Democratic Devolution. An ethnographic study of a 'whole-of-society approach' to tackling homelessness in Greater Manchester.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network (GMHAN) as a case study in the development of social policymaking in a newly devolved city region. Drawing on eighteen months of insider ethnography and a series of interviews with network members. I examine how the GMHAN created space for the inclusion of Greater Manchester citizens in the design of policy in a newly devolved city region or 'democratic devolution'.

The main research question looks at how community-led policy design methods such as community development are introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context. With the aim to create applicable findings for other devolved contexts and to show how tangible policy can be borne out of civil society action. Through insider ethnographic research, interviews and participant observation, I explore gaps in understanding concerning the deployment of community-led policy design methods and create a picture of how successful the GMHAN was as a forum for transversal community development and policymaking.

I argue that the GMHAN was a successful example of an inclusive forum for policymaking, solidarity and influence, but was not always as successful in its attempts to import transversal community development. My theoretical framework developed from this research proposes that political spaces such as the GMHAN (Arendt, 1951, 1958), transversal politics (Yuval Davis, 1997) and radical community development (Ledwith, 2011, Friere, 1968 and Gaventa, 1980) are all necessary to form a truly 'whole-of-society approach' to democratic devolution; enabling the

creation and enactment of policy on issues of social justice.

1.1 Introduction

Initially set up by the first directly elected Greater Manchester Mayor to operate under a 'whole-of-society approach', the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network aimed to bring all sectors of the Greater Manchester public, private and civil society together to tackle issues surrounding homelessness.

A 'whole-of-society approach', was first commonly used in a global public health context to explain a need for "Institutional coordination and coherence with partners from across society." World Health Organisation (2019, p.1). In using language around a whole-of-society approach, the Mayor was imploring every aspect of society to work together to address the issue of rough sleeping. This was in part a mobilisation of civil society to support the new political structure of the GMCA, but also a call to the political sphere (officers and politicians within the GMCA) to act and act differently.

The GMHAN was created by the Mayor as a method of developing policy and practice through a 'whole-of-society' approach, in the process, utilising softer power to navigate the restrictive legislative environment around homelessness for devolved cities. Co-production, a method of involving service users in the redesign of services, was to be utilised within the network to include people who were or had been homeless at the heart of policymaking in the new city region.

However, members of the GMHAN began to explore whether a more radical community development approach scrutinising the political root causes of homelessness would be more effective in creating policy to truly impact on the structural issues surrounding housing injustice. Transversalism, transversal

community development, or transversal politics seek to bring different worlds and experiences together to effect political and societal change. When brought together with community development and standpoint theory (Hill Collins, 1997), transversalism explains a process from which “each positioning the world is seen differently, and thus that any knowledge based on just one positioning is ‘unfinished’.” Yuval-Davis (1999, p.94).

A political theory developed by feminists in Bologna, Italy, during the 1970s, transversalism or transversal politics, seeks to bring different worlds and experiences together to effect political and societal change. Part of its draw is its applicability to social movements from the 1970s on, especially in combination with standpoint theory (Hill Collins, 1997), as the feminist movements of the city created a “general politics of dialogue and cooperation” (Yuval-Davis, 2012, p.50). Community development, also with a political naissance, enables people to build collectives around shared oppression to address issues of social justice through critical consciousness (Russell, 2015). Transversal community development combines these practices to describe the GMHAN’s aspirations across policymaking, dialogue and cooperation.

I outline the core components necessary for transversal community development, arguing, space for critical consciousness borne out of radical community development is restricted in Greater Manchester, due to some of the same political economic drivers exacerbating housing injustice. Accessible space is a crucial component in allowing civil society to coalesce in order to ‘root’ and ‘shift’ their perspectives to create the truest understanding of inequalities and be best placed to tackle them collectively. However, open public space is increasingly restricted by

material and social capital in Greater Manchester's core. I argue this context means it is vital for civil society to have access to forums to critique the causes behind issues of social justice they are working on, otherwise an endless industry addressing individual outcomes will be created rather than tackling societal root causes of oppression locally, nationally and internationally.

My proposed theoretical framework argues political spaces (Arendt, 1951, 1958), transversal politics (Yuval Davis, 1997) and radical community development (Ledwith, 2011, Friere, 1968 and Gaventa, 1980) are all necessary to form a truly 'whole-of-society approach' to democratic devolution; enabling the creation and enactment of policy on issues of social justice in city regions. I argue a combination of aspects from all three theoretical approaches is necessary to foster an environment for democratic devolution for all citizens, not just the issue of social justice at the top of the agenda, with the greatest political will or strongest advocates. In this, the findings show us the possibilities for civil society in city region devolution and policymaking around issues of social injustice (Jessop, 2020).

Background of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network

As Greater Manchester became a newly devolved city region in 2017, with a directly elected Mayor, housing injustice and homelessness rose to the top of the political agenda. The new Mayor began using the term 'whole-of-society approach' to explain their drive to bring interested parties together to tackle homelessness. The thesis seeks to explore how this term was defined in the process of constituting the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network beyond the Mayor's utilisation of the term. Traditionally applied to collaborative working in international development

contexts, the Mayor sought to bring all facets of society together to help solve the policy and political situation surrounding homelessness, but the GMHAN attempted to expand this remit to include a reworking of power in the new city region.

The GMHAN formed a collective of over two hundred individuals and organisations, compromised of: local, regional and national homelessness organisations, all ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities, the voluntary and community sector, people who have been or currently are homeless, the health sector, Police, Housing Providers, Department of Work and Pensions, Justice and Probation organisations, business, faith groups, the Fire Service, social enterprises, research institutions, cultural organisations, activists, funders and local politicians. Whilst GMHAN events were open invitation, people initially found out about the forums via the Mayor's promotion during events and the media whilst a candidate and through Mayoral advisors and strategic leads during smaller meetings. Later as data was captured at events, invitations were sent to a large mailing list with a request for people to distribute widely and word of mouth spread notice throughout the general homelessness and housing sector and wider civil society.

The network exists in a core-periphery model (Rombach et al. 2014), whereby the wider (periphery) Action Network is a loose collective of people and organisations mainly from civil society, whom gather for quarterly events. This periphery is governed by a core structure of an Advisory Board and action and support team. These both combined to inform Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Mayoral policy. However, core and peripheral members of the network eventually wanted to push beyond this Mayoral remit into community development and transversal politics.

The network's primary tasks were to create policy and practical action required to meet the Mayor's commitments on homelessness. Through the lens of homelessness as an issue of social justice, my conclusions seek to show the possibilities for devolution, both in terms of bespoke policy that can be created within city regions and democratic devolution to civil society and citizens within these new bureaucratic spaces.

Occupying a 'straddling' space between civil society and the political sphere, allowed the network to both critique and access power whilst transversal politics could act as an enabler for individuals to hold this space, especially those who are socially excluded or confined in terms of social capital. Here I define social capital as in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.119) as resources which an individual or group accrue by possessing access to networks, "institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." I found this capital and space has to be shared and led by those citizens who are most marginalised for democratic devolution to function for all citizens and argues this must not be undertaken paternalistically through coproduction, but radically and transversally.

Ultimately, I argue networks such as the GMHAN must occupy and hold tangible space for radical, transversal practices to take place in a political environment designed to hide issues of social injustice behind a cloak of redevelopment. How these spaces are then used is up to critically conscious civil society and citizens driven to alight Greater Manchester as a 'beacon of social justice' (Labour List, 2016).

Research aims and objectives

The main research question is: How can community-led policy design methods such as community development be introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context? The objective is to create practically applicable findings from this for other social justice and devolved contexts.

To answer this I explore 'hegemonic centres', “domains of power where oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality and nation mutually construct one another.” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218). I explore a gap in understanding around the hegemonic centre of devolved local government, as well as decision making within civil society such as the GMHAN. Current research emphasis around homelessness “colludes with the attempts of hegemonic centres to remain opaque” (Yuval-Davis, 2012, p.48) by focussing attention on the most marginalised populations. Turning research focus on the hegemonic power base instead, allows a deconstruction of these power bases, giving opportunity for civil society to critically analyse systemic injustice and eventually reconstruct political power and spaces.

The final aim is to establish if the GMHAN was capable of creating a space for community development, fostering a whole-of-society approach to allow the gaps highlighted in Mackie et. al (2019) around political will, bureaucracy and policymaking to be addressed when confronting national and international socio-economic forces sustaining housing injustice.

Chapter outlines

The main body of the introduction provides an outline of the devolution of political powers from Westminster to Greater Manchester, alongside the existing statistical, policy and political situation around homelessness within Greater Manchester.

The literature review draws together strands of what literature already exists around political spaces, transversal politics and radical community development, highlighting best practice in these areas. Reading around these areas allowed the formation of a theoretical framework to analyse the GMHAN. Through this reading, I established gaps in understanding around political 'hegemonic centres' (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218), how community-led policy design methods, are introduced and supported in centres of political power and the potential for civil society to work with the political sphere to achieve democratic devolution. Specifically, gaps are highlighted around the potential for homelessness and housing injustice. Devolution literature so far focuses on the hard legislative powers devolved from Westminster and thus ignores the potential for social justice issues not included in the Devolution agreement.

Reading on political participation highlights why coproduction was the original vehicle for participation in Greater Manchester around homelessness and why radical community development was increasingly seen as a practical framework for action within the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network. However, reading displayed gaps in the ability for community development to be the total vehicle for change in newly devolved cities, most notably through reluctance to be co-opted and a lack of a transversal approach.

This reading showed apolitical participation is insufficient when working on issues of social justice within a city region where trickle down economics were relied upon to develop the city (Russell, 2015). The role of non-state actors in allowing us "to achieve greater democratisation and greater responsibility for the care and management of our common wealth" (Novello, Mohammad and Buckland, 2017, p.77) is at present under researched in the context of devolved UK cities and leaves us with the main research question for this thesis.

The methodology explains learning from insider ethnography, rooted in understanding human behaviour, environments and their consequences (Lipsky (1980), can highlight what forces hold power in decision making and how action is taken in an attempt to shift power closer to the communities impacted by and working on issues of social justice. Researchers turning their focus to the impact of austerity on the daily lives of individuals within the homelessness and housing system (Hoolachan, 2016) are complemented here.

The findings bring together a timeline of devolution and the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network, to clarify where certain events and decisions opened and closed opportunities for others. The findings move through to understanding what is meant by a 'whole-of-society' approach by looking at the difference between hard and soft power (Nye, 1990) and why soft power was utilised in the beginning of Greater Manchester's devolution. The findings go on to substantiate the GMHAN's spaces, as initial architecture for this soft power, looking at why and how they were created and what was enabled as a result. Along with these spaces or 'fora' were individual actors who participated as both social connectors and gatekeepers to

further power. The final analysis, determines to what extent hard policy around homelessness was created out of these tools for soft power.

The key findings and theoretical framework argue political spaces (Arendt, 1951, 1958), transversal politics (Yuval-Davis, 1997) and radical community development (Ledwith, 2011, Friere, 1968 and Gaventa, 1980) are all necessary to form a 'whole-of-society approach' to democratic devolution; enabling the creation and enactment of policy on issues of social justice in city regions.

In conclusion, transversal community development ultimately appears as a potential practice for political contexts deliberately ignorant to the impacts on marginalised populations. This method appears as a route to democratic devolution and I set out the practical steps needed to introduce, support and sustain this practice within a newly devolved UK local government.

1.2 Context

In 2014, Greater Manchester signed a Devolution Agreement with the UK national Government, the agreement contained few legislative powers or fiscal support (Lupton et. al, 2018) but laid the groundwork for a directly elected Mayor for each city region. In May 2017, Greater Manchester elected its first city region Mayor, responsible for governing the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), covering all ten Greater Manchester boroughs. As part of their campaign manifesto, Labour's candidate for Mayor promised to end street homelessness by 2020, using a 'whole-of-society approach' to tackle the issue of social justice (GMCA, 2017). This proved a lightening rod through their campaign (The Guardian, 2017) and they were elected as the first directly-elected Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Homelessness policy however, was not covered by the original Devolution Agreement and other approaches were needed in lieu of legislative or fiscal control to achieve the Mayor's ambitions around street homelessness. This was done via a 'whole-of-society approach' through the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network (GMHAN), a collective of individuals and organisations working in or with experience of homelessness across the city region and nationally. The network was responsible for writing the city region's strategy to end rough sleeping through coproduction and political participation; a devolution of democracy. Using an insider ethnography from a Knowledge Exchange between the University of Salford and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the GMHAN will be used as the case study for understanding how civil society can contribute to policymaking in devolved city regions.

I was embedded in Greater Manchester's political journey on homelessness throughout the period 2014-20, first as an elected local Councillor for Manchester city centre between 2014-18, a Mayoral Lead on Homelessness from 2017-18 and Knowledge Transfer Fellow at the University of Salford working on the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network (GMHAN) in 2019-20. The thesis was developed utilising an insider ethnography conducted over an eighteen month period between May 2019 and November 2020, in tandem with a Knowledge Exchange[1] project between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and University of Salford, designed to support the development of the GMHAN.

The thesis lays out the political context behind homelessness as an issue of social justice in Greater Manchester, providing a picture of why homelessness and housing injustice became issues at the top of the region's political agenda, contextualising the Mayor and Greater Manchester Combined Authority's place in addressing them. Alongside local political context, the thesis lays out the conditions surrounding devolution of powers from Westminster to the Greater Manchester city region from 2014 onwards, including most notably, the creation of a directly-elected Mayor. With homelessness and housing issues of such high importance to Greater Manchester's citizens and the mandate of the newly elected Mayor, despite a lack of legislative power to address them, the Combined Authority and Mayoral office had to develop mechanisms to work alongside civil society and the wider public to address them.

1; Knowledge exchange is defined by the ESRC as a two-way exchange between researchers and research users, to share ideas, research evidence, experiences and skills. It refers to any process through which academic ideas and insights are shared, and external perspectives and experiences brought in to academia. As a Knowledge Transfer Associate between University of Salford and the GMCA from 2018-20, I was tasked with supporting the establishment of the GMHAN and researching its potential impacts on participatory policymaking in the city region.

1.3 Figures and definitions of homelessness

A decade of austerity measures from the United Kingdom Government, has fragmented the social safety net and state functions including health, welfare, education, access to employment, prisons and housing across the UK. With impacts falling disproportionately on the poorest communities (Institute for Policy Research, 2015), whilst greater responsibility for economic prosperity and austerity is laid at the feet of local government and devolved city regions (Johnson et al, 2017). The most economically deprived urban areas, suffering the greatest inequalities and feeling the focus of devolution, such as Greater Manchester, have seen homelessness become one of the most visible and visceral impacts of austerity, with all types of homelessness rising exponentially in every area of the UK since 2010 (Shelter, 2018). The UK's unhoused population represents the true cost of austerity; homelessness and housing injustice, one of the most violent forms of poverty and restriction of human rights, borne out for people to witness in city centres, while families with children are forced to live in unsafe conditions behind closed doors (Shared Health, 2019). With increases in homelessness, human beings have become the abjections falling through gaps in a torn safety net (Tyler, 2013), as people become a visible reminder of not just the true cost of spending cuts, but failed politics.

When using the term 'homelessness' it is recognised this is simultaneously an issue of social justice, poverty, inequalities and politics (Anderson, 2011, Crisis 2019).

One of the largest homeless charities in the UK, Shelter, define homelessness as:

“Homelessness means not having a home. You are homeless if you have nowhere to stay and are living on the streets, but you can be homeless even if you have a roof over your head. “You count as homeless if you are:

- staying with friends or family
- staying in a hostel, night shelter or B&B
- squatting (because you have no legal right to stay)
- at risk of violence or abuse in your home
- living in poor conditions that affect your health living apart from your family because you don’t have a place to live together.”

Shelter, 2018

Another charity, Crisis, states “a home provides roots, identity, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing. Homelessness is about the loss of all these.” (2016, p.1)

The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANSTA), has gone further in developing a typography of homelessness and housing exclusion, creating an ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) conceptualisation of homelessness (Edgar, 2009; FEANTSA, 2016). The ETHOS identifies four categories to homelessness; rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing, with most countries seeing homelessness as different derivatives of these four concepts.

The Crisis/Joseph Rowntree UK Homelessness Monitor uses a definition of ‘Core Homelessness’, which focuses on people who are in the most extreme homeless situations. This encompasses the different categories in the FEANSTA (2016) typography including people who are rough sleeping or:

> “quasi rough sleeping situations (such as sleeping in cars, tents, public transport), squatting, staying in hostels, refuges and shelters, unsuitable TA and “sofa-surfing”, i.e. staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions”. (Crisis Homelessness Monitor, 2019).

Alongside definitions of homelessness, housing as a human right is important to note in terms of definitions of homelessness, in that it:

> "recognises the basic need of human beings not just for shelter from the elements, but also for accommodation which is safe, secure, affordable, and sufficient for the needs of the household." (Anderson, 2012, p.249)

Importantly, these advocacy and academic examples contrast strongly with the UK Government's statutory duty towards people who are homeless. This leads to duty-bound Local Authorities only being able to support a small proportion of a more widely recognised homeless population.

> "Local authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people. On 3 April 2018, local authorities acquired a duty to work to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants." Wilson and Barton (2019, p.3).

For the purposes of this research, homelessness will be defined in line with the FEANSTA typography or the term 'core homelessness'. This internationally recognised, encompassing terminology makes international comparisons easier (even though challenges remain in making policy comparisons between nation states) (Anderson, 2016). This framework also reflects the desire of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network, multiple agencies and voices of people with lived experience in Greater Manchester, to encompass a wider homelessness policy agenda beyond street homelessness.

Nationally, core homelessness rose from 120,000 households in 2010 to 153,000 in 2017 in the United Kingdom, an increase of 28 per cent (Crisis Homelessness Monitor, 2019). This includes households in temporary accommodation, individuals rough sleeping and homeless households with children. The reality is anticipated to be at least double recorded figures owing to discrepancies in robustness and

reliability of data (Crisis Homelessness Monitor, 2019), with many people in unsupported temporary accommodation and those sofa surfing also left out of official statistics (Justlife, 2018).

While the numbers of homeless households grew by 28 per cent nationally, in Greater Manchester there was a particularly marked increase in various indicators of homelessness and housing insecurity over the period 2010-2017, incidentally the period encompassing the election of the Conservative Government, to the first directly elected Greater Manchester Mayor.

As of March 2010, 470 households were living in temporary accommodation across Greater Manchester. In 2021 that figure had risen to 3,881, an increase of 726 per cent. Manchester accounted for 273 of these households in 2010, whereas in 2021 that figure had risen to 2,537, an 829 per cent increase (The Meteor, 2022). In comparison, over the period 2010-17, Birmingham saw an increase from 877 households in temporary accommodation to 2058 (Local Government Association, 2022), an increase of 134 per cent.

Between 2010-2017, the number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Greater Manchester also increased dramatically. 41 people were recorded on a single night in Autumn 2010, compared to 268 in 2017, a 554 per cent increase (GMCA, 2022, p.35). Over the same period, street homelessness in England as a whole grew by 169 per cent. These facts combined with Manchester having the highest number of deaths of people on the street in the country (by local authority) of 28 people in 2019 (ONS, 2019).

In 2009-10, 1,857 applications were accepted by Greater Manchester local authorities as a ‘main duty’ of re-housing owed under provisions of the Housing Act. This increased by 85 per cent, to a peak of 3,428 in 2017-18 (GMCA, 2022, p.35). In addition to more visible aspects of housing insecurity, the social housing waiting list also peaked at 120,000 (Manchester Evening News, 2015).

These astronomical increases and peaks at 2016-17 highlight the urgency of addressing homelessness and housing insecurity as an issue of social justice for the new Mayor as they came into office in 2017. This thesis seeks to understand why the Mayor came to address homelessness as a campaign commitment, the political backdrop to addressing homelessness and how policy was formed in the city region to address this issue of social justice.

Despite such numbers, the UK has a recent past reducing all forms of homelessness, most notably street homelessness through the Rough Sleepers Unit. Due to this national effort, the numbers of people who were street homelessness in Manchester was consistently in the 10s throughout the 2000’s (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2010). This was achieved through a combination of proactive street-based methods, coordinated work on homelessness across government and political priority of the highest degree tied to public targets (Institute for Government, 2018). These year on year decreases continued until 2010, with the reverse taking place until the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 triggered the ‘Everyone In’ initiative (GMCA, 2021).

In other words, we know what works, so why were we not doing it?

To understand this, we must look at the approaches behind homelessness policies currently in place alongside historical economic and political environments in which homelessness and poverty are perpetuated and homelessness policies operate within. This thesis will outline how policies around homelessness were constructed in Greater Manchester and the real-time impacts of city region devolution, proposing theory around the construction of social policy alongside citizens and civil society.

1.4 Overview of policy and policymaking approaches

One of the traditional approaches to understanding and tackling homelessness has been to attribute causality, and thus the required action to be taken, at the feet of the individual who is homeless (Johnson and Pleace, 2016). This Moral Underclass Discourse (Levitas, 2005) bleeds into public policy through examples such as 'priority need', 'intentional homelessness' and when an individual is perceived as 'unwilling to engage' with services. Blaming of individuals rather than wider political or socio-economic causes has led to a lack of political responsibility for the causality of homelessness, as seen in 2018 as then Homeless Minister James Brokenshire claimed drug use and family breakdown were the cause of increases in homelessness, not his government's policies (The Guardian, 2018). Additionally, a lack of scrutiny and space for complexity (Cairney, 2012) into the interwoven causality behind varying root causes of homelessness, allows this false narrative to be played by policymakers and services alike (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

On the back of this narrative, the individual-aimed or blame attributing approach has led to the use of such models as the 'Outcome Star'[2] within services reliant on a client base to continue their function. This approach requires support staff to engage one on one with 'service users' or 'clients', assessing the duties and responsibilities required in order to achieve 'inclusion' (Anderson, 2011).

Housing injustice rooted in housing as a market commodity, instead of a human right, inequalities based on socio-economic inequality, gender and 'race', as well

2; Outcomes Stars are tools used by support workers such as key workers, as part of conversations with individuals accessing support services. They are supposed to measure an individual's journey towards prescribed goals and were developed by Triangle a registered social enterprise.

as social exclusion are eradicated as causalities of homelessness when the individual is seen as at fault due to their behaviour. This is in spite of a plethora of research on the impact of societal and economic inequalities on access to housing in the UK (Fitzpatrick, 2005, Bengtsson and Ruonavaara, 2010, Anderson, 2011, Crisis Homelessness Monitor, 2019).

The increases in homelessness statistics are thus relatively meaningless if seen in isolation to those around the financialisation of the housing market in the central boroughs Greater Manchester from 2010-17. Silver (2018) details the drive for housing financialisation in Greater Manchester, a tactic deployed by local authorities to drive economic growth of the city region. Housing financialisation is defined as per a United Nations report as:

> "... structural changes in housing and financial markets and global investment whereby housing is treated as a commodity, a means of accumulating wealth and often as security for financial instruments that are traded and sold on [the] global market." (UN Habitat, in: Silver, 2018, p.5)

For Greater Manchester residents this meant several changes regarding their human right to access adequate housing, firstly, home ownership. Greater Manchester saw "the sharpest fall in home ownership of any major city area in the last decade" (Resolution Foundation, 2016), this equated to a 14 per cent drop in home ownership between 2003-2016. Second, private renting. The number of private renters tripled in the same timeframe as home ownership depleted in Greater Manchester (private rental figures doubled in the rest of the country) (Resolution Foundation, 2016). This demand brought with it rental increases which not only stretched the affordability of housing for many residents, but also the yields available to private and foreign investors of property in Greater Manchester (Silver, 2018). Making Manchester property increasingly attractive to investors and

increasingly out of reach for residents. Finally, Housing Benefits and Local Housing Allowance rates. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the housing benefit paid to tenants of private landlords. This rate was frozen by the Conservative government in a drive “to ensure fairness between working and non-working households” (House of Commons, 2019). When paired with the drastic increases in rent in Greater Manchester, this led to average rental prices not being covered by LHA in a single ward in Manchester by 2016, a city which contains some of the most economically deprived wards in the country (Manchester Evening News, 2022).

Therein, austerity and cuts to local government services may have snapped the safety net staving off homelessness for many of those now in Temporary Accommodation or insecure housing, but the rapid commodification of Manchester’s housing market first created the situation now at hand in the city region’s central boroughs.

If market forces and the impacts of increasing socio-economic inequalities are rejected as causes of homelessness in place of individual blame, social policy is falsely constructed (Levitas, 2005). In recent years, this has meant not only the wrong policy is constructed to ‘solve’ homelessness (Mackie et. al, 2019), but also the manner in which the policy is constructed is contradictory to the true causes of increases in homelessness.

Coproduction was chosen as the policymaking tool within Manchester to involve people who were homeless in redesigning services (Manchester Homelessness Partnership, 2019). This approach looked to the people who were subject to housing injustice for the answers in the light of national and local government cuts

and rising housing costs. Rather than, if the true causes are structural and societal, a more collective, radical political participation and discourse being required (Ledwith, 2011). As the literature review suggests “individualised explanations of inequality lead to individualised solutions, whereas structural explanations demand more universal, collective solutions.” Anderson (2011, p.23).

In Manchester, individualised blame and the attributed co-production-led policymaking approach were particularly contradictory after years of a deliberate political economic drive to build a city on the very foundations exacerbating homelessness. Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority redeveloped the city region’s inner boroughs (Manchester and Salford) through a new industrial revolution based on property investment (Silver, 2018) and highly skilled jobs (Mellor, 2001). Much like the first industrial revolution Manchester was at the heart of, ignorance of its social effects were vital to its economic success (Peck and Ward, 2001).

At the same time as a more individualised approach was used by housing providers and drug and alcohol services, many frontline charities were noting the changing political environment and the impacts post-2010 policy had on their communities (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Freezes to LHA rates, benefit sanctions, eradication of Supporting People funding, waiting times for Universal Credit, No Recourse to Public Funds legislation and the closure of supported accommodation created a perfect storm for charities on the frontline. These charities, used to being able to support individuals on a case by case basis, could no longer attribute causality solely to the individual. This approach was soon at odds with itself and as such, new practice was required.

Taking an approach that requires structural explanations and collective solutions requires bodies with policy and decision making powers to allow space for “what works, for whom, in what circumstances” (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Due to the political root causes of homelessness and its cross-sectoral impact, the nature by which it is tackled needs thus to be both collaborative and politically driven across the whole system (Mackie et al, 2019).

There are few opportunities within local or national policymaking environments to allow this kind of shift to take place on the scale required. However, devolution in the Greater Manchester city region in 2017 did allow a window of opportunity for democratic devolution (MyCock, Knowles and Andrews, 2017), including the use of softer powers in lieu of tangible legislation and funding being devolved from Westminster (Kenealy, 2016, Lupton et.al, 2018).

Soft power as distinct terminology was coined by Joseph Nye (1990), but as he states “Power, like love, is easier to experience than define or measure.” (Nye, 1990, p.25) so a definition is hard to reach. Nevertheless, soft powers, he claims are “co-optive behavioural power - getting others to want what you want - and soft power resources - cultural attraction, ideology and international institutions.” (Nye, 1990 p.188). This behaviour focused power, wielded by developing public support and imparting ideology, is the understanding used in this thesis in terms of ‘soft power’. This is opposed to a “more concrete, measurable and predictable” (Nye, 1990, p.25) legislation based, hard power.

The election of a high-profile Labour Mayor in 2017 was seen by the trade unions and voluntary sector organisations as “an opportunity to contribute to a progressive agenda around poverty and inequality’” (Johnson et al., 2017, p.7).

Expressly, the thesis will consider the new Mayor's choice to utilise a 'whole-of-society' approach to meet their campaign promises (GMCA, 2020). With few legislative powers (HM Treasury and GMCA, 2014), but the largest democratic mandate of any Greater Manchester politician in history (BBC, 2017), an opportunity was seen by the Mayor and civil society to harness alternatives to harder political powers.

The Mayor began using the term 'whole society approach' to end rough sleeping during their initial campaign to run for office (GMCA, 2017). A 'whole-of-society approach' was first commonly used in a global public health context to explain a need for "Institutional coordination and coherence with partners from across society, a crucial aspect of effectively implementing multi and intersectoral action." World Health Organisation (2019, p.1). This has since been linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 17 around partnership working (OECD/UNDP, 2019), thus gaining traction at multiple levels of government and civil society. The OECD/UNDP (2019) explanation of a whole-of-society approach goes further than just partnership working, supporting civil society to enable "better organisation of citizens, create direct communication channels with elected representatives and support overall public engagement for citizens to hold their governments to account".

The Mayor's 'whole-of-society approach' included drawing on Greater Manchester society, beyond the public sector, in addressing social justice issues and policy change. This "new politics" (BBC, 2017) alongside new powers, was designed to address the Greater Manchester public's desire for a fairer society led by social reforms (Lupton et al, 2018) and opportunity for greater democratic inclusion in

their governing (Perry et. al, 2019). As described in the introduction, the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network (GMHAN) was the Mayor's first vehicle to drive this 'new politics'.

The Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network is described by the GMCA as:

> "bringing the combined efforts and experience of public, private and third sector organisations to drive and deliver a homelessness strategy that can succeed in ending rough sleeping." (GMCA, 2020).

The GMHAN was to be a space for collaboration, agenda setting and sharing of best practice across the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester (GMHAN, 2020). The network was the first vehicle utilised by the Greater Manchester Mayor as an embodiment of their whole-of-society approach (GMCA, 2021), in order to instigate this environment the Mayor implored all of the region's stakeholders to work together via the Homelessness Action Network (Inside Housing, 2018). Thus enabling the GMHAN to take on the Mayor's convening powers as a space for any individual or organisation with a desire to be involved in the drive to end rough sleeping by 2020.

This created the environment for "a multi-stakeholder approach where actors participate in a meaningful way." (Cázarez-Grageda, 2018, p.6). The Greater Manchester Action Network, whilst not constituted as an official organisation, created and managed a participatory space through large open forums, a collective Advisory Board and regular Action and Support meetings, with only a small funding capacity. The network gathered people around the ambition to co-create GMCA homelessness strategy (GMCA, 2020). At first, this encompassed the drive to end rough sleeping and the stakeholders needed to achieve this. The

Mayor stated those within policymaking, housing, charities, health, faith networks, people who were homeless and local business needed to work together on this issue of social justice. In doing so, not only were they showcasing a desire to instigate a multi-stakeholder approach, but also delegate some responsibility to civil society in lieu of hard powers from Westminster or cooperation locally (Kenealy, 2016).

This ‘whole-of-society approach’ allowed the Mayor to create their own soft power, circumnavigating both a lack of national powers and local authorities who did not take kindly to diktats from his office demanding change (Manchester Evening News, 2017). A softer policy of relationship building and power utilised through the GMHAN and other civil society partners was critical to this approach.

With devolution impending, high profile decision makers with soft powers in the form of Mayors were suddenly more accessible to the local community. Here lay an opportunity for the local community working on and being vocal about homelessness to garner political interest and will around a different approach to housing injustice. This thesis seeks to understand how the Greater Manchester community (civil society) and Mayor worked together utilising these soft powers and how effective they were in creating tangible policy change via democratic devolution.

1.5 The [in]visibility of homelessness: How homelessness became a political issue in Manchester and Greater Manchester.

Notwithstanding the fact of national governmental change in 2010, a lack of political will to attend to increasing numbers in homelessness was not just a national failure, as choruses across the Town Halls of Greater Manchester repeated (Manchester Evening News, 2014), but also a deeply embedded local one. Homelessness and inequality for local residents of Manchester were inevitable symptoms of a pre-designed political economy of regeneration (Peck & Ward, 2002), as Manchester city centre became (or reverted back to) both the heart of economic regeneration and social degradation. Manchester has the highest rates of child poverty in the region after housing costs (40 per cent), the highest rates of unemployment (7.2 per cent) and more Universal Credit claimants than any other borough in Greater Manchester (GMPA, 2019).

Manchester and Greater Manchester were hit adversely by austerity (Manchester City Council, 2015), but choices on where cuts fell were made locally. Predating these choices were the decisions around which direction to take the city's political economy. From the late 1990s Greater Manchester political thought was that economic growth and regeneration of the city centre would ultimately allow the city region to climb down the ranks of deprivation. A "diversion from the municipal socialism that characterised the drive for greater local autonomy in the 1980s, was replaced by a focus on the entrepreneurial city making its contribution to Gross Value Added" Kenealy (2016, p.575).

By 2015, efforts made around regeneration in Manchester to combat post-industrial decline and London-centric growth, were having a paradoxical effect (Silver, 2018). An 'Americanised' city created in the wake of development, with:

> "economic and social polarisation underwritten by a set of policies legitimising the transfer of funds from social safety net to speculative accumulation, zero-sum competition and middle class consumption" (Peck & Ward, 2002, p.8).

The city forewarned in Peck and Ward (2002), had come to bear. Apart from communities living in poverty themselves and a few academic observers, this fact was concealed as part of the city's desire for growth in property markets (Mellor, 2002). Manchester's desire to be known for its 'Glamchester' image, rather than the long standing structural nature of problems, had largely succeeded due to the 'hype' created to support economic growth (Herd and Patterson, 2002).

As Mellor (2002, p.234) states "authoritative institutions react to the threat of the poor's visibility". This started in the form of enforcement measures making accessible common activities illegal, such as skateboarding in the city centre (Manchester City Council, 2000, Manchester Evening News, 2020) and drinking your own alcohol in public. This may seem trivial, but these visible measures set the groundwork for more malign exile to take place economically and socially, with leisure, house prices and jobs in Manchester city centre out of most locals reach by the early Millennium (Mellor, 2002).

The agenda behind this concealment of poverty, set by those who sought to benefit from the city's renewed property market, (developers and the local authority), was largely successful, until street homelessness became the city region's most visible, pressing and contentious political issue (Silver, 2018).

In 2015, street homelessness became the visible antithesis of the Manchester economic project, an unavoidable consequence of the toxic mix of austerity, politically-led regeneration excluding locals from the property market (Mellor, 2002, Silver, 2018), social exclusion and economic dislocation (Peck and Ward, 2002). Manchester's socio-economic issues could no longer be hidden beneath an invisibility cloak of cranes and crass slogans (Minton, 2009).

In April 2015, protestors set up an encampment outside Manchester Town Hall in an attempt to raise awareness of the impacts of funding cuts to homelessness and mental health services in the city (Manchester Evening News, 2015). One of their arguments was rough sleepers felt 'invisible'. If a population felt invisible, it is reasonable to imagine they may feel their concerns and requirements for support might be as well. In an interview with one of the protest leaders in August 2015, they stated the council objected to their "homeless policy being highlighted in such a central area" as "they don't want people to see"." (The Pavement, 2015).

The protest lasted four months and created a six figure sum legal and policing challenge for Manchester Council, resulting in camping in tents becoming illegal in Manchester city centre (BBC, 2015). Most notably however, the activity created a swathe of articles in local and national press (Granada News, 2015). With homelessness no longer a hidden social issue, services could no longer be cut without public objection. Budget consultation and the 2016 City Centre Review returned homelessness unanimously as the primary concern for residents and businesses. In the Council's 2016/17 budget there were no cuts to homelessness services, in fact, there was an increase (Manchester City Council, 2017), a drastic

change from the previous 2015/16 cuts of £2million, confirmed in March 2015, just before the protests began.

As was documented, not all of the protestors had been or were homeless (The Guardian, 2015), but that was besides the point, the public saw in the protests a nod to their curiosity around seeing Mancunian residents on the streets, in noticeable abject poverty. This protest was the first physical manifestation of people who were excluded from Manchester city centre, coming back into it and attempting to explain how they were excluded in the first place. This helped to create an alternative narrative to that of the City Council; that everything was 'under control' and most people who appeared homeless, were not, but were in the city to beg out of choice (Leese, 2015). The added value in Leese's explanation of people entering the city's new public spaces to beg, was they were blamed for why they were there, to earn money. Leese, as Council Leader, was publicly stating not only was there 'nothing to see here', but if you do see something, it has nothing to do with us.

An analysis of Piccadilly Gardens, the city's most central public space, brings to life much of the above. The Gardens, once an arcade of cheaper shops and a sunken garden, is one of the few free to access spaces in the city with some form of seating, despite an encroaching privatisation as witnessed by Minton (2009). The Gardens were occupied mainly by people with nowhere else to go, despite a Millennial conversion in time for the Commonwealth Games in 2002, office blocks, lunch shop chains and international architecture, sat side by side with public drinking, drug overdoses and people rough sleeping (The Guardian, 2017), this remained the case through the 2010s. With this, the Gardens became a villain in

the general public's consciousness, the antithesis of what they believed Manchester city centre should look like based on the vision they had been sold. As captured by Minton: "Clean and safe is about more than safety, it's about creating places which are for certain types of people and certain activities and not others." (Minton, 2009, p.45).

The homelessness tent protests were just the first of many to follow of a housing nature, including squats in various unoccupied city centre buildings (New Statesman, 2018). The most important aspect to note is the foundations on which the discontent sat were created by the local authority itself.

As the relation between public and commercial spaces has become crucial in a modern capitalist city (Harvey, 2006), Piccadilly Gardens and the politics taking place in it were a prime target for developers and the local authority looking to leverage the space to further their narrative of success on which to build an optimum trading environment (Minton, 2009).

As a local Councillor, I was invited to a meeting with a major investment firm who, as owners of vacant office space surrounding the Gardens, had a sizeable stake in their future. I was asked outright what the local authority was going to do with the people who currently occupied the Gardens and the arcade, namely those who were homeless. My answer to this of "it's their city as well, where else can you sit and eat your packed lunch?", was not appreciated. What the investment firm wanted from me was what the Business Improvement District[3] and Council had

3; Business Improvement Districts are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses. Manchester's being CityCo.

been providing up until that point, the exclusion of signs of poverty from the city centre.

The Gardens' future ended in a £2million conversion, originally masterminded by the private enterprise that set to benefit most, but now taken over and funded by the local authority (Place North West, 2020).

The Millennial conversion brought two competing cities, one of excluded communities and heritage, the other of economic growth and tidy public spaces, up against one another. Homelessness brought this fight into the city centre, a visual manifestation of the competition for space, for participation, in Manchester.

As Trafford Council leader Sean Anstee pointed out during his campaign to be Greater Manchester Mayor in 2017:

> "[homelessness is] upsetting and distressing and it shouldn't happen," but "there's an economic impact on the city as well. We want to show off Greater Manchester as an investment location to companies around the world, to create jobs and economic growth." (The Guardian, 2017).

Helen Pidd continues in the same article:

> "as Anstee suggests, if the first thing people see when they get off the train at Piccadilly is a series of sleeping bags in doorways and Spice victims wandering around like the living dead, it is hardly going to encourage investors to view Manchester as a city with its act together".

This is not a new problem either, in 1844, Engels wrote of Manchester:

"I know very well that this hypocritical plan [economic regeneration] is more or less common to all great cites… but I have never seen so tender a concealment of everything that might affront the eye and nerves" (Engels (1844). In: Peck and Ward, 2002).

The reason I have considered this depth around the deliberate concealment of poverty as part of the Manchester economic project and the contrasting visibility of homelessness, is to give insight into the political pressure and incentive behind what at first seemed to be a baffling lack of political will on homelessness. For criticism of political paralysis around homelessness to be countered with arguments around begging, lack of resources from national government and stretched capacity locally, was a continuation of the local authority's desire to push its own narrative. Of course, these externally-led factors play an important role in homelessness, but the scale of street homelessness in Manchester was entirely solvable, at 75 people in official statistics in 2015 (MHCLG, 2016). There was just one factor missing, political acceptance and therefore will to act. As Peck and Ward state "A paradoxical relationship exists in Manchester between the political narratives of success and the economic realities of decline" (2002, p.16). As a participant of Manchester's political landscape whilst an elected Councillor for the city centre, this concealment around homelessness, was a necessary understanding of the political history of Greater Manchester.

Coincidentally, as the fight around homelessness hit its peak in 2017 the Devolution Agreement was about to take effect across Greater Manchester through the establishment of the region's first directly elected Mayor. As the above contextualises, the politico-economic foundations for Greater Manchester's Devolution were laid well before a Mayoral candidate was selected. If a Mayor were to disagree with the embedded political economy or be led by a general public wanting to see more focus on social reform and less economic growth, the cracks would be there to become rifts in relationships and power.

1.6 Greater Manchester Devolution. What is it and why was it an opportunity for democratic devolution?

Reference to devolution in this research, refers to the Devolution Agreement signed in 2014 between central government and Greater Manchester's ten local authorities; Wigan, Stockport, Trafford, Manchester, Salford, Tameside, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Oldham. This provided new powers from national government to the local authorities, in the form of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the GMCA. These authorities had long cooperated outside of any national agreement, and were therefore seen as the right English region to pioneer working effectively together to build a new city region (Kenealy, 2016).

The powers set out in the Devolution Agreement in November 2014 were the following:

> "The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) will receive the following powers:

- Responsibility for devolved business support budgets, including the Growth Accelerator.
- Control of the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers and power to re- shape and re-structure the Further Education provision within Greater Manchester.
- Control of a Working Well pilot.
- Opportunity to be a joint commissioner with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the next phase of the Work Programme.
- GMCA and Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups will be invited to develop a business plan for the integration of health and social care across Greater Manchester, based on control of existing health and social care budgets.

With the caveat that "Further powers may be agreed over time and included in future legislation."

In the same document, the “new, directly elected Mayor of Greater Manchester” received the following powers:

- “Responsibility for a devolved and consolidated transport budget.
- Responsibility for franchised bus services, for integrating smart ticketing across all local modes of transport, and urgently exploring the opportunities for devolving rail stations across the Greater Manchester area.
- Powers over strategic planning, including the power to create a statutory spatial framework for Greater Manchester. This will need to be approved by unanimous vote of the Mayor’s Cabinet.
- Control of a new £300 million Housing Investment Fund.
- Take on the role currently covered by the Police and Crime Commissioner.”

(HM Treasury and GMCA, 2014)

In 2015, powers followed including the most significant; “Devolved health and social care”.

2016

- “Life Chances Investment Fund to bring together budget with similar aims such as Troubled Families, Working Well Pilot and Life Chances Fund.
- Adult skills: planning for full devolution of adult skills.”

and in 2017

- “GM one of 3 areas in £28 million Housing First pilots (rough sleeping)
- Commitment to work in partnership with Government to develop a local industrial strategy.
- Commitments to work with government across policy areas including trade/investment, housing, skills, offender management, employment support.”

(Lupton et al, 2018, p.18)

The agreements up to 2017 included more pilots, projects and promises than tangible powers. With the Mayor receiving notably less powers than the Combined Authority, even then, one of the six powers was subject to unanimous vote by the Mayor’s Cabinet i.e. all of the Leaders of the ten Local Authorities. At time of

writing, the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework[4] had not even made it into existence, instead transforming into 'Places for Everyone', a long-term plan for sustainable growth across the city region (GMCA, 2021).

Significantly, these 'powers' were not backed by notable fiscal devolution (Kenealy, 2016), apart from budgetary devolution for health and social care, business support and adult skills (Lupton et al, 2018). There was hardly any money to back the few legislative changes, meaning even if the Mayor did want to make changes within the areas given to them, they would be hemmed in by lack of funds.

More policy responsibility than real power, they also lay far removed from any form of public consultation (Prosser et al, 2017), with Greater Manchester politicians embracing the secret of the deal and associated powers (Kenealy, 2016). Alongside lack of legislative powers and money to fund them was an absence of engagement with the general public on devolution. Lacklustre consultation on the GMCA website and the appointment of an unelected interim Mayor (Kenealy, 2016 and Prosser et al, 2017) gave rise to the sense devolution was not something for the general public, but for the high ranking elected officials involved in negotiations. Though the secrecy was borne out of fear the public would not be on board with a vision the councils had wanted so badly for so long (Kenealy, 2016).

The lack of transparency and communication about what Devo Manc was

4; The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework outlined an ambition for the ten Greater Manchester local authorities to work together on a joint development plan known as Greater Manchester's Plan for Jobs, Homes & the Environment (the "GMSF"). This had reached the publication stage of the process, but Stockport Council's decision to withdraw from the plan signalled the end of the GMSF. Work has however continued to prepare a plan for the remaining districts now called "Places for Everyone", not including the Stockport borough.

especially threatened a younger generation and more marginalised communities who were at risk of not feeling included in their future, and thus in their identity and their home (Mycock, Knowles and Andrews, 2017). The risks to democracy from the nature of the devolution deal and resulting lack of consultation (Brenton, Prosser et al, 2017) were laid out in reports on the cusp of devolution taking effect.

Ayres (2016) writes:

> "Devolution deals have been delivered solely through informal governance. Without a framework of aims, objectives, and guidelines, it is hard for people who are not involved in the process to understand where it is going" Ayres (2016, p.6).

Ayres continues:

> "Local support for the new directly-elected mayors - not to mention a willingness to turn out to vote at their elections - will be critical to the legitimacy of the new structures."

The risks highlighted by Ayres (2016) also gave light to the opportunities Devo Manc could bring, of democratic devolution. As in Cox and Giovannini (2015), precedent had already begun to emerge in Scotland:

> "In a social climate characterised by increasing levels of political disenfranchisement, the example of Scotland shows that accountable decentralisation can be an effective means of restoring the relationship between the public and the wider political system – bringing decision- and policymaking closer to people, and thereby putting people back into politics" Cox and Giovannini (2015, p.56).

This opportunity rested on control of devolution shifting from original decision makers, into the hands of a new Mayor willing to take on responsibility for engaging the general public in their local services and handing democracy further to them in the process.

Kenealy (2016) writes:

> "[Opportunity] can only happen if local leaders are committed to participatory democracy. It will not occur by transferring powers from Whitehall to a shadowy, distant combined authority chaired by an interim mayor for whom nobody voted." Kenealy (2016, p.578).

A Mayor, elected with a respectable turnout, committed to open politics (Lupton et. al, 2018) was key to participatory democracy and creating a 'new regional architecture' in the process (Cox and Giovannini, 2015). Elected leaders' lack of trust in the Greater Manchester public was proven to be misguided with the ballots cast in the May 2017 Mayoral elections reaching nearly 600,000 (The Electoral Commission, 2017) and an unexpected level of public support for the new Mayor, with a 2021 poll suggesting eighty-five per cent of the public want more powers for Mayoral positions (Centre for Cities, 2021).

A wealth of organisations and partnerships also either set up or tuned their focus to Greater Manchester in the months surrounding devolution, forming a new civil society, in turn suggesting a new interest in local democracy and lending legitimacy to the new governance structures (Ayres 2016). Perhaps in reaction to a lack of initial engagement or a desire to be involved in the birth of a new democracy being formed in their backyard, public hustings to elect the Mayor were packed out (The Guardian, 2017), voluntary organisations galvanised (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO), Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) was established, hubs were set up in local universities (Devo Manc Hub, Inclusive Growth Unit), public groups formed to question what the real potential for Devolution was (People's Powerhouse, Democratic Devolution) and national think tanks increased their focus on the region (IPPR North, RSA North).

A buzz resting on promises to work on social justice alongside economic growth (Lupton et. al, 2018) was creating a distinct identity around Greater Manchester politics. This politics had very little to do with policy on bus franchises and adult skills. This was closer to what Cox and Giovannini (2015) described, out of disenfranchisement, it looked as though people were being encouraged closer to politics and democratic devolution.

However, the real significance of democratic devolution would be in whether communities who were disenfranchised through the Greater Manchester economic model, would be included through a new model of governance (Perry et. al, 2019).

What political agenda was set and who set it, was a core responsibility for the new Mayor in connecting with communities and encouraging participatory democracy (Devo Manc Hub, 2016). This agenda was broadly set through the Mayor's election campaign, with their manifesto being co-created through conversations with the general public and civil society, rather than the legislative powers dictated in the Devolution Agreement. This resulted in the Mayor pledging to turn Greater Manchester into a "beacon for social justice" (Labour List, 2016). There was a desire from both the public, civil society and the Mayor to operate in areas beyond the agreed scope of devolution to achieve this (Brenton, Prosser et al, 2017 and Lupton et al, 2018).

The Mayor had a choice when elected, to either follow the manner in which powers were agreed by the ten local authorities and continue on a path of perceived exclusion, or listen to the public and take strength from the political

mandate they had given, opening up devolution in the process. This had the potential to exclude the ten local authority leaders, previously in control behind closed doors (Perry et. al, 2019), weighing up this risk was one of the Mayor's first tasks in office.

One such opportunity to utilise democratic devolution to work on an issue outside of the devolution framework was homelessness. In one press article before the election, the Mayor described homelessness as the "lightening rod through their campaign" (The Guardian, 2017). This quote crystallises the importance of the issue to The Mayor and their election, and the way in which homelessness was viewed by the Greater Manchester public and civil society. What the issue needed was a galvanising force, capable of bringing people together around a sense of Greater Manchester identity, rooted in becoming the 'beacon of social justice'.

Setting "ending rough sleeping by 2020" (GMCA, 2017) as the main campaign promise, gave the political will lacking around homelessness (Mackie et. al, 2019), whilst the manner in which it was to be undertaken "through the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network" (GMCA, 2017) set the means.

> "The Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network (GMHAN) was established by the Greater Manchester Mayor to combine efforts in tackling homelessness and co-production, with a view to utilising partnerships, frontline and lived experiences to end rough sleeping by 2020 and reduce and prevent homelessness in all its forms over the next ten years." GMHAN (2017).

Thus the GMHAN is examined as the case study for understanding the types of power and levers used with citizens, civil society and the public sector to effect change in a newly devolved Greater Manchester.

2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature to identify gaps when researching 'Democratic Devolution. Using a 'whole-of-society approach' to tackle homelessness in a newly devolved city region'. The review is broken down into three sections, forming the three bases of the proposed theoretical framework.

The first, political participation and community-based routes to creating a 'whole society approach' in collaboration with a bureaucratic political system. As coproduction was the original vehicle for participation in Greater Manchester around homelessness, but radical community development formed the practical framework for action within the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network, this section looks to understand gaps in literature between both coproduction and community development. Key questions addressed are; what are the differences between the two approaches, how they came to spilt and what the reasons are one approach was widely adopted by the UK public sector and the other utilised on the fringes of UK civil society.

Radical community development is used as a lens to understand the potential of the GMHAN in the second section. Margaret Ledwith's *Community Development: A Critical Approach* (2011), Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Gilding the Ghetto; the state and poverty experiments* (1977) by the CDP are core texts in this section. Key texts for the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship, these texts created a theoretical framework to analyse the development of the GMHAN, helping to analyse decision-making processes and power structures that shaped GMHAN.

Gaventa's *Power and Powerlessness* (1980) and Lipsky's *Street Level Bureaucracy* (1980) also come into play in terms of this analysis.

However, there are theoretical gaps in these arguments, particularly around standpoint theory and collaboration with political systems, it is argued the concept of transversal politics can aim to fill these, primarily utilising literature by Yuval-Davis (1997, 2012) and Hill Collins (2000).

The third section is concerned with bringing transversal politics and Arendtian concepts of political space to Greater Manchester's approach to poverty and homelessness and how this played into the use of soft power by the new Mayor. Addressing a gap in literature around devolution and power, the third section looks at how devolution through (hard) policy-based legislation from Whitehall to the UK's city regions triggered the use of a different type of (softer) powers by the new Mayoral office. Specifically, can the local level offer opportunities for democracy other levels of government do not and are "participation, transparency and accountability easier to achieve on a smaller scale"? Roth, Lander and Pin (2017, p.85). This literature review determines a gap in recognising the potential for democratic devolution in this space and the role of civil society or non-state actors in working with the political sphere to achieve this.

2.2 Political participation and community-led routes to creating a 'whole-of-society approach'.

In the past fifteen years, 'coproduction' has become the go to phrase to describe a reinvigoration of the involvement of citizens in participatory governance, policy making and service design (Bovaird, 2007). In its purest sense, coproduction is defined as "the provision of services through relationships between professional service providers and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions" (Bovaird, 2007, p.847). However, co-production now has become somewhat of a buzzword, the meaning of which can be misconstrued due to several factors. These include its broad and fuzzy nature (Bussu, 2018), a lack of institutional recognition of the outcomes from coproduction (Loeffler and Bovaird, 2016), a lack of knowledge and skills within service professionals, senior officers and politicians (Loeffler and Bovaird, 2016, Paskaleva & Cooper, 2018, Kozak, 2019) or a lack of necessary leadership processes where coproduction is being utilised (Bussu, 2018).

Whilst coproduction was the language used for collaboration in Greater Manchester initially, the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network as a forum did not make sense in terms of coproduction, with the forum being more useful as a space for solidarity than service design. Thus, community development literature became more relevant to the network than co-production literature early on in the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship. The ability to tackle issues of social justice and not just support an overstretched public sector in redesigning their services in the face of austerity, became paramount.

This thesis informs practical application and longer term outcomes of community-led approaches to political and policy change. As part of this, this literature review finds the argument for the use of community development over coproduction is a gap in literature. Community development is “A process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.” United Nations (1995).

Ledwith (2011, p.17) states the following of community development:

> “Since the 1960s there has been a split from the radical agenda, which believes community development is a locus of change within the struggle for transformation of the structures of society that are root causes of oppression; and the pluralist agenda, which believes that there is a multiplicity of competing power bases in society, mediated by the state… The pluralist agenda rejected a wider political analysis to focus on skills and process issues such as interagency work and service delivery.”

This quote draws out the divergence of community development into two facets - the first a radically transformative agenda set out to tackle issues of social justice as well as political structures causing oppression. The second, ignoring political context and structures, instead focusing on service design and delivery, this latter description is where coproduction currently sits. This is at the heart of why ‘deepening’ of coproduction mentioned by Loeffler and Bovaird (2016) has not come to fruition yet. This divergence contributes to a gap in coproduction literature of community development not being identified for the deep institutional reform coproduction scholars wish to see.

Radical community development is political, its purpose to build collectives around shared oppression and address issues of social justice (Russell, 2015). There is a distinct process to follow, outlined in Russell (2015, p.58):

> “It starts with a clear understanding of the socioeconomic causes of oppression, then moving on to a clear distinction between oppressors and the oppressed and then to a clear articulation of whose side you are on. From there, the question becomes ‘what do you do about it?’”.

Ledwith (2007) claims radical community development evolved to highlight the need for theory and reflexive practice within community development work. Whilst community development was always radical (Ledwith, 2005), the practice was at risk of co-option by mainstream political agendas. In addition to continual reflexive practice, radical community development requires connection of local issues to structural injustices, including environmental, racial and gendered oppressions (Ledwith, 2007). This creates a necessary framework for solidarity and understanding of how international structures are creating oppressions which manifest in our communities. This practice also stops the proliferation of the belief that issues of social justice are localised and solved through individual practice or service redesign.

The view that community development is only capable of small-scale neighbourhood change and piecemeal reform (Ledwith, 2011), came in tandem with the adoption of participatory approaches by the New Labour government. Therefore, a rejection of radical community development literature was embedded at the outset of the adoption of more pluralist approaches. Thus, the gap in literature is itself a political construct, one that has come to benefit short-term, state-led, arms length approaches to community participation. This thesis seeks to understand this gap a little further, as a deliberate de-politicisation of community participation.

Coproduction came in tandem with the work of Giddens (1991) and New Labour to move away from economic classifications of citizens, towards citizenship being defined by inclusion/exclusion and redistributing possibilities as opposed to wealth

(Giles, 2005). A decade into a Conservative-led austerity agenda, UK institutions have felt pressure to begin “counting the uncounted” Ranciere (1999, p.83) or risk cutting out those who most need to be involved in decisions affecting their lives.

A further argument around the lack of space afforded to collectivism and critique within the UK political sphere, is that exclusion of certain groups or voices is ‘designed in’.

> “It is not necessarily true that people with the greatest needs participate in politics most actively - whoever decides what the game is about also decides who gets in the game” Schattschneider (1960, p.105).

The nature of coproduction as a tool for participation leads us to assume greater inclusion is inherently part of its agenda and decision making is open as long as you are part of a recognised group or identity required for the service in question (Gaventa, 1980). These identities can become the key to inclusion in decision making rather than exploring why that identity is a precursor to social exclusion in the first place. Again, this provides evidence that coproduction serves a pluralist, rather than a political agenda. This can be explored further by taking an example of structural inequality manifested in a form of social identification and performing a basic literature search.

Social class was chosen as the example of a root cause of structural inequality in the UK (McKenzie, 2015) due to an observation, unexplored due to the scope of this research, that the underpinnings of approaches adopted within public institutions in the UK are rooted in class assumptions. This manifests itself most obviously in service recipients being asked to give their time (mostly) for free to support service redesign. Amidst conversations I observed between senior officers and service recipients about poverty, homelessness and access to basic needs such as housing

and food, there were never discussions about their relationship to class. Whilst it was apparent senior officers were predominantly middle class and service recipients working class (Interview with GMHAN Member, November 2020), this remained an unspoken truth during the period of research. On reviewing literature for mentions of social class and coproduction, there were zero relevant results returned out of just over 35,000 mentions on Google Scholar. The only mentions of economic/social class and coproduction were for coproduction of services in middle class districts, speaking as to whom coproduction is primarily designed to work for. This is affirmed by Bovaird, who coined the most recognised definition of coproduction:

> "Because co-production is widely believed to be particularly characteristic of educated and better off citizens, the potential contributions of other groups, particularly the disadvantaged, is being systematically overlooked." Loeffler and Bovaird (2016, p.1016).

Class in this context is viewed in a political sense as in Ranciere (1999, p.83) "class is an operator of conflict, a name for counting the uncounted". To research politics, power, decision making and community participation in a UK context without looking at social class would be tantamount to ignoring social and cultural inequalities, continuing to not count the 'uncounted' (Gaventa 1980 and Tyler, 2014).

While coproduction may be used as a bridge to bring people who would not normally be involved in decisions closer to gatekeepers of those decisions (Lent and Studdert, 2019), there is a historical ignorance in coproduction of the differences and structural inequalities between the people brought in to 'coproduce' and the people within public institutions asking them to participate (Bussu and Galanti, 2015). Community development not only allows understanding of these social inequalities, but also gives a framework to dismantle them. There is a danger in not

understanding these differences class-based power asymmetries may be exacerbated (Hastings and Matthews, 2015).

On the other hand a search for ‘community development’ and ‘class’ in Google Scholar, returned 4.8 million results. This dichotomy in rhetoric between the disciplines reflects a construct within community development to allow political action based on structural inequalities.

Within community development literature, there are clear examples of theory and practice to answer coproduction’s lack. Whilst there is a gap in coproduction literature on the spaces and collectives needed to support it, literature on community development provides sound theory, developed and tested practically over generations (Freire, 1968 and Abers, 1998), as to how communities can understand the root causes of their oppression, collectivise and work on politicised action to alter the instigators of that oppression.

> Pitchford and Henderson in Ledwith (2011, p.30), state: “The case can and should be made for how community development can deepen democracy, but will not happen if practitioners’ minds are colonised by top-down policy, resulting in herding communities into structures and forums
> they neither own nor relate to.”

Ledwith calls for a critical approach to community development to achieve this deepening of democracy. Unlike the multitude of influential factors and principles devised for co-production to function Ledwith (2011) writes on the practical steps needed to create:

> “collective action for change
> • the individual person
> • the small face to face group
> • the institution (or structures of society)
> • the wider society”

Ledwith (2011, p.97).

The transference of these steps to collectives hoping to work collaboratively with institutions of power as yet remains unrecognised by co-production literature.

> "They [coproduction literature] tend to be strong on highlighting the nature and level of co-production and, to a lesser extent, evidencing specific short-term impacts—but weak on wider, longer-term impacts… Only a small number of evaluations of co-production initiatives have so far provided stronger evidence on the wider and longer-term outcomes of co-production." Loeffler & Bovaird (2016, p.1016).

This brings the argument community development has not happened because co-production is not designed to effect institutions, political structures or wider society for the longer term. This is the role of radical community development. Recognition and will to welcome radical collective action by public institutions, may allow an edging towards a different coproduction, as Bussu & Galanti (2018, p.349) suggest:

> "collective coproduction will go beyond [group coproduction] and translate into programmes that benefit the whole community rather than particular groups of users only."

The importance of understanding this difference between the two practices is essential in a homelessness context. As the issue is socio-economic, rooted in social injustice it is best understood through radical community development, rather than a service-based concern addressed through co-production. If institutions are aiming to involve people who have experience of homelessness in decision making, understanding barriers to political participation and democracy, rather than just services is essential. Russell (2015, p.58) states "Apolitical community development is a myth promulgated by a dominant elite. It stands alongside similar myths of the classless society and the trickle-down theory." This statement summarises the gaps in literature for this research; apolitical participation is insufficient when working on issues of social justice within a city region governmental system where trickle down

economics were relied upon to develop the city, and which was deliberately ignorant to the impacts on anyone who was not middle to upper social class.

The complex and deep-rooted challenges for people living in poverty, are at a tangent to the system designed to support them, which cannot flex to accommodate or understand individual difference and complexity (Cottam, 2018). The complexities of a 'lived experience' are not complex if they are your life, your community, but it takes time for those who face these realities in their jobs as public sector officials to recognise this reality.

The issue is not a lack of understanding of collaborative values within individuals, there is instead a gap in understanding the rigid institutions surrounding individuals in policy-making positions. How able those institutions are to flex around individual experience or provide more than a one size fits all solution to poverty and socio-economic inequalities such as homelessness is also key:

> "individuals… are exhausted from trying to provide good help within institutions and frameworks that no longer seem to trust their professional judgement or provide the support and space that would make good work possible" (Cottam, 2018, p.11).

As a result of this gap in daily understanding and literature, people who are oppressed by institutions can focus in on the relatable individual bureaucrat they come into contact with as the focus of their discontent (Lipsky, 1980). This can in turn effect collective action, which can be aimed at individual services, rather than what can feel like an esoteric structure or political factor (Piven and Cloward, 1977).

Using homelessness as a lens to interrogate this gap in literature, it is helpful to look at Mackie et. al, 2019 and Fitzpatrick's critical realist approach (2005). Mackie et. al (2019) highlight several political components which are stopping evidence-based

work on homelessness being adopted, this review will use these gaps highlighted for policy change and draw out relevant research questions.

Firstly, bureaucracy. Overly bureaucratic processes and interventions are rife throughout the homelessness sector, especially as voluntary sector organisations focus on supporting individuals. Mackie et. al (2019) call for a more flexible approach to support which clashes with more traditional, rigid 'one size fits all' bureaucracies of the public sector, designed more out of lack of capacity rather than need (Cairney, 2012, Seddon, 2002). This approach would also allow space for addressing the needs of different groups and understanding the external socio-political and economic forces at play.

Secondly, political will. As quoted in Mackie at. al (2019, p.92), the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing signified this political challenge; 'If we're going to solve homelessness we need governments to show up. All levels of government.' The question is how are politicians, policymakers and all levels of government encouraged to show up? This again, is a gap highlighted by Mackie et. al (2019), but not answered in literature around homelessness.

Finally, there are evidence, research and evaluation gaps. Mackie et al (p56. 2019) call for a 'step change in homelessness research from small-scale qualitative research to larger-scale experimental studies'. This correlates with co-production researchers' calls for longer term research (Loeffler & Bovaird (2016) and community development practitioners' calls for reflexive practice (Ledwith, 2011). The use of long-term research roles, or more specifically the Knowledge Exchange Partnership between SHUSU and GMCA, at the heart of this thesis can help to answer the

question of not only how the policy is constructed to ‘solve’ homelessness, but also why the manner in which the policy is made is contradictory to the true causes of increases in homelessness.

Community development processes allow this time and space for complexity, in fact this practice instructs communities to delve into the causality behind issues creating oppression and make them known (Ledwith, 2011). Bringing these gaps together provides a research question for this thesis. Did the GMHAN create a space for community development and foster the use of a whole-of-society approach to allow the gaps highlighted in Mackie et. al (2019) around political will, bureaucracy and policymaking to be addressed when confronting national and international socio-economic forces sustaining housing injustice?

The Community Development Programme’s pamphlet ‘Gilding the Ghetto’ (CDP, 1977) is the text with the strongest link to all three of these policymaking failures. The text, published in 1977, was written by community workers, at the climax of a decade of ‘deprivation’ work funded by the UK government, taking into account The Urban Programme, Inner Area Studies, Quality of Life projects, Community Development Programmes (CDPs) and more (CDP, 1977). However, the most interesting aspect of the pamphlet is not its description of history already past, but its explanation of political machinations, and its aim to give insight to future generations of community workers. The pamphlet is a reaction to the “striking official silence” about the programmes of the 1960s and early 70s, with the government of the day failing to release revelations on root causes of urban poverty, any learnings or even whether the projects succeeded (CDP, 1977). This is not an

academic text, but is based upon research from sources on the ground, newspaper clippings, government papers, reports from charities and photography.

Gilding the Ghetto tells a story that could have been written any time since, about any level of government within the UK, with an honesty rarely allowed due to political restrictions now present in senior levels of the UK Civil Service (The Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations, 1990). This writing inspired much of this ethnography, by showing the importance of bringing political undertones and the inner workings of government to the surface and in doing so, combining the gaps highlighted by this literature review.

Because of this, in itself Gilding the Ghetto highlights a gap in literature; a resource that provides:

> "a framework both for understanding better the variety of ways in which the state operates and for locating the weaknesses and contradictions within the state's structures and activities." CDP (1977, p.63).

To this end, Gilding the Ghetto has identified what this research hopes to achieve. Practical advice alongside a theoretical intervention on how the political system can work alongside civil society-led approaches to issues of social justice and how to work within or against those institutions of power. Ultimately, the political system is not a singular 'system' at all, this review, shows the opposite. The political system is full of individuals, with differing attitudes, opinions and life experiences, (CDP, 1977 and Lipsky, 1980) whom must be worked with and be willing to work collaboratively, if the root causes of any issues of social justice are to be properly addressed.

The Community Development Programme rejected the 'cycle of deprivation' approach to public policy in the UK in the 1960s (CDP, 1977), which is largely still in place within services and policy today with interventions such as the individual

Outcome Star, centred around ‘fixing’ the individual’s actions or the services they interact with. This is opposed to the community development narrative, that any change must start with popular education and scrutiny alongside the people who are being oppressed by systemic causes of poverty and deprivation. Only then are people are able to understand and then challenge the true root causes of their situation in society (Friere, 1970). “It is this commitment to get beyond the symptoms to the root causes of oppression that defines radical community development.” Ledwith (2011, p.17).

Building a community profile and causality chain are key to the scrutiny and evidence-led approach needed for community development (Flaherty et al., 2004). Relational work is first needed to create these through cycles of action and reflection (Cottom, 2018), the first step in community organising. Creating these profiles together, spending the time deliberating issues and looking to wider political reasoning, provides the space for collaboration to occur, sustainably, not just for a one off project. Co-production literature seems keen to source this understanding but does not look beyond its discipline for the evidence. Not only is radical community development as a concept left under-researched in the field of participation in devolved cities, as are the local actors who can contribute to the development of political participation as a whole. When discussing the content of their book, Beel, Jones and Jones (2021, p.5) state: “the involvement of actors in city regions… being under researched and silent in current debates.”. This highlights a lack of research on civil society responses to devolution in devolved city regions.

City regions are beginning to be seen as “important sites of resistance to the downloading of or devolving austerity” Beel, Jones and Jones (2021, p.66). Despite this acknowledgement and the knowledge that "The devolution settlement has

essentially involved the devolution of austerity, which impacts on civil society in a variety of ways" *(*Beel, Jones and Jones, 2021, p.67), homelessness as an impact of austerity on devolved regions has been left under-researched. Most literature focuses on areas specifically mentioned in the Devolution agreement (Lupton et. al, 2018 and Bell, Jones and Jones, 2021), leading to the notion only legislative or harder powers are worthy of research or accessible to the majority of researchers.

As a result of a 'helicopter' view of devolution by researchers, the devolution of legislative powers and broader austerity are often the issues considered. In tandem with this, more traditional civil society is considered as the primary community-based actor when considering democratic resistance in devolved city regions. Beel, Jones and Jones (2021) for example look to the impact of localised austerity on two of the major devolved legislative powers; healthcare and welfare systems. To understand the impact of the devolution of these powers they research trade unions, established charities, skills providers, health services and Local Authorities as the civil society space for debate and challenge. Whilst these groups are of course involved in homelessness and housing insecurity, the less established actors within local civil society or newly formed groups have of yet been under-researched.

Radical community development is not mentioned as a challenge to this delegation of responsibility and opportunity for the delegation of democracy. As Novello, Mohammad and Buckland state in the *Fearless Cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalise Movement,* non-state actors play a vital role in allowing us "to achieve greater democratisation and greater responsibility for the care and management of our common wealth" (Novello, Mohammad and Buckland, 2017, p.77) This is at present under researched in the context of devolved UK cities. This leaves us with

the main research question for this thesis. Practically, how can community-led policy design methods such as community development or a ‘whole-of-society approach’ be introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context?

2.3 Transversal Politics, Standpoint Theory and a call for Arendtian Agora

For Arendt, engaging in collective action and public discussion in deliberately formed political spaces, is essential for politics to function. The transparency of debate, voting and civic action these spaces afford is what enables political agency and democracy. Arendt highlights the importance of politic spaces in being able to gather people around a common agenda.

> "What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved… but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them." Arendt (1958, p.53).

The argument from participation practitioners is this public space has indeed broken down, with decisions and the democracy absorbed by a bureaucratic ethos closed off to the majority of citizens (Gaventa, 1980, Nabatchi, 2010). Beyond needing the people and spaces for policy co-creation, there is a need for these environments to be created at a time when space for progressive dialogue is limited within the political sphere. Nabatchi (2010) argues;

> "deliberative democracy offers institutional designs that may help the field rediscover the role of the public in shaping societal affairs and, in doing so, abate the inherent tensions between bureaucratic and democratic ethos." Nabatchi (2010, p.392).

Challenging this established policymaking, especially for the most marginalised communities to be heard, "requires the creation of spaces where deliberative problem-solving can take place", Shand (2018, p.520). When co-production research discusses space, it tends to note its existence is necessary for co-production to 'be effective' or for the 'legitimacy' of the practice (Shand, 2018), not as an essential caveat to democracy. Voorberg et. al argue "Future research must conclude to what extent co-creation/co-production contributes to bridge this

perceived democratic or performance gap…" Voorberg et al. (2014, p.26) , however this gap is yet to be addressed. It is evident from this review of literature the political ramifications of the lack of this space in public sector bureaucracies and how community-led approaches can help to create and sustain them requires further research.

To this end, community development does not entirely lend itself to working alongside political bureaucracies either, the literature is conflicted on whether to work with political institutions or not, due to the threat of co-option. Ledwith (2011) states that community development is at the interface of reactionary and revolutionary practice, which leaves it vulnerable to distortion from other agendas (or co-option) "when we do not remain vigilant". Friere (1990) in the conversational piece with Highlander Institute Founder Myles Horton *We Make the Road by Walking*, is asked about the question of a movement's co-option and whether working within or outside of the political system is the correct approach. The answer appears to be both, but for different means and measures of success. Friere argues that to not be co-opted, at some stage you have to do nothing and if the choice is do nothing and be left alone or do something and be co-opted, then co-option is the only choice (Friere and Horton, 1990).

Spaces as fora which create a straddling effect between the 'inside and outside' (civil society and the political sphere) in order for citizens and institutions to work together, present their own gap in literature. This research hopes to highlight pragmatic steps when working on community-led approaches in bringing these two spheres together. It aims to address the gap in literature on what this space is in a newly devolved UK local government context and what can be done practically to

enable these spaces to exist. “There is always space to be created by working together… The change is on the inside and outside.” Friere and Horton (1990, p.208).

Transversalism or transversal politics, seeks to bring different worlds and experiences together to effect political and societal change. As in Yuval-Davis (1999, p.94), transversalism is based on standpoint epistemology, which recognises that “from each positioning the world is seen differently, and thus that any knowledge based on just one positioning is ‘unfinished’" .

Hill Collins (2000) refers to the notion that building dialogue with people from different positioning is the only way to "approximate truth” in her theoretical work, Black Feminist Thought, theorising the experience of Black women in the United States and the American feminist movement. Unlike Hekman’s Standpoint theory (Hekman, 1997), whom Hill Collins critiques for lack of connection to intersectional oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, Hill Collins, 1997), this theory has broad applicability to political movements of resistance and the encouragement of groups to engage in transversal dialogues (Hill Collins, 2017, Roth and Chambers, 2019). Whilst Hill Collins (2017) is concerned political practice is not yet entirely ready to move to transversalism, it provides a hopeful lens and a step towards more inclusive, collaborative political action for various levels of social movement and government.

Transversalism is founded on the notion of “difference by equality”; as Yuval-Davis (1997) states, so differences are important, but non-hierarchical and must include a recognition of class, ‘race', gender and varying social and political power. Additionally Bastian (2006, p.1039) claims “politics based on a homogenous notion

of identity is spectacularly unable to deal with the problem of working toward peace". Thus, the collective ambition built from an understanding of difference and equality becomes the paramount feature of a transversal social movement "It is the message, not the messenger that counts." Yuval-Davis (1999, p.96). In order to form this collective ambition or 'message' Yuval-Davis sets out a process built from standpoint theory:

> "The idea is that each such 'messenger', and each participant in a political dialogue, would bring with them the reflexive knowledge of their own positioning and identity. This is 'rooting'. At the same time, they should also try to 'shift' - to put themselves in the situation of those with whom they are in dialogue and who are different." Yuval-Davis (1999, p.96).

This rooting and shifting encourages individuals to spend time on empathy as well as developing their understanding of their own positioning within societal power constructs. This reflexive work is necessary for individual advocates within networks more than any others going forward to avoid pitfalls, particularly in terms of maintaining a position as social connectors, rather than becoming gatekeepers.

A network and understanding built from transversality, allows individual advocates to bring a message from a larger forum into smaller bureaucratic spaces to discuss the experiences of themselves and others, in order to better inform political practice. This notion of vertical political dialogue allows for the transfer of dialogue into and out of the political sphere. This carrying of messages also requires horizontal dialogue between advocates in smaller groups and between advocates and the wider social movement to function legitimately (Seem and Guattari, 1974) and ensure the most 'approximate truth'.

Hill Collins (2017) argues in her later paper *On violence, intersectionality and transversal politics* that transversal politics is an unrealised political practice. Rather than lead us to believe this is therefore a naive practice to follow, Hill Collins points to the Black Lives Matter movement as a step in the direction for a transversal politics rooted in an understanding of intersectional oppression.

> "Yet just as intersecting oppressions are far from static, forms of political resistance that are similarly flexible are well-positioned for such sustained intellectual and political struggle." Hill Collins (2017, p.1472).

Although applied to the racial justice movement in the United States, if homelessness is seen as an oppression through the denial of a basic human right, this learning can also be applied to houselessness and movements invested in addressing it as a "sustained intellectual and political struggle" Hill Collins (2017, p.1472). The GMHAN gives us an opportunity to examine whether transversal politics can in fact be applied to this context.

Deiana (2018), argues transversal politics can only take us so far as the historical differences and external interference can be too great to be sustained by a desire for solidarity alone. To create a transversal environment or movement, there needs to be recognition people who relate to a particular group or collective can have varying levels of oppression and relationships with society and exclusion. This thesis recognises the vital importance of the inclusion of people with lived experience in order to co-create policy, with, not on behalf of marginalised communities (Taket et. al, 2009). However, the involvement of people with lived experience in co-production in Greater Manchester has already been researched (Allmark, 2020), whilst the power structures creating the conditions for exclusion from power and decision making have not been subject to the same analysis. As Yuval-Davis (2012) argues:

> "Emphasis on the importance of the lives of the most marginal elements in society can sometimes collude with the attempts of hegemonic centres to remain opaque while at the same time maintaining the surveillance of marginal elements in society." (Yuval-Davis, 2012, p.48).

Thus, in order to broaden understanding of these central groups where most political decisions emanate (Yuval-Davis, 2012) and to take advantage of rare insider insight into them, I focus my research on individuals within these power bases.

This 'space' for solidarity is complex, with political movements forming everything from "tight, formal organisations to loose informal networks" (Yuval Davis, 1997, p.132). Aside from these more recognisable political campaigns or spaces, Arendt urges the notion that democratic society cannot exist without openly accessible and public political spaces as fora. As outlined in Knowles et. al (2019), the GMHAN was concerned with making a choice on whether to become a formal organisation or remain a loose informal network, this could have led the research in a direction of critiquing this decision and its ramifications. However, looking to Arendt provides an alternative set of research questions, around the creation of open forums as spaces for democratic devolution. These will be examined to identify whether the GMHAN contained spaces for different approaches to the advancement of homelessness policy or political action.

Arendt's philosophy outlined in *The Human Condition* (1958) tells us that openly accessible, public space for deliberation is vital. These spaces were first formed as Agora in ancient Greece. We might look to Greece 2000 years ago to understand what democratic space is needed in a newly devolved UK city region. The Greeks first formed these spaces for public display of speech, debate and action (though slaves and women were barred from participation Layard, 2016). Agora were a pillar

of the first and truest democracy, as the “single most defining characteristic” of Greek urban settlements (Lindenlauf, 2014). Rather than just being a market or gathering place, they were constructed for political purpose and a community without one was not seen as democratically functional “a community without one, such as that of the Cyclopes, [was seen] as lawless” Lindenlauf (2014).

Arendt believed whilst we perform often in public (our work etc.), we do not practice speech or action publicly. This is also formative to Friere’s theory of community development (1968); we must come together physically as a community to scrutinise, challenge and organise against oppressive structural inequalities. Otherwise as Arendt warns, people retreat to their private sphere for political discourse, creating “radical isolation, where nobody can any longer agree with anyone else.” (Arendt, 1958, p.58). D’Entreves (2006) confirms it is only “by means of engaging in common action and collective deliberation, that citizenship can be reaffirmed and political agency effectively exercised.”. Arendt’s philosophy argues these spaces are not just essential for political participation, but if citizen participation in the political sphere is essential for true democracy to function, then so too are the spaces where this participation can take place. Arendt gives us a historical narrative of the loss of this space and provides a hopeful narrative on its reconstruction for the future. However, as her texts are philosophical by nature they do not provide us with practical examples of how to reconstruct this space.

Whilst this is not a geographical thesis, to understand where this space might be found it is essential to understand present political geography of the cities we operate in. In Greater Manchester this privatisation of politics has, under neoliberalism and urban regeneration, come alongside the privatisation of public

realm (Harvey, 2013). Harvey presents a warning, with Capitalism comes a privatisation of public realm and thus a further deconstruction of the public space available for politics, whether this be protest, discussion or people who do not have the funds to access private space simply being barred from interacting with their city (Harvey, 2013).

As the relation between public and commercial spaces has become crucial in a modern capitalist city (Harvey, 2006), public realm and the politics taking place in it have become a prime target for developers and local authorities Minton (2009). These market forces look to leverage space to further their narrative of success on which to build an optimum trading environment. Public space and democracy are effectively being sacrificed to promote spending and consumption Layard (2016). In Gimson (2017, p.16) Grayling states: “If you were to squeeze out the possibility of people… altogether, that would be exactly what a tyranny does; exactly what despotism does.”

This effect has been particularly acute in Manchester’s public spaces, such as Piccadilly Gardens (Minton 2009, Gonzalez and Waley, 2013). Knowles as quoted in Gimson (2017, p.16):

> “It is not just the private ownership, but the influence on the public element of the square. If the whole of Piccadilly Gardens were privatised, and access for protest prevented, Manchester would kick up a bit of a fuss. But, I don’t know where they would go to do it.”

People who are determined to be ill fitting with the aesthetic of regeneration are often the first to be excluded from these spaces and thus, as this literature review argues, democracy within their city. As Minton (2009) writes:

> “Exclusion is either covert, by making people uncomfortable, or overt, by banning them, with the list of undesirables spanning far more than the usual suspects of the beggars and homeless… It is no coincidence that Manchester, which operates one of the most vigorous Clean and Safe polices is also the ASBO capital of Britain.” (Minton, 2009, p.46).

Whilst the ‘usual suspects’ are the first to be extradited from public spaces, sacrifices at the altar of economic growth, poorer populations are not the only ones to suffer from their ejection. As Arendt (1958) argues, public space is essential to political participation, where slaves and women were excluded from Agora, they in turn were excluded from political discourse and decision making. Thus if these spaces are created out of the removal of people deemed to be homeless, not only does our democracy suffer, but all of our ability to participate in it fully. Friere asks what this democratic exclusion means for truly addressing the inequalities causing oppression:

> “if a liberating education requires political power and the oppressed have none, how then is it possible to carry out the pedagogy of the oppressed prior to the revolution?” Freire (1968, p.54).

To change legislation with people who were being oppressed by the homelessness and housing system, Friere (1968) tells us the key elements of community development and reflective practice (a liberating education) need to take place. However, Freire gives no insight into how change might take place when working within (or side by side) a political context. Thus his earlier theory focusses on the steps before systemic change, assuming political power is not interested or not capable of any act other than oppression ‘before the revolution’. Freire identifies “educational projects carried out with the oppressed” (Freire, 1968, p.54) as the necessary first step to liberation. But, if political power was willing to hold space (as deemed essential by Arendt, 1958) and other organisations and citizens wanted to act in solidarity (as considered vital by Yuval-Davis (1997) and Hill Collins (2000)),

can both a liberating education and systemic change be undertaken simultaneously? The involvement of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and other influential policymakers attending the GMHAN gives rise to these questions. If policymakers witness questions, challenge and reflective practice directly, what insight does this provide for their policy creation in a newly devolved city region, and does it come along with the solidarity needed for them to work *with* citizens, not on their behalf.

It is helpful here to address the language of oppressor and oppressed in Friere (1968), whilst accurate with reference to those subject to oppressive forces within the housing and benefits system, it may be more helpful to use more recognisable, modern terminology around privilege for this thesis. Hill Collins (2009) argues for the need for individuals to recognise their various privileges (and lack of), in order to empathise with others and form the most accurate picture of the world in order to work in solidarity. The additional recognition of intersectionality as "the most valid approach to analyse social stratification as a whole" (Yuval Davis, 2011) lends a clearer understanding of the multiple factors that oppression is based upon and rejects binary thinking such as 'oppressors or the oppressed', as Hill Collins states:

> "Depending on the context, individuals and groups may be alternately oppressors in some settings and oppressed in others, or simultaneously oppressing and oppressed still in others." Hill Collins (2009, p.265).

The term intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, when discussing the marginalisation of Black women in feminist theory and anti-racist politics, Crenshaw (1989) argues:

> "Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist police discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater

> than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated." (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140).

This definition, rooted in the experiences of Black women in the United States, has gained adoption by a number of social movements wishing to address the underlying causes of multiple, intersecting and shifting oppressions. Despite being an established academic phrase, readily debated by feminist scholars, intersectionality was not widely adopted into policymaking space until the 2000s (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Yuval-Davis states that intersectional issues have "been debated by European feminist scholars since the end of the 1970s but, apparently, without noticeable effect on policymakers" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.194). This lack of inclusion in the British policymaking space has relevance to this thesis not just in relation to how policy is created, but by whom, specifically; the representation of groups of people by individual advocates based on rooted experiences.

Yuval-Davis (2006, p.205-6) adds:

> "The differential positionings and perspectives of the participants in such a dialogue should be acknowledged without treating them as representatives of any fixed social grouping… the boundaries of the dialogue should be determined by common political emancipatory goals while the tactical and strategic priorities should be led by those whose needs are judged by the participants of the dialogue to be the most urgent."

Friere (1968) neglects the importance of these intersecting factors creating oppression in placing all of 'the oppressed' under the same banner. Friere's early work only recognises the importance of oppressive terminology in naming how those with the least privileges can be treated by those with more. When oppressors begin to stand side by side with those oppressed they are in turn recognising their power, privilege and the "mutually constitutive models of intersectional social division" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.193). Terminology around intersectionality, rather than

oppression, lends itself to the empathy or ‘rooting and shifting’ required to undertake transversalism. In defining transversalism and the need for all participants’ ability to ‘root’ and then ‘shift’ their perspectives, this thesis can begin to question transversalism’s use as a political framework for the GMHAN and the use of GMHAN forums for community development activity. This presents a gap in cross-sectoral, diverse advocacy and spaces for political education, challenge and action.

When looking at social exclusion and intersectionality, it helps to look briefly at social capital and how its accumulation can be a determinant of political participation. Bourdieu (1992) describes social capital as focussing on accumulation of social capital around the individual:

> “The sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.119).

Field (2006) furthers this by adding in the notion of networks containing capital:

> “The central idea of social capital is that social networks are a valuable asset. Networks provide a basis for social cohesion because they enable people to cooperate with one another - and not just with the people they know - for mutual advantage.” Field (2006, p.12).

For Putnam (1993, p.35) on the other hand, social capital refers to “features of social organisations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit.” Putnam argues politics itself functions where:

> “Social and political networks are organised horizontally, not hierarchically. These “civic communities” value solidarity, civic participation, and integrity. And here democracy works." (Putnam, 1993, p.3).

Like Arendt (1951), Putnam argues where citizens see public affairs as “somebody else’s business – “‘the bosses’, ‘the politicians’ – but not theirs” (Putnam, 1993, p.3) democracy fails.

These definitions allow us to begin to see social capital as a membership card into these organisations (civil society), an enabler of our continued participation and the ability to wield capital for the benefit of ourselves and wider society. Thus crucially for this thesis, a lack of social capital can be a key factor in excluding a citizen from networks, civil society and therefore political action. Whilst the Greater Manchester Combined Authority was handed power from Westminster, this cannot then be allowed to silt up in inaccessible places and institutions in a different geography. Power still needs to be transcended out of places already holding significant social capital and into communities who require change to take place most urgently (Perry et. al, 2019).

Arendt (1958) fails to recognise spaces within public realm can also be restricted through social capital and a lack of understanding of intersectionality. She also does not explore the matter of deliberate or ‘designed’ exclusion of citizens. Though she argues personal capital has become the new precursor to political access, her Marxist argument for a redistribution of this capital to the state does not drill down into the nuance of how human beings socially, as well as financially, assert their political will and protect political realms for those they deem to have appropriate knowledge or opinion (Bourdieu, 1986). Personal wealth, class, ‘race’, ethnicity, education, disability, gender, geography, citizenship, sexual orientation and social capital all stand to restrict access to political participation in varying ways through individual social actors and symbolically via wider societal factors (Bourdieu, 1986,

Yuval Davis, 1997, Field, 2006 and Hill Collins, 2009). As such, it is not simply enough to ensure political discussion takes place in public spaces as Arendt (1951, 1958) suggests. Social capital must be recognised, alongside different privileges and spaces must be truly or radically accessible to communities involved, especially when these concern issues of social justice, such as homelessness and housing injustice.

The above review brings us to a subsidiary research question in order to address a gap in understanding the 'hegemonic centre' Yuval Davis (2012) of political decision making:

Who operates within the hegemonic centre and can transversal politics be utilised by civil society advocates or non-state actors to create political dialogue and spaces for policy change?

In modernising cities such as Manchester, regeneration has served to combine economic, geographical and social forces to exclude existing communities from the city centre, the site where most public space was constructed historically, as outlined in Mellor (2001), Wainwright (2003), Degen (2008), Minton (2009) and Silver (2018). As Arendt states: “If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only, it must transcend the life-span of mortal men.” (Arendt, 1958, p.55). There are several examples of this kind of fora in action internationally, with citizens debating and formulating social policy for politicians to then enact. Whilst not having enough space to outline all of them in this thesis, this review will outline a couple of examples with closest relevance to

devolved city regions to determine best practice and potential learning for Greater Manchester and the GMHAN in this regard.

In 2017, Barcelona hosted the first international gathering of the Fearless Cities network, bringing together

“over seven hundred participants and one hundred citizen platforms from one hundred and eighty cities and forty countries, aiming to democratically transform cities to resist growing inequalities, democratic deficits and social injustices” (Barcelona en Comú et al., 2019).

This gathering brought politicians, activists, civil society and academics often deemed ‘radical’ in their spaces into one common space. In reality those deemed radical were just looking to be fearless in their desire for democratic change. In the book collated for the conference Roth, Lander and Pin look at ‘radical democracy in the city council’, they state:

> "Greater local democracy can also improve democracy at the global level. Given that cities and local governments are becoming key actors in the political context we live in, making them more democratic has great potential to give ordinary people a voice in how to deal with global problems… Nevertheless… one particular challenge is how to open up channels for the participation of ordinary people in decision-making, while at the same time making sure that the demands of social movements and associations are heard.” Roth, Lander and Pin (2017, p.85).

This quote summaries both the opportunity and challenge to devolved cities like Greater Manchester and to civil society within these geographies. Whilst attempting to deal with issues of social justice such as homelessness and housing insecurity, rather than leave responsibility to government and policymakers, there is an opportunity to discover and experiment with different forms of democratic participation and routes to devolving power to local communities. Connecting these movements and people globally, not only allows us to pursue larger issues of socio-economic injustice, but also shows movements they are not alone, not isolated or

‘radical’ in their aims, but fearless in their pursuit of addressing issues of social justice and demands for participation in decision making.

My reading forms the strands of theory leading for this thesis, gathering them into a theoretical framework to be explored via research questions, answered through an insider ethnography of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network. The proposed framework combined with the thesis’ findings argues spaces (Arendt, 1951, 1958), transversal politics (Yuval Davis, 1997) and collective power (Ledwith, 2011, Friere, 1968 and Gaventa, 1980) are all needed to form a whole-of-society approach to democratic devolution. The Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network allows a case study into the challenges and opportunities evolving in real time alongside a new form of government. The following research questions drawn out through this literature review garner learning for others in pursuit of similar aims, whatever their environment.

2.4 Research Questions

The main research question established is:

- How can community-led policy design methods such as community development be introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context?

To enable this question to be answered, the following subsidiary questions will be interrogated:

- There is a gap in understanding the “hegemonic centre” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218) of political decision making and who operates within that power base. Can transversal politics be utilised by civil society advocates or non-state actors to sustain political dialogue when working with centres of power rather than for personal gain?

- Did the GMHAN create a space for community development and foster the use of a whole-of-society approach to allow the gaps highlighted in Mackie et. al (2019) around political will, bureaucracy and policymaking to be addressed when confronting national and international socio-economic forces sustaining housing injustice?

3.1 Methodology

Introduction

The methodological approach chosen for this thesis was an insider ethnography, as the research was undertaken as part of the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship between the University of Salford and Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Knowledge Exchange Projects are defined by the ESRC as:

> “a two-way exchange between researchers and research users, to share ideas, research evidence, experiences and skills. It refers to any process through which academic ideas and insights are shared, and external perspectives and experiences brought in to academia." (UKRI.org).

As a Knowledge Transfer Fellow between University of Salford and the GMCA from 2018-20, I was tasked with supporting the establishment of the GMHAN and researching its potential impacts on participatory policymaking in the city region. The Knowledge Exchange project facilitated the role of researcher and development role for the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network to run in parallel to one another. This created a symbiotic relationship between the network’s development and writing this thesis.

The method of ‘knowledge exchange' also contributed to the methodology due to the time I spent on the exchange of knowledge between partners and citizens. Kara (2015) describes knowledge exchange as a methodology as:

> “Knowledge exchange is a more egalitarian approach that implies a two-way process of sharing knowledge between researchers, practitioners, service users and other interested people.” Kara (2015, p.176).

This allowed me to relay research to members of the network and the GMCA in real time, creating reflexive practice, facilitating the development of the network at the same time as findings for this thesis. Feedback was organised through weekly action and support meetings, advisory board meetings, individual conversations

with core network members and informal conversations in shared office spaces or over breaks. Key to these mechanisms working were people involved in the network keen to have research and evidence-led practice. Several advocates of this approach publicly supported the research and the knowledge exchange methodology. The knowledge exchange helped the insider ethnography in this regard, as people were less concerned about a researcher extracting from them when they could see the real time benefit to the network during the knowledge exchange process. Thus, the knowledge exchange became an embedded element of the project and research methodology in parallel.

I relayed relevant reading and research findings through these meetings, with interested individuals requesting time just for these conversations. Quarterly presentations were also made to the GMCA and University on findings and planned development for the next period. Monthly meetings took place with the Mayor where relevant findings were discussed and ideas put forward on further engagement with the network. I took ideas and challenges from these spaces on board and worked them into network activities or research, creating a feedback loop between action on the ground and the research.

The research timescale was constrained by the Knowledge Exchange, thus took place over the eighteen-month period the project was commissioned for. This was extended slightly to allow time for interviews and the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the research needed to be conducted over a period of time to allow observation to take place from inception of ideas or policies through to the barriers and impacts of decision making (Marvasti, 2004).

Ethical approval was given by the University of Salford for a mixed methods approach of observation and interviews, including the capturing of data through field notes, dictaphone and reflective diaries. Ethical approval was specifically given for undertaking informal observation with the caveat that consent forms were collected from participants and participants were made aware at regular intervals of the role of researcher. Questions were asked during ethical approval regarding anonymity, due to the political sensitivity of the work encountered and difficulty anonymising unique spaces and political roles, as well as ensuring covert research did not take place. Reassurance was given on the grounds research could be embargoed for up to five years, allowing for people within political office to change positions, as well as the coding of any notes taken. This thesis thus makes every effort to anonymise roles and the people occupying them where possible as well as anonymising meeting spaces and the times meetings took place.

Ethnographic observation was designed to witness the development of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network as a new civil society space for policy co-creation and a 'whole-of-society' approach to ending rough sleeping. In order to answer the research questions, individuals' relationships to one another, the spaces they operated in and the relationship between civil society spaces and the political sphere were observed through group and one on one meetings, forums and the observation of daily life in policymaking spaces, allowing for a critical observation of the impact of devolution on civil society and civil society's ability to impact policy creation during the transfer of powers from Westminster to Greater Manchester.

Insider ethnography can have connotations of insularity, introspective reflection and be at risk of coming close to auto-ethnography (Gobo, 2008). From the outset, there

seemed little sense in spending significant time looking inward for answers when working with a community of people on every other aspect of the network, the knowledge exchange aspect gave this counterbalance. In order to achieve this, conversations were arranged with six network members about the research direction to sense check the questions being asked and themes emerging at the start of the research. These members were a PhD researcher; an anthropologist who encouraged continual asking of questions, the others were members of the network with a breadth of experiences.

This informal group became a source of reflexive practice for both the research and network development, allowing for some of the challenges of insider ethnography to be tackled. More insight was shared in these short conversations with the community, than could hoped to be achieved in the same timeframe through introspection alone (Duneier, 1999). These conversations often took place unplanned in university offices, coffee shops, waiting before meetings and over the phone, these informal settings did not have the air of an official research space (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 and Gobo, 2008) and allowed people to give their immediate personal feelings on what was happening in front of them. This reflexive group allowed space for draft research findings from observation to be discussed, creating more collective reflection than a solo reflective diary, this practice also allowed for preliminary findings to be informally fed into the network's development, allowing for knowledge exchange.

Whilst these conversations only infrequently contributed directly to the research findings, this informal support for the research allowed for the development of personal ethnographic practice. This was especially notable in relating observations

to broader events or formulating trans-situational ideas: “Our ideas are constantly moving between local, specific features of our research setting and broader Trans-situational ideas” Atkinson (2015, p.36). In order to answer the research questions set, this expansion to macro political events was essential to understanding the impacts of the network’s activities. Researching the network would have meant little if not attached to the broader themes of devolution, the transfer of powers within a new bureaucracy and the local political economy.

In addition to counteracting the insular notions of ‘insider’ ethnography, questions of insider vs outsider are apparent in ethnographic field research. Critiques of insider ethnography state researchers struggle to maintain objectivity and emotional distance, presenting their research subjects in a favourable light (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Whereas, critique of a full outsider perspective is that are outsiders are incapable of finding the nuance in interpersonal relationships and appreciating the “true character of group life” Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, p.86). Neither of these approaches felt appropriate for this research. Outsider ethnography was not possible due to the daily interaction with research participants and the previous relationships built with them over several years prior to the research taking place. However, the main critique of insider ethnography as being too close to the research participants (Mackenzie, 2015) needed to be continually addressed. Thus, a more marginal perspective was sought, balancing the mindset of both traditional ethnographic approaches.

The perspective of an insider ethnography was chosen to be able to capitalise on the benefits of access and relationships, whilst not allowing those social bonds to obfuscate all critique. Hammersley and Atkinson describe the attainment of a marginal position as an insider:

> "While ethnographers may adopt a variety of roles, the usual aim throughout is to maintain a more or less marginal position, thereby providing access to participate perspectives but at the same time minimising the dangers of over-rapport." Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, p.88-89).

Crucial to this approach was outlining to members of the network that research was being undertaken from the outset and would continue to be undertaken for the duration of the Knowledge Exchange project. Members involved on a daily basis with the network were asked to sign both ethnographic and interview consent forms and were constantly reminded of the role of the researcher as both Knowledge Exchange Fellow and researcher. People were informed field notes were being taken and observations would be noted during meetings and informal conversations. Reminders were given on a regular basis to combat any criticism of the research being undertaken via a covert approach especially due to the long-term nature of the research.

The final reason insider ethnography was chosen as a method was its historical precedence in defining issues of social justice yet to be recognised, or for whatever reason, not on the current political agenda (Becker et. al, 2004). In addition, homelessness and housing issues are rarely looked at through an ethnographic lens due to the time and financial implications of ethnographic research and potential trust issues with researchers being allowed access to marginalised communities (Duneier, 1999, Bourgois, 2009, Gibson, 2011 and Hoolachan, 2016). These combine to give a historical precedence of unearthing truths behind the causes of issues of social justice, but a gap in use of the method for understanding the power dynamics around homelessness. In particular, this combination can help to answer a key question underpinning the research; we know what to do to solve homelessness, so why don't we do it (Mackie et. al, 2019).

Research Timeline

Participant observation: Physical meetings: May 2019 - March 2020. Online meetings: March 2020 - July 2020.

Reflective diaries: September 2019 - June 2020.

Informal interviews: October 2019 - March 2020.

Formal interviews: April - November 2020.

3.2 Settings

In this instance the setting was opportunistic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) in that a Knowledge Exchange was taking place in a setting already known to the researcher and undertaking an ethnography of devolved politics did not have to be designed or access requested, the opportunity presented itself in the unfolding of wider political events.

The primary issue for ethnography of navigating gatekeepers to access certain settings (Atkinson, 2005), was less of problem for this research due to prior relationships and the Knowledge Exchange agreement. However, on the one occasion gatekeepers were an issue, this in itself was fed into the research findings relating to access to spaces for policy change.

The GMHAN was established as the setting for research to provide an in-depth case study over a period of eighteen months. Access to the GMHAN also allowed access to connected spaces and individuals operating within them, including certain GMCA meetings and forums, as well as GMHAN forums and meetings, including Advisory Boards and action and support meetings. These settings did not change during the period of the research so deep research could take place over an eighteen-month period, rather than breadth across multiple spaces. The period of time combined with the settings allowed for adequate time in order to understand the intricacy of political relationships (Katz, 2004) and to observe numerous interactions within the same spaces, such as the GMHAN forum.

The context changed towards the conclusion of the research as the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a nationwide working from home mandate (HM Government, 2020). As GMHAN members supported the work of the GMCA and homelessness services during the period, meetings moved online and research conversations either took place over the phone or via Zoom. Observational research and formal interviews continued during this period (March 2020-July 2020), until summation of the Knowledge Exchange. Formal interviews continued up until November 2020 as the workload of the network and in general community work was so intense from March-September 2020 as a result of the global pandemic this did not allow much space for research interviews or for a relaxed environment when undertaking them.

Studying people in their natural environments is a foundation of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), this research gave this opportunity whilst altering the environment as little as possible by being present as a knowledge exchange fellow and researcher (Gobo, 2008).

3.3 Data Collection

As the methodology chosen was ethnographic, the data was collected through participant observation, reflective diaries, field notes and interviews, the process for each is explained below.

Participant Observation

The research design began with both what to observe and how (Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson, 1996). The multitude of options, as with any ethnography, was overwhelming (Silverman, 2000). In order to decide on a focus, as the setting was one I was familiar with, this initially required a process of de-naturalisation (Gobo, 2008) to allow distancing from a setting in which day to day activities appeared as just that.

Part of this process involved the decision in particular scenarios to allow space to be a researcher, rather than a social actor. In order to achieve this, more notes were taken, a location in meetings was chosen away from the group and contributions to the meetings were not made unless specifically asked. This would not have been possible if the participants did not in some way see the researcher or 'other', able to switch from the margins to the centre with little notice. This flexibility could be questioned as lacking the rigour quantitative approaches enforce (Silverman, 2000), especially with regard to sustained activity or gathering of data from one source. In the circumstances however, this was a necessary element of allowing interpretation of reality and reflexive practice.

Marvasti (2004) reported a similar situation when undertaking research in a homeless hostel whereby with his different roles his identity would shift, requiring a constant balancing act in how to undertake observation. This gives precedence to the notion and use of multiple identities within one 'observer' (Silverman, 1993 and Goffman, 1959).

The next step in the research design was deciding what to observe (Gobo, 2008). This was initially set out as the obvious forums involved in the GMHAN (action and support meetings, the advisory board and larger forums), this however expanded with the number of informal settings attended where the information was prescient to the research and participants were already engaged and aware of the research. Examples of this included in the thesis were one to one meetings, smaller meetings between members of the GMHAN and the GMCA and impromptu observations in public spaces across Greater Manchester. Participant observation in these spaces were just as crucial for revealing the architecture on which the network rested (Gobo, 2008).

Due to undertaking a process of de-naturalisation the way these instances were observed was altered (Gobo, 2008). The most notable two examples in the thesis are the *Take it to the Bridge* and *People's Coffeehouse* reflective diary excerpts, underneath these observations emerged findings which were central to the thesis, around advocates and the accessibility of public spaces and thus democracy in central Manchester.

Observation and personal reflective diaries were more heavily relied upon than interviews as people would discuss very different topics when observing than they

would in interviews (Duneier, 1999). Smaller group settings such as the action and support network and meetings of three to four individuals from mixed professional backgrounds were where some of the most fruitful observations took place. When the group all trusted one another, were sat around in a circle and felt unconstrained by an agenda, observation began to unveil the social structures behind the network's development and GMCA policymaking. Informal conversations would also elicit much more honest conversations than a recorded interview with pre-set questions. Participants would ask to meet to vent, run ideas past one another or conversations would emerge out of frustrations or excitement at particular spontaneous events. All of this data was documented in field notes and reflective diaries.

These human behaviours could not be observed through statistical analysis or in laboratory settings, ethnographic observation was the only viable option to witness the human impact and input of these structures emerging and understand their relevance to wider political forces within the city region.

Field Notes, Reflexive Practice and Reflective Diaries

As so much of the data collected was through personal observation of a situation, to avoid inaccurate recall as bias, a reflective research diary was kept alongside field notes (Alaszewski, 2006). Even if recall was possible of events or people's responses to them, it was not possible to remember accurate reflections on them eighteen months in the future during writing up.

Alaszewski (2006, p.2) notes the key components of a reflective diary as:

- Regularity.
- Personal.
- Contemporaneous.
- A record.

A diary was kept almost every week and more reflective notes were made after significant events, forums or interactions. This generally took place on the train home after the day's work had been completed and was reviewed at the end of the week to turn into longer pieces if necessary. Diaries were kept in physical notepads to allow for stream of consciousness without spellchecking and electronic notifications creating barriers and typed up later that day or week during the process of creating longer pieces. Pertaining to the regularity component mentioned by Alaszewski (2006), this practice helped to note some events which did not seem significant at the time, but during field note analysis were observed as a key point in a chain of events. However, it was a challenge to avoid the danger of noting 'everything' (Silverman, 1993) at the beginning of the research as there was a fear of missing events which may be key later on.

In the research findings these diaries are referred to as reflective diaries or diary entries, this is due to them not merely being a recording of factual events, but the researcher's experiences of such events and thoughts on how they connected to wider themes addressed in the research. It was deemed important to follow the practice of Alaszewski (2006), as outlined below, as this would enable the provision of a more nuanced and reflective account of events.

> "More complex diaries include not only a record of activities and/or events but also a personal commentary reflecting on roles, activities and relationships and even exploring personal feelings." Alaszewski (2006, p.3).

These diary entries formed large excerpts in the findings as they best encapsulated efforts as an ethnographer to “transform my experience of the social world into a social science text” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.191). This method allowed a story to be woven into the findings and the overall narrative to be seen through the perspective of the researcher and people in the network (Foley, 2010). It is hoped this gives the reader the feeling of sitting around a table or in a forum observing the events taking place themselves, the feelings of empathy this can elicit would be helpful for ‘outsiders’ in understanding why a ‘whole-of-society approach’ was taken and the nuance of why individuals took part in the GMHAN.

Interviews

Structured interviews were undertaken with fifteen members of the network, sampled for a diversity of professional and personal experience and their views expressed on the network. More semi-structured interviews and conversations were undertaken with upwards of twenty-five to thirty members of the network and organisations intersecting with the GMHAN. Observations were undertaken with between one hundred and fifty to two hundred network members, between private meetings, advisory boards, open forums, informal gatherings and serendipitous meetings. Consent forms were not given at large scale GMHAN events, due to the logistics of gathering consent forms from over a hundred people at any given time, but people were informed research was taking place.

The interviews followed a pre-written set of questions, based on the research questions, designed to encourage participants to enquire further into their personal

involvement in the network and interrogate the network's place within Greater Manchester civil society.

Interviews were chosen to elicit more detailed responses to events and clarify actors' insight into their roles and macro political forces (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Interviews were set up with core members of the GMHAN and recorded via dictaphone, the majority were done via video conferencing as a result of the global pandemic, so also recorded via those programmes.

Interviews of between one hour to an hour and a half in length were undertaken after the observation had taken place, to offer chance to clarify certain events or considerations of the research (Marvasti, 2004) and also to allow the participants to distinguish between researcher and peer, this decision was made after one particular event with a GMHAN member which led to a change in research timeline, explained below.

While in the shared office space worked from once a week, a GMHAN member began discussing what was perceived as a controversial event during a GMHAN forum and the repercussions unfolding for them. They stated they appreciated the researcher's direct experience of politics and wanted to speak to someone who understood local political hierarchies and attempts to subdue any individuals who wanted to effect change. They knew they would not have to explain the inner workings of local government and behaviour of certain bureaucrats and proceeded to go into detail about bullying, intimidation and threats they had received from a public servant since attending a GMHAN forum.

Notes were taken during the conversation and a small reflective diary piece was created afterwards, this resulted in insights into how the member saw the GMHAN from several different perspectives. To delve further into their experiences and ask for clarity on some points a formal interview was arranged, with a dictaphone and appropriate interview consent forms. The interview did not elicit anywhere near the same insights as the informal conversation and in fact led to a slightly glossier and more surface-level version of the previous conversation. The formal interview did not provide understanding of the decision-making processes of the official in question or evidence of the fallout of their decisions (Gobo, 2008), this was only possible through initial observation of the event in question and an informal conversation with a GMHAN member who saw the researcher as part of the network's available support.

After this incident, it was decided to complete observation as of March/April 2020 and conduct formal interviews in the months preceding (see timeline above). This decision timed well with the pandemic and allowed the space to reflect on the previous eighteen month's observation, asking better, more fluid and focused questions in interviews as a result.

3.4 Data Analysis

The field notes and interviews undertaken were analysed through a constructivist lens. Constructivism allows for the assumption that "*information about the social world could be analysed to reveal a reality or social structure beyond the data itself*" Marvasti (2004, p.83). By applying constructivism there was scope to look beyond the moment in which the language was spoken and try to use it to gain a greater understanding of the world in which it was uttered.

This method required procedural analysis of field notes and interview transcripts as research was carried out (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996 and Marvasti, 2004). This was performed by coding text looking for possible themes at first, using this for knowledge exchange and reflection with the small group of network members, then later on towards the writing phase looking over the notes and highlighting them where themes emerged. This was done through four notebooks worth of field notes and coded according to themes relating to advocates and, policy change and community development. As there was not a clear idea of the subjects to investigate at the outset, this exploration and reflection allowed opportunities and threads to emerge as Alaszewski (2006) suggests is done throughout the data collection period.

3.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Approach

In evaluation of the approach taken, the main strengths of the approach were the level of access achieved due to my previous experience, the relationships observed over a significant period of time and thus the nuances of how power and action work in the area chosen (Marvasti, 2004). In addition, utilising the knowledge exchange allowed a greater degree of reflexive practice with the community to be undertaken, leaving knowledge created behind before the production of a formal thesis.

As the research focussed on power and the establishment of structures to enable radical community development to take place, ethnography gave the best lens to understand the relationships forming and holding these together. “An ethnographic approach allows investigators to observe the complexities of human relations in the specific settings that give them meaning.” Marvasti (2004, p.41).

However, finding meaning or themes in the initial observations was difficult due to the close nature of the role to the research and people within the network, as well as observations taking place in such diverse settings (Silverman, 1993). As much as reflexive practice could be undertaken, people were still observed in different settings differently, watching a meeting of activists as a researcher and attending a meeting in a network development role with the Deputy Mayor would inevitably provide different perspectives on the situation. Thus, generalisations were almost impossible to make, the reasons behind the behaviour of people within different hierarchies or roles could not easily be compared ethnographically, this was avoided where possible as a result.

My interpretation of any understandings is also not finite, another ethnographer might observe a different happening all together or take a completely different relevance from the incident (Mehan and Wood, 1975). So whilst ethnography gave a depth of nuanced data on people and their relationships not possible through statistical data collection, the data collected may have been different and interpreted differently by a different researcher, especially one with fewer personal connections to the field studied.

The main purpose behind this research was to inform further work in the field and encourage greater understanding of the possibilities for civil society within city region devolution. Knowledge exchange being embedded throughout the research process (Kara, 2015) removed the usual barrier in time lag and a lack of relevancy that lengthy field research can produce. Findings, reflexive practice alongside members of the network and literature reviews, all informed the development of the network and the GMCA's attitude towards the GMHAN in real time. As in Kara (2015), this was a major positive to this methodology: "Knowledge exchange increases the likelihood that 'research findings will be used…and…the research… will achieve a greater impact" Gagnon (2001) in Kara (2015, p.28).

A key element of knowledge exchange can also be a limitation to the approach, the practice of conversing with participants and stakeholders whilst crucial, does not just happen in one language (Kara, 2015). Myself as researcher, the participants and institutional stakeholders, all used different discourses and had different interpretations on what was being discussed. These discourses resulted from different professional and personal environments and levels of experience in working

with people from a diverse set of backgrounds. At times, this could cause friction or a constant cycle of questioning during knowledge exchanges as participants who were drawn into reflexive practice, struggled to understand my perspective or wanted their perspective to become the prevailing narrative. As Kara (2015) states: “This can make attempts at knowledge exchange rather like attempts at conversation between people who don’t speak each other’s languages.” Kara (p.176, 2015).

This cycle of questioning added to an established limitation of both ethnography and knowledge exchange; time pressures (Martin, Curie and Lockett 2011). In this project, time pressures resulted from both the University of Salford and GMCA requiring research outputs in real time. These included detailed research reports, sometimes about areas at a tangent to the knowledge exchange and this thesis itself. In addition, it took a large amount of time to embed and undertake a practice loop of observation, reflexive practice, writing and dissemination.

As a previous policymaker, to some extent I still felt it was my role to straddle these different discourses and translate between them. As discussed above, this became tiring and made the writing up phase of the research feel much more cumbersome. After I stepped out of my role as Knowledge Exchange Fellow in June 2020 this became easier as I identified more closely with the role of ethnographer. Ethnography ultimately guided the development of my role as a researcher, to become one aiding policy analysts, as well as evolving the political narrative around the sociological roots of civil society in a devolved city region (Becker et. al, 2004 and Katz, 2004).

3.6 Reflection

The introduction to the findings starts with a caveat related to the nature of insider ethnography, that ultimately allowed writing up of the research. Expressing gratitude for the work undertaken by the network and an understanding it was a difficult operation, breaking new ground with often unpaid work, assuaged some of my guilt over peer critique. Making this statement also laid claim to the nature of the research from the outset. Ethnographic reading was completed before setting out in the field, so it was understood how to wrestle with previous relationships with 'subjects' and my multiple identities as an activist, politician and now researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). When the time came to produce knowledge I could feel as if I was writing a piece of investigative journalism extracted from the GMHAN over a two year period. At times it felt as if participants would feel each grain of knowledge as a critique and every theory devised would be seen as exploitation. Personal sensitivity over this, whilst making it initially difficult to write the thesis, led to me ensuring there was a constant awareness among participants of the nature of the research and a high level of personal reflection on the role of being an insider ethnographer.

This constant self critique was useful if put into reflexive practice (Foley, 2010), but damaging if it focussed too much on critique of personal identity. Shifting from a political identity to that of a researcher was a difficult task in and of itself. Being an elected politician, at whatever level, comes with a necessary element of public life. Whilst in office, approachability and an ability to bring together groups of residents, activists and council staff working on the same issues of social justice were honed skills. When I stood down from politics these were still perceived as my skills and purpose by the local community, but my public identity needed to shift to that of

Knowledge Exchange fellow and researcher; I did not have the luxury of just being seen as myself but as the public roles I had occupied. This was not a quick process and blended with the beginning of this research, lending another level to the negotiation of identity in the research. This constant dialogue with myself and participants about my identity within the research proved ultimately useful to challenge criticism of covert research. These conversations also kept me close to discussions around participants' identities and thus more able to observe and interpret the motivations behind some of their decisions (Blumer, 1969 and Jansson and Nikolaidou, 2013). This 'closeness' was not achieved falsely, either coming out of previous relationships or through naturally bonding with people by spending time and discussing work closely with them. Not only was time put into ensuring participants fully understood my role as a researcher, but also to fostering relationships to achieve an honest 'closeness'. Becker et. al (2004) concur with the notion that 'closeness' to the people being studied is a key attribute of ethnography "I think ethnography is particularly useful here because we come closest to the people who are being studied." Becker et. al (p.265).

As for having held a role in the Mayoral office and been a politician, I felt I would either be perceived to have bias towards authorities I had previously been part of or that I was unfairly critiquing them, turning my 'insider' privilege and insight against them. This contradiction paralysed my writing for a period, feeling I was in a limbo between two perceived biases, I became scared to write about findings from either community or political sphere publicly; hearing only other people's perceptions on my thoughts and not my own. I eventually came to the realisation I was perhaps not the traditional 'insider' ethnographer, not fully a participant neither trying to walk in someone else's shoes, neither insider or outsider (Allen, 2004). This is not to focus

the methodological choice on its impacts on myself as a researcher, but to bring to light the sociological ramifications of my role and identity within the field (Allen, 2004 and Becker et. al, 2004).

Empathy I gained from multiple standpoints was useful (Hill Collins, 2000), not just in piecing together the reasons behind certain actions or decisions. I was recognised by members of the network as having held previous identities, with this they believed I understood difficult decisions, practices in certain spaces and sensitivity around delicate information (Jansson and Nikolaidou, 2013). As such, there was a greater degree of honesty and access in some situations, especially informal conversations, as the research was not assumed to be purely critical.

The downside to researching as an insider was at times there was so much content swirling from meetings, informal chats and observations, it was difficult to gain a macro perspective from the micro warrens I was being drawn into. In order to do this I would remove myself from the setting, either to make a cup of tea, make an excuse like going to the bathroom, taking a walk or grabbing a coffee. This was a necessary breather to compost what I was witnessing and helped the reflective diaries I would produce later that day. As I was processing these events within a geography linked to the research, these ‘breathers’ even sometimes contributed to observations and trans-situational thinking (Atkinson, 2005).

In one instance, the coffee shop I had chosen to go to for reflective space was the site of a meeting of a Devolution civil society group. Observations of that meeting ended up becoming part of a reflective diary as the meeting symbolised what was being witnessed elsewhere in the research. As reading expanded into the political

economy of Manchester and Greater Manchester, the city itself became a protagonist in the research context. I was initially concerned this over observation led to a lack of acute perception on the research topic, but in fact this learning served to feed into the broader historical political narrative of the city, a cornerstone to the overall research. I learnt, like Duneier (1999) not to narrow the scope of the ethnography to what I thought was the expected narrative, in reality the complete story would emerge naturally if I was observing my environment wholly and critically. As Becker et. al state "*the description in addition to the concepts really told the story*" Becker et. al (2004, p.269). The forthcoming findings provide a window to witness and critique democratic devolution, alongside the opportunities and risks held within it as a concept.

4.1 Findings

Introduction

These findings are drawn from an ethnography of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network as a case study. A space representing a 'whole-of-society approach' to tackling issues of social justice, composed of civil society, the health service, business, local government and people who had been or were oppressed by Greater Manchester's housing market financialisation. These findings will ascertain whether this network and its spaces allowed for the collective creation and interrogation of city region homelessness policy.

The findings are a mixture of two main elements; firstly; an ethnographic narrative and critique of the tasks undertaken by the network to bring collaborative policy making into the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to meet the Mayor's ambition to end rough sleeping by 2020. These findings bring together a timeline of devolution and the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network, to clarify where certain events and decisions opened and closed opportunities for others. Secondly, based on these findings, a theoretical contribution will be outlined, drawing on the main theories outlined in the literature review; namely a transversal community development approach to creating new policymaking spaces.

The Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network, while imperfect, was a step in a collaborative direction and one not many other devolved city regions were willing to take first. These findings have a foundation in understanding how difficult this work was to undertake, how selflessly time was given by people from diverse backgrounds and the new ground people were attempting to break just to work

together. Any critique of these methods and outcomes is borne out of this understanding and a desire for others to learn from the work undertaken by a few people to benefit many.

These findings focus on three main areas. Firstly, the creation of the network as a space for policymaking in a newly devolved city region. Secondly, the role individual advocates played in the operation of the GMHAN and collective advocacy. Finally, the impact the GMHAN had on tangible policymaking around homelessness in Greater Manchester.

4.2 Devolution and Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network Timeline

To allow for clearer understanding of the events unfolding in this thesis a timeline of key events is presented.

	Event
2014	
November	Devolution agreement signed between all ten Greater Manchester local authorities and HM Treasury.
2016	
	Health and Social Care Powers devolved from Westminster to Greater Manchester. The Mayor has oversight of this Partnership, but has equal voting rights to other members of the board on all
August	Labour's candidate for Mayor selected.
November	Conversation between researcher and unsuccessful Labour candidate for Mayor (sitting Member of Parliament), about homelessness and opportunity for Greater Manchester Mayor to work on as an issue of social justice. Researcher encouraged MP to lobby Labour's successful candidate to this effect, suggesting ending rough sleeping by 2020 as a possible campaign
2017	
January	Labour's candidate for Mayor invited researcher along with a Member of Parliament to lead homelessness commission across Greater Manchester, aim was to develop their policy on ending rough sleeping by 2020.
March	First GMHAN Forum, held at Salford University's Maxwell Hall.
	Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network established as the 'whole-of-society' forum for homelessness strategy and policymaking, in place of leading a homelessness commission.
May	Labour's candidate elected as first directly elected Greater Manchester Mayor with 63% of the vote, taking 359,352 votes (The Guardian, 2017).
2018	

February	Rough Sleeping strategy launched and discussion on the structure and democratic function of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network at a GMHAN Forum.
November	Programme launched to ensure every person who was rough sleeping had access to emergency provision (A Bed Every Night or
December	• Greater Manchester becomes third Vanguard City as part of Institute for Global Homelessness campaign. • National Government Social Impact Bond for rough sleeping launched.
2019	
January	Knowledge Exchange Partnership between University of Salford and Greater Manchester Combined Authority started.
February	First Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network Accountability Board meeting.
March	National Housing First contract launched with Greater Manchester as one of three pilot city regions.
May	Data collection begins for thesis.
July	Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board first meeting. The board was to "provide oversight of all elements of the GM homelessness infrastructure, which includes ABEN, but also the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer, Entrenched Rough Sleeper Social Impact Bond and Housing First." GMCA, 2019.
October	• Advisory Board and Action and Support team established as accountability and governance functions for the GMHAN. • GMHAN forum on family homelessness and Legislative Theatre.
2020	
February	Funding agreed to design first Greater Manchester homelessness prevention strategy utilising Legislative Theatre.
March	• Last physical meeting of the GMHAN, involved setting agenda for the coming 12 months. • Covid-19 pandemic dictates working from home and all GMHAN spaces move to Zoom.
2021	
October	Greater Manchester prevention strategy launched.

Before being elected to office, the Mayor recognised public opinion was shifting around issues of social justice, the Greater Manchester public was beginning to

perceive the cranes across the region's centre not as a measure of growth (Peck and Ward, 2002), but as a visual indicator of growing inequality (Silver, 2018). The original ask of the Mayor was to run a commission on homelessness in Greater Manchester, but without it being labelled as such, due to the connotations of a national government MP coming into the region to address its issues. The desired outcomes of this 'commission' were to:

- Understand the issues related to increasing homelessness in all Greater Manchester boroughs (mainly in reference to rough sleeping).
- Connect with organisations and people working in Greater Manchester and nationally on homelessness and its interconnected issues.
- Provide a forum whereby anyone who wanted to aid the regional government effort to end rough sleeping could connect with likeminded people to work collaboratively.
- Bring together all of these agencies and people to create an initial strategy to end rough sleeping.

The Mayor's initial concept was for the work to be undertaken by a board of high profile individuals working in the sector and people who had been homeless, chaired by the researcher as a local Councillor in Manchester and another individual as a sitting Greater Manchester Member of Parliament. Representing the local and national collaboration needed to work on homelessness (Williams, 2017).

After initial scoping work, meeting with individuals across the city region, it became apparent a board was not a suitable forum for any of these outcomes to be achieved. A board of representatives making decisions on behalf of others did not

sit with the whole-of-society language the Mayoral candidate was using to encourage engagement with their campaign (Burnhamformayor, 2017). What was needed was the creation of a new space for a different kind of politics (BBC,2017) and a team of people from diverse backgrounds to sustain it.

The decision was made to bring all of Greater Manchester's stakeholders together with the Mayoral candidate to talk about issues long left off the political agenda. Since there had not been this much political attention directed at homelessness since the Rough Sleeping Unit of the late 1990s, civil and wider society's interest in being part of this political drive was palpable.

The Action Network was a term that came out of this new direction, chosen by the Mayor's closest advisor, during a campaign run, the language signified projected achievement rather than an added layer of bureaucracy. Rather than a national politician dictating the need for a commission to root out poor local decision making and design new regional initiatives, this language sounded collaborative. Rather than sounding like bureaucrats writing strategies removed from the daily reality of the work, this collective was about action and drive. Collaboration and action, exactly how the new Mayor wanted to be seen by a Greater Manchester public hungry for progressive leadership with a purpose (Williams, 2017).

4.3 Turning Hard Power into Soft - A 'whole-of-society approach'

The term 'soft power' was first coined by Joseph Nye (1990) to reference "the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment." Nye (2017, p1). Less tangible than power by coercion, payment or persuasion (hard power) (Nye, 2017), this thesis will examine whether soft power employed in Greater Manchester to tackle homelessness has been successful in addressing national and international socio-economic forces sustaining housing injustice.

Traditionally as explained in the introduction, power around homelessness policy has been of the 'hard' or formal variety, with formal responsibility resting with local authorities and national government exclusively (Crisis, 2018). Even the inception of the bespoke Rough Sleepers Unit in 1997 came directly from Tony Blair's office and reported directly back to him.

In a Manchester Evening News article specifically written on the 'growing Labour rift over housing and homelessness', Jen Williams points to "[The Mayor's] dilemma - use soft power, or lay down the law" (Manchester Evening News, 2017). This use of soft power in contrast to hard behaviour and legislative power speaks to the challenges of the Mayoral office and the choice that befell the new Mayor; use the powers they had or fight the powers that already existed. In the same article Williams points out:

> "How much [the Mayor] is able to influence any of that [the existing housing policy agenda] from above will be a test not only of policy, but of his relationship-building abilities - and the limits of the newly-minted mayoral role itself. That will apply not just to housing and homelessness, but everything else he is seeking to achieve in the next two-and-a-half years." (Williams, 2017)

Therefore, any soft powers wielded in the ambition to end rough sleeping by 2020, would be a test bed for what could be achieved as Mayor. This made the GMHAN's role as 'relationship builder' an experiment for democratic devolution and the powers Mayors were able to use in contrast to and above and beyond local authorities.

As the context detailed, Manchester local authority has a separate historical context to the rest of Greater Manchester, especially in seeing and tackling issues surrounding poverty in juxtaposition to a regeneration agenda. At the same time, the authority also had a historical precedence of dominating Greater Manchester's policy direction (Robson, 2002). With a firm grip on legislative powers on homelessness, a vulnerability around exposing the true extent of the issue in the city and an existing brief for Manchester to drive all Greater Manchester policy, hindsight was not necessary to see difficulties that could arise from a new Mayor in town. On top of this, that the Mayor was willing to call out the contrast in a crane-fuelled drive for growth while bodies lay under railway arches, while calling for the use of alternative, softer powers to affect change (Manchester Evening News, 2017). Rifts grew as the Mayor wielded soft powers in their first few months in office through instructive letters to public sector leaders (Manchester Evening News, 2017), media appearances, celebrity partnerships (Reflective Diary, September 2018) and the creation of large scale new networks such as the GMHAN.

Crisis' explained this divide in power around homelessness as devolution came into view:

> “While the cities’ devolution ‘deals’ differ in their details, in all cases the mayors lack formal powers on homelessness – the relevant duties and responsibilities continuing to rest with local authorities. Nonetheless, these mayoral activities appear to be galvanising significant enthusiasm and momentum behind cross-border and inter-sectoral approaches.” Crisis’ Homelessness Monitor (2018, p.21)

Thus, if Mayoral offices were to have an impact on their promises around homelessness the Mayoral office and civil society recognised there was a need to utilise the (softer) power held in enthusiasm, momentum and an inter-sectoral approach.

Alongside the newfound attention for homelessness and housing issues, the GMHAN was the Mayoral office’s answer to encouraging this inter-sectoral working across all partners (Lupton et. al, 2018),. The network was also helpfully removed from the strained relationships between the Mayor’s office and some individual local authorities.

The people who came together to encourage a ‘whole-of-society approach', did so while local authorities and city regions were left to tackle homelessness on multiple fronts through a variety of methods. In lieu of governmental interest or effort and any hard powers (Crisis, 2018), these forums were tasked by the Mayor to help make a promise to end street homelessness as a reality, within three years. These Greater Manchester spaces and individuals, the basis of this research study came together to try and encourage cooperation across a new bureaucracy and geographic identity or ‘political community’ (Arendt, 1958). Tasked by the Mayor to help make a promise to end street homelessness a reality in an environment that helped to perpetuate them in the first place.

The terminology ‘soft power’ or an ability to wield power by attraction rather than coercion, was used on an unquantifiable number of occasions within the Network, both by members in public meetings and in smaller, more private discussions (Field Notes, October 2019). Soft power was used to refer to multiple actions both the Network and Mayor were undertaking including;

- Convening - the ability to draw people into a place to listen to you and one another. Used most frequently in reference to soft power.
- Collaboration - beyond the departments and people you already work with.
- Building support with the general public and local media.
- Building positive relationships.
- Having a network of advocates.

Reflective Diary (March, 2020)

These factors creating soft power all converged to attract people and ideas towards the goal of ending rough sleeping, with the Mayor and GMCA pointing all non-statutory attention to the Action Network (Williams, 2017), the GMHAN thus became the magnet for the Mayor’s soft power on homelessness.

The potential of the Action Network in the Mayor’s utilisation of soft power was not to be underestimated. This was the first network representing the Mayor’s vision of how Greater Manchester may address issues of social justice going forward and a tangible entity for civil society to coalesce behind. As described in the introduction, in using language around a whole-of-society approach, the Mayor was imploring every aspect of society to work together to address the issue of rough sleeping. This was in part a mobilisation of civil society to support the new political structure of the

GMCA, but also a call to the political sphere (officers and politicians within the GMCA) to act and act differently in the process.

In a formal interview, a leading charity manager stated;

> "*[The GMCA] has this overarching role to unify, lead and bring together, but they can't implement any of it. And they can't make anyone implement any of it. And they can't make anyone play nicely together*."

Neither the new Mayoral office, nor the new bureaucratic outfit the GMCA, held the legislative power or financial might to create policy change around homelessness. These powers lay firmly within local and national government control, with neither taking action which affected the numbers of people who were unhoused in Greater Manchester (MHCLG, 2016).

As stated in the timeline, several pilot projects were delegated to the new city region including Housing First and Social Impact bonds, but these were not meant to be led by the new Mayors. There was one strategic lead in the GMCA, working with the ten homelessness leads in Greater Manchester councils, with responsibility over small-scale government-funded pilot projects. This was not about wholesale public sector reform, combatting austerity or redressing the power and wealth imbalances creating homelessness in the first place. These harder (legislative), government backed projects were the only initiatives given to the realms of the new combined authorities.

As described in the context, the divergence of local and regional power bases added to this lack of 'hard' political power for The Mayor. If the new regional office desired to work further than its remit on rough sleeping, they would need to lever a

different type of power. One outside of the control of local or national government, but with the support of people locally.

One senior Local Authority official at a GMHAN meeting in 2019 stated:

> "*The political priority and agency is at city region level, the Mayoralty has pushed action on homelessness further and quicker, it was moving that way before but this [office] has had that impact*.".

This quote from a senior officer within the Greater Manchester Council most resistant to the Mayor's ownership of homelessness (Williams, 2017), evidences the notion that political agency and softer powers used to galvanise it were key to affecting homelessness on the ground and in local policy.

Not just the case for homelessness, this galvanisation around policy areas was consistent with the creation of the 'Our GM Strategy' (GMS). which Lupton et. al (2018) state:

> "emphasises that it does not belong to the Combined Authority, but is the collective will and responsibility of all GM organisations and citizens." In the strategy the GMCA continue "notably and consistent with 'our GMS', targets are set for areas over which the CA has no responsibility."

This meant a softer, more participatory power was necessary to instigate change (Perry et. al, 2019 and Kenealy, 2016). Framing this in terms of social capital, the Mayor needed to develop a foundation of social resources in order to underpin their softer powers (Field, 2006).

Traditionally a resource base for the middle class or 'elite' (Bourdieu, 1986), this base of social capital would need to be developed equitably to form a representative body for the Mayor's policy creation if the GMCA were to align with its initial coproduced intent (GMCA, 2017). Else the risk was that, frustrations of "Minster-like diktat" (Manchester Evening News, 2017) would be levelled at the Mayor from

Greater Manchester Councils. In response to the elite and individual-specific nature of social capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), the Mayor needed to not only delegate responsibility, but also power to civil society. Transferring this to a network of advocates or specific group would allow them to act on the Mayor's behalf, navigating public, private, community and political spaces (Reflective Diary, September 2019) to further the goal of ending rough sleeping.

This is where the GMHAN came in, simultaneously an embodiment of a whole-of-society approach and determined to ensure people with experience of homelessness were at the heart of policy making (GMHAN, 2017). This created a tangible force capable of harnessing a softer form of power, reflecting the need for Greater Manchester to operate outside out traditional 'harder' powers. The risk in this, was that power and thus accountability would be delegated out to informal networks and partnerships (Ayres, 2016). The narrative and risks of how this softer power was found to have been built inside the GMHAN (GMHAN spaces) and used by advocates (Gatekeepers) will form coming sections of the findings. Based on evidence from the ethnography, the next section will look closer at how the GMHAN was built as a network. The consequences of this approach are also outlined and considered via reflective diary excerpts.

4.4 GMHAN Spaces

As discussed in the literature review, the creation of policymaking spaces between the political and community spheres (Knowles et al., 2019) needed to be explored to determine the value of bringing representatives from both spheres together to collaborate and create new policy and programmes around homelessness. The following research question was identified during the literature review to establish this:

How can community-led policy design methods such as community development or a 'whole-of-society approach' be introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context?

Several tangible factors were highlighted in how the GMHAN formed these spaces and to what end:

Convening; one of the key aspects of soft power outlined in the findings' introduction was brought into play most visibly in the Action Network's large scale 'forum' meetings. Between seventy to one hundred and twenty people were present at every Action Network meeting with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (Field Notes, October 2019). Core Network members understood from the beginning this attendance was mostly down to the Mayor's convening powers (Field Notes, May 2020). This signified as long as the Mayor's policy priority remained homelessness (GMHAN Advisory Board Minutes, April 2020), the GMHAN would be a focal point

for this attention and thus space for physical convening power around the issue. The GMHAN forum thus plays a large part in the thesis' findings.

Solidarity, representation and a tangible connection to power, were key factors for most members from the voluntary sector, housing and business attending these large fora (structured and semi-structured interviews with network members, October 2019 - November 2020). At a tangent to most members, members from local authorities who already saw themselves as represented and did not see a need for such in the GMHAN, still attended these larger forums (Reflective Diary after conversation with Local Authority officer, February 2020). Some officials started to see the GMHAN as a 'safe space', accessible for them as people in positions of power (Interview with advocate and GMHAN Member, February 2020). They also saw the GMHAN had an ability to bring politicians into a space and manage that environment (Field Notes, conversation with Senior GMCA officer, April 2020). This collective power from civil society was seen as a rare ability by officials in positions of authority, a power they saw to be capable of shaping theirs and the Mayor's decisions.

Addressing a meeting of Greater Manchester leaders in 2019, Dame Louise Casey said the region's work on homelessness was a "torch in the darkness" (Manchester Evening News, 2019). Not only were softer convening powers being shown to have an effect locally, but Dame Casey went on to announce "the city-region is shining a spotlight on 'cracks in the system' amid a lack of an overall approach from Westminster" (Manchester Evening News, 2019). The consequences of the Mayor's convening powers were being seen nationwide and resulted in a notion of leadership from the city region on rough sleeping. Making the most out of this concentrated

attention would be key to the GMHAN developing political will beyond the Mayor to address homelessness.

4.4.1 The Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network as a forum

For charities or individuals who wished to contribute insight on homelessness policy or had questions on what local power was doing to combat the societal structures creating homelessness, decision making arenas were limited in Greater Manchester. Until the instigation of the Manchester Homelessness Partnership in 2015 (Manchester Homelessness Partnership, 2019) and Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network in 2017 (gmhan.net, 2017), traditional decision making arenas such as local Council scrutiny committees, task and finish groups, calls for evidence and occasional community forums were the only spaces for participation on homelessness policy. In addition, although you may be able to impart your knowledge if you knew about these political spaces, you could not sit in a cross-sector space, critically reflect on macro political issues and take reflective action collectively (Ledwith, 2011). These spaces, though assumed to be democratic, were not open, as Gaventa states "Participation is assumed to occur within decision making arenas, which are in turn assumed to be open to virtually any organised group." (Gaventa, 1980, p.5). Thus, there was a need for a type of policymaking space open to all.

The GMHAN forums were an attempt to create this space, at once true to Arendtian political philosophy that all politics should take place in the public realm (Arendt, 1958), while challenging the closed decision making structures Gaventa (1980) encountered.

In addition, these forums would align with Freireian theory; for the oppressed to become truly free they must be able to develop their pedagogy, while their

oppressors must be able to form true solidarity in standing by side with them (Freire, 1968). Rather than just align theoretically, the forums aimed to provide physical public space for these actions to take place that Freire rarely mentions as an important practical consideration.

Freire's community development pedagogy and Arendt's philosophy of the Agora as a collective challenge to totalitarian political structures were proposed to network members and the GMHAN Advisory Board in the form of a widely shared report (Knowles et al., 2019). The report gave a proposed theoretical foundation for GMHAN forums. Practically, this meant decision making spaces were open for anyone affected by, working on or interested in homelessness in Greater Manchester to come together in solidarity for education, discussion, challenge and action. The large Homelessness Action Network meetings at the University of Salford Maxwell Hall became synonymous with the GMHAN itself, indeed at first there was little recognition the GMHAN was anything beyond these forums (Reflective Diary, January 2019). A space for presentations on best practice, networking, facilitated discussions to contribute to wider strategy, progress updates from the GMCA and political speeches. Decisions were also made in these fora about how the GMHAN should operate and what the policy and advocacy agenda of the network should be over the next year (GMHAN, 2020).

Starting in March 2017 and still continuing (online) at time of writing, the GMHAN forums were open invitation. Invitations were initially through the Mayor and his advisors and strategic leads during smaller meetings and broadcast by the Mayor at larger events. The Mayor pointed anyone interested to his Mayoral Advisors and Strategic Leads within the GMCA. As data was captured at events invitations were

sent to a large mailing list with a request for people to distribute widely. Anyone from any professional or personal background interested in homelessness was able to attend. The agendas were initially set by myself as the Mayoral Lead for Homelessness and my Co-production and Policy Officer, this was done by listening to members in between meetings and responding to policy asks of the Mayor's Office and GMCA. The main purpose for the first two years was gathering as many people from as diverse backgrounds as possible into these spaces, gathering critically conscious insight, funnelling this towards the Mayor and his policy teams. However, once the group became a certain size (300+ mailing list) to avoid a 'tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman, 1970), a more structured approach to not only the meetings, but the leadership of the network, needed to be taken. With more dedicated time given to the network's build and with the Knowledge Exchange Partnership 2019-20 this could begin to take place and is outlined in the following sections.

Only meeting three times a year, the Mayor wanted more of the larger Network forums (Meeting Notes, January 2020), feeling the physical coming together "*helped to keep momentum*" (Field Notes during meeting with the Mayor, October 2019). For themselves as well as the wider housing sector, these forums were the clearest way to share a message, hear the honest opinions of staff on the ground and listen to people supported within the homelessness system (Field Notes during meeting with the Mayor, October 2019).

During the GMHAN forum's beginnings, the GMHAN was heavily reliant on the Mayor's convening powers to bring people in. His political resources (Gaventa, 1980) brought a wealth of people from across the public sector, housing, national

charities and business; people whom those working in homelessness would have struggled to connect with previously. Being in a space with one of the most influential politicians in the country was a draw in itself because of the resources the Mayorality held. The action promised on homelessness and ability to be part of it by attending forums feeding directly into policy, brought hundreds of people together over the course of three years.

The space for these fora was initially gifted by the University of Salford, seen as one of their contributions to the 'whole-of-society' approach, a space able to host 150+ people to discuss homelessness policy within easy access of the city centre, for free, was a valuable asset. One that rested on a few key individuals in the university understanding the value of the network and university leadership comprehending the social capital of hosting the new Mayor (Field Notes, February, 2019).

Whilst the GMHAN recognised what the Mayor brought to the forum, it could be framed that the forum represented a very obvious, if simple, statement that the Mayor was bringing Greater Manchester society together to achieve his campaign ambitions around the issue. The warrens of bureaucracy in the British political system rarely give opportunity to show you are 'getting the job done', but when they do, making a noise about them becomes paramount politically (Hardman, 2019). Additionally, this appeals to the original Grecian concept of politics being undertaken in the public realm to achieve recognition and 'immortality' as described by Arendt (1958).

The forum's first task was to develop the Mayor's strategy to end rough sleeping by 2020. The launch of this at a February 2018 meeting provided an opportunity to

showcase what the GMHAN could do and what it looked like in doing so. Whilst the meeting was organised for the GMHAN to celebrate and scrutinise the strategy document, the Mayor's press team invited the region's media, with live TV and print journalism showing up for the occasion on mass. These acts showcased (or exposed) a community meeting to an external electorate.

There was no doubt the visual aspect of the GMHAN was powerful to the Mayor politically. A desire for visibility could be seen from the original meeting, where GM Mayor's office staffers climbed up to the second floor stalls in the lecture hall (so large it used to be a music venue), to take a panoramic shot of attendees. This image (Figure 2), and many after, were shared and re-shared on Twitter, evidencing the whole society did exist and the new Mayor was right at the heart of it. The electorate were not the only audience for the Mayor to showcase action to, these images also beamed back to local councils and their leadership, political will was being galvanised by the Mayor and they had the backing of the 'whole-of-society' to help them meet their commitments (Senior Officer statement in Advisory Board Meeting, October 2019).

Figure 1; University of Salford. Local and national press invited by the Mayor to a GMHAN to launch The GM rough sleeping strategy (February 2018).

The new visible power in turn strengthened the Mayor's hand when negotiating with national government for more legislative powers and funding (Wainwright, 2003). If those further up the chain of decision making from the Mayor could witness mass public support, they may be more likely to act in the Mayor and city region's favour. This was suggested in conversations with the Mayor where they referenced the GMHAN's ability to help keep momentum around homelessness (Informal conversation with the Mayor, February 2019). This would suggest a route for soft convening power to turn into, or at least improve, harder legislative powers. Ultimately, this visual aspect could thus be a positive for the GMHAN itself, not only a strong show of solidarity (Field Notes, meeting with Deputy Mayor, October 2019), but a vision of people's power, a tangible representation of political opinion on homelessness (Bourdieu, 1986), showing the possibilities for democratic devolution in Greater Manchester.

Figure 2*; University of Salford. Policymaking facilitation taking place (February 2018).*

Cynicism was occasionally expressed by GMHAN members after these meetings (Informal conversation with GMHAN Members, October 2019), but there was little

doubt from most that forums of such a size would be possible without the convening powers of the Mayor. When asked their thoughts on the Mayor using the GMHAN to create power, one member summed up feelings vocalised by members over the course of the research:

“In terms of how we've worked with the Mayor and his team… We’ve had to be quite forceful haven't we and saying, look this isn't a platform for you to speak, this is a place for you to come and listen. And to be influenced, not to just generate good PR, and we know they’re a politician and there will always be a degree of that. I think having [the Deputy Mayor] so closely involved as a local authority leader, is really important, because that reminds people it isn't just a GMCA thing, or a Mayor's office thing. I think, if we're really, really serious about trying to affect change in the long run, I still maintain that much more regional devolution is absolutely vital. And so we'd be foolish to think we could do this without close working with that political office.” Interview Charity Manager and GMHAN member (November 2020).

Whilst subject to some criticism, as the above quote asserts, the Mayor’s convening powers and social capital were necessary for the creation of GMHAN as a fora. In a practical sense, this meant being gifted space, attendees coming from a variety of sectors and those involved in homelessness feeling they were not alone in tackling housing injustice. These soft powers could be described in “power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance, between acting and speaking men in existence.” Arendt (1958, p.200). The power mentioned by Arendt is not a tangible legislative power, it is a soft power, but has a tangible outcome in holding or creating the public space needed for political participation and the creation ultimately of the Mayor’s rough sleeping strategy.

Whilst this power provided the space and visibility, it could not be held by the Mayor in isolation and needed the input of active citizens to constitute political participation (Arendt, 1958 and Hill Collins, 1997). As more people became sustainably involved, the membership soon took hold of the fora for themselves. Members said they felt included in larger decisions by being present, as if they could now see where or how

decisions were made and who was making them (Reflective Diary from GMHAN Forum, October 2019). One GMHAN member and voluntary sector manager claimed: "*Each time is a 'journey of influence'*." They explained the importance of these spaces being open, with anyone being able to create new relationships in the space, "*you just get better outcomes if you have relationships with people*". The physical coming together of the GMHAN was part of that for them. In a newly devolved political environment, these forums were a statement that democratic devolution needed to come alongside devolution of powers from Westminster. Furthermore, local authorities were not the only places the devolution of power could reach.

A charity CEO working with people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), said they had a seat around the table for their policy issue because of the Network:

> "*No one cared before, we weren't on the agenda, now we have a seat at the table and can see where [NRPF] is politically because of that.*" (Informal conversation at GMHAN forum, March 2020).

The table they were referring to was not unlike the ones in Figure 2 above, each set out to facilitate threads of ideas, solutions or political insight through to a collective vision such as the rough sleeping strategy or later the GMCA's homelessness prevention strategy (Advisory Board Meeting Notes, January 2020). This charity CEO did not have one on one discussions with policymakers or politicians at the GMHAN, but garnered support from other members, educated those who were unaware about issues facing people they supported and encouraged more than existing charities working with destitute asylum seekers to act (Field Notes, October 2019 - March 2020). This resulted in the first publicly facilitated provision of homelessness

accommodation for people with No Recourse to Public Funds in Greater Manchester.

One charity chief executive identified why the GMHAN was especially an important space for smaller organisations, especially those based outside of Manchester or people who were not guaranteed a voice in decision making:

> "*We are as disconnected from strategy as we have ever been, but there is a willingness to connect on our part. The pace of change is just too much to keep up with while we do our frontline work, which is why GMHAN is such a valuable space for us*." (Field notes from GMHAN Action and Support Meeting, January 2020).

A comment from a housing provider representative in an Advisory Board aligned with the above, in their experience authorities were very hard to influence from the ground up, but being part of the GMHAN was a route to that (Field Notes GMHAN Advisory Board, January 2020). The GMHAN sought to bring these feelings of powerlessness from across sectors and experience together to attempt to question and change legislation locally, regionally and nationally. This is where the main research question begins to be answered: How can community-led policy design methods such as community development or a 'whole-of-society approach' be introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context?

As Arendt (1958) states, if politics is to take place in the public realm, this must be held by power. The ultimate ambition, of course must remain for power capable of holding space to be part of a "transcendence of relations of power" (van Doorn et. al, 2010), supporting the community to hold this space by and for themselves. To begin with, it must be recognised the GMHAN forum was created by those in

privileged power, allowing access to that very power in return. This is of particular note if the ambition is to be transversal and not just provide political participation for those ‘representing' communities marginalised from traditional power structures.

The GMHAN sought to recognise what viewpoints were present in order to see those missing on a continual basis to seek their most complete truth (Field Notes from GMHAN Advisory Board and Action and Support Team, September - December 2019). This was not just about ensuring lived experience representatives around the table, as is now common in homelessness services (Homeless Link, 2021), but ensuring the social constructs leading to varying types of homelessness were recognised and brought into policymaking to address them. This transversal politics was one of few legitimate routes to the GMHAN advocating on behalf of those oppressed by housing injustice (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

During GMHAN Advisory Board and Action and Support meetings the need for greater diversity of representation was addressed by members questioning how homeless families would be represented by the GMHAN, women from Black African and Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds, people with No Recourse to Public Funds, younger people, LGBTQ+ community and boroughs beyond Manchester (Field Notes from Advisory Board Meeting, October 2019). Members particularly sought to address the lack of representation from those groups most likely to be impacted by homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005). These questions and a desire to be more representative did not automatically lead to greater diversity of representation especially in the GMHAN’s decision making (Field Notes Advisory Board, October 2019).

In terms of geographical diversity from Greater Manchester boroughs a role was created to bolster GMHAN's partnerships with voluntary sector organisations throughout the city region. To ensure diversity of experiences of housing injustice a small group of the Advisory Board took this task on (Field Notes from Advisory Board Meeting, October 2019). Whilst the intention was clear, this was still a work in progress at summation of the research.

Lack of representation on family homelessness was addressed directly by bringing family homelessness as the core issue in the October 2019 GMHAN. Focus continued through a faith sector family homelessness summit in March 2020 and family homelessness task and finish group of the GM Homelessness Programme Board as of February 2020. More detail is given on the impact of this representation on policymaking in the Soft Power to Hard Policy section (4.3) of the findings.

The impact of transversal politics on policymaking could also be evidenced through the informal conversation in March 2020 with a charity CEO working with people with NRPF, if a group or advocate for a group had a seat around the table, they felt as if they could feed directly into GM policymaking. People with NRPF being able to access A Bed Every Night was tangible evidence of this representation taking effect into policy (Watts, 2021). This points to reducing barriers for groups more likely to face homelessness accessing the GMHAN forum and decision making spaces being essential to a re-balancing of policymaking priorities around homelessness and a common way forward being established (Sen, 2003).

The risk in lack of representation not being addressed, is in reducing homeless experiences to that of rough sleeping, the standpoints of how homelessness occurs

for the vast majority are made invisible (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Thus, homelessness policy efforts are reduced to those focussing on street homelessness. GMHAN members continually addressed this in smaller GMHAN meetings and larger forums (Field Notes October 2019 - April 2020), especially as the Mayor began to focus programme efforts on rough sleeping in the form of 'A Bed Every Night'.

This desire to see a reframing of homelessness was also a factor resulting from a radical community development approach. The more space given for questioning of the root causes of homelessness and housing injustice, the less attention was given to the manifestation of this injustice as street homelessness, the more to structural causes (Interview with community development worker, November 2020). This bred tension within the GMHAN's decision making spaces, especially within the GMHAN action and support team, as to which policymaking path to follow; a programme-led rough sleeping agenda or an advocacy-led approach to addressing housing and socio-economic injustice (Field Notes, March - June 2020). This tension and the ramifications for the network are addressed more detail in the Gatekeepers section (4.5) of the findings.

These findings suggest those in a privileged position of power need to do more than simply stand with those who have different experiences to them, instead actively opening space in policymaking arenas and actively participating in dialogue and action. Thus, whilst Freire's practical application of community development theory was of great use to the GMHAN as a forum for learning, challenge and sharing, his political framing was less so. I argue transversalism and an intersectional lens need to be integrated with Freire's approach, for the GMHAN and their forums to create

just policy in a devolved city region. This is of critical importance where political actors are participating with a set agenda in mind.

Whilst challenge was a key part of GMHAN fora, not all questions were welcomed. When interviewed after the October 2019 GMHAN, one member who had been homeless said “good practice is great at a GMHAN forum as long as it hasn’t come from challenge.” (Field Notes from informal conversation with GMHAN member who had been homeless, October 2019). Referencing another member asking a difficult question to the Mayor and being chastised by an officer of their Local Authority for doing so, they continued “To speak truth you need individual protection.”. This implied a larger forum was good for challenge of a certain type; palatable challenge not involving criticism of officers or being seen to shift power away from them.

The forum space was not just about meeting or taking photos proving how many people wanted to end rough sleeping in Greater Manchester. For many, it was about figuring out how to work in the same direction, when they had been previously working at cross purposes or outright fighting one another. Space for critical reflection was key to this. One member stated “*The opposite of isolation isn’t connection, it’s exchange*.” (Field Notes, September 2019). Merely providing a space to connect was not going to provide everything the network members needed to end rough sleeping and reduce all forms of homelessness. This would require effort beyond bringing people to a space for large meetings.

During a conversation about power inequity, a GMHAN member appeared to concisely answer just this: “*The collective power of this group can help us to take on the collective power of institutions*.” (Field Notes, December 2019). This along with

comments from senior policymakers in local councils (Observation of Local Authority officials at a GMHAN meeting, October 2019, March 2020 and informal conversation with Local Authority senior officer, October 2019) would suggest not only was the forum a valuable space for connection and policymaking power for particular groups, but the GMHAN itself provided a collective power in policymaking.

In order to sustain the attendance and involvement of policymakers, people who had been homeless and frontline staff, the network needed a clear purpose within the meetings centred in political participation (Reflective Diary, September 2019) and influence outside of them (Interview with charity leader, November 2019). Where this influence came from and who designed the forums was a cause of great debate for the network and resulted in an options paper presented to Advisory Board in October 2019 (Knowles, 2019).

The physical nature of the network was clearly one of its most important factors to some, to achieve that alone required capacity and collective leadership (Advisory Board Meeting Minutes, January 2020). In order to design the GMHAN forums, as well as work on the Network's advocacy, people were asked to meet as a smaller group more regularly. Volunteers were invited or put forward by the larger GMHAN to join an 'Advisory Board' and 'Action and Support Team'. These smaller groups would be responsible for designing the larger GMHAN forums, making them interesting, useful, critically conscious, supportive spaces.

As well as this, they would be part of forming the GMHAN's voice into influence, act as advocates for the GMHAN in smaller meetings with the GMCA and other bodies, relaying experiences and policy insight from GMHAN members to positions of policy

making influence. These smaller spaces were observed over the period June 2019 - June 2020, the findings from which form the following section.

4.4.2 The Advisory Board

This GMHAN Advisory Board, was built to be representative of the 'whole-of-society' approach; a space for individuals with a degree of decision making power within the public sector, civil society and people who had been or were homeless. They met at regular intervals and attempted to problem solve where the Network could influence decision making or there was a need to influence on a particular policy issue. This space was designed to fulfil two core functions (Advisory Board Minutes, October 2019):

> "***Action Sessions (action and support team)***
> *Members with live actions met every two weeks to sort out anything which needs to be done, including communications to the Network, co-designing network events and supporting local partnership developments.*
>
> ***Accountability Meetings (Advisory Board)***
> *All Advisory Board members meet every two months to consider the overall direction and take key decisions on the basis of feedback from the Network. This is also a chance to update and inform others about relevant activities within each member's area of expertise and experience."*
> (gmhan.net, 2020).

Not mentioned officially by the GMHAN as an aim, but valued by the members interviewed, was the additional sense of connectedness they felt to one another by attending GMHAN Action and Support meetings (Interview with Voluntary Sector Manager, January 2020). This individual claimed as a result of asking a question at the GMHAN they were 'frozen out' of discussions with their Local Authority, their seat around the table pulled away and their reputation irreparably damaged (Field Notes, Formal and Informal Interview, January 2020). The forum could not be seen as a safe space for everyone, but instead of no longer participating this individual came to smaller action and support meetings and began supporting the network from behind the scenes. Whilst they recognised they did not feel able to ask certain

questions of power in GMHAN forums, they could support other people to do so, learning from what happened to them (Interview, January 2020).

People who were working all over Greater Manchester, often by themselves, could connect and 'check in', something the meetings became known for. Many individuals commented they sometimes came along solely to check-in with others and digest (Field Notes November 2019 - June 2020). These 'check-ins' grew from the practice of individuals within civil society, people were asked to say how they were doing or what was on their mind, whether personally or professionally, giving a few minutes to chat and connect with your peers (Reflective Diary, Action and Support meeting, September 2019).

This was initially seen as 'the fluffy stuff' by some council officers and frontline staff attending, discomfort was noticeable when they talked about themselves as individuals away from work with people they only knew professionally (Reflective Diary, Action and Support meeting, September 2019). As trust grew from people connecting as human beings, beyond their job titles and work remits, so did the ability to take action collectively (Advisory Board Meeting Notes, April 2020).

The GMHAN created the action and support space for people to have oversight over decision making spaces (incl. the GMHAN's), question and reflect on actions to be taken to further homelessness policy and support one another (Reflective Diary, Action and Support meeting, March 2019). A clear question in a meeting to discuss what the forums should do was "*How do we hold* '*the system*' *to account on behalf of the GMHAN?. There needs to be almost a scrutiny committee off to the side, which looks backwards and forwards*." (Field Notes, Action and Support meeting,

September 2019). The action and support team was deliberately named as such to mirror the need for the core individuals within the GMHAN to focus on action on behalf of the network and support one another to undertake it.

The duties of this group came into focus during a conversation with the Mayor, as they requested the GMHAN convene in time to develop priorities for the manifesto for their second-term (Field Notes, meeting with the Mayor, January 2020). A clear path to helping to set a policy agenda suggesting the Mayor saw influence and expertise in the GMHAN forums, however, this was rejected at an Action and Support Meeting (Field Notes, January 2020). Members said they had never felt so disconnected from GM strategy, being asked to help write manifesto commitments felt like campaigning, not policy change. A contentious meeting followed with key advocates disagreeing on a direction to take, later deciding the GMHAN should set its own agenda for the next twelve months in the coming March forum (Advisory Board Meeting Notes, January 2020) and let the Mayor build their priorities by listening to what network members wanted to work on. This suggested the new GMHAN decision making structures were working in favour of the GMHAN and not the Mayor, whom displayed a lack understanding, perhaps evident from the beginning, about what and who GMHAN's large fora were for. This incident could also be seen as a lack of vision in seeing what the GMHAN had become since its inception.

From incidents such as these, it was clear the GMHAN's spaces needed to be focussed on questioning decision making and taking decisive action. This desire for the GMHAN to scrutinise, hold power to account and set a clear agenda for cross sectoral policy creation became the 'Accountability' and 'Action' focused meetings.

The extract below from my reflective diary was written after the Advisory Board where these spaces were formalised (October 2019). This extract notes conversations around representation and the impact this had on the GMHAN as a policymaking forum. Following this, I list what key findings were gained from observation of the Advisory Board as a GMHAN space.

Not enough chairs around the table

At the offices of a well known charity in Manchester, nearly twenty people convened for a GMHAN Advisory Board meeting, many more than the two previous meetings, we hadn't even set out enough chairs. Perhaps the growth in attendance was because of advertising beforehand about exactly what action and decisions needed to be taken, maybe it was the deliberate drive to include more voices from all the boroughs in decision making. Like most things with the network, most likely it was a combination of the right ingredients. Whatever the cause, people's appetite to be directly involved in decision making for the network was palpable and this was a tangible place for it.

There was also greater equity of voices than before; a noticeable drop off in leaders from charities meant more chairs around the table for people who had been homeless and frontline workers. It felt like there was space for people with these perspectives to breathe. I could breathe more easily… there was less questioning at a tangent revolving around Chief Executive's own concerns and more deliberation on what needed to be done for the network. However, although there was class and gender diversity, there was no ethnically diverse representation. This was discussed,

with one member saying because Black and South Asian community groups are less well funded the GMHAN needed to go to their spaces, rather than expect people to come to theirs. Improving/building relationships with some named groups was given to two members.

Members contended to have an open discussion and make a decision on the future direction of the GMHAN. A paper I had prepared beforehand gave researched options, essentially providing a choice between remaining a loose network, with an advisory board, which was open invite. Not an organisation as such, but a space between public and community/social spheres which could be occupied by a large collective of organisations and individuals with various opinions and agendas. The role of the advisory board and meetings of the network would be to navigate a path through these experiences and agendas to action, adding in political will along the way from the Mayor to get to policy change.

The other option, an established charity which could apply for funds and run much like the best practice internationally such as Glasgow Homelessness Network, was also tabled. Drawing time and money away from the frontline and taking action was given as the main opposition to this model.

Members wanted to see space for decisions and challenge established and connect with more diverse experiences. They chose to remain a network, not an established organisation, for this reason.

Collective relief afterwards the group had made a decision on what the GMHAN should look like in future and move forward. Momentum also mentioned repeatedly.

Desire to see progress from those on frontline mores than those in strategic roles was palpable. It felt like we all drew a collective deep breath and were ready to run.

The Chair position having the gravitas of an elected official enabled action and commitment from GMCA, multiple CA and LA officers attending, meant commitments could be made at the table rather than taken elsewhere for agreement 'up the chain'.

CA and authority officers didn't appear 100% comfortable in the space, they were initially surprised there was more than one attending and didn't speak unless invited to. Usually these positions take over and lead conversation, when the space was held by an elected politician in a large forum with diverse experiences, where challenge part of their purpose, there was less contribution. Not only were these officers not chairing the discussion and agenda, the meeting did not take place in their offices/environment. Still attended despite this discomfort.
Reflective Diary, October 2019.

The key learnings from this meeting, exemplified in the reflective diary extract above were:

• Equity of voices around the table.
Whilst the involvement of charity leaders brought influence within the sector, some individuals were criticised for only having their charity or the sustenance of charity itself at the forefront of their concerns. Less civil society leadership (top heavy) involvement meant frontline staff and people who had been homeless were able to take up more space and highlight their ideas and concerns more easily. More traditionally working class, this gave a nod to the social capital of the people around

the table levelling out. It is notable that despite class diversity, there was no representation from charities or people serving ethically diverse communities. Although rough sleeping disproportionately affects white, working class men, family homelessness disproportionately effects single women from Black African and Carribean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds (Fizpatrick, 2005). Not having this representation present on the Advisory Board and among advocates meant focus remained on street homelessness, until the GMHAN forum focussed on family homelessness, and Legislative Theatre projects helped to shift this narrative (Benes, 2021). This threatened the GMHAN's ability to undertake a transversal approach and should not have taken as long to make progress on as it did.

• Chair position being a high profile elected member.

The Chair was able to cross boundaries whilst holding hard power themselves. Being an outspoken, progressive politician gave them respect in community spheres, whilst being an elected member gave them hierarchical gravitas with local authority and especially GMCA staff (Field Notes from Advisory Board Meeting, April 2020).

• Clear, evidenced decisions on a collective structure.

It was important to note the feeling in the room when the decision on the GMHAN structure had been made. The relief showed members felt accountable action could take place and they could move forwards, there was also a sense the mist of confusion over what the network was and could do was clearing. Because this was well documented it could also be shared clearly, in a public space online (gmhan.net) and a transparent loop of communication could be achieved with the wider network and public. The Knowledge Exchange recommended this approach

(Knowles et. al, 2019) to avoid what Freeman (1970) calls a 'Tyranny of Structurelessness'. Through lack of defined and commonly understood structure within social movements or groups (remaining a completely loose network), the most powerful or privileged would establish their hegemony over others and 'mask' their power. As Freeman states:

"The rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few and awareness of power is curtailed by those who know the rules, as long as the structure of the group is informal. Those who do not know the rules and are not chosen for initiation must remain in confusion, or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware." Freeman (1970, p.2).

A danger in soft power is highlighted here, whereby if intangible power is not equitably understood, it could be said to contribute to the hegemony of those in the centre.

• Senior officer attendance despite seeming discomfort.

Whilst noting the seeming discomfort of senior officers, the most important aspect was their attendance and willingness to engage after this meeting. For many people, the Advisory Board was their only way to question senior officers and politicians directly and most importantly, receive answers they could take back to their workplaces or communities (Field Notes, April, 2020). The officers now had a structure they understood how to engage with (Reflective Diary, October 2019) and a chair they knew understood their perspective, as well as the wider community's. The clarity in decision making and a structured way forward were helpful for continued engagement from the public sector (Lipsky, 1980).

Just because spaces had been created to govern the GMHAN this did not mean there was consensus about the level of interdependence or freedom from the GMCA. The risks in taking on too much of an independent role were clarified by one

member as "*risk and responsibility have shifted to the voluntary sector, whilst power and control are maintained by local authority*". (Field Notes Action and Support Meeting, September 2019).

Calls to further criticise or hold power to account were also constantly contradicted with asks for financial support from the same bodies (Advisory Board Minutes, January 2020). The prevailing attitude in the Action and Support group at the time was if the GMCA wanted the GMHAN to do work for them they had to help pay for it. It is important to note, this contradiction and indecision almost paralysed the network (Yuval-Davis, 1997) beyond large forums until the formal agreement on the structure of the GMHAN.

Thus a balancing act needed to be performed by advocates of the GMHAN who sat in decision making spaces such as the Advisory Board and Action and Support team to stay true to the GMHAN's role in accountability, whilst not becoming paralysed by too much self-reflective questioning and not enough action. Balancing between accountability and action was no more delicately performed than in the spaces holding the relationship between the GMCA and the GMHAN. The next section explores the findings from the observation of these spaces.

4.5 The GMHAN and GMCA

The relationship between the GMHAN and the GMCA began conjoined, far beyond co-option (Ledwith, 2011) the idea for the Network did not come from the ground up, but the purpose and alternative desire for its use did.

The nature of different spaces within the GMHAN, whilst created for influence and support as outlined above, also allowed people to use the network to have relationships with individuals and boards within the GMCA. The diagram below (Figure 3) attempts to identify these spaces and their connection to one another.

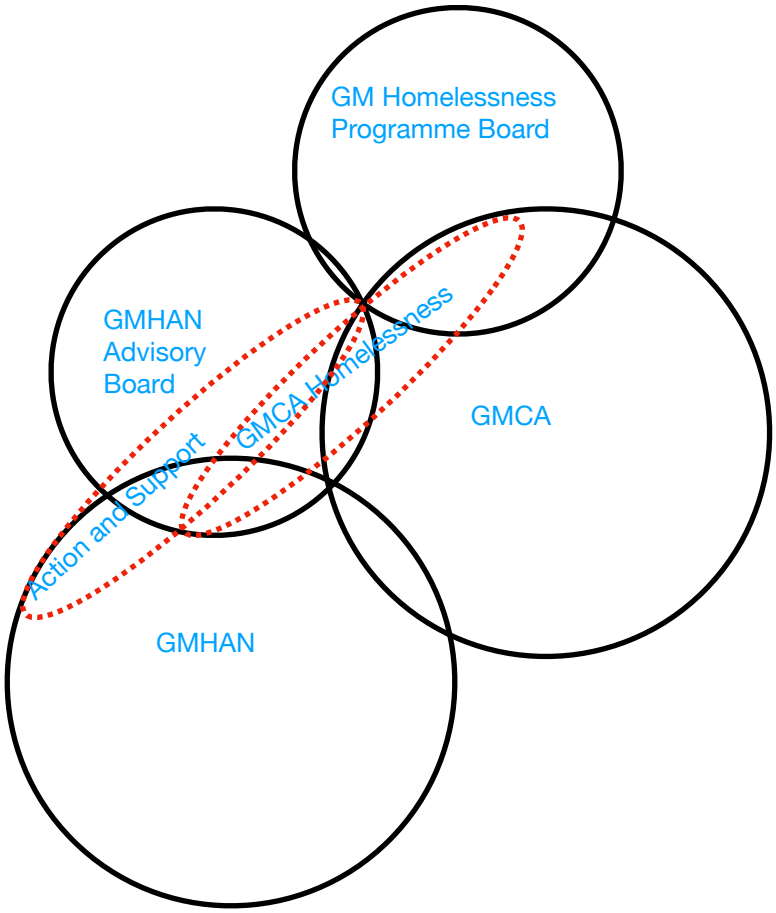

Figure 3; Spheres of influence and decision making connected to the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network.

The GMHAN itself, had connections through to the GMCA via meetings with the Mayor, senior officer attendance and input into GMCA homelessness programmes.

The GMCA likewise had connection through to the GMHAN via the same routes. The Knowledge Exchange Fellowship also bolstered this relationship with the Mayor through one to one meeting every two months.

The GMHAN Advisory Board made up of members of the GMHAN and GMCA, crossed over into both GMCA and GMHAN spheres. In addition, the board had a remit of communicating to and from the Homelessness Programme Board via people including the Deputy Mayor sitting on (and chairing) each. A function designed to enable members within the GMHAN to feedback on GMCA policies and programmes directly at the heart of where they were being held to account. The action and support team, designed to serve both of those functions for the GMHAN, was attended by GMCA homelessness team staff (Field Notes, 2019-20) and was open to anyone from the GMHAN and GMHAN Advisory Board to attend as they wished (GMHAN, 2020).

The relaxed nature of action and support meetings meant attendance fluctuated (Field Notes, 2019-20), with initial membership entirely drawn from the GMHAN, GMCA officers felt less conformable attending a meeting that sometimes had no clear agenda and was purely a space to connect and share updates over a coffee (Field Notes, 2019). As trust in the people within the space grew, more officers came, sometimes with a purpose, a specific update or questions to work through with a small group, towards the end of the research this was also often just to touch base and ‘check in’ (Field Notes, April, 2020).

The Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board sits further away from the other spheres, with connection to the GMHAN through individual advocates on the

Advisory Board and GMCA Homelessness Team. Members of the Programme Board were not encouraged to attend large GMHAN forums and neither were members of the GMHAN asked to attend a Programme Board outside of the chosen Mayoral advocates (Field Notes, September 2019). The remit of the Board was very clear; they were overseers of the GMCA's homelessness programmes (Greater Manchester Joint Commissioning Board, 2019). While the attendance of the Mayor's trusted members of the GMHAN was requested, the extent of the interconnectedness of the two spaces stopped there.

The extract below from a reflective diary nods to the creation of this particular space building an "opaque centre of decision making" (Hill Collins, 2009) at the heart of GMCA homelessness policy. This looks to address the gap highlighted in the Literature Review around "hegemonic centres" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218) of political decision making and who operates within that power base. This contributes to the research question: Can transversal politics be utilised by civil society advocates or non-state actors to sustain political dialogue when working with centres of power rather than for personal gain?

The People's Coffeehouse

Since the programme board's inception I've had an invitation request pending to attend. Eventually, I started asking other people if they were able to attend, one such GMCA officer working in homelessness said it took them three months to find out GMCA staff could attend in the 'cheap seats' (Field Notes, Jan 2020). The seats at the side of the room where you could watch the democratic performance, but not speak or take part in decision making. I started wondering why a decision making

forum talked about as if it is a partnership by the GMCA (GMCA, 2021) was so restricted. Of course a small meeting room cannot be open invite, but when people working in the area in the same office have to 'find out' months later how to gain entry, that sticks out.

In addition, notes from the meeting have to be shared by an attending member, the content of which were often different depending on the person, because of naturally varying perspectives. There were no shareable meeting minutes and none were published online.

There was a noticeable growth in empathy towards the GMCA from some GMHAN advocates spending more time in the GMCA's spheres, whether on behalf of the Mayor or officers, advocates began to explain the GMCA's reasoning for certain decisions as they relayed news of them. This led to what could be a staunch defence of the GMCA or public sector's position as these advocates at the same time as being party to the entire decision making journey, had seen just how difficult it was to make tough decisions. Although my bureaucratic empathy borne out of being a Councillor got me so far in GMCA spaces, I was still waiting for my invite for the Programme Board or advice on who to include from the GMHAN, my empathy didn't stretch as far as understanding that decision.

As I'm sat in a coffee shop across from the GMCA waiting for a meeting, I'm digesting how personal the rescinding of my invitation to the GM Programme Board may have been, the People's Powerhouse are meeting to my right. A group of all white middle class people, who work for think tanks, universities and the local authority - places manufacturing knowledge and policy for the new Devolution

revolution. Though not formally linked to the Programme Board, these were in effect the people whose opinions were called on when new Devolution powers are called for or interrogated.

I'm not sure which part of the Greater Manchester population they represent, besides the same postcode in South Manchester. It brings to mind people mentioning the impenetrability of Greater Manchester's 'meeting network' several times in the past week and my own (rare) experience of this.

Sitting in a cafe with the releasing pressure of coffee machines in my ears, I bump into three people involved in that network. They in turn make an effort to come and say hi and return to the table where the People's Powerhouse are meeting. No one invites me to the meeting, or mentions what the agenda is or asks for my opinion on it. I'm definitely a coffeeshop meeting perpetrator at times, but I can't remember the last meeting I was in where someone didn't mention who wasn't round the table (it's a recurring agenda point in one of them), or whether where we were meeting was accessible to everyone attending. This set up in a city centre coffee shop represents the clearest answer to the impenetrability question so far; you have to be in these spaces to hear about and learn how to access them. The city centre coffee shops are just one gateway into Greater Manchester's powerhouse of decision making spaces.

I talked about magic rooms in a diary piece at the beginning of my project, I made the assumption these were all offices and waiting rooms within the GMCA, but they're not. They're all across the devolved Greater Manchester decision making construct; whether in the voluntary sector, where you are most likely to transfer

information at the top of a staircase as people swap in and out of meeting places, or at the nexus of 'the people's powerhouse' in a city centre coffee shop, where you can gain entry for the price of a halloumi and guacamole sandwich.

The 'clean and safe'; spaces created within Manchester city centre, designed for commerce above all else, are not only excluding people from the economy and public spaces, you are also excluded from a web of meeting spaces and networking opportunities connected to them, where the key decisions about your life are being made.

Not only are these environments only accessible via flat whites and smashed guac, but they themselves are occupying places once used for a different type of networking, one that was free and accidental. The Free Trade Hall used for meeting and revolution, (opposite this coffee shop) now an expensive hotel and bar with private security, a representation of this shrinking space for community-led discussion and debate in the city centre (Minton, 2009).

The GMHAN is not a definitive network or lobby, whilst this ambiguity can cause a 'tyranny of structurelessness' as I have written about before, the nature of the 'chaotic forums' can also be more open and accessible to people and groups who are never invited to sit around the table and often don't even know where to find it.
Extract from Reflective Diary, November 2019.

In combining Freire's theoretical desire to "stand side by side with the oppressed" and Hill Collins' version of Standpoint theory that we can only approximate truth if we accept our own viewpoint as part of a whole, we can start to see the theoretical

foundations of a representative body to tackle social justice issues within a new political community. One that does not seek to represent, but stand with, whilst acknowledging the individuals within the group's varying experience, privileges and social capital.

Restricted spaces for political discussion, such as those mentioned in the reflective diary excerpt, contradict routes to community-led political space. If you lack either financial or social privilege to enter a space initially, this does nothing towards helping citizens to look outside of their privileges and work alongside one another. Neither does the socio-economic stratification resulting from political spaces existing within city centre culture, help people to empathise from one another's perspectives. Bourdieu states:

> "abstentionism is not so much a hiccup in the system as one of the conditions of it functioning as a misrecognised - and therefore recognised - restriction on political participation." Bourdieu (1986, p.398).

Unfortunately, Bourdieu's point is formed solely around political surveys, but has potential to be viewed in terms of any form of political participation. Whether comment piece or conversation on devolution in a coffeeshop, these spaces for opinion and thus democratic participation are reserved for social actors who have the social capital to undertake them without a second thought (Bourdieu, 1986, Putnam, 1993).

Political discourse, especially around issues of social justice within Greater Manchester, has been restricted through lack of public space for the conduct of political debate and action. Utilising Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (1993), it can be said citizens who are not present in coffeehouse meetings are abstaining from political participation and civic society. Those party to the meetings, like the authors

of surveys, may view this as a lack of interest in newly devolved government or a lack of will to be part of creating a new form of democracy. My argument prescient to the building of the GMHAN, is by meeting in a space designed for commerce in the city centre these spaces are not accessible to those who are excluded financially or lack the social capital to gain access and are thus not spaces within the public realm. If conversations that take place are about the potential for devolution and the further powers that should be called for, it is of civic importance these political spaces are truly public, as reflected in the literature review.

When looking at spaces surrounding the GMHAN, it is important to address how the GMCA saw the GMHAN and people connected to it, to bring us closer to the question of why continued democratic devolution is integral to devolution itself. By understanding perceptions of the network within the GMCA, wider than the Mayor, we are led to a greater understanding of the whole society framework and how officers envisaged working with organisations outside Local Authorities and public sector agencies.

The spheres in Figure 3 attempt to show the degrees of interconnectedness between the different spaces of or around the GMHAN, as one member put it “the different planets in one another’s orbit” (Field Notes from Action and Support Meeting, September 2019). Figure 3 was sketched out in antithesis to a design handed over during a meeting with the GMCA Homelessness Team’s senior leadership in September 2019, two of the three staff were newly appointed, having not previously worked with the GMHAN whilst at the GMCA. When GMCA staff first drew their idea of how the GMHAN coexisted with the GMCA it was displayed as follows.

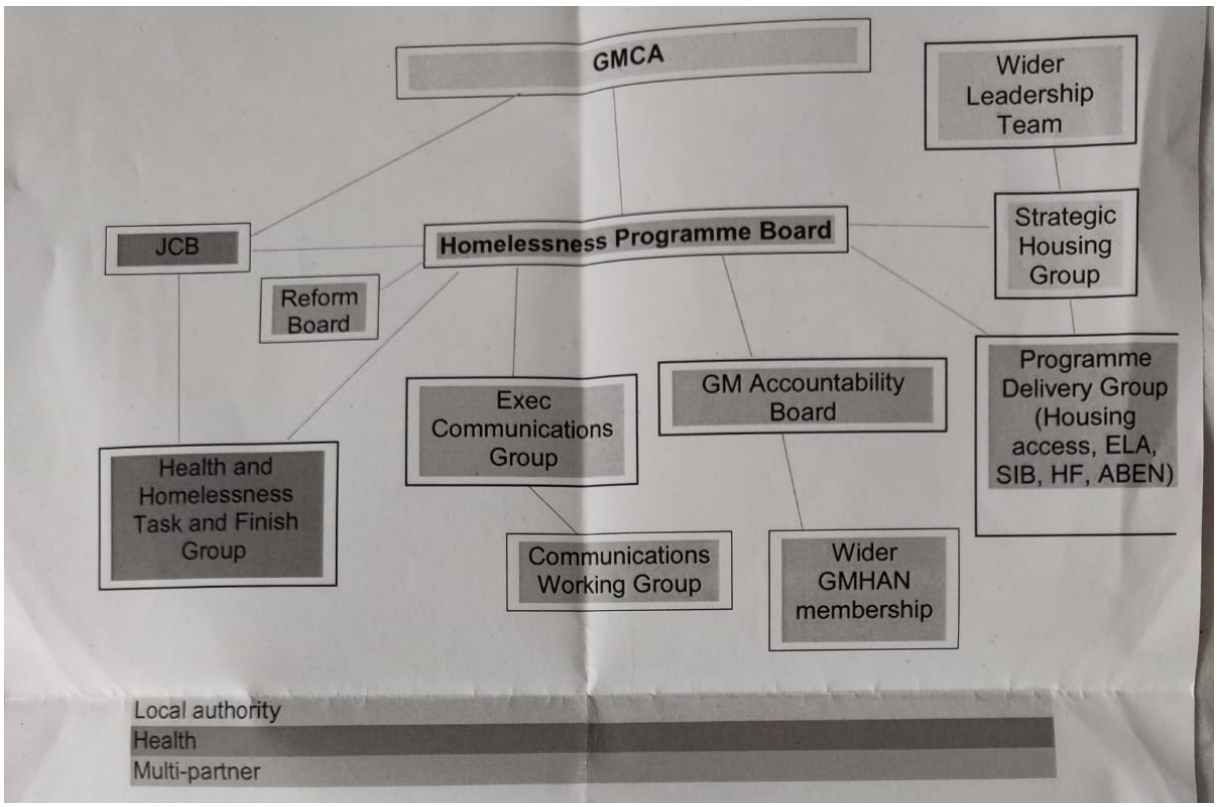

Figure 4; Diagram of proposed GMCA homelessness decision making structure, tabled by GMCA officers.

A hierarchy was clearly set out, with the GMHAN fitting into a GMCA-led structure. The most notable aspect when the paper was handed over in the meeting, was the GMHAN responding to and being held to account by the GMCA Homelessness Programme Board. During the meeting it became apparent this was how the structure was identified by new staff at the GMCA (Field Notes GMCA Meeting, September 2019), possibly pointing to a misunderstanding of the GMHAN and working with cross sector partners.

The ensuing conversation allowed space for GMHAN advocates to explain the purpose of the GMHAN to new ears. The senior leadership though open minded, displayed reservations on the GMHAN being anything beyond a joined up voluntary sector voice, useful for communicating information from the GMCA. The main purpose of which was to carry their message out to charities and the faith sector and vice versa; hearing an easy to digest coherent message from the Greater

Manchester voluntary sector (Informal conversation with GMCA staff member, August 2019 and Field Notes GMCA Meeting, September 2019). Staff were invited to the coming GMHAN forum to see for themselves what the GMHAN was about. These staff were among the individuals who emotionally connected to the homeless families story (described in section 4.7.2), subsequently leading to the creation of collaborative policymaking forums on the issue. The GMCA hierarchy sketched out above was subsequently abandoned and a fuller understanding of the GMHAN gained by senior officers.

Near summation of the research, this shift in understanding was represented in a reconvening of the same staff and GMHAN members to discuss financial support for the GMHAN and approve the first ever Legislative Theatre project in Greater Manchester (Field Notes GMCA and Deputy Mayor Meeting, March 2020).

Legislative Theatre Agreement

The final recognisable policy change observed to enable the network to have greater abilities to redress power, was Legislative Theatre. The formative steps to this happening are recognised in these findings, but the process as a whole unfortunately could not be researched due to timing, thus the process will be noted but not fully explored here. Further information and an evaluation of the project to co-produce the GMCA Homelessness Prevention Strategy (Benes, 2021) can be found online (streetsupport.net/greater-manchester/lt-evaluation/legislative-theatre-evaluation.pdf).

Legislative Theatre follows the methodology of Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by Augusto Boal in the 1970s in Brazil and based upon the theoretical community development framework of Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). Through a series of theatre workshops and performances, communities interrogate systemic issues impacting them and bring them to an audience in the form of a small theatre production. Forum Theatre builds on this and allows the audience to stage alternatives to the scenarios presented in order to offer solutions. Legislative Theatre further develops Forum Theatre by bringing performances and solution-led interrogation of systemic issues of social justice to audiences of policymakers (TONYC, 2019).

Legislative Theatre was recommended as a policy creation and political participation tool by the GMHAN to the GMCA (Knowles et. al, 2019), via a report and live presentation during a GMHAN forum, eventually being given funding by the GMCA to operate from Summer 2020. Albeit the budget was not sufficient for the work undertaken (Benes, 2021), the financial backing of the GMCA was symbolically significant for the GMHAN and Legislative Theatre, as recognition policymaking could be done alongside the GMHAN and could move beyond co-production.

As gatekeepers began to emerge within the GMHAN, Legislative Theatre offered another potential route to equalising power within the network and homelessness policy making, in order to maintain a transversal community development approach. Continuing to strengthen the representation of people who had been or were homeless was key to this, as trained and paid facilitators with lived experience are a vital element of Legislative Theatre. Legislative Theatre showed a potential route to creating a truly representative network and beginning to restructure power within the

GMHAN and GMCA. For this thesis, the most important aspect to note is that a method presented at a GMHAN forum was supported to the point of integration into GMCA policy making. As a press release for the GMCA Homelessness Prevention Strategy states:

> “Part of Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s (GMCA’s) participative approach to developing the strategy [was] through Legislative Theatre Forums”. GMCA (2021).

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy itself as policy is not as important to this end as the community-led political policymaking process by which it was partially devised.

This integration is an example of Democratic Devolution in operation, with wider repercussions beyond homelessness for the GMCA and Greater Manchester city region (Benes, 2021). To this effect, the Mayor is quoted on the GMCA website as saying:

> "Our first ever Homelessness Prevention Strategy is a testament of how we do things differently in Greater Manchester. We’ve worked with people who have lived experience of homelessness and professionals, communities, charities and faith groups who work with them to design a long-term and ambitious solution that puts people, participation and prevention first.” GMCA (2021).

Legislative Theatre also displays the potential for the longer term impacts of radical community development-led policymaking. Not only can this practice be replicated in other policy areas beyond homelessness, but the community trained up during the process as facilitators, who had been homeless, have the potential to become advocates. This has the potential to build up a community of people who have been systematically oppressed by intersectional injustices within the housing, welfare and class systems in the UK to be involved in the practice of dismantling them. This, the hardest, but ultimate goal for the GMHAN and any other partnerships working on political participation within newly devolved city regions.

It is of note, Legislative Theatre was presented on at the same GMHAN forum as homeless families. This appeared to show the influence in bringing GMCA officials to physical GMHAN forums and have them experience what members had to say for themselves.

When asked what they thought the power of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network meant to the GMCA, a member from a sector support organisation stated:

> "*It's not in the structures of those institutions. I feel it shifted the culture and made it more possible… That soft power, I guess we often talk about and I was really inspired by… I feel like you can't really skip that. I don't think we've had much influence over where money was spent. But still, we could have influence*."
>
> Interview with GMHAN Member and sector support leader, January 2021.

This implies influence of a different kind, referencing soft power and the ability for the GMHAN to not only wield the Mayor's 'whole-of-society' power by association, but create and hold its own to shift culture within the GMCA. This allowed the GMHAN to take a formative next step; to build its own network of advocates and not just rely on the Mayor to achieve policy change. Findings from observing this network of advocates are explored in the next section.

4.6 Advocates; Social Connectors or Gatekeepers?

This chapter will seek to address the following aim from the research: There is a gap in understanding the "hegemonic centre" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218) of political decision making and who operates within that power base. Can transversal politics be utilised by civil society advocates or non-state actors to sustain political dialogue when working with centres of power rather than for personal gain?

Though the depiction of spaces is useful to understand how the different GMHAN spaces were built and utilised, the structures themselves did not move from one to the other to create and change policy, this was done by people (Field Notes, November 2019). A small network of advocates appeared regularly in each space, either through invitation or opportunity. Indeed, this was an explicit ask of the GMHAN:

> *"We need explicit roles to go between groups and communicate, hold them together*." GMHAN Advisory Board Member, Field Notes September 2019.

These individuals had the time, will and soft power to move across these spaces (Interview GMHAN Action and Support Member, November 2020), gathering the thoughts and ideas of others as they went and depositing them where they thought they would have the most tactical impact (Deiana, 2018).

Advocates were either agreed on by the Network or started to play an advocate role after attendance at meetings (Field Notes, November 2019). As people, they were a combination of charity leaders, people who had been homeless, faith representatives, social activists and frontline staff, in a position of power but with a perceived neutrality (Field Notes, November 2019). Whilst this breadth gave diversity

of thought and experience, it was still a complex task to advocate for the myriad of views within the GMHAN. I argue equal investment was thus needed in developing these individuals as much as the network's spaces. The theories of transversal politics and Standpoint theory as applied by Hill Collins (2000) and Yuval-Davis (1997) will be used as a basis to address theoretical foundations for GMHAN advocates and their interaction with the wider network.

Firstly, of critical concern, is by becoming an advocate out of necessity for the network, it does not automatically assume representation of the network:

> "community activists should not see themselves as representatives of their constituencies (unless they were democratically elected and are accountable for their actions). Rather, they should see themselves as their advocates, working to promote their cause." Yuval-Davis (1999, p.95).

As GMHAN advocates were not elected, despite recommendations to the contrary (Knowles et. al, 2019), this linguistic differentiation was important.

> Yuval-Davis continues: "Even as advocates, it is important that the activists should be conscious of the multiplexity of their specific positionings. Activists and 'community leaders' too often become the 'authentic voice' of their communities." Yuval-Davis (1999, p.95).

This was in particular danger of happening within the GMHAN when advocates were invited into spaces such as the GM Homelessness Programme Board specifically as representatives of the GMHAN. Charity and faith leaders as well as people who had been homeless were called on as the 'authentic voice' of these communities, this presented a risk, as these bureaucratic spaces had previously misunderstood the nature of the network and were capable of taking these voices as a complete representation of their communities and the wider GMHAN.

The second lesson is in the validity of having advocates from a range of communities to advocate around homelessness and poverty. Transversalism teaches that “It is the message, not the messenger that counts.” Yuval-Davis (1999, p.96). In this, the GMHAN recognised the ability of people without lived experience of homelessness to speak about homelessness and equally those with lived experience as able to have a voice on bureaucratic practices and service design beyond their own personal experience. This does not mean individuals are irrelevant in place of a message with the adoption of transversalism, but that work is required by the messengers to deliver the right content. This structure is described in the GMHAN’s Terms of Reference in the below diagram:

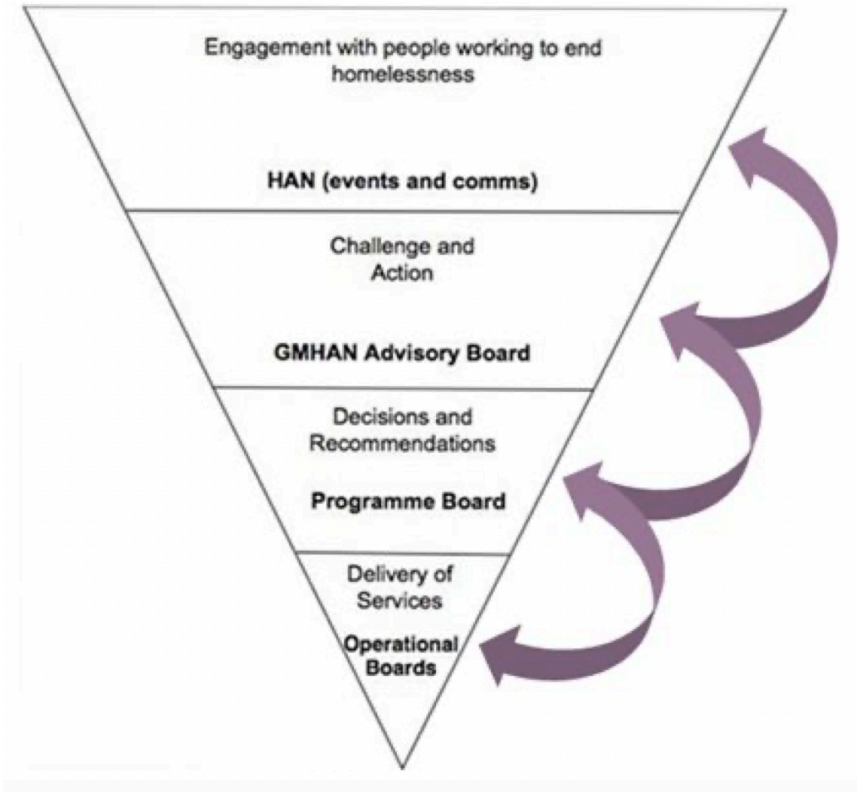

Figure 5; GMHAN Terms of Reference displayed visually (gmhan,net, 2020).

This diagram was designed to visualise the feedback loops operating with the GMHAN, or how information was passed from different spaces to inform lobbying. A reversed hierarchy was designed to depict how consensus from the HAN forums should trickle through decision making spaces to inform politics, practice and policy.

Hill Collins (1990) refers to this notion that building dialogue with people from different positioning as the only way to "approximate truth”. As considered in the literature review, this theory has broad applicability to political movements of resistance and the encouragement of groups to work side by side one another in order to engage in transversal dialogues (Hill Collins, 2017).

The GMHAN had the potential to adopt this transversal politics of dialogue, empathy and resistance and root the Democratic Devolution project in Greater Manchester as not just one of solidarity, but transversal social justice. Advocates, as key actors in that community, played a vital role in what politics were adopted beyond the forum and taken into spaces shared with other groups. The following section looks at these advocates, by examining their most cooperative adoption of this approach in their role as social connectors and their most obstructive, as gatekeepers.

4.6.1 Social Connectors

Via the Knowledge Exchange, it was suggested the GMHAN worked with a number of individuals, understanding of multiple oppressions, to cross over between spaces of influence. It was also reflected there may be more acceptance for individuals to cross boundaries than formal agreements or communication of formal decisions from the GMCA to the GMHAN (Reflective Diary, March 2019).

Initially, there was resistance to this approach within the GMCA, when it was suggested that some individuals from the GMHAN could begin to meet with strategic leads to understand their priorities and shift relationships from the Knowledge Exchange post to the collective GMHAN. A senior officer stated "*We have the relationship brokers here, you don't need to replicate.*" (Field Notes, September, 2019). The inference being; GMCA officers were the holders of relationships with policymakers and politicians, these were not to be held by the community, but the local elite. Described by Gaventa (1980) as the local power base citizens visited to exert influence externally to their community, the local elite here sat within the GMCA. In this meeting the officer appeared overwhelmed and distrusting of co-production (Field Notes, September 2019), there was a sense if relationships were held by anyone other than the GMCA, disruption would result, meaning more work at the same time as less power for them.

At risk of being "*navigators in unnavigable systems*" with a lack of support from the GMCA (Field Notes, October 2019), these individuals needed to have a set of skills and existing connections for them to be valuable to the GMHAN, alongside their willingness to operate with transversality. These skills are interrogated below.

Individual political knowledge and ability to navigate the GM political landscape

Each advocate had, either through direct, frontline or strategic experience, an undeniable knowledge of the political system surrounding homelessness in Greater Manchester. This insight was required in order to find the right policymakers and spaces to change policy or develop new relationships on behalf of the GMHAN, as well as having an understanding of the GMCA's fears outlined above. Not having this knowledge of homelessness services and local politics would have been akin to navigating blindfolded and could have caused more trouble than problems solved. As one member reflected, navigating everyone's priorities for the GMHAN was like "*doing a puzzle blindfolded over the internet*" (Informal interview, May 2020).

Ability to convene

Another task for advocates was to create space for the GMHAN to convene on specific policy issues. An example of this was seen in an inter-faith meeting on family homelessness. Church and Mosque leaders attended the meeting alongside council staff and families who had been homeless, to develop collaborative, community-led policy solutions to issues highlighted by homeless families and charities. These advocates not only moved in spaces owned by others, but created environments for others to meet, discuss politics within their communities and co-create ideas (Field Notes, January 2020).

Known across sectors or able to cross the 'whole-of-society'

Advocates started out akin to chameleons, often referred to by other members as 'translators' for their ability to interpret information from different sources (Field Notes, September 2019). The individuals chosen were respected, understood and

trusted by people in various positions cross-sector (Interview GMHAN member and housing provider manager, November 2020). This was aided by the fact they often had more than one defined role or skillset, such as those who were faith leaders, while simultaneously running homelessness accommodation and had experience in local authority housing (Interview with GMHAN Advisory Board member, November 2020). Being seen to 'fit in' in a multitude of environments and provide skills from personal support to in depth policy knowledge, these advocates were invited into spaces others were not. These spaces included strategy discussions with housing providers, one on one meetings with senior politicians, conversations with funders and the Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board, providing roles helpful to the network in each.

As such, these individuals relayed the experiences of people in the Network in bureaucratic environments no other members could access (Field Notes, February and November 2019). Because of their ability to move between environments, political attention was paid to the nuances and impacts of homelessness policy by decision makers that did not have this insight themselves. Advocates also challenged where homelessness policy was being enacted without proper participation. An example was highlighted in a Reflective Diary piece from February 2019:

"*The main question at a GMHAN Action and Support Team meeting was how the next phase of emergency provision was going to be designed. People who had been sleeping in the provision and frontline charities had raised concerns from the preceding Winter, which were seen as solvable if the provision and questions around it were resolved collaboration. The support team saw the best opportunity for this as*

the next GMHAN forum, where a whole feedback and co-design process could be run openly, but the GMCA homelessness team had gone to ground and were not sharing their thoughts on the design process for the next winter's provision.

How to resolve this and instigate participatory design showed the web of advocates and relationships in action.

One social enterprise owner with the Mayor's email address and a good personal connection, was tasked with asking these questions about participation directly to the Mayor. "How did the Mayor see the GMHAN being involved in the design of next winter's emergency provision?". They copy in only one other advocate, a faith leader, to show there are others asking questions (and awaiting a response), but only out of support and interest in collaboration.

The Mayor responded, quickly, stating they saw their core team at the GMCA designing the proposal and bringing this to the GMHAN in April 2019 for feedback. The Mayor finishes with asking for any advice and comments on this proposal.

The advocate who was copied in sends the Mayor's response to a small number of other advocates and asks for a quick physical meeting to agree on how to respond.

The group dialogue decides reiterating the need for co-design of any emergency provision and taking into account the feedback of residents last year, is paramount. The group also mention the Vanguard City initiative in their response to add their external validation for evaluating projects properly and responding to needs accordingly.

The Mayor does not respond.

The next step is for this group of advocates to coordinate feedback to an insights and trends document from the GMCA laying the groundwork for 2019's emergency provision. This document is presented to the Mayor as his personal insights paper before a meeting with all elected and senior officers on homelessness in Greater Manchester. Feedback from the GMHAN states unanimously there should be co-design of any emergency provision for 2019 and if this is undertaken there will likely be no mention of group accommodation in church halls etc. for the following Winter.

A thank you is sent in response by the GMCA officer.

In the meeting with eight officers and elected member leads for homelessness (Bolton and Wigan are not present), the Mayor outlines in his introduction that any proposal for emergency provision will be co-designed with the GMHAN.

Despite no written confirmation, there is a tracked achievement from the advocates lobbying. They continue with individual actions to follow up; a phone call with the strategic lead for homelessness in Greater Manchester and monthly meetings with the Mayor.

The ultimate decision is for the GMHAN to have a steering group for the emergency provision whose task it is to listen to residents of the provision and the wider GMHAN, feeding this insight into the GMCA."

Reflective Diary, February 2019.

This extract showed the heavy reliance on multiple individual connections with the Mayor, strategic lead, GMCA officers, the GMHAN and frontline charities to effect change or encourage bureaucratic movements. Whilst beneficial in terms of achieving outcomes, collaborative design being put into practice was effectively still reliant on more informal relationships with the GMCA. This showed a lack of responsibility around sustainable participation within the GMCA and a desire to keep the 'real design' inside their bureaucratic structure.

Whilst showcasing the need for advocates, this piece highlights one of the reasons for them existing in the first place came from the GMCA's lack of meaningful, long-term engagement with the GMHAN. The Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board was eventually set up in July 2019 to handle governance of all homelessness projects officially within the GMCA, but again, this was by invite only and did not have public minutes or streaming capacity. Members of the GMHAN selected to attend were personally chosen by the Mayor, without input from the wider network. So whilst governance wise, the board reflected greater accountability for homelessness in the GMCA, it did not move away from reliance on informal networks by requiring a high level relationship to provide access to participate.

4.6.2 Gatekeepers

All of the experiences highlighted in this thesis were had by individuals, as such they were open to individual interpretation, personal lenses and individually-led decision making, if reflexive practice did not occur (Pink, 2001). As one GMHAN Advisory Board member resisted "*we're not just roles, we're individuals*" (Field Notes, May 2020). If transversal politics was to be sustained, with the 'message' more important than the 'messenger', each individual would need to sustain a "reflexive knowledge of their own positioning and identity" Yuval-Davis (1999, p.96) in order to effectively advocate for the collective and recognise their personal standpoint within any decision making they were part of. In this ability to balance personal standpoint and collective transversal politics, rested cohesion of the epistemological community (Assister, 1996) of the GMHAN, if this balance was lost, the risk was advocates could turn into gatekeepers. Spotting this risk became a reflective task for myself in the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship and the action and support team.

The research question this section answers are in relation to a balance between collective aims and individual actions and the hegemony of power that can manifest in the 'core' if this balance is not achieved. It is argued this balance is in effect transversal politics and if individual advocates within the network's core were not aware of their heightened ability to build and wield this power, this would threaten the ability to create an environment for transversal-led policy change. Observation of how soft power was held and wielded within the network by individual advocates became a focus for the thesis. My observation focussed on whether the power meant to be used by the collective network to advance policy aims around

homelessness, was increasingly being reserved by individual advocates with high level political relationships and social capital.

The question addressed in this section is thus: There is a gap in understanding the "hegemonic centre" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218) of political decision making and who operates within that power base. Can transversal politics be utilised by civil society advocates or non-state actors to sustain political dialogue when working with centres of power rather than for personal gain?

One observed meeting highlighted the tensions between social capital and transversal politics particularly acutely. The meeting took place over Zoom during the global pandemic to design the next GMHAN forum and the GMHAN's advocacy response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group wanted to simultaneously concentrate on coordination of the voluntary and community sector response to the 'Everyone In' initiative and develop an alternative vision capitalising on narratives to 'Build Back Better'[5] after the pandemic[5].

An advocate joined a GMHAN Zoom late, after a few minutes they agitatedly asked if they had joined the right call. They were not involved in the framing of the call at the beginning, with other advocates and core members and felt they had missed out on feeding into the main ideas for the GMHAN forum. Namely tensions rested on whether the forum should focus on coordination efforts or have an advocacy focus on proposing a different way forward for issues of socio-economic and housing injustice. Thus, the advocate felt they had missed out on shaping how the GMHAN would respond to a major national government homelessness initiative in

5; Available at: https://www.gmhan.net/assets/uploads/gmhan-building-back-better-proposal.pdf

‘Everyone In’ and the Mayor’s political narrative around ‘Building Back Better’. Missing out on the agenda setting led to them trying to push their opinion, disagreeing with the rest of the group on any decisions made as to whether the GMHAN should support or challenge the GMCA (Field Notes Action and Support Meeting and Reflective Diary, May 2020). They gave no space for understanding why the group felt more challenge was needed at that particular moment and what key questions the collective network felt should be asked of the Mayor and GMCA. It could be said they felt their personal opinion was becoming more important than the rest of the core group’s and indeed wider network. They referred several times during that meeting and following conversations to “*knowing what works*” (Field Notes Action and Support Meeting and Reflective Diary, May 2020). Due to their experience moving between spaces and lobbying on behalf of the GMHAN, the advocate believed they had a better understanding of influencing or ‘advocating’ than other members.

These actions led to a building tension in the group, as some core members believed the advocate did not understand their individual knowledge was part of a larger whole and thus ‘unfinished’ without a dialogue between members, and the advocate believed they had complete knowledge through their diverse individual experience.

A May 2020 Reflective Diary entry goes into detail on my Knowledge Exchange role performing a ‘balancing act’ between two opinions in an attempt to achieve a transversal politics within the network. It was not possible to both coordinate the community’s response to ‘Everyone In’ and challenge the structural issues causing the need for the policy in the first place. The entry notes a balance was being

attempted in the GMHAN decision making spaces. The risks when this balance was not achieved were the core members feeling they were having power taken away from them in their role holding power to account if they could not set the agenda and ask questions thy felt were needed. Whereas on the other hand, some of the advocates felt 'pushed out' if they were not listened to. The entry states:

"*It felt as if on one side of the scales there was a group of ten or so core members with a set of questions they needed answering and one or two people on the opposite side trying to protect the people answering them and the network from any sanctions that could be invoked as a result of challenge*." Reflective Diary, May 2020.

This was not an irrational fear of 'sanction' on the part of advocates, as similar was witnessed by Gaventa, (1980) in his observation of local power dynamics involving advocates in Appalachia. I framed this situation in the reflective diary as "*community vs authority*", with a space for understanding needed in the middle (the role of the Knowledge Exchange feeling like it was the only role holding this space). Maintaining a perfect balance between the two viewpoints of how the network should take action not only started to feel unjust to the role, but impossible (Reflective Diary, May 2020). Noticing and trying to redress the power imbalance was key, setting the agenda and key questions for the GMHAN forum might have at first seemed insignificant, but as Gaventa (1980) writes:

> "One of the most important aspects of power is not to prevail in a struggle, but to pre-determine the agenda of struggle - to determine whether certain questions ever reach the competition stage." (Gaventa, 1980, p.10).

Also as in Shor and Freire (1987): “To achieve the goals of transformation, dialogue implies responsibility, directiveness, determination, discipline, objectives’ (Shor and Freire, 1987 p.102)”.

Thus the struggle over what agenda the forum would follow was not just a timekeeping piece, but determined what questions would be asked to power, what policy priorities would be set for the city region around homelessness and who would be encouraged to join any collective transformative action to ‘Build Back Better’.

These struggles were observed as some of the first signs of advocates potentially becoming more than connectors to power, but gatekeepers to accessing it.

This struggle for collective political action became more pronounced as advocates began operating as a ‘bridge’ from GMHAN gatherings to areas of direct political influence (Field Notes, November 2019) and accessing free meeting space (Interview with community development worker, December 2020). A few examples of this were observed with note from February 2020 - May 2020 and noted in informal discussions with GMHAN members attempting to organise meetings (January 2020 - March 2020). Whilst being connectors to free physical space for the GMHAN’s meetings, advocates also became gatekeepers when not responding to emails requesting to book meetings. At times, this left some organisers with no options for their GMHAN meetings (Informal conversation with community development worker, May 2020). When these meetings centred around interrogating structural causes of homelessness, this amounted to advocates restricting space for community development in the city. I observed it could be easier to find space for large GMHAN

forums with political figures in attendance than smaller GMHAN meetings (Field Notes, February 2020).

The Knowledge Exchange Fellowship also played a role in this, with large spaces at the University accessible during the project but not when the project ceased. In an attempt to avoid this over reliance, advocates were tasked with sharing the responsibility of providing access to physical space essential for GMHAN meetings before the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst this worked numerous times, I observed it to be faltering towards the end of the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship for GMHAN meetings beyond the large fora.

Another example where advocates could be observed to be 'gatekeepers' occurred when advocates were invited into the most important space for Greater Manchester homelessness decision making, the Homelessness Programme Board. As noted above, 'representatives of the GMHAN' were personally chosen by the Mayor with no input from the wider network. One of the impacts of this was the advocates ended up being from similar professional, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to the majority of board members, thus it could be argued their perspectives were already over represented in the hegemonic centre (Hill-Collins, 1990 and Yuval-Davis 1997).

This was one area where the use of advocates between different spheres began to run at a tangent to the network taking a transversal approach. Perspectives being overrepresented in the hegemonic centre was also interpreted as a challenge to the GMHAN taking a community development approach. One member concerned about

the overuse of individuals to assert influence, especially over the long term Grater Manchester Homelessness Prevention Strategy stated:

> "*Co-production tries to build a bridge, maybe from the inside circle. If we're thinking about what that says, lenses of oppression, feelings of hopelessness of the people who are most impacted by these systems to the next level of individuals who are the gatekeepers, that ignores the policies that are oppressive within the institutions*." Interview GMHAN member and Arts Practitioner, December 2020.

A fear of quicker, micro (individual) influence over defined issues or policies, rather than slower initiatives concentrating on systemic overhaul by a larger group was also encapsulated in a reflective diary piece from the time.

Take it to 'the bridge'

The bridge came to symbolise a regular meeting between representatives from the GMCA and GMHAN during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the bridge constituted the GMCA on one side, the GMHAN on the other. Two individuals from each were asked to meet at the request of the GMCA to be "translators" of official policy relating to homelessness in the first weeks of the global pandemic. Official tasks brought to the meeting point included; translating sensitive or official language into releasable and relatable communication to the network who were working on the homelessness response to the pandemic and coordination of the network's offers of support. Those GMHAN individuals were repeatedly told of the trust being placed in them with this information, who they could relay it to and when, this literally was a matter of life, death and containing panic. For me, this brought up my experiences as a Councillor after the Arena bombing.

The whole thing had the same air of wartime government response. Around this environment swirled civil service instructions like "Gold Command" and "death minimisation". Meeting on the bridge the first morning, GMHAN representatives were asked to respond to tasks, in return personal support to officers was offered. When in crisis mode, this felt like the quickest option to get the most work done to support people's basic needs. However, the bridge soon became a border crossing, manned by gatekeepers.

I had a Frankenstein-like "what have I created" panic often when writing up this research. By attempting to create a doorway, opening into new corridors of power, something was created that could at different times be different things depending on the individuals with the most time to be at the centre of it. At times this space was not an open door anyone could turn up to and use to challenge, dismantle or access power, but a border crossing, manned by knowledgeable individuals with high level personal connections, social capital and a desire to sort out other people's problems. This was often driven by goodwill and kindness, but not only did you have to know these individuals to get on to the bridge, but you then had to utilise them and their connections to access further power.

This suited people in governmental positions more than anyone. The border 'check-in' point with a few GMHAN advocates, created a regular connection with supportive individuals, that became a protective mechanism at times of great challenge and disruption. This space was found to be cathartic and a much easier way to digest and act upon the needs and desires of a larger group. Whilst giving space to be kind to officers in a period of great distress felt like the right thing to do, this restriction in

who could make direct contact to these individuals meant any larger GMHAN group had to go to a gatekeeper to access the resources they needed, or change they wanted to see.

Extract from Reflective Diary, March 2020.

There was nothing new in a few people within the GMHAN maintaining the strongest connections at the core, simply to get things done. During this particular time of crisis, the core membership met with one another and the wider network regularly and made decisions, delegated and took action (Field Notes, May 2020). What altered was the restriction of space to facilitate the connection between the GMHAN and the individuals working within the GMCA's political structures.

During the pandemic the spaces these people met became phone calls and invite only one on one, or two on two, Zoom meetings. Even the relatively inaccessible 'bumping into one another' at the top of stairs, in coffee shops and day centres had ceased as a result of the pandemic. This began to result in an exchange of information between advocates around coordination or 'Everyone In' as national government policy, not a dismantling and rebuilding of an oppressive system through challenge, collaboration, dialogue and accountability.

Arendt's statement that "the essential human condition of plurality is contradicted by tyranny, which [relies] on isolation." (Arendt, 1958, p.58) reaffirms the notion a 'whole-of-society' approach encouraging transversal dialogue can contradict the absorption of power by a few individuals. If citizens are restricted in being able to speak and act together, a form of tyranny can be constructed from this isolation. Therefore it is not enough for the oppressed and oppressors to stand together in

solidarity as Freire (1968) insists, they must speak and act together to avoid isolation and the tyrannical politics that can ensue. Restricting the space for this speaking (dialogue) and action to take place, thus restricts political freedom.

Whilst Freire (1990) argues co-option is not always negative, he is implying the ideas and people of political movements can work with hierarchical political power to achieve their aims. I observed this to be true for the GMHAN where spaces remained public. However, when co-option occurs alongside spaces becoming private, with invitations into spaces necessary and communication reliant on individuals with high levels of social capital, the ability for the group to act politically reduces, as the group risks becoming isolated and "deprived of the capacity to act" (Arendt, 1958, p.188).

While a 'whole-of-society' approach allowed the soft powers of the Mayor to be co-opted by the Network, this type of co-option of individuals into the political system risked reducing the network's ability to question and create its own social capital and political voice for leverage in "Building Back Better' (Ledwith, 2011).

This restriction of space for the GMHAN to operate in was leading to a gathering of power and influence in the advocates, leading to a shift in their roles from social connectors to gatekeepers. The same notion is reflected in Gaventa (1980) when analysing the power relationships between a community action group and chosen advocates:

> "As the appeal was made by the local citizens, the experts and bureaucrats of the regulatory agency-separated by class, culture and distance from the protest group-turned to the local elite, with whom they felt more affinity, for interpretation of the conflict. The elite in turn could maximise their power: while serving as the brokers of information to the regulatory agency, they operated as wielders of more coercive power within the local arena." Gaventa (1980, p.237).

This experience was reflected in my ethnography, with advocates taking on the role of local elite. Out of an initial desire to support the GMCA, these advocates were co-opted into closed bureaucratic spaces such as the Homelessness Programme Board. Through brokerage of information, their role was observed to have shifted to becoming brokers, rather than challengers during policymaking on behalf of the GMHAN. Where the core GMHAN membership was demanding questioning and lobbying action when advocates were in contact with the GMCA, advocates were increasingly just relaying information to and fro between political and civil society spheres (Field Notes Action and Support Meetings, April 2020 - June 2020).

The GMCA Homelessness Programme Board also became an example of gatekeeping forming out of advocacy. Individuals were specifically invited to join the Programme Board as 'representatives of the GMHAN' by the Mayor, this was not discussed with any of the GMHAN forums and was not collectively decided (Field Notes, July 2019). The advocates chosen were thus already in positions of great influence in order to be known and trusted by The Mayor and came from similar backgrounds. As this reflected the majority of the membership of the existing programme board, this fed into the notion of a new 'local elite' (Gaventa, 1980) or 'hegemonic centre' (Hill Collins, 2000). Thus policymaking centred increasingly around their needs, rather than that of the loose, disparate network.

An antithesis to this approach was proposed in a meeting between two GMHAN advocates and a senior GMCA officer. The pitfalls to a representation model and an alternative proposal for a community-based steering group to guide the co-design of the Greater Manchester prevention strategy were laid out. The officer's response was clear; "the *Homelessness Programme Board working group is to manage*

strategy" (Field Notes, September 2019). GMHAN members agreed although the Programme Board was the right place for governance, membership of a strategy steering group needed to come jointly from the GMHAN and GMCA if anything was to be co-designed, because the Programme Board was inaccessible. Evidence of which lay in even GMCA staff only being able to view proceedings in 'the cheap seats'. Despite this, the officer claimed; "*It is not inaccessible… the GMHAN Accountability Board's job is to feedback to the network"*. Through this exchange it was laid bare the role the GMCA saw for GMHAN advocates was in information brokerage, true involvement from the community and levelling of power structures from within GMHAN forums was strongly resisted.

Thus, one of the GMHAN's risks along with the rewards of having advocates was played out with "*priorities defined by people sat at the table*" (Field Notes from Conversation with GMHAN member at a HAN Forum, March 2020). This was observed to work in practice by advocates on the Programme Board giving their personal interpretations (via personal notes) of Programme Board events to the GMHAN Advisory Board and wider GMHAN (Field Notes from GMHAN Advisory Board, February 2020). This became an issue when one advocate no longer attended any GMHAN forums (Field Notes, December 2019). The question asked by the Advisory Board, was how this advocate could represent the GMHAN when they did not attend the forum to hear other's voices. Their absence also ran at a tangent to transversal practice, a lack of connection to group dialogues closed the advocate's standpoint down to an individual assessment of the world. I observed members who attended both the Advisory and Programme Boards stating their discontent with this, adding that the advocate was doing nothing more than representing their sector and individual organisation, a valid reason in itself, but not

the guise they were invited on the board under (Field Notes, December 2019). In this it could be argued there was a decreasing sense of solidarity in advocates standing with those who were being oppressed by housing injustice, and instead created an opportunity for some individuals to expand their social capital as brokers of information (Gaventa, 1980).

The tension around this issue heightened during GMHAN Action and Support meetings in December 2019 and January 2020 (Field Notes, December 2019 - January 2020). Members were told by GMCA officers their business case for funding support roles for the GMHAN had to go to the Programme Board for financial support, after being led to believe this could be decided directly by GMCA officers. Some members of the Action and Support Team perceived this as a small group of advocates with little or fraying connection to the GMHAN having more power over the future direction of the GMHAN than its members (Fields Notes, January 2020). The decision being made in this space was not the only issue, it was the length of time it took for a decision to be made, at time of completing this thesis (over two years later) these roles were just being advertised (gmhan.net, 2022).

With recognition that "non decision making is a means by which demands for change can be suffocated before they are voiced" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970) questions arose over whether the GMHAN should wait for decisions to be taken by the Homelessness Programme Board or continue their work and seek alternative support. One member stated:

> "*We need to realise the power we have in the room and what can we do whilst we're waiting for the powers that be"* (Field Notes from Action and Support Meeting, December 2019).

This began to form the exclusionary hierarchy GMHAN members were cautious of, as Gaventa (1980) states:

> "Power is exercised not just upon participants within the decision-making process, but also towards the exclusion of certain participants and issues all together." Gaventa (1980, p.9).

To this end, GMHAN Advisory Board members would wait for their representatives to come back from the Programme Board with news and relay decisions made within the bureaucracy (Field Notes from Advisory Board Meeting, December 2019). Rather than the Programme Board coming to the GMHAN, it was observed as the other way around (Field Notes from Action and Support Meeting, April 2020), adding to a sense of opacity around how the board operated (Peeters et.al, 2018). In the absence of understanding, dysfunctionality could be assumed (de Jong, 2016), jokes were regularly made about the length of the name of the board and I was called on numerous times to remind people what the board did (Field Notes from Action and Support Meeting, February 2020).

Members' feeling disconnected through lack of participation appeared to show a lack of connection via advocates was leading some to view the Programme Board (and thus governance of homelessness in Greater Manchester) as yet another space for opaque bureaucracy to take hold over their needs. A belief advocates were leaving out the collective values and voices the GMHAN was designed to represent risked a breakdown of trust in the wider political system (Wang, 2016).

It is of note Arendt places no importance on the individual advocate whatsoever, "the power generated when people gather together and act in concert, disappears the moment they depart." Arendt (1958, p.244). Although, these findings highlight the dangers of advocates, it does not nullify their benefits and if anything,

contradicts Arendt by reinforcing their power as individuals. Advocates could be seen to carry a collectively generated power for the benefit of the collective into private spaces. Ideally, of course, these private boards would have followed Arendtian and transversal political philosophy and been more open to public discourse. Ideally, these individuals would have remained public in their nature instead of becoming closed off to the wider GMHAN membership, but the benefit of the GMHAN being a loose network, not governed by any individual in particular gave an ability to adapt to current needs. If these advocates were no longer serving the original purpose for the GMHAN, the network could choose different advocates and create different mechanisms for change. One such opportunity lay in Legislative Theatre, discussed earlier, and the collaborative writing of the Greater Manchester Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

4.7 From Soft Power to Hard Policy

This section documents how the GMHAN went from a space where soft power and a ‘whole -of-society’ approach were formed and used by the collective as well as advocates, to a network with ‘teeth’ (decision making powers and an influential voice) within the new Greater Manchester City Region bureaucracy. Whilst focussing on the GMHAN as a case study, this has broader connotations for the Greater Manchester urban governance model as a whole, in terms of how the Mayoral model can operate outside of formally devolved powers from Westminster and provide a beacon of governance, as well as a ‘beacon of social justice’.

The issue concerns how the soft power of civil society forums was utilised for policymaking and what the policy outcomes were (if any) for the GMHAN and GMCA. Two forms of homelessness and the accompanying public policy are analysed to determine if a breadth of outcomes and powers were possible in Greater Manchester.

4.7.1 Street Homelessness

The GMHAN Rough Sleeping Strategy was the only initial strategy and accompanying action plan released by the GMCA designed to look at rough sleeping as a whole, rather than for the projects they had formal accountability over. This strategy, co-produced by the GMHAN over a series of large forums and smaller events across Greater Manchester, outlines Reduction, Respite, Recovery and Reconnection as the headline segments of policy for reducing rough sleeping and preventing further homelessness (GMHAN, 2017). The Respite section covers a raft of policy around emergency provision, beyond opening church halls for communal accommodation, this 'respite' accommodation covered personalised support, integrated new and existing programmes and access to more stable housing. This importantly also required provision to be created for people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), whom no matter the weather or their personal circumstances, had no access to provision beyond the charity sector in Greater Manchester.

The Rough Sleeping Strategy paragraph 1.2 quotes:

> *"The network has helped to co-produce this implementation plan. The Mayor hopes this example of co-production can lead the way for other areas of policy and become a model of how we make things happen in Greater Manchester*." GMHAN (2017, p.2).

The pivotal nature of the GMHAN is hinted at here, in both creating the strategy and the Mayor's vision for more participatory public policy in Greater Manchester. The importance given to co-authorship and the Network being a vanguard for wider public policy, contributed to the GMHAN developing teeth and influence cross sector. The example below of strategy coming to fruition, shows how this production

of knowledge and building of a cross sector collective, developed into rough sleeping policy.

As of November 2018, just before the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship began, the Mayor's bespoke plan for respite accommodation in Greater Manchester 'A Bed Every Night' (ABEN) came to fruition. This scheme aimed to provide a bed and personal support for anyone who was sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough in Greater Manchester (Manchester City Council, 2021). Despite controversy around the name and branding of the programme (designed by the Mayor's press team), the programme was the first large scale attempt at the GMHAN and the Mayor's soft powers combining to create tangible action and public policy out of the strategy or whole society 'vision'.

In Watts et. al's evaluation of A Bed Every Night (2021), they outline three drivers for the programme's instigation, two of the three being the Mayor and an active civil society:

> ""[The Mayor] was totally the driver... one of his big electoral priorities was around tackling rough sleeping and homelessness and bold claims at the outset in the manifesto around ending rough sleeping or the need to rough sleep". (Watts et. al's Key informant, criminal justice).

Others highlighted the additional relevance of a very active and vocal group of voluntary sector and faith based organisations, especially in Manchester itself:

> "it very much came from the third sector and faith-based [organisations], but very Manchester city centre based, rather than the other nine local authorities. I know there's some very key players within that arena, really, that were driving that... which is now the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network." (Watt's et. al's informant, local statutory service)."" Watts et. al (2021, p.18).

This highlights the GMHAN's influencing role in the creation of a programme of public policy, running in parallel to the Mayor's political voice. Both worked together beyond the authorship of a strategy to instigate a type of emergency, humanitarian support which had not existed before in a devolved city region, despite support mainly focussing on Manchester city centre.

As the GMHAN was touted as one of the origins for the programme, an element of oversight and holding the GMCA to account on its delivery was expected by GMHAN members (Field Notes, March 2019). As the reflective diary from March 2019 highlights; individual advocates took responsibility for ensuring the network's continued participation on the programme and set up a weekly cross sector steering group to manage feedback from services, relay information to the GMCA and continue to attempt to have a stake in the programme's management.

"The ultimate decision is for the GMHAN to have a steering group for the emergency provision, whose task it is to listen to residents of the provision and the wider GMHAN, feeding this insight into the GMCA."
Reflective Diary Extract, March 2019.

The domain of the GMHAN was the knowledge contributing to the instigation of 'A Bed Every Night' and responsibility for continued community participation in the programme's design. The structure the GMHAN was built to enable the network to influence policy through a combination of fora and advocates. These spaces and people facilitated the growth of the project in question, although this project was established before this research, its impacts were still felt through the course of my observation.

The ‘A Bed Every Night’ programme itself was subject to just criticism, in particular; the shared nature of accommodation, evictions and a disparate quality of support on offer (Watts et. al, 2021). However, the programme is an important showcase in how public policy intervention by a city region Mayor can directly impact on numbers of people who are street homeless (Watts et. al, 2021).

The below graphs, shared by the Mayor on Twitter in November 2021, aim to showcase the impact of Greater Manchester’s ‘A Bed Every Night’ policy. Accompanying the graph on Twitter, the Mayor states:

> “We’re making real progress on rough sleeping as you can see below. But it still means around 100 people across GM could be out in the cold this Christmas. That’s why @GMMayorsCharity is launching a campaign to raise £30k to pay for 1000 bed nights over the festive period.” GMMayor, 2021.

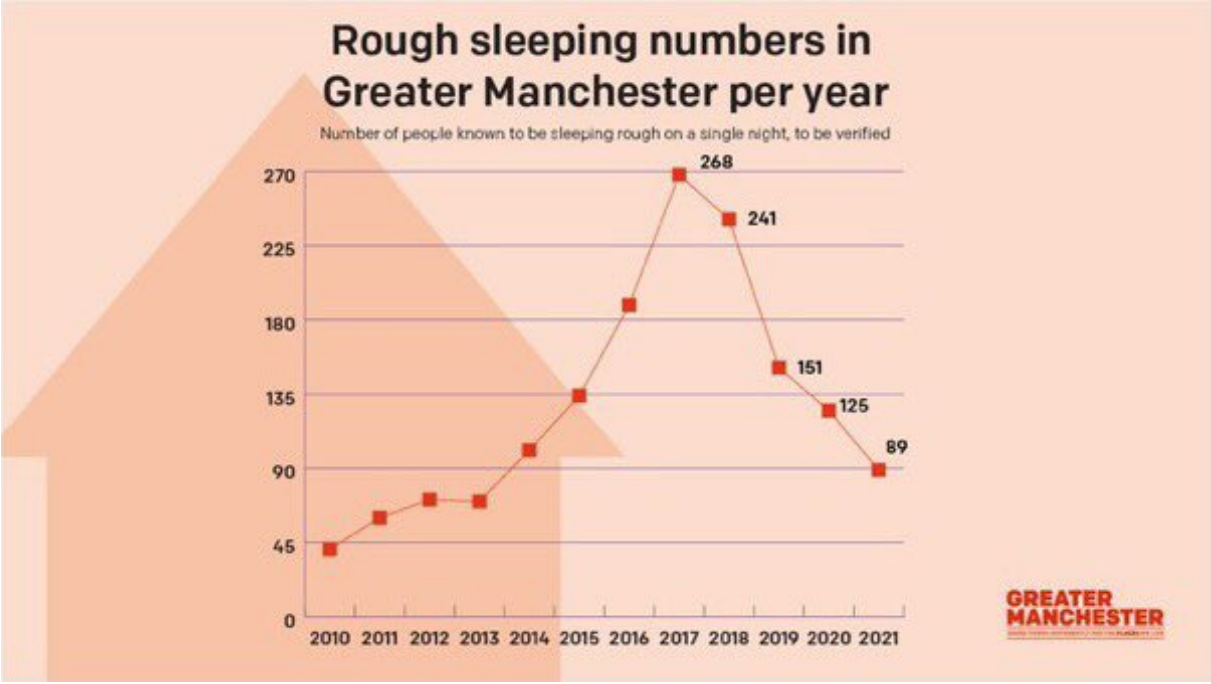

Figure 6; Graph displaying numbers of people rough sleeping in Greater Manchester from 2010-2021. Shared by @GMMayor on Twitter.

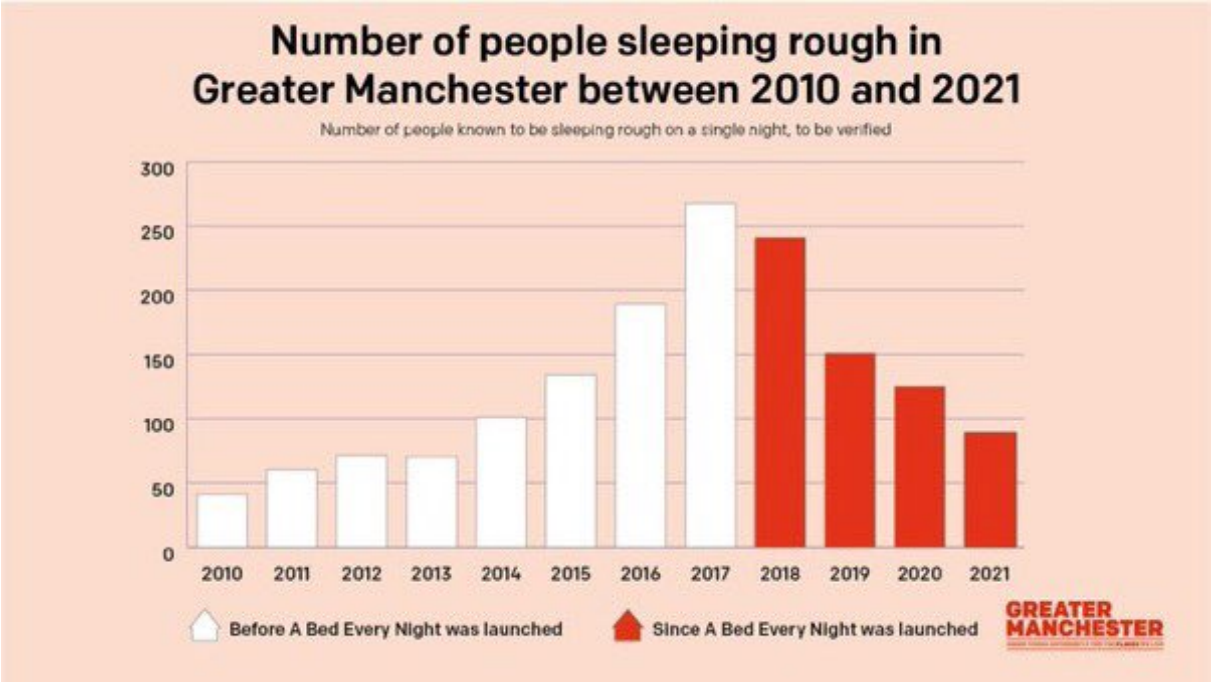

Figure 7; Graph displaying numbers of people rough sleeping in Greater Manchester, highlighting the start of the 'A Bed Every Night' programme. Shared by @GMMayor on Twitter.

Here, the Mayor is not just showcasing the decreasing numbers of people rough sleeping during the existence of a GMCA programme, but also the impact of their term of office on public policy. The mention of the GM Mayor's Charity also continues the notion that the GMCA and public authorities cannot act on their own and require support of the wider public to continue the successful implementation of local policy. These posts point to the Mayor evidencing the impact of their softer powers and 'whole-of-society approach' on tangible policy and outcomes.

In a blog on the evaluation of 'A Bed Every Night', Watts (2021) states one of the three key components of the programme's effectiveness was "the high profile of the programme – politically, publicly and among key partners – that is seen to have created buy-in and momentum across wider public services."

This contributes to findings the visibility of the GMHAN and 'whole-of-society approach' supported the a city region to devolve democratic accountability for

issues of social justice from Westminster to local government and civil society. Whilst this could be determined as taking responsibility (and blame) away from national government on a serious issue of inequality (Tyler, 2013), UK Government took two more years and a Global pandemic to take the same action as Greater Manchester through the "Everyone In" initiative (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021).

Democratic Devolution, the GMHAN and other new partnerships, allowed for an alternative, accountable, local decision making structure, capable of social reform to be showcased through tackling rough sleeping. This section of Lupton et. al, 2018, describes the potential for this to happen, alongside the consequences:

> *"[Devolution] is understood, at least in GM, as a far broader opportunity for wide-ranging social policy reform. Principles of this reform include… greater responsiveness to local people (both individually as users of services and as communities with distinct and varied needs). Some of these changes can come about through place-based policies and collaborations which do not require formal powers and budget delegation*." Lupton et al. 2018, p.41).

By looking at another area of homelessness, more focussed on prevention, I argue there is another type of influence the GMHAN facilitated. Methods used for advocacy were not the same for the GMHAN in every instance and needed to shift depending on whether the GMCA was already invested in the issue or not.

Whilst figures for those sleeping on the street in Greater Manchester began to decrease to double figures (70) as a result of political attention (andyformayor.co.uk, 2021), the number of families who were homeless in the city region was reaching three thousand (GMHAN, 2019). A form of less visible homelessness than rough sleeping, the issue had received little to no political or policy attention in Greater Manchester (or nationally), while statutory agencies and local charities were raising

concerns about the numbers of families coming through their doors (Shared Health, 2019).

Not seeing coordinated action akin to street homelessness, the GMHAN chose to put the issue firmly in front of policy officers and politicians at an October 2019 forum. What resulted was perhaps one of the most tangible examples of direct advocacy and policy change from a GMHAN large scale forum.

4.7.2 Homeless Families at the GMHAN Forum

This example is of the GMHAN's direct influence on policy change, resulting from a presentation to a full GMHAN forum on the situation for homeless families. The presentation was by a woman who had been homeless in Greater Manchester with her three small children, she was accompanied by the charity she had worked with. The presentation was billed as 'best practice' on support and advocacy around homeless families, but when putting together the agenda, the GMHAN Advisory Board and Action and Support team knew this was an area hardly any practice was taking place on.

The woman spoke to the hall about her experiences in unsafe, substandard temporary accommodation, finishing with a poem her daughter had written. The opposite of a dry powerpoint, the presentation was a story, filled with horror, desperation and ultimately a happy ending. A perfect arc, drawing the audience into her personal journey, so they could imagine themselves in her place and begin to understand how they might prevent this happening to others. Scanning the room, there were numerous attendees crying, including one of the highest ranking public servants in Greater Manchester (Field Notes from GMHAN Forum, October 2019). The story had been a dagger right through the bureaucratic heart of the GMCA, reaching underneath the surface to connect with individuals who had secure families and safe homes.

The member of staff at the charity then spoke about the report their organisation had written and solutions the organisation wanted to see put in place in Greater Manchester to prevent families going through what had just been described. Not

just tugging on heartstrings, they came with ideas and a route away from the narrated experience becoming common place (Field Notes, October, 2019). Seeing what had been possible with street homelessness, had not made them disdainful of the attention, but encouraged the organisation and individual they may be able to do the same for their issue.

The Mayor said this was "*a blast of reality*", "*dragged into a broader world*" by the Deputy Mayor's preceding political presentation (Field Notes from GMHAN Forum, October 2019). Every civil servant in the room with a stake in creating the political agenda around homelessness and poverty in Greater Manchester went to speak to the presenters afterwards, pledging, along with the Mayor and Deputy to bring the issue to the forefront of homelessness policy in the city region. At the time this meant the Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board (Field Notes from GMHAN Forum, October 2019). This was a potential showcase for experiences from GMHAN forums to have impact within the GMCA.

However, as one member noted after the meeting "*Tears and empathy into what action though? Will there be more tears at programme board?*" (Interview with GMHAN members who had been homeless. Interview Notes, October 2019). Earning attention, however energising it may have been for an abandoned issue, was only the first step to real change in the form of public policy and wider sustained intent across Greater Manchester. The GMHAN now had to understand its part in converting this energy into action in order to support those next steps (Sen, 2003).

The ‘journey of influence’ the presentation had after the forum, began with a presentation to the Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board, organised by the senior GMCA officers in attendance at the GMHAN. They ensured by February 2020 there was an agenda dedicated to homeless families for the first time within a GMCA structure.

This meeting with the Programme Board resulted in setting up a dedicated Homeless Families Task and Finish Group to work on the issues raised and solutions identified in the charity’s report. This was to last no longer than a year to encourage action and be the first dedicated policy space to family homelessness (Field Notes, January 2020). According to one of the GMHAN advocates attending the October 2019 forum, there was indeed an “*emotional response*” to the presentation and poem (Field Notes, January 2020) and to move this into action the Programme Board had a vital combination of public servants in solidarity, offering themselves as advocates. The highest ranking public servant at the GMHAN forum took on personal responsibility for the homeless families agenda at the GMCA, informing the Programme Board of their intention through membership on the task and finish group (Field Notes, January 2020).

The same public servant was mentioned previously in the ‘GMHAN and GMCA’ section of this findings chapter, where the GMCA hierarchy was presented to the GMHAN, they were the individual encouraged to understand the GMHAN through attending a forum. Through this exposure to participatory politics they professed a solidarity through their actions in creating sustainable forums for policy change, but also a growth in understanding of the GMHAN more generally. As mentioned in the ‘GMHAN and GMCA’ section of the findings, the GMCA designed homelessness

governance structure was scrapped soon after this forum experience. More than just presenting a new system on paper, the senior officers helped to create a functioning alternative through their actions.

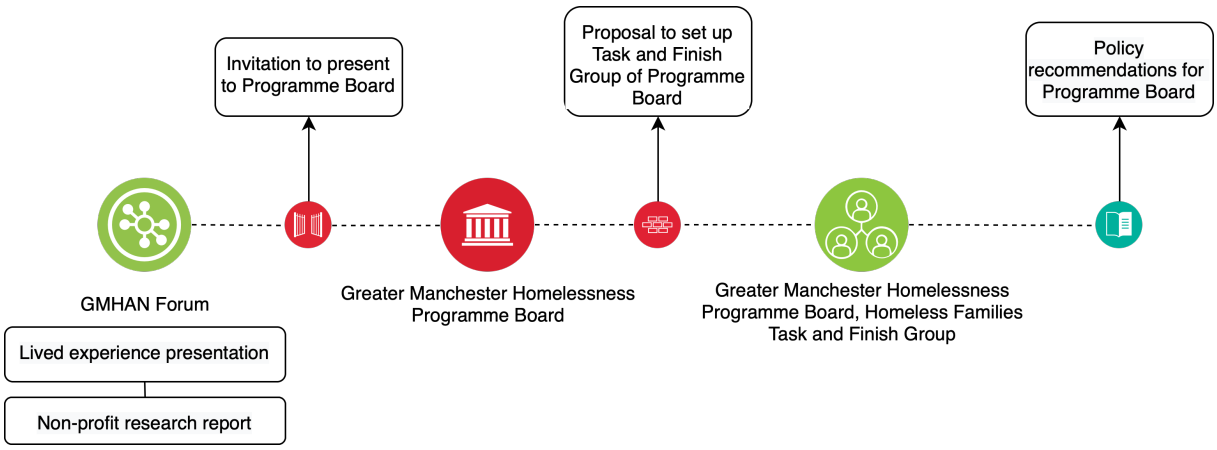

Figure 8; Homeless families policy chain from GMHAN Forum through to policy recommendations.

This all tied together to create a clear bureaucratic output in the form of the Homeless Families Task and Finish Group recommendations to the Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board (GMCA, 2021). This was the first time Greater Manchester had designed cross-sector public policy recommendations on homeless families. The main recommendations were:

- A renewed Greater Manchester bed and breakfast framework, with proposals to recommission accommodation based on the new minimum standards.
- A mapping exercise of current public sector health provision for families and improving areas where there are gaps.
- A GMHAN-led mapping of voluntary and community support for homeless families to understand where additional capacity may be needed. Resulting in a homeless families section of the Street Support website.

- Early Help integration into homeless families policy making and service design, via a series of workshops run by the GMCA.
- A pilot notification system to allow all public services to support new homeless families in their borough, utilising a new GM data programme.

Along with this legislative change, the group has continued to build solidarity among other public servants by retaining two meetings of the task and finish group per year. This continuation simultaneously ensures the group's recommendations are accountable and a high level group of advocates are regularly convened around homeless families policy within the GMCA bureaucracy. The journey from a story told at the GMHAN forum, to the creation of a space in which advocates meet to discuss solutions and implement policy at the heart of regional government, was vital to seeing the GMHAN and GMCA work together to implement policy.

Whilst some of the recommendations may seem small in scope given the magnitude of the housing crisis for homeless families, some of these problems have seemed "intractable to national policy makers" (Lupton et. al, 2018, p.43). Greater Manchester has at least attempted to find a way to grapple with them through a 'whole-of-society approach', changing political practice as well as policy. It is not the size of the change, but the nature in which it has been done, providing precedence for Democratic Devolution. The next question for Greater Manchester civil society is how this will be sustained by the Mayor, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network and issues beyond housing.

GMHAN members saw one of the main powers of the network, its ability to draw in people from various sectors and experiences to work together towards a common

initiative (Field Notes, September 2019), as outlined in the above observation. One of the difficulties in encouraging this collective working, was Local Authorities initially put forward willing individuals or advocates to work with the GMHAN who already understood collaborative working with local communities. In order to instigate an entire rethinking of local bureaucratic culture, the GMHAN needed to work more closely with individuals like the senior officer in the homeless families example above. Individuals who respected the GMHAN as an entity, but were not fully on board with how the GMHAN might influence public policy, changing their perspective through direct experience (Reflective Diary, October 2019). The expansion of this practice beyond a few individuals, has the potential to radically alter how city regions work with civil society and local citizens to create a transversal, public politics. Devolution has the potential to be a key moment for this, as a once in an epoch opportunity to restructure local government practice and the powers wielded within (Perry et. al, 2019).

> "*This is about something bigger than just making good PR, for local authorities when it comes to one of the most difficult problems. It's about massively rethinking how you respond, restructuring your own ranks, and processes, and personnel. It's about delivering something with a very different motivation behind it. It's about making different priorities locally*." Voluntary Sector Manager and GMHAN Member Interview, November 2020.

To some within the GMHAN their priority of building a network of individual advocates could work in tandem with achieving this culture shift (Field Notes, September 2019). Observed beyond the homeless families policy example, as personal connection to the GMHAN and understanding of the network's use shifted among GMCA officers, their attendance began to grow within GMHAN spaces including the Advisory Board and Action and Support Team, with officers coming "*just to check in*", most notably during the first COVID-19 lockdown via Zoom (Field

Notes, April 2020). With senior officers attending GMHAN forums, perceptions began to be altered of both the GMHAN and the policy change that could come from people with experience of homelessness (Field Notes from GMHAN Forum, October 2019). Perceptions of them from GMHAN members also started to shift, as bureaucracy was given a human face that was more than a collective target (Lipsky, 1980). Relationship building between GMHAN members and GMCA officers in these spaces was a formative step in the GMHAN cementing its links to the GMCA, without changing its use to become an easier to understand voice of civil society in Greater Manchester.

5.1 Conclusions

Introduction

The conclusion brings together key findings to answer the main research question: How can community-led policy design methods such as community development be introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context?

The aims of this study were to assess how community-led policy design methods such as community development are introduced, supported and sustained within a newly devolved UK local government context. The objective to develop practically applicable findings for other contexts.

The study also explored a gap in understanding the “hegemonic centre” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 218) of political decision making and who operates within that power base. Can transversal politics be utilised by civil society advocates or non-state actors to sustain political dialogue when working with centres of power rather than for personal gain?

The final aim of the thesis is to establish whether the GMHAN created a space for community development and fostered the use of a whole-of-society approach to allow the gaps highlighted in Mackie et. al (2019) around political will, bureaucracy and policymaking to be addressed when confronting national and international socio-

economic forces sustaining housing injustice. It is hoped this will be of use both for the political sphere and encourage a greater understanding of the possibilities for civil society within city region devolution (Jessop, 2020).

The key findings and theoretical framework argue political spaces (Arendt, 1951, 1958), transversal politics (Yuval-Davis, 1997) and radical community development (Ledwith, 2011, Friere, 1968 and Gaventa, 1980) are all necessary to form a 'whole-of-society approach' to democratic devolution; enabling the creation and enactment of policy on issues of social justice in city regions.

The key findings are as follows:

- I argue a combination of aspects from all three theoretical approaches is necessary to foster an environment for democratic devolution for all citizens, not just the issue of social justice at the top of the agenda or with the greatest political will or strongest advocates. The 'straddling' space between civil society and the political sphere, can allow for both critique and access to power (officers and politicians), whilst transversal politics can act as an enabler for individuals to hold this space, especially for those who are socially excluded or confined in terms of social capital. This capital and space must be shared and led by those citizens who are most marginalised for democratic devolution to function for all. I argue this must not be undertaken paternalistically through co-production, but radically and transversally.

- This framework was established by understanding what worked and what did not when radical transversal community development was undertaken. Advocates

within the network were a key part of both what worked well to contribute to policy change and also a barrier to radical transformation.

- When advocates started to become brokers of sensitive or high worth information, rather than social connectors on behalf of others, this caused issues within the GMHAN. Although advocates were called upon because of their ability to transverse different spheres, where these advocates had a high level of social capital they had a tendency to further accumulate this capital, rather than disperse it. This became a particular issue when advocates placed their role as diplomats between the GMHAN and GMCA ahead of the GMHAN's collective desire to pursue an agenda for radical change.

- The involvement of publics servants in a 'whole-of-society' approach is vital to achieve democratic devolution. The expansion of this practice beyond a few individuals, has the potential to radically alter how city regions work with civil society and local citizens to create a transversal, public politics. I argue working with these 'bureaucrats' is more fruitful than them becoming a collective target (Lipsky, 1980). City region devolution has the potential to be a key moment for civil society to determine how the foundations of working with local government are built for generations to come.

- These findings contribute to understanding of the hegemonic centre (Hill Collins, 2000), where individuals were observed in their multitudes as gatekeepers, social connectors and drivers of policy change on homelessness. For transversal politics to be sustained it was concluded a combination of transversal politics, radical community development and open political spaces are essential for

democratic devolution to create a path of genuine policy change and critical consciousness around issues of social justice.

- I found the need for politics to remain public and not become the private realm of advocates was key to introduce, support and sustain community-led policy design methods. As well as providing the building blocks for community development, Arendtian principles can serve as an alarm system for the restriction of political space in practising democratic devolution. Individual people, as valuable as they may have been to direct policy implementation, cannot be the only entity to straddle the space between political and public spheres, this must be maintained in fora and open public discussion.

- The historical precedence of concealing poverty and issues of social justice to further Manchester's neoliberal economic model of regeneration has made it difficult for civil society to access physical space to critique the causes behind issues of social justice. If the presence of issues of social justice threatened the foundations of the city region's economic model, space to critique them was not going to be forthcoming. Because of this political context, homelessness lends itself to radical community development, but accessing space to allow this is key to equitable development of networks in newly developed urban contexts.

- The Mayor's convening power initially allowed the fora to coalesce, from using soft power to access to physical space, to encouraging cross sectoral attendance. These soft powers had a tangible outcome in creating and holding the public space needed for political participation and ultimately, the creation of the Mayor's rough sleeping strategy.

- Building a collective voice and spaces for policymaking allowed the GMHAN to develop its own power and responsibility away from the Mayor, not just wielding the Mayor's soft powers by association. Creating governance structures meant the group could create its own objectives, activity and voice, enabling steps towards democratic devolution. These structures were also key to avoiding a 'tyranny of structureless' (Freeman, 1970).

- The time and space for public political participation in GMHAN forums allowed for collective deliberation and reflexive action, this encouraged deeper participation by members who attended on a recurring basis. Open access, a certain amount of 'chaos' and open challenge to political figures, helped to build a space that felt purposeful, open and build transversal community development.

- The use of long-term research roles, or more specifically the Knowledge Exchange Partnership between SHUSU and GMCA, at the heart of this thesis helped to answer the question of how policy is constructed to 'solve' homelessness. This role also allowed space to understand why the manner in which policy is made is contradictory to the true causes of homelessness and how community-led approaches could reverse this trend.

- Democratic devolution was created through critical consciousness and the collaborative policymaking sought by civil society in Greater Manchester. The spaces and fora required for these elements of community development needed to be held transversally, radically and openly. A body such as the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network is highly important to providing the

instigation for this environment, policy change and power shift, with initiatives such as Legislative Theatre allowing for their continuous evolution.

- The GMHAN's spaces were valuable for support not just action. The forums allowed for a public sense of solidarity, whilst the GMHAN's governance structures allowed individuals from the 'whole of society' to feel connected to a wider movement, moving from isolation to exchange.
- Cross issue solidarity is a core aspect of transversal politics, accessed by attending open fora, allowing a fuller picture of the structural causes of socio-economic injustice and enabling people to meet who would not otherwise. The straddling nature of the GMHAN made it easier for other members of civil society to be brought to the attention of the Mayor and GMCA.

- Connection to other movements internationally is the next step for the GMHAN. This has taken place in Japan and Brazil to a certain extent, but there is an opportunity to discover and experiment with different forms of democratic participation and routes to devolving power to local communities with international solidarity. Connecting these movements and people globally, not only allows us to pursue larger issues of socio-economic injustice, but also shows movements they are not alone, not isolated or 'radical' in their aims, but fearless in their pursuit of addressing issues of social justice and demands for participation in decision making.

- Representation from communities impacted by homelessness and socio-economic injustice only improved when the GMHAN focused on policy specifically effecting those communities. The Legislative Theatre project,

GMHAN forum on family homelessness and a drive to include organisations working with people with No Recourse to Public Funds increased the variety of standpoints in open forums, but not in the hegemonic centre of GMHAN decision making at the time of the study ceasing.

- Having a seat around the table was vital to policy being created on issues affecting marginalised communities. The direction the network took on homeless families and people with No Recourse to Public Funds was a result of those voices being present in the GMHAN's fora. Building solidarity with these areas of work beyond street homelessness was critical for true democratic devolution to take place and a building of political will around all areas of homelessness mentioned in Mackie et. al (2019).

5.2 Transversal politics and individual advocates

When advocates started to become brokers of information rather than social connectors this caused issues for the creation of policy for the GMHAN. Although advocates were called upon because of their ability to transverse different spheres (political, faith, civil society), where these advocates had a high level of social capital they had the potential to further accumulate this capital, rather than disperse it. A particular issue arose around the coordination of GMHAN activity during the pandemic, with some advocates believing supporting the GMCA's agenda and individual officers was more important than the preferred action of other GMHAN members in pursuing an agenda for radical change. Attempted critical abandonment of systemic injustices surrounding homelessness, showcased the need for constant rooting and shifting of perspectives present in transversal politics and for the need to maintain collective power and voice within civil society groups, not over rely on individual advocates to navigate the corridors of devolved power. Whilst these perspectives are essential to understanding and advocacy, the knowledge derived initially must come from collective critical consciousness and radical community development. If this knowledge is perceived to already be known by advocates with a high level of social capital, they begin to advocate from their own perspective, rather than that of the collective, creating tensions and policy at a tangent to the desires of the body they are advocating on behalf of.

The homeless families section of the findings (4.7.2) highlights the case for advocates within the political sphere most strongly. This example showcased the influence possible from GMCA officials coming into GMHAN forums to hear directly from member's experiences and best practice. This evidence also questioned

whether individuals were becoming as important as the spaces themselves. If the homeless families showcase of personal experience and non-profit work had been heard in a forum made up of individuals from civil society, the report and examples from the non-profit may have been viewed simply as an example of best practice. Whereas with public sector officers present they took the personal experience as evidence of their systems not working for citizens and the work of the charity as possible cross sector solutions. Therefore the open forum gave space for voices of discontent to be spoken, but the individuals hearing them were the key to unlocking policy change. This example highlighted what was possible with two or three advocates within a bureaucracy, the expansion of bringing public sector advocates into the network has the potential to showcase a radical alteration to how city regions work with civil society and local citizens to create a transversal, public politics.

Maintaining the symbiotic relationship between advocates and the GMHAN spaces was at times a struggle for the network, as those advocates proved invaluable, nudging along policy change, with direct relations with senior officers and politicians ensuring information was transferred back to the network and certain policy came to fruition. The roles these individuals took on (adding to their existing workload), played a vital role in sustaining the political will Mackie et. al (2019) call for. I argue advocates cannot just be abandoned in collective politics, but they must be reminded not only to root and shift their perspectives, but also of their roles as advocates, not representatives.

To counteract this behaviour I recommend a combination of factors based on all three theories;

- Reflexive action in smaller spaces such as the Action and Support Team can act as a counterbalance to individual perception, with individuals bringing their 'found' knowledge back into the team, critiquing collectively and taking this back out in the form of new actions. Rooting and shifting combined with reflexive action, was possible to a greater extent when members from other boroughs or with more diverse client bases were present, as they offered new perspectives held in high regard by the smaller group. However, where there was disagreement or some advocates believing they knew better than the wider group, this led to inertia, only gatekeepers stood to gain power in any limbo of indecision or 'tyranny of structurelessness'.

- The inclusion of public sector officers as advocates within the bureaucratic system, on top of GMHAN advocates lobbying the political sphere from the outside, led to a faster pace of change with the homeless families policymaking observed. This example was of a senior officer becoming an advocate, but where more junior officers built a relationship with the GMHAN it was observed to be for more personal reasons, similar to that of members from civil society. The check-ins they attended and personal relationships built were vocalised as more beneficial than the policymaking achieved as a result of connecting with the community. Relationships thus with officers at both junior and senior level were observed as mutually beneficial for individuals and the ability to pass homelessness legislation at a city region level.

- Transversalism is a challenge to power being co-opted by individuals rather than held by a group. A decreasing sense of solidarity was observed towards the end of

the research with some advocates no longer seeing their role as standing with those who were oppressed, but rather an opportunity to develop their social capital. By espousing the value that no one individual could represent the network or indeed any community, by themselves, any individual who did so could be delegitimised by the network. The risk being whilst the network may no longer see an individual as an advocate, if they were given a position representing the network by the Mayor or public sector, this was reliant on the Mayor revoking this role, not the network. Neither the Mayor, nor individuals outside of the network, should have been given permission to select representatives of the network without consulting accountable structures with the ability to gather the wider memberships' views; the GMHAN forum or Advisory Board. On top of transversal politics an acute understanding should be maintained of the need for politics to remain public and not become the private realm of a core of advocates. Information brokerage from a closed space to collective is a warning sign for this privatisation of political space occurring. Thus, Arendtian principles can be an alarm system for the restriction of political space in practising democratic devolution.

Individual people, as valuable as they may have been to direct policy implementation, cannot thus be the only entity to straddle the space between political and public spheres, this must be maintained in fora and open public discussion. This ultimately could mean the difference between a space for critical consciousness being utilised for the coordination of initiatives dealing with the effects of homelessness ('Everyone In'), rather than addressing the root causes during a once in lifetime social shift ('Build Back Better').

These conclusions contribute to understanding of the hegemonic centre (Hill Collins, 2000), where individuals were observed in their multitudes as gatekeepers, social connectors and drivers of policy change on homelessness simultaneously. On transversal politics and advocates it is concluded thus, a combination of transversal politics, radical community development and open political spaces are essential for democratic devolution to create a path of genuine policy change and critical consciousness around issues of social justice.

5.3 Community development and a whole-of-society approach

The ‘straddling’ space the GMHAN occupied between the GMCA, public sector bodies and civil society, gave access to bureaucratic spaces for other issues of social justice beyond that of homelessness. Whilst the GMHAN was the first group to embody the Mayor’s ‘whole-of-society approach’ the network encouraged solidarity with other issues of social justice, bringing them to the attention of the Mayor and GMCA. Solidarity was formed with refugee and migration justice organisations, poverty and social justice groups and issues not initially a priority for the Mayor or within the GMCA’s remit, such as food justice. These groups were actively encouraged to join GMHAN forums, added to mailing lists and members met with groups beyond their remit to ascertain commonalities and offer support. This support manifested in using the space the GMHAN occupied to help organisations arrange meetings with the Mayor or GMCA, put their political concerns on agendas at forums and bring their issues to showcases within the GMHAN. Cross issue solidarity is a central tenet of transversal politics, accessed by attending open fora, allowing a fuller picture of the structural causes of socio-economic injustice and creating the potential for a more effective radical community development in the process. The three theoretical approaches combined effectively to form a 'space for solidarity’, the first of such spaces to exist following devolution of powers to Greater Manchester. The GMHAN thus contributed to learning via the combination of these practices, both for showcasing what could work, but also what others could learn from what did not.

Conclusions from GMHAN Advisory Board and Action and Support meetings as GMHAN spaces are as follows.

Smaller groups allowed for empathy driven critique and collective action to emerge. Where Arendt and Hill Collins come together theoretically is the manner in which thought is constructed. Arendt (1958) states private political space does not allow for dialogue as public forums do, this restriction of space for challenge allows the individual to believe their opinion is the only truth and they alone are capable of representing an entire group, as in the 'Take it to the Bridge' reflective diary extract. Arendt's desire to see 'tables' created for public discourse, gives us a solution to creating this dialogue in the forming of small spaces for discussion. Whilst devising this voice in a small group setting with space for difference and similarity, allows individuals to engage in dialogue with one another (Hill Collins, 1997). Bringing these theories together with conclusions in section 5.2, that closed spaces can lead to the coalescing of power in individual advocates, the conclusion is a combination of smaller and larger spaces for dialogue are necessary for democratic devolution to take place.

The need to be cross sector; the Advisory Board was one of the only smaller spaces where politicians, policymakers, local authority staff, frontline workers, charity mangers, faith leaders and people who had been homeless had the time to critically reflect on issues arising from larger forums and make decisions on the action needed. Before this space existed it felt as if there was a missing link between the GMHAN as a forum and the GMCA, with policymakers being able to take away what they wanted from the forums to create policy within the bureaucracy and individual voices taking the fore in Q&A sessions with the Mayor rather than a collective voice or opinion. With the advent of this forum, policymakers were able to understand multiple perspectives on an issue and felt they could air theirs in a safe environment. Advocates who attended GMCA decision making spaces could also relay

information from those spaces and take information back to them. This open ‘straddling’ forum allows a space for people and information to transverse between political and civil society spheres, this combats the need for individual advocates to be the only entities to operate in this space.

The Deputy Mayor and Lead for Housing and Homelessness being the chair of the Advisory Board gave policymakers permission to attend, as their schedules were overloaded even if willing, they sometimes struggled to defend attendance at community-led meetings. As well as reason to attend, there was a recognition decisions could take place in the space while they were not present. The chair as an individual also gave space for politics within the meetings, often starting meetings with discussions on the impacts of austerity and laying the root causes of housing injustice at the feet of national politics, they also gave relevant updates on legislation with advice on how to challenge or educate on recent policy. This overt politics was often quoted by members as their highlight of the meeting, due to giving the right foundation for being there and a direction for their individual and collective energy. This was a key tenant to allowing a radical community development approach in forums even with policymakers and local authority staff present.

The notion of who is the ‘whole-of-society’ was present at almost every forum and Advisory Board in the form of the question ‘who isn’t here?’. This led to increased participation from Greater Manchester boroughs outside of Manchester, but not from marginalised communities. This representation only improved when the GMHAN focused on policy specifically effecting those communities. The Legislative Theatre project, GMHAN forum on family homelessness and a drive to include organisations working with people with No Recourse to Public Funds increased the

variety of standpoints in open forums, but not within GMHAN decision making at the time of the study ceasing. This threatened the GMHAN's ability to undertake a transversal approach and should be of urgent importance to the GMHAN to address in decision making spaces.

5.4 Democratic Devolution and space for policy on issues of social justice

The historical precedence of concealing poverty and issues of social justice to further Manchester's drive to create a neoliberal economic model of regeneration (Ward and Peck, 2001), is of great importance when understanding why homelessness was initially an issue of contention for the new Mayor and why alternative models of power had to be levered locally to achieve policy change on the issue. I argue this context tells us it is vital for civil society to have access to forums to critique the causes behind issues of social justice they are working on, otherwise an endless industry addressing individual outcomes will be created rather than tackling societal root causes of oppression locally, nationally and internationally. This context also informs us why the leverage of a 'whole-of-society approach' was necessary, a lack of legislative power from national government and lack of will locally to engage in issues of social justice threatened the foundations of the city region's economic model. Because of these contexts, civil society working on homelessness requires a foundational understanding in housing financialisation and the political economy of the area in which they operate.

For the Mayor a 'whole-of-society approach' meant convening forums to build civil society support around the issues of social justice addressed as part of their agenda to make Greater Manchester a "beacon of social justice" (Labour List, 2016), the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network was the first attempt at this approach in practice. While convening these forums to build support, they became a space for citizens to engage in political decisions, participate in political discussions and take part in how devolution would shape their city region. The GMHAN

modelled this approach for the Mayor, allowing a vehicle for other soft powers to be rolled out, including collaboration beyond the public sector and building support for a new political office with the general public. However, the potential for the GMHAN sat in framing this agenda as radical community development. With a 'whole-of-society approach' came terminology on coproduction, a pluralist agenda on tackling rough sleeping through quick win approaches and broadcast messaging without an equal amount of space for political discussion on the intersectional oppressions causing poverty and housing injustice. Through the Knowledge Exchange between the University of Salford and GMCA, the GMHAN had the space to create its own structures and understand how devolved politics might work for civil society in the region. The resource given to this role was critical in the network being able to understand the potential of a radical community development agenda, based on a theoretical framework, rather than being a vehicle for the Mayor's desired approach. For this theoretical approach to be embedded requires resources to be directed towards community development, rather than coproduction.

Having a seat around the table was vital to policy being created on issues affecting marginalised communities. The direction the network took on homeless families and people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) was a direct result of those voices being present in the GMHAN's fora. True representation resulted in the first publicly facilitated provision of homelessness accommodation for people with No Recourse to Public Funds in Greater Manchester and first city region policy for homeless families. NRPF and family homelessness policy represented a shift away from street homelessness, a challenge to the Mayor's policy priority, the GMHAN was essential in re-balancing homelessness policymaking priorities for the GMCA. The respect the Mayor held for the GMHAN and the GMCA's need thus to recognise the agendas the

GMHAN set was central to this shift. Building initial solidarity thus allowed fruitful challenge.

The adoption of approaches such as advocates, building a collective voice and spaces for policymaking allowed the GMHAN to develop its own power and responsibility away from the Mayor, not just wielding the Mayor's soft powers by association. A separate ability to build political will was evidenced in 'A Bed Every Night' and the narrative told around where support came from to instigate the project. I suggest the GMHAN formed an identity not reliant on the Mayor to achieve policy change, the group could manifest the soft powers the Mayor was witnessed leveraging. Power leverage was a step change in the network, especially since the Mayor was not going to be able to achieve such things as culture shift in public sector alone. As Wainwright (2003) suggests, this 'seen' power within the community can in turn strengthen Mayors' hands when dealing with national government in arguing for more legislative powers. Ultimately, this mutually beneficial relationship with power and distributed leadership (Bussu and Galanti, 2018) showcased possible steps towards democratic devolution.

Free to access space near the city centre was key to facilitating GMHAN fora and gaining momentum around the network, the space being in a University and not one designed for corporate gain was also of importance. Being given this space rested on a few individuals in the University of Salford understanding the value of the network and seeing the gifting of space as a contribution to the 'whole-of-society' and potential to build a radical community development agenda. The ability to host in these spaces contradicted meetings like those described in the People's Coffeehouse Reflective Diary excerpt. It is of wider civic importance for

conversations around the leverage of devolved power to take place in truly public spaces.

The Mayor's convening power initially allowed the fora to coalesce, from the gifting of space, to cross sectoral attendance. These soft powers had a tangible outcome described in Arendt (1958) in creating and holding the public space needed for political participation and ultimately, the creation of the Mayor's rough sleeping strategy. Given the outlined political economic context in Greater Manchester, this space would have been much harder to obtain without this power initially. However, it must be recognised the GMHAN forum was created by those in privileged power, allowing access to that very power in return for attendance. I argue this is of particular note if the ambition is to be transversal and not just provide political participation for those 'representing' communities marginalised from traditional power, whether those communities are accessing the network's space must be continually addressed and any network's leadership should be challenged if they are not present.

The time and space for public political participation in GMHAN forums allowed for collective deliberation and reflexive action, this encouraged deeper participation by members who attended on a recurring basis. Open access, a certain amount of 'chaos' and open challenge to political figures, helped to build a space that felt purposeful and open. Drawing on one charity leader's statement claiming the GMHAN gave them a "seat around the table" for the first time; these forums provided the tables missing from political discourse up until that point, this provides civil society, politicians and public servants with a rare place to meet. Ultimately, democratic devolution in the form of critical consciousness and the collaborative

policymaking sought by civil society (Kenealy, 2016, Cottam, 2018), requires these spaces not just to be created, but held transversally, radically and openly by a body such as the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network.

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