making process of the public authority
- Petitions with formal response – same as above, but where there is a formal and transparent process for the public authority to consider the petition.
- Advisory initiative – petitions that lead to a popular vote, but where the vote is not binding (it is advisory).

- Direct initiative – the proposition is placed directly onto a ballot, which if successful is binding.
- Indirect initiative – the proposition is first considered by the public authority. If it is not implemented in an acceptable form for the proponents, the proposition is placed on a ballot, which if successful is binding (i.e. there is room for negotiation).

In this synthesis, the initiative and popular referendum are generally being treated as similar institutions. There is a significant difference: the popular referendum (also known as the abrogative initiative or facultative referendum) allows citizens to challenge an existing law; initiatives enable citizens to propose a new legislative measure (statutory initiative) or a constitutional amendment (constitutional initiative) if they are able to submit a petition with the required number of signatures from fellow citizens.

As we shall discuss further in the analysis below, devices differ in the way that they limit the range of issues that can be raised; the number of signatures and time limits for a petition to qualify; and quorum requirements for those that result in a popular vote. These differences in institutional arrangements can have a profound effect on the way that petitions operate and their impact on community empowerment.

7.2 Methodology

7.2.1 *Selecting the evidence base*

The Stage 1 mapping exercise identified an evidence base sufficient to support the research syntheses across the areas initially identified. This stage of the project draws on this evidence base to identify literature that is based on case study examples of the mechanisms selected and how they link to empowering communities to influence local decision making. This evidence base has now been supplemented by additional literature searching to address the more specialised nature of the topic definitions now developed.

A total of 20 cases have been selected as a basis for the synthesis (see case sources and outlines at the end of the chapter). In selecting the cases, attention was paid to those studies that could offer evidence on the empowerment outcomes that the project is focusing on, although systematic evidence is lacking in the literature. In addition, effort has been made to ensure that there was a mix of different types of case: both in terms of scale of operation (local, regional and national) and institutional characteristics.

7.2.2 *Quality of the evidence base*

While there is extensive academic literature on this topic, the case based evidence is rather limited. Much of the literature focuses on the structure of different devices across the world and experience in relation to particular policy areas. There is also an extensive normative literature that argues the case for more extensive use of, in particular, forms of direct legislation

(initiative and popular referendum). Most evidence is available for national level devices: suitable evidence of the use of petitions at the local level is particularly limited.

It is rare for evaluations to focus much attention on the elements of community empowerment of interest to these research syntheses. Evidence is strongest for the effect on decision making, but relatively weak on political efficacy and other factors.

7.2.3 Selection of cases

Given the limits of the evidence base, the cases have been selected to ensure reasonable representation and spread of the following characteristics:

- Type of device – simple petitions through to direct initiative
- Scale – local, regional and national
- Country – UK and international

7.3 Findings

In the 'truth table', each factor is coded either as 0 (where the factor is absent in the case) or 1 (where the factor is present). In the instances where evidence either way is not available, this is also indicated (–).

Table 7.1: Boolean 'truth table': all cases coded against all factors – petitions

Case	Description	Influencing Factors					Outcome factors		
		Signatures	Time limit	Response	Popular vote	Spending limits	Participants	Community	Decision making
1	Kingston e-petitioning (local)	0	1	1	0	0	1	–	–
2	Bristol e-petitioning (local)	0	0	1	0	0	1	–	–
3	Hungary direct initiative (local)	1	–	0	1	1**	–	–	1
4	Finland petitions (local)	1	–	1	0	0	–	–	1
5	Japan petitions (local)	1	–	1	0	0	–	1	0
6	Sweden petition with discretionary referendum (local)	1	–	1	0	0	–	–	0
7	Bulgaria initiative (local)	1	–	0	1	–	0	–	0
8	Scotland petitions (regional)	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
9	California initiative and popular referendum (regional)	1	1	0	1	1	–	1	1
10	Colorado initiative and popular referendum (regional)	1	1	0	1	1	–	1	1
11	Bavaria popular initiative (regional)	1	1	1	1	1**	–	–	1
12	Estonia e-petitioning (national)	0	1	0	0	0	0	–	0
13	New Zealand petition with advisory referendum (national)	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
14	UK e-petition (national)	1	1	1	0	0	–	–	0
15	Spain petitions (national)	1	1	1	0	0	–	–	0
16	Liechtenstein initiative (national)	1	1	0	1	1*	–	–	1
17	Italy popular referendum (national)	1	1	1	1	1**	–	–	1
18	Slovenia direct initiative (national)	1	1	0	1	1	–	–	–
19	Latvia indirect initiative (national)	1	1	1	1	1**	–	–	1
20	Switzerland indirect initiative (national)	1	1	1	1	1**	1	–	1

* Monarch has veto power over referendum result
** Quorum thresholds

7.3.1 Influencing factors

The truth table shows that the selected cases exhibit a broad range of influencing factors with only a limited amount of missing data. Some interesting patterns emerge.

a. Signature qualification

Petitions vary in their use of signature qualification: four examples accept petitions of whatever length: the e-petitions in Kingston (case 1), Bristol (case 2), Scotland (case 8) and Estonia (case 12). In Scotland, for example, a decision was made not to include a qualification hurdle in order not to discourage petitions from citizens in low population rural areas.

b. Time limit

Taking into account the missing data, there are only two examples where there is no explicit time limit for collecting signatures: again both petitions (Bristol and Estonia). While the majority of cases exhibit both qualification requirements (signature numbers and time limit), the demands they place on petitioners vary considerably. Within the same polity, the demands often differ between different types of mechanism. So, for example, in Switzerland (case 20), a constitutional initiative requires the support of 100,000 citizens (about 2 per cent of the population) collected within eighteen months and a simple majority; whereas a popular referendum requires only half the number of signatures, but collected in ninety days of a law's publication or an international treaty. Both initiative and popular referendum require a simple majority vote. Compare this to California (case 9), where an initiative requires a higher number of signatures to be collected in only 150 days.

c. Public authority response

The cases again divide in terms of the response of public authorities to petitions. On one side we have petitions where there is a formal mechanism through which the public authority considers the proposition. This takes two forms. First, public authorities have a formalised process through which the proposition is reviewed and then an official response is made. This occurs in Kingston (case 1), Bristol (case 2), localities in Finland (case 4), Japan (case 5) Sweden (case 6), Scotland (case 8), UK (case 14) and Spain (case 15). The nature of the institutional response to petitions varies. In Scotland, for example, this task is co-ordinated by the Public Petitions Committee, arguably increasing the transparency of the process. In comparison, in the UK, qualifying petitions are passed to officials in the Prime Ministers Office or the relevant Government department for consideration and response. The second sub-set is indirect initiatives where the authority is given time to respond to the petition (often engaging the initiators in negotiations), but if they fail to satisfy the initiators, the proposition goes to a popular vote. This institutional form is found in Bavaria (case 11), Italy (case 17), Latvia (case 19) and Switzerland (case 20).

On the other side we find two very different sub-sets of institutions. First, those petitions where there is no clear and obvious feedback mechanism, represented in this synthesis by e-petitions in Estonia (case 12). Second, the very different direct initiative (and popular referendum) where the public authority is effectively bypassed and a qualifying petition goes direct to a popular vote. This institutional form is embedded in Hungary (case 2), California (case 9), Colorado (case 10), New Zealand (case 13 – although in this case the vote is non-binding), Liechtenstein (case 16) and Slovenia (case 18).

d. Popular vote

The existence of a popular vote can be seen as a clear distinguishing factor between devices. In those petitions without such a vote, there is only one mechanism of public engagement: initiating and signing the petition. The sample is almost evenly split between cases with and without popular vote.

e. Direct effect

The final influencing factor focuses on whether the popular vote is binding. By definition this factor is only relevant to roughly half of the sample, since 9 out of 20 cases do not link the petition to any form of vote. Amongst those cases with a popular vote, the minority remain advisory – typically they have direct effect. Again though, many of these will have their own qualification requirements and this may vary across device and may include double majority provisions: a majority of votes cast and a majority of votes in over half of the relevant geographical areas. Those devices which have some level of quorum threshold are indicated in the truth table.

7.3.2 Outcome factors

f. Effect on participants involved in process

While the evidence of the effect on participants is relatively limited, Boolean algebra suggests the following combinations of influencing factors have some significance (where a capital indicates presence of factor; lower case its absence; and '?' indicates missing data):

	Influencing Factors	Summary	Cases
Presence of effect (f=1)	aCde	No signature qualification Public authority response No popular vote No direct effect	Kingston, Bristol and Scotland petitions
	ABcDe	Signature qualification Time limit No public authority response Popular vote No direct effect	New Zealand petition with advisory referendum
	ABCDE	Signature qualification Time limit Public authority response Popular vote Direct effect	Switzerland indirect initiative
Absence of effect (f=0)	A?cD?	Signature qualification ? Time Limit No public authority response Popular vote ? Direct effect	Bulgaria initiative
	aBcde	No signature qualification Time limit No public authority response No popular vote No direct effect	Estonia e-petition

While recognising that this is a small sub-set of the data, we can draw some initial conclusions. The report of the Local E-democracy National Project provides evidence that many of those initiating and signing online petitions in Kingston (case 1) and Bristol (case 2) had not participated in the political process before or signed more traditional paper petitions (2005: 56, 422). The study of participants in the Scottish system (case 8) indicated that petitioners felt they had had an effect even when if their petitions were unsuccessful, simply because they had been able to raise a particular issue (Carman 2006). How might we interpret the different results observed between those petitions which have been effective in drawing citizens into the political process, and those that haven't (Estonia e-petition (case 12))?

The data suggests that the difference lies in the lack of a formal feedback mechanism to the wider population in Estonia. By contrast, in the three UK-based cases (Bristol, Kingston, Scotland), there is a formal mechanism through which the petition is considered by the public authority and its response made public. The failure to respond effectively can de-motivate citizens.

The differences between the structure of the two other cases – Switzerland (case 20) and New Zealand (case 13) – makes it difficult to make any comments about the relationship between participant efficacy and petitions linked to some form of popular vote.

Comparative evidence is available from the United States where Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan have analysed data on efficacy from across states – some of which have institutions of direct legislation (initiative or popular referendum) and others that do not.¹ Their analysis indicates that what they term internal efficacy (individuals' perception that they have the resources and skills to influence government) and external efficacy (their perception of the responsiveness of government) is higher in an institutional context within which direct legislation plays a role. They add that '[T]he substantive magnitude of the effect, moreover, rivals that of education, which has been demonstrated to be a consistent predictor of efficacy' (Bowler and Donovan 2002: 390).

A significant caveat to these findings is that the results do not hold and are in fact reversed for citizens within minority ethnic groups. There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. First, minority-ethnic communities are often relatively poor and in the US, initiators of a petition typically have to hire paid circulators to qualify their proposition for a vote: for example, in California a successful petition requires signatures that equate to 5 per cent of the turnout for the previous state election (around 400,000 signatures) to be collected within 150 days. It can cost in excess of \$1 million to qualify an initiative in California (Lupia and Matsusaka 2004: 471). As Thomas Cronin argues, there is no 'mythical citizen' who initiates petitions (1999: 207), it is organized interests who are able to afford professional signature drives and/or call upon an army of committed volunteers. Most citizens cannot access such resources – particularly those from poorer and/or minority communities

¹ The discussion of the broader literature on direct legislation in this report draws extensively on Smith (2009).

– and hence ‘the issues placed before the voters reflect the interests of groups with money or highly motivated volunteers’ (Magleby 1984: 76). Such uneven participation may also be present in stand-alone petitions. Take for example the Scottish example (case 8): ‘Comparing petitioner survey respondents to large, national, random-sample surveys, petitioners are disproportionately older (average age 57.3 years), male (66.6 per cent) and self-identified as middle class (56.2 per cent). Further, 58 per cent of petitioner respondents stated they have a university degree. One of the primary findings of this report is that only a small, distinctly defined segment of the public generally uses the petitions system’ (Carmen 2006).

Second, direct legislation appears prone to repressive outcomes: ‘One of the major concerns voiced repeatedly in discussions of direct democracy is that it raises the possibility of abusive majority rule’ (Bowler and Donovan 2001: 125). While there have been a number of high profile attempts to roll back minority rights, the actual impact has been overstated: the number of anti-minority initiatives has been relatively low and they have rarely been approved (Butler and Ranney 1994: 19–20). Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan suggest that in the US, the success of repressive measures appears to be strongly correlated to factors such as community homogeneity, level of education and size of population: ‘US anti-minority initiatives pass with relatively high frequency only at the local level, particularly in smaller places’. They go on to add that ‘there is no evidence that the initiative results were different from those produced by municipal councils in similar places that have no provision for the use of the initiative’ (Bowler and Donovan 2001: 133). Legislators can be equally as intolerant as citizens. And it is important to note that many of the more repressive initiatives have been sponsored (either directly or indirectly) by political elites (Bowler and Donovan 2001: 135).

Third, it has been argued that direct legislation tends to accentuate difference (Magleby 1984: 190) in a way that is often disadvantageous to minority social groups. Avigail Eisenberg argues that direct legislation tends to reinforce an *undifferentiated*, rather than *differentiated*, understanding of political equality. In other words, where minorities are (or appear to be) appealing for distinct group rights or special status to protect against discrimination or rectify unjust disadvantages, then they ‘are far more likely to find referendums an alienating event’ (Eisenberg 2001: 158). In contrast, Eisenberg argues that direct legislation can be (and has often proved to be) an effective vehicle for minorities that are appealing to an undifferentiated conception of equality to ensure similar treatment to the majority community. Here, proponents of equal treatment are typically able to appeal to values that reinforce the self-perception of the broader political community. According to Eisenberg, ‘one cannot justify the use of a referendum on the basis that referendums are a politically neutral means of resolving the issue... the very use of referendums creates an atmosphere that biases the proceedings against claims for differentiated equality’ (Eisenberg 2001: 164).

For those petitions that lead to a popular vote, participation in the ballot tends to be higher where such mechanisms are used sparingly, although turnout tends to rise for more controversial or emotive issues (Butler and Ranney 1994: 16–17). Qvortrup offers some evidence that we may be witnessing ‘selective participation’: ‘participation (the turnout) is a function of the perceived importance of the issue on the ballot. The ordinary voter sees no reason for wasting his or her energy on relatively uncontroversial issues’ (Qvortrup 2005: 29). Second, we tend to witness differential rates of turnout across social groups. As Matthew Mendelsohn and Andrew Parkin argue: ‘in situations of low voter turnout, such as in California, this means that the referendum may amplify the opinion of those most likely to actually vote: white, middle class, suburban voters’ (Mendelsohn and Parkin 2001: 12). But even in Switzerland where political authorities intervene to a greater extent to enable citizen participation, Wolf Linder argues:

direct democracy is demanding, and participation rates fluctuate fairly widely. So, especially when participation is low, the choir of Swiss direct democracy sings in upper and middle-class tones. ... The most important restriction on the democratic norm of equal and general participation... lies in the unequal representation of social classes. (Linder 1994: 95)

Qvortrup contends that this conclusion has been exaggerated, although his evidence still suggests an under-representation of citizens with low education and in unskilled manual occupations, and an over-representation of graduates and senior managers in direct legislation across a number of polities (Qvortrup 2005: 31–35). Uneven participation across social groups can have a significant impact on the results of direct legislation, particularly when the outcome is close (Magleby 1984: 120).

g. Effect on communities

Table 7.3: Influences on communities

	Influencing Factors	Summary	Cases
Presence of effect (g = 1)	aCde	No signature qualification Public authority response Popular vote Direct effect	Japan and Scotland petitions
	ABcD	Signature qualification Time limit No popular authority response Popular vote	California and Colorado direct legislation and New Zealand advisory referendum
Absence of effect (g = 0)	–	–	–

Compared to the other two outcome factors, the evidence both from our selected cases and the broader literature is relatively weak. The main effect on communities noted in the five cases where there is adequate evidence relates to the capacity of petitions to generate activity in civil society. This should not be surprising given that civic organisations will often use a petition to mobilise and attract new members.

Our cases again divide into two. First petitions that indicate some effect again share the characteristic of a formal mechanism through which the petition is considered by the public authority and its response made public: local petitions in Japan (case 5) and the Scottish parliamentary system (case 8). Feedback is crucial.

The second group of three cases are those where the petition is linked to a popular vote: California (case 9), Colorado (case 10) and New Zealand (case 13). It is notable that the binding nature of the vote is not apparently significant given New Zealand's presence in this list. However, the three cases share a petitioning system that requires a certain number of signatures to qualify in a specified period of time. This is a clear incentive for mobilisation on the part of civic organisations wishing to promote a proposition. Similarly, the fact that the proposition goes to a popular vote also acts as an incentive for civic activity: in this case for both proponents and opponents.

Public support for direct legislation is impressive. As Wolf Linder notes, 'the popularity in Switzerland of direct democracy is enormous. In a 1991 survey for instance, just 14 per cent of interviewees agreed with the idea of restricting the referendum in favour of more parliamentary power' (Linder 1994: 134). Similarly, Cronin reports on various surveys from across the US during the 1970s and 80s where, consistently, two-thirds or more of respondents signalled their support for direct legislation and were critical of the idea that powers should rest with the legislature instead of allowing initiatives (Cronin 1999: 78–80). Russell J. Dalton and his colleagues provide similar evidence from across Europe. Reporting on the 1997 Eurobarometer survey, he notes: 'Among those Europeans who express an opinion, 70 per cent are positive about the direct democracy of the Swiss system' (Dalton, Burklin et al. 2001: 145). What is clear from this European analysis is that there is a strong link between support for direct democracy and political dissatisfaction with existing political institutions and incumbents.

There appears to be a paradox here: large swathes of citizens (often from particular social groups) choose not to participate in direct legislation, yet they strongly support the idea that decisions should be made directly by the people rather than by a distrusted political elite. It is important to recognise that even the 35 and 40 per cent of the population regularly participating in Californian and Swiss ballots respectively represent significant numbers, although legitimate concerns remain about uneven participation across social groups (as discussed earlier). Whilst the popular vote is binding, individual citizens may well calculate that their own contribution will make minimal difference to the outcome. It is pertinent to recall Qvortrup's observation that many citizens may engage in selective participation. Given their general

disinterest in politics, it is only when they perceive that their interests and values are at stake that large numbers of citizens participate (Qvortrup 2005: 28–31).

h. Effect on decision making

Table 7.4: Influences on decision making

	Influencing Factors	Summary	Cases
Presence of effect (h=1)	A?Cde	Signature qualification ? Time limit Public authority response No popular vote No direct effect	Finland petition cancelled out by Japan and Sweden (same factors)
	abCde	No signature qualification No time limit Public authority response No popular vote No direct effect	Scotland petition
	ABDE	Signature qualification Time limit Popular vote Direct effect	Hungary, California, Colorado, Bavaria, Liechtenstein, Italy, Latvia and Switzerland initiatives
	ABcD	Signature qualification Time limit No public authority response Popular vote	Hungary, California Colorado, New Zealand and Liechtenstein
Absence of effect (h=0)	ABCde	Signature qualification Time limit No popular vote No direct effect	UK and Spain petition (N.B. Japan and Sweden cancelled out by Finland)
	A?cD?	Signature qualification ? Time limit No public authority response Popular vote ? Direct effect	Bulgaria initiative
	aBcde	Time limit No public authority response No popular vote No direct effect	Estonia petition

It should not be at all surprising that the largest grouping of devices that indicate an effect on decision making are those that incorporate a binding popular vote (forms of direct and indirect initiative and popular referendum): Hungarian localities (case 3), California (case 9), Colorado (case 10), Bavaria (case 11), New Zealand (case 13), Liechtenstein (case 16), Italy (case 17), Latvia (case 19) and Switzerland (case 20). The only two examples where this is not an attribute of the device in New Zealand (case 13) where the vote is required but advisory, and the Scottish petition system (case 8). The other stand-alone petition that had a positive impact – local petitions in Finland (case 4) – was cancelled out by the Japanese (case 5) and Swedish (case 6) examples which shared similar characteristics but had no evidence of effect. It is notable in the Scottish case that it has an apparently effective mechanism for considering petitions through its committee system and as such petitions have a reasonably high profile amongst legislators. Evidence from other petitions is fairly poor suggesting that when petitions are not tied to an effective process where the proposition is considered either internally by the public authority or through a public vote, they tend to have little material effect on the decision making process.

Analysts of direct legislation make much of the fact that policies in those political systems with forms of direct legislation (initiative or popular control) tend to reflect the median voter's preferences (Gerber and Hug 2001: 103–5). Direct legislation can be thought of 'as a 'median-reverting' institution that pushes policy back toward the centre of public opinion when legislatures move too far to the right or left' (Lupia and Matsusaka 2004: 474).

Responsive rule is not only achieved through successful direct legislation – unsuccessful campaigns and the very threat of an initiative can affect the political landscape. For example, drawing on evidence from the Swiss experience of the initiative (case 20), Wolf Linder argues that even when initiatives are unsuccessful, they can have an effect on the political process by placing new issues onto the political agenda, accelerating the adoption of policies and expressing discontent with the political establishment (Linder 1994: 105). Most commentators on Swiss democracy argue that the *indirect* effect of direct legislation has been fundamental to the development of the country's 'consensus democracy' as political elites have integrated different interests into the governing process as a way of anticipating challenges. The process whereby the federal government and parliament are given time to consider initiative propositions and offer counterproposals means that there is a great deal of interaction between political elites and the authors of initiatives (Kobach 1993; Kobach 1994; Linder 1994). Simply counting the number of successful initiatives in particular policy areas does not give us a fair representation of the effect of direct legislation mechanisms: their indirect effect must not be discounted. There is also evidence of the indirect effect of direct legislation in the US. Anticipating the potential for initiatives, public authorities tend toward policy that reflects the median voter's preference and hence majority opinion (Gerber and Hug 2001: 103–5). The indirect effect of stand-alone petitions – unless the petition is significantly large – is likely to be much less since the lack of a vote gives little indication of the popular support for the proposition.

These findings need to be tempered given our earlier discussions in this report. First, whilst there may be relatively few examples of successful repressive campaigns, the indirect impact of direct legislation may be considerable. Where populations harbour anti-minority feelings, Elisabeth Gerber and Simon Hug argue that there is a clear correlation between the policy preferences of citizens and the policy outcomes of states in the US with direct legislation, regardless of whether direct legislation has been used against these minorities (Gerber and Hug 2001: 105).

Second, there is a widespread fear that wealthy interests are able to 'buy' favourable outcomes through direct legislation; that it becomes an instrument of special interest groups. It is clear that organised groups, particularly in the US, are spending vast amounts on campaigns in an attempt to influence voters: at state level, over \$129 million was spent on the campaigns for the 29 propositions in California in 1988; \$15 million on Washington's 12 initiatives between 1990 and 1994; and over \$5 million on average for each initiative in Michigan in 1992 (Gerber 1999: 4–5). The evidence of the effect of money is mixed: Gerber's detailed study of interest group influence on direct legislation in the US suggests that citizen interest groups are actually more successful at passing laws through the initiative process than wealthier economic interest groups, but that economic interest groups have a significant advantage when it comes to blocking initiatives that challenge their interests and using the process to exert indirect influence on political elites (Gerber 1999; Lupia and Matsusaka 2004: 470–2). It is for this reason that many observers of direct legislation, particularly as practiced in the US, argue that we must begin to deal with the imbalances caused by differences in financial power through a firm regulatory framework that includes limits on campaign spending and declarations of the sources of funding (Budge 1996; Saward 1998; Cronin 1999).

7.4 Conclusions

The overarching conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis of the selected cases and the broader academic literature is simple: a relationship between the petition and decision making is critical for achieving community empowerment. Where petitions are linked to a visible outcome it is possible to empower citizens and communities, and to influence decision making.

Arguably the most effective is where a petition is linked to a popular vote: the different types of initiative or popular referendum. Here citizens can see a direct relationship between their actions in creating a petition and a visible outcome. The device can be indirect (where the public authority has a reasonable period to respond to a qualifying petition and is typically able to negotiate with the initiators) or direct (where a qualifying petition goes direct to a popular vote).

While the evidence suggests that there can be a positive impact on all three aspects of community empowerment considered in this report, there are caveats to this finding. First, there is a danger that well-resourced groups

dominate the petition process and the campaign that follows. Second, for petitions triggering a popular vote, there is a risk that legislation initiated directly by the public using petitions can be a vehicle for repressive outcomes. To a certain extent these problems can be dealt with through an effective regulatory framework.

An even more significant caveat is that such direct legislation is far from traditional political practice in the UK. An advisory or discretionary referendum triggered by a qualifying petition is likely to be the most that would be considered – here the evidence from New Zealand and Sweden is contradictory. Much depends on how it is institutionalised.

It is more simple forms of stand-alone petition that have the support of Government policy makers in the UK, as expressed in recent policy documents such as the *Communities in Control Real People, Real Power* White Paper. The relatively low cost of institutionalising petitions into decision making is clearly attractive to policy makers, although such costs increase where effective review and response mechanisms are institutionalised. The *Local Petitions and Calls for Action Consultation* recently published by Communities and Local Government in 2007 shows that there is a recognition that meaningful response mechanisms need to be institutionalised by local government if and when they adopt petitions (Communities and Local Government 2007: 5). The UK central Government's Number 10 e-petitions website guarantees a response to petitions signed by a minimum number of signatures, so the Government is not proposing a legal duty on central Government to respond to the petitions it receives.

Our basic conclusion still has purchase in relation to petitions that are not connected to popular votes (just under half of our sample). The most significant factor for these devices appears to be the extent to which public authorities take petitions seriously in terms of their institutional response. Here the Scottish example stands out as exemplary in the way that petitions are considered by a significant committee in the Parliament. If petitions are to be more widely promoted, this is the finding that needs to be most widely recognised.

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Case sources and outlines: petitions

Case	Description
1	<p>E-petitioning in Kingston (local)</p> <p>Source: Local e-democracy National Project (2005) <i>'From the Top Down' An Evaluation of E-democracy Activities Initiated by Councils and Government</i> (Bristol City Council) Available at: http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC/Documents/eDemocracy_from_the_Top_Down_ODPM_2005.pdf Accessed 16.08.08</p> <p><i>Napier University has developed an e-petitioning system. This document reviews the system including how it works, accessibility and use, by local authorities in Kingston and Bristol. More information is provided on Bristol.</i></p>
2	<p>E-petitioning in Bristol (local)</p> <p>Source: Stephen Hilton (2006) 'Developing Local E-democracy in Bristol: From Information to Consultation to Participation and Beyond', <i>Aslib Proceedings</i>, 58(5):416–428</p> <p><i>This journal article looks at the rolling out of a range of direct democracy initiatives in Bristol, on- and off-line. E-petitioning just one of several new tools being piloted in Bristol.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Local e-democracy National Project (2005) <i>'From the Top Down' An Evaluation of E-democracy Activities Initiated by Councils and Government</i> (Bristol City Council) Available at: http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC/Documents/eDemocracy_from_the_Top_Down_ODPM_2005.pdf Accessed 16.08.08</p> <p><i>Napier University has developed an e-petitioning system. This document reviews the system including how it works, accessibility and use, by local authorities in Kingston and Bristol.</i></p>
3	<p>Referendums in Hungary (local)</p> <p>Source: Reti, P. (2004) 'Hungary', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>

Case	Description
4	<p>Petitions in Finland (local)</p> <p>Source: Anckar, D. (2004) 'Finland', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Bogdanor, V. (1994) 'Western Europe', Butler, D. and Ranney, A. (eds) (1994) <i>Referendums Around the World: The Growing Use of Direct Democracy</i> (Washington, AEI Press)</p> <p><i>This is a chapter in a book considering theoretical and practical issues in relation to referendums around the world, including those called by government, and those initiated by citizens. How direct democracy fits in with existing mechanism of representative government is a key concern of the book. Bogdanor's contribution is a review of direct democracy in Western Europe.</i></p>
5	<p>Referendums in Japan (local)</p> <p>Source: Numata, C. (2006) 'Checking the Centre: Popular Referenda in Japan', <i>Social Science Japan Journal</i>, 9(1):19–31</p> <p><i>This journal article considers the use of referendums at local level in Japan. Though use of the mechanism is heavily restricted, the author believes that citizens can use petitioning for referendums as a way of setting the agenda.</i></p>
6	<p>Referendums in Sweden (local)</p> <p>Source: Goldmann, M. (2004) 'Sweden', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>

Case	Description
7	<p>Referendums and petitioning in Bulgaria (local)</p> <p>Source: Sirakova, N.I. (2004) 'Bulgaria', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>
8	<p>Petitions in Scotland (regional)</p> <p>Source: Source: C.J. Carman (2006) <i>The Assessment of the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions System 1999–2006</i> Scottish Parliament Paper 654, available at:</p> <p>http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/petitions/reports-06/pur06-PPS-assessment-01.htm Accessed 20/08/08</p> <p><i>This is Scottish Parliamentary Paper review of the workings of the Public Petitions Committee, including details on procedures, petitions submitted and the outcomes of the process as a whole, and of individual petitions. The changing role of the Public Petitions Committee and the experiences of people submitting petitions are also discussed.</i></p>
9	<p>Initiative and referendum in California (regional)</p> <p>Source: Qvortrup, M. (2005) <i>A Comparative Study of Referendums: Government by the People</i> (2nd edn.) (Manchester, Manchester University Press)</p> <p><i>This text considers theoretical and practical aspects of referendums, with examples from around the world, current and historical. Government and citizen initiated referendums are covered together.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Cronin, T.E. (1999) <i>Direct Democracy: The Politics of Initiative, Referendum and Recall</i> (London, Harvard University Press)</p> <p><i>This book considers the operation of citizen initiatives, referendums and recall mechanisms, drawing on a range of contemporary examples from around the world.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Smith, G. (2009) <i>Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizenship Participation</i>, Cambridge University Press (in press)</p> <p><i>This book considers a range of democratic innovations, including examples and more general theoretical discussion of citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, direct democracy and e-democracy.</i></p>

Case	Description
10	<p>Initiative and referendum in Colorado (regional)</p> <p>Source: Polhill, D. (2006) <i>Initiative and Referendum in Colorado</i>, Initiative and Referendum Institute, University of Southern California, available at: http://www.iandrinstitute.org/REPORT%202006-4%20Colorado.pdf Accessed 25.08.08</p> <p><i>This account of direct democracy in Colorado makes argues strongly for an extension of the use of referendums both within Colorado and generally in all polities. There is rich detail on the historic use of referendums in this state.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Cronin, T.E. (1999) <i>Direct Democracy: The Politics of Initiative, Referendum and Recall</i> (London, Harvard University Press)</p> <p><i>This book considers the operation of citizen initiatives, referendums and recall mechanisms, drawing on a range of contemporary examples from around the world.</i></p>
11	<p>Petitions and referendums in Bavaria (regional)</p> <p>Source: Kampwirth, R. (2004) 'Germany', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>
12	<p>E-Petitioning in Estonia (national)</p> <p>Source: Glencross, A. (2007) <i>E-Participation in the Legislative Process: Procedural and Technological Lessons from Estonia</i> (working paper on EU e-participation project)</p> <p><i>This working paper outlines the relatively recent Estonian e-petitioning system. It includes statistics on the site's use, and detailed analysis of the ICT elements of the programme.</i></p>
13	<p>Referendums in New Zealand (national)</p> <p>Source: Caroline Morris (2007) <i>Lessons in Direct Democracy from New Zealand</i> (London, Centre for Policy Studies Perspective)</p> <p><i>This paper considers the use of citizen-initiated referendums in New Zealand from the angle of lesson-learning in relation to the UK.</i></p>

Case	Description
14	<p>E-Petitions to the UK Prime Minister (national)</p> <p>Source: Smith, G. (2005) <i>Beyond the Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World</i> (London, The Power Inquiry)</p> <p><i>This is a review of a range of democratic innovations around the world, including petitioning, various forms of e-democracy, and citizens' juries. Includes selected case studies.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Iacopini, G. (2007) <i>21st Century Democracy: E-Petitioning and Local Government</i> (London, New Local Government Network) available at: http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/21st-century-democracy.pdf</p> <p>Accessed 25/08/08</p> <p><i>This report from the New Local Government network analyses current challenges to democracy and reviews what has been done so far to address the problem. Finally actions to enhance local democracy, including the use of e-petitions, are considered.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/ Accessed 25.08.08</p> <p><i>This is the website under discussion – checked for rules and regulations in relation to submission.</i></p>
15	<p>Petitions in Spain (national)</p> <p>Source: Guillem, R. and Font, G. (2004) 'Spain', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>
16	<p>Initiative and referendum in Liechtenstein (national)</p> <p>Source: Wohlwend, S. (2004) 'Liechtenstein', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>

Case	Description
17	<p>Initiatives and referendums in Italy (national)</p> <p>Source: Budge, I. (1996) <i>The New Challenge of Direct Democracy</i> (Cambridge, Polity Press)</p> <p><i>This book considers a range of direct democracy mechanisms, including referendums and initiatives across the world and detailed discussion of several case studies. E democracy is also covered.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Qvortrup, M. (2005) <i>A Comparative Study of Referendums: Government by the People</i> (2nd edn.) (Manchester, Manchester University Press)</p> <p><i>This text considers theoretical and practical aspects of referendums, with examples from around the world, current and historical. Government and citizen initiated referendums are covered together.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Erne, R. (2004) 'Italy', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>
18	<p>Referendums in Slovenia (national)</p> <p>Source: Luksic, I. (2004) 'Slovenia', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>
19	<p>Referendums in Latvia (national)</p> <p>Source: Feldhune, G. (2004) 'Latvia', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>

Case	Description
20	<p>Initiative and referendums in Switzerland (national)</p> <p>Source: Smith, G. (2009) <i>Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizenship Participation</i>, Cambridge University Press (in press)</p> <p><i>This book considers a range of democratic innovations, including examples and more general theoretical discussion of citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, direct democracy and e-democracy.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Source: Qvortrup, M. (2005) <i>A Comparative Study of Referendums: Government by the People</i> (2nd edn.) (Manchester, Manchester University Press)</p> <p><i>This text considers theoretical and practical aspects of referendums, with examples from around the world, current and historical. Government and citizen initiated referendums are covered together.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Cronin, T.E. (1999) <i>Direct Democracy: The Politics of Initiative, Referendum and Recall</i> (London, Harvard University Press)</p> <p><i>This book considers the operation of citizen initiatives, referendums and recall mechanisms, drawing on a range of contemporary examples from around the world.</i></p> <p>And</p> <p>Budge, I. (1996) <i>The Challenge of Direct Democracy</i> (Cambridge, Polity Press)</p> <p>This book considers a range of direct democracy mechanisms, including referendums and initiatives across the world and detailed discussion of several case studies. E democracy is also covered.</p> <p>And</p> <p>Ruppen, P. (2004) 'Switzerland', Kaufmann, B. and Waters, D. M. (eds) <i>Direct Democracy in Europe: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe</i> (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina)</p> <p><i>This source is a comprehensive and detailed reference work on citizens' initiatives and referenda across Europe organised on a country by country basis. Detail on national, regional and local direct democracy mechanisms are provided.</i></p>

8. Redress

8.1 Redress: a definition

The mechanism of redress allows citizens to register complaints and grievances, have them investigated and receive feedback and response.

The rights of consumers to redress have been long entrenched in law. For example, US legislation includes 'the right to be heard, to be assured that consumer interests will receive full and sympathetic consideration in the formulation of Government policy, and fair and expeditious treatment in its administrative tribunals' (cited in Hogarth and English 2002, 217). Related to this, it is the consumer's right to 'register his dissatisfaction and have his complaint heard and weighed, when his interests are badly served' (cited in Hogarth and English 2002, 217). Being able to register a complaint, have it investigated and receive feedback on that investigation is widely considered as an important mechanism for protecting and empowering consumers.

The transfer of this right from consumers in a private sector setting to citizens in the public sector is a long standing interest in public policy dating back at least to the 'customer orientation' of the 1980s, the Citizen's Charter in the 1990s, and the broader development of new public management (NPM). This concern has re-emerged in the recent Department for Communities and Local Government White Paper, 'Real People, Real Power' (2008). The right to redress is also an issue of cross departmental concern.

Within systems of redress, different issues of concern can arise:

- Verbal or written redress – where the complaint is about something which requires acknowledgement and an apology, for example when someone has been mistreated
- Practical redress – where the complaint is about a small practical problem that citizens mainly just want to be corrected
- Monetary or public redress – where the inconvenience is higher or the problem has persisted and citizens perhaps would want some form of compensation for the inconvenience
- System redress – where there is a systemic problem, evidenced in but not necessarily restricted to individual cases, the redress would take the form of change in the system going forward
- Public justice redress – this form of redress covers the most life damaging and inconvenient cases, for example concerning medical infractions and social care issues; the redress is likely to include more than one if not all of the above.

These useful distinctions acknowledge the wide ranging potential impact of redress based on the level of inconvenience to the citizen, and the citizen's wider wellbeing. As implied, redress is a potentially diverse and inherently practical, pragmatic tool for engaging with and empowering citizens and communities. Whilst these comments make redress a mechanism of significant interest to policy makers and practitioners, unfortunately such nuance about the nature of complaints and potential redress is not reflected in the wider evidence base.

The evidence base in the academic and much of the policy related literature focuses mostly on systems of complaint and redress and particularly on the process aspects of these systems. The focus on process in the evidence base is perhaps indicative of the primary reason why many of these systems were first established: in order to ensure due process and accountability; for example, the ombudsman system. An ombudsman is an independent complaints body for public services. Once complaints have been escalated or appealed through an internal complaints process they can then be passed to the ombudsman. The enquiry of the ombudsman will focus however on due process rather than the opportunity to empower the citizen or even to ensure customer satisfaction with public services.

8.2 Evidence base

The academic literature does provide extensive material around redress sufficient for the Boolean analysis utilised here. Redress and complaint have also been issues of long standing interest in local and central government and so useful material has also been provided by the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission.

However, the issue of empowerment is only a marginal concern in the literature. Indeed, much of the evidence base fails to comment on the impact and outcome of systems of redress and complaint. The evidence base is largely restricted to a focus on the process of redress and complaint. As such Boolean minimisation is not possible in this instance.

A total of 20 cases have been selected from the evidence base for the synthesis (see Appendix 1). The cases are predominantly drawn from the academic literature but also include reports from the Local Government Ombudsman and National Audit Office. The cases were selected in order to provide examples of redress across policy areas, for example, cases were drawn from health, social care, social services, and policing. Examples were also drawn from across the public, private and voluntary sectors. In addition, cases were drawn from both UK and non-UK contexts.

The cases focus on systems of redress and complaint rather than on particular forms of redress, reflecting the evidence base. A full list of case sources, references and outlines are provided at the end of the chapter.

8.3 Findings and analysis

In the ‘truth table’, each factor is coded either as 0 (where the factor is absent in the case) or 1 (where the factor is present). In the instances where evidence either way is not available, this is also indicated (-). For further detail on the coding of factors see Appendix 3. Findings for each case are discussed in Table 8.1:

Table 8.1: Boolean ‘truth table’: all cases coded against all factors – redress

Case	Description	Influencing Factors							Outcome factors				
		Open to all	Support	Links to decision making	Low resource base	Ethnic minority	Response trigger	Independent body	Citizen involvement	Impact on participants	Impact on community	Impact on decision making	Impact on staff
1	Child advocacy and social services	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	-	-	-
2	Complaint procedures in community care	0	0	0	1	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
3	Citizen Complaint Review Board US police	0	-	0	1	1	0	1	1	-	-	-	-
4	Scottish ombudsman	1	1	0	-	-	0	1	0	-	-	-	-
5	Local government ombudsman, nuisance neighbours	0	0	0	1	-	0	1	0	-	1	-	-
6	Civilian review board, Philippine police	1	-	0	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
7	US Federal Reserve, consumer complaint	1	1	0	-	-	1	1	0	1	-	0	0
8	New York City Police Civilian Complaint Review Board	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	-	1	1
9	National Association of Insurance Commission (NAIC) USA	0	1	1	-	-	0	1	1	1	1	0	-
10	Service Charters Initiatives Spain	-	0	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	1
11	Ontario College of Nursing Complaints Committee Canada	0	1	1	-	-	0	1	1	-	1	1	1
12	American Health Care Complaints Panel	1	1	-	0	0	0	1	-	-	1	0	-
13	New South Wales Police Committee Australia	0	1	1	-	-	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
14	Family Health Service Authority (FHSA) Complaints Committee	1	1	1	-	-	1	0	0	-	1	-	-
15	Police Complaints and Discipline Committee (C&D) UK	0	1	-	1	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
16	Boards of Governors for Hong Kong’s public hospital	0	1	1	1	-	-	0	1	-	1	1	-
17	Boards of Governors for New Zealand’s Health Authority	0	1	1	-	-	1	1	0	1	1	-	1
18	Department for Work and Pensions UK	-	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	-	-	0	-
19	Complaints procedure under the Education Reform Act 1988	0	1	0	-	-	1	0	-	-	-	1	1
20	Local Strategic Partnership Board	0	0	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	0

As noted, the literature on complaint and redress is broadly focused on the process of complaint rather than on the complainant or the outcome of the complaint, notably in terms of empowerment as an objective or outcome. The limitations of the evidence base mean that there is not sufficient evidence to code on all the factors deemed relevant across all the cases. Whilst this restricts the identification of critical success factors, it provides a systematic view of the specific limitations of the evidence. It is however, still possible to draw out some implications for policy makers and practitioners from the available evidence.

8.4 Analysis of influencing factors

a. Open to all

The factor, 'open to all', considers whether the opportunity for involvement in redress is available to all individuals.

Of the 20 cases, only 5 were coded as being 'open to all'. In these cases, the remit of the complaint or redress system was broad, for example users of public services in case 4 (the Scottish ombudsman). In other cases, the opportunity to complain or seek redress was only open to a specific constituency. For example concerning treatment by the police, in cases 3, 13 and 15; or concerning users of a specific public service, such as community care, case 2.

b. Support mechanisms

The factor, 'support mechanisms', refers to whether citizens are assisted in making a complaint. For example, are advocacy or mediation services available, are service users given full and open access to information?

Of the 20 cases, 13 provided some evidence that support was provided to assist citizens in making a complaint. However, the evidence showed that often these support services were not clearly visible to the complainant. In some cases, support only extended to raising awareness about the opportunity to make complaints rather than offering more engaged services such as mediation or advocacy.

Where mediation or advocacy was available, this often took the form of an external service drafted in to the internal complaints process of an organisation rather than being an inherent part of the complaint or redress system. For example, case 1.

c. Links to formal decision making

This factor indicates a link between the complaint or redress process with formal decision making within the organisation.

Of the 20 cases, there was evidence in only 8 of a link between complaint and redress and formal decision making. This is a relatively low figure

particularly when it is acknowledged that in cases where a link may be evidenced, the link is often constituted as part of a broader consultation strategy, so perhaps the complaint system is being reviewed and may include input from citizens. These cases indicate an organisation that is already committed to change. Overall, this indicates that the usual situation in organisations is not to link the complaints procedure with formal decision making processes. This implies that redress is much more about individual customer satisfaction than it is about empowerment.

d. Low resource base

This factor refers to the characteristics of complainants and considers if a significant proportion have a low resource base to draw from, so live in areas of socio-economic deprivation or are part of an acknowledged disadvantaged group in society.

Unfortunately, a substantial part of the evidence base does not record the characteristics of complainants, 10 of the 20 cases considered provided no such evidence. This is indicative of the process rather than outcome or empowerment based focus in the literature.

Of the 10 cases where evidence was available they overwhelmingly (9 in total) indicated that complainants were from a low resource base. This is unsurprising – after all, complainants to social services or community care services are broadly more likely to be poorer or more disadvantaged in society.

The wider literature indicated that there is significant concern within these groups that there are barriers to complaints beyond the issues of the availability of mediation and support. For example, in cases 1 and 2, service users feared recrimination for making a complaint, for example in the retraction of services. As this implies, many service users had low expectations of the complaint process and the likelihood of receiving redress. There was also evidence that if a complaint was made and not upheld, the process could in fact be disempowering for the complainant.

Many vulnerable groups in society were also deferential to those in official positions, for example cases 2 and 14. As such they were less likely to make complaints. If the complaints process was made more accessible, there is a possibility that the number of complaints made may increase, as noted in case 3.

Another issue of concern was that the responses to complaints appeared to be differentiated according to who made them, so if a complaint was made by a professional, middle class individual it was more likely to be escalated than if made by a poorer individual, case 8.

e. Ethnic minority

This factor refers again to the characteristics of complainants and considers if a significant proportion are from an ethnic minority.

Of the cases considered, only 6 of the 20 provided any evidence concerning the ethnic composition of complainants. This is indicative of the process rather than outcome or empowerment based focus in the literature.

Of the 6 cases where evidence was available, again, the majority – 5 of the 6 – indicated that a significant proportion of complainants were from ethnic minority groups.

Three of these – cases 3, 8 and 15 – were examining complaints made to the police. Perhaps this is unsurprisingly considering the strong research evidence about the targeting of young ethnic minority men in particular, by the police. Another example, case 2, concerned children in social services care, again the group is disproportionately composed of children from ethnic minority groups.

One potentially positive note is that perhaps developing opportunities for complaint and redress has the potential to reach some of the most excluded and disadvantaged groups in society.

Case 1: Child advocacy and social services

Pithouse, A. and A. Crowley (2007) 'Adults rule? Children, Advocacy and Complaints to Social Services' *Children and Society* 21, 201–213

Research from a Welsh Assembly government funded study of complaints to social services involving children and their use of advocacy services commissioned by local authorities.

This case is an excellent example of how particular processes of complaint and redress are restricted to a specific constituency rather than being open to the whole community. In this case, the process is restricted to children and their families in the social services care system.

This is a public service that is generally targeted at and used by the most vulnerable in society. The evidence here is that complainants generally draw on a low resource base and a significant proportion of complainants are from an ethnic minority.

However, the research found that guidance on where to find support and advocacy was not always offered when a complaint was first raised. Yet, it was recognised that children and young people often need practical help in getting their voice heard (Templeton and Kemmis 1998). Vulnerable young people need a professional to act on their behalf with vigour and determination (Cleaver 1996). Complaints are more likely to be treated as serious when a pro-active interested complaints officer was involved.

Where advocacy was available, young people were appreciative of it in relation to their complaints. However, it was felt by young people that the process should be more accessible, visible and inclusive.

f. Response trigger

This factor considers if a complaint triggers an automatic response from the organisation targeted.

Of the 20 cases considered, only 5 indicated an automatic response. This may be indicative of the lack of an established process in handling complaints from the public, but is perhaps more likely to be further evidence of the absence of a link between the decision making and practice of an organisation and the complaint and redress process. In 12 cases, there was evidence to suggest the complaint process did not trigger any sort of automatic response.

g. Independent complaints body

This factor considers if the complaint agency is independent from the subject of the complaint. In 15 of the 20 cases considered, the complaint agency was separate from the subject organisation. This is important in ensuring a fair and transparent process for complaint handling. However, it may exacerbate difficulties in effecting change in the organisation targeted by a complaint. There is also a question concerning how complaints are escalated and how many complaints are transferred from the subject organisation to the complaints body.

h. Citizen involvement in complaints process

This factor considers if citizens are involved in assessing/reviewing complaints. Of the 20 cases considered only 7 indicated evidence of citizen involvement in considering complaints. Whilst efforts have clearly been made to make citizen aware of the opportunity to complain and seek redress, citizen involvement in the process itself clearly has not been mainstreamed. In those cases where citizens are involved, it is often their specialist knowledge and expertise that is sought rather than their position as a lay member of a complaints board.

Case 3: Citizen Complaint Review Board, US police

Worrall, J.L. (2002) 'If you build it, they will come: consequences of improved citizen complaint review procedures' *Crime and Delinquency* 48, 355–379

Research considering the hypothesis that when law enforcement agencies make improvements in their citizen complaint review procedures a likely consequence is more complaints.

Case 8: New York City Police Civilian Complaint Board

Bartels, E.C. and E.B. Silverman (2005) 'An exploratory study of the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board mediation program' *Policing* 28(4) 619–630

The study seeks to provide an exploratory analysis of the level of satisfaction of citizens and police officers who participated in police complaint mediation.

Complaints to the police are often likely to be concerned with sensitive and contentious issues and involve some of the more vulnerable citizens in the community. These two cases indicate that where support is provided, and citizens are able to take a more engaged role in the complaints process, for example reviewing and assessing complaints, the complaints process generally is improved, with both parties being more satisfied with the process and outcome. In case 8, where evidence was available, this can also have a recognisable impact on empowerment.

8.5 Analysis of outcome factors

As noted, the evidence base is limited in its analysis of the outcome of systems of complaint and redress, particularly in terms of their empowerment success. This section outlines the available evidence against each of the criteria of empowerment success.

i. Recognisable impact on individuals

This factor refers to the recognisable impact on complainants. It includes impact on participants' sense of efficacy – their confidence or feeling that they could have an influence on decision making if they chose to do so. Impact on individuals also includes the development of skills (e.g. articulating a point of view, negotiating, partnership working, being able to reflect critically on the process and the ability to make judgements), and improved understanding of the complaint process and the issues under consideration.

Of the 20 cases, 12 provided no evidence concerning the impact on participants, 2 further cases indicated that participants were not empowered by the process. Only 6 cases showed evidence of empowerment for

complainants. As such, the literature on complaint and redress does not indicate that it is an effective means of empowerment for those directly involved.

j. Recognisable impact on the wider community

This factor refers to change in the sense that, at the aggregate level, members of the community could have an influence on decision making. It relates also to the expansion of social capital – an increase in associational activity, the density of social networks, or an increase in trust between different social groups.

Of the 20 cases, only 8 provided evidence that the opportunity for complaint and redress had a recognisable impact on the wider community. This figure however, only reflects the potential for empowerment through increasing awareness of opportunities for complaint and redress. It is important however to also acknowledge the lack of evidence of the wider empowerment impact of complaint and redress, 12 of the 20 cases considered provided no evidence on this issue. This finding is perhaps not surprising considering the often case-based nature of complaints. It does however point to the need to develop additional mechanisms for providing more support for complainants.

k. Recognisable impact on decision making within an organisation

This factor refers to the impact of complaint and redress on decision making within the particular organisation. Of the 20 cases, only 7 indicated evidence of this sort of impact. This is perhaps not surprising as the factor concerns a measure of whether a particular system, structure or working practice was directly affected by a complaint. Such issues may only be addressed over a long time frame in a more cumulative way. The evidence of impact on organisations and decision making does however roughly correlate to the link to formal decision making (factor c).

The cases considered here did make some recommendations concerning potential improvements to systems of complaint and redress, notably an organisation providing an individual co-ordinator of complaints not only to provide a coherent approach but also to give prominence within the organisation. This co-ordinator role may also link with the development of a 'one stop shop' for complaints.

l. Recognisable impact on public sector staff

This factor refers to the impact of complaint and redress on those targeted by the complaint. Of the 20 cases considered, only 7 showed any evidence of impact. Of these cases, the consequence was often disciplinary, staff would be reprimanded or dismissed from their position. In only one case, which was specifically concerned with learning, was improving individual practice and learning considered to be an outcome of the complaints procedure. The lack of evidence in 10 of the 20 cases considered may be due to the complaint not focusing specifically on an individual.

Overall, complaint and redress appears to have only a limited impact on empowering complainants, communities, organisations and staff. This limited nature of this impact is exacerbated by the limited evidence on empowerment in the relevant literature.

8.6 Conclusions

Complaint and redress are long standing mechanisms in the public sector. This interest is reflected in an extensive and diverse evidence base drawn from across policy sectors and in both academic and policy related literature.

Many systems of complaint and redress were initiated to ensure accountability and due process. This concern is reflected in the evidence base which focuses primarily on the process of complaint and redress. As this implies, the evidence base neglects the nature of complaints, the characteristics of complainants or the outcome of complaints. The objective of empowerment is perhaps marginal to the primacy concerns of systems of redress and complaint and as such is not prominent in the evidence base.

The report has produced a systematic synthesis of the available evidence and the specific limitations of the evidence. These limitations have made Boolean minimisation impossible in this instance. However, it is possible to highlight the potential of certain factors to drive empowerment.

Redress is a mechanism where support, notably in the form of advocacy, seems particularly important to drive empowerment of complainants. The importance of support is underlined when the characteristics of the complainants are considered. The evidence indicates that complaints on particular public services, for example, social care, are likely to be drawn from socio-economically deprived, vulnerable and/or ethnic minority groups. These groups are those most likely to need support but also those often targeted through empowerment strategies.

Systems of redress are most likely to empower where they are 'citizen centred' so the citizen is supported, but also perhaps involved in assessing and evaluating complaints. The Local Government Ombudsman substantiated the implications and concerns raised by other researchers (see DEMOS, NAO and LGA) by asserting that local people currently meet barriers when pursuing their concerns and grievances, but also that organisations themselves are confused about responsibilities and due process (2007, 39). This confusion undermines any sort of reflexive practice within the organisation or in terms of the working practice of staff. The report argues that complaints can be seen as an opportunity 'to understand "client" perspectives and needs, and to monitor service standards and outcomes, rather than as threats', this however requires service users to be empowered to speak out and an empowering organisational context for staff (Pressman-Shoot 2001, 711).

The importance of taking a more citizen centred approach to complaint and redress has also been raised in recent work by the Local Government Association (LGA) and National Consumer Council (NCC). The focus of the LGA/NCC report was on customer satisfaction and asserted that many of the current systems in place in local authorities to collect information on customer satisfaction are 'now not fit for purpose'; arguing 'they neither deliver systematic and high quality customer information nor do they help local government improve services in the way they might' (2007, 5). LGA/NCC argue for a more 'bottom up' approach based on tools that councils could use to improve their use of customer intelligence. Key indicators of performance should relate to the capability of local authorities in understanding and responding to their customers rather than relying on 'simplistic snapshots of comparative satisfaction' (2007, 7).

Redress also has the potential to reach complainants who are not necessarily personally affected by an issue, but wish to report an issue and already act in a 'civic minded' way. This is indicative of the potential for redress to act as a conduit for building responsiveness but also trust in public services. Here, redress provides the potential for empowerment 'spill over' to the wider community.

The National Audit Office (NAO) has also recently developed a framework for good practice in complaints handling, giving particular consideration to cost effectiveness and value for money (2008). The framework draws on key principles from the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, the British and Irish Ombudsman Association, the Public Administration Select Committee, OFGEM and the New South Wales Ombudsman. The NAO then used this framework as an assessment of complaint handling procedures in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Some of the recommendations made were simple and easy to achieve, for example including a complaint form within the leaflet on how to make a complaint. However, other recommendations that link with those made in the academic literature and the influencing factors identified here, for example, adopting a case worker approach; capturing more information on complaints to learn more about the customer experience; developing the complaints and redress system so as to link more clearly with customer expectations; developing reflexivity in the complaints process including random sampling of complainants to discuss their experience; developing training and sharing of good practice amongst front line staff in how to deal with and respond to complaints; publishing explicitly how complaints have been handled and how services have changed as a result (NAO 2008, 31–34).

The analysis presented here provides specific detail on the limitations of the evidence base on complaint and redress concerning the potential for empowerment. The limitations of this evidence base are a direct reflection of the objectives of the systems of complaint and redress. This acknowledgement together with the recommendations made in the

wider literature indicate that complaint and redress can be mechanisms of empowerment only as part of a wider strategy aiming to improve customer satisfaction with customer services and build trust in democratic institutions. Such a strategy involves the mainstreaming of the involvement of citizens in decision making about service provision. Systems of complaint and redress need to be 'bottom up', reflexive, responsive, and supporting and inclusive of citizens at every stage of the process. The potential to empower through redress is there, but it needs to be part of a broader strategy of change, which is by implication resource intensive.

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Case sources and outlines: redress

Case	Description
1	<p>Pithouse, A. and A. Crowley (2007) 'Adults rule? Children, Advocacy and Complaints to Social Services' <i>Children and Society</i> 21, 201–213</p> <p><i>Research from a Welsh Assembly government funded study of complaints to social services involving children and their use of advocacy services commissioned by local authorities.</i></p>
2	<p>Preston-Shoot, M. (2001) 'A Triumph of Hope over Experience? Modernising accountability: the case of complaints procedures in community care' <i>Social Policy and Administration</i> 35(8), 701–715</p> <p><i>Research exploring how effective complaints procedures are in providing redress for service users. Using primary and secondary evidence, the research evaluates the Department of Health's consultation proposals on complaints procedures in community care.</i></p>
3	<p>Worrall, J.L. (2002) 'If you build it, they will come: consequences of improved citizen complaint review procedures' <i>Crime and Delinquency</i> 48, 355–379</p> <p><i>Research considering the hypothesis that when law enforcement agencies make improvements in their citizen complaint review procedures, a likely consequence is more complaints.</i></p>
4	<p>Seneviratne, M. (2002) 'Joining up the Scottish Ombudsmen' <i>Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law</i> 24(1) 89–98</p> <p><i>Research looking at the Scottish Executive's proposals for reforming the system of public sector Ombudsmen to develop a 'one stop shop' for complaints about public services.</i></p>
5	<p>Seneviratne, M. (2000) 'Local Authorities, nuisance neighbourhoods and the local government ombudsman' <i>Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law</i> 22(4) 451–460</p> <p><i>Research exploring the powers of local authorities to intervene in nuisance neighbour disputes.</i></p>
6	<p>De Guzman, M.C. and J. Frank (2004) 'Using learning as a construct to measure civilian review board impact on the police: the Philippine experience' <i>Policing</i> 27(2) 166–182</p> <p><i>A study to determine the impact of a civilian review board on the police, highlighting 'learning' as a viable construct to measure effect.</i></p>

Case	Description
7	<p>Hogarth, J.M. and M. English (2002) 'Consumers complaints and redress: an important mechanism for protecting and empowering consumers' <i>International Journal of Consumer Studies</i> 26(3), 217–226</p> <p><i>A study of the complaints programme of a US federal agency as a case study for exploring a consumer complaints programme as a tool for empowerment.</i></p>
8	<p>Bartels, E.C. and E.B. Silverman (2005) 'An exploratory study of the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board mediation program' <i>Policing</i> 28(4) 619–630</p> <p><i>The study seeks to provide an exploratory analysis of the level of satisfaction of citizens and police officers who participated in police complaint mediation.</i></p>
9	<p>Goldsmith, E. (2005) 'Consumer Empowerment: Public Policy and Insurance Regulation' <i>International Journal of Consumer Studies</i> 29, 86–92</p> <p><i>The study explores consumer advocacy within the framework of insurance regulation. The study is based on the author's experience as a consumer representative and member of the board of trustees for the National Association of Insurance Commissions (NAIC).</i></p>
10	<p>Torres, L. (2006) 'Service Charters in Spain: Transparency and Citizen Empowerment or Government Marketing?' <i>Public Money and Management</i> June</p> <p><i>Research analyses the service charters initiatives in Spanish regional and local governments. It examines the role of service charters in the development of improving citizen's trust in government.</i></p>
11	<p>Bearwood, B. Walters, V. Eyles, J. and French, S. (1999) 'Complaints Against Nurses: A Reflection of 'the New Managerialism' and Consumerism in the Health Care?' <i>Social Science & Medicine</i> 48 363–374</p> <p><i>Research discusses how the new managerialist techniques have affected the nursing profession in Ontario, Canada.</i></p>
12	<p>Schlesinger, M. Mitchell, S. and Elbel, B. (2002) 'Voices Unheard: Barriers to Expressing Dissatisfaction to Health Plan' <i>The Milbank Quarterly</i> 80(4), 709–755</p> <p><i>Research explores whether the incorporation of market perspective into American health care plan has led to consumer empowerment.</i></p>
13	<p>Chan, J. (1999) 'Governing Police Practice: Limits of the New Accountability' <i>British Journal of Sociology</i> 50(2), 251–270</p> <p><i>The paper discusses managerialism and the impact it has had on accountability. The study is based on the experience of an Australian police force.</i></p>

Case	Description
14	<p>Nettleton, S. and Harding, G. (1994) 'Protesting Patients: a Study of Complaints Submitted to A Family Service Authority' <i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i> 16 (1), 38–61</p> <p><i>The paper discusses the procedures used for the resolution of grievances. The main focus of the research is upon complaints concerning health professionals within the community.</i></p>
15	<p>Walters, I. and Brown, K. (2000) 'Police Complaints and the Complainants' Experience' <i>British Journal of Criminology</i> 40, 617–638</p> <p><i>The research centres on the position and experiences of police complainants. It goes on to analyse the extent to which complainants are satisfied with the quality of service provided during, and the independence of complaints investigations.</i></p>
16	<p>Hayllar, M. (1999) 'Reforms to Enhance Accountability and Citizen Involvement: A Case Study of the Hong Kong Hospital Authority' <i>International Journal of Public Administration</i> 22(3&4), 461–498</p> <p><i>Research discusses the public hospital reforms that have taken place in Hong Kong. It focuses on the changing nature of the Hospital Authority from that of a paternalistic bureaucracy and minimal citizen involvement to one of enhanced public accountability and citizen involvement.</i></p>
17	<p>Paterson, R. (2002) 'The Patients' Complaints system in New Zealand', <i>Health Affairs</i> 21(5) 70–79</p> <p><i>Research focuses on New Zealand's experience with the patients' complaint system and discusses the implications for the quality of health care.</i></p>
18	<p>National Audit Office (2008) 'Department for Work and Pensions: Handling Customer Complaints' NAO: HC 995 Session</p> <p><i>The report examines how complaints are handled in three Agencies at the Department for Work and Pensions – Jobcentre Plus, the Pension Services and the Disability and Carers Service. The two latter agencies have merged to form a new agency – the Pension, Disability and Carers Service. As the report was conducted before the merger it refers to the agencies separately.</i></p>
19	<p>Harris, N. (1993) 'Local Complaints Procedures Under the Education Reform Act 1988' <i>Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law</i>, 15(1) 19–39</p> <p><i>Article discusses the complaints procedure established under section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988. The procedures were introduced as part of the reforms designed to foster greater accountability among education providers to the consumers of the education service.</i></p>
20	<p>The Commission for Local Administration in England (2007) <i>Special Report: Local Partnerships and Citizen Redress</i> Audit Commission, HMSO</p> <p><i>Report analyses various local partnerships and the problems that are involved when handling complaints. The main focus of the report is on the Local Strategic Partnerships.</i></p>

9. Policy delivery implications

9.1 Background

Additional research was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (Communities and Local Government) together with the Local Authority Research Council Initiative (LARCI) to supplement the systematic review.

A systematic review of evidence can only reflect the scope of the evidence base available. The review has determined that the evidence does not directly address important issues for policy delivery. Such issues include the potential re-distributional effects of mechanisms; the relative cost effectiveness of different mechanisms; and the risks of implementing mechanisms.

This research sought to address the practical delivery implications of mechanisms for community empowerment by drawing on practitioner expertise. The research team has sought to complement their extensive combined knowledge with practical expertise and experience of delivering these mechanisms for empowerment from the wider community of policy makers and practitioners in local government and the community and voluntary sectors to address the shortcomings in knowledge. A series of workshops were convened each focusing on one of the specific mechanisms contained in the systematic review and discussing the practical implications of their delivery; concerns which the current policy and academic literature are unable to address.

9.2 Workshops

Practical expertise from local government and the community and voluntary sector was convened in six workshops each focusing on a specific mechanism for empowerment. The workshops provided an opportunity for participants with practical experience of delivering these mechanisms at the local level to share and reflect on their practice.

Participants were identified through contacts provided by Communities and Local Government, the Audit Commission and the research team. These contacts focused on individuals recognised as reflexive practitioners who had participated in previous research, evaluations and workshops. A call also went to all local authority Chief Executives in England to identify relevant individuals within their organisations. The call specified that individuals had extensive practical experience of delivering the specific mechanism and were open to sharing their practice. The individuals identified will provide an ongoing useful network for further research and policy development on the theme of community empowerment. The workshops were all half day

sessions and were all held in November 2008 in London, Manchester and Leicester.

9.3 Participants

The workshops were intended as small group discussions with each involving between 6 and 10 participants. The workshops were deliberately small so as to facilitate a focused conversation on the issues at hand.

Participants tended to occupy a senior or strategic role within the authority or organisation they worked in but with practical experience and expertise at delivery on community empowerment.

In order to have an open and candid discussion, confidentiality was offered and specific comments in the report will not be attributed to participants.

9.3.1 *Structure*

The workshops were structured so as to allow sharing of the research findings and an opportunity for reflecting on practice.

The workshops were focused on three key questions important in shaping local strategies for delivering community empowerment: (1) Who engages and who benefits from the mechanism; (2) How to assess/measure the cost effectiveness of the mechanism; (3) What are the risks of empowerment? Each workshop addressed the questions in relation to the six empowerment mechanisms addressed in the systematic review:

9.3.2 *Who engages and who benefits from the mechanism?*

This question attempted to ascertain the potential re-distributive or reinforcing impacts of the mechanisms. Discussions centred on:

- The characteristics of who engaged with and benefited from the mechanism
- Did this include so called 'hard to reach groups' such as BME and new communities, older people, children and young people and the socially disadvantaged?
- What strategies could improve the 'reach' of empowerment?
- How do the mechanisms compare?

9.3.3 *How to assess/measure the cost effectiveness of the mechanism?*

This question attempted to understand the costs – both financial and resource based – in delivering this mechanism for empowerment. Discussions centred on:

- How to define 'cost'?
- How costs may be offset or minimised?
- How do mechanisms compare?

9.3.4 What are the risks of empowerment?

This question attempted to understand the risks in delivering a mechanism for empowerment. Discussions centred on:

- What different risks may arise?
- How might risks be minimised?
- How do mechanisms compare?

The workshops also provided useful detail on: how mechanisms are currently being used; and insights and issues that practitioners wanted to share with policy makers. This report provides comment on these points together with recommendations for practice and guidance on delivering empowerment.

9.4 How is the mechanism being used?

Participants in the six workshops were asked to share their experience and practice in designing and implementing mechanisms for empowerment. The examples provided by practitioners, set out below, provide useful and interesting insights into the wide ranging application and current use of these mechanisms.

9.4.1 Asset transfer

- A Development Trust in Humberside where council housing on an estate with a bad reputation has been transferred leading to an increase in property values and in the desirability of the estate as a place to live.
- The requirement to reduce the number of community centres run by a council in the north east which saw the centres as liabilities in terms of their running costs.
- A county council in the south east which has put the management of some youth centres and libraries out to community groups while retaining control of the physical assets.
- A systems approach across the council in a big Midlands city council which emphasises transparency and consistency of process, proactive community appraisal and capacity building in community groups.

9.4.2 Citizen governance

- A large city council has developed citizen governance on five "mini LSPs" using district committees. It has also placed citizen governance at the heart of its housing renewal strategy.

- A local authority in South Yorkshire has committed resources to training and supporting school governors and ensuring they are able to fully participate in the meeting in relation to understanding budgeting and IT processes for example.
- The district and shire authorities represented in the workshop gave examples of citizen representation at LSP and more devolved level, including local joint committees and local community action planning. In one case this included a system of devolved budgets and the capacity to “buy in” services.

9.4.3 E-participation

- In Greater Manchester the various local authorities were using e-participation to test citizens’ views on a congestion charge on motorists entering the area.
- In Birmingham “The Big City Plan” was a subject for E-participation. This was felt to be a relatively low key affair, given that the details of this plan would “bind the councillors for the next ten years”.
- An overview of E-participation in France suggested that many aspects were similar in terms of how local authorities attempted to engage with citizens through electronic media. In particular scepticism was evident about the link between the contributions made by citizens and their impact on the decisions eventually emerging from politicians and managers. However, although France has a tradition of petitioning generally, E-petitioning does not take place at local government level. Instead every ministry at national level attempts to engage citizens through E-participation in its policy decision by means of electronic forums and debates.
- “Digital Dialogues” is a central government initiative in the UK which examines “what makes engagement through E-participation work?” The messages coming out of this are that issues need to be of “direct relevance” to the potential participant.

9.4.4 Participatory budgeting

- Two small (£20,000 each) pilots in a North East council had focused on environmental improvements. One of the significant “spill over” effects had been the way people from disadvantaged groups had been engaged in the process.
- Also in the North East a city council had been engaged in district budgeting over the last three years. Two pilots focusing on the environment and young peoples’ issues had used a community events model to give local people a positive experience which was “above all fun!” People from the five wards who were “the keenest” on participatory budgeting had been engaged in this way with as many as 120 people from diverse backgrounds attending each event.
- In the North West two pilots had been run for two years using Area Forums in two wards. A “small grants pot” was the subject of competitive

bidding and peer voting on each others' applications. The council had received positive feedback from participants and requests for the relatively simple voting rules to be made more sophisticated. It was significant that participants had voted projects concerning activities for young people to the top of both priority lists.

- A community group in a city in the south of England had persuaded the local PCT to invest £100,000 to promote health projects on their estate as NDC funding came to an end. A participatory budgeting approach was used to allocate these funds through a local panel.
- Two shire counties had approached participatory budgeting through members' allocations. In the North East a council had completed the research and preparation for a scheme which would cover 500,000 citizens with over £2m allocated (£150,000 each to 14 devolved centres).

9.4.5 Petitioning

In terms of types of issue, petitions to do with the well-known regulatory duties of the council (e.g. against planning applications and licensing of premises) were strongly evidenced. However, in terms of the size of petitions, the agency of the petition leaders was clearly an important factor and variations from 11 to 3,500 signatories were recounted, with the one petition to stop the closure of the crèche attracting 246 signatures on behalf of a service used by 7 families.

Petitions discussed included those ...

- For residents' car parking
- For restrictions on speed limits on this roads and traffic calming
- Against reduced frequency of rubbish collection
- Against planning applications and licensing of premises
- For, and then against, new parish councils being set up
- Against a rehabilitation centre being set up in the area
- To pressure bus companies to reroute for greater access
- To pressure PCTs to improve local services
- Against a third runway at Heathrow
- Against post office closures
- Against school mergers
- Against the closure of a crèche
- For cycle pathways
- Against young people involved in antisocial behaviour
- Against travellers' sites and increasing racial diversity in the area

9.4.6 *Redress*

- The senior managers in an inner London borough and a district council see the task as principally about changing the organisational culture of the council to empower staff towards customer satisfaction in line with a private sector ethos.
- A borough council has encouraged complaints from residents and has seen a subsequent rise in overall number but a drop from 50 to 10 in complaint findings which are contested and are referred for arbitration to the Ombudsman.
- Three shire counties are attempting in different ways to make horizontal and vertical links between complaints and redress and other processes and policies. These involve linking community forums and equality impact assessments; taking an overview of services at local scrutiny committees and attempting to pre-empt complaints; and bringing together a range of information about different contacts with the council and linking this to the business planning process.

It is clear from these examples that mechanisms for empowerment are already out there, though they are often at an early stage of development in many local authorities. The examples also indicate the usefulness of engaging the expertise and reflections of practitioners on the issues around empowerment.

9.5 Who engages, who benefits?

A central concern in attempting to deliver empowerment is to consider who engages with and who benefits from empowerment mechanisms. The underlying objective in raising this question is to assess the re-distributive potential of the mechanisms. Are the mechanisms simply furthering the empowerment of those who already feel that they can influence local decision making, reinforcing the distribution of influence, or are the mechanisms useful in attempting to engage hard to reach groups?

9.5.1 *Who engages?*

a. 'Those that know how'

Across the mechanisms, practitioners suggested that those that engaged were seen to be the members of the community that were already involved in some form of participative governance or community activism and so had the capacity and skills required and were better placed strategically to take advantage of this mechanism and community empowerment opportunities generally.

b. What about 'hard to reach' groups and 'new communities'?

Most of the practitioners participating demonstrated an awareness of the value of engaging with 'hard to reach' groups – including black and minority ethnic

communities, the socially disadvantaged, children and young people, the disabled, older people – and ‘new communities’ – including asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants. However, there were clear difficulties across the workshops in talking in specifics about these issues. Increasing the ‘reach’ of empowerment was of clear importance but there seemed to be a lack of innovative strategies to do this and of the skills required.

Many local authorities had specific and separate strategies for engaging with these groups. Practitioners suggested however, that these separate strategies can at times have a counter-intuitive effect of further marginalising groups from the mainstream of citizen governance by providing them with an isolated political space. Practitioners perceived a need for informal community development strategies to support hard to reach groups to engage in mainstreamed processes rather than formal strategies for the specific inclusion of such groups.

There does however seem to be a positive sense from practitioners about the potential for mechanisms to engage with ‘hard to reach’ groups. For example, many new communities brought with them an appetite to be involved in local democratic processes and represented a welcome stimulus for the development of citizen governance.

9.5.2 *Who benefits?*

Practitioners were generally enthusiastic about the potential spill-over effects of mechanisms for empowerment to the communities of shared interest, the wider geographic community and to organisations involved.

Asset transfer: a practitioner example

Asset transfer is a means of facilitating the transfer of management or ownership of a community asset from the public sector to a community or voluntary sector organisation. This was seen to have wide ranging benefits.

For example, individuals in the community felt like they had benefitted if they were able to stop the closure of a local facility and continue the service it provided.

The wider community also benefitted from the transfer of significant assets to a community and voluntary sector organisation as it was perceived to have contributed to the overall regeneration of the area. House prices in the area had increased and the estate had become a desirable place to live. Hence there were material benefits which “spilled over” from a small group to a much larger group of citizens.

Individual organisations were also considered to be able to benefit from receiving the training and personal development which was part of the process of asset transfer, raising the group’s profile and creating leverage for further opportunities. These benefits were all seen to aid organisational development generally and play a part in community empowerment.

9.5.3 Strategies for improving the reach of empowerment mechanisms

a. Provide something qualitatively different

Some initiatives which have been labelled as community empowerment are a continuation of existing practices which may not engage 'hard to reach' groups as effectively as possible. One clear route is to provide a qualitatively different option.

E-participation: a practitioner example

Discussions of e-forms of participation and engagement can often cover the same issues as broader discussions, reflecting that problems 'online' can reflect those 'offline'. However, e-participation can be seen as qualitatively different from other mechanisms and encourage engagement and the spread of benefits.

In optimistic terms, *anonymity* might encourage citizens, who would usually fear reprisals from the authorities in face to face settings, to express their views. In addition, if sufficient time was allowed for online debates to mature, it was felt that the influence of single issue fanatics (SIFs) and "astroturfers" (those attempting to use websites to create a false impression of grass-roots support for something) was likely to be diluted. In this way it was proposed that those from disadvantaged groups, such as those with a disability and those whose first language was not English, could participate. In addition those without extreme opinions on a particular policy issue could also be heard – "middle voices on line".

The second characteristic of e-participation *a-synchronicity* allowed participants to reply to a communication at their time of choosing and possibility not at all. In this way many uses of E-participation are less intrusive than the phone call and less likely to escalate than the face to face debate in a formal meeting. E-participants can control the pace at which the debate develops and impose "cooling off" periods. Again it was felt that this element of control and protection may encourage those who were fearful of face to face debate, or unused to its institutions, to participate.

However, attendees generally agreed that both the literature and direct experience "stop short" of providing compelling evidence of the redistribution of community empowerment through e-participation. If as an estimate suggests that "40 per cent of the population are digitally excluded" the main beneficiaries may be those already empowered, including for example councillors in Bristol who were said to have generated 35 per cent of e-petitions in the city, and central government itself which had found a way of passing down the difficult decisions on "wicked issues" to local people.

Participatory budgeting: a practitioner example

Participants believed that participatory budgeting was an effective mechanism for bringing in “people who would not be involved in other things” and one project estimated that “over 50 per cent of those who came along are not those who would normally participate”.

In particular, participatory budgeting schemes can be designed to reach particular target audiences. One project which was particularly interested in developing services for children and young people, lowered voting ages, linked in with school and college curriculums, used ‘planning for real’ techniques related to budgets available and actively facilitated the involvement of children and young people in decision making.

b. Support/advocacy for citizens

Active facilitation for hard to reach groups to get involved can be supplemented by training programmes, mediation and advocacy aiming at building a trinity of *knowledge – skills – confidence*. Practitioners argued that local communities often exhibited high levels of optimism and ambition for the governance area with which they engaged in the early stages of their involvement and this could be nurtured and sustained.

Simple branding: a practitioner example

The language used by central government and consequently those involved in using the mechanism “is not accessible to many people”. This was seen as a challenge in communication and in producing ideas and terminology which were immediately identifiable to people in local communities and drew them into engagement with community empowerment.

In some of the participatory budgeting examples discussed, there had been a conscious effort to address the issue of inaccessible language and ‘rebrand’ the initiatives in plain language.

One example saw local authorities drawing parallels with the X Factor and Dragons’ Den TV programmes. Participants agreed that a “rebranding exercise” was almost always required to take a scheme “from the town hall to the village hall.”

One authority had branded participatory budgeting as ‘You Decide’ another as ‘Your health, your vote, your decision!’

It was considered important for practitioners to actively outreach to citizens and to make an effort to work in a different way. Practitioners clearly need guidance on creating inclusive and integrated strategies of empowerment that use a mix of mechanisms. The community and voluntary sector was seen as an excellent source of innovative practice and as a source of information about cultural practices which could facilitate more effective design of

initiatives. In addition, the role that community development can play in reaching out to and supporting the involvement of hard to reach groups and new communities should not be underestimated.

9.5.4 Comparing mechanisms

Many of the reflections on the characteristics of those engaged, the potential benefits and strategies for improvement are relevant across the mechanisms. However, it is important to consider the relative effectiveness and potential of the different mechanisms to redistribute influence. The mechanisms that can attract engagement from more diverse communities will have the most potential to deliver this redistributive effect.

The more formal and long standing mechanisms of citizen governance, petitions and redress can all empower those directly participating and influence decision making along with providing some degree of spill-over to the community. Citizen governance is however a mechanism more clearly limited to those citizens and community groups with existing capacity to engage, it also requires a sustained commitment over time and each instance only includes a relatively small number of people. Petitions and redress are an opportunity to build trust in democratic institutions such as local government. However, these are reactive mechanisms for the citizen to voice a concern. As such, groups seen to be lacking in capacity such as hard to reach groups and new communities are perhaps less likely to engage in these mechanisms and so be empowered by them. However, these three mechanisms have the advantage of familiarity; citizens and communities recognise and understand these mechanisms.

Asset transfer is a newer mechanism however it also requires a sustained commitment from citizens. Although there is an opportunity for the asset transfer and community anchor organisation to act as a catalyst for wider community engagement and empowerment, involvement in managing the asset inherently only engages with a small group with the capacity to manage and take ownership of the asset. However, by offering assets to a range of diverse groups within the community, new services and opportunities to engage could potentially be provided to citizens that mainstream service provision and local authority led initiatives may not reach.

E-participation has the potential to offer a qualitatively different opportunity for empowerment (see box earlier). However, there are significant barriers to online involvement that affect those hard to reach groups.

Participatory budgeting is the mechanism that seems to offer the greatest potential for re-distribution. The deliberative nature and scope for decision making that PB inherently offers, is an attractive prospect to 'hard to reach' communities. If the process is facilitated to avoid conflict and community development work is given the opportunity to reach out to new groups and support their involvement, PB offers an opportunity for re-distribution of influence and resources.

9.6 How to measure/assess cost effectiveness?

In a context of budgetary constraint and limited resource, an assessment of the relative cost effectiveness of different mechanisms is an important concern. However, the overwhelming sentiment from practitioners was that whilst the financial cost of implementing a mechanism could be quantified and is an important issue, it should be considered against the resources required in terms of staff commitment; benefits over the long term and wide ranging indirect benefits that may stem from the mechanism.

It is also important to acknowledge that few places have sought to implement a significant number of the mechanisms on offer. As such a relative estimate of cost effectiveness is difficult to make; particularly when the costs incurred depend on the size of the authority, scale of the initiative and the existing institutional arrangement and community organisation in place. In addition, where a mix of mechanisms has been introduced, practice is not necessarily shared and expertise may be disparately held. For many places, implementation of these initiatives is relatively recent and as such any assessment of cost effectiveness may be premature and inaccurate.

Practitioners repeatedly raised the question of what the situation in terms of community interest, engagement and empowerment would have been if no mechanism for empowerment was put in place and that implementation costs should be balanced against wider potential costs incurred and benefits to be gained. In this sense, many practitioners felt that a focus on cost effectiveness was perhaps not in the 'spirit' of debates about empowerment.

9.6.1 *Off-setting costs against benefits*

As this point implies, simple cost can potentially be evaluated, effectiveness is far more difficult to assess. Practitioners felt that the often intangible nature of empowerment meant that decisions about effectiveness were political decisions as opposed to technical decisions that could be determined from evidence. At the local level, this perhaps presents an ongoing role for elected members.

In any assessment of empowerment, the objectives need to be clearly defined. However, community empowerment is a complex and difficult issue; there are a range of longer term benefits that may be difficult to quantify, practitioners suggested the following, for example:

- Transferable training and skills for managers and people from the local communities
- An increase in voluntary activity in the area
- Event specific benefits such as a healthy meal and a positive experience of the day and the council who organised it
- "Raising the city's profile"

Some practitioners also made broader claims about wider social benefits from empowerment initiatives such as:

- Benefits in community cohesion
- Impacts on anti-social behaviour
- Increased voter turn out

9.6.2 *Minimising costs*

Practitioners also emphasised the importance of evaluating costs and benefits from different perspectives, for example, from those of the organisation, its staff, community, and citizens as this can vary.

Creating a 'value for money' system of local petitioning: a practitioner example

Petitions are a mechanism that could be considered 'low cost' to citizens; it is simple to sign your name to a petition and the wider public in general already know how petitions work. Yet for local authorities, the costs of petitioning was considered to be 'high', both in terms of processing individual petitions and in terms of increasing use of the mechanism. Costs varied according to the issues involved and the structures already in place within local authorities. Petitions could be just the beginning of accumulating costs to the authority if they required a substantive response, public consultation or change in policy.

Several methods were identified by practitioners to control costs and enhance effectiveness. In some local authorities attempts were being made to streamline the process by applying a criterion of 'subsidiarity'. Subsidiarity involved ensuring that a petition received a response from the lowest feasible level in the organisation commensurate with the issues raised. Rather than automatically requiring debate in full council, petitions that focused on an area of officer discretion could be dealt with by that officer.

One of the most prominently discussed opportunities to ensure cost effectiveness was early intervention. By being responsive from the outset, engaging in a constructive and committed dialogue, local authorities were not only able to deal with community concerns in a cost effective manner but were also able to build trust and reduce risks of disempowerment and exclusion.

Complaint and redress – the importance of early intervention: a practitioner example

Practitioners were able to identify a range of costs to the organisation which resulted from receiving a large number of complaints. Quantifiable costs included the costs of processing complaints and communicating with complainants; officer time spent in researching individual complaints; legal costs; and costs which were attributable to the “escalation” of an individual complaint. Costs which were more qualitative in nature were identified as impacting on the trust in and reputation of the organisation; the customer’s general perception of the organisation (“is this a good organisation to be involved with?”); and the continuing attrition of staff morale from a large number of aggressive complainants. Costs to citizens of complaining were felt to be less onerous than in some other mechanisms because of the defined nature of the processes and outcome. However it was agreed that complaining usually had an emotional cost for the complainant which at times was evidenced in “shouting down the phone”.

Most organisations published annual reports which covered their complaints and redress processes in terms of quantitative data. Indicators included speed of resolution, escalation rates, outcomes (including how many had been referred to the Ombudsman), and impacts on practice. There was general agreement that there were quantifiable savings to be made by streamlining complaints procedures, and seeking early resolution and avoiding escalation. Many issues could be resolved and not escalated into complaints by a simple willingness on behalf of the local authority or particular staff member apologising, “saying sorry goes a long way”.

9.6.3 Comparing mechanisms

The cost of mechanisms varies according to the perspectives of different stakeholders in the process. Citizens, communities, organisations and their staff all may reflect differently on the costs associated with mechanisms.

Mechanisms that are at greatest cost to citizens and communities, in that they require a sustained commitment, include asset transfer and citizen governance. However, costs for citizens can also be understood in the sense of the importance of what is at stake, so asset transfer might be an opportunity to save a building; citizen governance and participatory budgeting, an opportunity to make decisions about what goes on in the communities and on issues that matter to citizens’ lives. Petitions and redress often reflect issues that seriously affect the lives of citizens and communities and are often an expression of dissatisfaction and so have an emotional cost to citizens.

For organisations and staff, all the mechanisms for empowerment commented on here have a resource commitment associated with them, whether it be administrative time, community development time, or developing a learning process or training programme to go alongside delivering empowerment.

Cost effectiveness however, is an outcomes related question and so the most cost effective mechanism is the one that provides the most empowerment both to those directly participating but also in terms of the spill-over effect on the community (when cost is held constant). Whilst initial start-up costs for citizen governance and participatory budgeting may be higher than for other mechanisms, there is clear evidence of the spill-over to communities – so they arguably present the potentially most cost effective mechanisms. However, it is important to view these mechanisms within a broader, supported strategy for engagement that may draw on the other mechanisms outlined.

9.7 What are the risks of empowering?

The question of ‘risk’ was commented upon by many practitioners as a ‘government’ question. Whilst practitioners understood why risk was raised as a pertinent issue, it was also seen to be underpinned by a risk-averse attitude. As one practitioner commented, ‘risk-averse organisations will fail when it comes to empowerment.’ Community empowerment is inherently a difficult aim to achieve. As such, many practitioners acknowledge that initiatives developed to empower the community may fail. It is important however to not dismiss the objectives of empowerment but rather see failure as an opportunity for learning and developing practice.

These risks are not discrete but often mutually enforcing. It is important to develop a risk assessment appropriate to the particular locality where the initiative is being delivered and develop a holistic strategy to mitigate the risks outlined.

9.7.1 *Failure*

As noted, some initiatives set up to empower communities will fail. Failure can lead to cynicism from the community but also disenchantment from the local authority.

Participants voiced a concern, particularly in the context of asset transfer that citizens were potentially being ‘set up to fail’. Community groups could be drawn into attempting to manage facilities which had been proven to be uneconomical to run under council ownership and had little chance of achieving viability under different ownership. The transfer of liabilities themselves and the financial and reputational risks of failure are apparent.

However, failure is perhaps an inherent part of a difficult process such as community empowerment. It is important therefore to maintain a learning perspective on initiatives.

9.7.2 *Disempowerment*

Excluded groups in the community are already disempowered and there is evidence to indicate that such groups fear retribution or the withdrawal of services if they for example, complain or sign a petition. As such the concern

that these groups could be further disempowered is a real one. If initiatives are seen to be tokenistic or inaccessible, citizens could become more disempowered than prior to engaging with the mechanisms.

9.7.3 *Overburdening citizens*

There were concerns that citizen could become 'fatigued' or 'burnt out' due to demands. For example, the long term commitments that citizen governance and asset transfer require of an inherently small number of citizens could be problematic. For mechanisms such as e-participation, the technical skills and knowledge required could also "turn people off".

9.7.4 *Reinforcing 'usual suspects'*

There was a concern that single issue groups or those already active in the community, often pejoratively described as the 'usual suspects' may dominate the mechanisms for empowerment. As the process of community development progresses some citizens become skilled and incorporated while others are left behind. There is a risk that an elite group develops who become 'gatekeepers' to the communities outside, reinforcing inequities within communities and further marginalising the already excluded.

9.7.5 *Challenging the position of elected members*

Across the mechanisms, practitioners – mostly local government officers and representatives of community and voluntary sector organisations – commented on some of the difficulties in engaging with elected members. In terms of community empowerment generally, participants agreed that councillors were often ambivalent about citizen's participation in governance. Many elected members were seen to be persistent in the sentiment that they had a democratic mandate and wider encouragement for participation threatened that mandate or was unnecessary because of it.

9.7.6 *Lack of sustainability*

There were concerns that a shifting agenda from government and the often short term and fragmented nature of funding made encouraging consistent engagement from community groups a difficult task.

There was also a concern that community empowerment was often dealt with using small peripheral budgets, yet the issues arising from community empowerment often demand changes in larger, mainstream budgets. Local authorities felt that in order to avoid disempowering communities, resources needed to be made available to better respond to citizens concerns and priorities.

9.7.7 *Managing expectations*

The expectations that citizens may have of the empowerment process can often be high, it is important therefore to mediate expectations through an open and frank dialogue with citizens. The local authority should not feel

that it cannot say 'no' to citizens, but it should be prepared to explain its decision making and respond to citizens.

9.7.8 *Exacerbating conflict: individual over community*

There is the potential for conflict or competition between community groups to be exacerbated through empowerment mechanisms, notably participatory budgeting and asset transfer. This has potential consequences for cohesion within the community.

9.7.9 *Comparing mechanisms*

The risks outlined are concerns across the mechanisms. What is important is not so much which mechanism is riskier than another, but rather the acknowledgement of these risks and the development of strategies to pre-empt problems and stop them occurring.

Each mechanism has the potential to fail. It could be argued that mechanisms which the local authority is already confident in delivering, has experience with and that citizens understand have the least chance of failure. As such, citizen governance, redress and petitions present the least risk. However, if local authorities just do what they have always done, they are going to continue to struggle to deliver in a meaningful way on an agenda for community empowerment.

Newer mechanisms of e-participation, asset transfer and participatory budgeting offer a qualitatively different opportunity to citizens and communities with the potential to empower both directly and more widely. These mechanisms require a substantive investment of finance and other resources and benefits are only likely in the long term, however, they do offer a potential for the process of decision making and the outcomes and benefits of those decisions to be qualitatively different; so perhaps a risk worth taking?

9.8 Conclusions

There is considerable expertise held by local practitioners which provide an important resource for policy development in this area. At the local level, community development work provides a further excellent resource in developing locally appropriate strategies for empowerment and for working towards building capacity within communities to engage with empowerment strategies.

Practitioners have voiced concerns about the clarity of objectives for community empowerment. Many practitioners feel that the aims of empowerment are not made clear and this inhibits the development of initiatives as well as creating issues around managing community expectations and the risk of disempowerment. In part this is an ongoing

concern about whether the focus is on individual citizens, customers, communities of interest or geographical communities.

It is also important that community empowerment is an ongoing and sustained commitment and priority for government in order for successful implementation and delivery. This is in part to do with resourcing community empowerment work. An overarching theme in all the discussions with practitioners is the need for community empowerment to take place within a broader strategy of building trust in democratic and public institutions as well as between citizens, communities, elected members and officers.

Community development work is an essential resource in building community empowerment. Not only can community development work create a constructive dialogue, assist in building capacity in the community and facilitating the process, but community development workers can also be a source of 'local knowledge' and assist in understanding community needs, demands and interests. Community development work, and the local insights it provides, assists in making initiatives locally appropriate. This is clearly premised on a national framework that allows local variation and flexibility. Part of building trust at the local level is linking empowerment to a wider process of learning and accepting both the complex and long term nature of the task at hand as well as the possibility of failure.

The learning process can also be more direct. There is a clear and ongoing need for capacity building and training amongst elected members, public sector staff and officers.

Working with elected members on asset transfer: a practitioner example

Participants in the asset transfer workshop reflected on the difficulties in negotiating the process of asset transfer with councillors, who, it was said, were typically concerned about "giving away the family silver". Elected members were generally felt to be "risk averse" and concerned about losing "their" asset in the transfer process.

This was because of "paranoia" about the emergence of a huge demand to take over assets, but also because of long memories and historic grievances. Many members could remember a situation when "those who shouted loudest" were able to secure leases on properties from the council. This "ad hoc" process often backfired on individual councillors when organisations exercised their legal right to buy properties of the council at way below market value and some community groups were 'set up to fail' and could not effectively manage the property.

One way forward suggested, was to take members in "small steps" towards asset transfer. This meant in practice creating a systematic process instead of "ad hoc responses", offering long leases rather than freehold arrangements with leases ranging from 25 to 75 years in some cases, and creating links to beneficial outcomes which are visible to elected members. Another council was taking a similar incremental approach by offering community groups the opportunity to manage council facilities without as yet transferring the assets themselves.

Empowering staff – how to handle complaints: a practitioner example

Participants discussed the issues involved in empowering staff to deal with complaints and provide redress in ways which satisfied the customer of the organisation. An attitude which emphasises the formal and procedural nature of the complaint was felt likely to make customers angry and drive them away. The ideal response emphasised a problem solving mentality which helped the person to articulate the reasons for their complaint. Where possible, this would produce immediate redress in the form of an acceptance of fault and an apology. In this way staff should be encouraged to become “advocates for customers”.

There are also lessons to learn in relation to the three specific delivery issues outlined above: the re-distributive potential of empowerment mechanisms; cost effectiveness; and potential for risk.

Distribution

- Whilst aware and enthusiastic about the need to engage with hard to reach groups and new communities, practitioners provided evidence that community empowerment initiatives are often taken up by those in the community who are already empowered. It is important therefore to give emphasis to being as accessible and open as possible. It is on this objective that existing community and voluntary sector groups along with community development work can make a crucial difference by developing outreach strategies, innovating working practice and going beyond the reach of the traditional public sector. There is potential for empowerment mechanisms to have a redistributive effect, but left solely to the public sector there is a danger of a reinforcing effect which can trigger disempowerment and greater social inequality.
- Providing qualitatively different, open, inclusive, facilitated opportunities for citizens to engage on their own terms is of central importance to meeting the aim of redistributing influence and engaging with hard to reach groups in the community. Participatory budgeting is one mechanism with potential to do this.

Cost effectiveness

- It would be relatively simple to undertake a cost analysis of empowerment mechanisms. However, any analysis of effectiveness would have to take wider indirect benefits into consideration. A greater clarity in the aims and objectives of empowerment is vital to ensuring cost effectiveness, as is a strategy for linking and ensuring the best mix of mechanisms.
- Cost effectiveness is a question of benefit. The mechanism that over the long term provides cost effectiveness is the one that benefits the most or provides the greatest range of benefits at a given cost. The evidence base together with this research shows that although the set up costs of citizen governance and participatory budgeting are perhaps higher, these mechanisms have the potential to provide cost effective empowerment, impacting not only on direct participants but the lives of the community more widely.

Risks

- The risks identified can be broadly pre-empted and mitigated by a carefully worked out strategy of community development and support for the process of empowerment. Empowerment is difficult to achieve and as such there are clear risks of failure. The empowerment process should be understood as a constructive dialogue and a process of learning for all stakeholders. Whilst established mechanisms can contribute to empowerment, it is important to challenge existing practice and take on new ways of engaging with the community. As such asset transfer, participatory budgeting and e-forms of participation offer an opportunity for empowerment on a new scale.
- Practitioners involved in this research provided an enthusiastic commitment to developing a policy and practice framework for empowerment that takes on board both the practical considerations and constraints of policy delivery and embraces the potential for transformational change that community empowerment initiatives may bring to local decision making.

References

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10. Conclusions

This report provides a systematic review of the extensive and diverse evidence base around community empowerment, focusing specifically on six mechanisms with the identified potential to empower. The evidence base is largely qualitative and case based and in order to reflect this, the research team employed an innovative methodological approach which allows systematic comparison of qualitative case material. The approach allows the research team to identify which mechanisms empower, in what ways and in what contexts.

A concern raised by this report is the varied nature of the evidence base on specific mechanisms. The evidence base for some of the mechanisms identified by Communities and Local Government makes little reference to empowerment, it is either a peripheral concern or absent. More broadly, some of the literature does not provide evidence on outcomes of mechanisms, but focuses more on the process of developing and implementing mechanisms. In addition, evidence and expertise on the mechanisms is often held in silos with little existing cross-cutting or comparative evidence available. However, the report provides useful insights and clear implications for policy.

Overall, the mechanisms selected showed the potential to empower those directly participating and to influence and shape decision making. However, it was widely found to be more difficult to empower the wider community through the use of such mechanisms. As this would suggest, greater consideration of the potential 'spillover' empowerment effects is required.

- *Asset transfer* is a facilitative mechanism for achieving community management and/or ownership of assets and social enterprise. Asset transfer is a genuine means for achieving a degree of popular control over decision making that can boost resource utilisation and community participation. It is important however to provide ongoing support to individuals and communities interested and involved in asset transfer, both to avoid setting transfers up to fail and overloading volunteers and staff.
- *Citizen governance* is a mechanism covering the role of citizen or community representatives on partnerships, boards and forums charged with decision making about public services and public policy. Citizen governance is a flexible mechanism with broad relevance and with potentially wide reaching empowerment effects. Citizen governance can also importantly buttress existing more traditional forms of representation. The report presents a useful typology of citizen governance reflecting its broad potential application. In order for citizen governance to have the widest empowerment reach, it is important that initiatives are open, supportive and facilitated. Two particularly significant forms of citizen governance – 'local representation' and 'local knowledge' – emerge according to the link to formal decision making. Both types are able to

empower the wider community and shape decision making along with empowering those directly participating.

- *Electronic participation* for example, e-forums and petitions is a mechanism for offering substantively different forms of engagement, and alternative or complementary channels for participation. Whilst policy interest in e-participation is now long-standing, the links between e-participation and community empowerment are largely unproven.. E-participation was found to have positive empowerment effects on those directly taking part. Here moderation and the presence of a highly salient issue were found to be important success factors. However e-participation seems to be particularly limited in terms of its spill-over effects to the wider community. Where there is evidence of broader community empowerment, moderation, clear links to decision making, and the consideration of highly salient issues appear to be the most significant combination of design factors. In addition, the digital divide further inhibits the reach of e-based forms of engagement.
- *Participatory budgeting* is a form of deliberative participation in communities, facilitating decision making on devolved budgets. Participatory budgeting is a tool for empowerment that can have a significant impact in a range of contexts and settings. What is clear from our analysis, however, is that a tokenistic expression of PB is not going to have an effect of any magnitude. The adoption of PB techniques does not lead to quick-fix changes in embedded political, citizen and bureaucratic cultures. It is important that PB be part of a wider strategy to renew decision making. Successful participatory budgeting has to be open, supported and tied to salient issues and be set within a broader context and willingness for transformational political change.
- *Petitions* enable citizens and community groups to raise concerns with public authorities and give some sense of the support for the proposition amongst the wider population. It is a mechanism that is understood by elected members, officers and the community alike. Petitions differ in the extent and manner in which they are connected to formal decision making processes. Some petitions are not linked to a meaningful formal response mechanism from public authorities. Where citizens see no relationship between their participation and outcomes, not surprisingly, such petitions have the least impact on community empowerment and may even be considered disempowering. Other petitions require a formal response from the public authority. Where it is clear that the authority has given due weight to the proposition, the potential for empowerment increases: the device exhibits the potential for impact on decisions, thus providing a rationale for increased political efficacy and activity amongst civic organisations.
- *Redress* is a mechanism for citizens to register complaints, have them investigated and receive feedback and response. Evidence suggests that complainants are often drawn from the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society. Developing citizen centred systems of complaint and redress within a broader effort to build trust in institutions and focus on customer satisfaction has significant potential for wide

reaching empowerment. Systems of complaint and redress need to be more 'bottom up', reflexive, responsive to citizens and inclusive and supportive of their contribution. The evidence base shows that making a complaint rarely induces an automatic response, nor is it linked to formal decision making processes. The potential to empower through redress is there, but it needs to be part of a broader strategy of change.

The systematic review of evidence on community empowerment has provided important insights on the critical factors in the context and design of the mechanism and the potential empowerment reach of the different mechanisms. However, the scope of the evidence available does not always fully draw out the policy implications for delivering local initiatives to empower communities. Practitioners with experience in delivering these mechanisms provide an important source of expertise, feedback and reflection for policy development. Practitioner experiences have also been captured in this research and add significant value to it.

Within this research framework, practitioners were asked to reflect on three key delivery issues around: who benefits and engages with empowerment; the cost effectiveness of empowerment; and the potential risks of empowerment.

Currently, those *engaging* with empowerment and so *benefitting* most from the experience are those individuals with the existing capacity to do so. Practitioners highlighted the important role of community development work and techniques in building capacity and providing innovative strategies for empowerment.

Providing qualitatively different, open, inclusive, facilitated opportunities for citizens to engage on their own terms is of central importance; participatory budgeting is one mechanism with potential to do this.

Any analysis of *cost effectiveness* of empowerment needs to be based on meaningful comparison, take in long term impacts and a consideration of wider social benefits that empowerment may bring.

Whilst initial start-up costs for citizen governance and participatory budgeting may be higher than for other mechanisms that may be adapted or are more short term and simple in their organisation, the systematic review indicates that these mechanisms have the potential to provide cost effective empowerment, impacting not only on direct participants but the lives of the community more widely.

The *risks* to empowerment identified can be broadly pre-empted and mitigated by a carefully worked out strategy of community development and support for the process of empowerment. Empowerment is difficult to achieve and as such there are clear risks of failure. The empowerment process should be understood as a constructive dialogue and a process of learning for all stakeholders. Whilst established mechanisms can contribute to empowerment, it is important to challenge existing practice and take on new ways of engaging with the community. As such asset transfer,

participatory budgeting and e-forms of participation offer an opportunity for empowerment on a new scale.

It is however, important not to expect the grounded experience of practitioners to provide all the answers for policy makers. The knowledge that practitioners hold is often specific and local. It is important that strategies for empowerment seek to take advantage of this local knowledge rather than suppress it.

It is also important to acknowledge that few places have sought to implement a significant number of the mechanisms on offer. As such a relative estimate of cost effectiveness is difficult to make; particularly when the costs incurred depend on the size of the authority, scale of the initiative and the existing institutional arrangement and community organisation in place. In addition, where a mix of mechanisms has been introduced, practice is not necessarily shared and expertise may be disparately held. For many places, implementation of these initiatives is relatively recent and as such any assessment of cost effectiveness may be premature and inaccurate.

As this research indicates each mechanism works in different ways and has different empowerment effects. Some mechanisms have a greater reach and potential to 'spillover' to communities, though the resource commitment from citizens, communities and organisations may be greater. It is not only the mechanism but also how it is implemented and sustained that matters, for example, the level of commitment and capacity from local authorities and their partners; the level of support and facilitation; the extent of flexibility and informality in the institutional set up of the mechanisms.

As noted, evidence and expertise in this mechanistic approach to empowerment is broadly held in silos. As this implies, there is little existing cross-cutting or comparative research across the mechanisms. There is a clear need to integrate each of the mechanisms into an overarching strategy for community empowerment focusing on the links between and mix of mechanisms. The development of such a strategy should involve the 'mainstreaming' of the empowerment agenda so that all engagement between local authorities and citizens is seen as an opportunity by the council to offer support, early intervention, and response in order to facilitate the building of trust between the citizens and public institutions. The next stage of this research aims to provide tools to facilitate policy makers and senior practitioners to think through the development of such community empowerment strategies.

Appendix 1: Mapping the evidence base

Report 1: A map of the evidence base on community empowerment

April 2008

Key Findings

- Community empowerment is a term and concept with contemporary policy relevance and an extensive evidence base. This report maps the evidence around community empowerment and includes searches of academic work together with government departments, think tanks and international organisations. The elements of community empowerment as defined in the Communities and Local Government approach provide a good guide to steering the evidence search.
- Communities and Local Government and its predecessors have been central to the sustained interest in community empowerment. However, a range of government departments, notably the Home Office and the Department of Health have also produced extensive evidence around the issue. Bodies across UK government more broadly have also contributed to the evidence base.
- Over 3500 items of documentary evidence, such as reports and articles were identified through the mapping exercise as relevant to Communities and Local Government's understanding of community empowerment and the six planned research syntheses around various mechanisms or interventions including participatory budgeting, e-participation, tenant participation and social enterprise.
- The mapping exercise has sought to consider both 'community empowerment' in a general sense together with the various and specific aspects of the six syntheses. The planned research syntheses are interlinked but focus on different mechanisms and interventions around community empowerment.
- Whilst the evidence base around community empowerment was extensive and provided strong empirical content, the evidence base around the different aspects of the six research syntheses has varied more.
- Synthesis 1 focuses on public service accountability mechanisms. The evidence base here was extensive, but further clarification is required in order to align particular mechanisms with the overall objective of

community empowerment and its performance assessment. This synthesis requires the longest lead in time.

- Synthesis 2 is concerned with citizen and community involvement in the governance of public services, an issue of long standing policy relevance. The two specific mechanisms of community partnership and tenant participation emerge as the interventions with the strongest empirical evidence base. This synthesis provides one of the clearest opportunities for evidence based development.
- Synthesis 3 focuses on deliberation mechanisms referring to interventions which facilitate citizens in building knowledge and understanding around an issue along with the opportunity to reflect upon it. This is a concern high on the policy agenda. The area of participatory budgeting emerges from the evidence map with the strongest empirical base to build upon.
- Synthesis 4 refers to mechanisms such as petitions, ballots and referenda. Although the mapping exercise has produced some outputs, this is an area with a lack of direct evidence. The lead in time required for the production of a research synthesis in this area should reflect that.
- Synthesis 5 refers to electronic or online forms of engagement and empowerment. The initial search for documents has shown that there is a wide range of material that falls into this category but the amount that can be classified as providing appropriate evidence is more limited.
- Synthesis 6 reflects the cross government concern to facilitate and encourage social enterprise and community business together with community management and ownership of assets. This is an area with an extensive and empirically substantiated evidence base for the development of a resonant and useful research synthesis.

1. Introduction

Participation, engagement and community empowerment are not new issues in the UK; indeed, they have been a central part of government policy since 1997.

The history of official interest in public participation can, of course, be traced back much further than that. The topic has been a focus of government and academic interest from at least the mid-1960s onwards. Our review of the evidence base makes it clear that there has been a sustained and intensive interest in community empowerment in the early years of the twenty first century in many countries reflecting perhaps a search for political legitimacy on the part of policy makers and an increased capacity for civic action on the part of citizens. In Britain, we can see renewed emphasis on these issues since the announcement on 5th March 2008 of a new Empowerment White Paper, to be published in the summer. Coupled with some very specific developments around devices such as participatory budgeting, electronic participation and new forms of social enterprise, the UK government's commitment to empowerment is clear.

This commitment is backed up by significant policy interventions across government. A systematic and detailed search of government publications going back to 1965 identified some 139 documents that contained research or policy advice on engagement or empowerment (see section on evidence across government). Excluding two documents produced in the early 1990s around Citizens Charters, all of these documents have been produced in the last 10 years. Different departments and agencies have all been active in seeking to understand how engagement and empowerment can be enhanced.

Despite this commitment to engagement and empowerment, there is still a lack of understanding of exactly what works and how. The wide range of academic and policy evidence on empowerment has not been properly examined to draw the main lessons from the various initiatives that have been studied. The project, of which this report is the first output, addresses this shortcoming by developing a detailed and systematic study of the existing academic and policy related research around engagement and empowerment. It provides, therefore, the first comprehensive review of the evidence base on community empowerment.

This report sets out the findings from a preliminary yet extensive analysis of the community empowerment evidence base. The project team has systematically searched academic databases, government publications, and the work of various agencies, think tanks and inter-governmental organisations, to develop a detailed map of what evidence exists (see Appendix 1). The project has adopted systematic and meticulous searching techniques to establish a comprehensive base of evidence from both the UK and overseas (see Appendices 1 and 2).

Careful and detailed coding of this research has enabled us to map this evidence across a range of dimensions, including:

- the basis of the research (quantitative or case based methods, conceptual basis etc);
- the location and relevance of the research (UK or overseas, containing policy advice, etc);
- the policy focus of the research (health, education, local government, regeneration, planning, housing, environment, community development, crime and disorder, work, etc).

The evidence base is considerable. In total, the mapping has uncovered over 3500 articles and reports relevant both to community empowerment in general and specifically to the six planned research syntheses. However, the quality of the research identified and its relevance to the UK context is variable. As part of this mapping exercise, therefore, we have started the process of discriminating between the quality and relevance of different pieces and, where relevant, highlighting some examples of key research in specific areas. At the same time, we have also identified those areas and techniques where the evidence base is strongest, and hence, where

government may want to concentrate its interventions in the future. The report also sets out the next steps for the research.

2. Evidence from across government

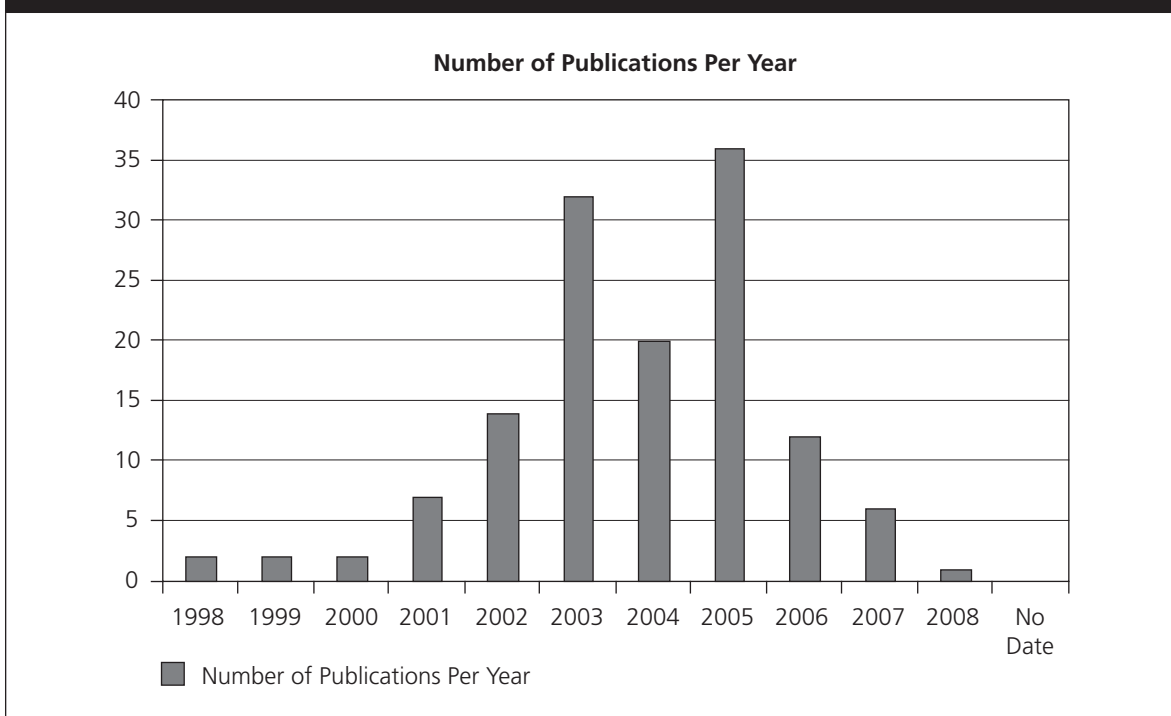
The starting point is to consider what evidence Governments over the years have produced. Given the sustained interest that New Labour have had in this topic over the last decade, it is useful first to take stock of the evidence that it has produced.

Using UK Official Publications database (UKOP), a specialist resource held at the University of Southampton, searches were conducted of the publications from government departments, agencies, devolved assemblies and related organisations. The UKOP database collates official publications from 1965 to the present day and is the most comprehensive searchable source of its kind.

2.1 *The growth in empowerment evidence*

A total of 139 documents from across government were identified in the search as relevant to the general theme of community empowerment and the six specific research syntheses. With the exception of two publications relating to the Citizens’ Charter dating from the early 1990s, all of these documents date from 1998 onwards. There seems little doubt that although ‘community empowerment’ was not a concern of government before 1998, successive New Labour administrations have made a sustained commitment to work around the issue. Figure 1 provides a distribution of the publications over that period.

Figure 1: The ongoing commitment to community empowerment since 1997



As Figure 1 shows, the early years of New Labour's administrations produced only a few pieces of published evidence on empowerment and engagement. The real development of evidence occurred between 2002 and 2006 as programmes and projects began to be evaluated and more widely spread. This lag in the development of evidence probably reflects the time taken for policy to really impact in key areas such as New Deal for Communities and other policies aimed specifically at enhancing participation and empowerment among particular communities or groups. It is also interesting that publications have tailed off since their peak of 36 separate outputs in 2005 to just six in 2007. Given the explicit commitment of Gordon Brown's administration to community empowerment, it seems likely that the amount of practice and related evidence is to grow again in the next few years.

2.2 The distribution of evidence across government

Figure 2 shows the distribution of these different publications across government departments. It demonstrates that community empowerment is an area of interest across government. Many government departments and agencies have been involved in producing evidence, from Communities and Local Government and its immediate predecessors through to various audit bodies. Even Parliamentary Committees have taken empowerment on board in their investigations. The devolved bodies in Scotland and Wales have also been active.

Work around community empowerment is most highly concentrated, as may be expected, in the Department for Communities and Local Government and its predecessors (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department for the Environment Transport and the Regions). Overall, this Department has produced 65 official documents on the subject, representing almost half (47 per cent) of the identified publications. However other government departments, particularly the Home Office and the Department of Health (DoH) have contributed to the evidence base. Some less obvious government departments such as Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the former Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Constitutional Affairs have all also produced work on this area. With the inclusion of the Cabinet Office's interest in this topic, the evidence base indicated here suggests a strong starting point for developing a cross government strategy around community empowerment and highlights potential key partners in this strategy.

Additional sources of work around community empowerment are the Audit Commission, National Audit Office and ombudsmen; together with a range of House of Commons committees and the devolved assemblies.

To understand the evidence base better, each report was coded according to: the type of evidence that it offered; a case based or quantitative approach to analysis; the quality of the empirical evidence offered; as well as the extent to which it was premised upon a strong or weak conceptual base. In such coding, of course, it is possible for a single document to meet more than one criteria (for example, it may contain both qualitative and quantitative evidence). Equally, many official documents fail to meet any of the criteria.

As a consequence, it is possible to become more discriminatory towards official documents by identifying those that offer the most substantive evidence.

The evidence base from government documents around community empowerment is balanced between qualitative and quantitative work, yet draws on only a limited theoretical base. Of the range of indicators analysed so far, it is interesting to note that only a small proportion of the material produced can be classified as being 'strongly empirical' (27); that is, it contains a substantive attempt to understand a particular case or number of cases and to report findings or evidence based upon those cases. A further 37 offer a weaker empirical analysis (i.e. they offer some case based or quantitative evidence but do not develop it), meaning that, overall, 64 official publications offer empirical evidence. It appears, therefore, that work from the Audit Commission, National Audit Office along with Communities and Local Government and its predecessors is most useful to this project as they contain the most empirical reports

Figure 2: The distribution of evidence across government

	Total number of documents	Qualitative	Quantitative	Strongly empirical	Weakly empirical	Strongly conceptual	Weakly conceptual	Policy Advice	UK	Non-UK
Audit Commission	6	5	2	4	0	0	6	6	6	0
NAO	3	2	2	1	1	0	3	3	3	1
L Govt Ombudsman	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Health\Ombudsman	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	1	2	0
Audit/Evaluation	12	7	4	6	2	0	12	10	12	1
Communities and Local Government	5	2	5	1	0	1	4	3	5	0
ODPM	55	27	25	12	11	17	38	50	52	6
ODPM\Home Office	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
DETR	4	2	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	0
Communities and Local Government and predecessors	65	32	32	15	12	19	48	57	62	6
DCA	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
DoH	10	2	3	1	1	2	8	10	10	0
Cabinet Office	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
DfES	5	2	4	1	1	2	3	3	5	0
DTIN\HomeOffice	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Home Office	10	3	4	1	3	2	8	7	10	1
Ministry of Justice	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
DEFRA	4	1	1	0	0	1	3	3	4	0
Other Govt Depts	33	8	12	3	5	9	24	27	36	2
HoC Committees	6	3	1	2	1	2	4	5	6	0
Scottish Parliament	6	2	2	1	1	2	4	4	6	0
Welsh Assembly	12	4	2	2	2	4	8	10	12	0
NI Executive	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Devolved assemblies	19	6	4	3	3	6	13	15	19	0
Miscellaneous	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	1
Totals	137	57	54	30	23	37	102	115	137	10

2.3 Analysis by topic area

The original project conceived six focused syntheses on sub-topics within the broad area of community engagement and empowerment. In order to test the feasibility of such syntheses, the official documents were also coded according to the topic area that they fell into. Figure 3 shows how the evidence base from across government is distributed in terms of its relevance to community empowerment in general and in relation to the six planned research syntheses in particular. From this analysis, initial ideas about where the evidence base may be strongest across the six syntheses may be determined.

Figure 3: The nature of evidence produced across government

	Total	Qualitative	Quantitative	Strongly empirical	Weakly empirical	Strongly conceptual	Weakly conceptual	Policy advice
Community Empowerment	81	42	33	22	19	21	60	66
Public service accountability mechanisms	23	8	8	4	2	3	19	18
Citizen and community involvement	21	3	6	2	0	6	11	15
Deliberation Mechanisms	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	2
Petitions, ballots and referenda	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Online engagement and empowerment	6	1	3	1	0	3	3	6
Community Ownership	7	3	3	0	1	4	3	6

The vast majority of the evidence – 76 of the 137 documents – referred to community empowerment in a general sense. This is to be expected as whilst the six research syntheses have been of interest to government, they have perhaps not been sustained and accepted mechanisms or interventions for community empowerment. Indeed, some of them have only recently become of interest to government. However, such a finding does pose problems for more developed syntheses of these topic areas, especially if this pattern is reproduced in relation to documents from other sources.

The absence of a strong empirical base among official publications is exacerbated when the six areas for further research are considered. The first planned research synthesis is around public service accountability

mechanisms. While, superficially, this area has the most extensive evidence base, closer analysis shows that much of it is around the broad issue of accountability. Other aspects of it focus on policy specific evidence like 'grievance' and seem to be concentrated especially on 'complaint' processes around health service concerns. The link between these concepts and the definition of 'empowerment' as stated by Communities and Local Government seems limited.

3. Initial findings from the broader evidence on community empowerment

Government documents and official publications were only a small part of the evidence base searched around community empowerment. The search included academic literature, both peer reviewed journals (which are generally considered to be the most up to date and contain the most cutting edge research findings) and books, which provide more developed research monographs, edited collections and seminal works. In addition, key think tanks and international organisations were also included in the search.

3.1 *The extent of the evidence base*

There are a number of important differences between this search and that based upon official publications reported in the last section. Most notably, the range of sources is much greater, the nature of the evidence base is wider; and the potential time period in which evidence may exist is much longer. However, possibly the most important difference is that this search is not confined to studies conducted or produced primarily in the UK but also captures international evidence. This difference is of potential importance in assessing the relevance of the findings to the UK context.

Each of these sources was searched using a number of terms identified by the research team as able to capture evidence around community empowerment, together with earlier work using different terms. Evidence around the six planned research syntheses was also collected. Each of the search areas around community empowerment produced substantial returns. For example, searching for 'community development' in a catalogue of collected research library holdings produced more than 45000 items. As such the initial returns were filtered using the definitions of 'community empowerment' and 'community engagement' produced by Communities and Local Government which indicated the particular subject areas of interest. This filtering narrowed the evidence base to some 3606 documents. Figure 4 provides a summary of the evidence base according to source.

Figure 4: Evidence base around community empowerment according to source	
Search area	Relevant returns
Academic databases	2471
Books	681
Government departments	139
Think tanks	201
International organisations	114
Total	3606

It is clear from Figure 4 that 'community empowerment' is a valid search term to use across a broad range of search areas. As may be expected, academic databases have yielded the most substantial search returns and provide the most developed evidence base. As such, academic work will be a key resource for the ongoing project.

3.2 *The nature of the evidence base*

As with official documents, all of the documents retrieved through these searches were coded according to the nature of the evidence contained within them. This enables the analysis to focus on the quality of evidence from across the full range of sources. In addition, the documents were all coded according to a set of key criteria determined by the research team. Figure 5 brings all of this evidence together to show the distribution of documents across these key criteria.

Figure 5: The nature of the evidence base around community empowerment

	Qualitative	Quantitative	Strongly empirical	Weakly empirical	Strongly conceptual	Weakly conceptual	Policy advice	UK	Non-UK	Totals
Community empowerment	1947	752	1483	555	1264	712	1244	727	1445	2626
Public service accountability mechanisms	141	49	140	83	129	101	99	116	117	250
Citizen and community involvement in the governance of public services	105	30	80	38	80	56	80	71	67	162
Deliberation mechanisms	58	14	50	16	45	21	50	17	50	56
Petitions, ballots, referenda	41	12	35	11	27	21	22	21	29	81
Online engagement and empowerment	65	15	36	11	32	21	36	26	28	119
Community ownership of assets/ social enterprise	103	25	81	41	83	51	65	55	85	142
Totals	2460	897	1905	755	1660	983	1596	1033	1821	

As Figure 5 shows, the nature of the evidence base overall differs from the evidence produced by government alone and indicates the value of conducting a more extensive and varied search of additional and complementary sources. As well as providing a more substantial quantity of evidence, it also begins to fill out the gaps that UK official documents alone are not able to address.

As expected the evidence around community empowerment and across the six identified areas is overwhelmingly qualitative in nature. In total, some 2460 of the studies identified were qualitative compared with just 897 that were quantitative. Community empowerment is an area of research that is usually small scale in nature and relies on examples, case studies and even anecdotal evidence. It is not an area that lends itself easily to more quantitative forms of enquiry. It is also noticeable that the pattern is relatively consistent across all of the identified topic areas; qualitative, case based evidence is three to four times more significant in all of them. No single area produces a predominantly different form of evidence base.

The quality of this evidence, however, is a little more variable. As noted, earlier the most important criterion, in terms of this project is the extent of evidence that can be considered to be 'strongly empirical'. It is encouraging to note, therefore, that when the evidence base as a whole is taken into consideration, it is clear that on balance the evidence is strongly empirical. Nearly half of all the documents identified (1905, some 48 per cent) were classified as 'strongly empirical'. This provides an excellent basis for moving forward. The evidence that has been coded as 'strongly empirical' will be extracted for the second stage of the project and the general material re-coded for its relevance to the six research syntheses.

The conceptual basis of these studies is also useful. Nearly half of the studies (some 1660 or 48 per cent) can be classified as strongly conceptual. Again, the distribution is relatively consistent across the different categories. This observation suggests that many of the studies are testing normative theories and establishing the causal relationships involved. By focusing on strongly conceptual pieces, therefore, it may be possible to develop a more nuanced analysis of how different forms of community empowerment are working and the factors affecting development.

The conceptual basis of the work is perhaps not that surprising, given that the majority of it has its roots in academic journals or books. However, what is surprising is how many of the documents offer some form of policy guidance or recommendations; 1596 or 46 per cent. It is unusual for much academic research, especially where it is conceptually based, to develop policy guidance, advice or recommendations. One conclusion that might be reached from this analysis, therefore, is that community empowerment is an area that lends itself more to evidence based recommendations than other areas.

The final, and arguably one of the most striking features of this data, is the extent to which it is international. Of all the documents identified, over half (1821 or 53 per cent) offer evidence from outside of the UK compared with just over 1,000 (30 per cent) that are UK based. The distribution across different topic areas is similar, with the exception of online forms of engagement, where the evidence is more equally distributed. This balance of evidence is important because it will require careful handling in the later analyses of the data. On the one hand, international evidence will, potentially, enrich the experiences and knowledge that this review can draw upon. On the other hand, however, there is also a problem of how relevant international experience is to the context of UK communities.

3.3 *The policy focus of the evidence*

The other way of analysing the evidence base is to reflect upon the different policy areas that it has developed from. As with the earlier analysis, there is a potential overlap in the evidence reported here. Not all studies will fall neatly into a specific policy category; some may straddle several policy areas while others may only be tangentially related to a specific policy area. Yet others may be more generic in nature and not related directly to any of the policy areas identified.

Despite these reservations, however, Figure 6 provides an initial classification of the evidence base broken down by policy area, and analysed according to the different mechanisms used in the earlier analyses.

Figure 6: The distribution of evidence around community empowerment by policy area

	Health	Education	Local government	Regeneration	Planning	Housing	Environment	Development	Crime and disorder	Work	None	Total
Community Empowerment	119	185	409	518	810	227	111	354	767	375	138	2626
Public Service Accountability Mechanisms	21	12	57	25	36	13	3	24	15	3	60	250
Citizen and Community Involvement	8	8	20	35	7	18	10	37	16	7	3	162
Deliberation Mechanisms	0	7	7	12	3	9	2	17	14	1	0	56
Petitions, Ballots and Referenda	0	2	9	2	9	1	0	8	10	1	5	81
Online Engagement and Empowerment	1	3	15	7	11	2	0	11	12	2	1	119
Community Ownership	2	7	17	21	26	13	4	17	25	41	3	142
Totals	151	224	534	620	902	283	130	468	859	430	210	

The areas of government that are most productive in terms of community empowerment are Communities and Local Government and its predecessor, the Home Office and Department of Health. This distribution is only partly reflected in the wider evidence base. Whilst planning, regeneration, local government and housing are all key areas in the wider evidence base along with crime and disorder, health is a policy area with a less extensive evidence base.

In terms of community empowerment generally, the evidence base is most extensive around the areas of regeneration, planning and crime and disorder. The former two areas have a long standing base and concern around issues of community empowerment. However, crime and disorder is a less obvious area for such extensive work.

In terms of the six syntheses, the evidence base for each was most extensive in local government; except for evidence around deliberation mechanisms which was most extensive in the area of development and the evidence around petitions, ballots and referenda. This distribution is to be expected. Local government is widely perceived and accepted as a key site for both governance and policy action and as the level most appropriate to engage with citizens and communities. As such, community empowerment and local government are linked concepts and the evidence base reflects this. Much of the evidence around particular mechanisms of community empowerment, notably participatory budgeting has emerged from the literature around development. In addition, planning is a long standing area for work around community engagement and participation with petitions in particular a common mechanism for citizen involvement. Further analysis and comment on the evidence base around the six planned syntheses is provided in section 4 of the report.

4. Initial findings informing the research syntheses

The initial work on the planned research syntheses has provided an indication of the range (variety of sources), quantity (extent of evidence), and quality (empirical content) of the evidence in each of these areas.

Figure 7: The evidence base across community empowerment and the six research syntheses

Search Term	Qualitative	Quantitative	Strong empirical	Weak empirical	Strong conceptual	Weak conceptual	Policy advice	UK	Non-UK	Totals
Synthesis 1	141	49	140	83	129	101	99	116	117	250
Public Service Accountability	12	7	8	2	8	11	15	13	8	52
Redress	13	3	6	7	7	7	2	4	7	23
Complaint	33	21	37	22	33	33	28	35	31	61
Grievance	11	3	8	8	7	7	2	5	9	23
Ombudsman	72	15	81	44	74	43	52	59	62	91
Synthesis 2	105	30	80	38	80	56	80	71	67	162
Community Partnership	41	12	38	8	29	27	28	23	30	84
Community Board	7	1	3	1	3	3	5	4	2	8
Community Panel	4	1	1	2	3	0	2	1	2	7
Tenant Empowerment	4	2	3	0	2	4	5	5	1	6
Tenant Management	5	1	3	1	3	1	2	1	4	15
Tenant Participation	41	11	29	25	37	17	33	32	26	35
Tenant Empowerment	3	2	3	0	2	4	5	5	1	6
Interactive Reporting	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Synthesis 3	58	14	50	16	45	21	50	17	50	56
Participatory Budget	35	9	32	8	27	13	32	7	32	24
Citizen Jury	15	2	11	7	13	5	14	6	13	15
Citizen Panel	4	3	5	0	2	3	3	2	4	14
Citizen Forum	4	0	2	1	3	0	1	2	1	3
Synthesis 4	41	12	35	11	27	21	22	21	29	81
Petitions	11	1	10	1	8	5	10	9	4	10
Ballots	12	5	9	3	6	6	6	4	9	20
Referendum	18	6	16	7	13	10	6	8	16	51
Citizen Initiative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Synthesis 5	65	15	36	11	32	21	36	26	28	119

Figure 7. The evidence base across community empowerment and the six research syntheses

Search Term	Qualitative	Quantitative	Strong empirical	Weak empirical	Strong conceptual	Weak conceptual	Policy advice	UK	Non-UK	Totals
E-Deliberation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
E-Participation	9	7	5	3	10	3	12	8	6	20
E-Democracy	16	0	11	2	9	5	6	10	4	29
E-Petition	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
E-Discussion	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
E-Voting	4	4	6	1	4	3	7	0	7	9
E-Forum	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Online Deliberation	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Online Participation	5	3	4	2	2	4	3	3	3	12
Online Democracy	5	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Online Petition	5	0	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	3
Online Discussion	4	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	2	6
Online Voting	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	6
Online Forum	3	1	3	0	2	1	2	2	1	9
Synthesis 6	103	25	81	41	83	51	65	55	85	142
Social Enterprise	27	5	21	9	28	4	27	12	23	33
Social Entrepreneur	3	3	1	1	4	2	5	6	3	9
Social Entrepreneurship	3	1	2	1	3	0	2	1	2	8
Social Economy	5	1	4	2	5	3	2	4	5	12
Social Business	3	1	3	0	2	1	2	1	2	3
Community Enterprise	5	0	3	3	5	1	2	2	3	12
Community Ownership	29	3	21	13	16	20	4	16	18	13
Community Management	17	9	18	6	13	12	14	3	23	30
Community Business	9	0	7	3	4	8	6	7	4	11
Credit Union	2	2	1	3	3	0	1	3	2	11
Totals	513	145	422	200	396	271	352	306	376	810

4.1 *Reflections on research themes*

When looking at the evidence around the research synthesis, reviews will be constructed around three themes. First, the nature, quality and extent of the evidence found; secondly the policy relevance and issues thrown up by the theme; and finally, the coherence of the topic and related evidence base; in order to ascertain where the next steps in developing the research synthesis can best be taken.

The initial mapping of the evidence base around the six research syntheses and the specific mechanisms of community empowerment within each has provided 810 relevant reports and articles. The extent of this evidence base is substantiated by more than half, 422, of those documents providing empirically substantive evidence. This is a very good basis for developing the research syntheses.

4.11 **Synthesis 1: Public service accountability mechanisms**

Synthesis 1 reflects a concern across government though particularly within Communities and Local Government with the need for mechanisms of accountability around public service provision that are accessible to the citizen. A concern with accountability is long standing within the public sector and across government and this is reflected in the extensive evidence base around this synthesis.

The conducted searches have yielded 250 articles and reports around this synthesis with 140 documents providing strongly empirical evidence. This is the strongest and most extensive evidence base of all the planned research syntheses, reflecting the breadth of the mechanisms associated with the issue of public accountability. Of the five specific mechanisms explored, 'ombudsman' provided the most extensive evidence – 91 documents – and provided strong empirical substantiation – 81 documents coded 'strongly empirical'. However, the other mechanisms, with only the limited exception of 'complaint', did not provide a viable empirical base.

In government much of the published material is focused around 'accountability' as a general theme. Across the wider evidence base, 'ombudsman' and 'complaint' were terms that provided the highest number of returns. The high returns for the term 'ombudsmen' reflects the long standing presence of the mechanism within government. For 'complaint', the mechanism may be aligned with a particular policy field, namely health. Another specific mechanism included in the search of evidence base, namely 'redress' produced less relevant evidence. This is perhaps reflective of the arguable lack of relevance of this term and indeed the sort of mechanism or intervention it implies with regard to community empowerment. 'Redress' refers to a relationship of exchange between the government and individual citizens rather than a focus on community and the building of the capacity of individuals within that community. The mechanism of 'grievance' again provided little relevant or empirical evidence. Again the term is likely to be specific to the particular policy field around employment related disputes.

Our sense is that of all the areas where further work is to be undertaken, the umbrella term of 'public service accountability mechanisms' needs the most clarification in order for us to focus on mechanisms that share sufficient objectives in order that respective performance can be appropriately assessed. We suspect that the material on complaints will reveal evidence of a relatively weak accountability mechanism since the control of the response remains entirely in the hands of its receiver. The ombudsman provides a sort of half-way-house where the citizen's grievance can be investigated and a response demanded. Redress and grievance procedures suggest the idea of a right held by the citizen and offer on the surface the toughest form of accountability. As argued above, all of these mechanisms tend to provide a focus for individual rather than community action. Should our research synthesis in this area investigate whether there is any evidence on how individual mechanisms might be used in a more collective manner? In order to develop the focus of our work in this area further we recommend that we give ourselves the opportunity for the longest lead in time in this area.

4.12 Synthesis 2: Citizen and community involvement in the governance of public services

This synthesis reflects an ongoing concern across government with local partnerships and engagement with the community in decision making. This broad area of interest is reflected by the second most extensive evidence base across the six syntheses yielding 162 documents. The quality of the evidence within this synthesis varied greatly and the two specific mechanisms of 'tenant participation' and 'community partnership' provided both extensive and strongly empirical evidence. The former yielding 29 empirically substantive documents from 35 overall; the latter 38 from 84.

As noted earlier, planning and regeneration are policy fields with the strongest evidence base and issues of tenant management and participation are long standing related concepts. Community partnership reflects the most succinct and widely used formulation relating to community involvement in governance.

The policy relevance in these areas is high as these mechanisms represent an important element in community empowerment where citizens take a more direct role in the governance and operation of public services. A coherent and effective research synthesis focusing on these two specific mechanisms could emerge in this area on the basis of the evidence base that we now have access to following the mapping exercise.

4.13 Synthesis 3: Deliberation mechanisms

This synthesis reflects a commitment in government and notably within Communities and Local Government to piloting and developing various forms of deliberative decision making; in particular, participatory budgeting. However, the evidence base across government was limited to Communities and Local Government and its predecessors.

Somewhat surprisingly, the evidence base for deliberative mechanisms was limited in terms of our initial mapping exercise. It is fair to say that despite its fashionable status in academic work on democracy, much of the work around deliberation is highly theoretical in nature. However, participatory budgeting emerges as the deliberative mechanism with the most substantive empirical base to work from.

In reference to this mechanism in particular, much of the research in this area is international in its nature. Although this mapping exercise included international academic journals and organisations, extending this line of enquiry may be particularly productive in the second stage of the project; notably employing the resources of the research team in Latin American literature.

Deliberation – that is forms of engagement based on providing citizens with knowledge, understanding and opportunities to reflect – are high on the policy agenda. The area constitutes a coherent focus for research as a mechanism to deliver community empowerment. The research team are confident that given some additional trawling of, in particular, the international literature an effective research thesis could be produced. In addition, a focus on participatory budgeting in particular might be appropriate.

4.14 Synthesis 4: Petitions, ballots and referenda

The searches conducted around this synthesis have yielded some evidence. A total of 81 documents have been collated, with 51 of these concerning the specific mechanisms of referenda. This distribution is also reflected when considering the empirically substantive evidence, with 35 documents collected overall and 16 of these pertaining to referenda.

Referenda have been an area of interest notably in the academic literature although much of the evidence comes from experiences that do not have a particular local focus as far as we can tell without further in depth investigation. Petitions can be used as a trigger to ballots or referenda but as such they are a rather different form of mechanism to those two mechanisms in that they generally raise an issue or concern rather provide a focus for a decision. Of course the decision offered by a ballot or referendum can be mandatory or advisory to policy makers. Another crucial issue is the initiation of the ballot or referendum. Is it to be in the hands of the citizens alone, policy makers alone or some mixture of the two?

There are many additional issues about the construction of the policy parameters for these mechanisms. Again the research team are confident that a useful research synthesis could emerge but would ask for the longest period of time possible in order to produce a coherent focus for the review.

4.15 **Synthesis 5: Online engagement and empowerment**

This synthesis reflects a now established interest in government around online forms of empowerment and engagement. The evidence base overall for this synthesis is strong with 199 collated from across various sources. However, the quality of this research is somewhat limited with only 36 of those documents providing strong empirical substantiation for their findings. Of the specific terms or mechanisms considered, 'e-participation' and 'e-democracy' have provided the most extensive evidence, but with 'e-voting' also providing an empirically viable evidence base.

4.16 **Synthesis 6: Community ownership of assets/social enterprise**

This synthesis allies with the development of mechanisms for communities to manage and obtain ownership of various community based resources and assets. The search around these mechanisms was extended to reflect the strong emphasis currently given by government to social enterprise. The evidence base yielded was one of the most extensive across the six syntheses, with 142 documents being collated. The specific mechanisms of 'social enterprise' (including 'social entrepreneur' and 'social entrepreneurship') and the related concepts of 'community management' and 'community business' provided both the most extensive and empirically substantive evidence base.

Different forms of social enterprise and community business have gained currency and widespread acknowledgement and support in the last decade. Government attempts to facilitate and encourage these mechanisms have engendered one of the firmest cross governmental commitments in the broad area of community empowerment.

There is some evidence, therefore, from which to develop a policy and socially resonant research syntheses and policy guidance.

5. Conclusion

'Community empowerment' has an extensive evidence base across all the sources searched in this exercise. The evidence is of clear interest and relevance to the overall project and in each area there is sufficient strongly empirical material to facilitate further analysis. Government publications in the area of community empowerment peaked in 2005 and are sponsored by a wide range of departments and agencies beyond Communities and Local Government. There are considerable opportunities for cross-governmental learning as further push is made on the issue of empowerment through the publication of a forthcoming White Paper on the issue.

Three criteria were adopted in order to reflect on the evidence mapped: its depth, policy relevance and conceptual coherence. From this process we think four clear opportunities for developed research syntheses can be offered to meet the short-term demands of Communities and Local

Government and government and the strongest opportunity for guidance for government action in the short to medium term. These are:

- Citizen and community involvement in the governance of public services > **community partnership and/or tenant participation**
- Deliberation mechanisms > **participatory budgeting**
- Online engagement and empowerment > **e-participation/e-democracy/e-voting**
- Community ownership of assets > **social enterprise/community business**

Appendix 1a: Methodology for mapping the evidence

Sources of evidence

Area	Specific
Academic databases¹	Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA) Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)
Books	COPAC ²
Government documents	UK Official Publications (UKOP ³)
Think tanks	Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Local Government Association Institute for Public Policy Research Joseph Rowntree Foundation
International Organisations	World Bank OECD United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Asian Development Programme (ADP)
Recent publications	Blackwells ⁴

Each of these sources has produced extensive material around community empowerment and some material in support of each of the six research syntheses. The selection of sources was determined by the research group working with specialists in conducting literature searches and by piloting searches of various sources.

¹ Material published in journals tends to be more up-to-date due to the lead times involved in publishing. Journals can only be effectively searched using databases, which can vary significantly

² COPAC: the combined catalogue of various UK research libraries including: British Library, Bodleian, Oxford University, London School of Economics and University of Manchester.

³ UKOP: specialist resource at the University of Southampton

⁴ Blackwells, specialist academic booksellers including key academic publishers such as: Sage, Palgrave MacMillan, Routledge, University of Oxford Press, Open University Press and Policy Press. Searching this database captures material not yet in research libraries.

Search terms

Database searching is based on the principle of the 'scoping search' which means that the subject researched is described by a number of 'key terms'. These terms referred both to the 'community empowerment' in the general sense as well as the six planned research syntheses.

Each source was searched systematically using the following search terms

Search areas	Search terms
Community empowerment	Community empowerment Community engagement Community development Community participation Community governance Community leadership Community consultation Community capacity building Community involvement Community organisation Community action Community activism Community campaigning Community representation
	Citizen empowerment Citizen participation Citizen governance Citizen involvement
	Local democracy Political empowerment Political participation Public participation
Public service accountability mechanisms	Public service accountability Redress Complaint Grievance Ombudsman
Citizen and community involvement in the governance of public services	Community partnership Community board Community panel Tenant empowerment Tenant management Tenant participation Interactive reporting

Search areas	Search terms
Deliberation mechanisms	Participatory budget Citizen jury Citizen panel Citizen forum
Petitions, ballots and referenda	Petitions Ballots Referendum Citizen initiative
Online engagement and empowerment	E-deliberation E-participation E-democracy E-petition E-discussion E-voting E-forum Online (on-line) deliberation Online (on-line) participation Online (on-line) democracy Online (on-line) petition Online (on-line) discussion Online (on-line) voting Online (on-line) forum
Community ownership of assets/social enterprise	Social enterprise Social entrepreneur Social entrepreneurship Social economy Social business Community enterprise Community ownership Community management Community business Credit union

These initial searches yielded substantial numbers of returns, for example, searching COPAC on 'community development' returned 45,000 items.

Filtering searches

Filtering of these returns therefore took place according to subject relevance (in academic databases for example, on 'social science' or 'political science').

Therefore, the returns were then worked through and filtered according to their relevance to the project as indicated by the specific definitions provided by Communities and Local Government:

Engagement: the process whereby public bodies facilitate citizens and communities' participation in order to incorporate their views and needs into decision making processes, including reaching out to communities to create empowerment opportunities.

Empowerment: helping citizens and communities to acquire the confidence, skills and power to enable them to shape and influence their local place and services, alongside providing support to national and local government agencies to develop, promote and deliver effective engagement and empowerment opportunities

Coding searches

The content of the relevant references was then coded according to criteria including the qualitative/quantitative balance; empirical/conceptual balance; the provision of policy advice; relevant policy area; UK or non-UK basis for evidence.

Initial analysis is detailed in this report with more developed Boolean analysis to follow in the six research syntheses.

Appendix 1b: Analysing searches

- The evidence base gathered here will inform and underpin decisions about the appropriate choice of action.
- The searching strategy employed to locate the evidence base is systematic and replicable.
- The coding strategy allows several hundred references or ‘cases’ to be worked on.
- Using Boolean techniques of analysis allows qualitative researchers to go beyond the common parameters of ‘suggest’ or ‘appear’ and make both basic tabulations of the distribution of evidence but also conduct direct tests of theoretical propositions using the results of cases.
- Boolean analysis takes case orientated materials and case derived ‘data’ in political science and converts them into a form suitable for factor-based research and the systematic testing of hypotheses, thus incorporating the very real advantages of case studies whilst being able to examine systematically cause-and-effect relationships existing in the outputs of many cases.
- The basis of the approach is a ‘truth table’ where findings from all available cases are presented and codified. A list of factors are identified which may act as influencing and outcome factors in each case and their presence or absence is denoted. This process has begun with initial coding of the evidence: ‘1’ to denote the presence of a condition and ‘0’ for the absence, on a number of basic criteria.

The second stage of the research will begin to test more complex relationships, multiple regression etc. by:

- Identifying sufficient influencing factors, though not necessary conditions, ‘or’
- Identifying conditions to produce outcome factors, ‘and’
- Eliminating factors and potentially reducing the causal pattern to relatively few combinations of factors

If a Boolean expression differs in only one causal condition yet produces the same outcome, then the causal condition that distinguishes the two expressions can be considered irrelevant and discarded.

Key with these methodological approaches is that they rest on a contextual understanding of the policy, research and practice of community engagement which this team brings.

Appendix 1c: UK Official publications – list of organisations included in database search

1. Audit Commission
2. Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales
3. Audit Scotland
4. Cabinet Office
5. Cabinet Office Citizen's Charter Unit
6. Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service
7. Department for Children, Schools and Families
8. Department for Communities and Local Government
9. Department for Employment and Learning
10. Department for Education and Skills
11. Department for Education
12. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
13. Department for International Development
14. Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
15. Department of Employment
16. Department of Employment, Skills and Enterprise Network
17. Department of Health
18. Home Office
19. Home Office, Research and Planning Unit
20. House of Commons Select Committees
21. Ministry of Justice
22. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
23. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
24. Prime Minister's Office
25. Prime Minister's Office of Public Service Reform
26. Prime Minister's Committee on Local Government Rules of Conduct
27. Scottish Parliament
28. Welsh Assembly

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Anton Bielecki, Valeria Guarneros-Mesa, Ross Millar, Jing Pan, Mark Roberts, Sally Spurr and Aamer Taj for their invaluable research assistance on this project.

In addition, to Jo Webb and Jason Eyre at De Montfort University Library and Suzanne Walker, Local Governance Research Unit Administrator also at De Montfort University for their support and contributions to this project.

Appendix 2: Outcome factors – criteria for evaluating 'empowerment success'

1. **Recognisable impact on participants involved in process**

Factors:

1a. Political efficacy

Increase in the confidence/feeling that one could have an influence on collective actions if one chose to do so

1b. Skills

Increase in political skills such as public speaking, negotiating, learning how to compromise, recognising when being manipulated and capacity to make judgements

2. **Recognisable impact on communities**

Factors:

2a. Political efficacy

Increase at aggregative level in the confidence/feeling that members of the community could have an influence on collective actions if they chose to do so

2b. Social capital

Increase in activity and/or density of associations in civil society

2c. Social cohesion

Increase in trust between different social groups within the community

3. **Recognisable effect on decision making**

Factors:

3a. Evidence of a sustained impact on decision making

Participation has led a discernible shift in the influence that communities and citizens exert in the decision making of relevant institution(s).

3b. Excluded groups are mobilised

Any impact is sensitive to and inclusive of the interests of different social groups in the community, particularly traditionally politically-marginalised groups (the young, the old, low socio-economic groups, minority-ethnic groups, women).

Appendix 3: Coding of influencing factors

Asset transfer

Code	Name	Description
a	Open to all	1 = the governance of the anchor organisation is open to all local residents 0 = the governance of the anchor organisation is only open to particular organised interests or selected/appointed individuals
b	Support mechanisms	1 = the anchor organisation has been able to access either capacity building training and/or feasibility studies 0 = the anchor organisation has had no access to either capacity building training and/or feasibility studies
c	Long term control of assets	1 = the anchor organisation has a 25 year lease or longer or owns the freehold of the asset 0 = the anchor organisation has a shorter lease or only manages the asset
d	Professional staff	1 = the anchor organisation employs professional staff 0 = the anchor organisation relies only on volunteers
e	Low resource base	1 = the anchor organisation is located in a low-socio-economic area 0 = the anchor organisation is not located in a low-socio-economic area
f	Political 'Buy-in'	1 = the anchor organisation has widespread (and cross-party where relevant) local political support 0 = indication that politicians were resistant or opposed to the transfer of assets

Citizen governance

Code	Name	Description
a	Open to all	1 = the board or forum is open to all citizens 0 = the board or forum is open to a particular section of the community
b	Support mechanisms	1 = support such as training or facilitation is provided to participants 0 = no support such as training or facilitation is provided to participants
c	Links to formal decision making	1 = clear statement of how the initiative links to the decision making process 0 = unclear how the initiative will link to decision making
d.	Low resource base	1 = the initiative is taking place in an area of socio-economic deprivation 0 = the initiative is taking place in an area that is not socio-economically deprived
e	Political and bureaucratic 'Buy-in'	1 = the initiative has widespread bureaucratic and political support 0 = indication that politicians and/or bureaucrats are opposed to the initiative

E-participation

Code	Name	Description
a	Government sponsored initiative	1 = the forum, petition, blog etc is hosted (i.e. owned) by an official body or elected politician 0 = hosted/run by an individual or community group, or commercial interest
b	Moderation of content	1 = there is a specific moderation of content or a promotion of specific topics/issues by the 'owner' 0 = issues and content are generated by citizen – users, with no or only very limited intervention from sponsors (e.g. to avoid libel charges etc)
c	Links to formal decision making	1 = clear statement of how the initiative will be used by decision makers 0 = unclear how the initiative will affect decision making or clearly low impact on decision makers
d	Political 'Buy-in'	1 = the initiative has widespread (and cross-party where relevant) political support 0 = indication that politicians are resistant or opposed to the use of the technology for this purpose
e	Bureaucratic 'buy-in'	1 = the initiative has widespread bureaucratic support beyond the technology department 0 = evidence of bureaucratic resistance
f	Highly salient issue	1 = the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 0 = the issues are arcane or largely unimportant to the community

Participatory budgeting

Code	Name	Description
a	Support mechanisms	1 = the process is facilitated; participants given technical/local knowledge; training provided 0 = participants manage process themselves
b	Commitment to openness	1 = there is strong intervention to engage and support politically excluded groups 0 = no such interventions are made
c	Widespread and deep political buy-in	1 = active support from political elites (action/spending/feedback/sustainable) 0 = limited or no political support
d	Widespread and deep bureaucratic buy-in	1 = active support from bureaucrats 0 = evidence of bureaucratic resistance
e	Issues under discussion of high political salience	1 = the initiative is focusing on issues of widespread concern to the community 0 = the issues are arcane or largely unimportant to the community
f	External partnership	1 = there is an external partnership (for example with NGOs) 0 = no external partnership
g	National political support	1 = there is a legal or policy framework for PB 0 = there is no national policy push/local initiative

Petitions

Code	Name	Description
A	Signatures qualification	1 = threshold number of signatures does need to be achieved before petition is considered 0 = threshold number of signatures does not need to be achieved before petition is considered
B	Time limit	1 = time limit placed on the signature collection process 0 = no time limit placed on the signature collection process
c	Legally required response	1 = relevant authority is legally obliged to respond to qualifying petitions 0 = relevant authority is not legally obliged to respond to qualifying petitions
d.	Popular vote	1 = qualifying petition generates a popular vote on the proposition 0 = qualifying petition does not generate a popular vote on the proposition
e	Spending limits	1 = if the petition moves to a popular vote, limits are placed on campaign funding for proponents and opponents 0 = if the petition moves to a popular vote, limits are not placed on campaign funding for proponents and opponents
f	State funding	1 = public authority provides funds for proponents and opponents of a proposition 0 = public authority does not provide funds for proponents and opponents of a proposition
g	Independent information	1 = public authority or an agency provides independent information on the proposition that has been brought forward 0 = public authority or an agency does not provide independent information on the proposition that has been brought forward
h	Direct effect	1 = the popular vote has direct effect – e.g. it generates a change in policy, law or the constitution 0 = popular vote has no direct effect

Redress

Code	Name	Description
a	Open to all	1 = the board or forum is open to all citizens 0 = the board or forum is open to a particular section of the community
b	Support mechanisms	1 = support such as advocacy or mediation is provided to complainant 0 = no support such as advocacy or mediation is provided to complainant
c	Links to formal decision making	1 = clear statement of how the initiative links to the decision making process 0 = unclear how the initiative will link to decision making
d.	Low resource base	1 = complainant(s) generally draw on a low resource base 0 = complainant(s) do not generally draw on a low resource base
e.	Ethnic minority	1 = complainant(s) are generally from ethnic minority groups 0 = complainant(s) are not generally from ethnic minority groups
f.	Response trigger	1 = complaint triggers automatic response 0 = complaint does not trigger automatic response
g.	Independent body	1 = complaint agency is independent from subject of complaint 0 = complaint agency is not independent from subject of complaint
h.	Citizen involvement	1 = citizens are involved in assessing/reviewing complaints 0 = citizens are not involved in assessing or reviewing complaints

ISBN 978-1-4098-1470-2

ISBN 978-1-4098-1470-2



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