Re-Designing Planning Policy Processes and Embedding Technology: The Case of Neighbourhood Planning

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Abstract

Neighbourhood planning provided citizens with new rights through the Localism Act 2011, empowering them to organise together to produce their own policy which would be adopted by local planning authorities. By December 2020, over 2700 communities had embarked on the neighbourhood planning process with just under 1000 plans adopted. However, challenges remain in the way neighbourhood planning is enacted by citizens with a complex process, uneven geographical take up and a lack of appropriate support for citizens. At a broader level, citizen participation in policymaking processes has shown a contested picture over many decades with calls for more and better participation whilst questions of the level of influence such participation has on decisions have been raised. Furthermore, the configuration of citizen participation has long been questioned, particularly in relation to the methods used to reach out to communities. Alongside this, research regarding digital technology for policymaking and citizen participation has increased but has yet to have an impact in practice.

In this research, I explore how digital and non-digital tools could be designed to better support citizens to shape places through the example of the neighbourhood planning policy process. I engaged with neighbourhood planning groups and planners to learn from their experiences, particularly centring citizens' needs in considering the need for support in the citizen-led policy tool. Using an action research approach, I used a cycle of action and reflection to inform research design, enabling participants to help direct research through their own experiences. To understand how citizens enact the neighbourhood planning process and explore the use of digital tools, I engaged in an exploratory deployment of a participatory media technology, then moved to deliver interactive workshops to explore the neighbourhood planning process in-depth and co-designed new modes of digital and non-digital engagement.

Through this research, I first demonstrate the complexity of neighbourhood planning, exploring the nuances of the process from a citizens' perspective and, second, I identify both opportunities and barriers to the use of digital modes of participation. Through identifying the issues within the neighbourhood planning process, I put forward approaches to designing better support mechanisms to enable citizens to shape places, including two key design principles, cross-disciplinary design thinking and inclusive design, which can ensure an inclusive and equitable approach to the design of policy and support tools. I demonstrate how these design principles should manifest within the neighbourhood planning context and provide recommendations for specific policy changes and the development of digital and non-digital support. Ultimately, I argue the need to design and embed digital and non-digital tools and technologies within a re-designed neighbourhood planning process to enable an appropriate, navigable and sustainable citizen-led policy tool where modes of participation can link directly to policy outcomes allowing citizens to shape places.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

Over 2700 communities had embarked on a neighbourhood plan and just under 1000 neighbourhood plans had been adopted by local planning authorities (LPAs) by 2020 (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), 2020a). The introduction of neighbourhood plans into the planning field has been met with mixed reactions, with some feeling it is a radical and exciting opportunity for citizens to have a statutory voice in decisions (Sagoe, 2016; Wills, 2016), whilst others see it as a mask to a reduced state and a way to force communities to accept development (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011; Parker and Wargent, 2017b). Regardless of these contested views, citizens are self-organising to produce planning policy to shape the future of their area. However, they face a range of challenges in doing so with a complex process, varying levels of support and limited sets of resources to draw upon. Furthermore, decades of research has explored citizen participation in planning policymaking, highlighting the challenges of a reliance on traditional engagement methods, a lack of skills to configure participation, and how participation can have a meaningful influence on policy decisions (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Rowe, 2004; Brownill and Carpenter, 2007; Parker, 2008a). Steps to create new digital modes of participation have emerged but have faced criticism for their solutionist approach which does little to meet real-world need as well as a the lack of adoption in practice (Kingston, 2002; Hanzl, 2007; Moss and Coleman, 2014; Ertiö, 2015b). The research presented in this thesis explores the intersection of planning and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) to explore how the development of digital and non-digital tools could better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning as a policy process.

1.1 Citizen Participation in Planning Policy

Citizen participation in planning policy has long been a feature of the legal planning framework with a view that engaging communities achieves democratic principles such as the right of citizens to be informed and consulted to express their views on decisions that will affect their lives

(Burby, 2003; Twitchen and Adams, 2011; Etzioni-Halevy, 2013). Charting academic thought on citizen participation shows an undulating picture of the ideals of citizen participation in planning policy as well as the realities of carrying out engagement in practice (Lane, 2005). Through the decades, the level of participation in policymaking and the level of influence given to citizens in participatory processes has varied, but debates have remained throughout with regards to the need to improve or increase participation (Day, 1997; Petts and Leach, 2000; Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2002; Etzioni-Halevy, 2013). Much of these debates have centred around the methods used to reach out to citizens, with research showing that traditional approaches involve a limited group of society and exclude others (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007; Gordon, Schirra and Hollander, 2011). Furthermore, a continuing debate has remained over decades as to how the results of citizen participation are incorporated into policy alongside other forms of knowledge, particularly scientific and technical evidence which is seen to be a privileged form of knowledge in policymaking (Graham and Healey, 1999; Massey, 2005; Sandercock, 2010a).

A move to incorporate more opportunities for citizen participation occurred in the 1960s with multiple influential reports and academic papers which are often still referred to today as key to engagement practices (Arnstein, 1969; Skeffington Committee, 1969; Nickson, 2018). Although the impetus was there to move towards greater citizen participation, in practice the issues of skills, resources, time and cost were often barriers at a local level (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Brownill and Carpenter, 2007). Furthermore, a foundation of a scientific-rational approach to planning permeated practice with experts seen to know best (Graham and Healey, 1999). However, academic scholarship began to create new approaches and models for citizen participation that could counter such issues and recognise citizens' experiential knowledge of place as an important factor (Friedmann, 1973; Habermas, 1987; Dryzek, 1990; Healey, 2003; Lane, 2005).

Over the last three decades, changes to government and changes to planning legislation has slowly seen an increase in opportunities for citizen participation in policymaking processes. There was a shift to recognise the benefits of community engagement in planning such as the improvement of development plans to account for local knowledge and, therefore, securing buy-in from local communities (Laurian and Shaw, 2009). In addition, it was seen that citizen participation was able to create better planning solutions, promote the empowerment of citizens, and increase citizens' capacity and knowledge of planning (Burby, 2003; Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). The Labour government in power from the late 1990s until 2010 played a role in developing practice guidance which focused on engagement in planning as well as introducing further legislative changes which placed an importance on citizen participation greater than anything seen previously (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007). The guidance was clear that public participation was essential to achieve local ownership and legitimacy, so it set a range of principles to be followed, however, the requirements placed on the process were criticised as the resources and skills needed to enact them were not adequately provided (Parker, 2008b).

Alongside formal approaches to citizen participation in policymaking, community planning developed from the 1970s whereby communities could influence local placemaking (Parker, 2008b). Parish and town councils developed plans of their own which created a type of local planning which gave voice to citizens in a new form (Parker, 2008b). Such plans were unable to address land use and formal development policies but could contribute to a wider vision for communities. It is against this background, that the Coalition Government introduced new forms of community-led planning, discussed in the next section.

Throughout the many changes to participatory practices in formal planning structures, academic debate has continued to consider the ways in which knowledge is created and valued within the planning system. Many began to recognise the tacit knowledge of local citizens as valuable in planning decisions such as "experiential, intuitive and somatic knowledges;

local knowledges; knowledges based on the practices of talking and listening, seeing, contemplating and sharing; and knowledges expressed in visual, symbolic, ritual and other artistic ways" (Sandercock, 2010a, p. 18). There were calls for an expanded language of planning that could incorporate more creative ways of expressing views within participatory processes (Sandercock, 2003; Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019), however, planning remained largely as a discipline that favoured technical solutions using technical data (Wesselink, Colebatch and Pearce, 2014; Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015; Sayer, 2020).

Throughout the varied stages of history, common issues within citizen participation in planning policy have emerged and continued to surface, including the challenges in configuring participation, the methods used, and the level of influence given within participation. Those making decisions about participatory practices, must choose the form of engagement and whether it allows for one-way or two-way communication, the modes of participation, and whether it will be more consultative or deliberative (Leach and Wingfield, 1999; Petts and Leach, 2000; Evans-Cowley and Manta Conroy, 2005). This is true for both digital and non-digital approaches to engagement. However, traditional non-digital approaches to engagement have been favoured within planning policy processes for a number of years and despite advances in technology, the methods used often remain the same (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Rowe, 2004; Brownill and Carpenter, 2007). The decisions made regarding participation in policy affect the ways in which citizens can participate both practically and in terms of the modes of expression to capture citizens views.

The history of citizen participation in planning policy, both in practice and in academic scholarship, has served to highlight the range of challenges faced in engaging communities in decisions. The next section will focus on the introduction of neighbourhood planning and is set within the wider context described here.

1.2 Citizen Participation in Neighbourhood Planning

The Coalition Government introduced the Localism Act 2011, an Act of Parliament which sought to give direct power to citizens through neighbourhood planning (Wills, 2016). Set against the background of Localism and the Big Society, ideas from the Conservative government's election campaign that focused on devolving power to local people, the Localism Act created new rights for citizens to participate in democratic processes. Although the term localism was not new, traceable to the 1960s, the Coalition harnessed the rhetoric with David Cameron, the then Prime Minister, arguing this to be "the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street" (Cameron, 2010). Furthermore, the localism rhetoric also spoke to the rekindling of the conservative ideas of communitarianism that would seek to counter an increased state government and the individualism that had become commonplace resulting in "an organic communitarianism that graces every level of society with merit, security, wealth and worth" (Blond, 2009, p. 6).

Neighbourhood planning, the central focus of this thesis, provides an opportunity for citizens to have a powerful role in the development of policy at a neighbourhood level, where citizens can self-organise to write their own development plan. A neighbourhood plan would be able to shape the future development of the area and would be officially adopted by the LPA. The definition of a neighbourhood development plan is:

> *"a plan which sets out policies (however expressed) in relation to the development and use of land in the whole or any part of a particular neighbourhood area specified in the plan"* (HM Government, 2011, Schedule 9).

It was felt that the creation of a new policy tier would be a way to "make the planning system more democratic and more effective" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011). The statutory nature of the process incentivised citizens to take part and have a new mechanism by which they could protect and enhance their neighbourhood (Wills, 2016;

Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). Furthermore, as a policy process it moved away from representative democracy traditionally found within the planning system, to participatory democracy. However, unlike many proponents of participatory democracy, it remains bounded within existing planning systems which has the potential to limit its capacity to enact change (Bradley, 2015; Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2017). The long history of participation scholarship in academia recognised the value of local knowledge and the introduction of neighbourhood planning embedded such notions into the policy process formally (Bradley, 2015).

As of December 2020, 2759 communities had embarked on the process of neighbourhood planning, with approximately 1000 made and adopted plans (MHCLG, 2020a). Positive outcomes have been reported such as the increased awareness of planning decisions, citizens' educated with regards to planning matters, and the improved community relationships (Kaszynska, Parkinson and Fox, 2012; Parker *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, research has evidenced the ways in which neighbourhood planning can support communities to secure more locally appropriate development, particularly regarding housebuilding (Bradley, 2017a). Neighbourhood planning can be seen to restore "collective mobilisation to public participation and created authentic sources of community power in the planning system" (Bradley, 2017b, p. 50).

However, neighbourhood planning also suffers a range of barriers and challenges to citizen participation which has been shown through recent research (Brookfield, 2017). Scholars have identified the complexity of the policy process as a barrier to engagement, as well as the time-consuming and costly nature of the process (Parker and Salter, 2017; Place Studio, 2017; Parker *et al.*, 2020). Research has also explored specific elements of the process, such as participation practices, the difficulties faced during examination, and the uneven take-up of neighbourhood planning across England (Parker, Kat Salter and Hickman, 2016; Parker, 2017). To counter the issues faced, Locality was designated as the national support organisation for neighbourhood planning and provides financial and technical support as well as a wide range of online guidance documents

(Locality, 2016). However, despite this support, research has criticised the information available, the mechanisms by which funding is allocated and the efficacy of technical support (Kaszynska, Parkinson and Fox, 2012; Burton, 2014).

Considering the wider context within which neighbourhood planning sits, this presents a complex and mixed picture. Firstly, communitarian ideals that sought to decentralise government and devolve power to communities "who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them" (Cameron, 2010) slowly faded from discussion. The communitarian thought failed to take shape for a number of reasons, namely the introduction of austerity measures and the complexity of modern communities that did not fit with traditional communitarian theories (Gibson, 2015). Secondly, and linked to the demise of communitarianism, many have argued that the Coalition's conception of localism was a mask to austerity politics which saw a significant reduction in the state, including the reduction in funding to local government, alongside the neoliberal approach to growth and development (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011; Parker and Wargent, 2017b). Wills (2016) suggests that adopting such rhetoric as 'localism' and 'the big society' adopts the language of radical social movements whilst simultaneously providing a screen where such citizen empowerment seeks to fill the gaps left by "a state in retreat" (p. 44). The contested context of localism and its effect on neighbourhood planning, leaves some feeling that such a task is requiring citizens to take on the role of planners, whereas others feel it hands power to citizens collectively as an opportunity to provide a "stronger vehicle for civic engagement, voice and action" (Wills, 2016, p. 51; Bradley, Burnett and Sparling, 2017). Finally, conceptualisations of neighbourhood planning also present a number of tensions with the wider Coalition (now Conservative) agenda of post-political, neoliberal, pro-growth policy. Neighbourhood plans are unable to refuse development and must conform to the growth agenda which specifically promotes the increase of housing numbers, leading some to argue that it enables "an obstruction to the technical questions of managing society in the best

interests of economic growth" (Bradley, 2014, p. 4). Ultimately, neighbourhood planning, although hailed by many as a radical and exciting initiative, has also been identified as "fraught with risk and difficulties" (Parker, 2012, p. 1).

It is within this complex landscape of neighbourhood planning that this thesis focuses. Thus far, the research has illuminated various conceptualisations of neighbourhood planning as well as exploring specific aspects to identify the benefits and challenges to communities (Parker *et al.*, 2014, 2020). This thesis concentrates on neighbourhood planning as a policy tool for citizens to centre their needs and experiences, whilst working toward providing greater support for those taking part. As communities continue to embark on the neighbourhood planning process, it is important to consider the ways in which tools could be developed to support the process.

1.3 Digital Tools in Planning Policy

There has been a significant rise in the design, development and use of digital technology in local democracy and planning across the fields of planning and HCI, and digital tools have been shown to have the potential to engage citizens in civic matters (Moss and Coleman, 2014). However, despite the recognition that digital participation could bring a range of benefits such as a deepened connection between citizens and governments (Brabham, 2009), the use and take-up of technology to engage in policymaking, although increasing, has generally remained low (Kingston, 2002; Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2005, 2006; Burgess, Jones and Muir, 2018; Grayling Engage and RTPI, 2020).

Over the last two decades, research in planning has moved from the introduction of e-government tools and participatory geographical information systems (PPGIS) to more complex technical tools to create future imaginings of place (Kingston, 2002; Evans-Cowley and Manta Conroy, 2005; Hanzl, 2007; Bugs *et al.*, 2010). There has been an increased interest within planning of the possibilities held through the use of technology, however, issues emerge when considering the priority placed

on technical approaches to planning (Ertiö, 2015b; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones and Comber, 2019). In addition, reviews of technology development in planning have shown evidence of a solution-focused approach to the design and use of new digital tools which are designed and implemented from a top-down planner's perspective and does little to engage a diverse range of citizens (Hanzl, 2007; Ertiö, 2015b). This links to the notion of 'invited participation' in which planners are the owners of participatory processes and they remain in control of the top-down approach (Cornwall, 2008). There have been some emerging examples of the development of digital participation tools which have taken a more creative approach, but it is often difficult to understand how such technologies link to planning policy.

In contrast, within the HCI field, a broader understanding of the use of digital tools in democratic participation has emerged with tools to support activism (DiSalvo *et al.*, 2008; Lee and Hsieh, 2013; Afzalan and Evans-Cowley, 2015); opinion gathering (Taylor *et al.*, 2012; Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2014; Koeman, Kalnikaité and Rogers, 2015); facilitating discussion and debate (Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2010; DiSalvo, 2012); and action (Olander *et al.*, 2011; Semaan *et al.*, 2015). There is a long history within HCI of the development of digital tools to affect planning participation, beginning with Kunz and Rittel (1970) developing tools to share information to enable discourse in political decision processes (Rittel, 1980). However, there has been a recent shift and growth in HCI research focused on place, whether directly or indirectly related to planning (Johnson *et al.*, 2016; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018; Puussaar *et al.*, 2018). Despite this, a similar issue occurs in understanding how outcomes from such tools link to policy outcomes. However, HCI has developed a more nuanced understanding of the affordances of technology and bringing together the two disciplines can enable the development of new approaches to designing and using tools within planning policy.

Research has shown that digital tools have the potential to reach out to wider audiences and can provide new modes of participation and citizen dialogue that can foster interactive and creative exchanges (Foth *et al.*,

2009; Twitchen and Adams, 2011; Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). A review of digital tools for planning and place-based participation has shown a myriad of technologies developed, tested and used, some adopted into practice and others remaining a product of research. Possibilities for location-based participation is common across many technologies for planning policy where engagement is situated in the everyday world of citizens (Korn, 2013; Fredericks *et al.*, 2015; Salim and Haque, 2015). Furthermore, creative and playful technologies, such as the use of digital tools for participatory media, have been developed that enable opportunities to catalyse community dialogue and create accessible modes of participation for those without planning knowledge (Sarkissian, 2010, p. 163; High *et al.*, 2012).

Bringing together the disciplines of planning and HCI is part of a 'civic turn' within HCI which moves towards the emergence of 'digital civics'. The civic turn in HCI began to focus on the development of technology within the experiences of citizens' everyday lives, as opposed to previous approaches which focused on users performing tasks with technology (Bødker, 2006, 2015; Harrison, Tatar and Sengers, 2007). Through the civic turn, a digital civics agenda emerged which enabled cross-disciplinary working to bring together researchers from multiple fields. The research in this thesis has been undertaken as part of the Centre for Doctoral Training in Digital Civics and so this agenda has strongly influenced this work. Digital civics moves to thinking about the use of technology within a "participatory imaginary in which both citizens and local government can explore the value of an alternative model of service provision" (Olivier and Wright, 2015, p. 62). It focuses on the design of technology, or research with technology, as a way to support citizens to envision, advocate and materialise changes in their everyday lives (Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2016, p. 3). Within this research, the digital civics agenda enables the consideration of neighbourhood planning through the lens of planning and HCI and can draw on the work of both fields to explore modes of support and participation.

1.4 Research Aims and Questions

This research brings together the above sections by working across planning and HCI to explore the complex landscape of citizen participation in planning policy, neighbourhood planning and digital tools in planning. Previous research, as briefly highlighted above, has explored the complexity of neighbourhood planning from the perspective of the range of stakeholders involved (Burton, 2014; Place Studio, 2017; Parker *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, as neighbourhood planning is a citizen-led policy tool, there is a need to understand the experiences of citizens in enacting the policy process in a way which can explore in-depth understandings and centre their needs.

Furthermore, the challenges faced in citizen participation in policymaking processes more broadly, and the need for new modes of participation, provides further motivations for this research. Research demonstrating the complexity of neighbourhood planning already suggests that more support could be given to citizens embarking on the process, however, little research has explored what this support should entail. Therefore, this research will seek to understand the needs of citizens to translate that to potential tools for support, both digital and non-digital.

Finally, the majority of digital and non-digital tools of support and engagement in planning policy are developed by and for planners with the purpose of engaging citizens – a top-down approach. HCI and the digital civics agenda has evidenced the ways in which technology in the hands of citizens can support new interactions with place, empower citizens and enable their voices to be better heard (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2016; Johnson *et al.*, 2016, 2018; Maskell *et al.*, 2018; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018; Puussaar *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, this research will seek to bring the fields of planning and HCI together to explore the need for bottom-up tools that could be developed to support citizens and which would be designed, used and led by citizens for citizens.

The research is, therefore, motivated by the aim:

> *To investigate how digital and non-digital tools and interventions can be designed to better support citizens to shape places through the example of neighbourhood development plans.*

To achieve this aim, a series of research questions guided the research:

RQ1. How is the neighbourhood planning process enacted by citizens and what are the opportunities and challenges faced?
RQ2. How could the design of digital and non-digital approaches in neighbourhood planning better support citizen engagement?
RQ3. What digital technologies can be developed and used to support citizen engagement in neighbourhood planning?

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is comprised of a sequence of research phases with neighbourhood planning groups that included interactive workshops and technology deployments. The chapters provide a background to the contexts and varying literature that the research engages with. The research draws on literature from planning and HCI (Chapter 2) before moving to detail the approach to research (Chapter 3). Three findings chapters detail the phases of the research (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), followed by a chapter to bring together the findings and detail a discussion (Chapter 7). The final chapter presents the conclusions of the research (Chapter 8). A summary of the chapters will be discussed below.

Building on the introduction, Chapter 2 explores existing academic literature which, firstly, further contextualises this research and neighbourhood planning within the wider history of participation in policymaking and localism. The chapter then details neighbourhood planning, exploring its aims, purpose and current adopted policy process, as well as highlighting already-known key challenges. Secondly, the chapter explores citizen participation practices in planning more broadly, exploring conceptualisations of citizens' experiences of place and policy, and the tension between forms of knowledge used as evidence in policy

decisions. Finally, it highlights the current work in both planning and HCI which shows the potential for digital participation within planning policy.

Chapter 3 introduces Action Research (AR) as the methodological approach taken in this research, outlining its epistemological stance, common frameworks, and the reasons such an approach is suitable within neighbourhood planning research. I then move to detail the research context and design, outlining three phases of research as well as a failed case study, and show this within an AR framework. In addition, I outline the methods used within the research and detail the method of data analysis, before mapping the research questions to the phases of research. Details of the specific methods used within each phase of the research is left to the beginning of each findings chapter.

Chapter 4, the first findings chapter, explores the use of a participatory media tool with neighbourhood planning groups as an alternative approach to participation. The chapter details two consecutive studies in which the tool was deployed, with learning from the first informing the second, and the methods of each study are provided. The first study highlights positive aspects such as the creation of spaces for storytelling and the widening of narratives and participation within the neighbourhood planning process, whilst also reflecting on the challenges of the digital tool in reality. Upon outlining reflections from the first study, the chapter moves to detail the changes made to the second study and reflects on the failings of this particular deployment. Finally, the chapter reflects on the tensions of participatory media in neighbourhood planning which can promote storytelling and multiplicity yet is complex and unsustainable.

Chapter 5, the second findings chapter, details findings from workshops with citizens and planners to understand the way in which the neighbourhood planning process is enacted. Again, the method and approach to research are outlined before the chapter moves to detail the myriad of challenges faced by citizens throughout the policy process. Finally, the chapter reflects on the need for change in the neighbourhood planning process to make it a policy tool fit for its citizen-led purpose, as

well as reflecting on the need for new modes of digital support for neighbourhood planning.

Chapter 6, the third and final findings chapter, details findings from co-design workshops with a range of citizens, planners and other relevant stakeholders. Once again, the co-design methods and approach is detailed before the chapter highlights the ways in which participants define engagement, describing the tension between the values and practices of participation. The chapter moves to capture participants' thoughts on a range of digital and non-digital methods before focusing on the key design task which showcases participants' designs. Finally, the chapter reflects on the need for and challenges to new modes of digital and non-digital support within neighbourhood planning, as well as the challenges faced with citizens delivering participation activities within their wider community.

Chapter 7, the discussion chapter, brings together the findings from the research and argues the need to (re)design the neighbourhood planning process and the digital and non-digital modes of participation within it. The chapter briefly summarise the opportunities and challenges faced by citizens, before outlining two foundational issues that provide insight into the complexity of the process. To address these issues, the chapter moves to detail two key design principles which can support inclusive and equitable approaches to policy and technology design, and then move to show how such principles should be enacted within the neighbourhood planning context. Finally, the chapter provides specific design implications in the form of tangible suggestions as to how the neighbourhood planning process should be improved and changed and the ways in which digital and non-digital tools could support the policymaking process.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides a conclusion to this research, reflecting on the needs of citizens within the neighbourhood planning process and the ways in which a re-designed process and new modes of support would create a renewed policy tool that could be truly citizen-led. It discusses the research

questions, reflects on digital civics research and provides implications for future work as well as recommendations for practice.

Chapter 2

2. Participation in Policymaking: The Practices of Town Planning and Human Computer Interaction

This chapter will discuss concepts of citizen participation in planning. It explores a history which culminates, in England at least, in the introduction of neighbourhood planning, and goes on to analyse participation practices and digital participation. The aim of this thesis is to better support citizens to engage in neighbourhood planning and, through discussing literature, I highlight the gaps and challenges that my research addresses.

The chapter will be organised in three sections:

Participation in Policymaking: Neighbourhood Planning (section 2.1)
Here, I present a brief history of participation in planning policy to chart broader thinking over time which directly leads to the rhetoric of localism and the introduction of neighbourhood planning. I review neighbourhood planning literature in-depth to consider the contrasting conceptualisations that underpin the policy initiative before discussing current practices. Through highlighting positive aspects of neighbourhood planning and the ways in which the policy tool has been used by citizens as a site of resistance, I argue the need to better support neighbourhood planning as a citizen-led policy initiative.

Citizen Participation Practices in Planning (section 2.2)
This section begins by conceptualising citizens' experiences of place and how this connects to policy, exploring the challenge of evidence-based policy and the ways in which scientific and technical forms of knowledge are privileged over citizens' experiential knowledge. I move to consider the contrasting, yet simultaneously held, notion that citizen participation is well-established as good practice in planning policy which further evidences the disconnect between participation practices and policy. Finally, in exploring how participation is enacted and the challenges faced, I argue that there is a need to better support citizen participation by moving beyond traditional configurations and methods to more

innovative approaches that can centre citizens' experiences in a way which have a greater influence on policy outcomes.

Digital Participation (section 2.3)
The final section explores the connection between the disciplines of planning and human-computer interaction (HCI) through the discussion of the digital civics agenda. I then move to consider the affordances of digital participation considering the design of tools, the configuration of participation and the potential for greater inclusivity. Finally, I provide a broad review of civic technology used within participatory processes to show how such tools could be used for innovative and creative digital participation in planning policy. I argue the need for planning and HCI disciplines to work together to develop new tools and methodologies, that can sit alongside non-digital approaches, to support citizens to engage in neighbourhood planning.

2.1 Participation in Policymaking: Neighbourhood Planning

In this section, I explore how participation in policymaking in the town planning system has developed over a number of years and how this culminates in the introduction of neighbourhood planning into the legal framework (Bradley, 2015). The chapter will begin by exploring a brief history of engagement in planning policy, however, it should be noted that this section does not intend to give a detailed history as this is not the intention of the thesis and many others have charted this subject (e.g. Lane, 2005; Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007; Laurian and Shaw, 2009; Twitchen and Adams, 2011; Parker and Murray, 2012; Brookfield, 2017 etc.). Following this, we explore neighbourhood planning in-depth with a comprehensive review of the literature. We consider the context of localism within which neighbourhood planning is situated, the conceptualisations of neighbourhood planning as well as the current practices.

Ultimately, I argue that neighbourhood planning, despite its neoliberal, pro-growth roots, has potential to create new spatial practices (evidenced

through Bradley, 2017a) and support community-led action and capacity building. With the continued uptake of neighbourhood planning, there is a need to support the policymaking process in a way which promotes equity and inclusion to be able to create "authentic sources of community power in the planning system" (Bradley, 2017b, p. 50).

2.1.1 A Brief History

In some form, public participation has been enshrined within the legal planning framework since the inception of the first Act of Parliament directly related to planning – The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 (Twitchen and Adams, 2011). The introduction of this act enabled planning to move from a purely regulative system to a future-focused endeavour where planning policy would be developed to shape our towns and cities (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). However, approaches to public participation in academia and practice have significantly developed and evolved over a number of years.

The early idea of development plans saw a single, fixed vision for a city that could not be changed and did not include any citizen participation in its production (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). Originating from Howard and Geddes' ideas in the early 1900s, and termed 'blueprint planning', it saw planners as the expert that could create city visions, however, critics were concerned that the outcome of such plans were not up for discussion with no consideration of what society would want (Lane, 2005). Although this mode of planning moved on significantly, some ideas persisted into future practice, namely that planning is apolitical and that public interest was something which could be unified into a single direction (Lane, 2005). The post-war planning era sustained many of these practices, continuing top-down development planning where planners sought to manage conflicting agendas with facts and expertise but criticisms regarding the lack of citizen participation remained (Shapely, 2011).

Moving to the 1960s, public participation began to hold more importance and the planning profession began to recognise this with multiple government reports and influential papers. The Planning Advisory Group

Report (1965) highlighted a range of concerns regarding participation which led to the Town and Country Planning Act 1968 (Nickson, 2018). This Act introduced public participation as a statutory requirement when producing development planning policy (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006) which some would argue changed the planners' role and relationship with the public (Hall, 1983). However, even this legislative change still limited the role of participation in the policymaking process to "providing a commentary on the goals of planning" (Lane, 2005, p. 290) and was not seen to go far enough in moving away from a top-down approach. In fact, many authorities avoided developing their planning policy partly due to their belief that consultation processes would be too costly and would not benefit their plan (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). Following this, the Skeffington Report (1969) was published and called for "full public scrutiny and debate" to be applied in the development of planning policy (Nickson, 2018, p. 26).

Alongside this, Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' (1969) explored the role given to citizens in engagement processes and the level of influence they were able to have on decisions. This influential paper is often still referred to and used in practice today despite various criticisms and adaptations (Hart, 1992; Bailey, 2010). In addition to the level of engagement and influence, there were also different viewpoints regarding how and when participation should be enacted. Some recognised the plurality in society and called for citizens to have more influence throughout the process, others felt that limiting citizen input to considering marginally different policy alternatives was best and, in many cases, the latter was true (Lane, 2005). The dominance of a rational-comprehensive approach to planning using modelling and quantitative methods that could emphasise goals and targets continued (Lane, 2005).

Through the decades that followed, further thought was given to the subject of public participation with the idea of pluralism as a direct critique of the rational-comprehensive approach to planning (Lane, 2005). Public participation began to be seen as the centre of the planning system and the planning policy process with "stakeholder involvement…one of the

fundamental components of the reformed planning system" (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007, p. 79). Consequently, a range of new models of planning were developed. Friedmann's (1973) transactive planning model called for a move from representative democracy to participatory democracy (Lane, 2005) and wanted planners to draw on the expertise of local people and their experiential knowledge rather than rely on their limited expert knowledge (Laurian and Shaw, 2009; Sandercock and Attili, 2010b). Advocacy planning sought to recognise the inequalities of power between groups, the different access to political structures and, therefore, the groups that were traditionally underrepresented in public participation processes (Lane, 2005). Under this model, the notion of a universal public interest was rejected, and planners should attempt to catalyse participation as facilitators, advocating for those underrepresented groups. In addition, a communicative turn in planning participation aimed to support deliberation and more discursive models (Laurian and Shaw, 2009). Rather than focusing on power differentials, communicative planning sought to bring together citizens with different perspectives and, in a process of learning, rethink about your own and others' interests (Healey, 1992). It built on ideas of communicative rational (Habermas, 1984, 1987), discursive democracy (Dryzek, 1990) and dialogic democracy (Giddens, 1994), and saw this communicative model as fundamental to planning. Further to this, outside of the planning discipline saw the rise of the community development approach to citizen participation in the mid-1970s which acknowledged the benefits of bottom-up participation to support positive local change (Eversole, 2012). Community development practitioners often worked within planning projects and programmes to empower communities to be actively involved in improving local conditions whilst building capacity and social relations (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). This was a marked shift where planners were no longer seen as experts under this movement, but community development practitioners were merely facilitators to support community needs.

In the late 1990s, the UK government changed to a Labour leadership which saw further reforms to planning, particularly as the government

began to focus on the idea of citizenship. The government wanted an active citizenship with more and earlier public participation to ensure its efficacy, creating legislation, practice guidance and reports all with this focus (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006; Parker, 2008b). In 2001, the Planning Green Paper, 'Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change', sought to reform planning noting it was complex, remote, slow, unpredictable and difficult to engage with (DTLR, 2001). The paper wanted participation to be at the heart of the reform and culminated in further legislative changes with the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007). The Act and subsequent government guidance was more extensive than anything previously seen in placing importance on public participation. It introduced the need for a 'front-loading' of participation and the inclusion of a Statement of Community Involvement that would be assessed alongside the development plan to ensure participation had been carried out effectively (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007). The guidance was clear that public participation was essential to achieve local ownership and legitimacy and set a range of principles to be followed, however, the requirements placed on the process were criticised as the resources and skills needed to enact them were not adequately provided (Parker, 2008b).

Further to this, New Labour introduced numerous urban regeneration programmes which were intended to address social, economic and physical aspects at a local level, making billions available for this purpose. Initiatives included a reformed Single Regeneration Budget which directed funding into the most deprived areas, New Deal for Communities which concentrated on the regeneration of deprived areas and a number of funding mechanisms for smaller, local projects through the Community Empowerment Fund and the Community Chest scheme (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). Within these urban regeneration initiatives during this time, community development approaches continued to have a positive influence on citizen empowerment and provided a way to work constructively and meaningfully with communities. However, the idea that such engagement in the planning system still failed to influence and shape

policy persisted, particularly with issues of trust between communities and the agencies involved (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006; Parker, 2008b).

Alongside the national government's approaches to participation over the years, community planning had developed since the 1970s. Parish and town council plans that would set out a vision for the area were a way in which citizens could engage in a type of local planning despite these parish plans being unable to overlap or link with development policies (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). The Labour government saw these efforts as positive and, through the Rural White Paper (DETR, 2000), advocated for giving citizens "a more effective voice", drawing attention to the successes of village design statements and local action plans (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, p. 512). Although seen in a positive light, there were issues of resources and skills both in terms of the communities undertaking them and the local government engaging with them, as well as the idea that this type of local planning further marginalised some communities (Parker, 2008b).

Throughout the history of participation in planning policymaking, the role of the planner has been debated in research whilst in practice, planners continue to see the professional nature of their role position them as experts that can provide neutral, technical advice (Graham and Healey, 1999; Tewdwr-Jones, 2005). The professionalisation of planning was said to have little intellectual underpinnings related to the social and economic development we now see today, yet planners felt they were best placed to make decisions about the future of places (Healey, 1985). Further to this, the role of participation was often heavily criticised by planners in practice who felt that engaging citizens created unnecessary issues in the policy process for little gain, and that policy outcomes would be the unaffected as their professional judgement would be accurate (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). With the changing approaches in government, questions of the professionalisation of planning emerged and resulted in the 'de-professionalisation' then 're-professionalisation' where planners reconstructed their normative identities (Jupp and Inch, 2012). Although such debates around planners and professionalism have little effect on the

policies of central government and their changes to participation in policymaking, how participation is enacted in practice is affected by those carrying out the task – the planners (see section 2.2).

From the brief history presented here, it is clear that engagement in the planning system has long been debated and discussed. The changing political influences, the development in academic theory, the realities of planning practice and the unchanging cultures of expert planners have made the subject of public participation in policymaking increasingly complex. Slowly, over the years, there has been a move to increase public participation including through legislative changes, however, each attempt has been fraught with criticisms, particularly surrounding the resources and skills of planners, and a lack of evidence to show that such participation is having the desired influence on policy outcomes. Seen as a localised form of engagement, parish planning was an example of citizen influence in place-based policy, although this was not through statutory means and did not cover planning policy issues. The developments in public participation and parish planning provided the context for the Localism agenda of the Conservative/Coalition government and, parish planning particularly, was seen as a precursor to neighbourhood planning. The next section will pick up the brief history presented here to explore the context of localism in which neighbourhood planning was introduced.

2.1.2 Localism and the 'Big Society'

In the lead up to the 2010 General Election, the Conservative government campaigned using their idea of Localism and the 'Big Society', particularly focusing on the idea of providing greater freedom and devolving power to local people (Stanton, 2014). The former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, stated:

> *"I have three very clear priorities: localism, and we'll weave that into everything we do from parks to finance to policy. My second priority is localism, and my third is localism...If you want people to feel connected to their communities. Proud of their communities. Then you give*

people a real say over what happens in their communities. And the power to make a difference" (Pickles, 2010)

However, the concept of devolving power and increasing public participation invoked by the Coalition were not new, just as the concept of 'localism' was also not new. As a term, 'localism' can be traced to the 1960s and various governments have sought ways to devolve power in some way, as discussed in section 2.1.1 (Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015a; Brownill, 2017). Over time, localism has come to mean "the space where publics can be re-engaged, and experiments in "better government" carried out" (Brownill, 2017, p. 20). This is illustrated through examples from the former Labour government where decentralised power and new tools to engage citizens were tried and tested including citizens' juries and neighbourhood committees (Wills, 2016). Such methods were seen as innovative compared with the standard approaches to engaging citizens in planning where town hall meetings were the norm, or where writing letters remained the key way for citizens to be heard in planning processes. A common theme also emerges when considering that alongside the devolution initiatives, control of how, why and what those schemes entailed remained in the control of central government (Stanton, 2014).

Once in power, the Coalition government introduced the Localism Act (HM Government, 2011) which effectively gave new rights to citizens in a variety of ways:

- Neighbourhood Planning allowing citizens to self-organise to produce a planning policy for their neighbourhood to direct the future of development (discussed in detail in the following section).
- Neighbourhood Development Orders allowing citizens to grant planning permission for a particular type of development in their neighbourhood.
- Community Right to Build allowing communities to physically construct or rebuild their neighbourhood as a type of Neighbourhood Development Order.

- Community Right to Challenge allowing citizens to challenge service providers and develop alternative service provision themselves.
- Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value) which allowed parish councils and voluntary and community groups more time to prepare a bid to purchase a listed community asset should the owner choose to dispose of it.

In these examples, the aim is that "power [is] held at the lowest possible level" (The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011) and the Coalition argued that this would provide greater accountability as well as more effective decision-making (Wills, 2016). Such an approach could be seen as a way to instil creativity and innovation into place-based planning policy, where localism is about "the place of the people in democratic life" (Wills, 2016, p. 44). David Cameron, the then Prime Minister, would argue this is "the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street" (Cameron, 2010). It is important to note, here, that the devolution of power often bypassed local authorities and gave power to communities whilst still retaining much of the ideas and management centrally

Despite the positive rhetoric of citizen empowerment and the devolution of power, the wider political context of localism presents a paradoxical picture. An alternative conception of the Coalition's localism is seen as a response to a failed centrist, top-down approach which would appeal to citizens across the political spectrum (ideas of 'you are in control') whilst, simultaneously, the reduction of the state in other ways reduces local resource ('you are on your own') (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011). Austerity, with the reduction in funding to local government, and the neoliberal approach of the Coalition present a different picture to one of empowerment and citizenship (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011; Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). In other words, the rhetoric of localism and the 'Big Society' enables the cynical adoption of the language of social movements whilst providing a screen by which community empowerment is used as a tool for citizens to solve their own problems "and fill the service

gaps that are left by a state in retreat" (Wills, 2016, p. 44). Furthermore, local government are disempowered with power devolved to communities whilst authority simultaneously bypasses local government and is given to central government. Some would go as so far to say that "localism can provide a useful justification for the resulting spatial inequality and social injustice" that would be brought about through austerity measures and the reliance on the market and competition for investment (Wills, 2016, p. 44). The risk from this would see those with power becoming more powerful through the reduction of the state that would have typically represented and served underrepresented groups, ultimately allowing government to be relieved of responsibility (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011).

This contested context of the Localism Act shows an increase in public participation in planning policy and decisions, particularly through neighbourhood planning, whilst a neoliberal government introducing austerity measures calls into question the motivations behind such initiatives. The rhetoric of localism, the reduction in local government spending and the loss of planning officers from local planning departments could frame neighbourhood planning as a way for citizens to fill that gap. However, regardless of those initial motivations, neighbourhood planning has been in place for a decade and, in that time, thousands of communities have embarked on the process. Despite the neoliberal agenda behind localism, neighbourhood planning does provide a way to prioritise public participation in policymaking – something which has been called upon for decades. To further explore the opportunities and challenges of neighbourhood planning, the next section will present a comprehensive review of literature.

2.1.3 Introducing Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and allows citizens to produce a development plan for their area. The definition of a neighbourhood development plan is:

> *"a plan which sets out policies (however expressed) in relation to the development and use of land in the whole or any part of a particular*

neighbourhood area specified in the plan" (HM Government, 2011, Schedule 9).

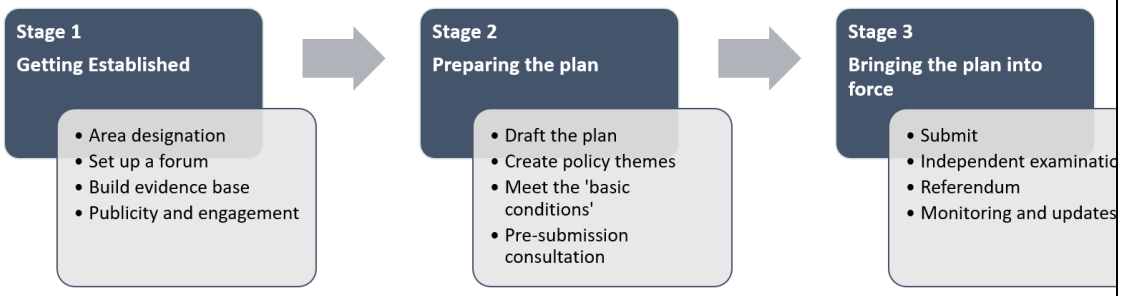
As of December 2020, 2759 communities had embarked on the process of a neighbourhood plan, with approximately 1000 made and adopted plans (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020a). A full explanation of what neighbourhood planning is and what it entails can be seen in Figure 1 which shows the process as seen in the Locality Roadmap (Locality, 2018).

Neighbourhood planning potentially gives a powerful role in policy development to citizens in a way which has never been done before, particularly as the neighbourhood is given a political identity (Bradley, 2015). It is a departure from previous attempts at local planning, such as parish plans, and a tool for empowerment for place-based groups (Bradley, 2015; Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). It has created a "new civic infrastructure" as a basis of community action (Wills, 2016). Neighbourhood planning provides a mechanism for citizens' voices to protect and enhance their local area and provide an opportunity for greater control of planning decisions (Wills, 2016; Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). The statutory nature of the process provides incentives for citizens, increasing the significance of their contributions and providing legitimacy through the legislation (Wills, 2016; Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). The rarity of such a policy tool being in the hands of citizens rather than public officials hands power to a collective and provides a "stronger vehicle for civic engagement, voice and action" (Wills, 2016, p. 51; Bradley, Burnett and Sparling, 2017).

The long history of participation theory in academia provided a place that recognised the value and importance of local, experiential knowledge and, the introduction of neighbourhood planning, embedded such notions into the planning system (Bradley, 2015). In addition, the dissatisfaction with public participation processes in planning had led to a crisis which some felt could be resolved through the redistribution of power and "a reformulated spatial planning…with more open, transparent, equitable and inclusionary planning features" (Parker, 2015, p. 2). The rhetoric of

Figure 1: What is neighbourhood planning?

The process of neighbourhood planning is briefly summarised here as set out by Locality's Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap (2018).



<u>Stage 1: Getting established</u>

- A 'Qualifying body' is formed to take forward the plan: this must be the parish/town council or, where none exists, an urban forum must be created.
- Urban forums must meet a range of criteria including, for example, expressing their purpose is to promote or improve the social, economic and environment wellbeing of the area and must have a minimum of 21 members that live or work in the area. Forums must also develop a constitution to set out governance procedures.
- The boundary of the area for the plan must be decided: it is presumed that parish/town councils will use the existing boundary, but designation is more complex for urban areas.
- The qualifying body must apply to the LPA to become designated which includes a consultations period and the LPA has a duty to support neighbourhood planning groups.
- The group must gather evidence to provide a rationale for policy decisions and this could include different types of technical assessments that may or may not already exist or groups could commission their own assessments to form their evidence base.
- Groups must publicise the neighbourhood planning process and engage with the local community. Advice is to engage with communities at set points throughout the process.

Stage 2: Preparing the plan

- The group must draft the plan and it is recommended that a vision for the area will be incorporated alongside the aims and practical policies that respond to the evidence base.
- Policy themes are usually included within the draft plan and ensure the plan is focused on planning considerations such as housing, historic environment, and design.
- Groups should ensure the plan meets the basic conditions as set out in legislation: it has regard to national policy, contributes to achieving sustainable development, it is in general conformity with strategic local policy and is compatible with EU obligations.
- The group should conduct a formal consultation period prior to submission which must last at least 6 weeks, usually referred to as Regulation 14 consultation.

Stage 3: Bringing the plan into force

- The neighbourhood plan is submitted to the LPA along with a map to identify the area, a consultation statement and a statement to show how the basic conditions have been met.
- The LPA must conduct a further 6 week formal consultation, referred to as Regulation 16.
- The plan will be subject to an independent examination to check against the regulations and recommendations for any changes are made to the LPA.
- The LPA arranges a final referendum and if over 50% of the votes are in support of the plan, the LPA are required to 'make' the plan.
- Advice states that groups should put procedures in place to monitor and update the plan.

devolving power to local people used by the Coalition has, through neighbourhood planning, come to fruition as citizens now have a statutory voice in the policymaking process and it is widely recognised as the most used community right that was introduced through the Localism Act (Bradley, 2015; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015a).

The introduction of neighbourhood planning, however, was not always welcomed by local authorities with some being initially unsupportive and some remaining so today (Burton, 2014; Locality, 2017; Neighbourhood Planners.London, 2021). To counter this, legislation placed a duty to support on local authorities which significantly changed the ways of working with communities in terms of connecting and supporting groups to undertake a neighbourhood plan (Gallent, 2013). Research has shown, however, that communities have sought better, more productive working relationships with the local authority in a way which supports cooperation on complex problems in a genuinely open and supportive manner (Parker, 2012; Place Studio, 2017). Ultimately, neighbourhood planning, although hailed by many as a radical and exciting initiative, has also been identified by others as "fraught with risk and difficulties" (Parker, 2012). The next section will detail the differing conceptualisations of neighbourhood planning and, following this, there will be a discussion of the current practices to highlight some of the challenges faced by citizens.

Conceptualising Neighbourhood Planning, 2011 – Present

Neighbourhood planning moves away from the traditional representative democracy which has been dominant in planning for many years, to one which favours participatory democracy – something which has been championed for decades (Friedmann, 1973; Lane, 2005). Historically, participatory democracy was often linked to radical social movements, counter-publics and experiments of new forms of participation as a way to challenge the dominant power where structural changes were needed (Bradley, 2015). However, the participatory democracy of neighbourhood planning is contained within existing systems of representative politics and market rationalities whereby citizens self-organise to have direct input but are contained within specified systems (Bradley, 2015). Here, we see that

participatory democracy does give direct power to citizens in neighbourhood planning but it also provides a legitimate, rather than disruptive, route to government and gives the citizen actors legitimacy too (Bradley, 2014; Wills, 2016).

Considering the wider context of the Coalition's localism agenda – one of post-political neoliberal pro-growth policy – the direct power rhetoric used to champion ideals of participatory democracy produced a limited policy tool. Neighbourhood plans may be led by citizens but they must also support housebuilding and development, ensuring citizens conform to the government agenda (Parker and Wargent, 2017a). With the Coalition government viewing objection to development as a NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) attitude and holding the view that communities en-masse are objecting in this way, the neighbourhood planning policy tool was part of the aim to convince communities of the need for housing development, provide greater certainty for developers and reduce appeals and legal challenges stemming from poor participatory practices (Bradley, Burnett and Sparling, 2017). Furthermore, the neoliberal conception of neighbourhood planning leads to a market model of planning that favours private providers and where citizens become consumers (Bradley, 2015). We also see that the neighbourhood becomes a homogenous place of consensus where anyone countering the dominant position is seen as an unrepresentative, irrational NIMBY where politics becomes "an obstruction to the technical questions of managing society in the best interests of economic growth" (Bradley, 2014, p. 4). This type of approach has little room for the 'messiness' of community participation and marginalises anyone that counters the hegemony (Jones *et al.*, 2015)

Thus far, we can see contrasting and conflicting conceptions and motivations of neighbourhood planning: one which champions participatory democracy and direct power, and another which promotes growth, particularly in relation to housing numbers, and limits the scope of the policy tool. This leaves many questioning the level of power that has truly been afforded to citizens through neighbourhood planning, where promises are made for local control while retaining power centrally and

limiting freedom so that it is given "only so far as they are oriented towards particular objectives" with those objectives being the need to plan for housing (Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015; Parker and Wargent, 2017, p. 30; Stanton, 2014). The contradictions visible here are further evidenced through the wider trends of deregulation in the planning systems that erode the policy and legislation which seeks to create positive places (Burton, 2014).

Despite these initial conceptions of neighbourhood planning, as the policy tool was taken up by communities across England, new research emerged which reinstated the importance of the participatory democracy and showed forms of community resistance. Firstly, the idea that citizens were motivated by NIMBY thinking does little to recognise the complex political realities and scholars have argued that neighbourhood planning can, in fact, become the site for "a new democratic politics of localism" which moves away from NIMBYism to a recognition of the multiplicity of citizen opinion (Wolsink, 2006; Bradley, 2015, p. 107; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015b). For example, McGuinness and Ludwig (2017) highlighted that citizens' motivations were not to refuse development, but to take control of decisions in the context of dissatisfaction at local authority decision-making and to have a say in the design, timing, location and scale of development. Secondly, research has shown that even within the neoliberal conception that attempts to force communities to accept development, the collective identity formed through the participatory nature of neighbourhood planning supports resistance to the pro-growth agenda (Bradley, 2017b). Where citizens have resisted development this has most notably been market-led mass housebuilding, and citizens have sought to support new models of locally appropriate housing and development on smaller sites (Bradley, Burnett and Sparling, 2017). The assumption that citizens have a NIMBY attitude has been proved untrue, particularly with examples in Leeds and Upper Eden as well as recent research which suggests that communities allocate more housing than local authority targets provided it is of the right type, design and tenure (see Parker *et al.*, 2020, Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015b; Brookfield, 2017; Place Studio, 2017a for

more details). Finally, neighbourhood planning is also able to bring "voices from the margins" in a way which counteracts power relations, moves away from NIMBYist thinking, and avoids the consensus of the 'usual suspects' (Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017, p. 426). It is important to note, however, that even within these new possibilities, there remains boundaries or conditions to participating in the neighbourhood planning policy process, such as the need for plans to adhere to higher policy tiers and the pro-growth agenda, which continues to provide a neoliberal framing to neighbourhood planning.

In summary, some see neighbourhood planning as a "radical and exciting opportunity for communities who wish to shape development plans for their locality" while others "as a post-political governance technology which does not enable communities to meaningfully challenge and shape government development plans for their neighbourhood" (Sagoe, 2016, p. i). The results of these two modes of thinking result in very different neighbourhood planning outcomes: one which allows citizens direct power to successfully challenge dominant narratives of development (e.g. resisting mass housebuilding for local, smaller-scale development), and one which sees neighbourhood plans limited by the conservative and restrictive policy approach (Bradley, Burnett and Sparling, 2017; Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2017).

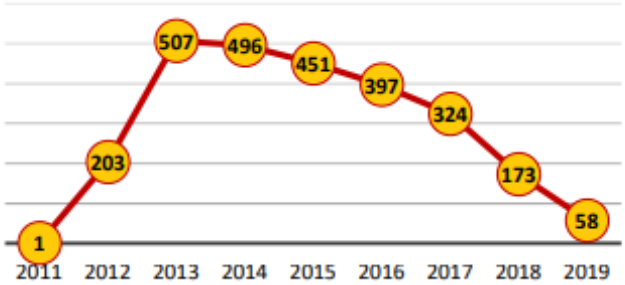
Whilst some of the issues and concerns over neighbourhood planning have been borne out in practice, with some neighbourhood plans failing or producing policy which does little to challenge the hegemony, there are also many examples where this is not the case (Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015a). Rather than assume neighbourhood planning will only achieve the neoliberal ends it was created for, further research into the practices and realities of neighbourhood planning from a citizens' perspective is needed. Adopting the negative perspective of neighbourhood planning does little to understand why so many communities are taking up the opportunity and fails to recognise that citizen resistance to the neoliberal agenda through participation can encourage innovation rather than conservatism (Sagoe, 2016; Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2017).

Current Practices of Neighbourhood Planning

This section will move to consider the current practices of neighbourhood planning to provide a foundational knowledge that can address RQ1 which seeks to understand how the process is enacted by citizens. The section will provide an overview of neighbourhood planning in England and move on to discuss the inequalities, complexities, support, and citizen participation practices.

Data provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) shows the areas in England which have undertaken a neighbourhood plan as of December 2020 (MHCLG, 2020a). The national picture shows a total of 2760 communities have embarked on the process and 998 neighbourhood plans have been adopted by local authorities. However, a report for MHCLG by Parker, Wargent and Salter (2020) shows a decline in the uptake of neighbourhood planning as designations for new areas have declined since 2013 (see Figure 2). Discussions at recent neighbourhood planning events suggest that the decline of uptake will continue since the publication of the Planning for the Future White Paper (MHCLG, 2020) due to the uncertain nature of planning reforms and the impact on an already complex process for citizens.

Figure 2: No. of neighbourhood area designations per annum



Source: Parker, Wargent and Salter, 2020

The MHCLG data shows a steady increase in the number of neighbourhood plans passing referendums since its inception in 2011 where only 6 referendums were carried out (see Table 1). Furthermore, the data shows where neighbourhood planning has been carried out, highlighting that the majority of neighbourhood plans have been

conducted in southern regions (see Table 2). It must be noted here, however, that the regional split of neighbourhood plans is not understood per percentage of the population which would provide a greater understanding of the population coverage of neighbourhood planning policy.

Table 1: No of referendums per year

Year	No. of Referendums
2013	6
2014	36
2015	83
2016	167
2017	211
2018	215
2019	230
2020*	47

*No. lower than expected due to COVID-19

Table 2: Total no. of neighbourhood plans per region

Region	Total no.	Percentage (%)
South East	567	20.6
South West	541	19.6
East	419	15.2
East Midlands	368	13.3
West Midlands	339	12.3
North West	200	7.2
Yorkshire & Humber	157	5.6
London	90	3.3
North East	79	2.9

For those plans which have been made, the data also shows the turnout of citizens for the referendum and the number of 'Yes' votes. Referendums were attended on average by 31 people with a minimum attendance recorded as 7 and a maximum of 81. Within this, the percentage of those voting 'Yes' was, on average, 86%.

The data from MHCLG provides a good overview of the current landscape of neighbourhood planning across the country and highlights the positive trend in the uptake of neighbourhood planning. There are clear disparities between regions taking up the opportunity, as will be further explored in the following sections, and the data also points to concerns over referendum attendance. However, those that do vote in neighbourhood planning referendums are, on the whole, inclined to support the policy with a high percentage of positive votes.

Inequalities

As is evident from the MHCLG data presented above, there are inequalities in the current picture of neighbourhood planning which have persisted over a number of years. A clear north-south divide exists with only 3% of plans in the North East and 11% in the North overall (Parker *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, there also remains a clear disparity between rural and urban areas, with only 10% of designated areas being led by a forum which would typically be predominantly urban areas (Parker *et al.*, 2020). The majority of neighbourhood plans, therefore, are taking place in parish or town council areas where there is already access to existing governing structures, platforms of support, staff, councillors and volunteers, and ongoing funding compared with urban areas which do not have this (Gallent, 2013; Parker, 2017). In addition, the socio-economic status of areas undertaking a neighbourhood plan also evidences inequalities with less than a quarter being in the lower two quintiles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Parker, 2017). Such disparities in deprived areas were seen to be due to a lack of awareness, a lack of resources, and the inability to see how such a tool would improve their daily lives (Crabtree and Mackay, 2013; Brookfield, 2017). Particularly in urban and deprived areas, the complexity, fluidity and the greater requirements placed on forums to self-organise, also make it more challenging (Parker, 2015).

Research in neighbourhood planning has explored these inequalities and highlighted levels of social capital, access to resources, rates of volunteering, and the ability to self-organise and take action all play a role in the levels of take up (e.g. see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015). Furthermore, as with wider research in participatory planning, scholars have also highlighted that the most active citizens are those who are most active, older, wealthier, better educated and usually longer-term residents of a place – a group usually terms the 'usual suspects' (Mohan, 2011; Parker, 2012). Consequently, core groups of citizens taking forward a neighbourhood plan are usually made up of small numbers of the 'usual suspects' which brings the representativeness of the process into question (as explored by Brookfield, 2017). However, Davoudi

and Cowie (2013) suggest such groups can be seen as legitimate in broader conceptions of representativeness. Ultimately, such uneven geographies of neighbourhood planning have seen that urban and more deprived areas lose out while resource-rich areas with active citizens have a direct say in future development and neighbourhood planning becomes a tool dominated by the "active, vocal or articulate individuals or groups" (Bradley, 2014; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015, p. 591).

The risk that neighbourhood planning at a country-wide scale shows evidence of disparities between areas taking up the opportunity has created fears of inequitable outcomes where communities are seen to be left behind (Parker, 2017). Ultimately here, we must return to the Coalition's setup of neighbourhood planning which assumed that all neighbourhoods were equally capable of taking up the opportunity with no question of the capacity of communities (Parker, 2017).

Complexity

The original design of neighbourhood planning as a policy tool was intended to be a light touch process *for* citizens where the lack of prescription about how to produce a neighbourhood plan would allow for local flexibility, whilst legislation built in touchpoints that would ensure plans were fit for purpose. However, there are significant questions as to whether the current neighbourhood planning process is really light touch and accessible (Burton, 2014; Brookfield, 2017).

Research has shown that citizens find the neighbourhood planning process long, complex and burdensome with around three quarters of neighbourhood plans in 2014 identifying it was more burdensome than expected (Parker *et al.*, 2014). This was particularly owing to the scale of the task to produce a development plan which sought to engage wider communities, understand strategic policy, collect and interpret complex datasets and produce usable policy documents. There was an expectation by government that plans would take an estimated two years to complete, but the average time taken is around 29 months, with some plans taking up to five years (Parker, 2015; Parker and Salter, 2017). Citizens felt they did

not have clear guidance and the process was seen to be incredibly long and bureaucratic – the opposite of a 'light touch' approach (Place Studio, 2017). Adding to this, planning was viewed by citizens as a 'moving target' where new development proposals, changing national policy, and evolving local government policies and priorities meant they were unable to plan effectively (Parker *et al.*, 2014).

Neighbourhood planning outcomes further highlight the challenges faced by citizens in enacting the policy process with research showing that independent examinations were often recommending substantial changes or local authorities were delaying examinations due to concerns they would fail (Parker, Kat Salter and Hickman, 2016; Parker *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, issues with the examination process itself shows inconsistencies as well as the complexities of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) and High Court cases that have quashed neighbourhood plans when developers have questioned them (Parker, Kat Salter and Hickman, 2016; Yu and Fischer, 2019).

Such complexity in the process compared to the original 'light tough' intention is evidenced through this existing research. However, a gap remains to understand detailed qualitative experiences of the citizens involved that can build on the current literature, something this thesis aims to contribute to.

Support

Initially, when neighbourhood planning was first introduced, four organisations were mandated to provide support but, to streamline and simplify services, Locality as a national organisation became the sole provider of assistance. Locality provided financial assistance through grants starting from £10,000 with a further £8,000 available to groups facing more complex issues (Locality, 2020a). Further to this, Locality provided technical support through their private sector delivery partners to enable planning consultants to undertake more complex assessments such as Housing Needs, Site Options or other evidence related tasks. Through their website, Locality also provided a wide range of guidance

documents and toolkits intended to take neighbourhood planning groups through the policy process with approximately 36 pages of support each containing multiple documents. Locality's website also hosted a forum for groups although was never used. Alongside these official resources, a wealth of guidance and documents from other organisations aimed to support neighbourhood planning groups (e.g. Royal Town Planning Institute, no date; Campaign to Protect Rural England, 2013; Local Government Association and Planning Advisory Service, 2013; Planning Advisory Service, 2016; Planning Aid England, 2016; Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2017; Lichfields, 2018; National Trust, 2019).

A range of issues have, however, been highlighted with the seemingly large amount of support that is available. Firstly, the long-term future of funding for neighbourhood planning is unknown and the model of small-scale grants does not support communities to develop and deliver a long-term vision (Kaszynska, Parkinson and Fox, 2012). Secondly, the idea that policymaking is a linear process persists through the majority of the guidance and support programmes fail to recognise this is not the case (Burton, 2014). Furthermore, research has shown that the grant funding process is confusing and does little to account for local context or the scope of the plan being produced (Place Studio, 2017). Finally, the guidance documents available are complex and jargon-filled despite stating they are written in plain English, something identified through Locality's own Localism Commission (Locality, 2017). Despite a wealth of support available, the variations and complexities are seen to be confusing for citizens who are already embarking on a complex process (Place Studio, 2017).

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is key to the aim of this thesis to explore tools to better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning. Although this thesis considers engaging with neighbourhood planning to incorporate the many and varied ways citizens are involved throughout the complex policy process, this section reflects on the practices of participation as

adopted by neighbourhood planning groups leading the process to engage their wider community.

Through case study research focusing on neighbourhood planning in Leeds, it was found that groups were all keen to open up participation to engage their community in the plan production (Brookfield, 2017). However, the methods used to engage communities were very similar to those seen in planning participation exercises over recent years such as public meetings, leaflet drops and community surveys (Brookfield, 2017). The use of such standard methods was also seen elsewhere and highlight the opportunities missed to engage communities through a wider variety of activities and methods (Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017).

Furthermore, the goal to widen participation beyond the 'usual suspects' was important, but neighbourhood planning groups found this difficult to achieve in practice, particularly engaging young people, those unemployed, older residents and landowners (Brookfield, 2017; Place Studio, 2017; Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). The 'usual suspects' are usually the citizens delivering participatory work and so, with shared traditions, practices and networks already in place, the work of reaching beyond this is unknown and little thought of (Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). Furthermore, research has highlighted that participatory work requires skills and knowledge which is often not held by those undertaking a neighbourhood plan (Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). However, this created a nervousness in highlighting who had and had not engaged for fear of showing a bias, however, there was no recognition that the bias was created by the continuing use of traditional methods (Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017). In addition to this, there were generally low response rates with a low rate of website use and a lack of attendance at public meetings (Brookfield, 2017).

Within the comprehensive review of literature, only two instances of digital technology for participation in neighbourhood planning was found. The first was MapLocal (Jones *et al.*, 2015), a reporting and visioning app that used GPS, tagging and other tasks to engage citizens. The tool allowed

photos to be taken, commented on and ranked; audio clips to provide commentary, in-depth information and reflection; and boundary data that marked the edge of the area that a user walked. After piloting the technology in two areas, they reported that the method was welcomed by participants, reached beyond the 'usual suspects', the technology was easy to use, and the method allowed contentious issues to be debated in a comfortable way (Jones *et al.*, 2015). The second was the development of a map-based platform that allows neighbourhood plans to "access and use evidence that is already in the public domain, together with evidence that they collected themselves, using volunteered geographic information (VGI) approaches to prepare their plan" (Kingston and Vlastaras, 2020, p. 328). The successful building and testing of the platform showed positive elements, however, there were varying levels of ability and skills to be able to use the toolkit and in understanding and interpreting the layers of data on the platform. Although only two digital tools, this presents a mixed picture in terms of the design and use of digital technology in neighbourhood planning.

2.1.4 Neighbourhood Planning Potential

This section has explored participation in planning policy with a particular focus on neighbourhood planning. Set within the historical context of citizen participation in policy, the challenges and contradictions surrounding the localism rhetoric which led to neighbourhood planning were explored. Moving to consider neighbourhood planning in-depth, the section explored the tensions within the conceptualisations of the policy tool and how citizens have been able to resist the neoliberal pro-growth agenda through the political identity given to them as well as their ability to develop new spatial practices. Furthermore, the section highlighted the current data from MHCLG and detailed the inequalities, complexity, support and citizen participation practices. This comprehensive review of existing research has revealed important insights whilst also highlighting the need for more research to qualitatively consider the practices of neighbourhood planning from a citizen's perspective.

It is important to recognise the critical stance of neoliberal neighbourhood planning conceptualisations, however, there is a range of positive aspects that have resulted in thousands of communities taking up the opportunity. The ability to have a statutory voice in decision-making, to improve local relationships and build community capacity should also not be underestimated. For many, the development of social capital has the ability to deliver outcomes that are difficult to measure but which improve community relationships, educate about planning, and increase awareness of planning decisions and participation (Kaszynska, Parkinson and Fox, 2012; Parker *et al.*, 2014). Examples of neighbourhood planning as a tool to empower communities are emerging where citizens are able to secure the future of housing in their areas and the act of plan production has sparked other forms of community action to further these aims (Sagoe, 2016). This links to a shift to a sense of place and experiential knowledge as "new arbiters of development planning", something research has called for over decades (Bradley and Sparling, 2017, p. 116). Furthermore, communities have been able to secure more locally appropriate development through their policy which has enabled a consensus to be formed around the future of places, although it must be recognised that more work is needed to support this endeavour (Crabtree and Mackay, 2013; Bradley and Sparling, 2017).

Such positive outcomes could be further supported and research has already shown ways to do so, including ensuring meaningful local partnerships to strengthen the community's position and to stabilise funding available for neighbourhood planning (Kaszynska, Parkinson and Fox, 2012). In addition, the capacity build through neighbourhood planning can lead to further local and citizen-led action to create positive changes in the neighbourhood (Sagoe, 2016). Further ideas include the need for more awareness of the neighbourhood planning process and ways to excite communities through new methods of engagement, the need for more and better support, and the need for improved participation practices (Burton, 2014; Parker *et al.*, 2014; Parker and Wargent, 2017a; Vigar, Gunn and Brooks, 2017).

Communities will continue to embark on the neighbourhood planning process, particularly with the statutory weight given to the policy created which can lead to direct action (Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2017), therefore it is important to consider ways to support or improve the process. There is an opportunity to renew local democracy as neighbourhood planning has "returned the principle of collective mobilisation to public participation and created authentic sources of community power in the planning system" (Bradley, 2017b, p. 50). Ultimately, I argue that as thousands of communities are embarking on neighbourhood plans, we need to better understand the potential of the policy tool and how it could be changed, improved, or better supported to encourage resistance and to make lasting positive, local effects.

2.2 Citizen Participation Practices in Planning

Engaging citizens is seen as an essential part of civic life where the ability of citizens to impact decisions results in a healthy democracy and, in both research and practice, it has become the norm that including some form of participation is good practice (Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2002; Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007). A general definition shows participation to be a "mode of relationship between the state and civil society that involves the public in decision making" (Laurian and Shaw, 2009, p. 294). However, although the notion of citizen participation is widely accepted as good practice, the gap remains between what is claimed and endorsed, and what occurs in practice (Parker, 2008b).

In most planning policy processes, citizen participation is carried out but decisions about policy development remain with local government (Rowe and Frewer, 2004; Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007). However, in the context of neighbourhood planning, citizens lead the policy process and are responsible for the development the plan. In this sense, engagement in neighbourhood planning not only refers to the common policy activity of engaging the wider community in decisions about policy, but engagement also includes the wider policymaking process and tasks. Citizens must

engage with the neighbourhood planning process to set up a working group, gather evidence, assess issues and options for policy, conduct formal consultations, and draft and finalise policy.

Although there is a wealth of literature focused on neighbourhood planning, in-depth studies of participatory practices are limited, therefore, in this section we consider the wider citizen participation literature in planning of which much continues to be applicable. Firstly, I will explore conceptualisations of citizens' experience of place and policy as a central concept of participation practices – and one which is weaved throughout this thesis. I will then explore existing approaches, methods, barriers and challenges of participation in planning policy, particularly focused on traditional practices, leaving the discussion of digital engagement to section 2.3.

Ultimately, I argue that there is a need to develop new participatory practices that can engage citizens in policy development in more inclusive, innovative and exciting ways. By highlighting that scientific and technical forms of knowledge are still privileged over experiential knowledge, and exploring the challenges faced in participation, I argue that participation practices need to move beyond traditional configurations and methods and ensure citizens can have a real influence on policy outcomes.

2.2.1 Conceptualising Citizens' Experience of Place and Policy

The history of academic thought around citizen participation clearly calls for more and greater quality engagement in planning policy and has done so for decades. This recognition by scholars, and, in many cases, planning practice, is also a recognition of the need to incorporate the knowledge of local people as evidence in policymaking. As briefly explored in section 2.1, early approaches to planning privileged expert knowledge and scientific ways of knowing which limited citizens' ability to meaningfully contribute to decisions and so a rational-comprehensive approach to planning was often favoured (Lane, 2005). In the 1970s, there was a movement of scholars who began to consider the challenges of such scientific ways of 'knowing' and the 'crisis of knowing' emerged. Churchman (1971) and

Friedmann (1973) began to question the notion that planners were the elite experts and that knowledge in planning should be created through scientific methods. They moved to a belief that local experience was a legitimate form of knowledge and stories were a way that knowledge could be shared and communicated (Throgmorton, 2003). However, despite this, the disconnect between citizens' experiences and policy remain, with a constant literature regarding the participation gap and the difficulty of achieving this type of participation in practice (Bridger, 1997; Parker, 2008b). To unpack this, I explore the notion of place experience and citizen participation in this section to better understand the forms of knowledge used in decisions, why engagement is important and why it is enacted in practice.

Experiences of Place and Policy

Citizens experience place in a myriad of ways. They live, breathe, play, work, laugh, feel and remember, and all of these elements can be tied to place – places gain meaning through lived experience (Tuan, 1977; Stedman, 2003). The way citizens feel about their environments are intrinsically linked to their "social and cultural experiences" (Eisenhauer, Krannich and Blahna, 2000). As Massey (2005) describes, space is not a purely flat plan but is rich with stories and feelings, multiplicity, imagination, and a range of understandings and meanings.

Scholars have long recognised and explored notions of space and experience in a way which can help to determine what we ask for when we encourage citizens to participate in planning decisions. Considering the epistemological shift of the 1970s, the move towards the use of stories is just one example of how academic thought encouraged different modes of representation of experiences where the knowledge of 'experts' should be limited and value placed on citizens' experiences (Churchman, 1971; Friedmann, 1973; Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003; Throgmorton, 2003). However, moving further to consider conceptions of space itself, rather than only how we represent it, can dig into the essence of citizen participation in planning policy – in other words, what does it mean to experience space or place? Lefebvre (1991) showed the complex character

of space as manifested through: perceptions of space as physical; conceptions of space as an abstraction informing people's negotiations; and, 'lived' through the medium of the body interacting with others. Further, he amplified space as: a spatial practice that is externalised and material; a representation of space as a conceptual model that directs practices; and a space of representation of lived social relations within an environment (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith, 1991).

Through these conceptions of space as lived experience, there lies issues in how citizens' experiential knowledge and values are gathered in planning policy when prescribed notions of spatial planning configure and limit responses to fit with dominant practices. For example, in planning practice we ask citizens to provide their views on matters of policy within a specified framework of planning issues and material considerations, both of which are often vague, undefinable and subjective (MHCLG, 2019; Planning Portal, 2020). Furthermore, the acceptance of the idea of lived experience into planning practice has still not occurred, despite academic thought on this subject being conceived around 50 years ago. In planning practice, 'place' is thought of as an object or container which bounds activities and space is a place simply where human life plays out and where physical structures are just surfaces for activity (Graham and Healey, 1999). Through this conception, space and its surfaces can be managed socially, economically and environmentally (Graham and Healey, 1999). These notions lead to an assumption that there is a linear cause and effect process which can be expressed in a policy plan and this approach is one which is deeply embedded within planning practice, even if the extreme examples of this (e.g. blueprint planning) have lessened (Graham and Healey, 1999).

However, in this dominant conception of space there are many issues. Simply confining space to a container for citizens and their lives means to confine place as a 'medium' by which this narrow category is unable to account for experiences in and of places (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith, 1991). Soja (1989) went further to state that thinking about space in this way, means treating "space as the domain of the dead, the fixed, the undialectic and the immobile – a world of passivity and measurement rather than

action and meaning" (p. 37). The passivity and measurement hark back to the days of a rational-comprehensive approach to planning where scientific and expert knowledge is favoured over such experiential knowledge.

Another issue with the dominant approach in planning to see space as a neutral plain where cause and effect can be easily mapped, is the lack of recognition that planning for places, through policy or action, is inherently a power-laden, political act. Although planners as 'experts' see their view as neutral, we must be reminded that planners' analysis of place are only partial perspectives through their own "treacherous selective vision" and contribute towards the social production of place (Shields, 1996, p. 245; Graham and Healey, 1999). Taking the use of maps within planning practice as an example, Harvey (1996) states that "to produce one dominant cartographic image out of all this multiplicity is a power-laden act of domination. It is to force a singular discursive representational exercise upon multiple cartographies, to suppress difference and to establish a homogeneity of representation" (p. 284). Through this lens, the experiences of place is reduced where representations made by planners focus on mapping and geometrising ideals (Miles, 1997). When space is seen as a container for human activity, there is a lack of understanding of how our places are produced through the varied networks that constantly (re)produce and recombine it (Latour, 1987).

What does all of this mean for citizens, in reality, when engaging in the planning of places through policy or action? With the dominant view in planning reducing citizens' experiences and values to representations of 'empty' space whilst favouring the representations of experts, leads to planning policy processes whereby experiences of place cannot be captured through participation and are not valued alongside other knowledge and evidence in decisions. It results in a mapped and measured city that is "sterilized, frozen, vivisected and objectified through quantitative lenses" where a planners' ability to produce compelling representations is intrinsically linked to their status as an expert (Sandercock, 2010b, p. xix). It also results in policies and experts that

mediate hegemony where those with power benefit from decisions, and those without are marginalised (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith, 1991).

Here, there emerges a contradiction in how citizens experience place, how planners 'do' planning, and how policy and action in place represent one or both of these factors. Massey (2005) draws a distinction between citizens and planners: "citizens see cities through a lens of multi-faceted lived experiences…planners work through a lens of development proposals, zoning ordinances and land use allocations" (Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019, p. 3). The resultant policy is often unsuitable for the myriad of varying citizens needs and Sandercock (2010a) highlights this with strong words:

> *"Policy reports produced by government planning agencies, and also by consultants for those agencies, are cut from the same clichéd cloth. They are dry as dust. Life's juices have been squeezed from them. Emotion has been rigorously purged as if there were no such things as joy, tranquillity, anger, resentment, fear, hope, memory, and forgetting, at stake in these analyses. What purposes, whose purposes, do these bloodless stories serve? For one thing, they serve to perpetuate a myth of the objectivity and technical expertise of planners. And in doing so, these documents are nothing short of misleading at best, dishonest at worst, about the kinds of problems and choices we face in cities." (p. 29)*

To overcome this and for citizens to be able to truly express their experiences of place, we need to be mindful of the ways participation is configured, the methods used, and the ways in which we ask citizens to represent their experiences – something that will be explored further in section 2.2.3. Scholars have also argued that we need an expanded language of planning so we can acknowledge other ways of knowing that include "experiential, intuitive and somatic knowledges; local knowledges; knowledges based on the practices of talking and listening, seeing, contemplating and sharing; and knowledges expressed in visual, symbolic, ritual and other artistic ways" (Sandercock, 2010a, p. 18). Finding ways to

incorporate this could support pluralistic thinking in planning, emphasising the "relationships between space and socio-cultural processes" (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008, p. 7).

The story turn in planning could be seen as one approach to achieving a more inclusive, experiential and pluralistic mode of thinking where the unrepresentable nature of spaces can be translated into narratives that begin to make them legible (Forester, 1989; Mandelbaum, 1991; Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003; Sandercock, 2003, 2010a; Throgmorton, 2003). Allowing more creative methods that make room for this expanded language of experiences of place becomes necessary to evolve participatory practices that "honour people's individual and collective knowledge about their lives and their environments" (Sarkissian and Hurford, 2010, p. 4). It enables the dominant visions and ideas about place to be destabilised and forgotten or invisible places and citizens to be made visible (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008; Sandercock and Attili, 2010b).

The disconnect between citizens' experiences of place and the way in which planners and planning represents places and spaces in policy shows a key flaw. In other words, the often-intangible everyday vernacular experiences and values are not placed (or even collected) alongside the sterile, power-laden representations in policy created by experts. This disconnect is then enacted through the configuration of participation, the methods used and the ways in which citizens views are or are not accounted for (see section 2.2.3).

Technical Versus Local Knowledge

The previous section highlights the disparity between citizens' experiences of place and how that is undervalued within planning practice when producing policy. To further expand on this, I now consider how knowledge is used to create policy, considering the technical versus the local knowledge within planning policy and what this means for citizen participation.

As we have seen, there is a deeply embedded notion in planning practice that space is a container for human life which allows a linear cause and

effect approach that can be expressed in a policy or plan (Graham and Healey, 1999). Within this notion, citizens' knowledge and values are viewed through a deficit model where it is seen as misguided and consequently excludes citizens from participating in planning debates whilst simultaneously promoting the use of scientific rationality as the alternative in decision-making (Petts and Brooks, 2006). In practice, this means that to create policy, planners are reliant on an evidence-based approach which favours scientific and technical data as evidence, an approach that favours objective measurement using verified and tested techniques (Petts and Brooks, 2006). Evidence-based policymaking in planning is the epitome of a linear cause and effect model to planning places and even goes so far as emphasising the importance of scientific methods such as randomised control trials, seen as the 'gold standard', to test effectiveness of policy (Sayer, 2020). In other words: "policy-making is a rational process, evidence can only be generated through positive science, and experts are apolitical and value-free – and they know best" (Davoudi, 2006, p. 16).

The introduction of technology into policymaking processes in planning has only served to strengthen this belief – new technology equates to new, and more accurate, scientific methods (Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015). The use of modelling tools and data processing was seen as a way for more accurate representations to be created where changes could be measured, and patterns identified. New sources of data collection from technology were also seen as a way of gathering more data to support this evidence through social media, sensors and other technological tools.

From this we can see that planning policy remains a largely top-down endeavour which assumes the relationship between evidence and policy is unproblematic. However, we already know that planning *is* political (Shields, 1996; Graham and Healey, 1999) – there is a rich literature that shows scientific evidence to be socially constructed and so the evidence created is also political (Davoudi, 2006; Sayer, 2020). Disregarding this concept of planning and evidence as political is to try to control, command and predict complex, political socio-economic systems in a way which

holds on to the idea that expert planners are professionals that are outside of this politics (Sanderson, 2002; Sandercock, 2004). In addition, even within this imagined apolitical system of evidence and policy, a debate still occurs as to what constitutes evidence and this, in itself, is political although the rhetoric of evidence-based policy provides a façade by which to hide behind (Wesselink, Colebatch and Pearce, 2014; Sayer, 2020).

If we then consider the outcomes of planning policy processes that use this evidence-based policy rhetoric where data and evidence is seen as apolitical, we see policies imbued with judgements and values that do not match with the experiential knowledge and values of citizens (Sandercock, 2004; Davoudi, 2006). Solesbury (2002) states "there is more to policy and practice than the disinterested pursuit of truth and wisdom" (p. 93). However, we see this remaining the dominant discourse when, in 2018, a Cabinet Office document called for more randomised control trials and systematic analysis in policy (Cabinet Office, 2018). Further evidencing this dominant approach to policymaking, Hermus et al. (2020) reviewed the state of policymaking through Sanders' (2005) informational or inspirational model of policy: informational policy is based on expert knowledge focused on means and ends; inspirational policy focuses on who is involved and who participates in the design and implementation to create tailor-made approaches. They found that the informational model of expert-dominated policymaking remained the norm, further showing the reliance on planners as experts in the process.

In opposition to this, local, non-expert knowledge and value have been long recognised by some scholars for a number of years and has contributed to the growth in participatory practices. However, the continuing disconnect between citizen engagement and policy shows there is more work to be done to recognise experiential knowledge and values as a valid form of evidence alongside other ways of knowing. Sayer (2020) suggests that we must first stop asking the 'wrong questions' – rather than considering what could most accurately predict policy, we must consider context, power, and knowledge. To create more meaningful policy which speaks to the needs of citizens, or to put it in Sanders' (2005) framing, to

create more inspirational policy, we need to recognise lay knowledge and values as important and use it accordingly as evidence.

It is imperative that recognising such lay knowledge and values as important alongside other forms of knowledge is not enough as the ways in which citizens' experiences of place are captured is enacted through the configuration of participation and the methods used (see section 2.2.3). The decisions made about participation (the configuration, methods, approaches to expression) that are determined by planners, directly serve to privilege the use of scientific and technical data. Capturing experiential non-expert knowledge and values as evidence means listening to the casual, the serendipitous, and the speculative, as well as the knowledge shared informally in social groups, communities and between citizens as they navigate the politics of everyday life (Petts and Brooks, 2006). Scholars have argued that planners should incorporate such knowledge into policy processes but a fear among planners remains where policymaking is recast as "a more reflexive, uncertain and even ambiguous process compared with the instrumental rationality of policymaking as depicted in policy handbooks" (Brabham, 2009; Lewis, McGann and Blomkamp, 2020, p. 124).

Here, however, it is important to reflect that the discussion on forms of knowledge, whether scientific, technical or experiential, sit within a quasi-legal planning system. The way in which planning is legitimated is through the rule of law which gives a requirement to produce planning policy and, to some extent, fixes the way that requirement must be met (Booth, 2016). However, it also true that the nature of planning, in practice, is arguable with competing claims of knowledge debated: "Such debate is nowhere more evident than in the public inquiry process – an administrative not a judicial procedure – in which cases are made and countered in a quasi-judicial fashion in an attempt to find a decision that is proportionate to the problem and reflects fundamental values" (Booth, 2016, p. 354). The quasi-legal nature of planning means that knowledge claims can be debated and could give room to lay knowledge, however, as already shown, the

longstanding existing practices continue to privilege scientific and technical evidence as forms of knowledge.

The continuous disconnect between citizens' participation and the effect on policy can be seen as one symptom of the privileging of scientific knowledge over lay, local, experiential knowledge and values. Within neighbourhood planning the site of decision-making and policy creation is moved from experts to lay citizens, but that does not mean these issues are resolved. Neighbourhood planning, as we have seen in section 2.1.3, remains within the formal system of planning and requires citizens to work alongside a wide range of stakeholders, including professional planners. Therefore, the policy tool is still imbued with questions of what counts as evidence and the advice given serves to reinforce the dominant discourse: scientific above all else. There is, however, an opportunity identified through this to resist and challenge those notions whereby citizens have been mandated to create their own policy and so, with support and positive engagement practices, an opportunity to see their own knowledge and values as valuable.

2.2.2 Debating Citizen Participation

Moving on from the dominant notions in planning which privilege some forms of knowledge over others, this section will explore the debates in academic thought regarding citizen participation. It is often the case that participation has been accepted as a universal 'good' within policy processes, however, it is important to recognise the tensions that exist.

The role of citizen participation in planning policy and decision-making is seen as positive for a number of reasons. Firstly, such engagement is seen to achieve democratic principles which have been explored by many as concepts of fairness; the right of citizens to be informed and consulted; the right to be able to express their views on decisions; the need to include and represent disadvantaged groups; and the ways in which participation contributes to citizenship (Arnstein, 1969; Day, 1997; Berry, Portney and Thomson, 2002; Burby, 2003; Etzioni-Halevy, 2013).

Secondly, it has also been shown that public participation supports increased awareness of planning issues, increased civic engagement, and promotes the empowerment of citizens (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). Thus, citizen participation can be seen to educate and, therefore, build social capital that can further promote an engaged public. Participation enables citizens to mobilise and provides an opportunity for planners to educate stakeholders about the problems and policy issues to work towards collaborative solutions (Burby, 2003). Such education through participation is able to transcend barriers where "informed and involved citizens become citizen-experts, understanding technically difficult situations and seeing holistic, communitywide solutions" (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004, p. 56). When citizens are engaged in this way, the learning process for both citizens and government can benefit both parties where better policy outcomes are achieved, citizens feel ownership of policies and decisions, and government have political buy-in long term (Burby, 2003; Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Twitchen and Adams, 2011).

Furthermore, the better solutions said to be achieved through citizen participation can also result in power sharing and an increased trust between the public and local government (Laurian and Shaw, 2009). Decisions made through positive participatory practices mean they are transparent and inclusive with an informed citizenry and a commitment to public good (Laurian and Shaw, 2009). These opportunities mean more local, direct and deliberative means of participation that can support citizens in understanding the complex and difficult decisions that face government (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Brabham, 2009).

Finally, citizen participation also has the potential to reach out to wider communities and better represent the interests of marginalised groups (Burby, 2003). It can bring communities together, improving social outcomes to promote compromise to find solutions rather than focusing on factions and divides (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). Participation processes can provide opportunities for those marginalised groups through empowering citizens to be included and to contribute their own knowledge

that can contribute to policy outcomes as well as build new relationships (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). Ultimately, citizen engagement in planning is seen to produce better, more appropriate planning policy that enhances quality and which are more widely accepted by the public (Brabham, 2009; Laurian and Shaw, 2009).

Despite the positive aspects of engagement that are widely documented in research and practice, there are those who fear participation can have an adverse impact on planning policy and decisions. Firstly, logistical concerns are often cited with rising costs, increased time and increased resources contributing to a delayed and costly process, some of which has been evidenced through past examples of participation (Twitchen and Adams, 2011). Such concerns are compounded when the skills and resources to carry out citizen participation are often not held within local government departments and, thus, increase the time it takes to undertake such participatory processes (Brownill and Carpenter, 2007).

Further to this, apprehensions that citizen participation takes power from expert planners and institutions are also of concern – particularly to those whose power would be seen to be reduced. Within this, there is a belief that experts should be trusted to make decisions and that, even with citizen participation, the same decision would be arrived upon through the technical and professional knowledge thus wasting resources (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). Here, we can see the challenges discussed in section 2.2.1 whereby expert, scientific knowledge is privileged over local experiential knowledge and how this can be justified in practice.

Adding to this, research has shown evidence that there is a reluctance by planning professionals or institutions to engage citizens in planning decisions. Although this could be evidence of a reluctance at a strategic level to change and adapt practices, it can also stem from a lack of knowledge and skills regarding participation which requires mediation, facilitation and negotiation skills (Parker, 2008b; Sandercock and Attili, 2010b). Where institutional factors play a role, a lack of political will and

the concern that representative democracy will be negatively affected also plays a part (Parker, 2008b).

Finally, the claims regarding reaching out to communities and widening participation are often debated with research calling into question the representativeness of those who are engaged. It has been shown that many participatory processes fail to reach out beyond the 'usual suspects' which typically include those in the top socio-economic groups (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). This leaves concerns that the engagement is not representative of the wider community – or of the marginalised groups it claims to involve – and leaves assumptions that others are apathetic to planning issues and debates (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007; Parker, 2008b).

It is important to note that these debates remain central within neighbourhood planning where citizen participation is the very essence of the process. Citizens are involved in creating the planning policy through a complex process and so much engage with the all the associated tasks, as well as engage their wider community in the plan production. Within neighbourhood planning there also remains a positive assumption that citizen participation is a universal 'good' and the above debates are taken on by citizens whether knowingly or unknowingly. Recognising these debates within the neighbourhood planning arena is essential to understand the enactment of citizen participation in this context. Furthermore, reflecting on section 2.2.1, the positive assumptions about citizen participation and the issues highlighted above can stem from the privileging of scientific and expert technical knowledge. Such practices can continue within the neighbourhood planning context where citizens are embedded into existing planning systems and work with a range of experts for support.

2.2.3 Challenges in Enacting Citizen Participation

As shown earlier, citizen participation is enshrined within planning legislation to ensure citizens are engaged within policy decisions and we know that neighbourhood planning in itself is a participatory process.

Further to the debates and tensions discussed above, the way in which participation is enacted can also affect the quality of citizen contributions and policy outcomes. Decisions regarding the configuration, methods and level of influence that citizen participation can have on policy all contribute to the outcomes – something which this section will explore further.

Configuring Participation

Configuring participation is about the decisions made regarding the structure and form of engagement processes including the level of power, influence and communication afforded – for example, will participation processes support one-way or two-way communication? Decisions regarding the configuration of participation will directly impact the outcomes as practices are bounded and limited. In most cases, local government determine the means by which citizens are able to participate and this presents a challenge for both parties: citizens must consider the issue at hand to determine if it warrants their commitment or whether their views will be taken seriously, and local government must try to ensure clarity, organise logistics and consider the representativeness of the engagement (Evans-Cowley and Manta Conroy, 2005). In neighbourhood planning, citizens face both of these challenges as the people both choosing to be involved and deciding how others should be involved.

Such approaches to configuring participation have been categorised by scholars in an attempt to suggest the best approaches, for example Leach and Wingfield (1999) provide four categories including traditional, customer-oriented, new innovative methods for consultation, and new innovative methods for deliberation. This type of categorisation attempts to provide information on what each method affords and what it can achieve. Others have furthered this thought, such as Petts and Leach (2000) who provided a typology where level one pertained to education, level two as information feedback, level three as consultation, and level four as extended involvement, and within each stated how they fit with the Leach and Wingfield's conceptualisations. Regardless of the changing nature and debates surrounding such categorisations, the attempts to do so suggest

that the level of power, communication and influence given in engagement practices determines how meaningful such participation will be (Lane, 2005).

Within this, a key distinction has been suggested by scholars between more consultative forms of engagement compared with more deliberative forms. Consultative practices usually refer to one-way communication where citizens' power and influence over decisions remains low and is often referred to as tokenistic as opposed to deliberative engagement which is the preferred approach of social movements and is said to bring about democratic renewal (Evans-Cowley and Manta Conroy, 2005). This deliberative approach, although harder to achieve in practice, can be seen as more meaningful, where complex processes and governance is recognised, but citizens are given a real stake within the decisions (Healey, 1996; Laurian and Shaw, 2009).

The decisions made about the configuration of participation and the level of power, communication and influence directly impact citizen engagement. Debates on when to engage citizens have long been discussed (Parker, 2008b) and a range of work has examined the disadvantages of consulting citizens on already-formulated plans (Conroy and Gordon, 2004). Earlier participation has been hailed as a positive approach to take but is also recognised as more difficult to achieve due to cost, issues of trust, lack of skills and the complexity of planning issues. Frontloading consultation is seen as a way to enable consensus and promote long-term participation, however, this can be difficult to sustain in practice (Brownill and Carpenter, 2007).

Methods of Engagement

Directly linked to the broader configuration of participation, is the methods used to engage citizens which will also have a direct impact upon participatory outcomes. The methods that remain most common when engaging citizens in planning remain the public hearing, public meeting, town hall meetings, exhibitions, and other approaches that require in-person attendance at an event (Rowe and Frewer, 2004; Baker, Coaffee and

Sherriff, 2007; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). Sykes (2003) highlighted that the public meeting continues to be a popular method, and provided a critique showing they also continue to receive low attendance and response rates. Even at a basic level, such in-person methods are inaccessible to many, whether meetings are at inconvenient times, the meetings themselves are alien and intimidating, the form of such events are inappropriate and the format for voicing opinions do not allow for open and honest expressions (Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2006). This usually results in gathering limited feedback from those with the knowledge and ability to speak publicly or articulate their views in the correct manner (Conroy and Gordon, 2004; Laurian and Shaw, 2009). However, as they remain the most commonly used methods, they have become institutionalised in that they are now seen as the legitimate way to participate in planning decisions (Warriner *et al.*, 1996).

Traditional methods have long been criticised for their limited ability to reach out to the whole community, their inability to inspire citizens to invest in civic life and the low response rates that are often received (Kingston *et al.*, 2000; Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2002; Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2006; Brownill and Carpenter, 2007; Nuojua *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, as suggested above, they also do not provide meaningful opportunities for participation where, for example, a public meeting allows for 'experts' to speak, delivering a message and information to citizens with little "authentic, informed exchange of opinion and no opportunity to build a true consensus" (Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2002, p. 352). The traditional format does not allow for genuine two-way communication and has been seen by some as tokenistic (Gordon, Schirra and Hollander, 2011).

Further exploring the inability for traditional methods to reach out to wider communities, there is a significant lack of harder to reach groups involved in planning participation processes with the inclusion of minority and marginalised communities often not thought about (Brabham, 2009). The lack of inclusion leads to the inability to address structural inequalities and associated power structures within society and, particularly, the planning system leaving a small number of citizens to represent a large and

diverse population (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Brabham, 2009). Research has shown that those making decisions about the configuration of, and methods used in participation often lack the knowledge and skills to achieve inclusive participation and avoid mono-cultural assumptions (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007). In addition, where attempts are made to include the excluded, the use of tick-box categories can often serve to reinforce marginalisation and so there is a need for better support and structures to achieve inclusive participation (Brownill and Carpenter, 2007).

Level of Influence on Policy

The configuration and methods used present a range of barriers to citizen participation and, further to this, an important factor within these decisions remains whether citizens can influence policy and decisions. Without the ability to make a difference, citizen participation becomes a tokenistic, tick-box exercise however, further barriers exist even when the opportunity to make a difference is present.

Firstly, to be able to effect policy, citizens must understand the issues being discussed and debated and the associated details however, such information is often presented in jargon-filled, inaccessible formats which compound the barriers to participation. Given the complexity of planning, such inaccessible information and documents require citizens to gather and understand before being able to provide a response, directly impacting the ability for citizens to affect policy (Ghose, 2001; Irvin and Stansbury, 2004).

Secondly, when citizens respond in participatory processes, the responses must relate to material planning considerations to be taken into account – the scope of which is unclear, not set down in legislation and which is context-dependent (MHCLG, 2019; Planning Portal, 2020). Non-material responses are disregarded despite the argument that an artificial separation of social and community issues from planning does not enable place-making more broadly, and citizens must have confidence their response fits within the prescribed approach (Townsend, 2002; Aitken, 2010;

Layard, Milling and Wakeford, 2013). This provides the perfect example of how experiential knowledge is overlooked leaving citizens frustrated and critical of the planning system – something which continues to reinforce the low response rates (Layard, Milling and Wakeford, 2013).

Given the range of issues in configuring participation and the methods used, the further alienation of citizens through the prescribed methods for expression create added barriers to participation. This results in a disconnect between participation and the links to policy and action, where citizen engagement does not link to real-world change and where this cycle is reproduced and further reduces participation (Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2002; Moss and Coleman, 2014).

2.2.4 Improving Citizen Participation Practices

This section explored citizen participation practices to understand the purposes of engaging communities in planning decisions, the contested conceptualisations of knowledge in planning policy and the challenges in enacting participatory processes. By exploring the conceptualisations of place experiences, the section highlighted the dominant narrative still present in planning practice that scientific and technical knowledge is favoured over local, experiential knowledge. A further tension was highlighted through the exploration of the debates around citizen participation where planning practice simultaneously favours an evidence-based approach to policy and accepts citizen participation as a form of best practice in decision-making. Despite these conceptual tensions, the practices of citizen participation are continually enacted where legislation mandates citizen participation – or, in the case of neighbourhood planning, citizen participation is the essence of the policy tool. The challenges facing citizen participation were highlighted as the way in which engagement is configured, the methods used, and the level of influence given over to participation.

Within the neighbourhood planning process, citizens must face these tensions, conceptualisations and challenges and navigate through them to produce planning policy. If we consider neighbourhood planning as a site

for resistance (see section 2.1.3 and 2.1.4), there is a further opportunity to resist the dominant narratives in planning and to centre the experiential knowledge of citizens in policymaking. Negotiating between citizens' experiences and the technical data preferred by planners will potentially provide the impetus for positive change. Furthermore, neighbourhood planning has the opportunity to also resist the traditional approaches to engagement and could configure participation to be inclusive, use methods that encourage participation from a wide range of citizens, and ensure contributions are influential on policy outcomes. However, institutional and cultural norms within planning, and within which neighbourhood planning sits, are not easy to change or resist and so new practices are needed to support citizens in neighbourhood planning (Lewis, McGann and Blomkamp, 2020).

Considering the uptake of neighbourhood planning, as we did in the previous section, I argue the need to consider how we can best support citizens in their endeavours through processes, tools and technologies that can help to negotiate these challenging spaces. Finding new ways to engage with planning issues that incorporate experiential lay knowledge is essential and can "take a significant step toward creating the conditions that may lead to a more democratic form of community planning" (Bridger, 1997, p. 78).

2.3 Digital Participation

The chapter has explored the long history of citizen participation in planning policy, culminating in the introduction of neighbourhood planning. The chapter moved to consider citizen participation practices in planning, highlighting that citizens' experiential knowledge is often pushed aside for other forms of knowledge in policy creation, and the ways in which participation is enacted contributes to this through poor configuration and methods. Thus far, the chapter has focused on traditional forms of engagement (particularly as described in section 2.3.3) however, here, I turn to consider digital participation.

Digital approaches to citizen participation has been a growing field of interest both within planning and human-computer interaction (HCI). Using technology to enable participation is a rapidly growing phenomenon and has long been recognised as having the potential to engage citizens in civic matters (Moss and Coleman, 2014; Potts, 2020). However, despite the recognition that digital engagement could bring a range of benefits such as a deepened connection between citizens and governments (Brabham, 2009), the use and take-up of technology to engage in policymaking, although increasing, has generally remained low (Kingston, 2002; Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2005, 2006; Burgess, Jones and Muir, 2018; Grayling Engage and RTPI, 2020).

In this section, I explore digital participation tools in planning to promote new modes of participation that can better support citizens in sharing their experiences of place. First, I will explore the links between the disciplines of planning and HCI to highlight the civic turn and the digital civics agenda arguing the two fields need to work together. I then move to explore the affordances of digital participation before providing a broad review of existing civic technology. Ultimately, I argue the need for technology to be incorporated into participation practices as a way to expand the language of planning and incorporate new forms of expression.

2.3.1 Planning and HCI

HCI is increasingly concerned with technology within a socio-political context rather than a simple conception of technology and a user and, to do so, is engaging in interdisciplinary research to support this mode of thinking (Bardzell and Bardzell, 2011). This section will chart a brief history of the development of HCI towards a digital civics agenda to provide context to the importance of HCI developments for citizen participation in planning.

First to Third Wave HCI

The beginnings of HCI focused on people as users performing tasks with a computer. It assumed a single user as a subject "to be studied through rigid guidelines, formal methods, and systematic testing" (McCarthy and Wright,

2004; Bødker, 2015, p. 24). The main goal of HCI in this paradigm was to optimise the relationship between humans and computers. As the field began to shift, the second wave of HCI began to focus on users as a group performing tasks, usually in a workplace. The methods used became more varied including "participatory design workshops, prototyping, and contextual inquiries" (Bødker, 2006, p. 1). Rather than focusing on top-down solutions through the lens of engineering problems, the second wave looked to be more 'human-centred' (Bannon, 2011), taking into account the context in which the interaction takes places. However, despite context beginning to feature more in the field, how people feel about interactions and how this fits with the larger systems as well as everyday life was still left at the margins (Harrison, Tatar and Sengers, 2007).

There has been a shift to a third wave of HCI which focuses more on the experiences in our everyday lives, and context begins to play a much larger role in technology design and use – something which is useful when considering the challenges of centring experiential knowledge in planning policy. The shift to this third paradigm arose based on a range of considerations from previous research including the lack of context in studies; the recognition of social interactions as important (both in workplace studies as in the second wave HCI but also beyond the workplace); the issues from evaluations based on quantitative metrics alone; the recognition that computing was becoming non-task-oriented; and the lack of emotion in previous research (Harrison, Tatar and Sengers, 2007). This led to the focus moving toward 'embodied interaction': "the way in which we come to understand the world, ourselves, and interaction derives crucially from our location in a physical and social world as embodied actors" (Harrison, Tatar and Sengers, 2007, p. 6).

The civic turn in HCI considers "meaning and meaning construction as a central focus" (Harrison, Tatar and Sengers, 2007, p. 7). It moves away from people as 'users' to understanding their situated knowledge; computer interfaces become centred around place taking into account the context; and researchers are also recognised as having their own situated knowledge as a way to present multiple interpretations (Harrison, Tatar and Sengers,

2007). Civic technology moves from thinking about the design as central with the context a peripheral consideration to accommodating the context specifically (Harrison, Tatar and Sengers, 2007). Boehner and DiSalvo (2016, p. 2970) summarises the latest trends in HCI as a logical step "from the cognitive, to the social, to the cultural, and now perhaps to the civic".

Digital Civics

Within this civic turn, digital civics emerged as a key concept which focused on a range of subjects in civil society including health, social care, education, urban planning, politics and much more. This PhD has been undertaken through the Centre for Doctoral Training in Digital Civics which looks to bring together a variety of disciplines to think about technology and, in my case, planning.

Digital civic supports "citizens becoming agents of democracy with and through technologies and in dialogue with the institutions that can actualize public will" (Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2016). It enables interdisciplinary work that considers the way in which technology can mediate interactions in civic life with the hope of transforming ways of working to support citizen empowerment in decision making (Asad and Le Dantec, 2017). Digital civics has emerged as a vision to create a "participatory imaginary in which both citizens and local government can explore the value of an alternative model of service provision" (Olivier and Wright, 2015, p. 62).

Built on the idea we can move away from the 'negative' politics to create a better civic environment (Boyte, 2010), digital civics imagines new ways to support citizens without turning to a solution-focused approach of designing and developing technology. This focuses on a relational approach to the development of digital tools that can "support citizens envisioning, advocating and materializing particular changes in their everyday lives" (Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2016, p. 3).

A whole range of research has emerged through this tradition considering how technology can mediate civic interactions and how political action can be co-produced (Asad and Le Dantec, 2017; Corbett, 2018). This provides an

opportunity for technology to support active participation through expression of experiential and contextual knowledge in decision-making processes (Nuojua and Kuutti, 2008; Koeman, Kalnikaité and Rogers, 2015). The growth of 'digital civics' research has sparked the design and development of technology to support new interactions with place, supporting citizens' views to be better heard and empowering citizens to 'do it for themselves' (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2016; Johnson *et al.*, 2016, 2018; Maskell *et al.*, 2018; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018; Puussaar *et al.*, 2018).

Within digital civics and the civic turn, HCI researchers called for more involvement in public policy and research emerged around social networking, e-government, accessibility in the built environment and more (Winckler and Sabatier, 2003; Prost, Schrammel and Tscheligi, 2014; Lazar, 2015; Rodger, Vines and Mclaughlin, 2016; Dow, Comber and Vines, 2018). Research showed both the need for technology and policy to work together more closely and explored the boundaries between HCI and policymaking (Lazar *et al.*, 2015; Spaa *et al.*, 2019). Despite this, however, the majority of research focus remains on increasing participation in consultation processes and developing new methods to engage citizens (Schroeter and Foth, 2009; Bhimani *et al.*, 2013; Crivellaro *et al.*, 2015; Johnson *et al.*, 2016; Asad *et al.*, 2017), each of which is only a small part of an overall policymaking process.

Working Across Disciplines

As HCI has experienced the civic turn and digital civics has emerged, planning has also sought to engage with technology, however, the two disciplines rarely meet. The approaches to technology development and use, therefore, are very different between the two fields, with reviews of technology in planning showing a more solution-focused approach (Hanzl, 2007; Ertiö, 2015a). In particular, Ertiö (Ertiö, 2015a) reviewed apps for planning participation creating a typology that categorised whether the technology was environment-centric or people-centric, strategic or operational, one-way or interactive. Within this the technologies were divided into categories: informing, reporting, shared reality, trend

monitoring, integrator, nudge, local network, citizen impact and public dialogue apps. The majority of apps were in the informing category where technology was used to present information to citizens and the review highlighted the need for increased dialogue between citizens and planners.

With this in mind, a different approach is present in the HCI discipline, particularly in the civic turn and digital civics agenda, which considers how we involve people in the design of technology and empowers citizens to take action with and through technology (Vines *et al.*, 2013; Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2016). A more complex and nuanced understanding of the (dis)affordances of technology exists in which issues of social justice are explored both within the design of the technology and how it is deployed and used (Dombrowski, Harmon and Fox, 2016; Fox *et al.*, 2016; Walker, 2018; Costanza-Chock, 2020). There is some recognition by scholars in planning that technology is constructed and used within the political context and, therefore, some tools serve to reinforce existing structures and practices while others disrupt and renew (Sandercock and Attili, 2010b). However, the issue in HCI remains that tools are often developed to address one small part of the policy process and often struggle to develop technologies which link with the widely accepted approaches to creating policy (as discussed in 2.2.1).

To bring two fields together to learn from one another, we need researchers that can work across both and can bring together two areas of academic thought. This could allow new modes of citizen participation that use digital methodologies and can create new interactions in planning. To further explore the use of digital engagement, particularly in the HCI field, this chapter will now explore the use of technology through a variety of different methods.

2.3.2 Affordances of Digital Participation Tools

Research has suggested that digital participation tools have the potential to reach out to citizens in a more inclusive way and to support new modes of engagement that can allow the articulating of citizens' experiences (Foth *et al.*, 2009). To further contextualise this, scholars have attempted to

compare the traditional non-digital approaches with digital modes of participation showing that citizens report greater satisfaction with digital methodologies (Conroy and Gordon, 2004; Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2006). In contrast, some researchers believe that digital approaches simply mimic the traditional methods rather than considering the new opportunities that arise from the use of technology (Twitchen and Adams, 2011; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones and Comber, 2019). Other scholars believe that the use of technology to engage citizens remains exclusive and elitist serving to further marginalise those that are already underrepresented in participatory processes (Craig, Harris and Weiner, 2002; Pettingill, 2008).

Importantly, however, the debate should not be centred on digital versus traditional but focused on digital as another complementary methodology, therefore, providing the best chance to reach out to citizens (Macpherson, 1999). To achieve such an approach, work is needed to ensure technology is used appropriately, ensuring digital tools are not seen as solutions to problems and to understand the intended and unintended consequences of technology design and deployment (Moss and Coleman, 2014; Costanza-Chock, 2020). It is, therefore, important to consider the affordances of technology – or, in other words, the properties of technology that show its possible interactions – to understand how digital participation methods could better support planning policy decisions.

Design (Dis)Affordances

Earlier in the chapter there were discussions regarding the political nature of evidence and knowledge (see section 2.2.1) and, in the same way, the design of technology also contains and embeds politics and worldviews through the design process (Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015). Designing technology is a value-laden process where judgements are embedded, implicitly or explicitly, within the technology and these create the affordances, or disaffordances of technological tools (Costanza-Chock, 2020). These judgements can lead to bias within the design of tools that could favour or benefit some groups of citizens over others, and can create inequalities embedded within the technology (Costanza-Chock, 2020). In the same way that traditional methods of participation must be configured,

an extra layer of decisions in the design of technology can decide the boundaries of future participatory configurations and, therefore, practices. For example, decisions regarding one-way or two-way communication, whether citizens require authentication prior to access, or whether users can interact, are all design decisions that can impact future participation practices (Afzalan and Muller, 2018).

Within planning participation, research has shown that digital tools could be designed to be planner-led or participant-led which would each directly impact the type of interactions that are allowed and which occur in practice (Afzalan and Muller, 2018). Where technology is often embedded into the fabric of the city, design decisions can impact the values rooted in those tools and, therefore, the data collected and how it is used (Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015). Furthermore, it is essential to understand that beyond the initial design of tools, offline social processes such as the existing inequalities within society mean citizens may not be represented equally – in other words, algorithms or other technological processes can devalue data and serve to further marginalise citizens (Zook and Graham, 2007).

Considering the design of technology through this lens serves as a reminder that digital tools and methodologies are not value free. This does not mean that the use of technology should be avoided, but that we should remember the limitations of designs and what such tools enable or counteract (Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015). It is also a reminder that as the field of digital technology continues to rapidly change and develop, early issues with technology does not mean approaches are inappropriate but that context and design is needed to provide quality participatory opportunities (Moss and Coleman, 2014).

Configuring Participation

As with the earlier discussion (see 2.2.3), configuring participation is still important in digital participation. This is particularly true when considering that digital approaches were confined to one-way communication for some time – a vote, a comment left in response to a

question or providing information to respond to – which negates the possibility of debate or deliberation (Johnson *et al.*, 2017). Such participation does little to move beyond the traditional approaches.

Moving from this, however, we have now seen that the development of digital tools and methods has matured, with a wide variety of technology and approaches to engage citizens that can provide opportunities to foster meaningful, interactive and deliberative engagement practices (Fredericks and Foth, 2013). Deliberative methods and tools have been developed that include a game that builds deliberative capacity through role-play and ideation (Gordon, Michelson and Haas, 2016); a web reader that encourages fact-checking (Kim *et al.*, 2015); and the use of social media for political deliberation (Semaan *et al.*, 2014). Such approaches have increased interactivity providing more meaningful opportunities for engagement that includes debate and deliberation in a way that can foster discourse to arrive at a consensus (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008; Farina *et al.*, 2014; Korn and Voida, 2015).

The rise of third wave HCI prompted the rise of the 'everyday' in which interactive, innovative and creative methods are able to capture the value of everyday experiences. There has been a range of developments of methods and tools that support everyday participation to capture lived experience, or the vernacular, such as *Viewpoint*, a situated device that allows voting and participation (Taylor *et al.*, 2012); *Community Conversational*, a tabletop game that uses maps and markers to track debate and discussion of the everyday locale (Johnson *et al.*, 2017); and methods that approach geographical location as means to express views about place (Sarkissian and Hurford, 2010). Media has also been strongly suggested as the means by which this type of participation and deliberation can be supported, as well as creative methods such as *JigsAudio*, a physical tool that allows drawing and talking about place to be captured imaginatively (Sandercock and Attili, 2010b; Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). Other work has shown that such methods can maximise participation and offer the opportunity for shared community narratives and histories (Klaebe *et al.*, 2007; Goldstein *et al.*, 2015). Despite this move to new and interactive

approaches, digital engagement does not always embrace the deliberative aspect and there is a significant scope to promote this further, particularly to show how such debate manifests in policy and decision-making (Moss and Coleman, 2014). Furthermore, the technological capability may have significantly moved forward, however there remains a lack of skills held by planners in knowing how to use, configure and deploy such tools and how participatory technology could be utilised (Kingston and Vlastaras, 2020).

Inclusivity and Access

Digital technology is often hailed as an easy, low-cost method by which to reach out to citizens (Nuojua *et al.*, 2008; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). Data from 2019 shows the internet use in the UK has increased since 2011 in all age ranges, with a large uptake in 65 year olds and older, and this will have continued to grow in the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Research has also shown that digital participation is able to create an inclusive and diverse participatory process that can specifically involve those that are usually marginalised or underrepresented, including younger people (Fredericks and Foth, 2013; Moss and Coleman, 2014; Ertiö, 2015a).

Such inclusivity within digital participation is possible through the ability of technology to bridge time and space, therefore, relaxing the time constraints and burdens placed on citizens (Evans-Cowley and Manta Conroy, 2005; Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2006). With technology increasingly becoming ubiquitous, it is argued that digital participation becomes more easily accessible, enabling collaboration and encouraging asynchronous participation (Moss and Coleman, 2014; Ertiö, 2015a; Afzalan and Muller, 2018). Such affordances enable citizens to participate within their own environments and research has shown this enables a stronger connection to place, resulting in stronger participatory practices and buy-in from citizens (Fredericks and Foth, 2013).

Furthermore, accessibility does not simply equate to inclusivity or physical access to tools, but also refers to the qualities of the information and tools provided. There has long been criticisms that the information presented in

traditional participation processes is too complex and requires citizens to have a sophisticated level of understanding (Ghose, 2001; Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Sandercock and Attili, 2010b). Digital participation is able to rely on accessible approaches to presenting such information in understandable and interactive formats that enables access by citizens on their own terms and at their own pace (Fredericks and Foth, 2013). Such an approach can empower citizens and democratises participatory processes, as well as encouraging citizens to learn (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008).

Despite this, however, some scholars still feel digital participation promotes a shallow, short-term participation which exasperates issues of equity and the digital divide (Nuojua *et al.*, 2008; Afzalan and Muller, 2018). Despite the increasing ubiquity of technology, there are citizens unable to access digital tools and, in such instances, such approaches could serve to deepen inequalities and further marginalise those without access (Ertiö, 2015a; Afzalan and Muller, 2018). The cost of access to those with low incomes and the issue of the digital divide can show digital engagement as elitist (Craig, Harris and Weiner, 2002; Twitchen and Adams, 2011).

The affordances of technology show that careful consideration is needed to design and configure technology but that innovative approaches can create new modes of participation that can promote inclusivity. A final quote can sum up the potential and use of digital technologies: "In a political sense, then, the digital city cannot replace the physical city. And yet, it can help to transform the power dynamics of traditional urban politics" (Sandercock and Attili, 2010b, p. 326).

2.3.3 Reviewing Civic Engagement Technology

Moving from a broad understanding of HCI in the context of digital participation in planning and the discussion of affordances of technology, this section will focus on reviewing the use digital tools used within a planning policy context within the disciplines of planning and HCI. There has been a growth of work in HCI for civic participation and community agendas to support citizens "on their own terms" (Le Dantec and Fox, 2015). Indeed, a wealth of research has focused on activism (DiSalvo *et al.*, 2008;

Lee and Hsieh, 2013; Afzalan and Evans-Cowley, 2015); opinion gathering (Taylor *et al.*, 2012; Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2014; Koeman, Kalnikaité and Rogers, 2015); facilitating discussion and debate (Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2010; DiSalvo, 2012); and action (Olander *et al.*, 2011; Semaan *et al.*, 2015); as well as the recognition of civic crowdsourcing for collective knowledge feeding into political decisions (Harding *et al.*, 2015).

As part of this review of literature, a comprehensive search was carried out to identify digital tools used within planning participation and found a significant number of technologies in research and beyond. A summary of common themes can be found here but a full discussion and details of individual tools can be found in Appendix A and engages with literature from both planning and HCI.

The first main finding from his review showed a disparity between the digital technologies within planning participation between government-centric tools which are used and controlled by city authorities and citizen-centric tools which enable citizens to connect. Government-centric tools were used, for example, for the purposes of services, civic engagement and data analysis with the majority of technologies used to consult or inform citizens. Further to this, government-centric tools that were led by planners meant the need to either require access to already-established online spaces for citizens such as a neighbourhood Facebook group, or they face the challenges of gaining buy in to new modes of participation and creating a public to participate (Evans-Cowley and Griffin, 2011). In contrast, citizen-centric tools which encouraged connection and collaboration between citizens were found to be used more for empowering citizens to take action on their own terms. However, the risk of citizen-centric tools led by citizens is that they are not connected to planning policy or decision-making processes. Considering who leads such tools, and how they are configured is essential to overcome such barriers.

Secondly, many of the technologies within this review claim to reach out to wider audiences or provide new modes of participation that appeal to those that would usually not engage. However, considering the example of social

media, the use of different platforms reaches out to different demographics with Snapchat being more popular in urban areas than rural, Instagram having 90% of users under 35, and Twitter having 60% male users and 45% of users aged 16-22 (RTPI South East, 2020). This increase supports the idea that digital participation can reach out to wider audiences, however, there is no one single digital solution to participation and a range of digital methods is still required.

Furthermore, many of the digital tools allowed or supported location-based participation whereby citizens' locations were captured through the tool to provide additional context. Research has shown that civic engagement situated in place should be encouraged and that situated interactions can allow for localised conversations to capture the everyday nature of conversations and feelings about neighbourhoods (Korn, 2013; Fredericks *et al.*, 2015; Salim and Haque, 2015).

Finally, the review highlighted the range of creative and playful tools that have been developed and used within planning participation. Elements of creativity and imagination have been incorporated into a wide range of technologies from digital media, virtual and augmented reality and games, to social media and digital messaging. This quality within digital participation can be a powerful tool to capture citizens' experiences of place to be incorporated into planning and policy processes (Sandercock and Attili, 2010b). Digital games, for example, are said to "bring joy, pleasure, and engagement to the citizens while educating them and involving them in community decisions" (p. 496) while virtual and augmented reality can be incorporated to better engage young people in expressing their experiences of their neighbourhood (Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, 2017). The use of video or participatory media was a particular feature and it has been found that it can provide "immediate and authentic feedback" and can strengthen and empower communities (Sarkissian, 2010, p. 163; High *et al.*, 2012). Participatory video can be a tool for positive social change which provides the opportunity for deeper engagement, allowing the revelation of social relations that were previously hidden and encouraging collective action (Lunch and Lunch, 2006;

Sandercock, 2010a; Milne, 2016). The use of film within planning history is also well established with a move in the mid-20th century toward the creation of planning films to explore radical ideas and to convey planning ideas to a wider audience (Tewdwr-Jones, 2005; Freestone and Amati, 2014). It can provide a catalyst for community dialogue that wouldn't otherwise occur, is easily accessible for most people and it can help with the formation of communities around particular issues or causes (Sandercock and Attili, 2010a; Bartindale, Schofield and Wright, 2016).

Despite the clear indication that digital technologies for participation do exist, very few of the tools reviewed are used within mainstream planning practices. Many of the tools reviewed are from the HCI field where a wealth of research has moved focus away from technology to perform transactions to a relational model that can support political thinking and action as well as encourage co-produced and co-owned tools (Olivier and Wright, 2015). With the current disconnect between the planning and HCI fields, such technologies may be tested within planning policy but do little to enter the planning discipline more broadly. Furthermore, the disconnect means that the testing of alternative forms of evidence through digital means, such as participatory video outputs, have not been tested within the quasi-legal planning system in which evidence must be robust to stand up during planning inquiries.

2.3.4 The Digital Challenge

This section has explored the link between the planning and HCI discipline, the digital civics agenda, the affordances of digital participation and reviewed existing digital tools. The link between the two disciplines seldom occurs, but this section has called for more interdisciplinary working to improve participation practices in planning policy and has shown how the field of HCI has taken strides to incorporate citizens' experiences within technology design and design tools that can further support the sharing of experiences of place. As with more traditional methods, the section has highlighted the need to consider the affordances of digital participation including the design, configuration and the inclusivity. The broad review of civic technology within planning and HCI

has shown there is a wealth of tools developed and tested which support new modes of participation that can spark creativity and imagination, as well as widen participation to new publics. The challenge, however, is to connect these new digital modes of participation to policy processes.

Within neighbourhood planning, digital participation could serve to support citizens in engaging with the holistic policy process as well as to engage their wider community in the production of the neighbourhood plan. With digital tools able to simplify complex information and present it to citizens, new participation tools could support a simplification of the complex policy process and the information within it. Furthermore, linking to the earlier discussion of citizens' experiential knowledge (see section 2.2.1), digital participation could provide new modes of participation to support the sharing of experiences that link directly to policy outcomes (Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). With the uptake of neighbourhood planning and the challenges faced in the use of traditional engagement methods, I argue the need to consider how we can best support citizens in neighbourhood planning through the use of digital participation.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a thorough overview of citizen participation in planning policy and has detailed the neighbourhood planning context. Participation in planning policy has a long and complex history but the introduction of neighbourhood planning moves power to citizens in the form of participatory democracy. Although neighbourhood planning can be framed through the neoliberal pro-growth agenda, I have shown the ways in which citizens have resisted this and created positive policy agendas for their local community. Wider participatory practices, however, still show a disconnect between participation and policy with conceptualisations of engagement remaining whereby citizens' experiential knowledge is devalued and scientific knowledge privileged. The wider debates regarding participation and the way it is enacted also provide evidence of the disparity between participation and policy as well as

highlighting the often-exclusive methods used. Furthermore, digital participation and the developments in HCI have identified the need to improve participation to include a wide range of innovative and creative methods that can help to support the capturing of citizens' experiences in a way which could better link to policy outcomes.

Within neighbourhood planning, the citizen-led approach to policy remains bounded within the existing planning system, and this combination could create new challenges or could provide an opportunity to learn from the literature presented and improve participation practices. Through this literature review, it is clear that more research is needed to qualitatively understand the knowledge of citizens' in enacting neighbourhood planning in a way which centres their experiences. Furthermore, it is also evident that new approaches to non-digital and digital support for neighbourhood planning could improve participation with the policy process. Finding new ways to engage with planning issues that incorporate experiential lay knowledge is essential and can "take a significant step toward creating the conditions that may lead to a more democratic form of community planning" (Bridger, 1997, p. 78). This thesis presents research which seeks to explore and address these challenges.

Chapter 3

3. Action Research: Understanding and Designing for Citizens' Experiences

The previous chapter explored citizen engagement in policymaking and, specifically, neighbourhood planning and the use of digital technology for democratic participation. The literature highlighted that citizen engagement in policymaking broadly suffers from issues of a disconnect between citizens experiences and the policy created which link to the privileging of scientific knowledge forms and poor participatory practices. The growth in the use of digital tools to support engagement in policy was also demonstrated, drawing from literature within HCI, but low adoption was identified as a key issue linked to a lack of skills, knowledge and availability of technological approaches. The chapter ended with a challenge for this research which leads to my research aims and questions, as previously set out in Chapter 1 and explored below.

The research is motivated by the aim:

> *To investigate how digital and non-digital tools and interventions can be designed to better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood development plans.*

To achieve this aim, a series of research questions guided the research:

RQ1. How is the neighbourhood planning process enacted by citizens and what are the opportunities and challenges faced?
RQ2. How could the design of digital and non-digital approaches in neighbourhood planning better support citizen engagement?
RQ3. What digital technologies can be developed and used to support citizen engagement in neighbourhood planning?

The literature review and forming of my research questions led to the need for a qualitative approach that could explore citizens lived experiences in neighbourhood planning and draw on their knowledge of the process as a way to centre their needs. Qualitative research enables research to be conducted in "the world(s) 'out there'" or, in other words, 'in the wild', to

explore social phenomena within its context (Flick, 2017; Rogers and Marshall, 2017). Quantitative methodologies were deemed unsuitable for this research as they are not able to understand the complex factors at play and such approaches would require a hypothesis to be deduced from theoretical understandings and then tested – something which would not account for citizens' experiences (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2017). Furthermore, when considering the aim to investigate the use of digital technology within neighbourhood planning, qualitative research is often the chosen approach to better understand citizen's experiences of technology (McCarthy and Wright, 2004).

This leads to an inductive rather than deductive approach where I seek to collect data and interpret its meaning without a prescribed theoretical framework (Willig, 2013; Flick, 2015). In addition, I take a constructionist view which "draws attention to the fact that human experiences, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically" (Willig, 2013, p. 7). Such a world view understands that there are 'knowledges' rather than one single truth and which are created by a range of "actors, interactions and situations" (Willig, 2013; Flick, 2015, p. 25). This paradigm is able to link to the literature explored in the previous chapter which explores notions of competing knowledge in planning and is able to deal with this in the research to enable citizens experiences to be valued as one form of knowledge among many. A constructionist view is helpful in centring the lived experiences of citizens which can each have their own meaning as well as the many and varied ways we can perceive and understand that as a researcher (Willig, 2013).

Leading from this, I adopted an Action Research (AR) approach which is a common methodology used within HCI research when considering the use and design of technology (Suchman, 1987; Hayes, 2011). Other methodological choices could have been selected, such as Research through Design (Zimmerman and Forlizzi, 2014) or Experience-Centred Design (Wright and McCarthy, 2010), however such approaches have prescriptive values and ideals to follow. In the case of this research, it was important to be led by citizens in understanding their experiences and

needs and to direct research accordingly. Action Research enables this, as will be explored in more depth below. Furthermore, other inductive approaches, such as Grounded Theory, was seen to not be suitable, as the reflective cycles of AR allow the centring of citizens' experiences whilst recognising my, as the researcher, as a contributor to the research, and provides a space for reflection.

In this chapter, I first present an overview of AR as an approach, providing a general overview and moving to explore its epistemological stance and the frameworks used to carry out the research. From this I will then discuss why an AR approach is appropriate for conducting research into citizens engagement with neighbourhood planning and how it can contribute to the move toward change or action for better citizen support. Following this, I will detail my research describing the context and design, the data collection and analysis methods, and how this can be depicted through the AR framework.

3.1 Action Research

Action research (AR) is an approach to investigation which is concerned with ways of knowing that value tacit knowledge and democratic participation (Stringer, 2014; Coleman, 2015). The approach is often traced to educational research but has been used in a wide range of settings including industry, health and community development (McKernan, 1996).

There is not one accepted definition of AR due to the varied nature of the practices and approaches used but AR can be seen as a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview" (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 1). This methodological approach is concerned with understanding the nature of events and social phenomena and does so in a way which considers context and does not prescribe to the idea that solutions to real-world problems are generalisable (Stringer, 2014). Attempts to define AR have determined it is a way in which social situations can be studied "with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (Elliott, 1981, p. 69) or that it contributes to

practice and academia by tackling social problems collaboratively within a "mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Rapoport, 1970, p. 499). Another definition describes AR as a "collaborative process of research, education, and action, explicitly oriented toward social change" (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2008, p. 90). Ultimately, AR provides a powerful framework with which to conduct research 'in the wild'. Below, I provide a general overview of AR before outlining the philosophical stance that underpins the approach and the frameworks that guide action researchers.

3.1.1 AR: A General Overview

AR is a mode of scientific inquiry which takes a collaborative approach that seeks to engage citizens as full participants in the research and which seeks to create knowledge to specific problems in specific contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Stringer, 2014). In this sense, AR does not seek to create learning, knowledge and solutions that can be generalised to other contexts or groups, but focuses on the complexity of the social world in individual contexts (Stringer, 2014). AR focuses on real-world problems, often termed 'wicked problems', which are "complex, open-ended, and intractable" (Head, 2008, p. 101). Or, as Ackoff (1999) termed, 'messes' which represent "complex, multi-dimensional, intractable, dynamic problems that can only be partially addressed and partially resolved" (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003, p.21). As Dick (2012) suggests, the ever-changing nature of social phenomenon means that a solution may not be appropriate to future problems even in a seemingly similar context. Therefore, AR seeks to do research 'in the wild' to focus on the contextually specific problems with the relevant stakeholders as equal participants. The idea of AR and research 'in the wild' can be traced to both Lewin (1946) and Dewey (1998) who led the idea that research should move away from isolated laboratories to real-world contexts such as communities and that an iterative process of evaluation and practice would create a learning cycle.

The ways in which AR is contextually tied to issues and place is due to the participatory and collaborative nature of inquiry which sees citizens, experts, researchers and all involved as full and equal participants (Stringer, 2014). Within AR it is important that research is not done *about* or *to*

citizens, but that research is carried out *with* them in a way which is non-exploitative and aims to enhance the lives of those who take part (Stringer, 2014; Coleman, 2015). This means AR aims to enact local 'action-oriented' inquiry and change in a group or community (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Adding to this, AR encourages the sharing of knowledge on equal terms in a 'flat' organisational structure that enables parity and ensures participants are not studied as subjects (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Stringer, 2014). Conducting research through this lens can encourage feelings of pride, dignity, identity, control, responsibility, unity and ties to place (Kelly and Gluck, 1979 cited in Stringer, 2014).

Reflecting on the role of the researcher in AR moves to consider a new role of facilitator rather than an individual who is directing and leading the research (Stringer, 2014). As all participants in the research, including the researcher, are seen as equal, there is a move away from 'expert' versus 'lay' to one which values the experiences and knowledge of all. Here, the researcher's role is to scaffold participation, providing the conditions to enable participation, whilst taking part in the learning process alongside other citizens. As a facilitator, the researcher supports the process of defining problems, exploring solutions, and supports a move to resolving the issues. In addition, researchers actively participate, committing to "a form of research which challenges unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices" (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003, p. 11).

To support such participation, Stringer (2014) provides four principles for AR: developing strong relationships, effective communication, full participation, and inclusivity. All of these principles intertwine in a way which can configure participation (Vines *et al.*, 2013). Stringer (2014) proposes that relationships will have an impact on citizens' experiences and so research should promote equality, harmony, resolving conflicts, and encouraging open and dialogic interactions within those relationships. Within this, communication is key to facilitating those relationships and research should draw on Habermas (1979) which posits that change, or action, only comes from communicative action which requires

understanding, truth, sincerity, and appropriateness. The third principle, participation, is also key in enabling citizens to take part in exploring issues that concern them and the research process should provide support for this as citizens learn to act as full participants within the research. Finally, inclusion in enabling diverse groups to participate with the research inclusive of all the relevant issues and potential solutions, as well as maximising opportunities for citizens to participate.

3.1.2 AR's Epistemological Stance

In order to explore the approach of AR within this research, I must first provide an overview of the philosophical stance. AR has been described as "a form of science in the realm of practical knowledge" (Coghlan, 2011, p. 55) which means it not only provides a participatory way of working but also makes claims about knowledge creation. In direct contrast to positivist science, AR builds on much of the structuralist or post-positivist thinking in acknowledging the subjectivity of truth and recognising the multiplicity of narratives (Coleman, 2015). In this sense, AR sits in contrast to positivist approaches such as experimental and quantitative research which are able to study the physical world but has found difficulties in capturing the complexities of the social world (Stringer, 2014). AR, therefore, holds that knowledge is socially constructed and recognises that our work is already embedded into a system of values (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). Despite this, there is still a tendency for positivist approaches in research to dominate and this mode of inquiry sees truth as something attainable through measurements in a way which will provide objective reality: "objective, non-reflexive, non-biased, generalizable, context-free research" (Coleman, 2015, p. 394). The critiques of positivist science are many and are well-established and so, for qualitative researchers, notions of socially constructed and subjective knowledge are widely accepted (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Gergen, 1991, 1999; Coleman, 2015).

Tracing the origins of AR also helps to uncover the epistemology of the approach where Lewin (1946), often seen as the founding father of AR, developed an approach to research which created the action cycles.

However, ideas of AR have been developed alongside this by the science in education movement (e.g. Bain, 1879), experimental and progressive thought (e.g. Dewey, 1910) and the rescontructionist movement (e.g. Corey, 1953). Throughout these approaches to research, there was a common thread which united them in conducting research in the real world in a way which centred knowledge as socially constructed and subjective. The work of Dewey (Dewey, 1998) significantly contributes to the epistemological framing in his conception of pragmatism which calls for inquiry to come from human life and experience.

Coleman (2015) explores the ways of knowing as part of AR which values subjective lived experience, practical knowledge, shared and embodied knowledge and presentational and artful knowledge. Subjective lived experience challenges the dichotomy of objective and subjective knowledge and draws from the phenomenological idea that the real world is accessed through subjective experience, something which Husserl termed Lifeworld (Coleman, 2015). Practical knowledge draws from pragmatism where democracy is valued and 'rightness', as opposed to truth, is an ongoing conversation (Reason, 2003). This incorporates tacit knowledge, a term coined by Polanyi (1967) to describe the internal knowledge that cannot be described discursively. Shared and embodied knowledge draws from the tacit knowledge of communities whereby knowledge is created by exploring the 'whole' through 'parts' and remains partial knowledge as the world unfolds (Wenger, 2000). Presentational and artful knowledge recognises that if tacit, shared and embodied knowledge are valued in AR, then there is a need to articulate that in a way which language can often not capture (Coleman, 2015).

From this, it is clear that AR is an approach to research which values the tacit, experiential and subjective lived experience of participants as a form of knowledge within research and in a way which can stand alongside other scientific inquiry. Rather than viewing the subjective nature of results and knowledge claims as a weakness, the rich understanding is favoured as a way to explore the complexities of the social world. In the case of this research, I was able to use this methodological approach in a way which

centred the experiences of those involved in neighbourhood planning and, given the issues presented in Chapter 2 regarding the way in which policy is created through scientific knowledge, AR enabled inquiry that could work towards forms of action and change.

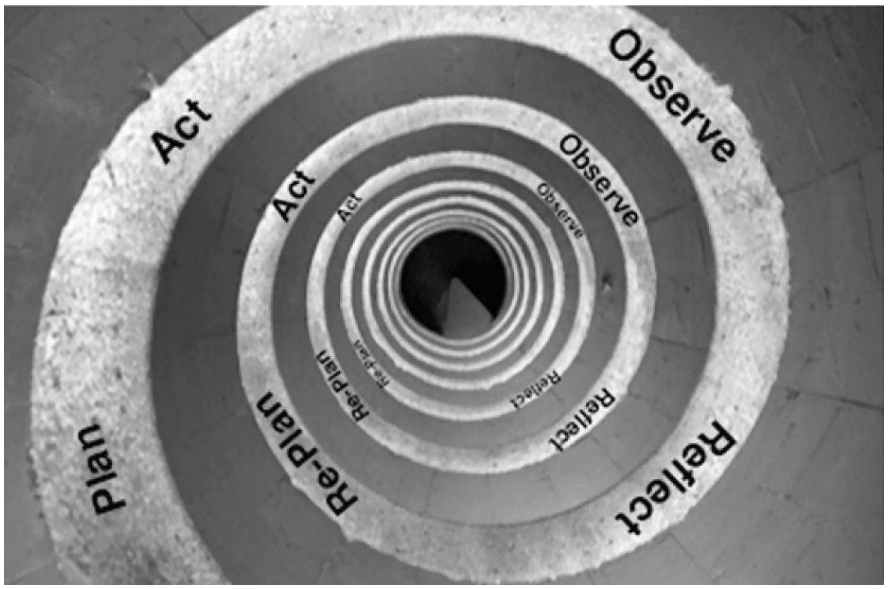
3.1.3 AR Frameworks

Adding to the general overview of AR and it's philosophical stance, it is important to explore the frameworks by which AR can be conducted. The cyclical learning and research process often mentioned in the above sections are an essential component of AR. Such frameworks attempt to provide a model by which to conduct AR particularly with the recognition that social contexts and phenomenon are complex and ever-changing and, therefore, require a flexible and adaptable mode of exploration in which subjectivity is key in understanding, developing and creating shared knowledge (Dick, 2012; Coleman, 2015).

Just as there is not one accepted definition of AR, there are also many frameworks developed to demonstrate the AR process. The key aspect, however, is a process of AR which enables action and reflection that can account for the complexity of the social world and which allows learning and knowledge to be created through the research process itself (Stringer, 2014). Lewin (1946) described AR in a way which set out a range of steps including taking action, observing, re-formulating the approach and continuing with that iterative process. Over the years a range of diagrammatical frameworks have been developed to show this process with the cycles of reflective of action as described by Lewin (1946) also taken forward by others (Griffith, 1990). Other frameworks created a flow chart to represent AR (Elliott, 1981) whilst Stringer (2014) created 'Look-Act-Think', a simplified way to consider AR research. However, the AR process is represented, the most useful are those which communicate a non-linear practice which shows "people are unpredictable and creative, and that life seldom follows a straightforward pathway" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, p. 95).

One of the most popular frameworks was Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988; 2014) representation of AR as a spiral of activity, a depiction which has remained prominent today. In this model, the 'self-reflective spiral' (see Figure 3) captures the evolving nature of inquiry through AR and accounts for reflection to continuously iterate the research process (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014). Within this framework, they describe the stages of planning a change or action, acting and observing the it, reflecting on the process and consequences to inform the re-planning then acting, observing, reflecting. Despite being one of the most familiar frameworks, it is acknowledged that even within the spiral it is likely that stages overlap and the AR process is more "fluid, open and responsive" (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014, p. 18). It is within this spiral framework that best represents the work in this thesis that allows for a continuously self-reflective research process.

Figure 3: Kemmis & McTaggart's self-reflective spiral



3.1.4 Action Research in Neighbourhood Planning

Moving from an exploration of AR, here I discuss the adoption of an AR approach for this research and how this links to supporting citizens' engagement with neighbourhood planning. The

AR takes an approach which centres the subjective lived experience of participants as an essential element of its mode of inquiry (Coleman, 2015).

It rallies against a positivist epistemology which is dominant in modern science and, instead, takes a stance which sees knowledge as partial, tied to place and socially constructed (Gergen, 1994, 1999). Within this research, it allows citizens and other stakeholders involved in neighbourhood planning to share their experiences in a way which recognises the value knowledge created. Rather than relying on quantitative measurements or other positivist scientific approaches, supporting engagement in neighbourhood planning can come from the lived experience of those involved and can encourage participants to co-create action with the researcher. In this research, I was able, therefore, to work with citizens and planners to learn from their experiences whilst also sharing my own knowledge and experiences as a planner, citizen, and researcher/designer.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the ways in which citizens experience place and policy shows a fundamental disconnect between the multi-faceted experiential knowledge of citizens and the scientific or technical knowledge of 'experts' which tends to focus on development proposals and land use allocations (Massey, 2005; Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). Furthermore, the notion of planning remains firmly rooted in the idea that place is simply a container for human life rather than recognising the intrinsically linked nature of people and place which enables the continuous (re)production of space (Latour, 1987; Graham and Healey, 1999). The positivist science of the roots of planning does little to recognise the socially constructed nature of the world. Through all of this, there remains an issue in the development of planning policy whereby scientific or technical evidence created by experts is privileged as a form of knowledge over the experiential knowledge of local people (Davoudi, 2006; Brabham, 2009).

With this in mind, AR provides a way to do research which recognises the long-held understanding in qualitative social science that knowledge is partial and subjective from which develops multiple truths (Stringer, 2014; Coleman, 2015). In this research, an AR approach can 1) centre citizens experiences within the research process itself and 2) can use that knowledge to move towards positive action and change that can better

support citizens to engage with the neighbourhood planning process. With the former, AR is able to place value on the experiential knowledge and can continue to draw from Dewey's idea of pragmatism in valuing the ways in which citizens make sense of their own experiences in a way which continuously transforms based on past and current experiences (Dewey, 1998). With the latter, by valuing such knowledge, AR allows participants (including the researcher) to take action based on such ideas and in a way which continues to centre those experiences.

Furthermore, through an AR approach I was able to participate in the research alongside citizens and planners as a full participant which was essential in developing relationships with local neighbourhood planning groups and other stakeholders. My knowledge of and previous work in neighbourhood planning meant citizens' groups were often able to draw on my expertise to support their current policy activities whilst also being part of the wider research – an approach which avoided extractive research practices. In addition, my personal position as a qualified planner supportive of neighbourhood planning means I was able to reduce my role from 'expert' to participant and recognise, through the reflective practices of AR, that this research and my participation was already embedded into a system of values (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003; Stringer, 2014).

Finally, as a mode of inquiry, AR is able to account for the complex 'chaos' or 'messes' of the social world and everyday life (Ackoff, 1999; Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). Neighbourhood planning has already been recognised as a complex policy process with many issues having already been highlighted, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Burton, 2014; Parker *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, AR is also a useful approach to begin to explore and understand the neighbourhood planning process whilst accounting for the changing dynamics, responding flexibly to the needs of the citizens and remaining reflective of the overall approach.

3.2 Research Context and Design

To meet the aims of this research and through an AR approach, I worked with a number of neighbourhood planning groups and planners across the North East. In this section I will provide a brief context of the neighbourhood planning landscape in the region, my position within it, and the way in which relationships with research participants emerged. I will then provide a brief overview of the three phases of research conducted, however, a full, detailed account of methods, field sites and participants for each phase is contained within Chapters 4-6. Finally, I will show how this research fits within the self-reflective AR framework.

3.2.1 Context and Research Positionality

Nationally, over 2700 communities have embarked on a neighbourhood plan with just under 1000 complete and adopted plans. In the North East, there are 77 as of December 2020 that have embarked on the process, some of which are complete (MHCLG, 2020a). Corresponding with the wider neighbourhood planning literature, the majority of neighbourhood plans in the region are in parish or town council (n=70), leaving only a few in urban areas (n=7) where establishing a forum was required. Consequently, most of the neighbourhood plans in the North East are located within Northumberland or County Durham.

Over the course of this research, I became part of the neighbourhood planning community within the region by developing and maintaining relationships with a wide range of citizens, planners and other stakeholders. It is important to note that prior to this PhD research, I was a planner that worked with communities to support citizen-led initiatives such as neighbourhood plans or community-led action plans. Through this work, I had already developed a network of planning professionals and communities that were familiar with my area of interest. Coming to this research with that background and expertise meant I could build on the relationships I had already developed and open up connections to new citizens and planners.

Through being part of the regional neighbourhood planning community, I was able to develop a number of relationships with neighbourhood planning groups, some through recommendations or introductions from planning officers and others through word of mouth between groups. In addition, through my professional network I was able to develop relationships with the Planning Aid North East Task Group, part of the Royal Town Planning Institute. The Task Group steer the volunteer activity in the region and is made up of planners from the public and private sector. The neighbourhood planning community in the North East are fairly close-knit in that many groups are often supported by the same private planning consultants or LPA planning officers, thus I was able to develop a range of relationships to conduct this research. Furthermore, I attended a wide range of neighbourhood planning related events, both in the region and beyond, which further informed my research.

3.2.2 Research Phases 1-3

Phase 1: Participatory Media in Neighbourhood Planning

The first phase of this research aimed to use Bootlegger, a participatory media technology, with neighbourhood planning groups through an exploratory approach with citizens, and this mainly addressed RQ3. This was to understand how alternative approaches to participation could better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning and to explore whether such digital tools were useful and appropriate within the context.

The first study began with two neighbourhood planning groups whereby citizens recorded their stories and opinions about the area based around planning themes (i.e. natural environment, housing etc.) after storyboarding their ideas in a workshop setting. The learning from this was used to develop a further second study with another neighbourhood planning group in which the activities were scaffolded through structured materials in a workshop in an attempt to reduce the reliance on the researcher.

This initial phase sought to explore the use of digital tools, specifically creative tools, to understand the capacity of citizens to use and take

ownership of them. In addition, there was an opportunity to understand how citizens were enacting neighbourhood planning at different stages within the process. Detailed methods and findings from this initial phase can be found in Chapter 4.

Phase 2: Exploring the Reality of Neighbourhood Planning

Moving from the initial phase, there was a need to better understand the way in which citizens enacted the neighbourhood planning process, identifying the opportunities and challenges faced, directly addressing RQ1 and contributing to RQ2 and 3. Interactive workshops were conducted with three neighbourhood planning groups and one group of planners through the Planning Aid North East Task Group.

The workshops sought to map the journey of neighbourhood planning in detail and, thus, workshops were conducted with groups that had completed the process or were in the final stages. The workshops were supported with a range of prompt materials to structure discussions and detailed process maps were created.

This second research phase was intended to understand the complexities of the neighbourhood planning process from the perspective of those closely engaged with it and centring citizens experiences. It also enabled the identification of opportunities for tools to support citizen engagement with the neighbourhood planning process and provide design implications. Detailed methods and findings from this initial phase can be found in Chapter 5.

Phase 3: Co-Designing Engagement Practices

The third and final phase of research built upon the first two phases in seeking to co-design new engagement methods with citizens involved in neighbourhood planning, directly addressing RQ2 and 3. Engaging citizens in neighbourhood planning was seen as a key challenge through the previous research phases, and interactive co-design workshops sought to engage participants in creating new modes of digital and non-digital engagement.

The co-design workshops were intended for anyone involved in neighbourhood planning and were attended by a wide range of stakeholders including citizens, planners, third sector organisations and councillors. A structured co-design process using prompt materials enabled participants to design new engagement methods to engage harder to reach groups.

This research phase intended to co-create a range of new digital and non-digital tools to support engagement with neighbourhood planning that participants could take forward in the future. This would also provide recommendations for the design of digital and non-digital tools and would better understand the capacity of those involved in neighbourhood planning to co-design such tools. Detailed methods and findings from this initial phase can be found in Chapter 6.

Failure in Research: A Failed Phase

It is important to note that I began another phase of research with a group of citizens which would have responded to all research questions, however, this phase did not continue due to the group disbanding. This research was working within a deprived urban area in the North East of England and would have been an important and interesting case study for this research to better understand the needs of urban areas, particularly as literature and MHCLG data shows the disparity between rural and urban uptake. Here, I briefly set out the research approach and key issues, and a full exploration of this case can be found in Appendix B.

The research worked with a group of citizens at the very early stages of neighbourhood planning – deciding whether to go ahead, forming a group and deciding a boundary area. The group were working with planning consultants delivering the government's 'Neighbourhood Planning and Capacity Building Programme', a scheme designed to encourage and support the uptake of neighbourhood planning in deprived, urban areas. Through the neighbourhood planning networks I had developed, I became involved from the early stages of the capacity building programme, attending meetings regularly and supporting the group in those early

stages. This research took an ethnographic approach with observations and field notes gathered as data. In addition, as a researcher with a background in neighbourhood planning, I provided support, knowledge and advice where I felt it was welcomed. This research was conducted over a period of six months and I became embedded within the group in that time.

Once the capacity building programme came to an end, the group were initially keen to continue and saw that there were multiple individuals they could draw on for support, including me as a researcher and planner. Over the following months, the group began to meet less frequently, attendance began to dwindle and eventually the group disbanded permanently. A full exploration of this can be seen in the Appendix, but some key points from this research were the specific challenges faced by the group in engaging with the LPA; the challenges of undertaking a plan that required significant community resources in an area of deprivation; and the fear from citizens to be involved in such a formal process where residents were not confident to carry on with the neighbourhood plan.

This particular research provided a perspective on neighbourhood planning from those in a deprived urban area and provided some insights into RQ1 regarding the enactment of the process and the challenges faced. Continued embedded research would have enabled a long-term case study that explored the needs of citizens and potentially provided opportunities for testing new digital and non-digital modes of support. However, as the group disbanded, it is important to note that this research still formed a key part of the learning in this thesis which confirmed many of the challenges already highlighted in literature and shed a light on the inequalities present within the neighbourhood planning process. I draw on these experiences in the discussion and conclusion (Chapters 7-9).

Figure 4, below, provides an overview of when the research was conducted.

Figure 4: Gannt chart of research timing

		2016				2017				2018			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Phase 1	Berwick-upon-Tweed			■	■								
	Kingston Park			■	■								
	Wooler				■	■							
Phase 2	Stannington							■					
	Longhorsley							■					
	Morpeth							■					
Phase 3	Durham Workshop										■		
	Morpeth Workshop										■		
A Failed Phase	Meadow Well		■	■	■								

3.2.3 Neighbourhood Planning in the AR Framework

As previously discussed, a range of frameworks have been developed to represent the AR process. The spiral of activity as developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (2014) remains the most useful and enables a depiction of the continuous research process. Here, I show the spiral of research in this thesis and how it fits into an AR approach (see Figure 5)

The first two spirals represent the first phase of the research where I deployed a participatory video tool with neighbourhood planning groups. After the first study with two groups (spiral one), there was varied success with positive findings such as the creativity and the supporting practices of storytelling. However, issues such as the lack of adoption in, and externality to, the policy process were observed and, through reflection, led to the re-planning of a second study. The second study (spiral two) took a new approach with structured activities, technology support and less researcher involvement, and directly responded to the learning from the previous study.

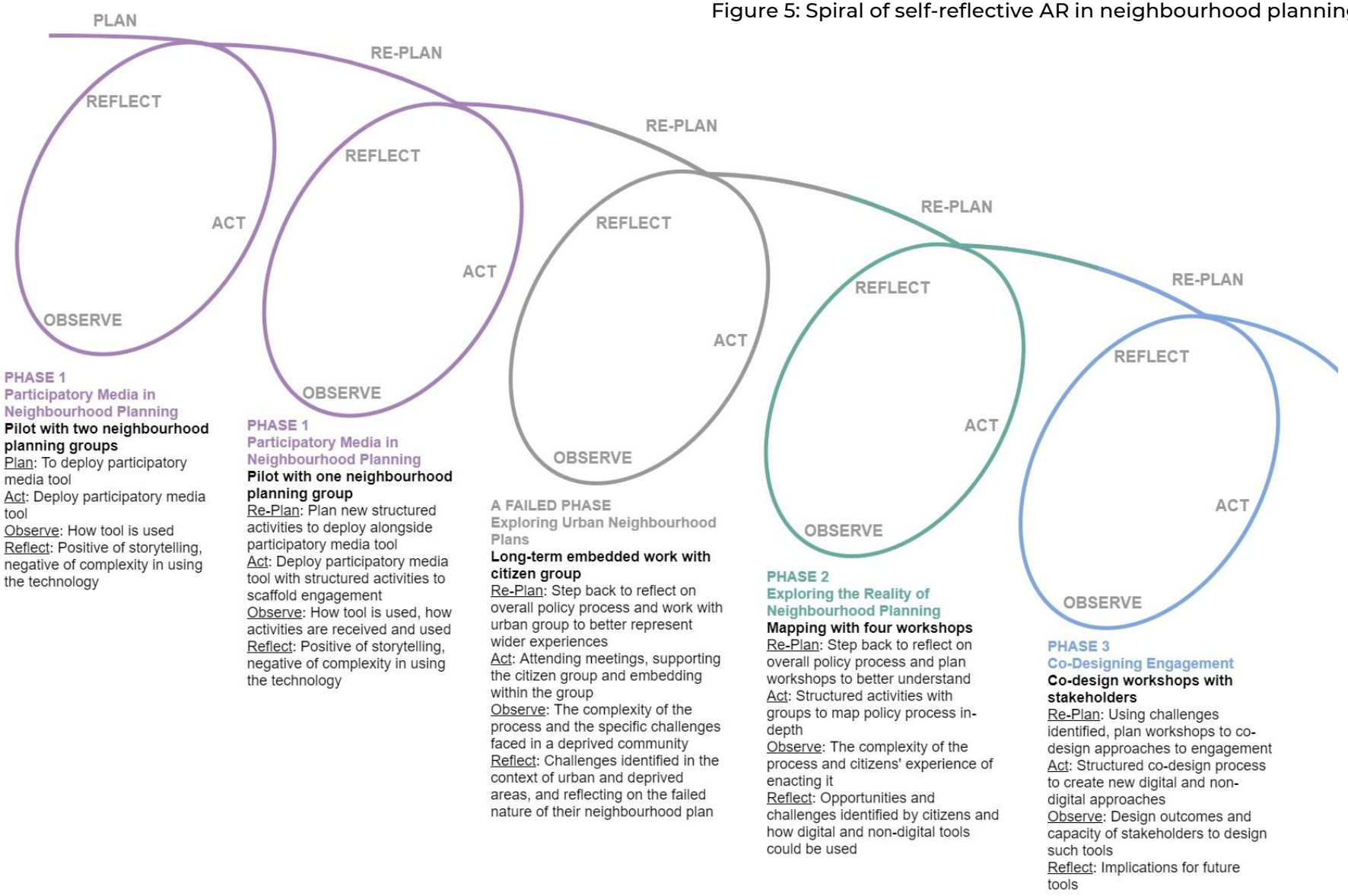
The third spiral resulted from the reflection of the first phases of research (spiral one and two) and, through this, I took a step back to consider the holistic policy process rather than deploying tools within it. Here, mapping the policy in-depth with citizens and planners provided an opportunity to observe, reflect and centre citizens' experiences. Finally, the fourth spiral represents the co-design workshops which were a result of the reflections on the challenges faced by citizens as identified through the previous

research phases. This was an opportunity to co-design digital and non-digital tools with citizens as a way to directly respond to the issues faced.

To reflect the failed phase of research, the cycle represented in grey is shown alongside the other phases. The timing of this research overlapped with other phases that were ongoing but the reflections from this element contributed to the approach taken moving forward. Reflecting on the ease with which the neighbourhood planning process could halt or fail, and recognising the significant challenges faced within different contexts, ensured I continued to centre citizens' experience. In this sense, I still felt it important to include planning professionals involved in neighbourhood planning to gain their perspectives, however, in a citizen-led process, I wanted to ensure that citizens' tacit knowledge was at the heart of research.

The AR framework enabled a continuous reflective approach to research that centred the needs of the neighbourhood planning groups and other stakeholders, recognising their lived experience and creating the fluid and responsive research that Kemmis and McTaggart (2014) described as important in AR.

Figure 5: Spiral of self-reflective AR in neighbourhood planning



3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

As seen through the above discussion of AR, the approach does not prescribe specific methods to use within research, particularly as each context will require a tailored approach. In this section, I will outline the data collection and analysis methods used, detailing the approach and why they were chosen for this research.

It is important to note that the methods used in this thesis were drawn from those in HCI and Interaction Design. Within these fields, design is seen as an activity focused on people and a way to ensure products, services, processes and systems are able to enhance people's everyday lives (Kolko and Connors, 2011; Preece, Rogers and Sharp, 2019). It is seen as a "humanistic enterprise" whereby the needs of people are viewed as logical and emotional narratives which progress over time and design can respond to this (Cooper *et al.*, 2014). Focusing on user experience, interaction design attempts to "design *for* a user experience" through design features that try to evoke that experience (Preece, Rogers and Sharp, 2019, p. 13). Conceptions of such experience do not simply focus on the usability and functionality of such products, processes and systems, but try to move beyond this. Norman (2004) stressed the need for building "joy and excitement, pleasure and fun, and yes, beauty to people's lives" while others have suggested the need to respond in a way which encourage fun, the building od social capital and cultural identity, and education (Carroll, 2004). Furthermore, McCarthy and Wright (2004) theorise experience as the tacit way in which people experience, what is felt and how that experience can change over time based on past and current experiences.

Within the interaction design field, a wide range of methods have been used to understand and research the needs of people, model those needs, create design requirements and move to create new systems, products and processes. This includes familiar methods such as interviews, focus groups and ethnographic approaches but also moves to more interactive methods such as contextual inquiry, task analysis, personas, scenarios and mapping

(Cooper *et al.*, 2014). It is from the interaction design methods that I draw upon in this thesis, along with technology deployments.

3.3.1 Technology Deployments and Observations

Deploying technologies 'in the wild' has become a valuable and growing method within HCI (Rogers, 2011; Taylor *et al.*, 2013; Chamberlain and Crabtree, 2020). Rogers and Marshall (2017) set out the goal of deploying technology in the wild:

> *"Its overarching goal is to understand how technology is and can be used in the everyday/real world, in order to gain new insights about: how to engage people/communities in various activities, how people's lives are impacted by a specific technology, and what people do when encountering a new technology in a given setting"* (p.1)

Such technology deployments in HCI are often done through an AR approach which enables in-situ evaluation that can account for the everyday contexts (Suchman, 1987; Hayes, 2011). Deploying technology can often take a long-term approach compared to other lab-based technological experiments, and often centres on designing (socio-technical) tools for communities (Taylor *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, it has been argued that deploying technology allows for more accurate evaluation than lab-based studies as it enables the researcher to see the real-world use as well as the appropriation of technology (Rogers, 2011; Rogers and Marshall, 2017). Capturing data from such deployments is often done through observations due to the nature of the research whereby participants are using the tool and surveys or other methods would distract from the task at hand (Bannon, 2011).

The first phase of this research used technology deployments in the wild with two areas involved in the first study conducted whereby learning from the first informed the second study. For detailed methodologies for this phase, see Chapter 4. In the technology deployments, citizens used a participatory media tool to capture experiences of place in their neighbourhoods. I attended all of the workshops where technology was deployed and supported the citizens in its use. I captured data through

observations as a participant-researcher and also captured the informal interactions between participants, including myself. Deploying technology was a way to understand how citizens in neighbourhood planning would use such tools, their capacity to use technology, and whether such a creative tool could be useful in the neighbourhood planning process.

3.3.2 Interactive Workshops

Interactive workshops are a common method to use in qualitative research and, particularly in interaction design, are seen to facilitate creative and design processes that enable collaboration with one another for future systems, processes and technologies (Bratteteig *et al.*, 2013). Workshops are widely accepted as a common approach to considering the issues at hand and envisioning for the future, as well as enabling citizens to talk about their everyday experiences with other participants (Brandt, Binder and Sanders, 2013). Interactive workshops were conducted as part of all three phases of this research and a range of structured, creative activities were used which I will briefly discuss below.

In phase one of the research, citizens created storyboards in small workshops immediately prior to using the participatory media tool to capture film. For detailed methodologies for this phase, see Chapter 4.The storyboard considered how they would use the tool, where they would film and the issues they would cover within their videos. Storyboards are seen as a tool to capture a narrative within design processes and has a long history in developing film and animations (Bannon and Ehn, 2013). It enables participants that are not 'expert' designers to express their tacit knowledge within a format that supports creativity (Truong, Hayes and Abowd, 2006). The shared element of constructing a storyboard with multiple participants also support the creation of a shared narrative that seeks to combine individual ideas into a consensus (Wahid *et al.*, 2011).

In phase two of the research, a generative context mapping activity was used with citizens and planners that enabled them to detail the steps taken in the neighbourhood planning process whilst reflecting on their own practices and experiences. For detailed methodologies for this phase, see

Chapter 5. Through these reflections, participants were also able to identify key challenges and future needs within the neighbourhood planning process. Generative context mapping is used to support researchers and designers in understanding interactions with tools, systems and processes, and seeks to create knowledge that can be built upon in the later design process (Visser *et al.*, 2005). Such a generative technique is able to support the uncovering of participants' tacit knowledge and their hidden needs (Sanders, 2001). Further, it supports the future design team in creating human-centred process and tools (Visser *et al.*, 2005).

In phase three of the research, the co-design workshops used a range of structured activities that included card sorting and vignettes to support participants in the design process. For detailed methodologies for this phase, see Chapter 6. Within the workshop, participants would co-design new digital and non-digital approaches to engaging other citizens in neighbourhood planning. However, as participants are not experienced designers, structured activities were able to scaffold participation. Firstly, a card deck was developed which detailed a range of digital and non-digital methods, providing some basic information and a case study for inspiration. The participants were asked to sort the cards to methods they had used previously and methods which they found intriguing, and the card deck further supported the design decisions in later activities. The card deck was used as "things-to-think-with" in a way which encouraged game-like participation (Brandt and Messeter, 2004; Slegers *et al.*, 2015). Further to this, vignettes were presented to provide the context and provide structured questions for the design activity. Vignettes are short scenarios or stories that enable a hypothetical character(s) to be discussed within a given context whereby participants can make sense and consider the scenario on their own terms (Finch, 1987; Barter and Renold, 1999). Within the workshop, this enabled participants to use the vignette as the context to design for, with structured questions to support decisions, and the card deck to inspire new approaches.

3.3.3 Recording and Transcribing

Workshops in phase one were observed as described in the above section. However, workshops in research phase two and three were both audio recorded. Prior to recording, all participants were given information and were asked permission to begin audio recording. Participants were made aware that recordings were for research purposes only and that all information would remain confidential. Audio recording the workshops was particularly important so that I was able to facilitate and support the structured activities. In all cases, the audio recordings were transcribed after the workshops and appropriately anonymised. Following this, the transcriptions were imported into NVivo, a qualitative analysis software package, that enabled the data to be coded using thematic analysis.

3.3.4 Thematic Analysis

Throughout all phases of the research, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that allows the identification of patterns across datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be used in a flexible way and does not prescribe to a specific epistemological stance and, therefore, used within this research it is able to fit well with an AR approach which centres the experiences of participants. Thematic analysis is a systematic way to work through data "to identify common threads of meaning, to group these together into categories of meaning and to then cluster these into higher-order themes" (Willig, 2013).

The approach of thematic analysis provides a way to organise and describe data in rich detail as well as provide a way to interpret aspects of the data with regards to the research topic and questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To analyse the data, an inductive or deductive approach to thematic analysis can be taken and, in this research, a bottom-up analysis grounded in the participants' data was undertaken which enabled the experiences of citizens to remain central (Willig, 2013).

Although there is not one widely accepted approach to thematic analysis, there are guidelines that show best practice within the approach (e.g. Joffe,

2012; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). This research used thematic analysis as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006) following their six phases:

1) *Familiarising yourself with the data*: I transcribed all of the data myself which meant I actively listened to all audio recordings. As I transcribed, I made notes and memos of data I felt was interesting to return to during the coding phase. After completing transcriptions, I then read through the transcripts and continued to make note of important or interesting pieces of data.

2) *Generating initial codes*: I imported all transcripts into NVivo to begin the data analysis and generate initial codes. All engagements within each phase were analysed as one body of data to enable the experiences of citizens and planners to be holistically captured. During the coding process, I first analysed the transcripts by coding descriptively to reflect the content and then conducted a further round of coding that sought to capture latent meanings and interpretations (as suggested by Braun and Clarke, 2006). As with the guidelines, I approached both rounds of coding inclusively in that I ensured each section of data was coded and I generated codes for as many potential patterns as possible.

3) *Searching for themes*: Following the coding phase, I reviewed the codes generated and the associated data to systematically categorise them into themes. This further analysis process was done based on the goals of each of the phases of research and the data I was reviewing, each which ultimately responds to the research questions of the thesis. As I identified potential themes, I continued to cluster codes and where codes overlapped, I ensured they were clustered together. A pattern began to emerge, and those themes were identified.

4) *Reviewing themes*: To ensure the themes were representative of the data set, a further two levels of reviewing was used to check the themes and data identified. Firstly, I looked at the coded data extracts within each identified theme to see if there was a coherent

narrative in the data. Through this process, I was able to identify themes that had a coherent pattern and any that did not, I was able to remove or reconsider the data extracts within it to ensure a consistent quality. Once this was complete, I then reviewed all of the themes in relation to the data set to ensure it accurately reflected the meanings evident in the data as a whole.

5) *Defining and naming themes*: Here I reviewed the themes again and identified the essence of what the theme was trying to convey. This involved creating an analysis for each theme that identified the story being told and, therefore, the narrative of citizen and planners' experiences of neighbourhood planning. The aim, here, was to ensure the analysis both represented the data but that interpretations went beyond paraphrasing to the core of what is interesting about the data and theme.
6) *Producing the final output*: The final stage of the thematic analysis was the process of documenting the themes through a detailed written analysis. The written analysis was done in the form of this thesis as well as conference papers and journal articles that were submitted for peer review. The written analysis of the themes can be seen in Chapters 4-6 where the research data is presented according to each phase. A further discussion which brings together the findings from all phases of research can be found in Chapters 7-8.

3.4 Mapping Research Questions

As the detailed methods will be discussed within Chapters 4-6, here I revisit the research questions to show how the research design contributes to the aim of the thesis. Table 3 summarises the research phases showing which research questions they address, the methods used and identifies the chapter which will discuss the corresponding findings.

Table 3: Mapping Research Questions

RESEARCH PHASE	METHODS	RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Participatory Media in Neighbourhood Planning See Chapter 4	• Two studies of technology deployments of which the learning informs a further technology deployment • Workshops to support deployments, including storyboarding and structured activities • Data collection: observations through field notes	Responds to RQ3 *What technologies can be developed and used to support citizen engagement in neighbourhood planning?* Also contributes to elements of RQ2.
2. Exploring the Reality of Neighbourhood Planning See Chapter 5	• Three workshops with neighbourhood planning groups and one with planners • Structured interactive workshops using generative context mapping to map the journey of the policy process and gather experiences of challenges • Data collection: audio recordings and transcriptions, as well as the mapping materials created in the workshops	Responds to RQ1 *How is the neighbourhood planning process enacted by citizens and what are the opportunities and challenges faced?* Also contributes to elements of RQ2 and 3.
3. Co-Designing Engagement See Chapter 6	• Two workshops with a range of participants including citizens, planners and councillors • Interactive co-design workshops using structured activities including the use of a card deck and vignettes • Data collection: audio recordings and transcriptions, as well as the mapping materials created in the workshops	Responds to RQ2 *How could the design of digital and non-digital approaches in neighbourhood planning better support citizen engagement?* Responds to RQ3 *What technologies can be developed and used to support citizen engagement?*

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach taken in this research, including exploring the decisions made, the research design and

data collection methods used. The nature of this research which seeks to investigate how digital and non-digital tools could better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning requires an approach which can centre citizens' experience, something highlighted as a gap in research in Chapter 2. This chapter has demonstrated a methodological approach through AR which can value tacit knowledge, and which is "grounded in a participatory worldview" (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 1; Stringer, 2014). AR accounts for complex, or 'wicked', problems and seeks to explore them within context and which can see citizens as full participants within the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Head, 2008). As neighbourhood planning is a citizen-led policy process where communities are given direct power to shape their future, a research approach which shared those same values was essential.

Further to the overall approach, this chapter details the research phases and explore the methods of data collection and analysis used, although it should be noted that a detailed description of methods for each phase is contained within the corresponding chapter (see Table 3 above for more details). Using qualitative methods was required to be able to explore the complex phenomena within the social world within its context (Flick, 2017), and particularly when considering the need to understand citizens' experiences of technology (McCarthy and Wright, 2004). Drawing from research methods within HCI and Interaction Design was also important, particularly as this thesis sits at the intersection of planning and HCI. Such methods enable this thesis to consider the design of digital and non-digital tools as well as the contexts within which those tools would sit in a way that other methods are not able to do through consideration of the experiences of technology within everyday lives (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; Preece, Rogers and Sharp, 2019).

The following three chapters will describe the three phases of research, including the detailed methods used within each to provide context prior to discussing the findings. Following this, two discussion chapters will bring together the learning across all phases of research.

Chapter 4

4. Investigating Participatory Media in Practice

In this chapter, I explore the potential for the use of participatory media in the process of neighbourhood planning responding to RQ3. The chapter seeks to understand how alternative approaches to participation could better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning and whether digital tools are useful or appropriate within the context.

The desire for citizens to influence and direct planning policy in their neighbourhood is situated in a long history of citizen participation through traditional engagement methods (Arnstein, 1969; Taylor, 1998; Burby, 2003; Bailey, 2010). Such traditional methods restrict the type of responses received from citizens, both limiting the representation of planning issues to written responses or other narrow formats and only encouraging the well-informed 'usual suspects' to take part (Conroy and Gordon, 2004; Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff, 2007; Laurian and Shaw, 2009; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). Therefore, I was interested to investigate how alternative methods could be used by the core group of citizens taking forward a neighbourhood plan to better represent planning issues and to understand whether such participatory methods could broaden participation. In particular, I was interested in participatory media as a way to capture the experiences of citizens through video that can capture sound and movement which goes some way to capture the essence of an experience.

The participatory media tool used as part of this work was Bootlegger (Bartindale, Schofield and Wright, 2016): a media commissioning platform that uses an easy to use camera style app which connects to a central web platform to commission and aggregate video content. Bootlegger was designed in-house within Open Lab, where this PhD was undertaken. The tool supports "community contributors to democratize both the commissioning and capture process, whilst retaining the core values of shot quality and content" (Bartindale, Schofield and Wright, 2016, p. 2705). The tool was chosen precisely because it supported contributors to capture high quality footage, but also because of the functionality of uploading, storing

and archiving footage within the web platform. Particularly in the context of neighbourhood planning, where citizens volunteer in groups, a key need for any tool was to be able to help the group's to access and organise the footage to be able to make use of it. For example, a camera on a mobile phone could have been used to capture footage, but citizens would then need to have mechanisms in place to upload and store footage.

This chapter will set out findings from two studies in three locations across the North East – Berwick-upon-Tweed, Kingston Park and Wooler (see Figure 6). The chapter begins by reporting on the first study (section 4.1 and 4.2) which focuses on the process of using participatory media and how such a tool can change interactions amongst citizens in neighbourhood planning, as well as the way in which citizens interacted with the technology itself. The learning from this first study is then used within the second study which this chapter continues to set out (section 4.3 and 4.4) and explores the unsuccessful use of the technology. Finally, I reflect on the ability of participatory media to open a space for storytelling and multiplicity which can centre citizens' experiences, as well as the issues of complexity and sustainability in the design and use of digital tools.

Figure 6: Regional locations of field sites

4.1 Bootlegger in Berwick and Kingston Park

The first study was carried out with neighbourhood planning groups in two locations: Berwick-upon-Tweed in Northumberland and Kingston Park in Newcastle upon Tyne. This study was exploratory in nature, aiming to understand how participatory media could be used by citizens in neighbourhood planning and observing suitability and usability of the participatory media tool.

4.1.1 Field Sites and Participants

The first location, Kingston Park, is a predominantly suburban residential area within Newcastle upon Tyne and sits approximately 5km to the north west of the city centre (Figure 7). The area includes a large retail park and the Newcastle Airport industrial estate. To the edge of Kingston Park, the land is identified as a growth area in the Newcastle City Council Local Plan and, in 2016, a Masterplan was developed in conjunction with three main developers to build approximately 800 new homes. Although not within the neighbourhood planning boundary (Figure 8), the increase in housing adjacent to Kingston Park remains a key issue for the area. The neighbourhood planning group was established in 2015 through the creation of a neighbourhood forum made up of 21 members of the community. However, around 6-8 people regularly attended the core steering group, all of whom were residents with the exception of one local councillor. The group were at the very early stages of the neighbourhood planning process and were about to begin an initial community engagement exercise.

Figure 7: Location map of Kingston Park

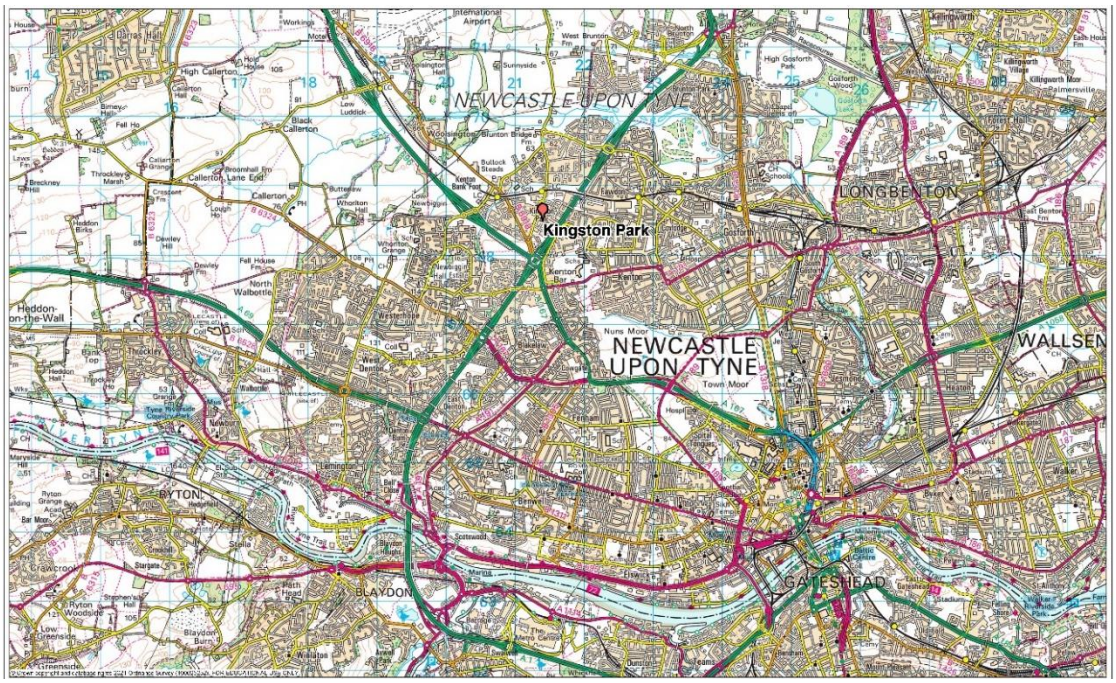
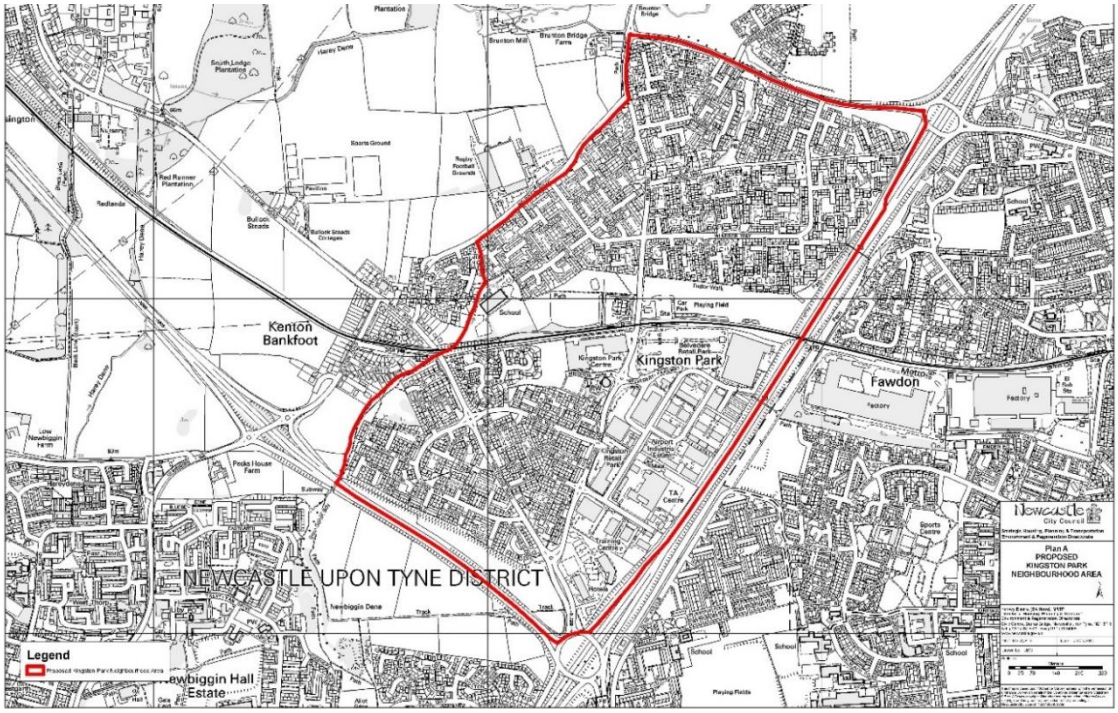


Figure 8: Kingston Park Neighbourhood Planning Boundary



The second location, Berwick-upon-Tweed, is a coastal market town in north Northumberland which has a significant rural hinterland (Figure 9). The historic area is seen as a main town in Northumberland and the neighbourhood planning group felt it was important to positively plan for

the town's future to create more employment opportunities, high quality housing and encourage tourism. The neighbourhood plan was instigated by Berwick Town Council in 2015, and a core steering group of around 14 members had formed to take forward the plan (see Figure 10 and 11 for boundary). The steering group was made up of residents, town councillors, business-owners and workers, all of whom were active citizens in their community. The steering group had completed various stages of the neighbourhood planning process, having already conducted initial community engagement and identified key issues that were important. The steering group had recently divided into smaller sub-groups based on the key issues (e.g. housing and tourism) and had invited other members of the community to join. The sub-groups' role was to further explore their issue and gather evidence to inform future work.

Figure 9: Regional location map of Berwick-upon-Tweed

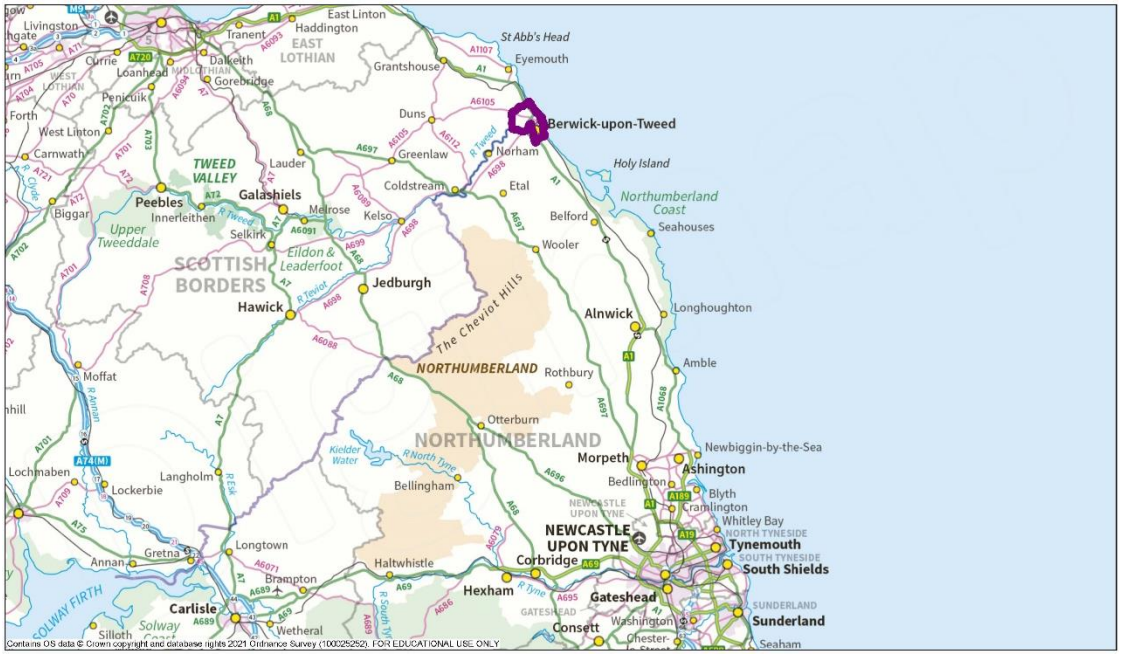


Figure 10: Location map of Berwick-upon-Tweed

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED
Foulden
Paxton
Horncliffe
East Ord
Lamberton
Marshall Meadows Bay
Meadow Haven
Cocklawburn Beach
Saltpan Rocks
Scremerston
Spittal
Tweedmouth
Marshall Meadows
New East Fm
Needles Eye
Brotherstone's Hole
Sharpers' Head
Ladies Skerrs
Bucket Rocks
Huds Head
Cargie's Plantation
Borewell Fm
Deputy Row
Heatheryton
Tweedmouth
Billylaw
Murton High Craigs
Murton
Ewe Hill
Unthank Square
Longridge Towers School
West Longridge
Middle Ord
Ord Mains
South Ord
Orchill
Mount Pleasant
Loanend
West Loanend
Honey Fm
Falwick
Union
Nisbet
Broadmeadows
Clarabad
Meadow House Mains
Spital Ho
Spital Mains
Paxton North Mains
Paxton South Mains
Nabbonds
Nansfield
Winfield
Paxton Ho
Low Ho
Paxton PH
Cawdrstone
Edrington Castle
Edrington Mains
Edrington Ho
Chesterfield
Baldersbury Hill
Low Cocklaw
High Cocklaw
Cocklaw
Sanson Seal
Baistrand
Cumberland Bower
West Edge Fm
Brow of the Hill
Halidon Hill
Camphill
Meadow Hill
Bogend
Loughend
Folly Fm
Highfields
Mobil
Royal Borders
Ravensdowne
Dock
Tweedmouth
Lowhaughs
Ulnestead
Gainslaw Ho
Gainslaw Hill
New Mills
Grangeburn Mill Fm
Fairney Flat
High Letham
Letham Ho
Settlemont
Greenlaw
Edrington
Foulden Deans
Mordington Holdings
Mordington Ho
Blinkbonny
Nutlands
Kirkhanny
Burnbank
New Mains Foulden
West Foulden
Foulden Bastle
Foulden Woodlands
Foulden Newton
Foulden Hill
Greenfield
St Johns
Westmains Moor
Moorpark
North Crowlee Mains
Hag Wood
Grunewell
Witches Knowe
Woodhill
Lamberton Church
Marvitie
Green Hill
Hall
Murton
Inlandpleasure
Tweed
River Tweed
A 1167
A 6105
A 6089
B 6461
B 6525
B 6470
B 6501
A 698
A 1018
A 1018
A 1018

The two cases were chosen because they were at very different stages of the process, each facing their own challenges and issues. The long and complex nature of neighbourhood planning means that there could be many opportunities for participatory video. The project developed as a result of my involvement with planning officers at the local authority and through discussions with the neighbourhood planning Chairs in both areas. Both neighbourhood planning groups in Berwick and Kingston Park were keen to engage the broader community and could see potential for participatory video to open up new dialogue with citizens that would otherwise not take part. My experience of working in the field of neighbourhood planning meant I became embedded in the wider neighbourhood planning community in north east England and the project emerged from these relationships.

4.1.2 Method and Data Analysis

My involvement in the wider neighbourhood planning community and my AR approach (see Chapter 3) meant that as well as carrying out the study, I aimed to support the neighbourhood planning groups in their day-to-day tasks. I attended steering group meetings, building relationships and becoming familiar with the areas and the issues they faced. This enabled me to observe, contribute and interpret the interactions of this research as a participant researcher. For this phase of research, I used workshops with both neighbourhood planning groups as a way to engage the steering groups, allowing the citizens to explore the use of participatory media.

Within this first study, I deployed the Bootlegger platform to capture the stories of the neighbourhood planning groups using video. A fuller description of the tool and how it was used can be found below.

Workshops

As the two neighbourhood groups were at different stages of the neighbourhood planning process, two different workshops were developed to suit their needs.

With Kingston Park, I delivered one workshop which aimed to support the citizens in exploring the key planning issues for their neighbourhood. In

this workshop I provided a demonstration of Bootlegger before handing the technology over to the citizens. A small icebreaker task enabled the citizens to feel comfortable and familiarise themselves with the tool. The main workshop activity consisted of six stations around the venue each focusing on a planning topic: retail, housing, leisure, transport, community and growth (see Figure 12). Each station consisted of a small display of photographs of the area to serve as inspiration, relevant planning policy, and a set of questions that asked the citizens what was good or bad about this topic/area, what needs to be improved and what their aspirations were for the future. The citizens formed small groups of 2-3 and took turns to interview one another using the questions from the display and using Bootlegger to capture the responses for each topic.

With Berwick, I delivered six workshops with six of seven sub-groups: tourism, transport, housing, built environment, natural environment and youth. For each workshop, I met the citizens in a local café to informally create a storyboard which aimed to capture the key issues they would like to film and show in a story format (see Figure 13). Following this, I provided a short demonstration of Bootlegger before handing the technology to the citizens. We then travelled around Berwick together to film the places and spaces they had planned as part of their storyboard. Within each workshop conducted, learning and reflections were taken to the next workshop enabling an iterative process which responded to the context. In addition, the capturing of the film was not restricted to only the areas citizens had identified within their storyboard and citizens could choose to video any areas whilst travelling.

In both cases, data was collected through written reflexive field notes which captures my experiences of deploying technology and feedback from participants during the workshop. Through the relationships I had built, citizens were able to provide open and honest feedback through informal conversations about all aspects of the research, including the digital tool being tested. Particularly where important or interesting comments were made, I ensured I recorded quotes within my field notes. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was then used to analyse the data collected.

Figure 12: Example workshop activities with Kingston Park

Figure 13: Example storyboard from natural environment group in Berwick

4.1.3 Bootlegger Configuration

The Bootlegger platform consists of a camera style app which connects to a central web platform where the film shoot can be set up and configured. Once set up in the web platform, the app syncs allowing participants to access the film shoot created. Here, I detail the possibilities for configuring Bootlegger before describing the configuration for this research, shown in Figures 14 and 15.

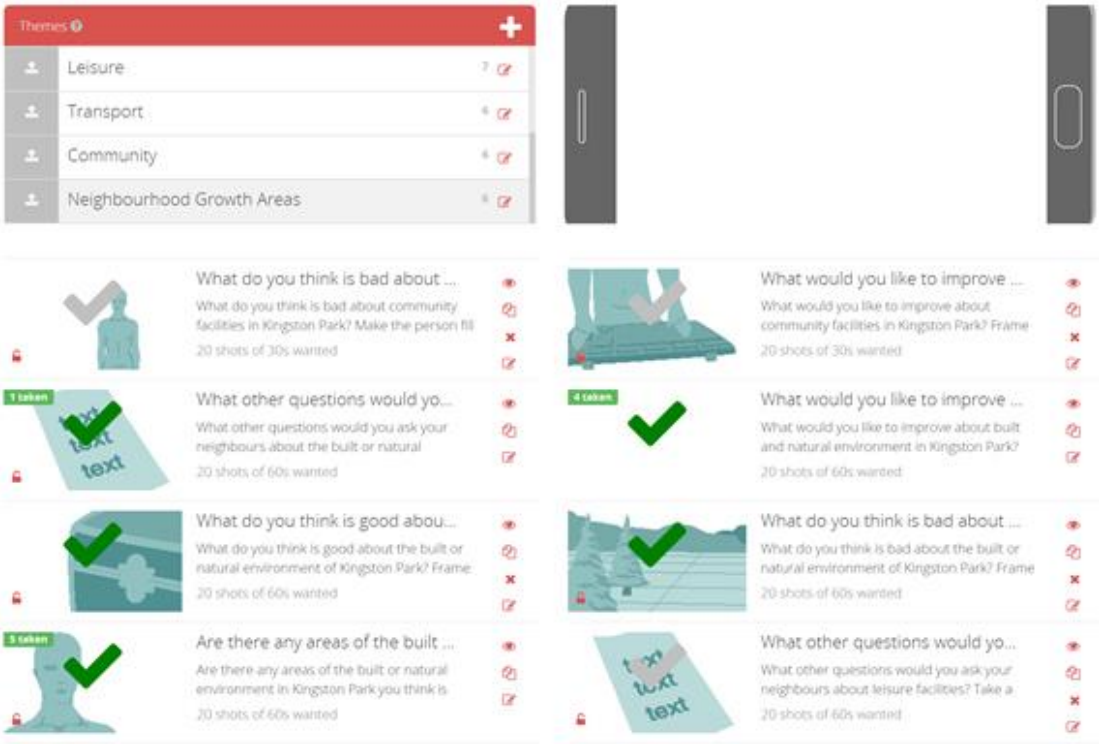
Within the web platform, the film shoots for both groups were created using already-existing templates. The templates provide a ready-made framework to structure the film shoot, something which is particularly important for amateur filmmakers. Within this template, themes were used to further organise the video capture which was personalised to each workshop delivered. The themes developed from the topics the neighbourhood planning groups were interested in, as described above. The way in which Bootlegger enabled the film shoots to be organised meant that after videos were recorded, they were easily sorted within the platform and could be viewed according to the topic.

Focusing on the topic themes, within each theme graphic overlays were used to support citizens to capture footage. The overlays were silhouette graphics that enabled citizens to align their videos accordingly – a feature which enabled amateur filmmakers to produce high-quality, coherent footage which was well-composed. The relevant graphic overlays were selected in the web platform and the details edited to show the questions or specifics of the topic, allowing the overlays to be personalised to the activity including instructions related to the task or how to film a particular video. These details and overlays would be visible during filming on the camera app. Within the web platform configuration, all of the settings related to the film shoot are customisable including which themes or graphic overlays to select, the time limits for video capture, and the number of videos per theme to be filmed.

For the workshops in this research, the exact configuration is described in further detail in Figure 14 for Kingston Park and Figure 15 for Berwick. To

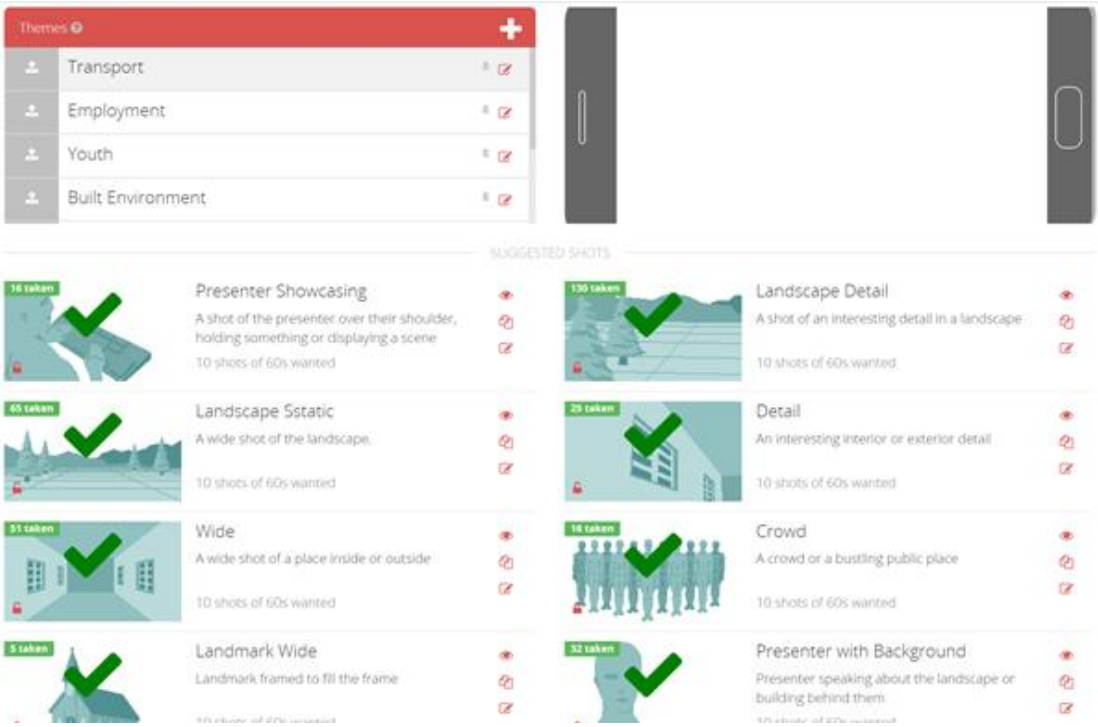
show how Bootlegger is used in the research by citizens, Figure 16 also shows how this configuration translated to the camera style app and shows a user journey to demonstrate its use in practice. It is important to note that I was responsible for creating and configuring the film shoot through the web platform. Both groups felt this was the best approach to enable them to focus on the filming process, but I worked with groups to understand the best approach, topics and questions to configure the film shoot in advance.

Figure 14: Web platform setup of Bootlegger in Kingston Park



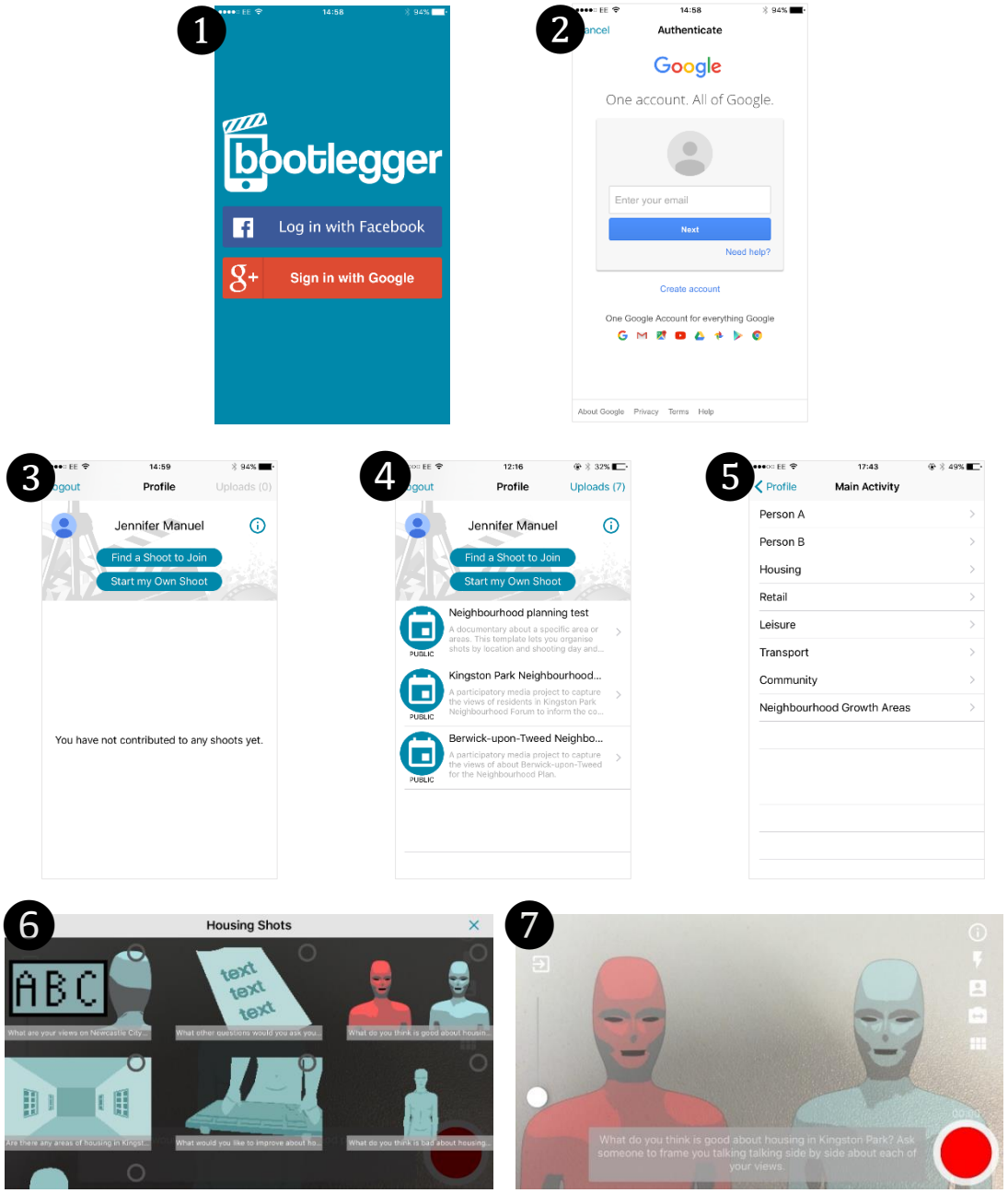
The web platform above shows the themes used within the film shoot, each one corresponds to the workshop stations focusing on planning topics. As this workshop was based on participants interviewing one another, the graphic overlays selected (those with green ticks) were mainly close-up silhouettes to support filming. Each overlay was given its own title and description which corresponded with the workshop questions and activities. In practice, this meant participants were able to select the relevant overlay and, whilst interviewing their partner, read out the question and associated details to support the filming process. Video clips were set to a maximum of 60 seconds in this workshop.

Figure 15: Web platform setup of Bootlegger in Berwick



The web platform above shows the themes used within the film shoot, each one corresponds to a topic sub-group – four of the six in total can be seen in this image. As this workshop would involve participants travelling and filming locations within the neighbourhood, the graphic overlays selected (those with green ticks) were mainly landscapes and townscapes with some close-up interview style shots included. Unlike the setup for Kingston Park, the headings and details of the overlays were not edited as the decisions about what should be filmed and the stories to discuss were decided within the storyboard activity on the day. This meant there was no need to change the headings and descriptions and, instead, they remained with basic instructions of how to capture that particularly type of shot. Video clips were initially set to a maximum of 30 seconds but was later increased to 60 seconds based on feedback from participants.

Figure 16: User journey of using the Bootlegger app



Participants are asked to sign in (1) and put in their credentials (2). Following this, participants select to 'Find a shoot to join' (3) and scroll through to locate the relevant shoot (4). Once participants have joined the shoot, they are able to choose from all of the themes created in the web platform (5). The example above selects 'Housing' and participants are shown the options of graphic overlays (6) which, in this case, shows the overlay and the question to ask. Participants make a selection then the overlay appears on screen along with the question and participants can press the red button to start the recording (7). As recording takes place, the white bar around the red button fills to show the time left to record.

4.2 Findings

A total of 52 video clips were recorded at the Kingston Park workshop of which nine were from the icebreaker activity. As the groups could choose which stations and questions they answered, it is clear from Table 4 that some topics were more interesting to the participants than others.

Table 4: Number of clips per topic in Kingston Park

Working Group	No. of clips
Community	11
Housing	1
Leisure	10
Neighbourhood Growth	18
Retail	3

From the six workshops in Berwick, a total of 330 video clips were generated, reflecting the larger number of participants spread across six topic groups. The amount of footage captured by each of the working groups differed greatly (see Table 5). The groups that recorded less footage had made decisions quite early in the participatory media process about locations, key messages and choosing to record the audio at a later stage. Groups with more footage, although they had created a storyboard, had made fewer decisions and were unsure about the narrative they wanted to create.

Table 5: Number of clips per working group in Berwick

Working Group	No. of clips
Built environment	128
Natural	32
Transport	15
Youth	26
Tourism	33
Housing	95

I carried out a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to explore the qualitative data from field notes and considered the design implications for participatory media technologies. Our findings from this study indicated the potential for participatory video to play a role in supporting

neighbourhood planning however, a number of key issues were identified. The following section sets out three key data themes: creating spaces for storytelling; widening narratives and participation; and a new reality. A summary and lessons learned will then outline how this research impacted the subsequent study.

4.2.1 Creating Spaces for Storytelling

In both Berwick and Kingston Park, the participatory media activities had a democratising effect where participants all discussed the key issues that mattered to them. Within all the workshops, there were a small number of citizens that already had planning knowledge or were heavily involved in wider community activities such as activist causes. These 'expert' citizens often held strong views and tended to dominate the conversations by sharing their own stories that fit with their own agenda. Through the use of the storyboarding activity and the process of filming, the expert voices were diminished slightly allowing the stories of other citizens to be genuinely heard and considered in the process. There has been much work focusing on the role of expert and lay knowledge in planning and the possibility of bringing both into use in planning processes, however, little has focused on *how* to achieve this (Petts and Brooks, 2006; Rydin, 2007). This research shows how participatory video could be a way to bring lay local knowledge to the fore, legitimising and demonstrating its use as experts begin to position the different opinions alongside their own knowledge. As this process occurred through the filming, it gave confidence to other 'laypeople' in voicing their stories.

For example, in Berwick, P5 was keen to portray their experience: *"I think we should stay focused on the streetscape on the main street, it's too busy"*. When others made suggestions, P5's response was often negative: *"No, it's pointless suggesting that. I know the businesses wouldn't agree to that, they'd fight against it so it's pointless to consider it."*. P5 often positioned their own narrative above those of others in the group, however, by the end of the workshop, there were open discussions considering the stories of all citizens and the possibility of all ideas. In addition, P2 who was usually dominant in voicing their own agenda in steering group meetings and was initially dominant in

the workshop, quieted his views to allow a more open space for storytelling to take place with other participants.

In both areas, the space for storytelling allowed participants to reflect on their individual stories and consider what they meant when put together as a collection of narratives. Deciding what should and should not be included in the filming and, once situated in the neighbourhoods, what they did and did not film (which was often different to the initial plan), helped individuals consider the importance of bonding stories as a community as well as identifying that their own stories were often based on bias and assumptions.

In particular, P8 and P9's stories were framed around their everyday practices of cycling and walking. This led their focus for filming to be on the need for sustainable transport in Berwick with one of the participants stating *"We need more bike routes that are safe and we need to encourage people to walk into the town centre. Like the people who work in the centre, a lot of them could walk from home to work but they choose to bring the car"*. As the discussion continued, the sharing of stories together enabled reflection that allowed them to realise that their views were heavily biased because of their everyday experiences. P9 began to speak about other modes of transport: *"We do still need to consider cars and lorries. We need a way for lorries to get into the centre for deliveries. Plus, we said we want to encourage people to come here from further afield so we need to make sure they can come here by car"*. This began the formation of a new, more inclusive, community narrative, made possible by the creation of space for storytelling.

The same kind of situation occurred at Kingston Park where participants were discussing issues and stories framed from their own perspectives without much thought for others. Through the discussion, they began to change the conversation to think about transport networks for older citizens or young families, for example. There was a key difference between the two areas in that the space created for storytelling in Berwick using the structure of the storyboarding exercise promoted the reframing of individual opinions whereas the more unstructured space in Kingston

Park meant the chance to think from other perspectives was only prompted on an ad hoc basis.

The discussions captured through the storyboarding, and the views and opinions captured during the filming would usually be discussed amongst a small group of citizens and would not be visible to the wider public. The use of participatory media opened the space for the stories developed during such activities to be out in the open, available to the wider group and to the public in future consultations. For example, in Berwick, citizens were beginning to discuss new ideas for the town that could be included in policy. Such ideas would not usually be available to discuss until the policy itself had been developed. The group focusing on young people, for example, gathered ideas from the youth about the development of land on the south of the River Tweed. In Kingston Park, they began to use social media with the intention of sharing stories that had been gathered, posting about the workshops taking place and posting a video of an exhibition they had created from the workshop materials. Although no videos of citizen interviews were shared due to a lack of capacity within the steering group, the use of participatory video sparked new ideas of engagement with the community.

4.2.2 Widening Narratives and Participation

The creation of the space for storytelling led to the widening of the narratives created by participants, as well as the recognition of the need for broader participation. Participatory video provoked this greater deliberation, creating a discursive arena where honest discussions could begin to question dominant narratives. For example, in Berwick, the initial storyboarding activity was a way to elicit individual stories to begin to construct one, shared story. What became apparent was the difference between what the citizens planned to capture and what they actually captured once out filming the area. The storyboarding discussion often created a shared story which citizens were satisfied with, however, once filming, citizens felt there were parts of the story missing or issues that had not been captured. In Kingston Park, there was less structure to plan the

filming, however, the same was found in that citizens felt there was often something missing from the filming

During the filming, P2 stated *"I don't think we've covered everything, I think we need to go away and think more about this"* to which P3 responded *"I think we should get the rest of the group to have some input"*. This conversation took place after 1 hour of planning the filming and 2 hours filming in various locations around the town and was typical of instances from other workshop groups. They felt that the clips captured told the shared story they had planned but parts of the narrative were missing and this meant the story did not feel coherent to the citizens. They recognised that they had only captured part of the story and would like to gather more voices before completing the final, shared story they were aiming for whilst acknowledging that the video captured thus far was still valuable.

The discursive arena enabled participants to question the truth of the stories they had captured in a safe environment. When forming a more inclusive community story, created from individuals' vernacular experiences, not all citizens would agree on others' points of view. The ability to challenge and question all stories to decide on a shared story became a vital part of the process. For example, one working group in Berwick had formed their community narrative based on the stories of citizens present in the workshops which resulted in a strong focus on the town centre of Berwick. They began to realise this: "*We need to be careful about what we're saying and how we're saying it. Think about it, if we're sharing this with people, they'll think we've ignored their neighbourhood.* (P6). The conversation moved to consider the lack of information they had about the rest of the neighbourhood planning area beyond the town centre and risk that the wider community would think they were *"neglecting everywhere else"* (P7). This conversation highlights the questioning of the collective story they had already formed and, through this, they began to recognise that there were more stories to collect and consider to form a full picture from other citizens who were not present.

The workshops did facilitate the participation of some who would be unlikely to participate in neighbourhood planning and hadn't been engaged previously. When first organising the workshops in Berwick, speaking with the Chair and members of the steering group, one participant was particularly keen to take part. P10, along with the Chair, thought that participatory video using mobile technology would be appealing to young people. This was also a factor that was discussed as I was getting to know the area and meeting with the steering group in that they felt that digital technologies would help them to involve a younger generation.

The youth working group, in one workshop, engaged approximately 15 young people in the neighbourhood plan through the filming process. This included musicians, BMX bikers and army cadets, all of whom provided their stories of Berwick. This brought new perspectives to the shared community story that would otherwise have gone unheard. The lived experience of being a young person in Berwick was different to what other, older citizens had imagined. In addition, the young people were comfortable with this method of participation with P10 stating *"I think they [young people] were comfortable with being filmed. That first girl, the musician, she did it in one take. She's used to all this technology, though"*.

The widening of participation and recognition of the need for more participation by the citizens, enabled hidden parts of the neighbourhood to be made visible as well as hidden issues that would otherwise not be discussed. Particularly in Berwick with the addition of youth engagement, areas of the town which had not been discussed were brought to the forefront of the discussion. For example, when speaking to the young musicians, they said *"There's nowhere for us to play and sing and record. We go to the youth centre, but that's not just about music. There's a tiny little place we can go to record, but that's it and it's not ideal. We really want to record more of our own music but there's nowhere to practice either"*. Highlighting the lack of places in the town that were suitable, the young people brought the current facilities into discussion: facilities which would otherwise not have been discussed.

On the other hand, places in the town that were often discussed by citizens were often thought about through a different lens by the young people. For example, the BMX bikers stated *"There's nowhere to go on our bikes. People don't like us hanging around here [the Quay] but there's nowhere else"*. The Quayside had been discussed on a number of occasions by the citizens involved but the stories of other, minority groups had not been considered previously. However, through the participatory media and, in particular, the filming aspect, the young people were able to tell their story and contribute to a re-imagination of the future of the spaces and places in discussion.

4.2.3 A New Reality? Future Potential Versus Reality

The use of participatory video in neighbourhood planning and, in fact, in statutory planning processes more broadly is still a novel concept. There had been strong reservations by some citizens about using a creative method that was not usually associated with planning, but participants still chose to attend and tell their story. Some citizens expressed hesitancy in using the technology with most stating *"I'm not very good with technology"* or *"I'm not very tech-savvy"*. Despite this, almost all participants became comfortable in using Bootlegger by the end of the workshops.

In Berwick, the confidence of participants grew and by the end of each workshop, at least one member of each group was fully sufficient in using the app. P4 said *"Can I download this onto my own phone? Just I'd like to film some of the landscapes when I'm walking the dogs at sunrise"* and P10 said *"This is great. Now that I've had plenty of practice with you there, I'll download it and get some more footage of the area. I'll get others from the working group that couldn't come today to do it as well"*. All of the working groups in Berwick said they would like to film more footage on their own, of which four groups went on to do.

At the end of the workshop, P5 who was reluctant to take part in such an '*unusual'* way said *"Thank you for this. It was really good. I thought it would be pointless and I couldn't see what difference it would make. I'm used to the older ways of planning that I used to do but it was really good"*. The creative methods

did begin to break down some of the barriers once citizens were creating content, both in relation to using technology and using video as a useful method for neighbourhood planning.

The content creation through the filming and, to some extent, the storyboarding activity helped the citizens to imagine a new future with a new story for their neighbourhood. The more creative method of participation meant that the citizens were more imaginative and told their stories in a more animated and interesting way which conveyed emotion and lived experience. For example, in Berwick, the tourism working group spoke of the town's history as a way to frame the new imagined future for the town's tourism. In another instance, the youth working group often became excited about the potential for the imagined future with P10 stating: *"There's so much potential! There's loads of space we could use for facilities for youth – they could have a skate park, music studios, dance studios, youth group facilities…there's so many possibilities!"*. The citizens also recognised that the stories they create could be imaginative yet would still feed into planning policy. The content produced during this project can be directly linked to the reports from the working groups which will be used to draft planning policy. They were able to express their stories creatively without the restrictions of other formal methods.

The participants in both areas recognised the need to involve more people in the process of neighbourhood planning, however, there were only limited instances where engagement was widened to those that were not yet involved in the steering group. Initially the groups were keen to engage a wider demographic and had specifically said this during prior discussions. However, it became apparent that they were unsure what widening engagement meant, what it would involve and why it was actually necessary. Through the participatory media workshop, they recognised they were not necessarily the 'experts' and they would need to engage and include stories from the whole community. One participant in particular said *"I think we need to use this media as a way to ask other people what they think and what they know. We've focused too much on the centre and the people that live in the other neighbourhoods will know more than we do. We could use the video as*

a way to ask them their opinions". Similarly, the transport working group recognised that the group members in attendance were keen cyclists, but they should use the filming as an opportunity to invite stories from car users.

In Kingston Park, they recognised the value of the participatory media and were keen to include this in their initial three-month consultation with the wider community to invite new participation: *"We should hold some workshops with different groups to build up more interest and to get people's opinions. It'd be particularly good for youth groups or schools even"*. Subsequently, this has been accounted for in the group's engagement strategy.

The functionality of Bootlegger as a tool for participatory video supported participants in becoming proficient in the use of the app. Functions such as the graphic overlays were used by some citizens to help them capture higher quality footage with P10 stating *"Oh, that's good. So I can just line up the landscape with the overlay? That'll be helpful to make sure what I'm doing is okay then"*. The media literacy support enabled the citizens to focus on creating the creative content, rather than the additional stress of training to be able to capture video, however not all participants agreed with many choosing to turn the graphic overlays off. In addition, in both areas, the clip length of the videos was also seen as helpful in supporting participants. Initially, clip length was set at 30 seconds, but participants in the first workshop in Berwick were struggling to coherently deliver their message. A quick change of settings within Bootlegger changing the clip length to 60 seconds gave the participants more space to deliver their message and was seen as "*less daunting"* (P8).

However, despite the positive aspects of using participatory video in neighbourhood planning participation, a number of issues became apparent. These issues were related to both the method of participatory media in itself and the use of the technology by participants. The main issue identified was the reliance on the researcher throughout the process which was evident in a number of ways.

Firstly, as described in the methodology for this study, the ability to use Bootlegger relies on setup through the web platform prior to filming with the mobile app. When discussing and organising with participants prior to the workshops, none of the citizens wanted to be involved, or responsible for, the setup of the film shoot through the web platform, including those heavily involved in the core group. As the lead researcher, I created the film shoot through the web platform and in doing so was able to at least demonstrate this to three participants across both locations, all of whom felt the setup stage of the participatory media tool was too complex.

Following from this, to be able to create the film shoot in the web platform, the activities that will be undertaken through Bootlegger must also be decided. As described in the methodology, I was able to discuss the research activities with both neighbourhood planning groups to better understand what each respective group would like to gain from using the participatory media tool. However, when discussing the design of the engagement activities, such as the questions and prompts to use, both neighbourhood planning groups did not contribute. Participants were uncertain about what questions should be asked or what activities could be used to achieve their goals. As with the setup of Bootlegger, I designed the activities that were to take place in the workshops.

Similarly, the mobile app was used by all participants and most were proficient by the end of the workshop (as reported above). However, during the workshops, I was able to provide significant technical support which did continue for a minority of participants. In addition, following the workshops, participants were encouraged to view the footage they had captured through the web platform. As none of the participants were comfortable in doing so, I facilitated participants viewing the footage.

As well as identifying issues with the design of activities and use of the tool, participants were also heavily reliant on mediation and input during the discussions about their neighbourhood as part of the workshops. As the lead researcher, I was often required to facilitate discussion and prompt participants: *"Let's go back to the purpose of the film. What will it show? Do you*

want to show something from the whole area or do you want to use it as a way to say to the community, we need your help?". There was also the need to prompt the sharing of stories and help to configure the space so participants felt comfortable sharing amongst a group. In addition, the facilitation also supported the citizens in making decisions about the stories that would be shared and how to create a new, shared story.

Although there were many positives gained from the use of participatory media with neighbourhood planning groups, the heavy reliance on researcher facilitation highlighted in the examples above are important to note. For participatory media as a method, and the tools it requires, to be truly useful to neighbourhood planning groups, they must be useable in and of themselves. In this first study, both neighbourhood planning groups were not comfortable in accessing the web platform to set up the activity or to view footage after it had been captured; they were not able to design engagement activities for the method; and they required much facilitation during discussions. In its current form, Bootlegger and associated activities would be difficult for neighbourhood planning groups to use without support from a researcher or other expert.

Another key issue that became apparent following the workshops was the lack of follow-up post-filming. With both neighbourhood planning groups, I discussed the plan for the research with participants which included working alongside participants long-term, creating videos through participatory editing activities, and supporting the use of any material created in the neighbourhood plan. A shared vision between the group and I included sharing and using videos on social media to invite wider public involvement, as part of future consultation events, as evidence to support policy formation, and to create an archive of footage which would represent the story of the neighbourhood plan's production. Despite the positive views of participants, following the workshops reported in this chapter, no further activity took place. In both cases, the neighbourhood planning groups returned to their neighbourhood planning tasks in a 'business as usual' fashion, leaving the videos as an unexplored resource going forward. In Berwick, each of the sub-groups returned to the task of

producing a report about their chosen topic and the group in Kingston Park moved forward with organising and running their public consultation. Therefore, in both cases, no further use was made of the videos created.

I am unable to categorically provide reasons for the lack of activity post-filming, however, through my field notes and reflections, I was able to identify two issues that could go some way to explaining this outcome. The first was that participants were enthusiastic and positive about participatory media as a method but saw it as a novel activity amongst their 'real work'. When follow-up workshops to edit videos was suggested, either no reply was received or participants stated *"we just don't have the time right now"* (P7). The workshops using participatory video, although seen as useful and enjoyable, were ultimately a novelty for participants. The second issue was that the novel participatory activities were not seen to fit into their everyday neighbourhood planning work. Although it was discussed with the neighbourhood planning groups that I would work alongside them over a long-term period which was well-received, the reality of this following the workshops was not desirable. Participants viewed the use of such a method as an add-on to the neighbourhood planning process. For example, the use of the video to facilitate the creation of the reports by sub-groups in Berwick was seen as unnecessary when the groups could simply write their report. Despite the discussion that media could enhance such a task or could provide further evidence for policy, the videos were seen as superfluous. Overall, the open-ended approach to the research which had been welcomed initially by the neighbourhood groups was seen to be impractical and burdensome.

4.2.4 Summary and Lessons Learned

This first research study was an initial foray into how technology could be used to support the neighbourhood planning process. The use of participatory media in this space has much potential but there are issues to be addressed. The process of using the technology to capture video had merit in that it allowed participants to have a more creative and imaginative discussion about the future of their neighbourhood. It also encouraged a multiplicity of citizens' stories to be shared, helping

participants recognise that all experiences are valid even when they are different to their own. In addition, the use of participatory media helped to highlight those stories and experiences of missing participants, inspiring them to involve the wider community in contributing to policy formation.

However, issues with the usability of the participatory media tool, challenges in designing engagement activities and the capacity of groups to use such methodologies are all important issues that still need to be addressed. The aim to produce edited videos was never realised and the participants did not take up the opportunities afford by participatory media, even those that they themselves identified. The open-ended nature of the first study in terms of working alongside the neighbourhood planning groups did not sit well alongside the groups' everyday neighbourhood planning tasks.

Following this study, future research was needed to change the configuration of the method and of Bootlegger as a participatory tool to harness the positive outcomes whilst addressing some of the shortcomings.

4.3 Bootlegger in Wooler

The second study was carried out with a neighbourhood planning group in Wooler in Northumberland. This study was designed with the learning from the first study in mind, iterating the methodology to attempt to make the participatory media tool more useable and to explore whether the use of participatory media in neighbourhood planning could be more sustainable.

To clearly show how this research design responded to the first study, five key aspects were changed to iterate the method and to test whether the use of the tool could be improved:

1. A bounded project was created that would avoid the open-ended approach that became impractical in the first study.
2. The setup of Bootlegger through the web platform was executed with one of the steering group members.

3. All of the activities were co-designed more explicitly with steering group members rather than led by the researcher.
4. Support materials were created that provided technical advice for the use of Bootlegger and could act as workbooks for participants throughout the project.
5. Along with two workshops, a period of independent filming was incorporated to provide the opportunity for participants to film without researcher support.

These changes were made to encourage the steering group to take greater ownership of the participatory media tool, the activities and the workshops. Such an approach would allow the tool to be used in the future without the need for a researcher making it a sustainable method of engagement.

4.3.1 Field Sites and Participants

Wooler is a small market town in Northumberland in the foothills of the Cheviot Hills (see Figure 17). It is seen as a service centre in Northumberland providing key services for the surrounding areas, as well as being an important gateway to the National Park. The neighbourhood plan was initially set up by Wooler Parish Council in 2015, however there has been a long history of community action through The Glendale Gateway Trust, a charitable development company set up to support the community, economy and environment (see Figures 18 and 19 for boundary). A steering group of 15 citizens was established for the neighbourhood plan, all of which were residents and parish or county councillors. Wooler falls within the remit of Northumberland County Council but the neighbourhood plan also involved Northumberland National Park Authority. The neighbourhood plan aimed to retain and enhance the attributes of Wooler by preserving distinctive landscapes and townscapes, encouraging the reuse of derelict sites and provide a variety of housing for the local population.

Figure 17: Regional location map of Wooler

Figure 18: Location map of Wooler

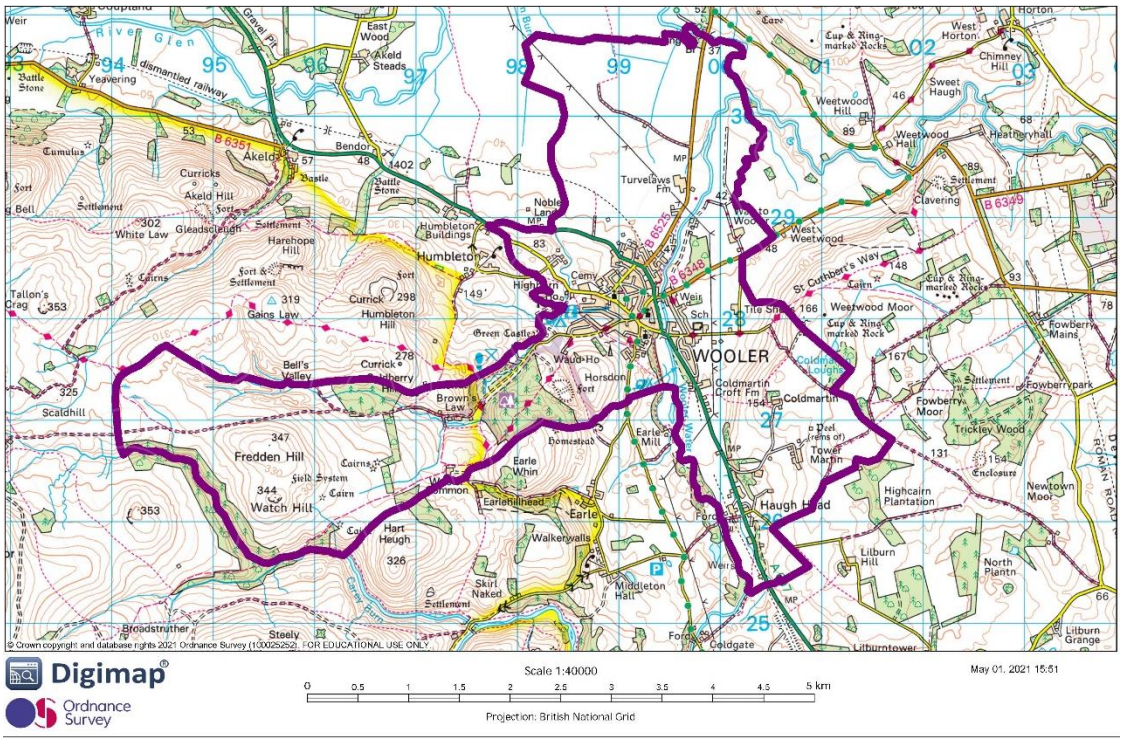
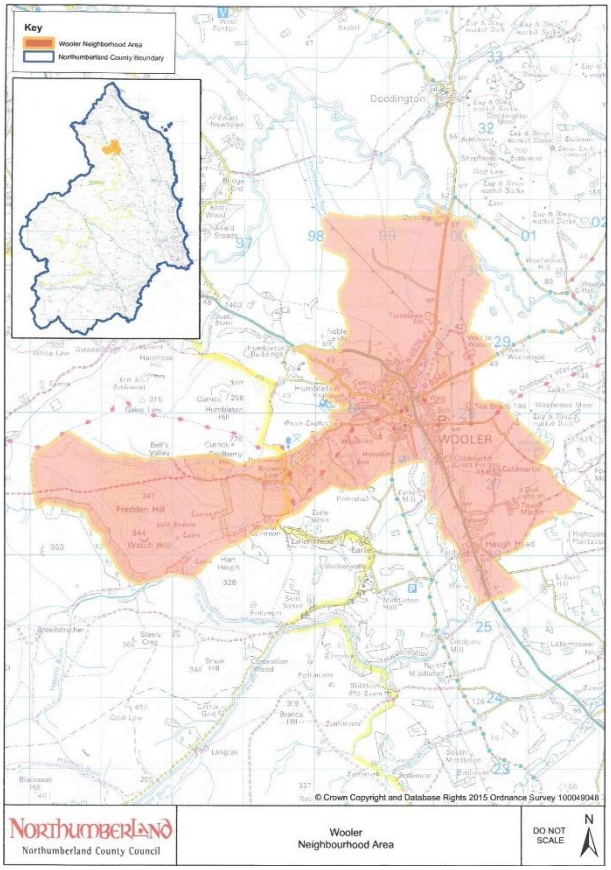


Figure 19: Wooler Neighbourhood Planning Boundary



The neighbourhood planning group were in the process of starting to develop policy for their neighbourhood plan and felt that participatory video could be used to capture some of the special characteristics of the village. Through my relationship with the neighbourhood planning community in the North East, I met one of the steering group members from Wooler and through this connection, we discussed the formation of a project. The neighbourhood planning group were keen to involve the wider public of Wooler in forming evidence to support their policies through the video format.

4.3.2 Method and Data Analysis

Working with two leaders of the steering group, I discussed the needs of the group and how the activity could fit with their work, ensuring the participatory media activity would respond to that whilst considering the learning from the initial study reported above. In discussions with the steering group, it was decided that a bounded standalone project that

would fit with a specific topic currently being discussed as part of the plan would be the best approach. Two workshops were planned around the theme of 'Landscapes, townscapes and heritage of Wooler': the first would introduce Bootlegger as the participatory media tool and introduce the task; the second would take place four weeks later and would comprise of participatory editing activities to create a short film. The timescales would allow participants to independently film their neighbourhood in between the two workshops.

All of the activities in the workshops were co-designed with the steering group. This was a conscious change from the initial study to encourage the steering group to take ownership of the engagement activities. Prior to the first workshop, and using the identified topic, a number of questions and prompts were developed that would be the focus of the participatory media activities. A booklet was designed which included the questions and activities, allowing space for notes to be written by participants, and included technical instructions and advice about the mobile app (see Figure 20). This was seen as one way in which the participatory media activities could become sustainable. By providing materials, such as a booklet which could be edited, alongside the Bootlegger technology, a toolkit approach could go some way to enabling neighbourhood planning groups to use the method independently.

The initial workshop was held at the Cheviot Centre, a local community centre that acts as a hub in the neighbourhood, and it was advertised by the neighbourhood planning group. Participants were encouraged to bring along their own smartphones, but phones were available for those that did not have them. A total of 8 participants attended the workshop. The workshop began with an icebreaker to enable the groups to feel comfortable with the technology after a short demonstration of the mobile app. The icebreaker activity involved community members interviewing one another about their connection to Wooler, something which could later be used for the short films. Each participant then received the pre-prepared booklet and was given the chance to make notes before beginning their independent filming. A chance to film independently during the

Figure 20: Wooler workshop informational booklet sample pages

WOOLER'S LANDSCAPE

Using the filming prompts provided which match with the app, write down some locations and thoughts about places you want to film. Think about what you will say when filming too.

SHOWING VISITORS: What would you show a visitor of Wooler's landscape and why?

FAVOURITES: What is your favourite landscape in Wooler and why?

VIEWS: What is your favourite viewpoint in Wooler and why?

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GROUP HAS DRAFTED THIS DESCRIPTION OF WOOLER'S LANDSCAPE:

Wooler Parish is part of a deeply rural landscape of dark skies and far horizons, rich in history and prehistory. Wooler town nestles against the hillside where the Cheviot Hills meet the Glendale Plain, and looks towards the ridge which surrounds the Plain. From this ridge, coming over the hill from Chatton, is one of the most striking views in Northumberland. From here, Wooler town appears as surrounded and interspersed with trees. Views towards and out of the town, and the landscape generally, is valued by locals and visitors alike as very beautiful. This landscape is a key asset for our future, attracting visitors and new residents, and enriching the lives of all who live and work in the area.

DESCRIBING WOOLER: What would you record to match the above description and what would you say about it? What do you think is missing from the description?

Above: example activities in the booklet to support participants engagement

Below: example of the technical instructions for the Bootlegger app

STEP 6: NAVIGATING THE SHOOT

Once you've joined the shoot, you will see this screen with the camera. The diagram below describes all the icons and functions:

1. This icon opens up the menu (menu described in next steps)
2. Slide this button up to zoom in to a shot
3. Click this to see help information
4. Click bulb icon to turn on the phone's light as a substitute for a camera flash
5. Click this icon to rotate the camera into 'selfie' mode
6. Click the red button to start and stop recording. When you start recording, this button will also show you the remaining time you have left to film

STEP 7: STARTING TO RECORD

To start recording, click the Menu button and you will see this screen:

To start recording, select 'Change Camera Position'.

Then select the appropriate choice of what you would like to video.

You will then see this screen:

Hopefully you should recognise these prompts as relating to the prompts in this booklet.

Click the appropriate selection for the video you would like to record.

Repeat this step for each video you would like to record in each

workshop aimed to build participants' capacity and ensure any issues could be resolved. Following the workshop, participants were encouraged to continue capturing footage independently in response to the various prompts within the booklet.

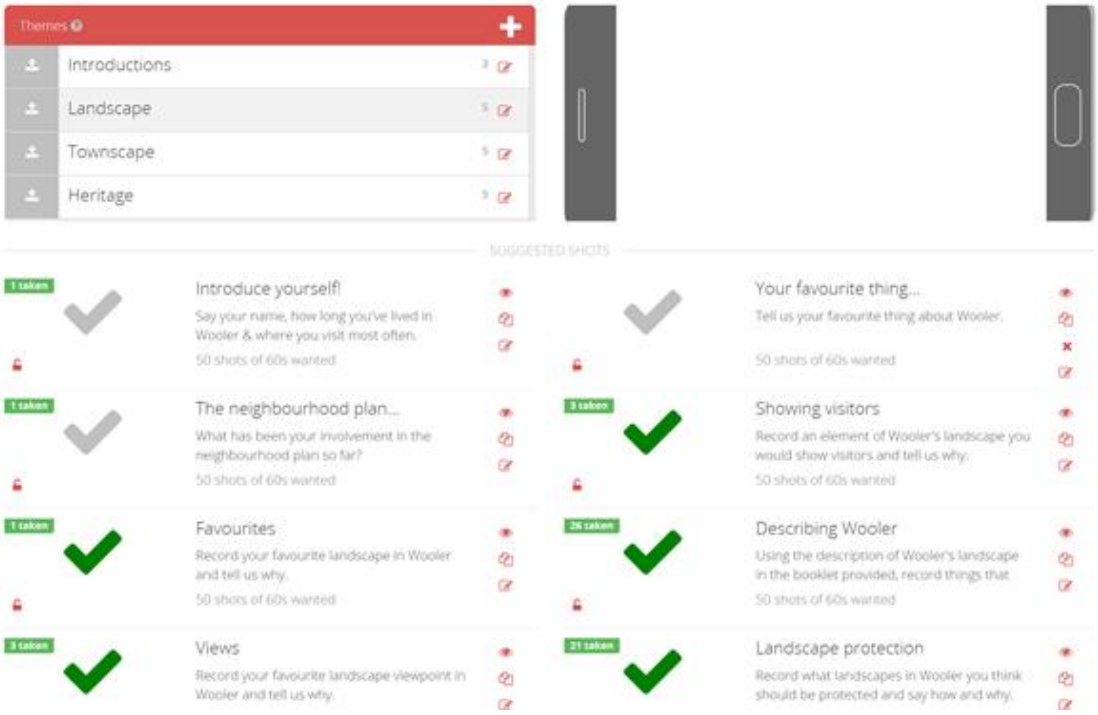
The final participatory editing workshop was designed to support the group in producing a short video. The editing function of Bootlegger's web platform would be the basis of the workshop which would allow short videos to be edited together. The editing facilities allow for the amalgamation of Bootlegger video clips with basic transitions, but the platform removes much of the functionality that professional editing software would afford to ensure simplicity. After reviewing the video clips recorded together, participants would gather into groups of 2 or 3 to decide the structure of the story they would like to create from the gathered footage. With support, each pair would then produce an edit of the footage. The final part of the workshop allowed each edited video to be showcased to the other groups with the final result being a number of videos showing what citizens in Wooler feel is important about their landscape, townscape and heritage.

I collected data through written reflexive field notes of my experiences before, during and after the activities. As this activity was co-designed with the intention of the steering group taking greater ownership of the workshops, my field notes were based on my observations and reflections of the activities within workshops but also on the discussions and conversations during the planning phase, including email communication with steering group members and participants. The communication during the planning phase and beyond via discussions or emails are an important part of understanding how the study was received and organised, and to better understand the successes or failures of the project. I also recorded any feedback given by the participants during and after the workshop. Analysis of these field notes was undertaken using a framework which supported the discussion of unsuccessful research studies, as explored in the findings below.

4.3.3 Bootlegger Configuration

From the initial study reported above, changes were made to the configuration for the workshops based on the feedback and learning gained. The positive aspects reported, such as the ability to aggregate video content and create and archive, meant the platform was still used. However, unlike the initial study, one member of the steering group was involved in setting up the film shoot using the web platform (see Figure 21), creating the film shoot and themes, and making decisions as to how the shoot would appear in the mobile camera app. This steering group member was also involved in the co-design of the workshop activities and so could help translate these into the configuration.

Figure 21: Web platform setup of Bootlegger in Wooler



The web platform above shows the themes used within the film shoot and each one corresponds to the co-designed workshop activities including an icebreaker to support the initial use of the app. The technical functionality provided by the graphic overlays was used in this setup but without a silhouette feature. This meant the titles and descriptions could still be edited to correspond with the workshop activities. The silhouette feature was not used based on the findings from the first study and aimed to simply the visual display in the mobile app and allow participants to focus on the activities, questions and prompts. Video clips were set to a maximum of 60 seconds.

4.4 Findings

There was hope that with the various changes made to the second study based on learning from the first, the research would build on the positive outcomes of participatory media and would show that Bootlegger could be a useful tool to support neighbourhood planning groups. However, the study was unsuccessful and, here, we attempt to understand the reasons why.

Reporting unsuccessful research is often overlooked in academia generally and, in particular, in HCI (Gaver *et al.*, 2009). There are many studies showing the benefits and positive outcomes from the use of civic technology (Le Dantec *et al.*, 2015; Johnson *et al.*, 2017; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018), but little work addresses the failings. Unsuccessful research is important in showing the realities of technology use and generally the realities of research 'in the wild'. However, unsuccessful research studies are often difficult to articulate – without sufficient data, how can conclusions be drawn?

To help with the analysis of this study, I turn to Gaver et al. (2009) to provide a framework by which to discuss unsuccessful qualitative studies – the only study I found that provides such a framework. In quantitative studies, and particularly those with technology, measurable criteria can clearly show the success or failure of an experiment, however, this is not easy to deduce in more open studies. In qualitative studies, what it means to succeed and the dimensions for success may vary widely, especially when research "embodies a style of design, and design research, in which human-machine interaction is seen as locally situated meaning making" (Gaver *et al.*, 2009, p. 2213). Gaver, therefore, provides a framework for discussing the failures of research studies that can help to make assessments that can helpfully shape future work. The framework provides four themes of analysis: engagement, reference, accommodation and, surprise and insight. These themes have been used to consider the successes and failures of the research in Wooler.

4.4.1 Engagement

Engagement is seen as a fundamental sign of success whereby participants engage with the study and the technology, and continue to do so over time (Gaver *et al.*, 2009). Examples of such engagement could include participants' enthusiasm about the study and the technology and their persistence in engaging, as well as suggestions for improvement that could enhance their experience or the desire to continue with the activity beyond the life of the study.

During the planning phase of the research study in Wooler, I was able to discuss the needs of the neighbourhood planning steering group with two group members to ensure the workshop would be useful and to engage them in co-designing activities. The initial excitement over the idea of the project suggested that participatory media could be a welcome addition to the neighbourhood planning process. The initial workshop was organised to take place midweek in August 2017, advertised by the steering group, and I was to facilitate. However, only three participants attended: two steering group members who had helped to organise the workshop, one of whom had brought their husband. The steering group members were disappointed with the lack of engagement by the wider community stating *"I really thought more people would come. It seems a shame"* (P1).

Despite the lack of wider community turnout, those in attendance were keen to see Bootlegger in action. Instead of running the workshop, we held an informal discussion about the use of participatory media and a demonstration of Bootlegger. The participants remained positive about the project: *"I think we should still do it. Imagine how fantastic it would be to have one, or a series, of short videos about Wooler's landscapes. And they'd have been made by the people of Wooler. I think we should try to re-organise it"* (P2). The steering group members recognised that their decision to hold the workshop midweek in August during the day as being a key issue, therefore, arrangements for a second workshop began.

Taking account of the failings of the first work to engage the community, a new date in September was arranged for the workshop which would be

held in the evening. Once again, the steering group were responsible for advertising the workshop amongst the community and a total of 8 participants attended. All of the participants were keen to engage with the activities, enjoying the initial workshop with little support needed to use Bootlegger. The icebreaker activities, which served as a chance to familiarise participants with Bootelgger, saw 12 videos recorded and, following this, all were keen to use the workshop booklet to make notes of locations and issues they would like to film.

Despite the positive reception in the workshop, continuous engagement beyond this did not continue. The four week independent filming period only yielded a total of 7 videos, suggesting the use of participatory media and, therefore, Bootlegger, did not persist over time. Due to the lack of engagement, I contacted the steering group organiser to determine the best way forward given the lack of engagement and to see if there was any support I could offer. The steering group member felt guilty they had not engaged in the project when they had been instrumental in arranging it: *"Oh yes, I need to get out and do some more myself. I really haven't done as much as I should."* (P1). Following a prompt email from the organiser to all participants, a flurry of 46 videos were recorded. However, all of these videos were captured by the two steering group members who had helped organise the workshops with no videos recorded from other participants.

As a result of the lack of engagement in the project, the participatory editing workshop did not go ahead as planned. An initial period of four weeks was given to allow independent filming, following which the participatory editing workshop would take place. At the request of the steering group members, this was delayed to allow more time for independent filming. Although more videos were needed, my field note reflections highlight the difficulty this posed: *"I am uncertain that more time for independent filming will have a significant impact – what would prompt participants to capture footage now that was not done earlier?"* (Field notes). Eventually, in late November 2017, the steering group requested the project be delayed indefinitely due to the workload of the neighbourhood planning group.

Throughout the research, it is clear that engagement with the participatory media workshop and the Bootlegger tool was low, apart from the early instances of steering group support. The engagement of all participants did not persist over time and, in many cases, did not persist beyond the initial workshop.

4.4.2 Reference

In Gaver's framework, reference refers to the tendency for participants to discuss the study and technology through references to other technologies or experiences they like (Gaver *et al.*, 2009). It allows consideration of what participants take to be a valuable experience and how that compares to their involvement in the study and their use of the technology.

In the first study reported earlier in this chapter, there were a number of comments and suggestions about the usefulness of Bootlegger and relating their experience of using the mobile app to the ease with which they use a regular video feature of a smartphone. However, during this study, there was less buy-in of the technology. Although the participants required very little support to use the app, becoming proficient in using Bootlegger very quickly, participants were quick to question why such an app was necessary at all. Rather than comparing the ease of use to a regular video function on a smartphone, participants questioned why they couldn't simply use the functions of a smartphone instead: *"Can we not just use the video on our phones? Wouldn't that be easier?"* (P4).

One participant, a photographer, was particularly keen to incorporate photography and was not enthusiastic about using Bootlegger: *"So you can't just take photos on the app? It has to be video? Just I want to incorporate some of my photography."* (P6). Despite the scepticism, this particular participant was supportive of the idea of using a creative engagement method in planning, but simply felt the tools were not appropriate.

In both of the cases above, the affordances of Bootlegger was explained, however participants were still uncertain of the benefits of such a technology. Firstly, the ability to be able to aggregate video content easily through the app and web platform was discussed but participants felt the

tool should be easy to use first and foremost, referencing video functions through smartphones as one way to achieve that. It was felt the benefits of aggregated content did not outweigh other factors. Secondly, the simple editing facilities available through the web platform were also discussed. Although participants felt this function was useful and would support them in producing videos, something which they felt unable to do through other, more complicated software, they did not like that photos or videos from smartphones could not be incorporated into the web platform. They felt there should be a function to allow uploads of data to the web platform, something which Bootlegger does not support.

Overall, participants' references to other technology and experiences were usually to highlight the negative factors of the tool. Although there were elements that were received well, such as the editing facilities through the web platform, generally participants felt that easier methods of recording their neighbourhood were available through regular smartphone features.

4.4.3 Accommodation

How technology and related methods are accommodated in the lives of participants can also provide an indication of their successes or failures. Incorporating activities into existing rhythms and routines can show the activity itself, or the tool, has become part of participants' everyday lives (Gaver *et al.*, 2009).

The study in Wooler incorporated a period of time for participants to independently film in their neighbourhood. During the workshop this activity was introduced to participants and the booklet provided allowed them to make notes of locations or issues they felt were important. All were very keen on this idea, making notes and discussing different areas of Wooler they would like to capture and why. Two participants, a grandmother and granddaughter, discussed their approach to independent filming: *"We could do it [film] while we're out and about at the weekend. Or even when we're walking you to and from school"* (P4). This suggested that participants felt it would be possible to accommodate the technology and the study into their everyday lives. However, following the workshop, only

the steering group organisers captured video following a prompt email with no other participants taking part.

One of the key issues identified through the first study was the heavy reliance on the researcher, and the opportunity to independently film as part of a project was a way to remove the researcher in an attempt to make the method sustainable for neighbourhood planning groups to use of their own accord. However, the reality shows that participants did not engage with the study beyond the workshop and the technology was not accommodated into their routines and everyday lives.

4.4.4 Surprise and Insight

The final criteria that can indicate success is surprise and insight: a way in which technologies and related methods can create new interactions over the course of participants' encounters with them (Gaver *et al.*, 2009). For example, the ability for new content to appear or methods to be able to elicit surprising results, can create novelty and surprise, creating interesting interactions that could be meaningful (or not) to participants.

With regards to the study in Wooler, surprise and insight did not feature during the project. The workshops were clearly set out with a structure of activities and future activities were explained to all participants. The use of the technology, beyond the initial surprise and excitement of using something new, also did not continue to provoke surprise and insight. The Bootlegger app was downloaded onto participants' phones and would sit in the background of the device unless being used. The app did not utilise notifications or other system functionalities to bring the tool and, therefore, the project to the attention of participants. Thus, a lack of interaction throughout the project meant there was no opportunity for surprise and insights.

Reflecting on the project and what could have occurred, I feel surprise and insight could have become a key factor during participatory editing activities. There would have been opportunities for participants to share their videos and the issues they care about, leading to interesting discussions about their own neighbourhood, as was the case in the first

study. There may also have been opportunities for surprise and insight into how Bootlegger as a tool had been used by other participants. However, all of this is simply conjecture based on my own reflections of the project.

4.5 Reflections

The mixed nature of the findings show, on the one hand, the positive aspects of storytelling and participatory media and, on the other hand, the complexity and sustainability of digital tools. In the following sections I consider the use of participatory media to support storytelling and multiplicity that can centre citizen's needs, and the challenges faced in developing tools for sustainable interactions.

4.5.1 Storytelling and Multiplicity

The literature explored in Chapter 2 has already explored a range of challenges to engaging citizens in planning policy: the use of traditional approaches being exclusive; the limited frameworks used to engage citizens which do not account for tacit knowledge; the ways in which citizens experiences are not accounted for in policy; and the "clichéd…dry as dust" policy that results from such participation (Sandercock, 2003, p. 21). However, the use of storytelling was also briefly explored, whereby academics began to question the scientific ways of knowing which led to the 'story turn' and the legitimisation of lay knowledge told through stories (Throgmorton, 2003). Advocates of storytelling in planning feel such an approach is more inclusive and supports citizens to express lived experience through narratives which can "imagine the ultimately unrepresentable" (Forester, 1989; Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003; Sandercock, 2010a, p. 18). Despite this, scholars have indicated that stories have little impact on policy outcomes and, where they do, it is more by chance than design (van Hulst, 2012). In this section, I reflect on the use of participatory media as a creative approach to participation that enabled a new discursive arena to open up and support citizens to share their experiences through storytelling in the first study.

Firstly, the ability for citizens to capture and share experiences together opened up a new discursive arena that became a more inclusive space that

recognised the different narratives present. This new space was created at the sites visited by participants and, therefore, participation took place in situ within everyday spaces. In this sense, the use participatory media created a vernacular space where citizens were able to communicate their narratives to one another which resulted in citizens questioning the truth of their own and others' stories. Standing in the same location and sharing different stories allowed participants to recognise they could be both true and false for different citizens and that "transparent, unmediated, undisputable facts" are almost 'beyond reach' (Latour, 2005, p. 9).

Leading from this, it was the ability of participatory media technology that supported the avoidance of individualistic narratives in a way which promoted multiplicity of citizens' stories through synchronous story capture. This enabled the citizens to begin to create a shared narrative allowing for "differences in perspective, storyline and focal point" within a collective story (Goldstein *et al.*, 2015, p. 1290). The result was the beginning of a shared story in which "coherence was not a product of an integrated plan, but rather an emergent quality of a nationwide collection of plurivocal narratives" (Goldstein *et al.*, 2015, p. 1290).

It is important to note, here, that I reflect on the *beginning* of a shared narrative as the citizens also recognised, through this discursive arena, that there were missing stories. Through the recognition of multiple truths present in the experiences shared, the citizens felt that there was a need to provide further opportunities for others in the area to share their experiences and stories. This was significant in itself, but also important to reflect that such a realisation came earlier in the policy process rather than waiting to involve other citizens when the neighbourhood plan was already formulated. The participatory media technology was able to 'make the invisible visible' (Schroeter and Foth, 2009) and enabled citizens to consider the issue of representation – that is, it is important to "gather the legitimate people around" (Latour, 2005, p. 6). Although stories in planning literature are often presented as positive in and of themselves, when the spaces created for storytelling aren't inclusive, community-focused or, in

other words, representative, they accept exclusivity in participation (van Hulst, 2012).

The first study showed that citizen storytelling through participatory media provided an opportunity to democratise the voices of those involved, supporting citizens to recognise the need for others to participate and enabling them to question the truth of their own narratives. There was already some elements of widening participation, with the inclusion of young people in the formation of a policy agenda, and, ultimately, spaces were opened to share stories of their own "everyday vernacular experiences and practices" (Klaebe *et al.*, 2007, p. 4). Allowing citizens to capture their own stories through participatory media also serves to prioritise their lay knowledge. With technology in the hands of the citizens themselves, a deeper understanding of their stories and experiences can be gained that would not be possible through traditional processes where responses would often be re-represented by a planning officer (Latour, 2005). Although there were many challenges and failings within this chapter, the research shows the potential for creative storytelling in the policy process which could serve to challenge the dominant policy approach (Sandercock, 2003).

4.5.2 Complexity and Sustainability in Technology Design

As noted above, there were many positive aspects of the use of participatory media, however, the research evidenced a wide range of issues in using such tools with citizens in practice. Chapter 2 (see 2.3) discussed the digital civics agenda and the wide range of technological tools developed to support citizen participation (Olivier and Wright, 2015; Boehner and DiSalvo, 2016; Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2016; Asad and Le Dantec, 2017; Corbett and Le Dantec, 2018). However, here, I reflect on the failings of digital tools, exploring the need for sustainability and the need for tools to be easy to use for everyday participation.

In all cases reported in this chapter, the use of participatory media did not extend beyond the initial workshops and deployments and failed to garner long-term engagement, and here I reflect on some possible reasons. Firstly,

the use of the tool was seen as an interesting method by the citizens involved in the research, however, it was also seen as a novel intervention rather than a sustainable form of creative participation. Such novelty in deploying technology has been shown to support short-term engagement and requires a more engaged and longer term approach to the design and use of technology (Gordon and Mugar, 2018). This leads to the second issue in that the design of the tool used, Bootlegger, was intended for other uses and the tool was not specifically designed for the neighbourhood planning policy context. Although the appropriation of technology is often positive and supports citizens to use familiar technology (Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2020), in this case, the tool used was not familiar and was unable to account for the policy process where the setup of a film shoot was always bounded within the affordances of the tool. The motivation for using participatory media was one which wanted to promote the "communicative and generative possibilities of the tools" (Gordon and Mugar, 2018, p. 9), however, the suitability of Bootlegger for this purpose highlights the notion that technology cannot simply solve problems (Jones *et al.*, 2015; Gordon and Walter, 2016).

Further to this, the technology was seen as complex by many participants in the research. Although many citizens felt they learned quickly and it became easier with each use, the complexity of the web platform, the way in which the film shoot appeared within the mobile app, and the interface design all presented challenges. Complexity in such citizen-focused tools negates their use and the lack of context-specific design leads to a 'build for, not with' approach which decentres citizens' needs (McCann, 2015). The issues with the web platform also made it difficult to engage citizens in setting up the tool for use in practice meaning citizens' needs were constantly interpreted by me as the researcher. These challenges point to the need to take an approach to the introduction of new technologies which allows citizens' experiences to be considered through the co-design of tools (Saad-Sulonen and Horelli, 2010; Jones *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the reliance on facilitation is common in participatory processes and this research suggests that even with well-designed technology that meets

citizens' needs, a level of skilled support may also be needed. This links to the ideas prevalent in community development approaches where practitioners (not necessarily planners) were able to support citizen empowerment (Eversole, 2012).

It is important to note, however, that the complexity of Bootlegger and the reliance on facilitation means reverting to methods which are quick or simplified as this may not achieve the deep participation required in a process such as neighbourhood planning. For example, the use of participatory media tools could be seen as a 'meaningful inefficiency' – a term which prioritises relationships, connections and reflective practices – but the tool itself could be easier to use than the one presented in this research and could still be further supported by skilled facilitators (Gordon and Walter, 2016; Gordon and Mugar, 2018).

The lack of long-term engagement could also be a result of the attempts to embed a complex digital tool into an already-complex policy process. The citizens were keen to use participatory video to capture their neighbourhood and could see the appeal of visual representations and stories in a process otherwise based on long policy documents. However, all of the above issues merge to create a participation process which is burdensome to embed within the everyday tasks of policymaking, particularly as they are carried out by citizens themselves. The second study attempted to provide a more bounded and manageable structure to using the technology, particularly through a toolkit approach, but the issues of engagement persisted. Again, the design of Bootlegger could be questioned, in that tools should be designed with longevity in mind as well as allowing for flexibility and adaptation (Gordon and Mugar, 2018; Costanza-Chock, 2020). Furthermore, working in real world contexts means considering the issues faced by citizens and, where possible, working collaboratively together to address these. The need to ensure *"human values and human priorities are advanced, and not diminished through new technology"* (Carroll and Rosson, 2013, p. 25) is essential in ensuring a positive process of technology design and use with citizens in a civic context such as neighbourhood planning.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the potential for the use of participatory media in the process of neighbourhood planning and responds to RQ3. The first study presented in the chapter enabled an exploratory approach to using Bootlegger with two neighbourhood planning groups, highlighting that such a method allows for citizen storytelling which can democratise the agenda and prioritise lay knowledge in the policy process. The method of participatory media and the process of using Bootlegger revealed the positive aspects of a creative approach that was able to open up new discursive spaces and support the multiplicity of citizens' stories. However, the study also highlighted the complexity in using the tool and, particularly, the web platform as well as the heavy reliance on a facilitator. The second study aimed to respond to this learning within a more bounded project and a toolkit approach to reduce reliance on a facilitator. However, the second study was largely unsuccessful with a lack of engagement beyond the initial workshop and, as with the first study, a failure to engage longer term with participatory media as a method.

RQ3 asks what technologies could be developed and used to support citizen engagement in neighbourhood planning and this research has provided a range of insights. Participatory media, as a method, provides a creative approach to participation which can centre the needs of citizens in policy and tools to support this could be developed and used in the future. However, when designing and configuring the use of such tools, the policy process must be considered to ensure the tool can be designed for or adapt to the context in question, the digital skills of citizens must be considered, and the tools must be designed with ease of use in mind. Furthermore, such technology should account for sustainable, long-term engagement to foster new, sustainable modes of participation, rather than designing and deploying tools for the novelty aspect. The failings of the various studies presented here should be taken as learning to distinguish the issues with the design and development of tools for citizens in neighbourhood planning from the positive aspects of participatory media as a creative mode of participation in policy processes.

Finally, the context of neighbourhood planning provides an already-complex site for design and it is important to further explore the challenges faced by citizens undertaking the task to best understand their needs before designing technology. It has been shown that selecting technological tools and methods to test 'in the wild' must consider the context and nuances of complex worlds rather than simply deploying tools experimentally (Taylor *et al.*, 2013). Given this, the following chapter will explore the neighbourhood planning process in-depth to identify the needs of citizens, the challenges they face and the opportunities for technology. Chapter 6 will then move to consider co-designing technology with citizens as an alternative approach to designing tools to simply deploy with citizens.

Chapter 5

5. Reflecting on the Realities of the Neighbourhood Planning Process

The previous chapter explored the potential for participatory media to be used within neighbourhood planning and highlighted that such an approach can promote storytelling and multiplicity in sharing citizens' experiences to support policy formation. However, the research overall was largely unsuccessful due to the complex nature of the tool used and inability to embed such a technology within an already-complex process. The outcome of the first stage of this research led to a changed approach (explored in Chapter 3).

Therefore, in this chapter I seek to document the neighbourhood planning process to understand how it is enacted by citizens and the opportunities and challenges faced, directly responding to RQ1. Within this chapter, the challenges and opportunities discussed also contribute to RQ2 and 3 in providing insights into the needs for non-digital and digital support. Although a wealth of guidance and advice documents already exist and a range of academic literature, key to this research was centring the perspectives of citizens involved in neighbourhood planning, particularly as a citizen-led process.

This chapter begins with the reporting of four workshops with neighbourhood planning groups and professional planners which aim to create an in-depth understanding of the neighbourhood planning process. I then present seven themes from the data gathered: accessing the policymaking process; creating boundaries; forming groups and governance; forming relationships; engaging citizens; policy, evidence and translation; and transitioning ownership. These themes highlight the complexity faced by citizens and the ways in which they are navigating what is, in reality, a professionalised and expert-driven policy tool. Finally, I reflect on the need for changes and improvements in neighbourhood planning, and the possibility for digital support tools.

5.1 The Realities of Neighbourhood Planning

Four workshops were carried out with citizens and planners who were, or had been, involved in neighbourhood planning. The interactive workshops encouraged participants to use their own stories and experiences to map the process of neighbourhood planning in detail.

5.1.1 Field Sites and Participants

Three neighbourhood planning groups took part, all of whom had either completed their neighbourhood plan or were in the later stages of the process: Longhorsley, Morpeth and Stannington (see Figures 22 and 23). In addition, one workshop was conducted with volunteers for Planning Aid North East, all of whom were professional planners. Table 6 provides a summary of all participants and their role.

Figure 22: Regional locations of field sites for mapping workshops

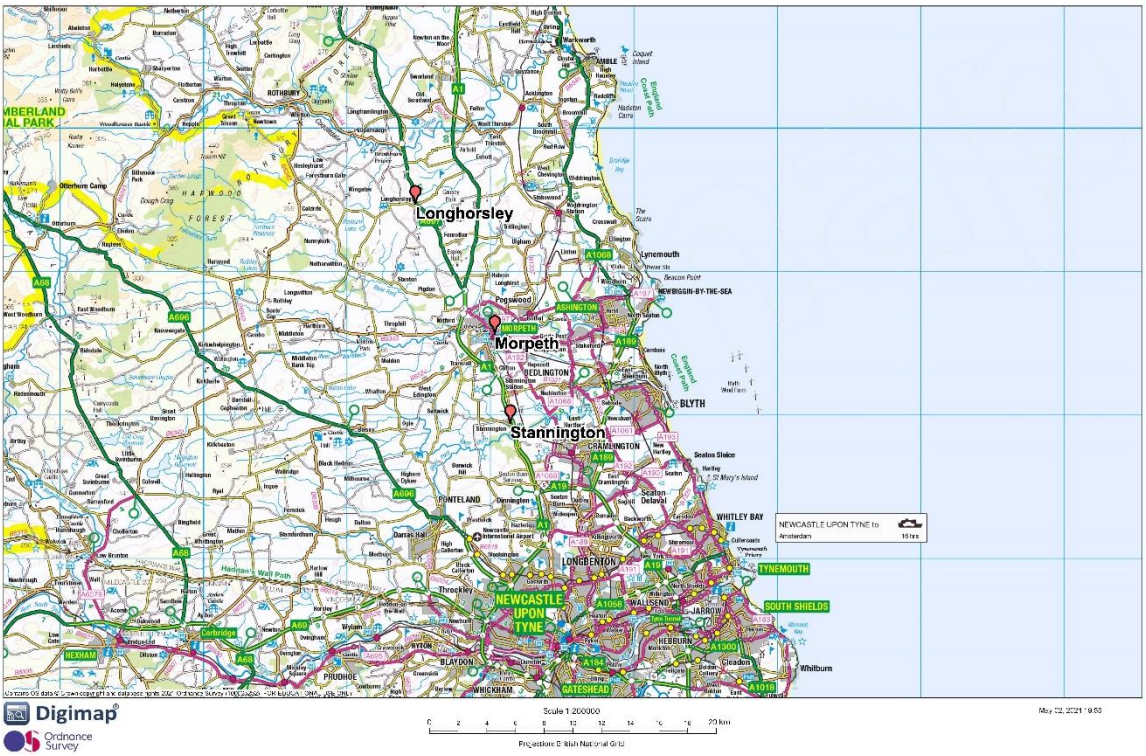


Figure 23: Local map with field site area boundaries

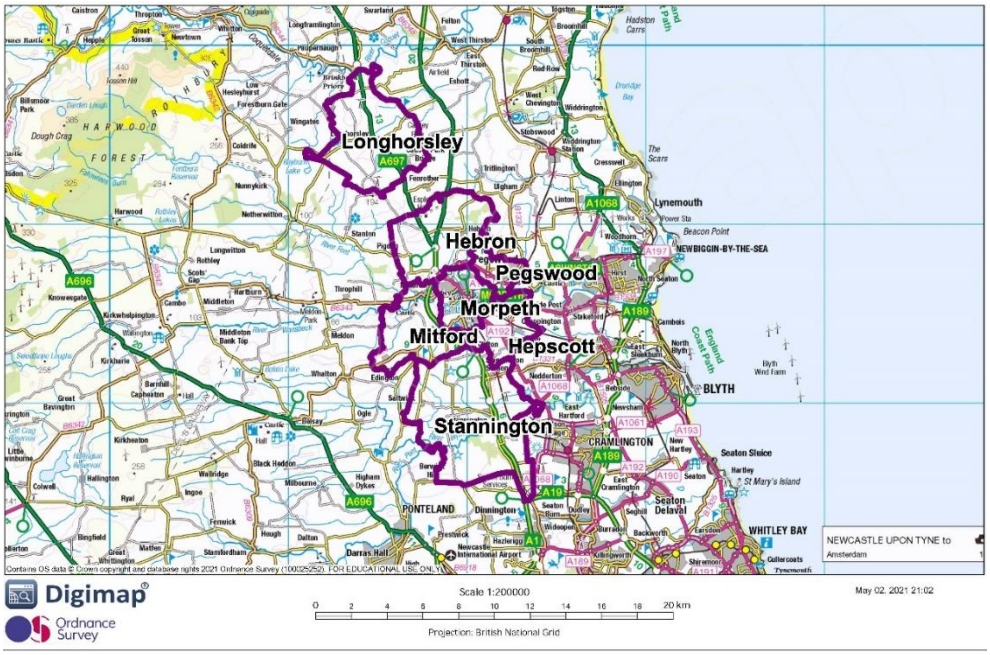


Table 6: Summary of participants for mapping workshop

Note: The labels given distinguish between citizens (CX) and planners (PX).

Label	Research Role	Further details
C1	Citizen	Steering group member who had led the neighbourhood plan for over one year
C2	Citizen	Longstanding steering group member involved in the plan from the beginning
C3	Citizen	Chair of neighbourhood planning group and town councillor
C4	Citizen	Clerk of neighbourhood planning group
C5	Citizen	Chair of neighbourhood planning group
C6	Citizen	Longstanding steering group member and county councillor
P7	Planner	Private planning professional interested in neighbourhood planning
P8	Planner	Volunteer with Planning Aid, previously a public sector planner
P9	Planner	Public sector planner working directly with neighbourhood planning groups
P10	Planner	Private planning consultant working directly with neighbourhood planning groups
P11	Planner	Public sector policy planner interested in neighbourhood planning

The research aims to explore the process of neighbourhood planning in full and, therefore, groups in the North East who had already completed their plan or were almost at the end of the process were targeted for recruitment to this study. LPAs must advertise any applications to undertake a neighbourhood plan, therefore, I used updated lists on the websites of local authorities in the North East region to identify active neighbourhood plans. Further research through local neighbourhood plan and/or parish/town council websites was then necessary to identify which groups had either completed their plan or were at the stage of submitting their plan to the LPA. I approached nine groups that met the criteria by email, inviting them to take part in the research, of which three self-selected: Morpeth, Longhorsley and Stannington. Each workshop was conducted with two members of the steering group. I had intended to deliver larger workshops with more participants from each of the steering groups, however, participants felt that a smaller group would allow for more in-depth discussion and would allow those with the most knowledge of the whole neighbourhood planning process to attend.

The first workshop was conducted with Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. Morpeth is a historic market town located in south east Northumberland, approximately 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne (see Figure 24). Morpeth began their neighbourhood plan in 2013 as part of the fifth wave of front runner pilots selected by the government. They completed their plan in 2016 and Northumberland County Council has adopted the plan for use in decision-making. Although Morpeth Town Council instigated the process, it became a collaboration with Hebron, Hepscott, Mitford and Pegswood Parish Councils (see Figure 25 for boundary). The neighbourhood plan area has an approximate population of around 19,000. I met with the former Chair of the steering group and the administrative clerk, both of whom had been heavily involved in the process throughout.

Figure 24: Location map of Morpeth and surrounding Parish areas

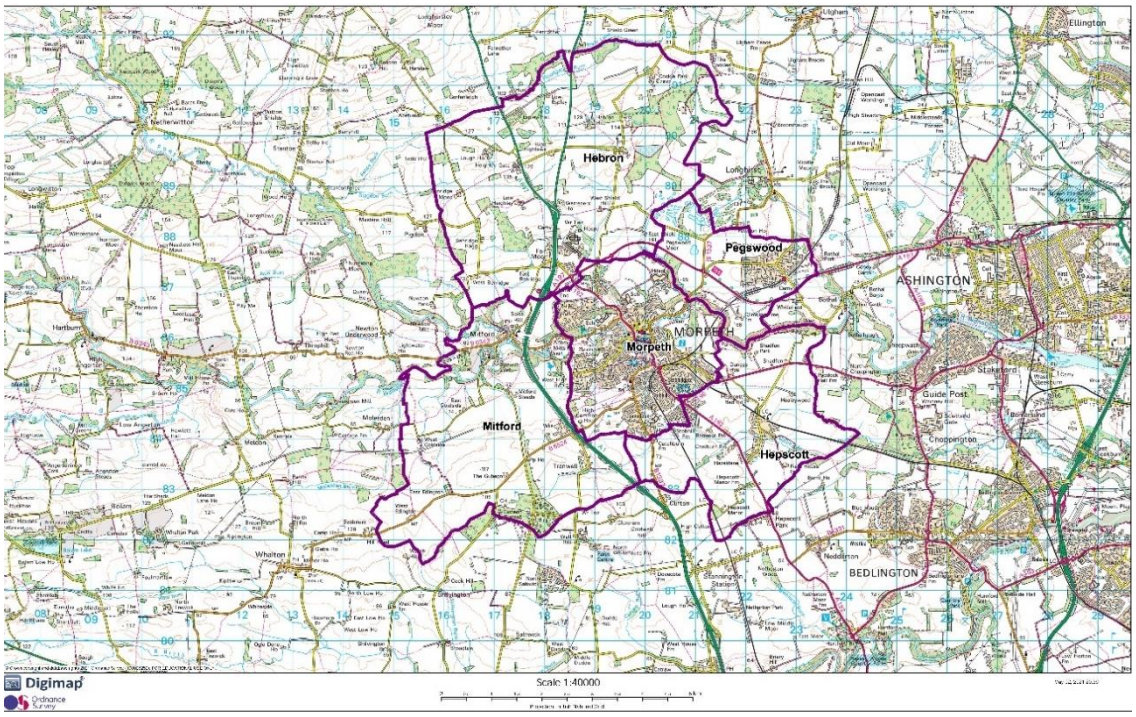
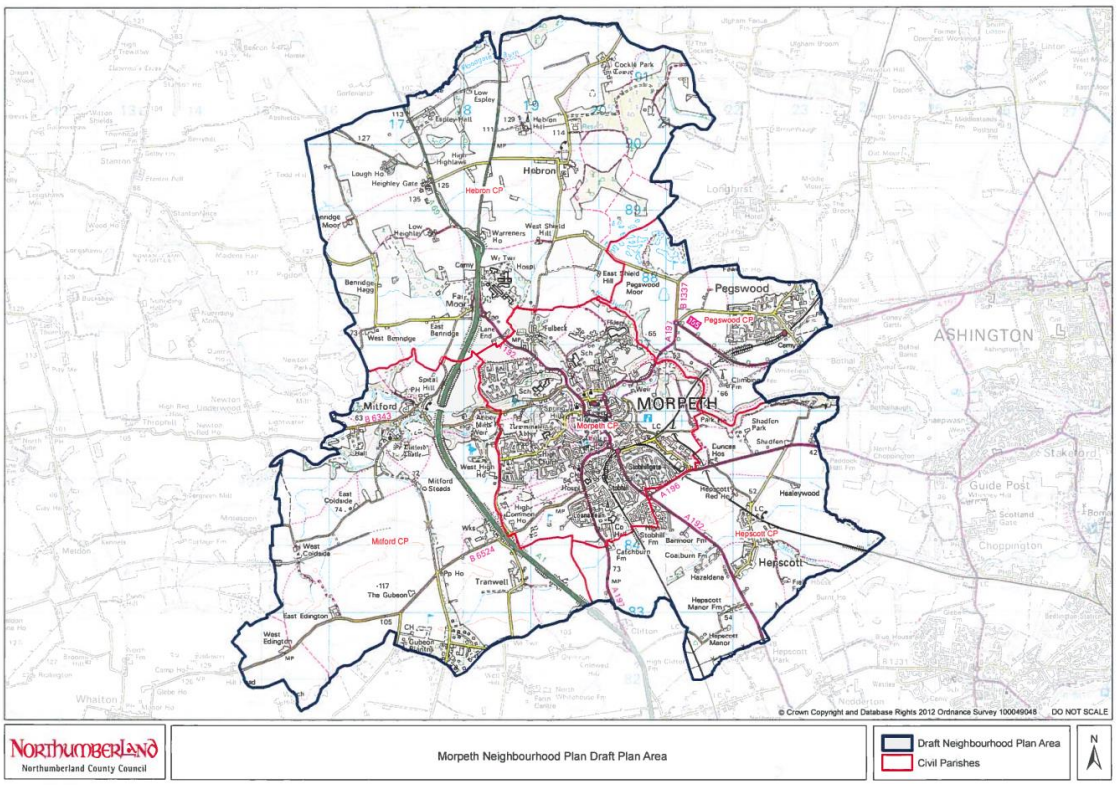


Figure 25: Morpeth Neighbourhood Planning Boundary



The second workshop was conducted with Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan. Longhorsley is a rural village parish with a small settlement and a number of outlying dwellings and farmsteads (see Figure 26). The Parish has an approximate population of under 900 with the majority of the population commuting to work in south Northumberland and beyond to Newcastle upon Tyne. Longhorsley began their neighbourhood plan in 2014 and, at the time of the workshop, had just completed their pre-submission consultation exercise (see Figure 27 for boundary). The group were in the process of making revisions to the neighbourhood plan, writing the basic conditions and community involvement statements, before submitting the plan to the LPA. I met with two long-standing members of the steering group who had been heavily involved throughout the process. The neighbourhood plan was later adopted by Northumberland County Council in 2018.

Figure 26: Location map of Longhorsley

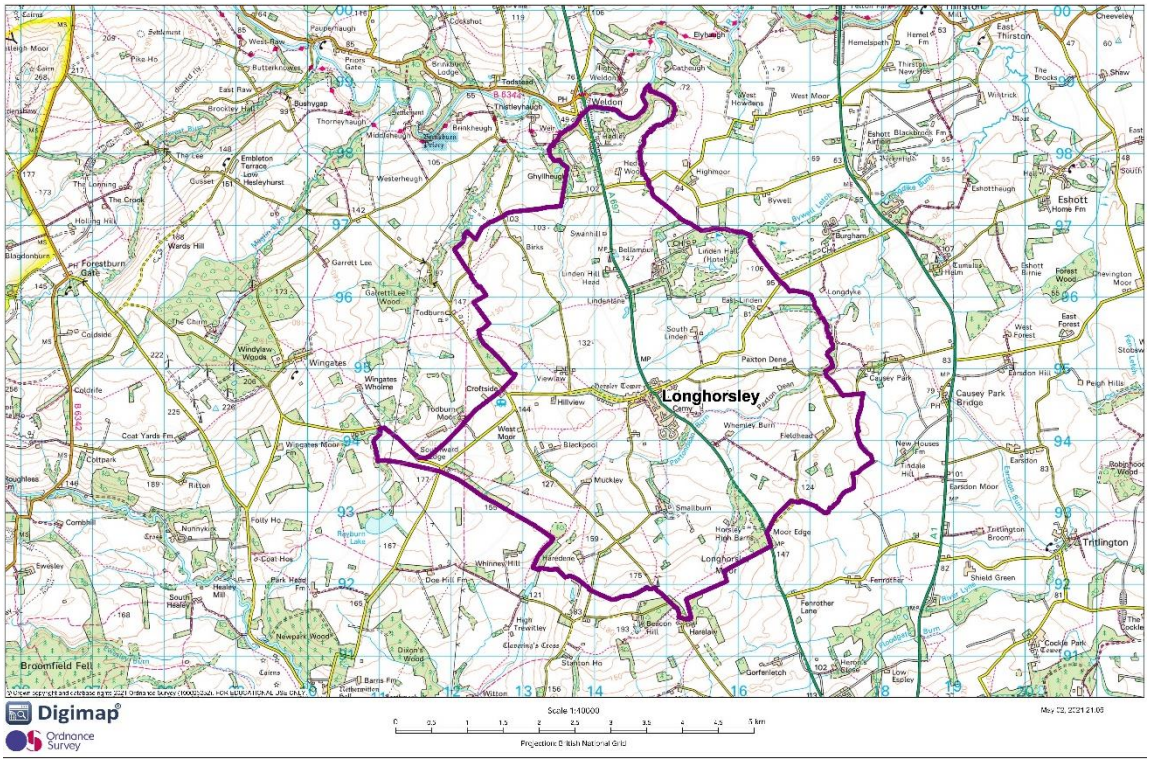
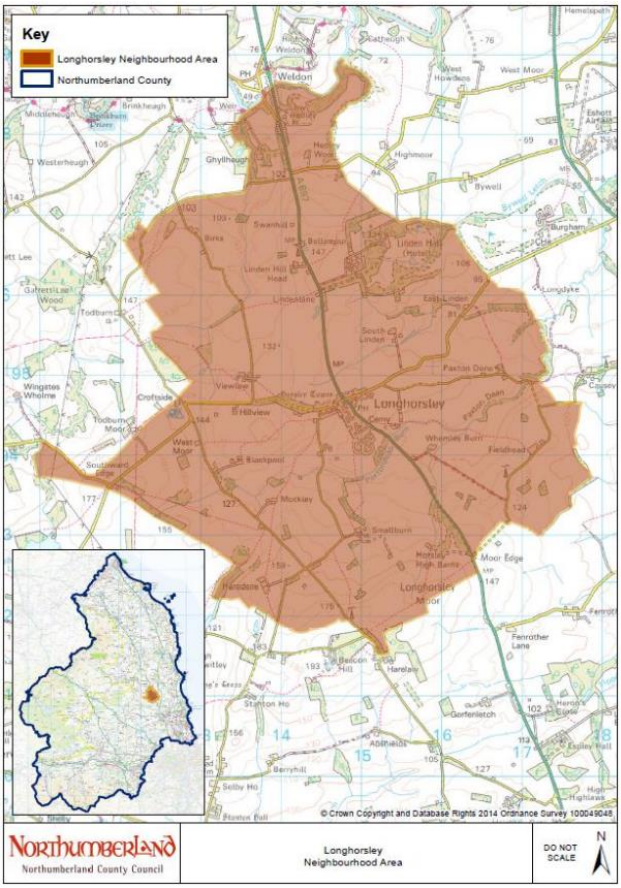


Figure 27: Longhorsley Neighbourhood Planning Boundary



The third workshop was conducted with Stannington Neighbourhood Plan. Stannington is a small rural village in south Northumberland with an approximate population of around 1,200 (see Figure 28). The village has a number of local amenities and small businesses, and the parish includes a range of smaller settlements and farmsteads. There has been a significant amount of new housing provided in the area in recent years and, as with Longhorsley, much of the population commute to surrounding areas for work. Stannington began their neighbourhood plan in 2013 and, at the time of the workshop, they were in discussion with planning officers to finalise revisions before submitting the neighbourhood plan to the local planning authority (see Figure 29 for boundary). I met with the Chair of the steering group and a County Councillor, both of whom had been heavily involved throughout the process. The neighbourhood plan was later adopted by Northumberland County Council in 2018.

Figure 28: Location map of Stannington

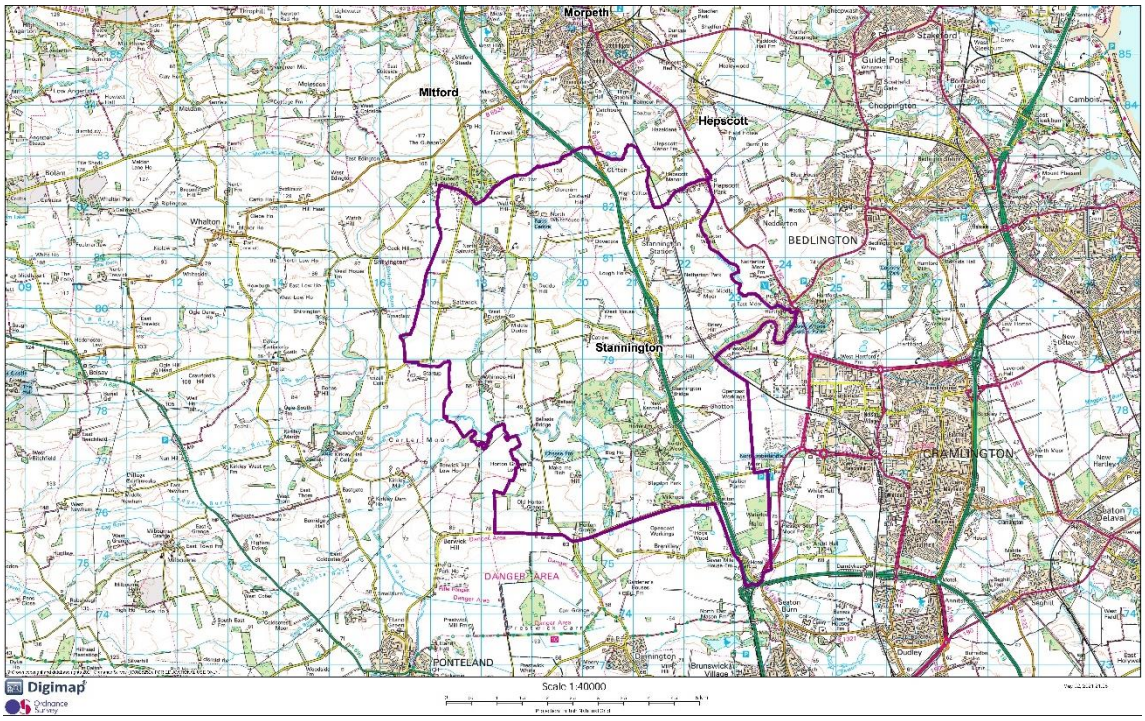
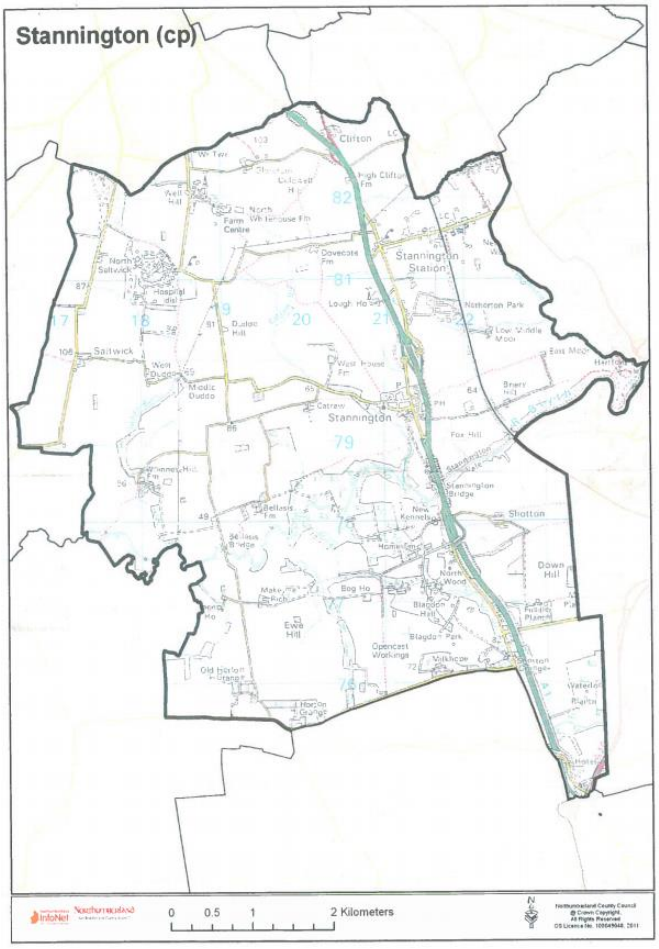


Figure 29: Stannington Neighbourhood Planning Boundary



In addition to these workshops, I conducted one workshop with members of the Planning Aid North East Task Group, all of whom were professional planners and had significant experience of working closely with neighbourhood planning groups. Planning Aid England, part of the Royal Town Planning Institute, provides advice and support to individuals and communities engaging with the planning system. Each region of England has a Task Group with the role of managing, organising and coordinating activity in their locale. Through my networks and relationships built during my research, I had been engaging with the North East Task Group for over 6 months as they were interested in my research. The Planning Aid North East Task Group is made up of a range of planning professionals, both from local planning authorities and private practice, that volunteer their time to manage the service in the North East.

I conducted one workshop with five members of the Task Group. All participants had a keen interest in neighbourhood planning but are from a range of backgrounds including experience in the private, public and third sector.

5.1.2 Method and Data Analysis

With each of the three neighbourhood planning groups, I conducted a three-hour workshop to encourage participants to map their neighbourhood planning journey. On large sheets of A1 paper, each group mapped out the process they had gone through to produce their neighbourhood plan using a set of semi-structured activities (see Figure 30). To provide an initial warmup activity, I presented the groups with a set of pre-prepared post-it notes containing key stages of a neighbourhood planning process as set out in the Locality Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap (Locality, 2018). The groups began by arranging these stages into chronological order and then I encouraged participants to begin adding their own stages to sit alongside those already given. This initial activity enabled the group to recall their own neighbourhood planning journey, remembering back to the early stages which, for all groups, was several years previous.

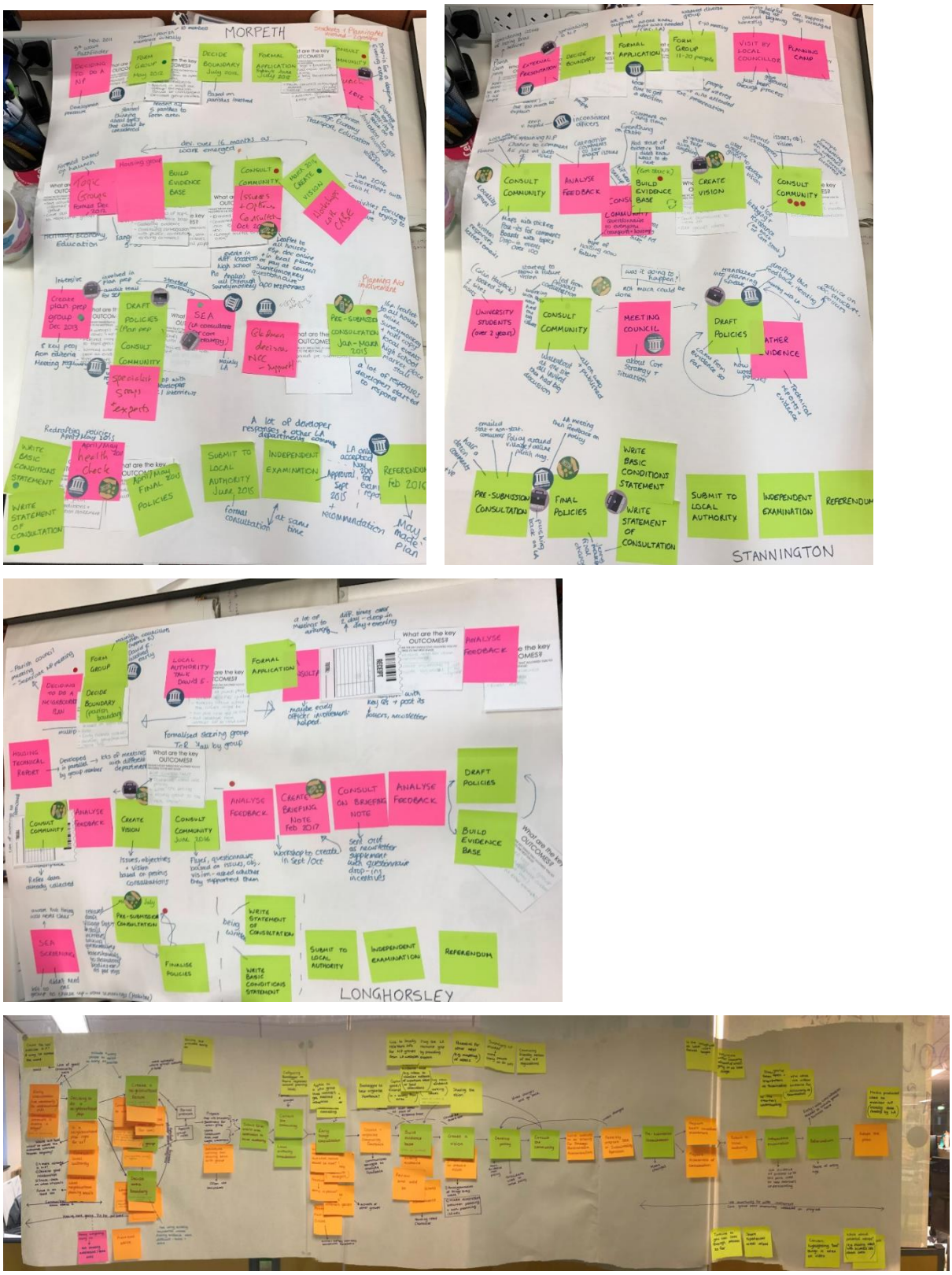


Figure 30: Workshop materials for mapping workshop – top and middle show process maps created by neighbourhood planning groups; bottom row shows process map created by planners

Following this initial activity, the groups then focused on each stage of their neighbourhood plan and began to talk, in detail, about each stage and the tasks they had completed. Participants were encouraged to continue adding post-it notes to represent significant stages in the process and to make notes on the map. To further support discussion and prompt reflection, a set of props and prompts were used (see Figure 31). Stickers were used to represent support and advice given from the local planning authority, when money was spent, and when external support was used (i.e. private consultants). Key outcome postcards were also used to prompt the groups to think about and note down the outcomes at each stage and were intended to capture some of the work done throughout the process, including some of the more mundane tasks. Finally, I used a set of pre-prepared questions to prompt discussions when needed. The schedule of questions was similar to those used in semi-structured interviews and provided questions about each part of the process to ensure participants covered as much detail as possible (the full schedule can be seen in Appendix D).

Figure 31: Mapping workshop prompt materials

The final workshop was conducted with planning professionals over a two-hour period – a slightly shorter workshop due to the time constraints of the participants. The workshop was conducted in a similar way to those with neighbourhood planning groups, but it was tailored to help them reflect on the process of supporting multiple neighbourhood planning groups and from their broader experiences over time. As above, the workshop began by arranging a set of pre-prepared post-it notes and encouraging participants to add further stages they felt were missing. The props and prompts in the form of stickers and key outcomes postcards were not used in this workshop as the participants were not recalling one single neighbourhood planning journey. Therefore, participants were encouraged to make notes on the process map throughout the workshop and I used the pre-prepared questions to prompt discussions when needed.

From all four of the workshops, any material created as part of the activities, such as the mapped processes, were collected as part of the data. In addition to this, all four workshops were audio recorded with the permission of the participants and later transcribed for analysis. The workshop recordings were essential to capture the rich discussions throughout the workshops that could not be captured through notes on the physical materials. The physical process maps were a tangible output to help participants reflect during the workshops and to serve as a final output for participants. The audio recordings meant I could amalgamate the two sources of data to gain a thorough understanding of the neighbourhood planning process and issues at play.

A total of 11 hours of recorded discussions and four mapped diagrams were collected. Transcripts were imported into NVivo to begin to code the data using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As the data was coded, themes began to emerge from shared issues across the codes and, through a process of refinement, seven themes were identified.

5.2 Findings

Findings from this study show the many difficulties faced by citizens undertaking a neighbourhood plan and how, in reality, the process differs

greatly from the generic advice given to neighbourhood planning groups. This section will set out seven data themes exploring the challenges faced by neighbourhood planning groups: accessing the policymaking process; creating boundaries; forming groups and governance; forming relationships; citizen engagement; policy, evidence and translation; and, transitioning ownership.

5.2.1 Accessing the Policymaking Process

The neighbourhood planning process is intended to be a citizen-led initiative, however, access to the process is challenging for citizens, as explored below.

Access and Knowledge

Neighbourhood planning groups reported their knowledge of the opportunity came through word of mouth, usually from one individual in the community with a surface-level knowledge that would attempt to galvanise others: *"Erm…we had 1 or 2 people within the 5 parishes who knew about it"* (C3). The planners highlighted that the first hurdle to encouraging uptake was that *"neighbourhoods know about it"* (P7). The workshops highlighted the uneven take-up of neighbourhood planning due to citizens being unaware of the legislation and the opportunity it provides.

Even once citizens were aware of the opportunity, there was a significant lack of knowledge as to what neighbourhood planning is for and, therefore, citizens embark on the process without considering if the tool is appropriate for their needs. The planners were keen to stress: *"you can forget about the term neighbourhood plan in this stage and just do community consultation on the neighbourhood…you might do a lot of good work and decide you don't even need a neighbourhood plan to solve the problems"* (P9). The planners highlighted that other planning tools could be used to achieve different aims: *"the plan may not be the right tool…so we would talk about other planning tools"* (P7). However, in reality, none of the neighbourhood planning groups considered this.

Further to this, the decision to move forward with a neighbourhood plan was taken without understanding the complexities of the process and all groups reported the path to producing a plan was unclear, stating:

> *"It became clearer as we went on...It was almost like you couldn't stand at the beginning and see a clear pathway but as you fought your way through, you could see a bit of space..."* (C1)
>
> *"We pulled everybody together to say let's go through what we think this involves because nobody had any idea really"* (C2)
>
> *"We just did what was necessary and crossed our fingers"* (C3)
>
> *"We decided we would go ahead...then we got a [LPA planner] to come and tell us what that actually meant"* (C5)

The uncertainty of the process was compounded when parish or town councils decided to go ahead with a neighbourhood plan and then delegated to a steering group to do the work, of which those citizens were not part of the decision process: *"The idea was floated in the parish council meetings and it was decided that we would do it"* (C2).

Motivations and Support

The motivations for undertaking a plan also highlighted the lack of knowledge of the process, with the main motivation being the desire to protect their neighbourhood from an influx of housing: "*We all said 'what could we do about the development pressure?'"* (C3). This conflicts with the aims of neighbourhood planning as a pro-growth tool (as discussed in 2.1.3). The planners also stated that groups they worked with were motivated by the "*real or perceived development pressures*" (P10). The initial difficulties accessing the neighbourhood planning process resulted in fundamental misunderstandings about what could and could not be achieved through the policy tool.

Neighbourhood planning groups did share the ways in which they received support after they decided to embark on the process, with all receiving different support: one received a presentation from the LPA; one received a presentation from a private company who aimed to gain paid work; and

one received a presentation from another local neighbourhood planning group. In addition, one group attended a 'Planning Camp' event hosted by Planning Aid England which was seen as particularly helpful. Events and opportunities to network with other neighbourhood planners was seen to be valuable in developing understanding and sharing experiences, however this is limited due to the changing nature of national support for neighbourhood planning.

Further to this, groups sought advice online from the various guidance documents available but further issues arose. Firstly, groups felt the documents were jargon-filled and difficult to understand: "*It was hard translating what you're reading when we had no real idea what was involved and what we were actually going to do"* (C2). In addition, there was a lack of advice in how to produce a plan which was also recognised by the planners: *"Yeah, the guidance…it's pretty vague"* (P9). Finally, the amount of advice available online made it difficult to distinguish trustworthy and useful advice with, for example, one website hosting 25 advisory pages each with its own pdf document of up to 30 pages long. In response to this, planners suggested that groups should look at the legislation and regulations before realising such information would not be accessible for citizens : "*I was going to say 'oh, you need to look through the regulations' and then you think goodness that's the last thing you want to do to a voluntary community group"* (P8). This highlighted the disparity between the knowledge of citizens and planners and suggested that advisory information was not targeted at the correct knowledge level.

Planning Issues?

On proceeding with the plan, further issues arose where neighbourhood planning groups were unaware of what constitutes a planning issue and, therefore, what could and could not be addressed by a plan. The planners were very aware of this issue: *"You're always going to have this split of planning and non-planning. You're going to have things that can feature and are legitimate to incorporate into the neighbourhood plan and there's others that will…they're still legitimate but they're not planning and not for neighbourhood planning"* (P10). Consequently, all neighbourhood planning groups reported the consideration of issues that were not material planning matters such as

litter, speeding, and the frequency of bus services. Even once the group producing the plan began to understand this distinction, they found it difficult to communicate that with the wider community: *"It was difficult to get people to understand it was a local plan for the future and not a case of what you want now and also explaining what you could and couldn't do"* (C6).

Finally, the formal process of becoming a designated neighbourhood planning group requires an application to the LPA and this step created further issues where citizens were confused as to what was required and what information to include. This meant that the task was usually completed by one citizen to produce the documents and application: *"But again, nobody was given any direction about what it was that the county council wanted to know. I mean, we gave what our population was, how diverse the parish is in all sorts of areas and that was it and it was really difficult what was expected"* (C5). Planners suggested that templates were available online, but groups were unaware of this.

In all four workshops conducted, it was recognised that the early stages of accessing the process and beginning the neighbourhood plan was crucial for groups and that, unequivocally, more support was needed at this stage: *"we need to frontload the support at this stage"* (P7).

5.2.2 Creating Boundaries

One of the earliest tasks is to decide the geographical boundary for the neighbourhood plan and the workshops highlighted unknown trade-offs made during this step along with challenges this created for policy outcomes.

Each group decided on their geographical boundary based on different considerations but, in all cases, the implications of the decisions made were not discussed. Two of the three neighbourhood planning groups reported their boundaries were decided very early without any problems: *"It's pretty easy when you do a small parish...I don't remember this being a big ordeal at the time"* (C2). Of these, one group used the existing statutory boundary without any discussion, and the other stated: *"We did actually argue...there's one part of the parish which is on one of our roads and there's 6 houses that are on*

the same road but aren't involved. They're not in the parish, they're in another. We actually looked at trying to incorporate them but the logistics and what you have to go through to do that, it just wasn't worth the hassle…" (C6). In the latter case, the group recognised the need to include the area, but the administrative burden was seen as too great to do so in practice. The final neighbourhood planning group formed their boundary to include multiple parish areas and, even in this case, the decision was taken quickly without much discussion. All groups reported that final boundary decisions were made by the parish or town council as opposed to the delegated group conducting the work: *"The parish council decided that, given it was a parish council, the parish boundary actually was sufficient"* (C5).

The formation of the geographical boundary surfaces tensions between who makes the decisions – the governing body or the group undertaking the work – and issues of inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately, the boundary defines the future of the policy produced, determining the key issues of importance, the focus of the policy and who it would affect. Despite this, the lack of discussion means these issues and trade-offs are not considered and, in particular, the exclusion of a geographical area and the resultant exclusion of citizens was not recognised. In contrast, however, the planners recognised the extent to which the geographical boundary would impact on the neighbourhood plan and the citizens involved: *"Because if you decide on the area boundary then that may have an influence on the extent of the forum…the forum would reflect the geography"* (P8).

The discussion of planners further highlighted the trade-offs in boundary decisions where, firstly, planners were keen to suggest groups choose a bespoke boundary rather than the existing statutory demarcation to best represent the community identity. However, the planners went on to recognise the difficulties of accessing data for such a bespoke boundary: "*but the problem they've got is that when you get to that stage [collecting evidence]…when it's a bespoke area boundary, where it's not a parish boundary where you can easily access stats and facts and census data and all that sort of thing. It can be a lot more difficult to get specific evidence together so there's pros and cons in terms of doing that."* (P7). Secondly, a further issue of including large,

strategic planning issues was highlighted by the planners who recognised the difficulty of addressing such issues within a neighbourhood plan:

> P8: *"They wanted to take a portion out because that wasn't the area of concern to them…they wanted to actually look at the area outside of the town centre"*
> P11: *"I think they felt like they didn't have any control over the town centre which was entirely privately owned"*
>
> *"Another manifestation of that is where you've got very large infrastructure or strategic sites which the neighbourhood plan is not the vehicle to deal with strategic, major infrastructure – motorway service stations and that sort of thing. So, they either prepare the neighbourhood plan and are just silent about that and then it's within the boundary or they exclude it."* (P10)

It is important to note that only the planners discussed these issues and concerns in the workshops and that the neighbourhood planning groups did not consider such strategic issues at this early stage of the process – something which later causes issues during policy formation.

Finally, none of the neighbourhood planning groups engaged with the wider community in the formation of the geographical boundary despite guidance suggesting doing so as good practice. The planners also suggested engagement at this stage would be important.

The workshops highlighted that the decisions taken by neighbourhood planning groups incorporates a wide range of issues and implications that are currently not explored at this stage, and, therefore, unknown trade-offs are made. Many of these trade-offs are felt later within the process when certain areas, issues or citizens are excluded from the plan.

5.2.3 Forming Groups and Governance

In parallel with deciding the boundary, another early task is to form a neighbourhood planning group to take the plan forward which creates challenges of membership and governance.

In theory the neighbourhood planning group should be formed to be representative of the geographical boundary, however, during the

workshops, all groups reported that the initial formation of the steering group was decided by the parish or town council. This resulted in little discussion of the representativeness: *"We [the parish council] had an initial meeting…and we separated it off from the parish council meetings because it's such a big thing"* (C2). The neighbourhood planning group working across multiple parishes also formed a group this way: *"We [the town council] wrote to the four neighbouring parishes and said, 'we're going to do this, do you want to be on board?', to form that initial group"* (C3). As a result, in all cases, the steering group consisted only of councillors, clerks and others directly involved in the parish or town council.

Two of the neighbourhood planning groups did not invite other members of the community to join the steering group – an issue closely linked to the lack of community engagement regarding the geographical boundary. One group, however, did invite new members to the steering group to ensure a diverse knowledge base:

> C5: *"We ended up with a really good…well, different backgrounds type of group that we wanted. It had to include, we hoped, people from the businesses, farming, residents and you know, just that kind of thing and parish councillors obviously."*
> C6: *"We just wanted as diverse a group as possible."*

The differing approaches taken in group formation was reflected in the size of the steering group with the two that did not invite wider membership having six-eight citizens to take forward the plan. However, the group which invited wider membership was able to share the workload more evenly: *"We had about 17 or 18 on this steering group which is far too big. But my feelings on it, which have been proved quite right, is that people drop in and drop out…So we ended up with a nice 8 to 10 people at meetings which is perfect and a wider pool to help out with the tasks"* (C5). The planners also felt the group size was important: *"You need a critical mass of dedicated people, a core of people…working group, that actually will do what's required"* (P10).

The way in which the groups were formed also resulted in members being unaware of the time and commitment requires by the process (also

discussed in 5.2.1). In contrast, the planners were keen to ensure the skills, roles and commitment were considered:

> *"It can be the case where there is a point where it just doesn't proceed any further because you can't actually reach agreement on the chair and the group roles..."* (P8)

> *"You've got to have a functioning, fit for purpose group, that...needs to meet certain critical requirements in terms of the numbers and composition, and as a group...you need to really understand that there's core skills that need to be tapped into around organisation of work, mapping and project planning work, certain specialisms or topic interests within the group, the relationships both within the group and externally..."* (P10)

The planners made two suggestions to better support group formation and membership. The first was to undertake a skills audit of the core group to understand the skills needed and what may be missing to support plan production and to highlight the need for a diverse and representative group. The second suggestion was to recruit a large pool of volunteers with a range of skills that could be called upon to contribute to plan production as required. One neighbourhood planning group had taken this approach, recruiting at a launch event: *We had 500 volunteers of which 150 to 200 got involved in the topic groups"* (C3). In this case, however, issues arose in the management of volunteer information with regards to data protection: *"You're taking people's details and you're using it. If you had to prove what you were using it for and you had to prove you were just using it for that"* (C4).

Leading from group formation, another key challenge was governance whereby groups had not duly considered procedures. For two neighbourhood planning groups, the parish or town council remained responsible for key decision which excluded those undertaking the work day-to-day: *"The steering group did not make decisions...that was still up to the parish council to make all the decisions"* (C6). Furthermore, all neighbourhood planning groups reported confusion over the production of governance procedures such as terms of reference, particularly the group working across multiple parishes:

C3: *"Then we spent a lot of time in that group trying to work out how…because different parish and town councils have different codes of conduct…we were working out how we could operate with all five parishes and it be covered by codes of conduct and all those legal things."*
C4: *"And setting up terms of reference and things like that."*
C3: *"…terms of reference and people were saying well…will the meetings have to be held in public? Can we have non-councillors on the steering group? Because it's a code of conduct thing…we had lots of very conflicting advice from all sorts of people there."*

The planners still felt this was an important step: *"It's about setting yourself up to be fit for purpose… which is more about the group, the relationships, your internal communications, your external communications and all those sorts of things…"* (P10). In addition, planners also felt that working across boundaries, despite the complications, was also a positive aspect:

> *"We've got a lot of examples where parish councils who have hated each other for years decided that, as much as they'd like to do individual neighbourhood plans, that they haven't got the critical mass of people and expertise and resources within their parish so they've clubbed together with these other parishes. It's a way of getting people to talk to each other across those parish boundaries"* (P11).

Later in the neighbourhood planning process it was often the case that sub-groups were form to progress specific tasks. One neighbourhood planning group reported forming eight sub-groups to investigate key planning topics with their role to collect evidence, engage with key stakeholders and report on their findings. In this instance, the large pool of volunteers recruited were called upon to form the sub-groups but these group range from 5-30 members. Issues arose around ensuring groups remained focused on the task: *"A lot of the work was trying to keep people on track and trying to keep the focus going…The education one kept going off on horrendous tangents"* (C3). Further issues of sub-groups working in silos and failing to report to the wider group arose and two further editorial and writing sub-groups formed to try to address this. However, the lack of governance

procedures to manage the structures became a significant challenge: *"It was brilliant but logistically, it was…a nightmare"* (C3).

The workshops highlighted the challenges faced in forming a neighbourhood planning group in considering the membership, skillsets, roles and representativeness, as well as the difficulty in creating appropriate governance procedures. Throughout this, there was a significant lack of support despite the issues being common across all the neighbourhood planning groups.

5.2.4 Forming Relationships

Forming relationships was a key theme within the data and three important relationships emerged which will be explored below: citizen to government relationships, group to group relationships, and citizen to external relationships.

Citizen-Government Relationships

Neighbourhood planning groups interact with the LPA throughout the process with legislation also placing a 'duty to support' onto LPAs. Within this research, all neighbourhood planning groups were within the same LPA area which is seen to be supportive of neighbourhood planning and has a dedicated team of officers to support groups. The groups all felt an increase in communication and a more positive relationship had developed with the LPA. However, issues still emerged in communication: *"can we put those stickers on upside down if it was unhelpful?"* (C3).

Firstly, the languages and practices of groups and the LPA officers were not aligned with citizen describing the difficulties of knowing how to communicate with planners, and what and how to ask:

> C6: *"Nobody knew…you thought you understood and then as soon as they walked away you're thinking 'well what are we doing?'"*
> C5: *"They brought us here [LPA offices]…There was about four parish councillors – you and I and [consultant]…even [the consultant] came out and said 'what was all that about?'"*

Furthermore, there was a lack of timely responses from the LPA with all groups reporting significant delays: *"Our experience is that we've had to push for everything, to chase people up and that it's actually very hard with people at [the LPA] to get people to reply…communication is actually very poor"* (C2).

Secondly, when the neighbourhood plan interacted with strategic decisions being made by the LPA, this created further issues where planning officers were unwilling to discuss key issues until the LPA position was clear: *"They kept throwing in, what I would call, hand grenades…They kept changing the goals posts didn't they?"* (C5). Another group described this lack of communication as *"like walking on mud…you're trying to keep your balance"* (C2).

In addition, groups felt the advice they did receive was too technical and jargon-filled: *"There was so much we didn't understand which the planners expected you to understand and, I mean, it used to just give me palpitations when they used to give you things like that because you think 'well, where do you start?!'"* (C6). The neighbourhood planning groups felt LPA officers assumed citizen's level of knowledge and felt frustrated by the seeming unwillingness to simplify the support given:

> *"But I do remember there was some frustration…Sometimes he'd [planner] say or do something or suggest something then…when we did it, it was like 'no, that wasn't right'…we did get a bit frustrated after a while thinking 'what are we actually doing here' because that didn't help, it added to the confusion actually of what the pathway was." (C2)*
>
> *"We did get conflicting opinions because they [planning officers] wanted us to start working out about what infrastructure we needed and that's not where we were going. It was getting far too complicated."* (C5)

Furthermore, there was a tension between groups feeling the need for more support and planners feeling they were giving the right level of support whilst remaining aware the plan should remain community led: *"I think it's sometimes difficult to draw that boundary, looking at it from where he [planning officer] sits, to say, on the one hand, 'I want to help and guide you' but on the other hand, it's the neighbourhood plan. It's not the council's plan"* (C1).

Additionally, the conflicting nature of advice received from different individuals within the LPA caused issues: *"We did get conflicting opinions from the planners there...It was getting far too...complicated."* (C5). Groups were often supported by multiple planning officers and their advice would differ based on their own interpretations of the context and policy: *"They'd [planning officers] put it around all the different departments and they came back...The comments weren't making any sense from the different departments"* (C5). This was a key issue for the groups at the stage of pre-submission consultation where comments received from different LPA departments conflicted with advice they were given by planning officers during plan production: *"It's now opened up to a number of other groups who haven't directly been involved and you get other comments that you've never had before and that changes things*" (C1).

Finally, the inconsistencies highlighted above were further demonstrated when considering the weight given to emerging neighbourhood plans. One group reported they had been told their plan would be given weight in decisions as it neared completion but *"that didn't happen at planning"* (C6). Another group was encouraged to complete quickly as the LPA required support to fight developer pressure: *"Suddenly the local authority said 'get your thing out there' because they were suffering from developer pressure too and they wanted planning policies too, to support them."* (C3).

Group-to-Group Relationships

Issues emerged during the workshops regarding the lack of opportunities for neighbourhood planning groups to link to others to share experiences and best practices. Although there was some informal links between the groups in this research because they were part of the same LPA area, this was only provided through planning officers attending multiple neighbourhood planning groups' meetings: *"The council did help at that stage because they gave us templates for the consultation"* (C5). However, this did not allow for any wider communication and peer support.

Only one neighbourhood planning group reported contacting another group to seek advice in the early stages of the plan but they felt it was a

hugely valuable experience in helping them determine whether to produce a plan: *"That was the most helpful thing that we probably did at the beginning out of everything because it made you realise how much money you needed…it was just…it was a real eye-opener"* (C5). The honest sharing of experiences were seen to help make the group aware of some of the opportunities and challenges ahead:

> C6: *"He gave a very, very honest report…And it wasn't all plain sailing."*
> C5: *"No. It was negative and positive. I mean, he talked about, you know, considering things like barn conversions and how the green belt…the villages were dying and it suddenly came to the forefront that that's exactly what could happen to [village name] if we didn't do something."*

The only other connection made between groups was through accessing material online such as completed neighbourhood plans from other areas. This was seen as valuable by two groups: *"[Group chair] used the Allendale plan…so we thought if we just used, more or less, that, taking out their references, trying to fill in things that were appropriate to us. But it was just a framework that we could start with"* (C2). The groups only looked for other plans within the same LPA area, finding this challenging to ensure they looked at material which was both good practice and made in a similar context. Groups felt that looking for material beyond their LPA area was too complex, particularly to find areas facing similar challenges and being able to contact those groups.

Two of the neighbourhood planning groups had attended more formal networking events: one attended 'Planning Camp' organised by Planning Aid England, and one spoke at a Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) event. Both felt these opportunities were extremely valuable, however, such events are now a rare occurrence as the way in which neighbourhood planning is supported nationally means events are rarely held in the North East region. Despite this, all of the neighbourhood planning groups would have liked more such opportunities to connect and share wider experiences of producing a plan.

Citizen-to-External Expert Relationships

The neighbourhood planning groups had all accessed support from other external organisations. The most common form of support was delivered through Locality as the national support organisation. All groups had accessed advice documents on Locality's website but felt the information was difficult to understand and it did not address *how* to undertake a plan so was not the correct type of information. All groups had also accessed the financial grant which was mostly well-received, although one group felt it was not enough to cover plan production costs. The grants were most typically used to employ planning consultants to support groups long-term which was seen as invaluable support:

> *"[Planning consultant] was good and she gave us free range to write things and then totally pull us back in again and sort it out…we'll just say she's amazing…She's the kind of person if I had a problem when I was doing something – I'd had a very confusing email from [planners]…I know I can just ring [consultant] and she'll just immediately sort it out."* (C5)

All groups had also accessed Locality's technical support to commission specific evidence such as a Housing Needs Assessment, however, this support was heavily criticised due to the detached nature of the support and the lack of communication:

> *"The [organisation]'s support feels detached. The plan is supposed to be a local thing, done by local people, then you suddenly have people sending you assessments of the area that don't live here and…well, I don't even know if they actually visited the area. We never met them. It just seems to go against the whole point of neighbourhood planning"* (C5).

It must be noted that the groups all felt that Locality's support was useful to an extent but discussed the lack of options available with no choice but to use the grants and technical capacity.

The support of planning consultants was seen as invaluable but all groups felt more support was needed in hiring processes, reporting that the process of finding consultants, articulating the type of support needed, ensuring consultants were competent, and accessing information about

tendering processes were all barriers. Furthermore, the long-term support provided by consultants was seen to balance a tension of ensuring the plan remained community-led whilst groups expected professionals to complete many important tasks:

> C1: *"I don't know why because his [planning consultant] brief didn't say this, he had this idea that he was going to be consulting and guiding but not actually hands on."*
> C2: *"We actually wanted him to do most of it."*

It is also important to note that other forms of external support were accessed by all groups through Planning Aid England, volunteers from local universities or organisations, and students from Newcastle University. Groups felt this was a positive experience, gaining support in engaging harder to reach communities, and assisting with the development of a vision, amongst many other tasks. In particular, two groups described positive experiences working with undergraduate students from Newcastle University:

> *"So they [students] looked at what we already had, what was happening and it was really interesting that we could walk round and they could see...because you're coming in cold which is brilliant, they didn't have any preconceived ideas."* (C5)

> *"These students came in and did an infrastructure study for [plan area] which, given that they didn't know the town, they didn't know the North East some of them, was really useful."* (C3)

Although this support was well-received, groups felt there should be a mechanism to access such support as it was very much on an ad hoc basis.

5.2.5 Engaging Citizens

Neighbourhood planning groups must engage with their wider community throughout the process of plan production, including several form consultation stages as required by legislation. The long history of engagement practices in planning (as explored in 2.2) provided the backdrop to the workshop findings which highlighted many of the

participatory practices were replicated from wider LPA approaches, continuing to create challenges in engaging citizens.

Both the neighbourhood planning groups and planners stressed the importance of citizen participation, seeing real value in gathering citizens' experiences to strengthen the plan and ensure the community's needs were met in policy: "W*e talked a lot about how to get the community involved…that was the whole point of it, consulting the community, so we put a lot of effort into this"* (C2). The planners also highlighted the need to *"think ahead to here, the referendum…51% of people have got to agree, so they need to talk to as many people as possible from day one really"* (P11). Citizen participation was seen to both strengthen the plan and ensure success in LPA adoption.

In discussing the practicalities of engagement, all participants stressed the need to consider the configuration of the activities having a clear awareness that different approaches would yield different results: *"It's vital as part of your strategy for engaging and consulting with the community, you consider what sorts of questions you need to ask, what sort of information you actually want to extract from the community and what are the best methods for doing that"* (P10). For one neighbourhood planning group, early discussions in the working group were dominated by discussions of engagement: *"That was the basis of a couple of the meetings – how we would do this consultation because we were very aware that we had to"* (P2).

Despite the positive discussions, the engagement practices of all neighbourhood planning groups did not align to their values with almost all methods used by groups being traditional approaches (see Table 7). The only digital approaches used were online surveys and emails, both of which replicate offline participation and add little to participatory activities.

As a result, the neighbourhood planning groups reported only reaching out to *"the same 50 people"* (C1) and all took a consultative approach with set frameworks and timeframes: "*They were allowed to write in, and email in and…yeah…and this was a drop-in event at the village hall"* (C5). The approach to engagement is reminiscent of the general practices of participation

within the wider planning system which has long been criticised as exclusive and ineffective.

Table 7: Common engagement methods used and number of instances used

Method	No. of instances used	No. of groups used
Drop-in event	9	3
Paper questionnaire	6	3
Newsletter	8	3
Printed media	4	3
Market/event stall	2	3
Online questionnaire	4	3
Write/email	3	3

Both neighbourhood planning groups and planners discussed digital engagement. To many, the use of a website was the only digital method of communication and it emerged that all three groups had a limited online presence – websites were set up halfway through plan production and was used as a repository for documents such as agendas, minutes and policy documents. A tension emerged in which some groups viewed this as engagement whilst recognising the limitations of the approach. Yet, the care taken to design and brand the sites by all groups suggests it was seen as an important aspect: "*...and the most important thing we did then was we chose the logo."* (C3).

Further discussion of digital engagement beyond this was limited due to a general lack of knowledge and skills in using digital tools. However, the planners were keen for new digital approaches to engagement to be adopted: *"I think technology has definitely got a role there because there will always be a place for conventional things...and need to provide opportunity for technology inputs to certain, specific questions"* (P10).

One group did report using a digital form of engagement and paid to use the commercial platform Commonplace – an online map-based tool that allows citizens to place pins and comments. The rationale for using the tool was to *"modernise their consultation"* (C1) to reach out to those not yet engaged in the neighbourhood plan, particularly younger people.

Commercial tools can be expensive to use, particularly within the neighbourhood planning context with limited funding, but the group were able to negotiate: *"I think we negotiated a very, very favourable rate because I think they wanted to charge us quite a bit but we explained that actually we're not a large London borough, we're only a small village"* (C2). When considering the outcomes of using this tool, however, the group felt little had been achieved: *"I wasn't sure at the time but looking at the results, it was almost superficial wasn't it?"* (C1). In addition, the group did not reach any younger people as intended: *"We never got anything from anybody under, sort of, 25 probably I should think…we always thought 'well, at least we can show we've tried"* (C2). The decision to use Commonplace was one of convenience and only knowing of this one tool through its use by LPAs. This evidences a lack of knowledge of digital engagement methods and how to go about considering their affordances in relation to the aims of the engagement.

Youth engagement was a key challenge discussed in all workshops with two neighbourhood planning groups describing their approach to engaging through local schools, where one group had support for this from Planning Aid England. However, one group described their approach: *"We never did engage the high school, even though we tried. We did engage with the infant school which was hilarious!"* (C5). From this, workshop discussions turned to consider the information collected in such circumstances as being useless within a neighbourhood plan – a concerning finding pointing to tokenistic practices. In contrast, the planners were keen to engage young people as valued contributors with *"massive scope"* (P10) in the use of technology.

Finally, all neighbourhood planning groups reported that consulting their community became a fallback activity when the group were unsure with what to do next but were also equally concerned with the issue of consultation fatigue: *"We didn't want to overload people with consultation. You have to consult people but at the same time if they just see what, to them, just looks like the same stuff coming back all the time – 'are you still sure about this?', 'is this what you really want?', - then you can actually turn people off"* (C1). Despite this, one group consulted their community three times in succession to review previous engagement results.

An overarching issue emerged from these workshop findings related to the lack of knowledge and skills of neighbourhood planning groups to plan, organise and deliver effective community engagement.

5.2.6 Policy, Evidence and Translation

As neighbourhood plan production progresses further, challenges are faced in producing policy, gathering and understanding the necessary evidence, and translating the wishes of the community into useable planning policy. Some of these challenges develop as a result of difficulties described in previous sections, but producing policy in itself creates significant issues.

Creating a Vision

Neighbourhood planning groups reported that their first interaction in writing policy was to produce a vision for the neighbourhood. The planners stressed the importance of this task and felt it was essential in providing a direction for the policy: *"They need to develop that into a vision and if they have that vision, then it's probably right that they go ahead with a neighbourhood plan"* (P11). However, all neighbourhood planning groups faced difficulties in understanding what a vision statement is, how to produce one and why it matters. In all cases, groups involved their planning consultant to support the production of the vision and, in some cases, to actually write it:

> C4: *"Did we have three workshops for that vision? Three workshops with [planning expert]."*
> C3: *"We had two workshops for starting the vision process"*
>
> *"We'd brought [the consultant] in at this stage, the planning consultant. So she started to create the vision."* (C5)

All the neighbourhood planning groups reported that creating the vision took a significant amount of time to produce and finalise because of the lack of understanding. One group described this process: *"We did start on the vision before, but the actual agreeing the wording of the vision alone took 16 months so that was done by the steering group and it took 16 months changing it"* (C3).

In contrast, the planners discussed the vision, describing it as something which *"evolves from lots of issues"* and as *"an amalgamation of all the things they want in the end"* (P11). The idea of writing vision statements is something very familiar to planning professionals, however, the practice has been replicated into the neighbourhood planning process despite the difficulties faced by communities.

Gathering, Understanding and Producing Evidence

A key task within neighbourhood planning is ensuring the plan is supported by evidence and this creates issues of groups gathering, understanding and using the information effectively.

All neighbourhood planning groups raised the key issue of what constitutes evidence with citizens feeling that community opinions should count: *"We already had the start of the evidence. We did other consultations. We had a base to start with what people felt"* (C6). The planners agreed that *"the other side of the coin is what does the community think? What's its perceptions?"* (P10). From this, two of the groups used previous parish plans and residents' surveys to provide the foundation. However, in practice, the officers that supported the neighbourhood planning groups often queried forms of evidence and did not accept community opinions as robust: *"We'd done our residents survey and I said 'is this the sort of thing that you would put in or is this now out of date?' and [planners] said 'no that's out of date now'...the thing we kept getting told was we had to gather evidence, then you'd gather it and they'd go 'well that's just someone's opinion'"* (C5). It also emerged that LPA advice was inconsistent with one group told by officers that older surveys could not be used, whilst the other two groups were told this was acceptable. Ultimately, the reality for the neighbourhood planning groups was that technical evidence was favoured by the LPA and this confusion created issues in writing robust policy.

Considering technical evidence, existing work produced by and for LPAs was a key source of evidence for neighbourhood planning groups. However, despite much of this being available online, groups felt it was only accessible if you knew what to look for. Furthermore, where evidence

was not online, neighbourhood planning groups reported that the LPA could be obstructive in providing access: "*Again though, it was like pulling teeth…They were very negative"* (C5). Further discussion of this revealed that LPAs would only reveal evidence *they* felt was appropriate, provided inconsistent advice and would attempt to specify which evidence could and could not be used to meet their own agenda:

> *"And one of the kind of the big rocks that got thrown in the pond…they said that because they've withdrawn the core strategy, they've withdrawn all the evidence base for the core strategy. So literally, if you go on the [council] website, and you look for something like the Green Infrastructure Strategy, it's not there anymore. There's just something that comes up and says it's been withdrawn. Now, as a result of that, things like the housing policy, which obviously referred out to things like the 5 year housing land supply…So the feedback from [planner] and team was 'oh well, you can't use any of this evidence anymore', like the 5 year land supply, 'what you should do is just put in some numbers. So you should just say, between the period of 2017 and 2031, we propose in this policy we will build circa 77 houses'. Now, I know, and I know nothing about examination, that the examiner will throw that straight out because it's not based on anything. Anybody could sit down and say 77, 110…"* (C1)

Furthermore, although existing technical evidence was often online, the evidence itself was inaccessible to all the neighbourhood planning groups. Citizens involved in the groups did not have the skills to assess complex, technical information and the groups required significant support to understand and make use of the evidence. One group did have a local volunteer with a particular expertise in housing and was able to translate the evidence for use in the neighbourhood plan: *"[Local volunteer]…had produced what he came to call a housing technical report…producing something that everybody can understand which also becomes a kind of factual base"* (C1). Such local support was invaluable but rare and the groups felt support with evidence should come through the LPAs 'duty to support'. However, the planners felt it was acceptable to buy in expertise to support technical evidence production or use. It is also important to note that the local

volunteer in the above example became *"a bit of a consultant to the council"* (P1) to support the LPAs use of housing evidence, suggesting that the skills of LPA planners may not extend to such specialist domains.

Where evidence does not already exist, neighbourhood planning groups must produce their own, however, there was little discussion of this within the workshops as the groups felt it was not a task that could be undertaken by the citizens themselves. Groups all felt that experts should be employed to create evidence. Further exploration of this reveals that groups were not sure what evidence was needed, how to communicate this, and the ways in which evidence could be collected. It was also discussed that groups felt unable to question the legitimacy of the evidence produced by professionals because the information gathered was inaccessible.

The range of issues identified here show the barriers to citizens in truly engaging with this aspect of the neighbourhood planning process, and to be able to fully understand the context in which they are writing policy. At this stage, the reliance on experts means the process becomes similar to wider planning policy processes undertaken by the LPA.

Translating and Writing Policy

Whilst gathering evidence, neighbourhood planning groups begin a cyclical process of writing policy, consulting evidence and re-drafting until a final policy draft is complete. At this stage, the groups reported requiring significant support from their employed consultants due to the process halting: *"we didn't know where to go next"* (C5). At this stage, issues of translation surfaced in two ways: 1) translating community wishes and the work of the group into realistic planning policies; and 2) writing in sufficient planning language to enable the policies to be useable, viable and appropriate within LPA decision-making processes.

Groups felt that translating their work into planning policy was a specific skill that they felt they did not have: *"We'd done all this bit but we didn't know how to translate that into a neighbourhood plan"* (P1). The nature of planning language meant writing policy themselves became a futile exercise in

which the content would need to be re-written to accord with policy-speak with little constructive support from LPA officers

> *"They [planners] then went through and said 'I think you should re-word this' or 'we think you should change this'...I can remember [planner] saying 'that's not policy. No you can't have that, it's just a wish' or 'that's just a community action' or 'that's just an opinion' and it was like well 'what do you want?!'"* (C5)

A tension also surfaced with neighbourhood planning groups keen to create a document in plain English, but planners did not see this as an option:

> *"Some of us were saying this is going to be the nearly final plan, it needs to be robust in planning speak, planning speak needs to be 'just so' and there were other people saying we need language that ordinary people can understand."* (C3).

Due to these issues, all groups reported that their employed consultants were tasked with writing the policy with one group stating that their consultant wrote all of the policy: *"Most of the policies [the consultant] produced"* (C1). This approach surfaced tensions around the community-led nature of the plan and the role of consultants to guide citizens rather than produce the policies themselves:

> *"When [the consultant] first came on board as a consultant, he had an idea, and I don't know why because his brief didn't say this, he had this idea that he was going to be consulting and guiding but not actually hands on."* (C1)

> *"When we went to planning camp, they said it was a very good idea to get a planning consultant and the one thing they did say is 'don't let the planning consultant write the plan' but, I'm sorry – that is happening. Because she [the consultant] was actually able to transcribe all of the different things we've thrown at her and put it into planning speak."* (C5)

The workshop with planners, which included some planning consultants, discussed the challenge faced when employed late in the process to write the policy: *"I've got a couple of groups now, and I've been brought in...and it's just*

a devil of a job. It's what you've done to arrive at that, that matters not just what the policy says" (P10). In these circumstance, planners felt early engagement with consultants was important to ensure the plan remains community-led through support.

Finally, the neighbourhood planning groups all felt the design and structure of the final policy document should be created by the group themselves, however, groups received conflicting advice from the LPA, consultants and examiners:

> *"I was told you could write your plan any which way you wanted…in other words, if you wanted to do your plan with music and drawings, you could do…it didn't have to be planning speak. This council here have insisted it has to be in planning speak even to the point where they've had our draft plan that went out into the community…and they've completely annihilated it"* (C5).

> *"The consultant recommended that the actual policies should have a strategic element in the policies themselves because that was her particular style of policy writing. The actual examiner we had said 'no, the strategic should be in the pre-amble and not in the policy'…and then we took them all out of the policies again as a result of [the planner]'s report but the text didn't change…Then we ended up with Part A which was planning issues and then community actions…and we were being told by our consultant that the planners would just ignore the community actions if they weren't clearly identifiable, they'd be lost completely"* (C3)

Ultimately the neighbourhood groups felt, at this stage, the structure and form of the document was one of the few they were able to contribute, but planners were removing the community-led element.

5.2.7 Transitioning Ownership

As the policy will be adopted by the LPA, ownership of the neighbourhood plan transitions in the later stages which creates challenges around Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), formal consultation processes and handover to LPAs.

Firstly, the group and LPA must decide whether a SEA should be carried out, but this decision requires a level of detail that allows the impact of proposed policies to be assessed. All neighbourhood planning groups reported that it was difficult to discuss this part of the process within the workshops because they were still unaware of the purpose and aims of the SEA despite having completed their plan. Groups felt this unknown stage meant the LPA took control, but little information was given to the group, creating issues with associated timings and tasks:

> "*The timing of it [SEA] when it needed to happen was never clear…I remember one of the questions I asked [planners] was 'are we going to need an SEA screening?'…the answer was pretty much 'well, of course not because the sites are permitted…so of course you don't need one'. And then, as we got through the drafting of the plan, [the planner] started to mention SEA screening more and more and one day I eventually said 'are you trying to tell me we should have already been doing this?' and 'well, yeah, you should have already been talking to somebody about getting screened'."* (C1)

All neighbourhood planning groups also felt a lack of support with regards to the SEA, particularly as groups were responsible for activating the process: *We have to fire the pistol to start it because we have to have the documentation to a certain level in order for them to say 'we understand what you're trying to do and, therefore, we can now screen'"* (C1). In all cases, the screening and assessment process caused delays and they felt the interruption could have been avoided with more LPA foresight. All groups also felt the SEA process undermined the work they had already conducted: *"There was a lot of confusion in the plan preparation group saying we've already made these decisions, why are they second guessing our decisions?"* (C3). The complexity and jargon-filled process further compounded the issue of groups feeling excluded from the process: "T*he actual people talking to the consultants who were writing the SEA was the local authority and our consultant who could speak both languages. None of the rest of us knew what the hell the SEA was doing."* (C3). Although groups felt the SEA was a task for experts, they felt it was something done *to* them rather than *with* them – a feeling that contradicts the values of neighbourhood planning.

Moving to consider the pre-submission consultation stage (often referred to as Reg. 14 consultation), the formal consultation is conducted by the neighbourhood planning groups. Here, a very low community response rate was reported by all groups due to the long and complex nature of policy documents: "W*e got about half a dozen comments"* (C5). The most significant challenge, however, was the responses received from the LPA where wider relevant departments provided feedback as a statutory consultee within the formal consultation which was often at odds with the support given by planning officers throughout the plan production:

> *"[The planners] had reviewed a number of iterations of this, in detail and commented on it, in detail, and we suddenly got 18 pages of changes"* (C1)
>
> *"They'd put it around all the different departments, and they came back and even [the planner] didn't understand what some of the comments coming back were. They weren't making any sense from the different departments"* (C5)
>
> *"We got it two days after it finished. I got an email on the last day saying 'oh, we're going to be a bit late with this, is it ok?'. And, of course, it is okay because it's pointless... I could have said 'no, you've missed the consultation period' but then all that would happen is we just get all the same comments at examination"* (C1)

In addition this, all neighbourhood planning groups reported that the LPA had recommended the policy should be subject to a 'Health Check' to *"flag up things like, when you come to implement that policy in real life it won't work because of x, y and z"* (C1). This was a surprise both in terms of timing and cost and although groups initially thought this was a positive step which would add value, the groups reflected that in hindsight, this added another 'expert' opinion that further contradicted advice they had already received. One group amended their plan based on this feedback and was later criticised at examination.

Moving to submission, the plan must be submitted alongside the basic conditions statement and consultation statement which presented further challenges for all neighbourhood planning groups. The task was left to one or two individuals and there were issues with creating an audit trail of

consultation responses and how they had been addressed, particularly as two groups had not kept detailed records. The planners felt that technology could support the recording of consultation practices and responses: *"Using technology to prove to the examiner that you've been open and transparent and you've got proof"* (P9).

Once the neighbourhood plan was submitted, all the neighbourhood groups reported feeling removed from the process with control taken away from them despite the years of work they had contributed. A further formal consultation takes place before examination, both of which are organised by the LPA, and any changes resulting from this are undertaken by the LPA:

> *"They [examiner] took a long time over it and it got rather more substantial developer responses than anyone was expecting because the developers only just twigged what we were up to. And at that stage, also, other departments of the county council started saying 'oi what are you doing?'...There was nothing we could actually do. It was owned by the county council and...the examiner's report was for the county council and not to us"* (C3)

Only one neighbourhood planning group had been through the final referendum at the time of the workshops, therefore this was not discussed in depth. However, the group that had completed this stage raise issues surrounding the turnout with challenges in consultation fatigue and the wider community being unaware of the plan's progress, particularly since responsibility was taken from the group. The planners suggested that technology could support this step through informing the community and charting the plan's progress so citizens could view the plan production retrospectively: *"An app would also be good at the end of the process for notifying everyone in the community...Because you could get to a situation where you get to a referendum and there's all these people who go 'well, what's all this about?'"* (P7).

5.2.8 Summary

The workshops intended to understand how the neighbourhood planning process is enacted by citizens, leading to answering RQ1. Therefore, much of this chapter focuses on challenges faced to highlight the ways in which

the process could be improved, however, there were many instances where groups described the positive impact of the plan process, the increased capacity of citizens in relation to planning, and the ability to have a statutory voice in planning decisions:

> *"There's loads of positives come from the neighbourhood plan. I mean, most of what we, our objectives have been...a lot of them have already happened."* (C5)

> *"I'm very for neighbourhood plans in general, but I think one of the side benefits of them that isn't obvious from this [process map] because it happens somewhere else, is that, the parish councillors have become more educated about planning and so when we get planning applications in, which obviously we do all the time, they look at them in a different light."* (C1)

> *"We're a bit more savvy now aren't we?"* (C2)

The findings presented highlight the many ways in which the neighbourhood planning process could be improved including:

- Better access to the process to enable groups to be more informed about what is possible and to encourage a wider uptake of neighbourhood planning
- The need for high quality information in an understandable language without planning jargon which support groups to understand *how* tasks can be undertaken, as opposed to the current support which provides too much advice of not the right type.
- More support in determining geographical boundaries of the plan area alongside support and advice to form diverse and representative steering groups that link to the neighbourhood area, including discussion of the trade-offs made, the skills, commitment and roles requires, and creating effective governance procedures.
- Identifying ways to improve communication between the LPA and the neighbourhood planning groups to enable timely and effective communication and a way to involve wider LPA departments earlier in the process.

- Providing opportunities for peer-to-peer communication and networking to enable neighbourhood planning groups to share information, resources and experiences both at a local, regional and national scale and to connect with others facing similar challenges.
- Connecting neighbourhood planning groups with formal and informal external support through support with hiring processes and coordinating wider volunteer activity.
- Improving engagement practices to enable groups to deliver participation that matches their values of involving their wider community, including support to configure and deliver participation and use a range of digital and non-digital methods.
- Providing groups with support regarding evidence, ensuring they are well-equipped with the knowledge and language to discuss with planning professionals, improving access to technical evidence, and supporting the process of commissioning or gathering new evidence.
- Ensuring support to enable groups to write their own policies, including understanding the need for viable, useable and appropriate policies in everyday planning decisions that can achieve their intended outcomes or supporting a more substantial change in enabling jargon-free policy for a community-led process.
- Ensuring information about the latter stages of plan production is available to groups that can support their involvement in SEA processes and examination and support them to remain involved beyond submission to avoid disempowering citizens.
- Considering the process as a whole to provide greater access to information, templates, case studies, and other useful material that can provide examples of groups facing similar challenges, encourage collaborative working and promote sharing resources across neighbourhood planning groups.

The fragmentation of the current support for neighbourhood planning compounds many of the issues faced with conflicting advice from LPA planning officers, planning consultants and online sources. Ensuring a constant and reliable form of support could address these issues.

5.3 Reflections

The findings evidence the complexity of the process and provide in-depth experiential evidence from citizens and planners involved in neighbourhood planning. From the findings in this chapter, I reflect on the need to improve or re-design the neighbourhood planning process, and the ways in which planning and HCI could work together within this space, each of which speak to RQ2 and RQ3.

5.3.1 The Need for Change in Neighbourhood Planning

The findings discussed above highlight the complexity of the neighbourhood planning process. This complexity had already been cited in academic literature (Parker and Salter, 2017; Parker *et al.*, 2020) but there was a need to learn from the in-depth experiences of citizens as experts in neighbourhood planning. However, to further explore this and move towards ways of improving this process, it is important to reflect on how this citizen-led policy tool resulted in such complex and challenging processes and practices.

The Localism Act 2011 created the opportunity in legislation to produce a neighbourhood plan and the regulations provided guidance on the rules with which citizens must adhere to (HM Government, 2012). The initial design of neighbourhood planning was intended as a light-touch process that could be both robust in policy terms and flexible to account for local context (Burton, 2014; Brookfield, 2017). However, the process as described by participants in this research shows many similarities to professionalised planning policy processes, such as those conducted by LPAs (see 7.2.1 for further discussion). The reliance on legislation and regulations to manage the process in the early stages of neighbourhood planning; the disconnect in language whereby citizens cannot access planning practices or liaise with stakeholders; the poor engagement practices; the reliance on vision statements which the community find confusing; the privileging of technical evidence over other forms of knowledge; and the policy language required to make policies viable and appropriate, all link to policy processes as undertaken by professional planners. Although these policy

processes are suitable and robust for the professional planning arena, they are arguably less suitable in a citizen-led policy process, particularly when evidence, as presented above, shows the challenges faced in navigating neighbourhood planning. In addition, such approaches to neighbourhood planning also evidence the embedded cultures of planning and planning professionals, where languages and practices are entrenched. The challenges faced by citizens, to some extent, are due to the unwillingness of planners and the planning profession to yield and meet citizens where they are, adapting their language and practices to be more inclusive.

The level of complexity faced in this chapter also has an impact on the inequalities present in the uptake of neighbourhood planning (see 7.2.2 for further discussion). The issues presented above further compound the inequalities that we already know of through academic literature (Parker and Salter, 2017; Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020a; Parker *et al.*, 2020) whereby communities with the capacity, skills and active citizens, mainly in rural areas, are more likely and able to undertake a neighbourhood plan compared with more urban, deprived neighbourhoods (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011; Mohan, 2011; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015a). This research was conducted with rural neighbourhood plans with active citizens or, in other words, the 'usual suspects' and a significant wealth of issues were still faced. Considering these challenges within an urban and deprived context highlights potential reasons for the inequalities and, as long as such areas are excluded, policy processes will fail to account for their needs (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020).

Understanding the way in which neighbourhood planning is enacted by citizens through this chapter highlights a need to change or improve the process to be more suited to a citizen-led policy tool. Improving the neighbourhood planning process could go some way to address these issues, however, this does not dismantle the existing flawed processes and practices (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Another option is to re-design neighbourhood planning through a participatory process to rebuild the citizen-led policy tool in a way which breaks down barriers to access and includes those previously marginalised (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020).

Furthermore, the need for support from skilled professionals was evidence in a similar vein to the way in which Chapter 4 highlighted the need for facilitation in technology use. Therefore, the process would also benefit from a greater resource of skilled facilitators which link to community development practices, of which Parker et al. (2020) also suggest.

Further to this, I argue for the closer link between the field of planning and HCI when considering these issues, particularly in relation to the design of processes and tools (more fully discussed in Chapter 7). Previous HCI research has called for more involvement in public policy processes (Lazar *et al.*, 2013; Dow, Comber and Vines, 2018; Spaa *et al.*, 2019), both in terms of HCI professionals providing design expertise through participatory design and interaction design skills, as well as in supporting the development of digital tools within a policy context. It has been discussed that HCI usually focuses on supporting particular aspects of democratic processes without considering their policy impact (Moss and Coleman, 2014), but by involving HCI practitioners more formally in the re-design of neighbourhood planning, it would enable support tools to be sustainable and embedded within the framework (Nam and Pardo, 2011). Such links with HCI could enable cross-disciplinary design thinking (Hermus, van Buuren and Bekkers, 2020) and the use of inclusive design methodologies (Costanza-Chock, 2020) to support the renewal and recalibration of policy processes in response to the changing nature of society (Holmes, 2011).

5.3.2 The Need for Digital Support in Neighbourhood Planning

The findings in this chapter show the significant need for support mechanisms within the neighbourhood planning process at all stages. The current modes of support rely heavily on the skills and knowledge of professional planners which should be encouraged, however, without a significant increase in the resources provided, neighbourhood planning groups still require further support. It is within this space that the design and use of digital tools to support neighbourhood planning could provide new modes of support and participation for the citizens involved.

As explored in 2.3, there has been a rise in the development of digital tools to support democratic participation, particularly within the HCI field (e.g. Asad and Le Dantec, 2017; Asad *et al.*, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2017, 2018; Maskell *et al.*, 2018; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018), as well as commercial tools as used by one group in this research (e.g. Commonplace). The need for digital support in neighbourhood planning could help to disrupt and renew processes and support citizens and planners in communicating together (Yang and Zhiyong Lan, 2010). However, such tools are often not widely available or the cost to use commercial tools does not fit within the limited neighbourhood planning budget. It is here that an opportunity for the planning and HCI disciplines exist to work together to develop technologies that are accessible, useful and appropriate for a citizen-led process. Such technologies could be developed from existing research, use open source tools, or develop new technologies with the key aim that it should be possible for neighbourhood planning groups to manage and maintain the tools.

Furthermore, it is often the case that HCI research develops democratic tools to support small parts of policy processes by, for example, developing new engagement methods for consultation processes to engage a wider audience but does little to consider how responses translate into policy or how the tool itself fits within the wider policy process at all (Moss and Coleman, 2014). The findings in this chapter show the importance of considering holistic policy processes where decisions must be traceable, and engagement mapped to produce statements on the robustness of the policy produced. Therefore, I argue that the HCI community should consider the holistic policy process and how tools effect it, rather than designing a foray of disconnected tools addressing small parts of the process.

The findings in this chapter also highlight the lack of knowledge and skills of both citizens and planners in the use of digital technology within policy processes. Instances of using digital tools was significantly limited and, although, most were keen to consider technology use, few would be confident to configure and deploy tools within neighbourhood planning.

In response to this, learning from HCI research would consider the appropriation of exiting technologies for neighbourhood planning by using tools that citizens are already familiar with (Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2019). Although not a new idea to use toolkits (Asad *et al.*, 2017; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018), developing this idea would also see digital technologies designed as part of a toolkit which would support citizens in configuring and using the tools within neighbourhood planning. Furthermore, the design of new tools should account for the limited knowledge, creating technologies that are easy to use whilst providing a clear support mechanism for policy processes.

Despite the many considerations, the chapter has highlighted a myriad of opportunities for HCI and technology to take on board with many tools needed to support the complex policy process, whilst designing for citizens that are not 'tech-savvy'. The design and access to information is currently lacking, there is a need for more user-friendly GIS tools, and there is a need for tools to interrogate data, visualise data, and help make sense of data. The neighbourhood planning process is ripe with opportunities to support grassroots democracy – a further discussion of this is seen in Chapter 7, particularly 7.5.

Working across the planning and HCI disciplines and taking a participatory approach to the development of digital support would enable the expertise of planners, citizens, and the HCI community to draw on policy and design skills (Hermus, van Buuren and Bekkers, 2020). A range of digital tools could support neighbourhood planning in response to the challenges identified in this chapter, however, it would also be important to avoid a solutionist focus that assumes technology will fix problems without considering the context (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Howlett, 2020). Therefore, involving citizens in the development of tools would be an important step in ensuring they are fit for purpose.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the experiences of citizens in enacting the neighbourhood planning process and response directly to RQ1. The

findings in this chapter illustrate the complexity in navigating the policy process and the significant challenges faced by those undertaking the policy process throughout. From the early stages of accessing the process to the LPA adopting the plan and all stages in between, challenges were faced by citizens in knowing *how* to go about the tasks of producing a plan, communicating with stakeholders, and being able to access and understand complex evidence. Building on the literature presented in Chapter 2, the findings also highlighted the ways in which technical evidence is privileged in policy processes and the issues faced in configuring and designing participation processes. Furthermore, there was a significant lack of digital tools used through the process despite technology being able to support many of the elements of policymaking process. Analysis of the findings demonstrates how many elements of the neighbourhood planning process are reminiscent of professional policy processes as carried out by planners in LPAs, and how the challenges faced could further compound the inequalities present in the uptake of neighbourhood planning. Through these insights into the enactment of neighbourhood planning which centre citizens' experiences, a clear need for further support is evidenced.

Leading from these insights, it is also possible to contribute to RQ2 and RQ3 in beginning to identify the opportunities and needs for digital and non-digital support. There were a range of suggestions throughout the findings for greater support with creating governance procedures, providing simple templates for various stages of the process, and more support in the early stages to support group formation. Drawing from the fields of planning and HCI could be seen as one way to provide greater support in neighbourhood planning, both in terms of re-designing or improving the policy process and in developing new digital technologies. The design skills of the HCI community could support the cross-disciplinary (re)design of neighbourhood planning to create robust and accessible processes whilst the same expertise could develop technologies to be embedded within a holistic policy process.

A key issue raised was the lack of knowledge in the design and use of technology by citizens and planners which creates a challenge in providing

more digital support. Given this, the following chapter will explore the co-design of technology with citizens as an alternative approach to designing tools that could increase their capacity and develop technologies which are simple, easy to use and are suitable for the citizen-led nature of neighbourhood planning.

Chapter 6

6. Co-Designing Engagement Practices

The previous chapter explored how citizens enact the neighbourhood planning process, and the challenges faced in navigating the complex process. The findings clearly evidence the need for more support in many areas, however, it is beyond the scope of this PhD to explore every opportunity for support. In addition, the challenge of designing and using digital tools for both citizens and planners was highlighted, yet the opportunities for digital support are abundant. Therefore, as this thesis is concerned with citizen participation, in this chapter I aimed to co-design engagement practices with those involved in neighbourhood planning both to explore alternative modes of support and to investigate the ways in which designing with citizens could increase their capacity to use digital tools. This chapter responds to RQ2 and RQ3 to investigate what non-digital or digital support would be useful to neighbourhood planning groups, as well as exploring a mode of designing such support.

The chapter begins with the reporting of two workshops with neighbourhood planning groups, citizens and other interested practitioners to explore their definitions of engagement and to co-design engagement activities based on design challenges. Using a specifically-designed card deck outlining a range of digital and non-digital engagement methods, groups first identify methods they have used and methods they find intriguing before designing engagement activities in response to a design challenge. The findings highlight the values, ethos and current practices of neighbourhood planning engagement and the most common methods used in engagement. The findings also show the potential for digital methods to be used in neighbourhood planning engagement through the co-design of engagement activities and the barriers that continue to exist that could prevent the use of such methods in practice without further support. Finally, I reflect on the use of digital and non-digital methods for engagement and the challenges that remain in citizen-led participation.

6.1 Co-Design Workshops

Two workshops were carried out with a range of citizens, LPA planning officers, planning consultants, and other parties with an interest in neighbourhood planning. One workshop was held in Durham and another in Northumberland, and the aim was to encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and to inspire new ideas to co-design engagement practices.

6.1.1 Field Sites and Participants

The workshops aimed to encourage innovation in engagement practices through the co-design of new engagement activities in neighbourhood planning. As such, a wide range of neighbourhood planning groups, planning professionals and other practitioners were invited to participate in the workshops – some of whom were directly involved in neighbourhood planning and others which were indirectly involved or were interested in community-led planning more generally. As both County Durham and Northumberland have a high number of neighbourhood plans in the area, a workshop was held in each location. All neighbourhood planning groups in County Durham (n=23), Northumberland (n=28), Newcastle upon Tyne (n=3) and South Tyneside (n=2) were invited to attend. Further invites were emailed to the corresponding LPA departments to invite relevant planning officers. In addition, the call for participation was shared with Planning Aid England's North East Task Group and their network including the RTPI North East region, the Durham Area Action Partnership, the Local Association of Parish Councils, and the Northumberland Association of Local Councils. Furthermore, I shared the invite through Facebook and Twitter, advertising generally through the #neighbourhoodplanning hashtag and directing details to groups.

The first workshop was conducted in County Durham at Belmont Community Centre, a central location within the county and second was held at St James Community Centre in Morpeth, Northumberland. A total

of seven participations attended Durham and 13 attended Morpeth – a summary of participants can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8: Summary of participants for co-design workshops

Label	Role	Location	Further details
P1	Citizen	Durham	Neighbourhood planning steering group member
P2	Citizen	Durham	Neighbourhood planning steering group member
P3	Planning Consultant	Durham	Private planning professional supporting multiple neighbourhood planning groups
P4	LPA Planner	Durham	Public sector planner working directly with neighbourhood planning groups
P5	Citizen	Durham	Neighbourhood planning steering group member
P6	Citizen	Durham	Neighbourhood planning steering group member
P7	LPA Planner	Durham	Public sector planner working directly with neighbourhood planning groups
P8	Citizen	Northumberland	Neighbourhood planning steering group member
P9	Interested Practitioner	Northumberland	Practitioner interested in supporting neighbourhood planning at a third sector health and wellbeing organisation
P10	Engagement Professional	Northumberland	Involved in support neighbourhood planning through a third sector community and voluntary organisation
P11	County Councillor	Northumberland	Interested in pursuing neighbourhood planning in their locale
P12	County Councillor	Northumberland	Interested in pursuing neighbourhood planning in their locale

P13	County Councillor	Northumberland	Interested in pursuing neighbourhood planning in their locale
P14	LPA Planner	Northumberland	Public sector planner working directly with neighbourhood planning groups
P15	Interested Practitioner	Northumberland	Practitioner interested in neighbourhood planning at Campaign for Rural England Northumberland branch
P16	Interested Practitioner	Northumberland	Practitioner interested in neighbourhood planning at Campaign for Rural England Northumberland branch
P17	Engagement Professional	Northumberland	Engagement officer at a local parish council interesting in supporting neighbourhood planning
P18	Citizen	Northumberland	Neighbourhood planning steering group member
P19	LPA Planner	Northumberland	Public sector planner working directly with neighbourhood planning groups
P20	Citizen	Northumberland	Citizen interested in community action working to create digital methods to share community information

6.1.2 Method and Data Analysis

In each location, I conducted a two-hour workshop with a set of structured tasks to encourage interactivity. Participants were arranged into groups of 3-4 and each group was provided with a facilitator to support and prompt discussions. Facilitators were PhD students within the Digital Civics Centre for Doctoral Training and, thus, were experienced in conducting participatory workshops and facilitating. In both locations, I hosted the workshops which involved introducing the tasks and helping groups to move through the structured activities, including speaking with all groups to further prompt discussions. In Northumberland, I also took on the role

of a group facilitator supporting a particular group throughout the tasks. Three tasks were set for the groups that led participants through activities to discuss engagement, consider new methods and, finally, to co-design engagement activities in response to a design challenge. To further support the tasks, prompts and activity sheets were also used. Each task will be outlined in more detail below, including the resources used, with analysis following in the next section

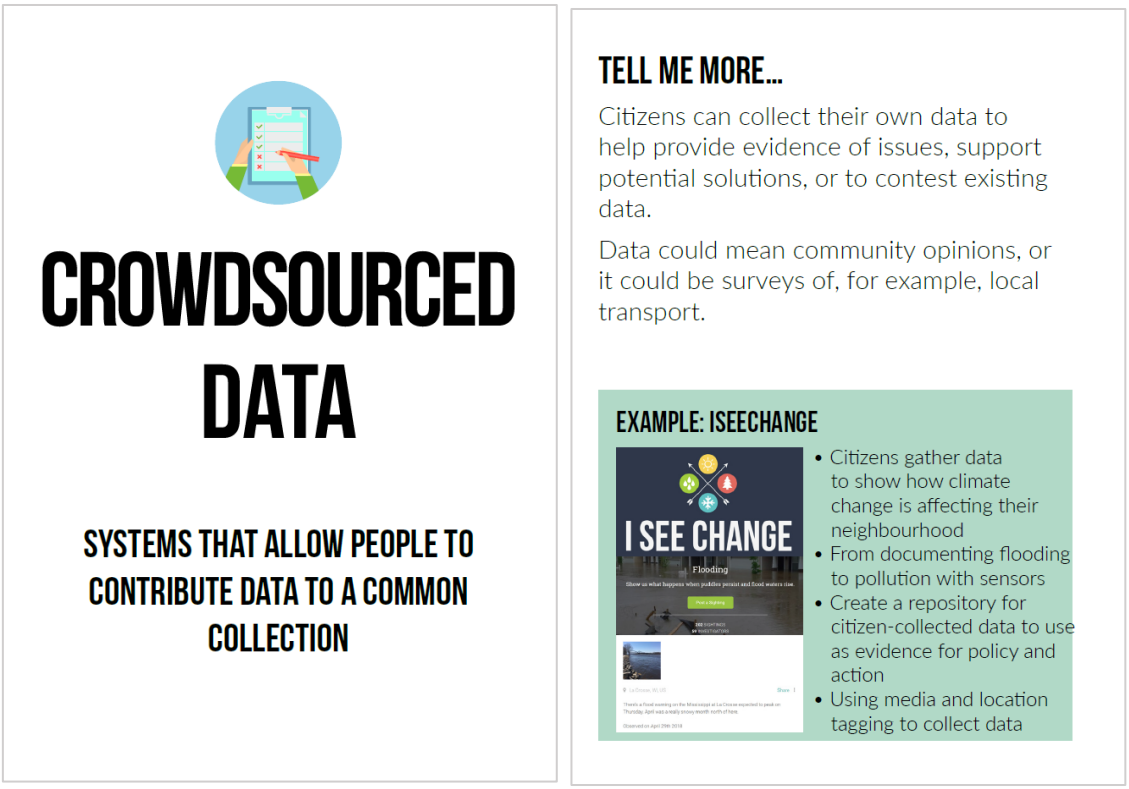
Task 1: Defining Engagement

The first activity for groups was to 'Define community engagement in the context of neighbourhood planning'. Participants were encouraged to think about who should be engaged, why engagement is important and when in the neighbourhood planning process engagement should occur. This activity served as an icebreaker amongst the groups as a way to open up discussion and encouraged participants to think about their own experiences and values with regards to engaging communities. Each group made notes with post-it notes, and the groups provided feedback to the wider workshop to share knowledge.

Task 2: Introducing Methods

The second activity introduced the groups to a range of engagement methods to explore what they were familiar and unfamiliar with. To support Task 2 and 3, I developed a card deck which categorised and outlined 20 methods that represented both digital and non-digital approaches (see Figure 32 for an example and Appendix E for the full card deck). As seen in Figure 32, the front of each card stated the method and a sub-heading that provided a basic description. The back of each card contained more details about the method and a brief example of where this method had been used in practice. There were 12 digital methods cards developed from the 'Civic Tech Field Guide' (Stempeck and Sifry, 2015), a crowdsourced collection of technology from across the world developed and used in both academia and practice. Using this guide, I themed relevant categories of technology into 12 methods cards such as map-based technology, virtual and augmented reality, and digital media. In addition, there were eight non-digital methods cards developed from Wates' (2014)

Figure 32: Example of a card from the deck used in co-design workshops



'Community Planning Handbook' where I grouped similar methods to create categories such as town hall meetings, interactive workshops and door knocking. To validate the categories, I referred to literature in the planning and HCI fields to evidence their use in engagement related to town planning.

The task itself was to use the card deck as a prompt to select any methods the participants had used in their work previously, how that method had been used and the outcome or response. Although this research was focused on neighbourhood planning, participants were encouraged to think about broader engagement practices in their various roles in civil society.

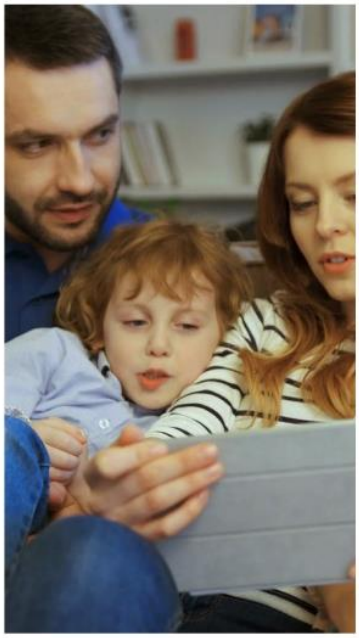
Following this, each group was encouraged to pick two or more methods that they found interesting or intriguing and discuss them in more detail. The information on the cards was designed to support and prompt discussion about methods that were more unknown to participants. The activities aimed to move discussions from theoretical value-based conversations about engagement to the practical implications of methods

and their different uses. The task also prompted participants to imagine the use of methods, something which prepared them for the next task.

Task 3: Co-designing Engagement Strategies

The final activity was the main task of the workshops and the culmination of the discussions from the previous tasks. To provide a focus, I designed five scenarios that provided each group with a challenge (see Figure 33 for an example and Appendix E for all challenges). The scenarios were developed from data collected throughout this research as well as academic literature and described specific groups in the population that are typically thought not to engage in planning matters. The five scenarios included: young people, ethnic minority communities, working families, the business community, and landowners and developers. Each small group in the workshops were given a different scenario and the aim was to design engagement activities that could support the involvement of that particular group in a local neighbourhood plan.

Figure 33: Example design challenge scenario in co-design workshops



THE JONES FAMILY

The Jones family moved to in a suburban part of a small town last year after buying a new house on a new estate that had just been built in the town.

Lucy and Dan, the mum and dad, work long hours. Lucy is a full time social worker while Dan works part time for a large accountancy company in the city. Dan works long shifts to make up his hours so he can take care of his mum 2 days each week. Their two children, Alex and Sarah, are 6 and 10, and go to the local junior school. They both have hobbies - Alex plays football and Sarah is in the swimming team.

The daily routine for the family is always hectic. Early mornings are a struggle. Mum needs to leave early for work, and the children need to get up and ready for school in time for dad to take drive them. The evenings aren't much better. Mum collects the children from school then the rush of cooking, homework, sports clubs and the bedtime routine begin. By 8pm, Lucy and Dan are exhausted.

As this was the main design challenge and something which many participants would not be familiar with, the task was split into three parts which led them through the design process at a steady pace, allowing for discussions and new ideas to surface. The first part of the task asked groups

to identify who was part of their scenario, why it was important to engage them, and what the challenges and opportunities were within the scenario.

The second part of the task asked groups to use the card deck to select methods they thought could be used to engage the group in their scenario. The only limitation was that each group must select at least one digital and one non-digital method, however, they could select as many methods as they wanted. As part of this activity, groups were encouraged to discuss why they felt the tools they picked were appropriate and what the barriers might be to using such methods. The third and final part of the task was to complete the co-design process by producing an engagement plan using the methods they had selected and considering the detail of how the engagement could be delivered in reality. Groups had to think in detail about how the methods and tools could be used, what type of activities they could do and what questions they might ask as part of the engagement. They were also prompted to think about the practicalities of their engagement plan such as how they would promote the engagement opportunities to the group in their scenario, how they would record responses, and what skills and/or resources they would need to carry out the engagement plan.

Each group was provided with resources to support discussions and enable them to record their responses. As well as the card deck, a structured activity task sheet was provided which could be used to further support discussion and would contain the final co-designed engagement plan.

Data Analysis

In both workshops, any material created as part of the activities were collected as part of the data, this included prompt sheets and notes taken by the groups. In addition, each small group within both workshops were audio recorded with the permission of the participants and later transcribed for analysis. The workshop recordings were essential to capture the rich discussions throughout the workshops that could not be captured through notes on the physical materials.

A total of 12 hours of recorded discussions and a range of prompt materials were collected. Transcripts were imported into NVivo to begin to code the data using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As each of the three tasks were independent of one another in the workshops, the data was coded per each task. Four initial themes were identified through the coding of task one which were then refined to two main themes. Task two required some basic quantitative analysis of the methods discussed and selected by participants, and a further two themes were identified through coding which focused on the discussion of the digital methods and the non-digital methods. The final design task was coded with two reflective themes identified which cut across all of the groups' designs.

6.2 Findings

The findings from the workshops highlight the many challenges faced by citizens and planners in engaging communities in terms of the skills and resources required to configure participation and the lack of knowledge regarding a variety of participatory methods. This section will set out the analysis of the findings per task: task one explores the values and practices of engagement which validate data from previous chapters and add depth to the discussion; task two explores the most common methods used and the ways in which participants consider the differences between digital and non-digital methods; and task three will present the groups' co-design engagement plans.

6.2.1 Task 1: Defining Engagement

Values and Ethos of Engagement

Participants in both workshops discussed the importance and value of engaging communities in neighbourhood planning, something also discussed by participants in Chapter 5 and thus validating previous findings. All participants were positive about the need to engage the wider community in neighbourhood planning and all had attended the workshop to further improve their engagement practices.

In an attempt to define community engagement, a discussion regarding terminology ensued with the term 'consultation' seen as negative: *"I think*

the clue's in the word 'engagement' isn't it. Because it's that word as opposed to 'consultation'...And I think that's changed over time...the slant has changed from consultation, you know, kind of informing people to actually interacting with them, engaging with them." (P3). Such debates regarding terminology have permeated academic literature for many years (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992) and it was interesting to see participants reflecting on such notions and their interchangeable uses and meanings. Another key element identified in engagement was the need for *"two-way, free-flow of information and views"* (P4) that leads to *"a conversation"* (P1) as opposed to a data-gathering exercise.

An underlying value of all groups was that the ideas and opinions put forward by the community should be valued and taken seriously: *"We said 'you can write anything you like, good, bad, indifferent, whatever you want"* (P2). There was recognition that this was challenging when citizens themselves are leading the policy process as they felt they must remain neutral despite being a resident with their own views: *"I'm trying to remain neutral in order to get all the ideas out but actually it's quite a hard role for us"* (P1). It was felt that this tension was important to overcome to ensure a diverse range of needs can be accounted for and that differing views were all valid and should be thought of as such: *"they might have views you've never even thought about"* (P7).

As all participants agreed on the values and ethos of engagement, discussions moved to consider what makes engagement successful. Firstly, it was felt that a feedback loop was essential: *"You've got to recycle what it is you're doing as a clear account of response to people's initial input. They've got to know that their views have been accounted for"* (P5). Without this, participants felt those taking part would be discouraged and it would seem to undermine the views they had shared. Furthermore, it was felt that citizens' responses should be able to meaningfully influence the direction of the neighbourhood plan: *"Well you'll see when you do get our plan how big it is and why, because there's a lot of stuff in there about engaging with the community and we wanted to include what they'd all said"* (P2). In addition, successful engagement was seen to be that which encouraged a feeling of community ownership over the plan: *"taking people along with you...And that all builds,*

theoretically, this sense of ownership" (P4). Without such feelings of ownership, participants felt that *"resentments can bubble up"* (P5) and *"the plan is lopsided, it doesn't cater for their needs"* (P6). Ultimately, it was felt that anything other than engaging the whole community would be *"more tokenism, and it's important that it's a lot more than that"* (P3).

Although all participants regarded community engagement as positive, discussions surfaced issues faced by neighbourhood planning groups whereby the citizen-led nature of the process meant fellow community members had to deal with difficult circumstances. One example given was the inevitability of citizens engaging with their own personal agenda and how, as a citizen-led steering group, that would be dealt with to avoid a plan being dominated by a small group whilst remaining aware of their own positionality:

> *"Understandably, because it's a human nature thing - you will, any group within the group dynamics, will have their own pet subjects"* (P3)
>
> *"We do have to tell each other that don't we? It's OK to have our own viewpoints and opinions and favoured topics because we are residents. But we have to make sure that we include everybody else as well and listen to what they've got to say and make a note of it"* (P2)

Participants in the workshops did not have a solution to this challenge but recognised this as a difficulty faced by the core group leading a neighbourhood plan. Similarly, another example was how steering groups negotiate conflict between longstanding residents and those new to the area.

As conversations amongst participants deepened, elements of negative and tokenistic practices began to emerge, despite their positively held values of community engagement. Suggestions were made on how to provoke responses from those disengaged which centred on provocations and threats to community assets and resources:

> *"Well the thing to get them engaged is provocation…The thing is to have a-, this sounds almost subversive, but the thing that gets people out is a threat, some problem"* (P6).

> *"Engagement is a sort of progressive process and you might catch them next time. Especially if you're proposing to build houses round the back of theirs, or whatever"* (P17)

Further to this, some participants still described a consultative approach whereby citizens were only engaged once decisions had been made: *"When you thought you had a rough idea of what you wanted, you'd involve community groups then"* (P10). This was framed as a way to manage community expectations, however, such practices have long been criticised with citizens feeling they have no real influence on the policy and decisions. A final example, was the feeling by some participants that using the usual methods of engagement was enough to show they had tried: *Well at least you know that they've had their opportunity and if they don't respond, that's up to them"* (P18). This evidenced a lack of recognition that different methods can engage different communities. Despite the positive values and ethos discussed, elements of poor or tokenistic practices crept into the conversations.

Current Practices

Moving from the discussion of the values associated with community engagement, participants began to discuss practicalities of citizen participation. Groups felt that engaging everyone was important, but it became clear that they were unsure how to go about this:

> *"And it's so typified when you look at the usual type of people that get involved with neighbourhood planning groups, you know, they tend to be - certainly with my groups - retirees, people with time on their hands."* (P3)

> *"The converse is that nearly all formal engagement exercises are absolutely dominated by almost caricatured types, you know, as a very small proportion of the total population, you get people who, almost self-classify as 'participants' and that epitomises the problem doesn't it, how do you reach the rest?… Middle-class, articulate, Guardian readers or something similar."* (P5)

> *"And I think there's too much of a tendency to go to the usual groups and ask the usual people what they think they want. Which tends to be the usual answers."* (P17)

When considering the idea of engaging everyone, it also became clear that participants weren't sure who constitutes 'everyone': *"I think that's an exercise in itself, like you say, is sitting down and working out-, because we all say 'engage everyone' but then we don't drill down to who everyone is and then where they are or what their needs are or that kind of thing. So that is-, I think that is an exercise to work out 'who is everyone'?!"* (P18). Many participants felt this continued to be a worry for neighbourhood planning groups in ensuring that the plan accounted for all needs throughout the policy production process.

Participants began to discuss overcoming such challenges and focused on inclusivity as a basis for future engagement practices: *"We haven't mentioned the word 'inclusivity' yet and I think it might be important to define our hard-to-reach groups... And they are precisely the people who are not going to participate. They're not going to notice printed media. They're not going to come along to a town hall"* (P14). One participant specifically identified the Equality Act 2010 as playing a vital role in considering inclusivity:

> *"It's very important and of course we're now beholden to the 2010 Equality Act which says that we have to make sure-, it doesn't necessarily mean that they have to engage but we have to make sure that they're given an equal opportunity to engage, i.e. the protected characteristics, people with disabilities, the elderly, you know, a lot of protected characteristics in the list"* (P13).

It was recognised during this discussion that neighbourhood planning groups would not be held accountable to the Equality Act 2010 but that good engagement practice would benefit from considering the need to engage those with protected characteristics identified.

In discussing groups within the community classed as 'harder to reach' participants felt young people were *"always forgotten"* (P5) and disability groups *"get left out of almost everything"* (P6). Aside from specific population

groups, a clear challenge was engaging with citizens that did not typically belong to a group, club or activity: *"Because you always get the response of 'oh, I didn't know about it' and 'nobody asked me' but if you don't actually belong to anything, they're the ones it's hard to get at isn't it"* (P11). However, a suggestion identified by many participants to overcome this, was to engage communities through existing networks rather than hosting one-off in-person events: *"Map out what you've got, so organisations, interest groups but also look at spaces and places and see who might just be active in that, in a shopping centre or a school or somewhere...So obviously then design your engagement accordingly"* (P18). Gaining access to open data was felt to be important in beginning to map out the community to engage citizens: *"So is there any open data, for instance, so say we're talking about Wylam and we actually got a map saying 'there's 15% over-50s, 10% under-21s'? But then you could start to actually try and target those groups and you could see who you're missing"* (P19). Another approach identified was to work with organisations and local agencies both to gather their views as an established body, as well as to reach citizens associated with them.

Within this, another important element for participants was deciding when in the neighbourhood planning process to engage communities and, here, conflicting views emerged. Most participants felt that engagement should only occur at major milestones: *"There are concentrated bursts of activity when you've got something specifically, you know, you've reached a certain stage or you're gathering feedback"* (P3). However, this creates an issue whereby citizens feel disconnected from the plan's progress and momentum is lost: *"And it's that distance-, it's that time between isn't it? Because that's what we found, it's how to keep people engaged in the process between that"* (P8). Fewer participants, however, suggestion that continuous engagement was important to provide a *"constant reference back to the community"* (P15) and recognising the important of *"leaving the door open"* (P19).

The findings presented above validate data from previous chapters whilst adding further depth to discussions of the values and practices of engagement. It became clear that participants shared many of the same

values but that their practices did not allow those values to carry through to reality.

6.2.2 Task 2: Introducing Methods

During the second task, groups were asked to discuss methods using the card deck provided to identify methods they had used previously and to select methods they felt were interesting and intriguing. The intention of this activity was to introduce new methods to participants, encourage them to imagine the use of alternative approaches, and to discuss the merits and challenges. This section will first discuss the methods selected by participants before presenting analysis of the discussions.

Table 9 tallies the methods used by participants in previous engagement activities. With the exception of two, all methods selected were non-digital showing a preference towards more traditional approaches. The most popular methods, town hall meetings and drop-in events, are unsurprising with academic literature noting this for many years (Rowe and Frewer, 2004; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). Reflecting on the two digital methods used, social media and map-based technology, it emerged that social media was used ineffectively and did not reach out to new citizens, and map-based technology was used by a LPA planning officer in a large-scale policy consultation and it was felt such GIS systems were not user-friendly.

The second part of the task asked participants to select methods they found interesting or intriguing and Table 10 shows a stark contrast to the first part of the task. With the exception of community art, all methods selected were digital with map-based technology and virtual and augmented reality the two most popular suggestions. This was owing to the interactive and visual possibilities of the tools. Participants felt that many of the digital tools could provide support in the neighbourhood planning process in a way which could directly engage citizens or could help to provide materials to engage citizens – for example, data visualisation tools to support citizens to view complex information. The visual possibilities was a key factor in all digital methods selected as participants felt it could support citizens to think about imagined futures for the neighbourhood.

Table 9: Methods identified by groups as previously used to engage

Method (from card deck)	No. of uses
'Town Hall' Meetings	6
Drop-In Events	6
Printed Media	5
Social Media	4
Surveys and	4
Interactive Workshops	3
Field Visits	3
Community Art	3
Door Knocking	2
Digital Media	1
Map-Based Technology	1
Ideation and Voting	0
Online Forums	0
Online Events	0
Crowdsourced Data	0
Data Visualisation	0
Games and Play	0
Virtual and Augmented	0
Physical Technology	0
Digital Messaging	0

Table 10: Methods selected by groups as interesting or intriguing

Method (from card deck)	No. of selections
Map-Based Technology	5
Virtual and Augmented	4
Crowdsourced Data	2
Games and Play	2
Community Art	2
Data Visualisation	1
Social Media	1
Ideation and Voting	0
Online Forums	0
Online Events	0
Physical Technology	0
Digital Messaging	0
'Town Hall' Meetings	0
Drop-In Events	0
Printed Media	0
Surveys and	0
Interactive Workshops	0
Field Visits	0
Door Knocking	0
Digital Media	0

Overall from this data, it is clear that traditional methods are still the approach used to engage communities despite the many issues faced in reaching disengaged citizens and the recognised lack of responses from events and surveys. Participants in this study are responsible, to a varying degree, for engagement decisions and practices in neighbourhood planning and beyond. The selections shown in Tables 9 and 10 show the clear mismatch between methods used and methods that are seen to be interesting, thus illustrating the need for change in the way in which communities are engaged.

During the task to identify and select methods, participants discussed the card deck and, in the two themes below, I explore the feelings of

participants about traditional and digital methods in an attempt to understand more about their perceptions of a variety of engagement methods.

Traditional Methods

Traditional methods were the most commonly used approaches by participants and below I explore participants' views on such methods. Firstly, all participants reflected on the use of traditional methods of engagement as a popular way to reach out to a lot of citizens in the community *"because that's probably how you're going to reach the most amount of people, initially"* (P16). Town hall meetings were seen as a way to gather a lot of information in one event which was also seen as useful in checking progress during plan production: *"we say 'yeah but what did the Town Hall meeting want?' Simple as that"* (P6). Similarly, drop-in events in a variety of locations where citizens already congregated was also seen as good way to reach out: *"We tried to do some engagement events where we were in the marketplace when the market was on...Different people would come to the market and at the leisure centre...But where people were going already, so at the leisure centre we set up a stand there. And at the local youth project, with young people, to get their views and opinions."* (P8).

Despite the positive views of traditional methods, all participants reported that such in-person events were generally not well attended, surfacing a tension in their views and practices:

> P5: *"And if you've got no reason-, no burning issue like that, you're not going to get them to a meeting...So it's an absolute dead loss."*
> P6: *"Yes, they won't come... People have lives, you can't suddenly say 'ooh we want to take up your evenings'"*
>
> *"We then invited them to town hall meetings or village meetings, a lot of people just didn't want to come."* (P16)
>
> *"There were a lot of public events and things like that and they didn't really attract that many people"* (P8)

In addition, there was also a recognition that surveys and questionnaires often received few responses with groups finding it *"very difficult to get a response"* (P8) and, in some cases, participants felt the unrepresentative sample of citizens meant the information could not be used: *"but the response was so patchy that I'm not sure we ever used the information."* (P17).

Secondly, another tension that surfaced was the persistence with traditional methods and the need to reach out to citizens who would not usually engage. Participants still felt that printed media, for example, was highly effective: *"if you've got a local newspaper, even with all the technology, by gum it doesn't half work"* (P6). Also, it was felt that door knocking would reach a large number of citizens: *"if you're knocking on doors and leaving a simple questionnaire, at least you're reaching everybody"* (P15). However, the latter approach created issues of resources when the neighbourhood planning group consisted of a small number of volunteers.

Participants also felt that field visits would enable them to reach out to the wider community, particularly organising activities such as intergenerational field visits that could bring together different members of the community. Similarly, community art was seen to hold intergenerational possibilities for engagement as a way to encourage citizens to consider the needs of others. There were many positive opinions about the ability of traditional methods to reach out despite evidence, both their own and the array of academic literature, suggesting the contrary.

Furthermore, traditional methods were often discussed by participants alongside conflict in that they felt citizens attended in-person events to direct anger toward those responsible for planning decisions. Town hall meetings or drop-in events were seen to invite conflict: *"public meetings used to turn into shouting matches"* (P13). Consequently, participants felt that such events could become unproductive: *"if enough people arrive at these drop-in events they can turn into a sort of, a public meeting and can get out of hand"* (P13). Despite two-way communication being seen as essential in engagement in task one, participants, here, discussed that such in-person events should

only be used to provide information to avoid such conflict: *"they're good for information, giving a presentation that lasts 15 minutes and then questions, but you cannot really go much beyond that, I don't find, at a town hall meeting"* (P18).

In addition, the role of design in engagement surfaced during the workshops, both in terms of the skills to design engagement activities and the aesthetic design of engagement materials. The ability to design engagement was seen as key and there was a recognition that asking the correct questions or designing interactive activities was an important skill:

> *"But you've got to be very careful, haven't you, as to what you're asking and that you're not leading and that you're not closing things off as well, isn't it?"* (P4)
>
> *"There's a real art to drafting a questionnaire and avoiding doing it in leading ways."* (P3)
>
> *"It's got to be very focussed as to what you're really asking"* (P4)

A key challenge in designing engagement in neighbourhood planning was to be able to plan for ways in which the data would be collected. For example, informal conversations at town hall meetings or rich conversations during door knocking needed to be captured formally in some way: *"the difficulty with door-knocking...is how you capture, unless you're going around with a Dictaphone or something like that and record"* (P3).

Aesthetic design was also seen to be important, particularly for printed media, whereby participants felt materials should be interesting and eye-catching: *"one of the things that struck me is how dreary our stuff was!...so I think there is something about making it look at bit less boring!"* (P1). The skills discussed with regards to designing engagement were sought after by participants but there was a recognition they were not often held within the steering group.

Finally, participants discussed opportunities for deliberation within engagement, feeling it was important that citizens had the opportunity to express their experiences: *"but they have a story to tell...suddenly all these stories started coming up"* (P17). Drop-in events and interactive workshops were

seen to be good methods to encourage deliberation, but the important aspect was ensuring a space of openness, expression and learning was created. Community art was discussed positively in being able to support deliberation and learning: *"It's a good way of people maybe expressing what they like and what they don't like and putting it into a display that people then can comment on that"* (P16).

Digital Methods

The digital methods within the card deck were those that participants had rarely used in their previous engagement practices. There were a number or positives and negatives identified by the participants when discussing which methods were intriguing or interesting for possible future engagement activities. Below we consider five themes: reaching out; interactivity and engagement; complexity; conflict; and exclusion.

Firstly, participants felt there was a greater possibility to reach out to citizens that would not usually engage using digital methods. For example, social media was discussed as *"good for young people"* (P6) and good for *"reaching out to people with those protected characteristics"* (P14). Initially, games and play was discussed as a good approach to reaching out to younger people but participants recognised that such a method, along with virtual and augmented reality, could also provide interactive possibilities for the whole community. In the same way, participants felt that crowdsourcing data was a good way to engage citizens in the plan production in supporting the gathering of evidence: *local knowledge, we were talking about flooding…'There isn't a problem of flooding here' and you find 'yes there is with this house'"* (P11). During the discussions, some participants did refer to the use of technology to reach out as a solution to engagement, whereby digital methods would simply fix the 'problem' that some groups were not engaging.

Secondly, all participants felt that digital methods afforded greater levels of interactivity and provided wider possibilities. Some examples included the use of map-based technology and the ways technology could be used to share outcomes of engagement processes, although some approaches

suggested simply digitised offline methods without adding any new modes of communication: *"Digitising the sort of post-it notes and pens work and making it more interactive"* (P18). Furthermore, the visual and interactive affordance of technology was felt to be able to provide new ways to visualise future changes to the neighbourhood:

> *"You could design your village and then you could look at it through your virtual reality!"* (P7)
>
> *"You could find the location where the issue is, then you could go out and take a panoramic view and then the person could get that panoramic view in their living room and be able to write down what they thought should be preserved."* (P13 – on the use of virtual reality)
>
> *"I think people find hard is to visualise what their neighbourhood might look like in 20 years' time...Because happening on the ground is very different than just looking at a 2D map. So I think sometimes if you can try and help communities visualise what might happen, they might be more inclined to get on board with it."* (P18)

Similarly, it was felt that games and play could also support communities in re-imagining their communities and think broadly about the issues: *"one of the difficulties in neighbourhood planning is...to see the interlinks; 'if we do this over here what will be the impact there?'...And if you've got a game design you can see how that works out"* (P8). The participants also recognised that such an approach can support more positive interactions: *"people might feel less inhibited because it's just a game but you might get into some other areas, people putting comments forward"* (P11).

Online forums and events were heralded as a way to encourage interactivity beyond the physical events, encouraging those not attending in person to interact. It was also seem to be a way to promote transparent decision-making: *"so people understand who makes the decisions, who their local councillor is, who says something at a meeting, who doesn't say something at a meeting when it's a really important issue. That's really important"* (P19). One participant had experience of live streaming a public event, however, although this was deemed a success to provide information, it was unclear

how much engagement or two-way communication was achieved, another example where the simple act of streaming was deemed a solution without evidence to show this was successful.

However, despite the positive elements highlighted, participants felt that the use of digital methods was complex in terms of development, setup, and the skills required to use and maintain the tools, as well as the high costs associated with technology. More specifically, participants felt some of the methods with the most promise, games and play and virtual and augmented reality, would particularly challenging *"to actually develop the games"* (P7) and that it would be *"time consuming"* (P5). All of these complex issues were seen to require costs that neighbourhood planning groups felt were beyond their budget: *"surely technology and the process you've got to go through to achieve that is vastly expensive, how can some small village get involved in something like that!"* (P15).

The complexity discussed also extended to the how user-friendly such tools are with participants referring to their own experiences of using engagement technology in a LPA consultation: "*the County has just put one out for 'where do you want buildings?' and I don't think many people have actually responded. Partly because I think it looks complicated"* (P8). In addition, the lack of skills held by neighbourhood planning groups to design and use digital tools was also highlighted, even when considering a widely available tool such as social media.

As with traditional methods, the issue of conflict surfaced in discussion whereby participants felt that some digital tools, such as social media, online forums and other open platforms, were fraught with conflict and invite abusive behaviour. Some participants had experienced such abuse: "*they've got nothing else to do with their time! But slag me off. Or us off, I should say"* (P12) and "*I replied to a rather derogatory statement, several derogatory statements about the Council and I'm still licking my wounds"* (P10). Furthermore, the sharing of fake news was also highlighted to cause conflict in the use of digital tools where false messages about

neighbourhood planning could be shared. Some participants did have suggestions to manage conflict on digital platforms using moderation:

> *"We have a moderator, who makes sure that when comments are put up, somebody replies. So that it's active...it was our moderator's decision whether to just ignore it." (P6)*

> *"You've almost got to be ready, if you're the person organising it, to be ready to counter, almost 'false news'! It's very immediate and very quick but also can mislead people very, very quickly." (P17)*

Only one group suggested the need for specific training to learn how to deal with such conflict and the need for a strategy, particularly for social media use: *"it's through just learning how to manage it better with a strategy"* (P18). Similarly, the time-consuming nature of managing the potential for conflict was also highlighted: *"they all want an answer. If you don't answer there's not much point in having it"* (P11).

Finally, participants felt that digital tools had the potential to exclude members of the community and this surfaced further tensions in participants' values and practices. Groups discussed the ways in which traditional methods only reach certain groups yet championed their use, yet digital was seen to exclude particularly the older community or those without online access:

> *"If you stick it on a website, for example, that's cutting out an awful lot of people in your community straight away isn't it?"* (P17)

> *"Because going on to talk about technology then arguably the older people tend to get left out of that."* (P15)

> *"If you look at things like online events, interactive, virtual technology, a lot of the community...they don't understand it, or don't have access to it...And just don't want anything to do with it."* (P16)

> *"Can I just say, one of the big issues with digital I mean we've just had people raise objections to a planning application and part of the problem is that a lot of the older people in the town don't...can't go online."* (P1)

Summary

This task raised a number of conflicts and tensions in the values and views held by participants and the way they conduct engagement in practice. The discussions highlighted the continued use of traditional approaches despite the recognition that such methods reach a limited group within the community, response rates are low, and conflict can make in-person events unproductive. There was recognition that digital methods could be more interactive and have the potential to reach out to those not usually engaged in such processes. However, despite all of this, participants were concerned with the exclusive nature of digital technology without considering the need to use multiple methods to reach different groups within the community.

6.2.3 Task 3: Co-designing Engagement Strategies

The third task was the main design challenge where each group within the workshop was given a fictious scenario and tasked with creating an engagement plan that would seek to involve the citizens in their scenarios. Figure 34 provides one of the final designs from the workshops that responded to the scenario, and all final designs can be found in Appendix F. Here, I reflect on the mixed methods used, the ways groups designed for harder to reach communities and barriers to engagement.

Mixed Methods

The majority of groups considered a mix of digital and non-digital methods and were keen to incorporate new approaches to engagement. Two groups focused on the busy family scenario with one group assuming that *"anything online would be very accessible for that family"* (P2), viewing digital modes of participation as a simple 'solution'. The two groups focused on youth engagement saw a great potential in using digital tools, particularly focusing on creative and playful methods such as games and play, and virtual and augmented reality. Almost all groups designing for the different scenarios felt that incorporating creative participation methods would provide a new mode of expression and invite participation from new sections of the community. This creative participation included both digital and non-digital methods and often included individual

Figure 34: Group response to youth design challenge in co-design workshops

Barriers

- Not all youth reached through clubs
- Traditional methods unsuitable
- Engaging youth is skilled work
- Schools can be difficult to engage, particularly the practicalities of the curriculum

Opportunities

- Making use of existing networks
- Social media to reach youth
- Schools subjects where the curriculum would fit
- Using everyday activities, such as walking to school, to encourage input from youth

Final Design

Requirements: engaging young people early in the process; anonymity to avoid embarrassment with peers; fun; integrating skill development

- Interactive workshops – using activities in schools to identify issues of importance to young people to be further explored through surveys and crowdsourcing. Activity could be to draw routes to school or their neighbourhood to understand what youth recognise as important.
- Community art – using a variety of mediums to encourage youth to share their opinions of the area, could also use digital media.
- Surveys and questionnaires – produce surveys on key topics and engage their peers and family, helping to develop skills and youth become agents for the plan to encourage feeling of ownership.
- Social media – reaching out to youth that don't attend existing clubs and services, recruiting youth volunteers to engage their peers. Longer term engagement to keep youth informed throughout whole process.
- Crowdsourced data and field visits – young people supporting the crowdsourcing of data of issues that are relevant to them. Example could be crowdsourcing data about local businesses and opportunities serving to inform the plan and to support youth in future opportunities. Further topics could be identified through workshops. Field visits would support the data collection.

contributions as well as community events to showcase outputs that could lead to further engagement. A common example of this was to invite citizens to take photos or videos and/or engage in community artforms, such as painting, drawing, theatre, poetry and more, to capture important places in their neighbourhood which would culminate in a local exhibition to invite further participation.

Two scenarios, however, did lean more toward the use of traditional engagement approaches using non-digital methods. The group engaging ethnic minority communities mainly opted for in-person engagement through community art or exhibitions, and participants found the scenario particularly difficult to design for, seeing this community as the 'other'. This perception led to many negative assumptions which resulted in the design of engagement which was similar to existing approaches in planning. Furthermore, the group engaging the business community felt that face-to-face methods would be best where individual businesses were contacted and engaged due to the commercial sensitivity that would be needed. The group did feel that some technology could support wider conversations about policy directions for the business community through an online forum that could anonymously allow businesses to share ideas.

Throughout the discussion on mixed methods, some key points were made by groups in how to incorporate positive aspects into engagement practices from the outset. Firstly, a practical point was made by two groups in ensuring that any engagement is designed in a way which enables outputs to be captured so they can be responded to: *"Capture it in a way that you can support your claims...there could be could be competing views and you're going to have to be able to balance those and come up with a justification"* (P4). In addition, this was also said to support the final stages of plan submission when producing the consultation statement: *"you've got to record exactly how you've done things, what the outcome was, how you used that to influence the Plan...forward planning of all of this is the vital ingredient isn't it"* (P3).

Secondly, almost all groups suggested that the use of existing networks, when considering designing engagement and reaching out broadly to the

community, were essential. Specific suggestions included engaging children through schools as a way to also engage parents, connecting with religious groups, and connecting with wider community activities to support reaching out.

Finally, one group focused on youth engagement proposed an engaged approach with young people whereby they become agents for the neighbourhood plan. This enabled the neighbourhood planning group to co-design the appropriate engagement approach with young people, involving them in key decisions and providing opportunities to co-design survey and conduct peer research. This particular group were keen to provide short term outcomes for young people that revolved around skill development, volunteering and work experience as a side product of the engagement within neighbourhood planning:

> *"You could get them as a school project to design a survey and carry out a survey because that could also be quite nice because they could do a survey for the kids but also for the parents...and get the kids to design a crowdsource site, wouldn't that be a good idea, so that they would learn the skills of doing that."* (P8)

Designing for Harder to Reach Communities

The co-design workshop aimed to encourage participants to design new digital and non-digital engagement approaches that could reach out to those not usually involved in neighbourhood planning processes, thus the design scenarios were focused on young people, ethnic minority communities, working families, the business community, and landowners and developers. The workshops surfaced some key issues in relation to designing engagement for such communities which provide insights into the challenges of improving engagement practices.

Many of the groups felt the task was challenging and the workshops required significant facilitator support to move toward a co-designed engagement approach. It was important for groups to highlight opportunities and barriers to engage the citizens in their scenario, but many of the groups remained focus on those barriers and were unable to

overcome this. In many cases, groups made assumptions about the citizens within their scenario that were unfounded and reinforced negative stereotypes. For example, one group focused on young people assumed the main character in the scenario was not academic because they were described as 'sporty' and the group focused on ethnic minority communities assumed their citizens were not interested in wider community endeavours.

Further to this, and perhaps more concerning, was the view that such harder to reach citizens were difficult to identify within their community. The group focused on ethnic minority communities worryingly stated: *"but you see, would you know to knock on their door anyhow really? Because they don't get involved with us so how would we know to knock on their door?!"* (P10). This positioned harder to reach citizens and communities as the 'other', reinforces negative stereotypes and contributes to the exclusion of citizens within the design and configuration engagement. This highlighted that harder to reach groups are still seldom thought of in community engagement and the assumptions made about race, ethnicity and religion served to highlight that those in charge of planning and delivering engagement are not part of marginalised groups and, as such, fail to recognise the needs of those communities.

Barriers to Engagement

On the whole, all groups did employ a mix of digital and non-digital methods, but this was not without challenges with many barriers identified through the co-design workshops. Firstly, the time-consuming nature of using multiple methods was identified as a barrier: *"I think if you included all of them you'd never get a neighbourhood plan done! You'd just be out there all the time"* (P18) and *"I don't see why we've got this great splurge of different ways of going about involving people"* (P15).

Secondly, almost all groups identified the lack of digital skills within neighbourhood planning groups as a significant barrier to adopting new approaches to engagement, even when groups were supportive of the idea of digital methods. For one group this halted progress in the workshop and

significant facilitator support was required to help the group think beyond the issue of skills and to consider how this barrier could be overcome. However, other groups were able to suggest recruiting volunteers to support the digital aspects of a neighbourhood plan and one group proposed the co-design approach with young people. Without consideration of overcoming such barriers, digital methods would not be used in practice where core steering groups do not possess the correct skills.

Further to this, specific barriers were identified around language barriers for ethnic minority groups and commercial sensitivity when engaging business. In addition, the group focused on business owners was originally given the scenario linked to landowners and developers but felt this was unrealistic and they could not imagine neighbourhood planning groups engaging in such conversations within the Northumberland feudal land ownership context. It must be noted, however, that other neighbourhood planning groups in Northumberland, also part of this research, had engaged with landowners and developers, and so this points to wider issues within engagement practices. The specific challenges for the different scenarios were often identified by participants as reasons why engagement with such groups has been poor in the past. Although there was a recognition of the importance of engaging a range of citizens, the groups found it difficult to overcome such challenges within the design of engagement approaches.

6.3 Reflections

This chapter has detailed findings which demonstrate the need for digital and non-digital modes of participation for neighbourhood planning and has validated previous data in regard to citizens valuing good engagement practices. Here, I reflect on the digital and non-digital tools discussed and selected during the tasks, and the challenges that remain evident in citizen-led engagement in neighbourhood planning.

6.3.1 Digital and Non-Digital Tools for Engagement

The findings in this chapter explore participants' feelings of digital and non-digital approaches and, through task two, it is already clear that traditional methods are usually relied upon. Further to this, task two highlighted that digital methods were interesting to participants with a rich discussion about the affordances of both digital and non-digital tools. However, when considering the final designs in response to the scenarios, a more complex picture emerges.

Overall, there were 16 digital methods and 19 non-digital methods selected through the final designs in all six groups. The most popular method, used in all final designs, was social media and it was proposed to be used in a variety of ways, including interactive polling, livestreaming events, sharing citizen-produced content and advertising opportunities to engage. Participants recognised the potential for social media in reaching out to the wider community despite their earlier reservations about the conflict they felt occurred through this platform. Following this, however, the other popular methods were all non-digital approaches: community art used in five designs, drop-in events used in three, printed media used in three, and surveys and questionnaires used in three. Community art was a popular approach selected and there was discussion that this method could incorporate digital modes of participation too. Although digital approaches were still selected 16 times, all groups selected different methods, leaving non-digital methods to be more popular amongst all groups.

The way in which the methods were used in the scenario designs further reflects the conflicting discussions from earlier tasks whereby participants values did not match with their engagement practices. In two groups, the main approach taken in their engagement was to provide information, providing few opportunities for two-way communication. In many cases, participants often felt the need to include more interactive modes of participation but were unsure how to go about this and, thus, the selection of methods led to the creation of shallow activities that would do little to engage citizens in neighbourhood planning. Despite this, in almost all groups, participants tried to rationalise their decisions and think through

the reasons for particular configurations with the methods selected. Through this, one group in particular, created an engagement plan aimed to co-design activities with young people to encourage youth to be peer researchers within the neighbourhood plan. This approach was significantly different to other designs and saw engagement both as an opportunity to involve young people and gather their views, whilst encouraging learning and citizenship through skill development. Finally, the ways in which participants configured the use of non-digital methods in the final designs often resulted in more interactive and engaging approaches as they tried to avoid replicating offline methods into digital. This included a range of creative mediums to display at exhibitions, and creating family-friendly, fun events at convenient times for a range of citizens. It must be noted, however, that two groups remained focused on traditional approaches with standard activities such as drop-ins where citizens could pin comments on a map.

The workshops did highlight that participants saw digital methods as more interactive, however, there was a risk that technological modes of participation were seen as a solution to a problem. Assuming that technology will solve problems and taking a solutionist focus to engagement practices has been shown to be detrimental (McCann, 2015; O'Neil, 2016; Costanza-Chock, 2020; Howlett, 2020). Where technology is used as a solution, it is usually the case that the specific context and needs of citizens has not been considered and can lead to ill-defined answers to ill-defined problems with little connect to the community (Chapman, Tait and Inch, 2020). In this sense, participants were enthusiastic about the possibilities of technology, but such enthusiasm resulted in misplaced suggestions for its use as a solution to engagement problems.

Non-digital modes of participation remained important within the workshops which highlights, and confirms, the notion of using multiple methods to reach out to different citizens within the community (Macpherson, 1999). Although not captured in the data from the specific design tasks, a further finding captured at the end of the workshops was that participants valued the card deck as a resource in itself: *"this [card deck]*

is a hugely helpful resource, it was really useful to be able to think about all the different methods like this…it would definitely help our group think about what we want to do" (P10). Following the workshops, I received requests from multiple participants to share the card deck and sent copies to neighbourhood planning groups that could support their engagement decisions. It was felt that such a resource was a helpful way to spark inspiration for the use of different engagement methods, both digital and non-digital.

6.3.2 Challenges in Citizen-Led Engagement

The findings in this chapter highlighted the challenges that remain in citizens leading and delivering participation with the neighbourhood planning process. There were tensions present in participants' discussions which highlighted that many had a vision for inclusive engagement practices but struggled to realise that in practice. The findings show a reliance on traditional participation methods and, although, a variety of digital methods were selected during task two and three, the challenge in implementing them in practice persuaded participants that non-digital approaches would be more realistic. Furthermore, during the final design task, participants immediately turned to traditional methods as their first instinct, further demonstrating the preference for such approaches.

A further challenge in citizen-led engagement, was the assumptions made about the citizens they would engage, made from the dominant worldview of white, middle-class and, often, male perspectives (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Some participants decided that some citizens in the scenarios simply would not have time to engage and so did not plan any methods that could seek to capture their views. However, more damaging was the stereotypes propagated whereby a 'sporty' young person is seen to be not academic, workers in the service industry seen to have limited life prospects, and the exclusion of minority communities based on assumptions about their race, ethnicity and religion:

"He's presumably not highly academic so you can't put him through reading materials and study materials because he won't bother. It's got to be at his level of interest." (P6)

"'She works in a local shop...It's very limited though, it's a limited life, if that one's going off to university, her only job is in a shop, you know, urgh." (P7)

"But they're not like, um, but they're not very community-involved, so how do you put that? 'Insular' they are, aren't they?... But you see, would you know to knock on their door anyhow really? Because they don't get involved with us so how would we know to knock on their door?!" (P10 referring to ethnic minority communities)

Such assumptions are made by participants who are part of the dominant narrative which serves to disadvantage marginalised communities (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Where neighbourhood planning is enacted from this standpoint, research has shown that policy creation would be based on simplistic understandings of marginalised communities and would fail to account for their needs (Peters, 2020). D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) further explain that, where systems or processes are designed by homogenous groups that represent the 'norm', other marginalised groups are not considered or provided for through those systems and processes.

Another significant challenge that arose during the workshops was the lack of skills and knowledge to co-design engagement, whether digital or non-digital methods were chosen. The majority of groups found it difficult to consider the barriers to engaging the citizens in their scenario and how to overcome them with many groups needing significant facilitator support to move forward with the task. Furthermore, the aim with the final design was to create a plan to engage with citizens that included the methods, the type of activities, the kinds of questions that could be asked and ways this could be captured to use within a neighbourhood plan. Despite recognition during an earlier task that the ability to ask the correct questions was important, almost all groups found it difficult to design, configure and create interactive activities that could link to policy production. This evidences the need for greater support to be able to design engagement

activities that can genuinely engage the whole community in a way which could support citizens to enact their values of participation. Considering this in relation to earlier findings chapters, this further evidences the need for skilled facilitation support and wider community development approaches.

A final challenge identified in the workshops was the lack of technological skills, both in terms of designing engagement activities using digital methods and in how these activities would be enacted in reality. The card deck was seen as a useful resource to support this, however, many groups were concerned how the neighbourhood planning groups would deliver such digital engagement given the lack of technological skills held by the core volunteers. Some groups were able to move past this by suggesting the need to recruit volunteers with specific skills to support digital engagement, but many felt it was too complex to deliver. However, it was recognised that toolkits which could provide materials, support and advice, such as the card deck, would further support citizens in the use of digital methods for engagement.

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to co-design engagement practices with those involved in neighbourhood planning as a way to explore alternative modes of support and to investigate the needs of citizens in using digital tools, thus directly responding to RQ2 and RQ3. The findings from the workshops highlight the complex nature of incorporating digital modes of participation into existing practices, with a myriad of tensions surfacing. Firstly, participants were clear about the value they placed on engaging the community, however, when discussing how they conducted engagement, their practices did not match their values. Secondly, participants were enthusiastic about the potential of using digital methods but initially reverted to traditional methods in the final design task. Furthermore, digital methods were seen as a way to reach out to those in the community that would not usually engage in such processes, however, participants often referred to the exclusive nature of digital without recognition that

traditional approaches were also exclusive. Finally, participants spoke of engaging 'everyone' in their community as essential in neighbourhood planning, but when asked to design for harder to reach populations, some groups found it difficult and were unable to relate to the experiences, particularly of marginalised groups. The tensions present throughout the chapter evidence the complex nature of participation practices. The findings highlight that many participants want to engage their community and have the best intentions, but the lack of an inclusive approach along with the lack of skills and knowledge made this difficult.

Leading from these findings, it is possible to contribute to RQ2 and RQ3 as there is evidence that both non-digital and digital support is required within the neighbourhood planning process along with approaches that can support groups to build capacity and skills to engage their community. Forms of non-digital support could provide citizens with training, support and advice to help develop the skills to conduct inclusive engagement as well as providing non-digital toolkits to support the use of technology. Digital support could come in a myriad of forms whereby the participation methods explored in this chapter could each be developed and tested as ways to engage citizens and provide broader functions within the neighbourhood planning process. As with Chapter 5, drawing together expertise from the fields of planning and HCI would enable an approach to developing support that accounts for the needs of citizens e.g. the need for simple and easy to use digital technology and the requirement for education toolkits to support their use.

From the findings in Chapters 4-6, the research questions have been explored with a wide range of insights gained. The following two chapters will bring together the findings from all chapters to discuss the re-design of neighbourhood planning as a policy process in response to the complexity, and the need to embed digital tools within such processes in a way which can support citizens in enacting neighbourhood planning.

Chapter 7

7. Re-Designing Neighbourhood Planning and Embedding Digital Technology

This thesis began with the aim of investigating how digital and non-digital tools and interventions could be designed to better support citizens to shape places through the example of neighbourhood planning. To do this, the research sought to understand how the neighbourhood planning process was enacted by citizens and, therefore, what opportunities and challenges exist. Working with neighbourhood planning groups in the North East, the field work in this thesis explores the use of creative participation methods (Chapter 4); uses interactive workshops to understand the realities of neighbourhood planning from citizen and planners' perspectives (Chapter 5); and co-designs engagement tools with citizens and planners (Chapter 6).

In this chapter, I will bring together the findings from this research and argue the need to (re)design the neighbourhood planning process and the digital and non-digital modes of participation within it. Firstly, I briefly summarise the opportunities and challenges faced by citizens, before outlining two further foundational issues that provide insight into the complexity of the process. I then put forward two key design principles which can support inclusive and equitable approaches to policy and technology design, and then move to show how such principles should be enacted within the neighbourhood planning context. From the findings of this research, I then provide design implications in the form of tangible suggestions as to how the neighbourhood planning process should be improved and changed, and the ways in which digital and non-digital tools could support the policymaking process. Ultimately, the chapter argues for the need to embed digital and non-digital tools and technologies within a renewed neighbourhood planning process to enable an appropriate, navigable and sustainable citizen-led policy tool where modes of participation can link directly to policy outcomes allowing citizens to shape places.

7.1 Enacting Neighbourhood Planning: Opportunities and Challenges

Neighbourhood planning was intended to be a light touch process (Burton, 2014) when originally formulated through the Localism Act 2011. However, this research alongside other academic literature has shown a complex, burdensome process (Parker *et al.*, 2014; Parker and Salter, 2017; Place Studio, 2017). Furthermore, Chapter 2 highlighted the ways in which HCI research is increasingly focused on democratic participation within placemaking and planning contexts (DiSalvo *et al.*, 2008; Chen *et al.*, 2012; Maskell *et al.*, 2018; Puussaar *et al.*, 2018), however such technology still struggles to affect policymaking directly (Moss and Coleman, 2014; Lundman, 2016). The fieldwork in this thesis was able to capture the rich qualitative experiences of citizens and planners involved in neighbourhood planning as a way to highlight the challenges faced in citizens' shaping places. Here, I provide a brief summary of some of the opportunities and challenges from this research related to both the policy context and technology.

There were a number of positive elements identified through this research relating to the neighbourhood planning process and there was enthusiasm from participants regarding the use and potential for technology to support citizen engagement in shaping places. Firstly, there was an improved relationship with the LPA, whereby communication was enhanced and there was a development of mutual respect. Although issues still occurred within that relationship, as shown in Chapter 5, there was still an improvement in communication that did allow all parties to better understand the aims of one another and value the different experiences and expertise.

In addition to this, the impact of citizens being able to have a direct and meaningful voice in decisions and policy led to greater citizen engagement and the ability to reach out to the wider community. Within this, there was also a keenness to embrace new methodologies to reach out and extend engagement beyond the already engaged. Again, this was not without its

challenges as will be explored later in the chapter, but there was an empowerment of citizens that occurred which enabled community capacity and planning knowledge to be developed. These elements have both been highlighted by academic literature (Sagoe, 2016; Bradley and Sparling, 2017) and has recently been acknowledged in the government's Planning for the Future White Paper (MHCLG, 2020b). Building relationships in this way, through the neighbourhood planning process, has facilitated the building of new forms of knowledge and engagement (Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2017) and delivered social value and impact (Kaszynska, Parkinson and Fox, 2012). Such new knowledge and engagement was also demonstrated through the participatory media research (Chapter 4) which supported citizen storytelling and situated, everyday participation, and participants were enthusiastic about new interactive and creative methodologies to facilitate this. It was able to open up the neighbourhood planning process to be more inclusive and to take account of a deeper set of narratives (Sandercock, 2010a; Bhimani *et al.*, 2012; Frohlich *et al.*, 2012; Green *et al.*, 2015). The participatory media research further built new knowledge and engagement by serving to reveal missing stories and highlighting the need to broaden participation. In addition, the co-design workshops (Chapter 6) produced a range of socio-technical designs for engagement which further evidences the enthusiasm for such approaches. The positive aspects, here, are supported by the idea that the process of shaping places and plan-making can be more important than the final product (Healey, 1997).

Finally, leading from the positive relationship building between planners and the wider community, there was a sense that a neighbourhood plan was able to develop policies that truly reflected the needs of the community and were able to achieve positive place-shaping outcomes for the local area, something which research has begun to evidence (Bradley and Sparling, 2017). This not only relates to formal planning policy but also to the development of community actions that embraces a holistic concept of placemaking.

Despite the many positive aspects, the challenges citizens faced were far more prominent, highlighting the complexity of the process, the need for more support and the challenges of incorporating technology. The findings presented in Chapter 5 particularly highlight the issues of access to the neighbourhood planning process; the unknown trade-offs made when demarcating geographical community boundaries; developing and maintaining relationships with a wide range of stakeholders; engaging communities inclusively; understanding, interpreting and using evidence when writing viable policy statements; and the transitioning of ownership of the plan. Within this, a wide range of opportunities were identified for digital technology to support citizen engagement with the policy process in ways which could mitigate some of these challenges. Many of the issues such as the lack of communication between neighbourhood planning groups, the need for more interactive modes of participation, or the difficulties in accessing, understanding and using evidence, to name a few, could all be supported through the use of digital tools. Technology has been shown to disrupt and renew processes by reducing the information deficit between experts and citizens (Yang and Zhiyong Lan, 2010) and the use of technology in neighbourhood planning could support citizens to take on the role of citizen-planner to shape places.

A further challenge, however, is the complexity of incorporating new mechanisms of support within an already complex process, particularly when such support is in the form of digital tools which are seen to be complex in themselves – all shown through the use of Bootlegger in Chapter 4. Furthermore, through Chapter 6, the challenge of incorporating new digital tools was further evidenced given the continuing reliance on traditional engagement methods, and the lack of skills and knowledge to both develop engagement activities and configure and use digital tools. It was felt that embedding such tools into the policy process would be an important approach as the use of the participatory media tool in Chapter 4 served to highlight that adding novel technology to an already-complex process did not allow technology to support the policymaking process holistically (Nam and Pardo, 2011).

Overall, this research has shown the way in which neighbourhood planning is enacted by citizens and has highlighted the opportunities and challenges as a starting point to consider the need for greater support. Despite the huge range of challenges faced, it is important that the positive aspects are recognised and, through any re-design, continue to be enhanced. Furthermore, the need for technological tools to support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning has also been evidenced and highlighted, with citizens and planners eager to incorporate new modes of participation. The research, however, has also shown the ways in which technology can fail to embed within contexts and the implications of this highlight that the design and configuration of socio-technical tools is important. In the next section, I move to outline two larger structural issues with the foundation of neighbourhood planning before moving to consider the approach to re-designing the process and designing technology.

7.2 Foundational Challenges of the Neighbourhood Planning Process

Further analysis of the research in this thesis, alongside academic literature, provides an overarching view of the neighbourhood planning policy process that highlights the ways in which enacting the process is influenced by the structure of the process itself. In this section, I identify two further structural challenges that could contribute to the issues faced by citizens in enacting the neighbourhood planning process. I first discuss the replication of professional planning policy processes in neighbourhood planning, then move to consider the inequalities designed into the foundation of the legislation and regulations, all of which serve to continually reproduce exclusive practices. Through this, I further highlight the need to consider the role of design in renewing the neighbourhood planning process and in designing new forms of digital and non-digital modes of participation to support citizens to shape places.

7.2.1 A Replicated Process?

Here, I argue the similarity between planning policy processes enacted by planning professionals, and the neighbourhood planning process shows a

replication of existing professional practices that are not suitable for a citizen-led process. This research has highlighted a wide range of challenges faced in enacting neighbourhood planning such as the reliance on traditional engagement methods, a reliance and privileging of technical evidence collected by experts, and complexity of the process itself. Many of the issues described map directly to professionalised policy processes that have long been criticised for these issues (Davoudi, 2006; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). There are many direct examples from this research, including the task of creating a vision (see 5.2.6) during the plan-making process whereby groups had little understanding of why it was necessary, its purpose and how to go about it, resulting in a lengthy task which citizens felt had little benefit to them. Furthermore, the lack of interactive digital tools to engage citizens furthers the notion of a replicated process in which citizens often recognise the need for wider engagement but continue to implement the existing LPA practices of traditional methodologies.

The replication of such professionalised planning policy processes sees citizens and their advisors mirroring past planning efforts as something which is deemed legitimate and provides a level of reassurance in a complex process. Without formal support in the early days of neighbourhood planning, citizens turned to what Rose (1999) terms learned behaviours whereby the accepted practices of local government policymaking was deemed the legitimate process to follow to shape places. Further to this, the institutional norms and politics within local government further compound the move to adopt existing practices and the legislation set the scope enough to "limit the imagineering of alternatives" (Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2015, p. 521; Buuren *et al.*, 2020; Peters, 2020).

To further demonstrate the replicated practices, an example from this research is the dominance of scientific and technical evidence in supporting policy development. The findings in Chapter 5 highlight the debate regarding community opinions as a form of evidence: *"what we kept getting told was we had to gather evidence, then you'd gather it and they'd go 'well that's just someone's opinion'"* (C5). As explored in Chapter 2, the foundation

of planning relies on the privileging of scientific and technical evidence with misconceptions that such an approach is objective and value-neutral with technology continuing to strengthen this notion (Davoudi, 2006; Petts and Brooks, 2006; Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015). Through the learned behaviours and mirroring of existing policy processes, neighbourhood planning has also adopted this dominant approach to evidence-based policymaking and, even when citizens questioned this, planning officers encouraged the continuation of the norms.

The replication of such professionalised planning policy processes results in citizens prescribing to such approaches if they wish to engage in shaping places, and this is one reason we see a complex, unnavigable process for neighbourhood planning. In addition, the unwillingness of planners to change their cultures, practices and language to meet citizens' needs and create more inclusive working environments, is also key to the challenges faced within the process. With specific issues toward the end of the neighbourhood planning process of writing policy and facing an independent examination, questions of the robust nature of plans come into play with the potential to undermine the community's plan (Parker, K. Salter and Hickman, 2016). Such formalised and professionalised processes that rely on quasi-legal foundations, limit the opportunity for citizens to become involved in shaping places in a way which is accessible and meaningful within their everyday lives. Without specific attention paid to the ways in which design can contribute to the challenges faced, the process, policy and technology will continue to (re)produce these same issues. Therefore, I argue that there is a need for a re-designed neighbourhood planning process that accounts for the citizen-led nature of the policy, but that design principles to create this could also support the design of new modes of digital and non-digital support and participation.

7.2.2 Designing Inequality into the Foundations

With over 2700 communities taking part in neighbourhood planning across England, there is considerable interest in citizen-led plan-making, however, there is a large disparity between areas that are and are not taking part. In Chapter 2 the literature highlighted that communities with less

resources and social capital, in more deprived areas are less likely to undertake a neighbourhood plan (Crabtree and Mackay, 2013; Parker, 2017). Here, I argue that many inequalities are designed into the legislation and regulations of neighbourhood planning which constantly reproduce the disparities and further evidence the need for a re-designed process.

Previous research has shown inequalities to exist in many and varying ways such as the disparity between take-up in northern and southern regions, rural and urban communities, wealthier and poorer neighbourhoods, and areas of higher and lower social capital (Crabtree and Mackay, 2013; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015a; Wills, 2016). In addition, demographic statistics also show that 97.6% of the population of rural areas are White ethnic groups with only 45% under the age of 45 (Office for National Statistics, 2018). The main phases of research in this thesis are all carried out with rural neighbourhood planning areas, with the exception of Kingston Park, and all citizens were active members of their community and would fit the description of the 'usual suspects'. This is partly due to the self-selecting nature of participants, however, the limited number of urban and deprived areas conducting a neighbourhood plan in the North East also means their experiences are not counted (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). It is also important to note that the failed case study outlined in Chapter 3 and available in full in Appendix B further highlights the issue of inequalities. The failed case study represents an urban and deprived neighbourhood within the top 10% most deprived areas in the country (MHCLG, 2019b) and, even with facilitator support through a government education programme, the citizens did not take forward a neighbourhood plan. Considering the failing of this case study, alongside the complexity described in Chapter 5 and the academic literature, the inequalities faced are demonstrated and there is a need for change to support more urban and deprived neighbourhoods to take up the opportunity.

The inequalities described above also move beyond binary examples of rural versus urban, for example, to consider the complex web of intersecting factors that could advantage or disadvantage a community. The skill sets, resource levels, social capital and homogeneity of citizens

involved as well as the resources, buy-in and approaches of local authority support, amongst many other factors, all play a part in producing and compounding neighbourhood planning as an exclusive process. To help illuminate this concept and consider the manifestation of multiple disadvantages, it is helpful to draw on intersectional feminist theory – a concept which considers the interlocking systems that create both structural privileges and structural oppressions by thinking not of one element of identity, but of the many identities we have as well as "relationality, social context, power relations, complexity, social justice and inequalities" (Hopkins, 2019, p. 937). Intersectional feminism considers how those at the margins are affected by interlocking issues and systems that can disadvantage and, in the context of this research, it enables us to consider the multiple factors that contribute to the inequalities in neighbourhood planning.

A way in which we can consider the dimensions of identity across different domains is through the Matrix of Domination, a tool which examines the power held in the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal domains (Collins, 2002). In Figure 35 a basic analysis of neighbourhood planning shows the ways in which inequalities between rural and urban areas are embedded into legislation, upheld by the institutions that administer legislation, compounded by the dominant narratives within cultural spheres, and the affect that this can have at an interpersonal level. The inequalities created are consistently reproduced and reinforced allowing urban areas with more diverse communities to be left behind in planning policy.

The foundation of neighbourhood planning through the design of the legislation has embedded inequalities into the process. Intersectional feminism provides a lens by which to consider the multiple interlocking characteristics that can benefit or disadvantage a community in their ability to undertake a neighbourhood plan. It must be noted, however, that this thesis was not conducted with intersectionality as a primary focus and research conducted in this way would have produced different results. The concept of intersectionality provides a useful analytical tool to understand

Figure 35: The Matrix of Domination to neighbourhood planning inequalities

Structural *Laws and policies*	Disciplinary *Administers/enforces laws and policies*
▪ Legislation creates a more complex process for urban forums to become established compared to rural, parished areas. ▪ Rural parished areas have existing settlement boundaries and organisations which are recognised officially in the legislation. ▪ Limited resources due to austerity measures have limited the ability of local authorities to support neighbourhood planning groups.	▪ Local authorities administer and uphold the system by managing neighbourhood planning applications. ▪ The level of support given by local authorities can further support or limit the opportunities of a community to undertake a neighbourhood plan. ▪ Funding given to neighbourhood plans fails to fully recognise the different needs of communities and mostly provides the same level of funding to all.
Hegemonic *Circulation through media*	**Interpersonal** *Individual experiences*
▪ Neighbourhood planning viewed in a positive light by national government and used as a success story for participation without recognising the wider issues. ▪ The narrative outside academia often does not recognise the inequalities and impact on different communities. ▪ Sharing negative experiences is used as a tool to campaign against neighbourhood planning rather to improve the processes.	▪ Defining a community by rules set in legislation can conflict with citizen and community identity. ▪ Citizens are given the mandate to create policy in a way which should affirm their experiences, however, the privileging of other forms of knowledge often denies this opportunity. ▪ Complexity of the process undermines the positive outcomes that can benefit citizens and communities.

multiple disadvantages and how structural oppressions through neighbourhood planning legislation can systematically disadvantaged communities. Therefore, this adds to the evidence of the need to re-design neighbourhood planning to create an equitable process that provides opportunities to all citizens and communities.

7.2.3 Summary: The Need for Change

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how digital and non-digital tools and interventions can be designed to better support citizens to shape places through the example of neighbourhood planning. By understanding how the process is enacted by citizens to identify opportunities and challenges, and further analysing this to identify root causes of the issues presented, this research has identified that there are fundamental concerns regarding neighbourhood planning as a citizen-led policy process. The challenges faced in undertaking a neighbourhood plan, the foundational issues of a replicated professionalised process, and the inequalities embedded into legislation highlight the need for change. Therefore, there is a need to consider the role of design in renewing the neighbourhood planning process and in designing new forms of digital and non-digital support.

The flaws in the neighbourhood planning process have been highlighted to varying extents through previous research (Brookfield, 2017; Parker and Salter, 2017; Parker and Wargent, 2017; Place Studio, 2017a etc.) however, this study sought to gather in-depth qualitative data that further explores the issues from a perspective which centres citizens' experiences. Continuing with the current neighbourhood planning process, including the reliance on exclusive engagement approaches, will continue to produce the same inequalities and it could be argued that retrofitting the process to improve it does little to tackle the issues embedded into its structures (Costanza-Chock, 2020). The continuing promotion of neighbourhood planning as positive in engaging communities (MHCLG, 2020) means the basis for policy and resource allocation is made through those areas that are counted (rural) and which are also those which respond to traditional engagement methods. However, this does little to acknowledge the areas not included (urban), which are also those usually excluded through

traditional engagement, and, thus, not counted (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). It is important, therefore, to recognise and acknowledge the wider experiences of communities that are excluded from such processes without the requirement for marginalised areas to continually prove their disadvantage when clear evidence has shown the need for change. As *Data Feminism* (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020) shows, "data alone do not always lead to change especially when that change also requires dominant groups to share their resources and their power" (p. 72).

7.3 Policy and Technology Design Principles

There is a need to renew and re-design the complex neighbourhood planning process and design new modes of support through digital and non-digital tools. Such design tasks would need to ensure the process was inclusive of all citizens and communities, however, to ensure this, it is important the re-design of the policy process and the design of new support mechanisms is approached in a way which promotes such values to avoid reproducing the same disadvantage we see today.

In this section, I put forward two principles to support the (re)design of policy and technology, beginning with the need for cross-disciplinary design thinking and moving to consider inclusive design methodologies.

7.3.1 Cross-Disciplinary Design Thinking

The concept of design thinking dates back to the 1960s and emerged within the field of design, engineering and computer science. Design thinking can be thought of as a way to manipulate future systems and processes using a range of knowledges and can bring together and integrate learning from different fields (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Hermus, van Buuren and Bekkers, 2020). More recently, there has been a move to adopt design thinking within public policy which has highlighted new ways to create policy processes in a wide range of disciplines such as politics, data science and HCI (e.g. Dow, Comber and Vines, 2018; Lewis, McGann and Blomkamp, 2020; Romme and Meijer, 2020 and many more). Here, I propose bringing expertise from urban planning and HCI to develop new modes of policymaking and technology that are "more responsive to the needs of

those who work with them" (Hermus, van Buuren and Bekkers, 2020, p. 22).

Design thinking is said to be able to address complex or 'wicked' problems, whilst fostering creativity, supporting alternative future imaginings and providing a way to empathise with a variety of stakeholders and their issues, all through incorporating "imagination, creativity and playfulness" (Buuren *et al.*, 2020; Hermus, van Buuren and Bekkers, 2020; Lewis, McGann and Blomkamp, 2020, p. 124). Viewing design as a way to both create policy process and technology would see design as "world-making" where "many worlds fit" and will move away from the current approach that continues to reproduce inequalities and challenges (Escobar, 2018, p. 21).

It is important to recognise that there are other forms of design, such as waterfall methodologies, soft systems approaches or research through design, which could be used to support the development of policy processes and technology. As previously mentioned (see Chapter 3), some of these approaches come with prescriptive values that would make it hard to truly centre the citizens' experiences. Furthermore, approaches such as waterfall design could indeed centre citizens, however they do not allow for true iteration – only refinement at later stages of implementation – and because of this, they do not have room for empathy and ideation in the same way.

Thinking specifically about design thinking in policymaking, critiques have suggested that designers take a solution-focused approach to accounting for citizen's needs and that this abductive approach knowledge creation is inferior to more scientific ways of knowing (Hermus, van Buuren and Bekkers, 2020). However, in recent years, particularly in HCI, new approaches to design methodologies have emerged to counteract the solutionist focus, including the digital civics agenda, data feminism and design justice. Considering the re-designing of neighbourhood planning and designing new modes of support within that, taking a design thinking approach would see citizens and planners move toward a new role as

designers (Buuren *et al.*, 2020). In this sense, the cross-disciplinary research in this thesis has shown that bringing together multiple fields can result in learning for all, including sharing perspectives and creating knowledge.

The literature presented in Chapter 2 showed the increasing body of work in HCI that engages with technology in civic life and for democratic purposes (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2016; Johnson *et al.*, 2016; Maskell *et al.*, 2018; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018; Puussaar *et al.*, 2018 etc.), and scholars have already suggested the HCI community should take an interest in policymaking more directly (Lazar *et al.*, 2015). Drawing on the skills in both communities – planners and communities' knowledge of policy process and HCI researchers' knowledge of design methods and technology – could lead to cross-disciplinary design thinking that can create a policy process fit for purpose as well as embedding technological tools to further support it. In this sense, policy experts do not need to become designers just as planners and citizens do not need to design technology in a silo, but all stakeholders can work collaboratively to design both policy processes and the technology embedded within it. Working across disciplines and centring the needs of citizens could successfully challenge the dominant solutionist and extractive methods to "approaches that produce community ownership, profit, credit, and visibility" (Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 90).

Further to this, Chapter 2 also discussed the deeply embedded notion in the planning discipline of the superiority of technical evidence in policy processes in a way which does not recognise the political nature of data or policy (Davoudi, 2006). This notion was evidenced in Chapter 5 where neighbourhood planning groups reported that planning officers had advised the need for evidence that was not *"just someone's opinion"* (C5). Furthermore, the ways in which the use of participatory media in Chapter 4 was able to prioritise the knowledge of citizens and legitimise the varied views of participants, suggests the ways in which technology could be used to disrupt such embedded notions. Turning to the field of HCI, there is a rapidly growing community of researchers and practitioners that strongly recognise the politics embedded within design, whether that be related to

technology, place, policy, systems or processes (Costanza-Chock, 2020; D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). Working together across disciplines to approach the re-design of neighbourhood planning would enable those creating and enacting policy processes to be more aware of the politics and the societal needs (Lewis, McGann and Blomkamp, 2020). In addition, scholars have also argued that the design of policy processes should be viewed as forever incomplete, encouraging continuous reflection on the democratic processes and recalibration to the changing nature of society (Holmes, 2011). In neighbourhood planning this would recognise the changing politics of national government as well as the changes to the ways in which planning operates, all of which affect the planning and development of communities, something which is particularly important with the recent proposed changes to the planning system (MHCLG, 2020).

7.3.2 Inclusive Design

To be able to negate the challenges already identified within the neighbourhood planning process and in the use of methods to support and engage citizens in it, the new design of policy and technology must take an inclusive approach. This would avoid reproducing the same issues that exclude and marginalise communities. However, it is important to consider what it means to design policy and technology inclusively and, here, I explore this through a feminist lens.

To understand inclusive design, first it is vital to explore the ways in which design is currently enacted and the dominant agenda at play. In many cases, design, in the broadest sense, is done through universalist principles whereby systems, processes, technologies and other artefacts are thought to be useable by everyone. However, such an approach fails to recognise design as a political process in which universalist principles centre the dominant agenda therefore erasing the voice of marginalised communities that are often the most disadvantaged (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Policy processes designed and enacted from this standpoint will account for the dominant voice and assumptions are made about those who fall outside this category (Peters, 2020). Considering neighbourhood planning through this lens, universalist design principles created the process we currently see,

and which does not account for marginalised communities. The policy process leans toward the dominant agenda in planning of expert-driven evidence-based policy which centres the needs of the 'usual suspects'. This has been evidenced throughout the research in this thesis, particularly with Chapter 5 detailing the complexity of neighbourhood planning as experienced by citizens, along with the myriad of other findings regarding the failed case study in Chapter 3 and the continuation of poor engagement practices shown in Chapter 6.

Further to this, it is important to note, that such dominant design decisions are often not intentional and do not seek to systematically exclude, but the very nature of the dominant agenda embeds inequalities and assumptions that have consequences which are often not thought of (Costanza-Chock, 2020). As *Data Feminism* (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020) notes:

> *"some groups experience unearned advantages – because various systems have been designed by people like them and work for people like them – and other groups experience systematic disadvantages – because those same systems were not designed by them or with people like them in mind*" (p. 24)

Specifically within policy design, the assumptions made about marginalised communities and their needs are based on an "excessively simplistic understanding" where the policy outcomes will be heavily influenced by the culture within which it is embedded (Peters, 2020, p. 133). Furthermore, such approaches also result in a solutionist focus in technology design where there is a lack of accountability or connection to communities, and it is disconnected from real-world needs, assuming a tech-centric focus that prioritises novelty (McCann, 2015; O'Neil, 2016; Costanza-Chock, 2020; Howlett, 2020). Within neighbourhood planning, it may not have been the intention of those creating the policy process, but unintended consequence is the challenging, complex and exclusive process. As *Design Justice* (Costanza-Chock, 2020) notes: "it's a call for us to heed the growing critiques of the ways that design (of images, objects, software, algorithms, sociotechnical systems, the built environment, indeed, everything we make) too often contributes to the reproduction of systemic oppression" (p. xvi).

Furthermore, research carried out with practitioners regarding technology design revealed that assuming technology will solve issues is a recipe for failure and a lack of recognition of non-digital solutions can be detrimental (Constanza-Chock *et al.*, 2018). This was partly evidenced through the findings in Chapter 4, with the deployment of Bootlegger as a participatory tool, where it was not designed for the specific context and the experimental deployment did not link with the wider practices and processes of neighbourhood planning. In addition, the co-design workshops found, when designing technological approaches to engagement, that citizens took a solutionist focus to digital tools being able to simply solve problems, e.g. *"anything online would be very accessible"* (P2) and that digital would be *"good for young people"* (P6). This issue becomes magnified within the current urban planning context whereby the Property Technology sector have been hailed as the way to provide technological solutions to ill-defined problems with no connections to communities (Chapman, Tait and Inch, 2020).

Thus, ensuring approaches to the design of policy and technology centre on inclusive practices that are able to account for the context and needs of citizens, learning from their lived experiences and designing tools *with* them is essential. In moving forward with inclusive design, it is first important to recognise the act of design in all its many forms and, in this case, within the policy and technology arena, as too often such work is not acknowledged as forms of design. Rather than see policy processes as a separate entity, their design and the act of designing must be recognised to be able to avoid the unintended consequences from the political nature of design decisions, and the design of technology and new modes of support should be embedded within that. To do this, design must begin from a place of empathy rather than a scientific "dispassionate rationality" where people are centred in a way which accounts for "needs, contexts, behaviours and emotions" (Buuren *et al.*, 2020, p. 8). This could support policy and technology design to become "tools for liberation" rather than simply reproducing existing inequalities (Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 6).

Next, it is essential that those affected by the design of policy and new modes of digital and non-digital support, are themselves involved in the design. As shown in Chapter 2, it has long been accepted that engaging citizens in decision-making provides and delivers more appropriate, positive outcomes (Twitchen and Adams, 2011). This becomes increasingly important when those most affected by design decisions usually have the least influence on how those decisions are made (Costanza-Chock, 2020). In the case of neighbourhood planning, those affected and excluded such as urban, poorer, under-resourced communities were not involved in the universalist design of the neighbourhood planning process and were often not engaged through the traditional modes of engagement, resulting in the existing inequalities. Even considering those that *are* able to access neighbourhood planning as a policy tool, the dominant professionalised process still results in huge challenges in enacting it as citizens rather than planning professionals.

It is important to note, as discussed earlier, that the main phases of this research only engaged with one urban forum, but the failed case study represents an urban and deprived community (see Appendix B). The absence of urban areas in neighbourhood planning, compared to rural, demonstrates the dominance and fits with the idea put forward by Data Feminism (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020) regarding the notion of what is counted and what is not counted. With this in mind, there is a need to work with more communities to capture their experiences and work with them to (re)design neighbourhood planning and new modes of digital and non-digital support, taking a justice-oriented approach to centre the voices of those marginalised (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

Finally, there are a range of frameworks and approaches that can support the design of policy and technology in this space, which works towards inclusivity. One such approach is *Design Justice* (Costanza-Chock, 2020) which urges the consideration of how advantages and disadvantages are distributed within a designed process, system, environment or artefact and uses a set of principles to carry out designing for justice (see Figure 36 for principles).

Figure 36: Design Justice principles

1. We use design to **sustain, heal and empower** our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.
2. **We center the voices of those who are directly impacted** by the outcomes of the design process.
3. We **prioritize design's impact on the community** over the intentions of the designer.
4. We view **change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process**, rather than as a point at the end of a process.
5. We see the role of the **designer as a facilitator rather than an expert**.
6. We believe that **everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience**, and that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring a design process.
7. We **share design knowledge and tools** with our communities
8. We work towards **sustainable, community-led and controlled** outcomes
9. We work towards **non-exploitative solutions** that reconnect us to the earth and to each other
10. Before seeking new design solutions, **we look for what is already working** at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices

Source: Design Justice Network (2016)

In addition, Data Feminism (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020) sets out an approach that can be used as a framework in itself, or used to structure other methodologies in a way which challenges, rather than reinforces, inequalities. This approach moves away from talking about ethics, bias, fairness and accountability as concepts which locate the source of problems in individuals to values such as justice, equity, co-liberation and reflexivity which acknowledge the structural nature of power and inequalities and moves to dismantle them. It is important to note that such methodologies for design must also look to those at the margins first, to see what and who is excluded (Bardzell and Bardzell, 2011).

It is important to reflect, here, on feminist approaches in this PhD and it is important to note that this PhD was not conducted through a feminist lens. The research intended to centre citizens' experiences from the outset and the exploration of citizen participation in policymaking processes was motivated by the underrepresentation of certain groups and demographics within society. As a result, a goal was always to improve the inclusivity of planning policy processes. However, as a researcher, I began to read about and engage with feminist literature late in the PhD journey. This meant I was unable to conduct the research through a feminist lens, but felt it important to show how the goals of this thesis – to find better modes of

support to engage citizens in policymaking – would be well-served through such a feminist design approach.

Applying inclusive design methodologies to the design of policy and new modes of digital and non-digital support within neighbourhood planning would serve to dismantle the current system which created the current inequalities and challenges, and would enable new inclusive practices. Here, I have identified three steps to inclusively designing within this context. First to recognise policy processes and support mechanisms, in the case of this thesis, in neighbourhood planning, as designed artefacts to be able to understand, examine and challenge the assumptions on which they were built and recognise the politics involved in decision-making. Second to involve communities in the (re)design process to ensure people are at the centre of design, particularly centring the marginalised and disadvantaged communities to account for their needs that are otherwise excluded and to avoid the reproduction of unequal processes. Finally, selecting appropriate design methodologies that can effectively centre citizens' needs and imbue such methods with the values needed to challenge the structures that create unequal conditions.

7.4 Enacting Design Principles in Neighbourhood Planning

Moving from the design principles which provides an approach to design for policy and new modes of digital and non-digital support, here I focus on the ways in which these principles could manifest within the context of neighbourhood planning. From the research in this thesis, I provide recommendations of how to enact the design principles, outlining the need for co-design, multiplicity and storytelling and, finally, considering the requirements for newly designed artefacts.

7.4.1 Co-Designing New Approaches

I propose the use of co-design as a methodology to centre the needs of citizens and enable them to work together with planners and HCI researchers as a way to 'build with, not for' communities (McCann, 2015).

Thus, this enacts both cross-disciplinary and inclusive design thinking practices.

Firstly, using co-design as a method moves away from the approach to designing policy and technology through extractive methods which sees 'experts' gather information and requirements from citizens and then produce a solution from their interpretation of those needs. Instead, co-design both enables a structured process that can support capacity building and recognise that communities often already have their own ideas and evidence in their everyday practices: "the tacit and experiential knowledge of community members is sure to produce ideas, approaches and innovations that no one else would be able to create" (Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 99). With this in mind, there is first a need to work alongside a range of citizens, particularly those who are marginalised, to understand their lived experience through a process which allows that to strengthen, support and extend existing community practices, policy processes and digital and non-digital tools. This would serve to rethink extractive design and research practices and replace them with inclusive co-design which centres the needs of citizens, amplifies marginalised voices and moves towards a 'solution' that is co-owned. It would also support planners to consider their practices and cultures in a way which can support the design of new artefacts, but which encourages a move to more equitable and inclusive ways of working together.

Secondly, co-designing the policy process and the modes of support within it allows for this to be done in a holistic way. This means the policy process and the digital and non-digital approaches to support are embedded together and co-designed with citizens, ensuring none of the elements are seen as an add-on to the process – something particularly important when designing digital tools within neighbourhood planning. This was evidenced through this research where the participatory media tool (Chapter 4) did not embed within the policy process and effect longer term policy decisions. This, coupled with the complexity of the neighbourhood planning process (see Chapter 5), highlights the difficulty in designing digital tools to add into the process, rather than embedding tools within the

wider context. Furthermore, within the HCI field, civic technology innovation often seeks to address isolated elements of policy processes without considering the wider context (Moss and Coleman, 2014). Therefore, it is important that the co-design of civic technology is also done within the co-design process, enabling tools to be sustainably embedded (Nam and Pardo, 2011).

Another role of co-design is to support citizens and others involved to consider the affordances and disaffordances of any digital or non-digital tools and how they impact different communities. In HCI, affordances are thought of as: "an object's properties that show the possible actions users can take with it, thereby suggesting how they may interact with that object. For instance, a button can look as if it needs to be turned or pushed" (Interaction Design Foundation, 2019). In the same way, disaffordances block or constrain action (Wittkower, 2016). Ensuring that the affordances and disaffordances are considered in the co-design process will allow for the recognition of both intentional and unintentional consequences that can often systematically affect and exclude marginalised communities (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Designing in this way will ensure a "deliberative and reasoned approach to design" (Buuren *et al.*, 2020, p. 10) that enables learning both in relation to digital and non-digital tools, and the wider community. In the context of neighbourhood planning, the co-design process would enable a range of citizens, designers and researchers to work together to consider affordances and disaffordances, something which requires a skillset that citizens, and many policy experts, do not have. Co-design would allow for communication amongst the range of stakeholders and enable the creation of a shared language to design together (Reed, 2013). In addition, without a specific attempt to consider affordances and disaffordances, the existing inequalities embedded within design practices and institutional frameworks will be reproduced within policy processes and the associated tools which would serve to reinforce inclusion and exclusion.

Finally, within the co-design process, a concerted effort to ensure that any 'solution' is a true reflection of what is needed and does not follow a

dominant or tech-centric approach is necessary. With a wide range of technology already in existence, some of which is almost ubiquitous, it is important to ensure co-design processes do not reinvent the wheel and create technology for novelty rather than real world need. This would avoid wasted resources and the design of tools which are inappropriate for the context and which will not be sustainable long-term. To highlight this, the co-design workshops in Chapter 6 highlighted the lack of knowledge citizens and planners held about the range of technology and a lack of skills to be able to use such tools. Within these workshops, participants often reverted to familiar technology such as social media or the camera app on mobile phones, rather than more complex technology such as augmented reality or data visualisation tools – this was despite some of the more complex tools being particularly useful in supporting tasks within the neighbourhood planning process. It is, therefore, important to consider 'off-the-shelf' technology as part of the co-design process to think about ways in which existing tools can be re-designed, re-configured or appropriated for the needs of citizens and to consider non-digital tools as well. Off-the-shelf tools could refer to well-known social media platforms to Google Maps, Open Street Map or messaging tools such as WhatsApp. Research has shown that such an approach can be beneficial in engaging citizens in large-scale projects (Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2019) and the co-design process must account for this.

7.4.2 Multiplicity and Storytelling

Another way in which the principles of cross-disciplinary design thinking, and inclusive design could be enacted, is through the enabling of multiplicity and storytelling within policy processes which could be captured through digital and non-digital tools. This would allow citizens' lived experiences to be included within policymaking, ensuring such knowledge becomes a central tenet of evidence and enabling this through new modes of participation.

As explored in Chapter 2, and confirmed through findings in Chapters 4-6, current approaches to policymaking both privilege scientific and technical evidence and do so as part of a linear cause and effect policy model (Petts

and Brooks, 2006; Sayer, 2020). This type of approach, as Davoudi (2006) describes it, sees policymaking as a rational process where evidence is generated through science in an apolitical and value-free approach. However, we know that evidence and the design of policy processes simply provide a "façade of objectivity" which allows those making decisions to weigh up competing evidence and decide what should be counted (Wesselink, Colebatch and Pearce, 2014; Sayer, 2020, p. 243). This is particularly true within the quasi-legal planning system which enables decision makers to debate evidence in a way which is opaque and ambiguous (Booth, 2016). Furthermore, the reliance on traditional engagement methods and exclusive engagement practices limits the ways in which citizens' knowledge can be collected, let alone incorporated, within policy processes. In neighbourhood planning, the linear model of policymaking and the limited nature of citizen engagement results in a process which is too complex for its citizen-led purpose and does little to account for lived experiences in the same way other professionalised planning policy does. Instead of a renewed neighbourhood planning process reproducing such an approach, there is a need to embed multiplicity and storytelling into neighbourhood planning to allow for multiple knowledge forms and multiple experiences to be accounted for and collected through new, innovative and creative modes of participation.

To do so, storytelling must first be incorporated as a mode of participation in policymaking, something which has been called upon for decades (Forester, 1989; Throgmorton, 2003). Such a method of engagement would enable a more inclusive approach whereby citizens can express their experiences through narratives that can "imagine the ultimately unrepresentable" (Forester, 1989; Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003; Sandercock, 2010a, p. 18) and provide an expanded language of planning (Sandercock, 2010a). In addition, incorporating stories recognises there is no "neat distinction between questions of fact and value" that can produce any evidence base that could not be questioned (Latour and Woolgar, 2013; Sayer, 2020, p. 242). Not only did the findings in Chapter 4 highlight that storytelling was able to make invisible experiences visible and open a new

discursive arena, it enabled citizens to bond together through the multiplicity of experiences, recognising others' stories as 'truth' alongside their own. In addition, despite the complexity of the participatory media tool used within the research, the use of technology to capture such stories and experiences was positive. Enabling stories to be valued in planning policy processes would be to learn from the academic thought already present on the issue and it would involve a recognition beyond space being a container for human life to one which recognises stories, feelings, multiplicity, imagination and a range of understandings and meanings (Massey, 2005). Practically, this could mean moving away from the definition of a 'planning issue' to something which incorporates place and placemaking more broadly, and using creative participation methods to capture this. With the ambiguous nature of what constitutes evidence in the planning system, there could be room to enable broader placemaking to be taken into account in the quasi-legal system through the debates by decision makers. However, it must be recognised that this would require a change in planning cultures and a move away from the established norms, some of which have been recorded in case law.

Secondly, accounting for multiplicity and stories would also prompt a move away from a linear policy process to one which can take account of local contexts and integrate a plurality of voices and knowledge forms. As discussed in Chapter 2, the embedded notion in planning which sees space as a container for human life results in a linear cause and effect approach whereby 'truth' is sought to predict the best policy and outcome (Graham and Healey, 1999; Sayer, 2020). However, there is a rich literature exploring the socially constructed and political nature of evidence which has already suggested that such linear and direct searches for 'truth' are flawed (Shields, 1996; Sanderson, 2002; Davoudi, 2006; Sayer, 2020). Within neighbourhood planning, moving away from a linear model could involve learning from the existing theories, frameworks and examples that allow for plurality (Sandercock, 2010b) and recognising that incorporating multiple forms of knowledge can result in pluralistic thinking in planning (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008; Sandercock, 2010a). More practically, this

could involve policy seeking to address local issues in a way which recognises the changing nature of time and space and so can provide possibilities for future action on an issue as opposed to one set course of action. Law and Singleton (2014) propose a similar approach and suggest this should be a "rule in the mildest possible form" which "reflects and respects the fact that the world is irreducibly multiple and irreducibly distributed" (p. 392).

Furthermore, when considering the practical implications of multiplicity and storytelling in policymaking, it is important to remember that the positionality of knowledge should be considered. Evidence, in whatever form, both scientific and lived experience, all come from a position within the world and being able to recognise and account for this can result in "more complete knowledge" (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, p. 83). When forms of evidence and knowledge are simply deemed as 'truth', they are presented in what Haraway terms 'the God trick' where you see "everything from nowhere", a position that is impossible to hold (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). Considering the re-design of neighbourhood planning, it is important recognise that partiality must be a factor in the policy process if we are to incorporate multiple forms of knowledge. In this sense, digital modes of creative participation could support the notion of partial knowledge, with the participatory media tool in this research able to allow for multiple citizens to capture video in the same place at the same time, each which represents a different *partial* story. This is particularly important when considering the narrative framing of policy can have "influence on the material consequences of policy" (Canary and Taylor, 2020, p. 687). In this sense, the (re)design of neighbourhood planning and digital and non-digital modes of support and participation would ensure multiple knowledge sources, each which provides a partial perspective, and could enable the process to account for the lived experience of multi-faceted lives and to be "legitimate policy" (Massey, 2005; Buuren *et al.*, 2020, p. 7).

Finally, within multiplicity and storytelling, a focus on diversity is important in so far as recognising that without a diverse range of citizens

involved, little changes (Canary and Taylor, 2020). Involving a diversity of citizens, planners, designers and domain experts within the (re)design of policy and modes of support and participation would enable many partial perspectives to provide multiple stories within this space. This diversity should also ensure marginalised groups are specifically involved to avoid reproducing conditions which work against gathering a diverse range of partial viewpoints. This is particularly important as we already know that the imagined objectivity of policymakers is heavily influenced by the institutions they are part of (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). Ensuring a wide range of citizens are involved would enable the "breadth of issues, values, perspectives, and people involved" (Canary and Taylor, 2020, p. 686) to be accounted for. As Chapters 4 and 6 have shown through their findings on the design and use of technology, such methods could support the inclusion of diverse groups to promote multiplicity and plurality in the policy process (Canary and Taylor, 2020).

7.4.3 Design Requirements

The final way in which principles can be enacted within the neighbourhood planning space, is to ensure that the affordances required during the (re)design of policy and modes of support are accounted for. Further to considering the affordances and disaffordances of policies, technologies, processes and systems, this research suggests specific characteristics that could be the basis of future designs.

Firstly, this research evidenced the need for simple and easy to navigate/use policy processes and technology. In Chapter 4, the use of Bootlegger as a participatory media tool was seen to be too complex for citizens, particularly with the challenge of setting up the film shoot through the central web platform. Furthermore, the design of the user interface within the app was also seen to be too complex. In Chapter 5, the complexity of the process was clearly articulated by citizens raising a number of challenges in enacting neighbourhood planning. In addition, the co-design workshops reported in Chapter 6 also highlighted the limited knowledge and skills held by neighbourhood planning groups in the use of technology. Therefore, it is important that future citizen-led policy

processes account for the needs of citizens and are designed in a way which meet their needs rather than attempting to make citizens into citizen-planners. In addition, it is also important that any technological tools are designed in a way which has clear, engaging and navigable user interfaces which could embed support for digital literacy and fluency into its design (Afzalan and Muller, 2018). This simplicity and ease of use extends to the holistic policy process including the new, embedded digital and non-digital modes of support. Even with a re-designed neighbourhood planning process, key planning tasks will exist which require support and ensuring that, within the wider policy process, simplicity and ease of use carried across multiple modes of support, tools and how they interact with one another throughout. It is important to note, however, that suggestions of simplicity and easy to use may support inclusive practices to engage a diverse range of citizens, but increasing such diversity does not negate other issues such as the digital divide and issues of digital literacy in marginalised communities (Brabham, 2009; Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015).

Secondly, the modes of digital and non-digital support designed within the policy context must be designed for sustainable interactions within the community, ensuring tools are flexible and adaptable. In addition, where appropriate, such tools should be managed and maintained by the citizens that will use them, however, it is important to recognise the significant challenges present in this suggestion. The use of Bootlegger as a participatory media tool in Chapter 4 highlighted the need for significant support and facilitation to be able to use the technology and encourage the continued adoption, however, this results in tools which are not sustainable beyond the life of the project or the researcher's role within the community. In many cases open source technology provides a way to hand over tools to citizens whereby they are able to develop and adapt them with access to the source code. However, this requires significant technological skills to be able to use, implement and adapt the tools which citizens and planners do not have. To account for sustainability and the opportunity for citizens to continue using tools beyond the life of research

projects, recognises the findings throughout the thesis which suggests wider community development practices that provide communities with specific support, not necessarily from a planning expert, would be useful. Furthermore, there is a broader need within HCI to enable citizens to use existing open source tools by providing new approaches to accessible documentation, creating toolkits, and developing models for ongoing support, something which could be further developed from the *'gE.CO toolbox'* which sets out to allow communities to access free technologies (Open Lab, 2021). Finally, another approach to ensuring sustainability is to co-design tools with longevity in mind, an approach which can support the strong social infrastructure (Gordon and Mugar, 2018). A range of scholars, through different approaches, have shown that technology should be "cheap, simple to maintain and repair, small-scale" and focused on local contexts that allow for adaptation (Pursell, 1993; Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 111).

Finally, digital and non-digital tools should be designed to encourage creativity and imagination as a way to elicit the rich experiences of place that can inform and support policy processes. Although the use of the technological tool in Chapter 4 was seen as too complex, the process of using participatory media as a creative method of storytelling was well-received, encouraging the democratisation of stakeholder voices, highlighting missing stories and introducing citizens to the need for a multiplicity of experiences. Digital and non-digital tools should be designed and used in a way which encourages creativity to elicit stories that can be debated and elaborated by citizens. Such tools can provoke the imaginations of citizens and encourage them to communicate in more animated and interesting ways that capture emotion and lived experience, something which traditional participatory processes fail to do. Civic technology to embrace creativity should focus on a wide range of creative approaches using a variety of technologies (e.g. Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). In this sense, digital modes of participation should not seek to simply digitise traditional methods, but overall, new approaches to digital

and non-digital tools should support creative and imaginative participation.

Providing design principles allows the foundation of the design process to be set up in a way which supports inclusivity and the sharing of knowledge across disciplines. This section has demonstrated, through the research in this thesis, how those design principles could be enacted within the context of neighbourhood planning. Co-designing policy processes and the tools to support it enables a diverse range of citizens, designers, planners and domain experts to come together to create co-owned solutions. Such an approach should ensure multiplicity and storytelling is recognised within the co-designed artefacts, recognising the partiality of knowledge and the importance of multiple knowledge forms. Finally, this thesis evidenced a range of requirements for policy processes and the support mechanisms that would be embedded within it, to ensure simple, sustainable and creative processes and tools.

7.5 Design Implications

The previous sections have outlined, first, the need for a change in neighbourhood planning; second, the design principles to support the (re)design of policy and technology; and third, how those principles should be enacted in the design process. Here, I make specific suggestions informed by my research to show how the neighbourhood planning process could be changed, and I outline a range of socio-technical tools and technologies that could support citizens' engagement with neighbourhood planning. It is important to note that I continue to advocate for the need to co-design such processes and tools with citizens and the suggestions here are my own interpretations of citizens' needs from this research. It is intended that suggestions here could be used as a basis for discussion and debate in future co-design processes.

7.5.1 Policy Process Implications

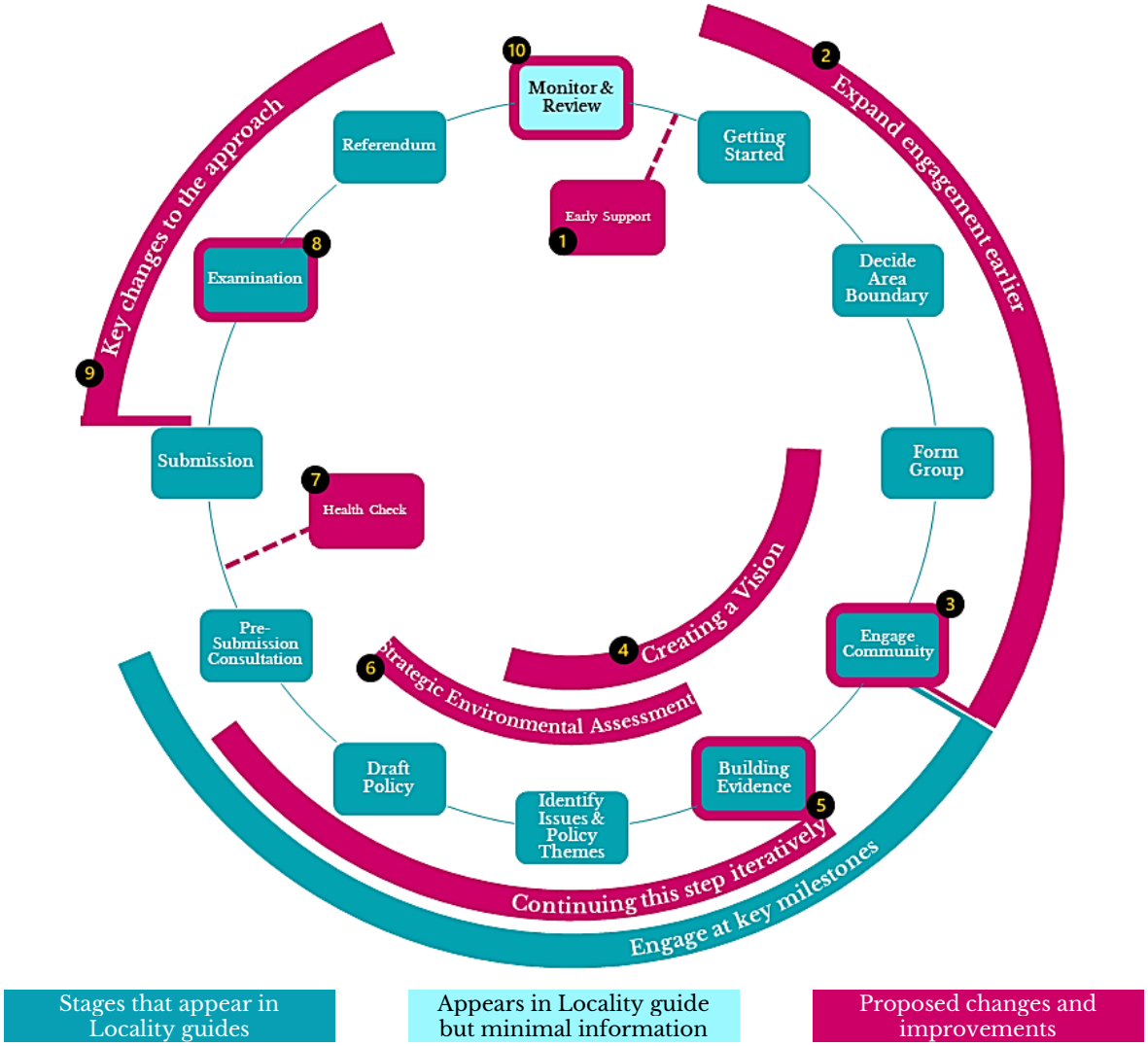
A wide range of challenges for citizens undertaking a neighbourhood plan have been identified through the research in this thesis. The in-depth mapping of citizens' neighbourhood planning journey, along with the

other elements of research in this thesis, has highlighted a range of ways in which the neighbourhood planning process could be improved. In Figure 37, I put forward specific suggestions that would allow the neighbourhood planning process to be improved and be accessible to more communities. Within this process diagram, I set out the neighbourhood planning process as depicted by Locality (the national support organisation) and overlay my suggestions of where the process should be changed or improved. Through this, I am able to show: 1) where improved support is needed; and 2) where support is needed but currently does not exist. In addition, I show where stages within the process should be changed, adapted or added which seeks to highlight stages currently not recognised or missing.

As well as detailing specific suggestions, Figure 37 also highlights the complexity of the process and an interesting tension arises. The intention of neighbourhood planning was to be a lightweight process and documents have attempted to simplify the stages by which citizens create a plan (e.g. Burton, 2014; Locality, 2018). However, the accompanying information with such simplified process diagrams was identified as jargon-filled, difficult to understand, and unable to advise citizens on *how* to go about producing a neighbourhood plan. In contrast to that, the figure shows the complexity that represents the reality of citizens' experiences which current guidance fails to recognise or address through the unsuccessful attempt at simplicity.

Here, I will highlight some key areas of suggested change within the diagram below. It is important to note that there are many suggested improvements throughout, but within the plan production, creating a vision and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) must be incorporated along with specific support, and is seen as essential. Both stages, although very different from one another, were largely unknown to citizens and required significant support. In addition, before submission, the research in this thesis shows that many neighbourhood planning groups were told to go through a 'Health Check' with an independent planning professional. This was a surprise to the groups and should be incorporated into the process to ensure citizens are aware of it. Following

Figure 37: Neighbourhood planning policy and design implications



1. Neighbourhood planning groups require early support to help determine with this process is the right tool for them, and support to begin the setup of the group.
2. Engagement is a step within the Locality guidance and suggests continuing engagement at key milestones, however, there is little that suggests community engagement should begin from the initiation stage so communities can help decide whether to do a plan, help decide the area and form the group.
3. Engagement is a large part of the Locality guidance, however, more needs to be done to ensure inclusive engagement practices that go beyond reaching the usual suspects and to encourage more, innovative methodologies.
4. The current guidance gives little information about creating a vision, however, groups are encouraged to do this by consultants or LPAs. Groups know very little about this stage, how to produce a vision or the importance. It is also something that takes time and should not be seen as a self-contained step at the beginning.
5. Building the evidence base is often seen as a single step in the process, when, in reality, this is an ongoing and iterative process as the plan and policy begins to take shape. This needs to be recognised and more support given to groups.
6. The SEA is crucial for neighbourhood plans, but little engagement currently occurs between the LPA and groups and the SEA is usually a surprise for citizens. This should be better embedded into the process, should begin earlier and should fully engage the neighbourhood planning group.
7. The Health Check was carried out by almost all the groups in this research, but it is currently not a recognised stage within the process. This stage isn't mandatory through legislation, however, many LPAs insists on this step. This should be embedded into the process and support given.
8. Examination is currently inconsistent across neighbourhood planning groups and it occurs after the citizens have submitted their plan to the LPA. Examination should be standardised and groups should have more involvement which recognises their years of hard work to produce the policy.
9. From submission onwards, neighbourhood planning groups have little to no control over the plan's future. This requires changes to enable groups to retain ownership of a plan and to recognise the work they have put in.
10. This step is often mentioned in guidance but little information is given. It is a crucial step to ensure the plan is used in practice and to help understand the impact of the policies. However, many groups do not continue when they lose ownership of the plan on submission, and due to the lack of guidance about monitoring and reviewing.

submission, key changes are required in the approach to the transition of ownership to ensure neighbourhood planning groups are continually engaged despite the LPA owning the plan. Following many years of work to produce the plan, this stage currently disempowers citizens and so changes are needed to include citizens within key discussions and ensure their local knowledge continues to be the foundation of the plan. This also links to the need to have more transparent processes at the stage of examination. Finally, there is a lack of support and advice for citizens to monitor and review their adopted neighbourhood plans which is not helped by the stages of submission to referendum where control is removed from the citizens. A changed and improved approach to the previous steps, as discussed, may result in a more engaged citizenry to monitor and review the plan. Regardless of this, however, there is a need for the monitoring and reviewing stage to be more formally recognised and supported with advice, guidance and funding for citizens.

Although I have highlighted some key changes, Figure 37 shows the wider need for improvements. There is, therefore, a need to re-design the process to account for the issues identified in this thesis, and supported by academic literature, and to recognise the reality of the experience of producing a neighbourhood plan. Many of the challenges described in Figure 37 require further support in providing resources and tools which will follow in the next section.

7.5.2 Civic Technology Recommendations

Following from the above implications for policy, there are a myriad of ways that digital and non-digital civic technologies could better support the process. Here, I provide some specific suggestions in an attempt to highlight the many tools that could be used, some practical applications of them within neighbourhood planning, and where in the policy process they could be used. It is important to note, here, that as with the policy suggestions above, I propose such tools should be co-designed with citizens within the broader re-design of neighbourhood planning to ensure they are embedded. This section is intended to provide inspiration for future debates and discussions but suggests an overarching vision for a 'home' for

neighbourhood planning, provides suggestions for tools to support throughout the process, as well as focusing on tools for citizen participation and policy creation.

A 'Home' for Neighbourhood Planning

Throughout this research, a continual and significant issue for citizens was navigating the neighbourhood planning process and being able to access appropriate information and support. As explored in Chapter 2, Locality as the national support organisation hosts a website with a myriad of advice documents and information, including an online forum which is not used. During this research, the information available was criticised for providing too much information of not the right type, and the lack of interactivity between Locality and citizens was also highlighted as an issue. Therefore, I propose the need for a 'home' for neighbourhood planning that could be hosted by Locality, or another supportive organisation, with an improvement to the quality of advice available as well as improving access to a wide range of other support mechanisms such as digital tools (explored further in this section).

A new or improved online website as the 'home' for neighbourhood planning would require a citizen-friendly approach to providing advice and information, and could also provide further access to digital and non-digital tools that could support different aspects of the process. The content of the information and educational materials should be appropriate for citizens and this is particularly important to stress as current information often states it is written in plain English, but citizens are still unable to understand it. Furthermore, such resources could be provided in an interactive and engaging modality that moves beyond the standard PDF guidance documents we currently see, to be delivered through, for example, massive open online courses (MOOCs) which encourage debate and do not focus on formal educational methods (Bryant, 2015). Changing the nature and content of the resources provided could also support such a site to move from a one-way information-giving site to one which enables two-way communication through the ability to share their own experiences with one another – something which is missing in the current

approach to support but which is seen as essential (Laurian and Shaw, 2009; Twitchen and Adams, 2011). A further development of this would be for the site to detail the neighbourhood planning process in a way which reflects the reality for citizens, providing them with the relevant, interactive, information sources at the corresponding stage. This would enable citizens to make sense of the process whilst selecting the route and information that is most relevant to them where, for example, groups that choose not to produce a vision could move past that stage to more appropriate information. In addition, this would support the original intentions of neighbourhood planning whereby the purpose of a lightweight process was to enable flexibility for a range contexts (Parker and Salter, 2017).

Further to this, the site could enable neighbourhood planning groups to connect across the country in a way which currently does not exist, and which could support citizens' wishes in connecting to share experiences. The current Locality site has the functionality for an online forum which has not been used, however, the purpose and configuration of the forum was not clear, and the citizens' critique of the wider site would discourage its use. Rather than such a forum, enabling neighbourhood planning groups to create a simple profile that can be updated to reflect their progress and even the key issues they are dealing with in their plan could support citizen connections. Simple key words on such profiles would support citizens to search for and identify other areas across the country that may be similar to them or facing similar issues. Such connections were highlighted in this research as being important to citizens but something that was difficult to achieve currently.

As well as hosting information and educational resources through interactive means, the site could also host and signpost to toolkits that could support specific parts of the process. Such resources could provide more detailed information on specific aspects in a way which provides practical 'how to' advice and suggests steps to complete policy tasks. For example, toolkits to support citizens to gather their own evidence, manage the Strategic Environmental Assessments process or consider viability

issues could all be useful resources. Within this research, the resources as part of the co-design workshops (Chapter 6) provides a positive example with the resources to support engagement design and a card deck to spark inspiration and decisions (see Appendix E for the full resource). All participants within the workshops suggested this, as a resource in itself, to be helping in decision-making around participation practices. Toolkits could be non-digital, as the example from this research, or could be delivered through digital, interactive means such as serious game approaches (Huyghe *et al.*, 2014; Slegers *et al.*, 2015) or interactive media (Liu and Ma, 2019). The idea to develop toolkits is not a new one (Asad *et al.*, 2017; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018), but I argue that they can support policymaking, as well as the use of digital and non-digital tools that may be unfamiliar, helping citizens to understand *why* and *how* – something identified as missing within existing resources. A further collaborative function could also allow citizens to provide feedback on their use of such toolkits and resources. For example, the use of the engagement toolkit would enable citizens to detail how they used the resources and the resulting engagement, including the configuration, methods, activities and questions, to enable the neighbourhood planning community to learn from one another. Such opportunities for citizens to co-create resources for the site would highlight the plurality of participation within the neighbourhood planning process, offering opportunities for reflection on the differing approaches (Vines *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, the site would be able to signpost to digital and non-digital tools that could support specific aspects of the process, such as mapping or visioning tools. In the following sections, I outline further recommendations for tools that could support different aspects of the neighbourhood planning process, however, here, I suggest that the site would simply signpost to such tools at the relevant points. It is important to note, that I do not propose a monolithic platform which provides all of the digital and non-digital tools within it, but that I propose the need for unplatformed design which "does not involve the creation of new platforms to sustain a process of participation" but uses the materiality of

existing technologies (Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2020, p. 2). Such an approach would allow the site to signpost to relevant tools that could be useful at different stages of neighbourhood planning.

Overarching Digital and Non-Digital Support

There are a range of tools that could be in place to support neighbourhood planning groups throughout the policymaking process. Having such tools in place from the beginning would provide solid foundations as groups move through the policy tasks and, here, I provide an overview of some possibilities.

Firstly, there is a need for peer-to-peer support tools to both enable citizens to connect with other neighbourhood planning groups, and to enable planners to support one another. Citizens find it difficult to connect across areas, whilst also receiving conflicting advice from planners on a range of policy topics which stems from the varying interpretations by professionals of policy and legislation. Within this space, HCI can design and develop peer support tools to that enable interaction with legislation (Dow, Comber and Vines, 2018) and such tools could go some way to providing shared cultural referents that could create an ontology of policy discourse (Reed, 2013). Online peer support tools to connect citizens would enable groups to share their experiences, support shared learning and develop best practice. This could be through tailored tools or through existing social media platforms which provides a range of mechanisms to ask and answer questions. Peer support to connect planning professionals could support the sharing of perspectives and interpretations to reduce the conflicting advice given to neighbourhood planning groups. For planners, connecting with organisations such as the Planning Advisory Service or the Planning Officers Society to develop such peer support tools could provide a route to fostering greater connections.

Secondly, neighbourhood planning relies on citizen volunteers but many groups have small steering groups which results in a large burden of work for each member. With the acknowledgement that volunteering within cities and communities can drive society forward (Hodgkinson, 2003;

Berntzen and Johannessen, 2016; Vakali, Dematis and Tolikas, 2017), providing tools for the recruitment and management of volunteers is a key way to support neighbourhood planning. Through this research, one group had successfully recruited volunteers and this supported the plan's production and, during the co-design workshops, participants often suggested recruiting volunteers with specific skills to support aspects of the policymaking process. Existing research has developed tools to match volunteers and organisations (Schönböck *et al.*, 2016; Thomas, Pritchard and Briggs, 2019) and has recognised the growing number of tools to support the recruitment and management of volunteers, such as Vol4All which supports volunteers sharing content, monitoring activities and gamifying practices (Vakali, Dematis and Tolikas, 2017; Mazlan, Ahmad and Kamalrudin, 2018). Despite this, research has also shown that managing volunteer expectations whilst demonstrating the value of the role is still a challenge, and the uptake of digital tools within the voluntary sector remains low (Thomas, Pritchard and Briggs, 2019). Within neighbourhood planning, tools could support the recruitment and management of citizens as well as matching neighbourhood planning groups to wider volunteer opportunities with local universities or other related support. Thomas et al. (2019) provide design recommendations for volunteer systems to ensure the volunteer opportunity is made explicit, and would involve a social promise, an opportunity promise, a value promise and an organisational promise, each of which can be designed into volunteer tools and better support citizens and neighbourhood planning groups in volunteering (Thomas, Pritchard and Briggs, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings from this research evidenced that the majority of administrative and writing tasks, including writing policy documents, were completed by one or two individuals within the group. There are wide range of freely and commercially available tools to support this task, such as Google Suite and Microsoft Teams, however, there was a lack of skills and knowledge to access and use them. Research has taken place for many years to support such collaborative writing (Greer *et al.*, 2016; Teevan, Iqbal and Von Veh, 2016), and such approaches in neighbourhood

planning could support the management of large datasets for policymaking including the results of engagement activities; creating formal documentation such as the initial application to become a neighbourhood group; writing funding bids to obtain grant funding; and writing policy documents. A simple solution, here, would be to create shareable templates for formal processes, such as producing a terms of reference for the steering group, something which would help citizens who are often unaware of what should be included and how to produce them. Furthermore, for more complex tasks, recognising it as a networked task can enable tools to support joint working (Teevan, Iqbal and Von Veh, 2016) and research has shown that microtasks can help those involved in a way which accounts for the context and style of multiple contributors, and which can still enable contribution to a larger vision (Greer *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, other key support mechanisms would include access to mapping tools to support plan production such as Open Street Map or even Google Maps, website facilities such as WordPress or other mainstream tools, and the creation of regional and national neighbourhood planning events. Although a wide range of mapping and visualisation tools exist (e.g. Hanzl, 2007; Berna, 2010; Nuojua, Soudunsaari and Hentilä, 2010; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018), they are not specifically designed to be used and managed by the community with many neighbourhood planning groups relying on the LPA. Current mapping technologies are focused to communicating complex plans and are used by professionals (Leeuwen and Timmermans, 2006; Lovett *et al.*, 2015; Alatalo *et al.*, 2017; Van Leeuwen *et al.*, 2018). Access to mapping tools is essential as part of plan production. Similarly, website design tools to support citizens to manage their own website are also important and, although there are many free options available, the lack of skills and knowledge means such tools must be well-supported through educational material. Furthermore, events to support citizens and planners connecting in-person to share experiences and learn from one another should also be supported. Such events were seen as invaluable, however, the lack of funding for such opportunities

mean groups are currently unable to create that wider national neighbourhood planning community.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is key tenet of neighbourhood planning that should run throughout the process in a way which involves the wider community in the citizen-led process. The findings in this thesis suggest that neighbourhood planning groups are reliant on traditional methods of engagement and replicate many of the poor engagement practices from LPAs. This research has also shown, however, that citizens are keen to involve the wider community and are enthusiastic about the possibilities held for new modes of participation.

There is already a wealth of tools and methods within the HCI field to support citizen participation in place-based and planning research which could be used within neighbourhood planning. Let's Talk Parks, a socio-technical process that incorporated a digitally-enabled board game, structured twitter engagements and web platform engaged with a wide range of stakeholders (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2019). Other socio-technical processes have engaged children in the design of their neighbourhood through digitally supported neighbourhood walks, mapping and discussions through an online platform (Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018) or have engaged residents at urban regeneration sites through a 'travelling suitcase' designed to capture stories promoting plurality and placemaking (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2016). Specific tools designed to engage citizens discussed in Chapter 2, such as Community Conversational (Johnson *et al.*, 2017) and Change Explorer (Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones and Comber, 2019), could also support greater citizen engagement. Furthermore, the *'Civic Tech Field Guide'* catalogues hundreds of tools in a range of categories such as *'Engagement tech'*, *'Govtech'*, and *'Civic data'* which should be considered (Stempeck and Sifry, 2015). In addition, the appropriation of widely available technology is also important to consider with, for example, WhatFutures (Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2019) providing an example of successfully engaging citizens in a large-scale decision-making process.

Further to this, specific mapping tools that support citizen participation have also been developed over decades within planning and HCI (e.g. Commonplace, no date; Kingston, 2002; Bugs *et al.*, 2010; Mougiakou *et al.*, 2020). Despite this, mapping tools that have been developed, tested and used are often too complex and are not designed with citizens as users in mind. Mapping tools, beyond being a necessity in plan production, are also a common way to engage citizens in planning decisions and so future tools should account for citizens' needs and create interactive and engaging modes of participation. Similarly, visualisation tools are also mainly used by professionals, although the more technical approaches are yet to make it into mainstream planning (Van Leeuwen *et al.*, 2018). However, visualisation tools support citizen participation through encouraging future imaginings of place through, for example, virtual and augmented reality which has been shown to increase engagement (Dambruch and Krämer, 2014; Gill and Lange, 2015). There has been recognition that smartphone technology does allow for realistic virtual reality experiences which could prove to change the current research trends and make such visualisation technology available to a larger scale for participatory processes (Ball and Capanni, 2007; Kuliga *et al.*, 2015; Maffei *et al.*, 2016). Further to this, such visualisation tools could be designed to support different stages of the neighbourhood planning process as details of future imaginings of place grow (Lovett *et al.*, 2015; Alatalo *et al.*, 2017).

Within this space, it is important that existing work is built upon to prevent reinventing modes of participation which has already been done. There is a need to connect the planning and HCI disciplines in the development of such participatory technologies and appropriate, adapt and reconfigure such tools to the context of neighbourhood planning. It is also important to note that many of the democratic tools developed in HCI are done so in isolation from the wider policy process, and so future development or use of tools should account for the holistic policymaking process.

Supporting Policy Creation

Within the creation of policy, there is a need to collect and understand data and evidence in order to provide a robust base for policy decisions as well

as the actual task of producing the planning policy. Here, I suggest ways in which citizens could be better supported within these tasks.

This research highlighted significant challenges for citizens when attempting to interact with data and evidence, including the lack of accessibility to existing data sets, the challenge of discussing data and evidence with planners without a shared language, and the unknown possibility of collecting their own data and evidence. Many previously thought that data-driven policy would open up the policymaking process to the public as data was collected and analysed, and that citizens could conduct their own analysis of data to support policymaking further (Etsy and Rushing, 2007). However, this provides a simplistic picture of a complex issue.

To support data access, the development of a working ontology of data in an accessible format for citizens that could provide examples of common datasets that are usually available would support policymaking. This could be tailored to the neighbourhood planning process to support all stakeholders to better understand what data is needed, what already exists and move toward a shared understanding and a collective foundational knowledge. Considering access to existing datasets, tools to support data working must build on the idea of 'effective use' which can be distinguished from simply having access to data (Gurstein, 2011). Existing research which has already conceptualised some of these challenges (Evans and Campos, 2013; Le Dantec *et al.*, 2015; Maskell *et al.*, 2018), has recommended developing models of effective data use (Gurstein, 2011) and suggests the need to consider such issues from a user's perspective (Janssen, Charalabidis and Zuiderwijk, 2012). This would result in designing tools to access existing datasets in a way which allows citizens to understand and take action from this, particularly as we know that data is tied to issues that matter (Taylor *et al.*, 2015). Platforms such as *'Data:In Place'* could support this, whereby data can be accessed for bespoke geographical boundaries enabling access to data that citizens feel is more representative of their neighbourhoods (Puussaar *et al.*, 2018). This is particularly important when considering that citizens often disagree with existing datasets that appear to

tell an unrecognisable story of their own neighbourhood (Johnson *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, designing flexible and adaptable tools to allow for the interrogation of data, but which also enables citizens to input their own experiences of place in a format which is considered valid evidence in policymaking, would ensure that citizens are able to interpret and interact with data

It is important to note that the current agenda within planning practice is to design tools for open data with the intention "to make planning information easier to find and understand" (MHCLG, 2020b, p. 18). This includes a move towards open data within the government's recent White Paper and a suggestion that central government and the PropTech sector will design tools to support this. Furthermore, Digital Land, a MHCLG department, is currently focused on the development of data standards and services to open up planning data for use (Digital Land, 2020), as is the Future Cities Catapult who have also moved towards the development of data services (Future Cities Catapult, 2018). However, despite this move, it is unclear amongst much of the rhetoric as to how accessible such data would be to citizens, including neighbourhood planning groups, particularly reflecting on the idea that availability does not equate to effective access and use (Gurstein, 2011).

Furthermore, this research identified policy writing as a major challenge for citizens with most relying on hired planning consultants which then calls into question the citizen-led nature of the policymaking process. Considering the range of citizens involved in policymaking processes along with policy experts in local and central government, and private consultants, a large significant community of people exist which holds and can contribute various knowledge and 'know-how' on policy writing. Research in other fields have already explored the potential of policy crowdsourcing at various stages in the policy creation cycle (Prpić, Taeihagh and Melton, 2015). In addition, tools already exist for citizens to interact with policymakers, allowing them to comment on proposed policies (The OpenGov Foundation, 2013; Countable, 2019; GovRight, 2019) and, in some cases, contribute to policy directly (Aitamurto and

Hélène, 2013; Farina *et al.*, 2014). Here, I propose using the knowledge of the crowd to create a database of policy phrases to support citizens in writing their own policy for neighbourhood planning. This could be an ongoing and growing resource that can be continually updated by citizens and professionals to account for and respond to changing political climates over time. To avoid generic policy phrases, crowdsourcing could build on *'PolicyScape'* which encourages citizens to move beyond simple commenting function by supporting deliberation, enabling citizens to discuss how policy would affect them and, thus, provides further context and perspective which can improve policy quality (Kim *et al.*, 2019). This type of policy crowdsourcing could provide valuable insights and could help to highlight unintended consequences of policies (Aitamurto and Chen, 2017). Ensuring policies are fit for use could be supported through advice from experts that could provide examples of how that particular phrase would be interpreted in day-to-day decisions

7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has taken the findings from this research and discussed them to identify the opportunities and challenges faced in enacting the neighbourhood planning process and to explore the ways in which digital and non-digital tools could support citizens to shape places through neighbourhood planning. The chapter argues for a renewed and re-designed neighbourhood planning process and the design of digital and non-digital tools to be embedded within the process.

Following a summary of the opportunities and challenges, the chapter identified two structural challenges within neighbourhood planning that go some way to explore the causes of the complexity faced by citizens enacting the policy process. This identifies the replication of professionalised policy processes and the inequalities embedded into legislation, both of which lead to exclusive practices.

Moving to consider these challenges, the chapter moves to argue the need for the (re)design of policy processes and digital and non-digital tools. The chapter puts forward two key design principles: cross-disciplinary design

thinking and inclusive design. These principles are able to centre the needs of citizens, particularly marginalised groups, during the design process and enable a diverse range of citizens, researchers, designers and experts to come together to create alternative futures. These principles provide a theoretical basis for design processes that can support the design of artefacts (policy, tools, processes, technologies etc) that value experiential knowledge and account for the lived experience of citizens. The chapter then provides ways in which these principles should manifest within the neighbourhood planning context, proposing co-design as the approach for both policy and technology design, multiplicity and storytelling to account for lived experience, and a range of requirements for any newly designed artefacts. The chapter also outlines a range of specific suggestions for the improvement of the neighbourhood planning policy process and for the design of tools to be embedded within it. These suggestions emerge from research and provide a picture of what could be achieved through the use of digital and non-digital modes of participation to support citizens to shape places through neighbourhood planning.

Ultimately, the chapter argues the need to re-design neighbourhood planning to provide a process for a citizen-led policy initiative which is appropriate, navigable and fit for purpose, and which embeds a range of digital and non-digital modes of support. Throughout the chapter, the issue of design is a common thread – the way in which policy processes are designed and the way technology is designed. Design, as the process of creating everything we make (Costanza-Chock, 2020), is a powerful tool to promote inclusivity, equity and ensure the consequences of design, both intentional and unintentional, are considered. Here, I argue that by applying and enacting the design principles presented, neighbourhood planning could become a more accessible and equitable process that allows a wider range of citizens and communities to take part, including those currently excluded such as the urban and deprived neighbourhoods. I also argue that embedded digital and non-digital modes of support through civic technology tools further creates an accessible policy process, both

simplifying the process and providing citizens with the tools needed to undertake this complex task.

The re-design of the neighbourhood planning process is necessary to enable a more accessible and equitable opportunity for citizens to engage in policymaking in their community. Without the re-design of the neighbourhood planning process, digital tools to support engagement would be designed as an addition to a flawed process making adoption and use of such methods more difficult as citizens continue to contend with the challenges of an unnavigable process. However, embedding technology within a renewed process would provide sustainable tools which could support the process and link directly to policy outcomes.

Chapter 8

8. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to investigate how digital and non-digital tools and approaches could be designed to better support citizens to engage in neighbourhood planning. In this chapter, I reflect on the research presented and, after a brief summary of the thesis, I will discuss how the aim and research questions were addressed. The chapter will then reflect on digital civics research, set out the contributions to knowledge and the implications for future work.

8.1 Research Aim and Questions

The research aimed to investigate how digital and non-digital tools and approaches can be designed to better support citizens shape places through the example of neighbourhood planning. To do this, the research asked three specific questions which are summarised and reflected on below.

8.1.1 How is the neighbourhood planning process enacted by citizens and what are the opportunities and challenges faced?

To better understand the enactment of neighbourhood planning, this research first considered existing literature in Chapter 2 which sought to understand the current landscape of the policy tool. Within this, the literature showed a contested policy tool whereby some felt the introduction of participatory democracy within planning policy was an important step and others felt the ways in which neighbourhood planning remained bound within existing systems undermined the impact (Bradley, 2015; Wills, 2016; Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2017). Chapter 2 also explored the current research on practices of neighbourhood planning which evidenced that over 2700 communities had embarked on the process, but also showed the inequalities present in the areas taking part, the complexity faced by citizens, the varied levels of support available, and the continuation of poor engagement practices from other planning practices (e.g. Brookfield, 2017; Place Studio, 2017; Parker *et al.*, 2020). Here, I highlighted the need to conduct further research that could seek to understand the opportunities and challenges faced by citizens in enacting

the neighbourhood planning process in a way which centres their experiences through qualitative in-depth methods.

In response to this, I conducted research with six neighbourhood planning groups and a wide range of citizens and planning professionals involved in neighbourhood planning. Ultimately, I have shown the complexity of neighbourhood planning from the perspective of citizens directly involved in the process whereby navigation through the policy tool is a key issue, evidenced within Chapter 5. Literature has already discussed the complexity of neighbourhood planning (Parker, 2015; Parker and Salter, 2017) some of which has focused on exploring specific challenges faced with, for example, community engagement (Brookfield, 2017) or Strategic Environmental Assessments (Yu and Fischer, 2019). However, for the most part this literature explores the complexity of the process at a strategic level. Further to this, Chapter 6 evidenced the reliance on traditional methods of engagement within neighbourhood planning whereby citizens taking forward a plan were unable to put their values of participation into practice and found designing approaches to engagement incredibly difficult. Literature has explored practices of participation in neighbourhood planning, identifying the issues with engagement resources for groups and the likelihood of engagement to cater to the 'usual suspects' (Brookfield, 2017). This research has been able to explore the values held by citizens leading neighbourhood planning groups to understand and work towards a vision for future participation practices, taking that further to design new approaches to participation. In addition, both Chapter 4 and 6 highlighted the challenges of incorporating new forms of digital support within an already-complex process, something which has not been explored in the neighbourhood planning literature. Although there is research investigating the use of technology in planning, particularly to engage citizens, (Hanzl, 2007; Ertiö, 2015b; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones and Comber, 2019), the challenges of how the outputs from such tools integrates with and is taken into account by policy processes has not been explored.

It is also important to note that as well as the range of challenges identified, citizens involved in neighbourhood planning also spoke of the benefits, such as the improvement of local relationships with the LPA, having a direct voice in development decisions, developing community capacity in relation to planning knowledge, and developing policy which truly reflected the needs of the community.

This thesis has contributed and extended the knowledge of the complexity of neighbourhood planning and has explored the nuances of the process from the citizens' perspective. Key among them is the issues how citizens practically and intellectually access the neighbourhood planning process; the challenges in building relationships with the LPA within the new citizen-planner paradigm; the conflicting values and practices of citizens in engaging the wider community inclusively; the difficulties understanding, interpreting and using evidence within the process; and the disempowerment faced when the ownership of the neighbourhood plan transfers out of community's hands. Furthermore, this thesis not only determines the enormity of the challenges faced by citizens but also seeks to demonstrate the ways in which wider structural issues of the design of the policy process further exacerbate this. The thesis also contributed to the knowledge of embedded practices and cultures within planning which also serve to place the burden onto communities to adapt to existing practices, rather than adapting cultures to new place-shaping processes such as neighbourhood planning. I have shown this manifest within the replication of professionalised policy processes within neighbourhood planning. Finally, I have further contributed to the discussion around inequalities in neighbourhood planning to identify the basis for such inequalities, highlighting that the legislative basis designs inequalities into the policy tool from the beginning.

8.1.2 How could the design of digital and non-digital approaches in neighbourhood planning better support citizen engagement?

Responding to the evidence in RQ1, the research indicated the need for new digital and non-digital approaches in neighbourhood planning, however, the design of such tools is also important to consider to avoid

reproducing poor engagement practices that are exclusive to many citizens.

The challenges faced by citizens in neighbourhood planning, evidenced through the findings and analysis related to RQ1, highlight the need for changes to be made to enable citizens to shape places. Thus, I argue that the design of neighbourhood planning must be renewed to seek to address the challenges present and ensure the process is appropriate for a citizen-led policy tool. The suggestion to re-design extends existing academic literature which has already highlighted the need for changes and improvements to the process (Parker *et al.*, 2020), however, the argument, here, is to re-design the process rather than improving a process which has structural inequalities embedded within it. This suggestion to re-design neighbourhood planning builds on research in HCI which argues the need to re-design processes and systems to avoid reproducing existing issues and inequalities (Costanza-Chock, 2020), and extends this argument into the planning policy arena.

Further to this, the existing support mechanisms for citizens in neighbourhood planning were shown to be inadequate through the findings in this thesis and which has partially been shown through academic literature. There was a limited amount of support for citizens and almost no digital tools to support the process which citizens would have free access to, and so I argue the need for digital and non-digital approaches to support. Much of this builds on existing literature which has called for new modes of participation to expand the language of planning and create interactive methods (Sandercock, 2010a; Layard, Milling and Wakeford, 2013; Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). However, I also argue that the design of such tools, just as the design of neighbourhood planning, is integral to supporting an inclusive and equitable process.

To address the design aspects for both policy and any digital and non-digital tools, this thesis proposes two key design principles:

1. Adopting a cross-disciplinary design thinking approach
   This would enable integrating the learning and skills from different fields to foster creativity and support alternative imaginings that enable citizens, planners and designers to design new neighbourhood planning processes whilst accounting for the political nature of design and decision-making.

2. Ensuring inclusive design methodologies are prioritised
   This would centre the needs of citizens within design decisions, specifically accounting for marginalised communities and designing with them. Three steps to achieve this would be to: 1) recognise policy processes as a designed artefact and that creating them involves political decisions; 2) involve communities, particularly marginalised groups; and 3) select methodologies that centre citizens' needs to imbue new processes with the values that can challenge inequalities.

This research has also shown the ways in which these two design principles should manifest within the neighbourhood planning process:

1. Co-designing new approaches
   This would put the design principles into practice by assembling a diverse range of citizens, planners, researchers and designers in a way which can scaffold design decisions and, importantly, centre citizens' lived experience. It would ensure tools were not simply seen as a solution to fix a problem, but would encourage the whole policy process and all of the support mechanisms within it, to be considered through the co-desgin.

2. Embedding multiplicity and storytelling
   This would avoid the façade that evidence is value-free and neutral and would move toward policy and tools which can recognise multiple forms and formats of knowledge and their positionality. This would enable citizens' experiential stories to be valued as evidence and provide routes to policy which is more flexible and adaptable to changing needs.

3. Required affordances for new design
   From this research, a number of requirements for future design were identified: 1) simple and easy to use or navigate; 2) sustainable beyond the life of the project or research; and 3) creative to foster new future imaginings of place.

This thesis has contributed to the knowledge of how design practices, methods and approaches in HCI can be used within planning and the social sciences to create more equitable and inclusive policy, processes and tools that can impact on citizens' ability to shape places. The research has demonstrated key principles and how these would manifest within the neighbourhood planning process, providing implications for both the design of policy and digital and non-digital tools. I argue that a re-designed neighbourhood planning process is required to address the structural challenges embedded within the policy tool through the principles and methodologies. The design of digital and non-digital tools to support the policy process should also be embedded within the re-design process, of which this thesis highlighted a number of needs: the need for new configurations to engage communities; the need for support such as that seen within community development practices; the enthusiasm to incorporate digital tools; and the need to ensure any digital and non-digital modes of support can have an affect on the policy process. Furthermore, this thesis buildings on HCI research which seeks to move towards equitable design practices that account for real-world need (Costanza-Chock, 2020; D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020), and extends this work into the realm of planning policy. The research contributes methodologies to prevent the continual reproduction and reinforcement inequitable practices and policy outcomes.

8.1.3 What digital technologies can be developed and used to support citizen engagement in neighbourhood planning?

This research explored the design and use of digital technologies as a mode of engagement to support citizens participating in the neighbourhood planning process. In addition, the research further responded to the evidence in RQ1 in exploring how digital tools could better support citizens

to overcome some of the challenges faced in the complex policy process. The research identified both opportunities for the use of technology as well as the challenges and barriers to adoption of such tools in neighbourhood planning.

The opportunities for the design and use of digital technology in neighbourhood planning were identified through all phases of the research:

- Chapter 4 highlighted the ways in which digital tools can support creative and situated modes of participation through participatory media that enabled a multiplicity of views to be captured and served to widen participation
- Chapter 5 enabled a range of digital tools to be identified as ways to overcome the challenges faced by citizens in enacting the neighbourhood planning process
- Chapter 6 identified the enthusiasm from citizens and planners in the use of digital technology to create new interactive modes of participation that could reach out to the wider community.

However, a range of challenges and barriers were also identified. Firstly, embedding new digital tools into an already-complex process was found to be a challenge where the use of participatory media did not carry through to the policy production process. Secondly, the sustainability of digital methods was raised where the need for significant facilitator support in using participatory media technology highlighted the barrier to adoption beyond the life of this research. In addition, participants in this research were keen to avoid the exclusion of citizens through the use of digital participation methods, particularly older citizens. Finally, the lack of skills in using digital tools within a neighbourhood planning process raised issues of the knowledge needed to design and use digital tools for engagement, and the challenge of using new, unfamiliar tools. It is important to note, here, that the exclusion of citizens through digital participation methods did not recognise that traditional approaches are already exclusive, and the lack of digital skills in using unfamiliar technology was a typical profile for

the actively engaged citizens, the 'usual suspects'. Much of this builds on existing literature which has called for new modes of participation to expand the language of planning and create interactive methods (Sandercock, 2010a; Layard, Milling and Wakeford, 2013; Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). This research has extended this knowledge through the in-depth exploration of citizens' participatory values in comparison to their practices, and through the co-design process which provides a structured approach to involving citizens in the development of tools.

This thesis has contributed to the disciplines of both planning and HCI with regards to the design and development of digital technologies within the context of citizens shaping places. Firstly, this research contributes to the understanding of the role technology can plan in planning and placemaking. This research is also able to demonstrate concepts of storytelling in planning, which is not a new idea (Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003; Sandercock, 2003; Throgmorton, 2003), through the use of digital technology to facilitate situated and everyday participation that can prioritise lay knowledge and democratise discussions away from dominant agendas.

Secondly, this research also contributes to the growing body of work in HCI focused on the use of digital tools in place-based research (e.g. Taylor *et al.*, 2012; Johnson *et al.*, 2017; Maskell *et al.*, 2018; Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018). This thesis extends the existing work by focusing specifically on the holistic policymaking process and how tools can be designed to be embedded in and affect policy outcomes.

Furthermore, much has been written regarding inclusive design methodologies in HCI that can account for user needs, but much of this work continually highlights the lack of this type of approach within planning and the design of technology in this field (e.g. Constanza-Chock, 2020; D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). By suggesting the use of feminist design methodologies to create the technologies and tools, this research begins to fill the gap within literature and moves to also provide specific implications for design. In addition, the understanding and identification of how digital

tools could better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning, which contributes to the planning discipline, also provides an indication of future HCI research to support the citizen-led policy tool.

Finally, this thesis contributes to a limited body of work within HCI and social science which discusses failure within research and the failure of digital tools. Even within HCI which can often take an experimental approach to designing and deploying technologies, reporting the failures is seldom done. This research, however, reports the success *and* failings of the participatory media tool and discusses the failed case study within an urban area attempting to undertake a neighbourhood plan. As well as providing a much-needed contribution to knowledge around failure more generally, this thesis also contributes to the growing body of literature of digital civics and provides a key critique of the assumptions that technology can and will empower without recognising the significant barriers in real-world engaged research.

8.2 Reflections on Digital Civics Research

This research was situated across the disciplines of planning and HCI with the digital civics agenda enabling interdisciplinary work, as set out in Chapter 1 (Asad and Le Dantec, 2017). Digital civics aims to provide new ways to support citizens in the design and development of technology that is directly linked to their daily lives (Vlachokyriakos *et al.*, 2016). Further, it creates a "participatory imaginary in which both citizens and local government can explore the value of an alternative model of service provision" (Olivier and Wright, 2015, p. 62). With this in mind, this research worked primarily with citizens to investigate how digital and non-digital tools could better support engagement with neighbourhood planning – in other words, imagining alternative models of policy support. Here, I reflect on the implementation of digital civics research, first reflecting on the approach of action research, then moving to contemplate the work with citizens and planners and, finally moving to consider policy-based research.

Firstly, this research took an Action Research (AR) approach (detailed in Chapter 3) which enabled a practice of critical reflection that informed the research continuously through the self-reflective cycle (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014). The reflective nature of AR enabled a flexible and adaptable approach that continually centred citizens' needs within the research, something clearly demonstrated through Figure 5 in Chapter 3 which demonstrates the reflexivity in the phases of this research. Enacting AR also enabled the development of long-term relationships to develop and meant the 'messes' of the real world could be captured and accounted for within the research (Ackoff, 1999; Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003). As digital civics research encourages civically engaged research rooted locally and seeks to take action to envision, advocate, or make changes, AR fits with the ethos and goals. In this sense, AR was able to support neighbourhood planning groups, and planners, to imagine future alternatives to the current neighbourhood planning process and envisage new modes of support. AR as a methodological approach aligns with digital civics research and, in this case, enabled civic research to centre citizens' experiences whilst reflexively adapting to the changing needs.

Working with citizens and planners was a largely positive experience throughout the research. Those involved in this research were already engaged in neighbourhood planning as an empowering tool to have a direct voice in future planning decisions. Thus, all participants were keen to experiment with new approaches and were motivated to contribute to work that could improve future practices in neighbourhood planning. Although this remains true, a tension and contradiction emerged whereby citizens were happy to experiment but were keen to ensure it would have a positive and/or immediate impact on their process. As we saw with the failed case study in Chapter 3 and the detailing of the failures of participatory video in Chapter 4, such engaged, real-world digital civics research requires citizens to take part in activities which mean accepting a level of risk that may not achieve the desired outcomes for their needs. In this sense, particularly for neighbourhood planning, such a risk is amplified where citizens are already engaged in a complex policy process

and have little time to take part in participation without purpose or results. Specifically reflecting on the research with planners, there was a sense that institutional norms and professional skills and knowledge often restricted their ability to imagine new models of participation. However, the approaches taken in this research such as the interactive workshops in Chapter 5 and the co-design workshops in Chapter 6, each which used structured activities, helped planners to move beyond this and envision new practices, processes and technologies.

As neighbourhood planning is a policy tool already set out in legislation with established practices developed over a decade, there were difficulties in challenging the established processes and working within already-bounded systems. As explained above, citizens and planners were largely keen to contribute to work which looked at alternative models of participation in neighbourhood planning. However, it was often difficult to consider how this research could be implemented – both from the perspective of the researcher and the citizens and planners taking part. Digital civics research aims to empower and change service models, however, in practice the potential of mismatched objectives between institutions, legislation and the research itself is a real issue. Real-world, engaged digital civics research points towards an ideal where empowering citizens to make changes is enough, but where legislative restrictions or cultural norms are already in place, creating new imaginaries is difficult to move to changes in reality.

8.3 Limitations

This research investigated how digital and non-digital tools and approaches can be designed to better support citizens to engage with neighbourhood planning. Whilst I have evidenced the ways in which this research responded to the aims and research questions, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the study and reflect on how these might be addressed or explored in future work.

This study was focused in the North East of England and engaged with neighbourhood plans in mainly rural parished areas. Therefore, the

citizens experiences that are gathered and centred in this work reflect the practices and issues faced within this particular context. Whilst it would have been beneficial to work across England with a range of neighbourhood planning groups from different areas, it was not logistically or practically possible to do so within this study. This is particularly true with the methodological approach taken which established and maintained longer-term relationships and where I was able to spend a large amount of time with groups to understand their context. Furthermore, the imbalance of rural to urban groups included does reflect the statistics which show that more rural, parished areas take part in neighbourhood planning, however, it is important to still recognise this as a limitation of the study. In Chapter 7, I demonstrated that discussions around neighbourhood planning are based on what is counted and, as urban areas are underrepresented, they will continue to be disadvantaged (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020).

This research proposes the need to re-design the neighbourhood planning process as a way to address the structural challenges embedded within the policy tool and the challenges citizens face in enacting it. Whilst it is speculated that such a re-design would create a more equitable and inclusive process, the research cannot prove this. Due to the constraints of the research timescales, I was unable to work further with citizens to speculatively explore what a future re-design could look like and to further solidify ideas around the need to re-design neighbourhood planning. Although much of this cannot be proven, the data within this thesis does provide evidence to suggest such an approach is needed, particularly when combined with design literature.

Similarly, the research is largely unable to prove that the suggestions for digital tools would improve engagement with the neighbourhood planning process. The deployment of Bootlegger in Chapter 4 does provide evidence around participatory video and storytelling, and the co-design workshops described in Chapter 6 provide evidence of citizens' approaches to designing engagement using technology. However, the suggestions given within this thesis of tools to support the policy process are speculative and based on the challenges citizens faced. It was not possible to further design

and develop the wealth of tools but this does provide a strong basis for future research that could deploy and test such technologies in practice.

8.4 Implications for Future Work

The research in this thesis is the first step towards bringing the planning and HCI disciplines together to consider better support for neighbourhood planning. This study is able to provide a foundation to understanding the practices of neighbourhood planning in a way which centres citizens' experiences and which moves toward non-digital and digital forms of support. Here, I move to consider implications for future work beginning specifically with neighbourhood planning and moving to broader considerations of planning technology more generally, the changing nature of future research due to COVID-19, and the opportunities and challenges linked to the Planning for the Future White Paper.

8.4.1 Future Neighbourhood Planning

Directly linked with the research in this thesis, a range of opportunities for future work can be identified that further centre the needs of citizens in neighbourhood planning as a citizen-led policy tool. Firstly, the issue surrounding the inequalities present within neighbourhood planning suggest more work needs to be done to better understand this and work towards ways to create a more equitable policy process. It is already well-documented in academic literature and MHCLG statistics (Parker, 2017; MHCLG, 2020a) that rural areas are more likely to take up the opportunity and that urban areas are disadvantaged in a myriad of ways, particularly deprived neighbourhoods. However, this literature does little to understand why this occurs from the perspective of citizens and does not engage with areas that failed to progress with a neighbourhood plan (like the failed case study discussed in Chapter 3 and Appendix B). In this space, research to understand the needs of citizens in relation to planning policy could understand whether neighbourhood planning is, in fact, the most appropriate tool to deliver positive change in communities, particularly those that are not taking part in the current citizen-led process. In addition, research should seek to work with a broader range of neighbourhood

planning groups, particularly those underrepresented, to further understand citizens' experiences of neighbourhood planning and the forms of support required. Such research could investigate the efficacy of neighbourhood planning to achieve the aims of such communities, thus questioning the availability of routes to citizen action. Another approach to research in this space could seek to engage with the voices of the most disadvantaged in neighbourhood planning, taking an intersectional feminist approach to consider the multiple ways in which citizens, communities and neighbourhoods can be marginalised (Costanza-Chock, 2020), with a view to providing a foundation that can begin to move towards a more equitable citizen-led policy process.

Further to this, speculative research to consider an imagined future for neighbourhood planning would seek to add to the work in this thesis which suggests a renewed and re-designed process. As citizens themselves are in charge of producing their neighbourhood plan and are embedded within the process, research that can draw on their expertise to consider what a re-designed process should entail would be an essential step towards renewing the process. This thesis was able to make suggestions based on citizens' experiences, but research with citizens to co-design a future process would help to move away from the dominance of universalist design principles (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Peters, 2020). Such engaged research could seek to create policy briefs and influence real-world change, although I recognise the barriers and limitations to this type of approach.

In addition, this research surfaced issues of the tension between citizen's involvement in planning and shaping places, and the entrenched cultures of planning. Many of the issues faced by citizens were reminiscent of the professionalised policy process which I suggest has been replicated within the neighbourhood planning context. So much so that even issues of citizens communicating with LPA officers and other planners meant there was a lack of a shared language which required citizens to upskill to a professional culture. Future research could seek to investigate this element further to understand what those entrenched cultures are and explore ways

in which planning cultures could change and adapt to account for citizens needs.

Finally, new digital tools to support engagement with neighbourhood planning could be developed and deployed with citizens to understand their efficacy in the policy process. This thesis argued that tools should be co-designed with citizens and provided a range of design implications and suggestions that could form the basis and serve as inspiration for this research. Section 7.5 in Chapter 7 sets out a whole range of tools that could support the neighbourhood planning process and each of these could serve as a research project in their own right. A challenge here would be to ensure tools are considered together and designed for a holistic process rather than reactively responding to a small part of the policy process – a specific recommendation within this thesis.

8.4.2 Future Planning and Technology

Considering the implications of this research on wider planning policy processes provides further opportunities for future work. This thesis engaged with citizens and professional planners and, during engagement specifically with planners, the implications of this research on wider processes was often discussed. The planners involved as participants in this research could already see how participatory media could link to broader policy processes and how digital tools to support citizen participation, capturing the process and visualising complex planning issues could be useful. Such findings were not discussed within the main body of the thesis as it did not contribute to the research aims and questions, however, there is a link to broader participatory practices in the planning field.

Exploring the use of participatory media in LPA policy processes could explore the use of such a tool on a larger scale, developing technology that could link to the policy process and is easy to use for the citizens involved. The research could further explore how planners translate the views of citizens from media formats into planning policy, an issue that is often cited in the use of creative methods (Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019). Furthermore, planners felt that using media as a way to inform citizens of

the process of policy production at the LPA level could also promote wider engagement, whereby citizens could continuously engage with the process. This could explore another important topic of when to engage citizens in such processes, something which has been debated for decades (Brownill and Carpenter, 2007).

Further to the specific use of participatory media, this research highlighted the myriad of ways in which digital technology could support policy production through, for example, crowdsourcing, mapping tools, data collection and visualisation tools, and many more. At present, most research within planning focuses on the use of digital tools in policy production to engage citizens or through technical tools such as GIS (Commonplace, no date; Bugs *et al.*, 2010; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones and Comber, 2019). In HCI, however, digital tools have been used more broadly to support a range of tasks within democratic participation processes (DiSalvo *et al.*, 2008; Le Dantec, 2012; Koeman, Kalnikaité and Rogers, 2015; Le Dantec and Fox, 2015; Asad *et al.*, 2017). Research that can bring learning from planning and HCI to explore the use of digital tools for policy tasks could move academic debate forward in terms of the low adoption of technology in planning and the ways in which the design of such tools can impact their future use.

In addition to research regarding technology and planning, future work could also focus on the interaction between policy tiers, specifically neighbourhood planning and LPA level policy. This research highlighted challenges at the interface of the two levels of policy, specifically where strategic and local objectives were at odds or where citizens felt neighbourhood plans were not used effectively in LPA decision-making. Research to explore this could seek to better understand the interactions between the policy tiers and investigate ways to improve this interface.

8.4.3 COVID-19 Pandemic Effects

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen an enormous shift in the way that planning participation is enacted both in general terms and specifically in neighbourhood planning. The research in this thesis was concluded prior

to the pandemic but it is important to reflect on the ways in which the research remains relevant within this changed context and the opportunities for future work.

Due to the pandemic, planning participation has moved online at a much-accelerated pace than has been seen in recent years. A recent Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) report found that 83% of organisations had changed the way they engaged with communities and almost all organisations felt online engagement would remain important beyond the pandemic – a large shift from previous research (Grayling Engage and RTPI, 2020). However, little is known about the specific online methods used and the report by Grayling and the RTPI fails to discuss exactly what online and digital methods have been used. Therefore, a risk remains that digital methods simply replicate offline approaches, for example, an email to replace a letter or an online survey to replace a questionnaire. Many have highlighted the opportunities created such as the ability to develop new digital platforms and toolkits, the increase in attendance at some online planning meetings, and the ability to reach out to a wider range of communities (Local Government Association, 2020; Planning Advisory Service, 2020). However, concerns remain regarding skills and resources with 73% of professionals in the Grayling research reporting that their team did not have the skills or tools to deliver online engagement, as well as fears of privacy and security issues (Grayling Engage and RTPI, 2020; Planning Advisory Service, 2020).

Specifically considering neighbourhood planning, guidance was issued that all activities must move to online and remote working, with Locality advising that desk-based tasks would be best to conduct at this stage such as gathering evidence or writing policy, and referendums are to be postponed until May 2021 (Locality, 2020b). Locality also advised that community engagement should be moved online, providing basic advice for free digital tools, and updated government guidance encouraged participation to continue (Locality, 2020a). However, it must be noted that the tools suggested continue to mimic traditional forms of engagement and do little to move beyond such approaches. There has been some discussions to

promote new modes of participation that can promote interactivity (RTPI South East, 2020) but the rapid shift due to COVID-19 has given little time to make considered decisions.

Future work could seek to understand the changing practices of neighbourhood planning groups in response to the pandemic to explore if new digital approaches have been adopted. This research could seek to understand whether the capacity of neighbourhood planning groups in using digital tools has increased and how this has changed the nature of the process and who is involved. Furthermore, future research could also seek to understand the impact of the pandemic on the process of producing a neighbourhood plan in terms of timing, expertise, and the changing nature of places in response to COVID-19. This research highlighted the complexity of the process, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding what citizens are able to achieve with a neighbourhood plan under such circumstances could help to investigate how the citizen-led tool can contribute to recovery beyond COVID-19.

Reflecting on wider planning policy processes, the advice provided was the same as for neighbourhood plans in terms of continuing with producing policy and engaging citizens, moving such tasks to online and remote modes of participation. Although the report by Grayling and the RTPI begins to highlight this move, it provides a basic understanding and does little to go into detail about the practices adopted. Therefore, little is understood about what exact methods and approaches have been employed, the impact this has on resources, and the kinds of skills required. With the report highlighting that online engagement will remain important beyond the pandemic, future research could carry out more in-depth research to explore this change. Furthermore, research to design, develop and deploy new tools for participation could be developed and could use many of the findings in this thesis, such as the design principles and suggestions for technology, as a basis. This would ensure an inclusive and equitable approach, something which was deemed as important in the Grayling and RTPI report (Grayling Engage and RTPI, 2020).

8.4.4 Planning for the Future White Paper

In August 2020, the Conservative Government released the Planning for the Future White Paper (MHCLG, 2020b) which proposes wholesale reforms to the planning system. Again, this research was concluded prior to the release of this report but the reforms propose a significantly increased use of technology within the planning system which is important to reflect on.

It is beyond the scope within this thesis to outline the many and varied proposals for the use of technology in the planning reforms, but the White Paper does propose a vision of harnessing the benefits of digitisation and ensuring that for citizens it is "radically easier to raise views" (MHCLG, 2020b, p.18). The White Paper also suggests civic engagement tools to support this new approach which includes map-based systems that are interactive, visual and accessible to all but does little to set out other digital approaches that could be used. In addition, proposal nine of the White Paper specifically state that neighbourhood plans should remain as a policy tool and "we [the government] will support communities to make better use of digital tools" (MHCLG, 2020b, p.42). The research in this thesis becomes increasingly important in the light of such reforms and the move to digital technology. During the consultation period of the reforms, I was invited by the neighbourhood planning policy team at MHCLG to attend a consultation event based on the findings of this research.

Further to this, there is a significant move within the White Paper to 'data not documents', which seeks to "move towards a modernised, open data approach" in planning with national data standards and new services developed by government and Proptech to support this (MHCLG, 2020b, p.16). The value placed on data within the White Paper further emphasises the continuous discussion within this thesis of the privileging of scientific and technical data over citizens' experiences of place in planning policy and decisions (Graham and Healey, 1999). Critics have already raised concerns that the tenor of the reforms takes a solutionist tone and that prioritising data in this way could create further inequalities in planning decisions (Beebeejaun *et al.*, 2020; Chapman, Tait and Inch, 2020).

However, government services are already in development and work has already commenced with the PropTech sector to begin to build such data services (Digital Land, 2020). Within the proposals regarding open data and data services, little is discussed as to how any of this relates to neighbourhood planning and how the needs of citizens in a citizen-led policy process will be incorporated into new standards and services. Here, this research serves to provide a critical stance towards the design and development of technology generally, and particularly in relation to tools which devalue citizens' experiences.

Future work in neighbourhood planning could seek to explore how the new technologies and data standards developed as a result of the White Paper account for the needs of citizens in neighbourhood planning. This thesis has highlighted the limited knowledge and skills held by citizens and the need for digital tools to account for this within the design. Understanding the impact of the new tools and services on neighbourhood planning groups will be important to understand if the citizen-led policy process will benefit from, or be disadvantaged by, the new approaches in the White Paper. Furthermore, the commercial aspect of developing new digital tools within the PropTech sector has implications for neighbourhood planning groups in terms of access to tools. This is particularly true with services to provide access to data whereby citizens already face significant challenges in accessing, understanding and using data within neighbourhood planning, as evidenced in this thesis.

The implications for future work from the White Paper for the wider planning field is immeasurable and the reforms have the potential to significantly transform planning practice. Opportunities for future work in this space are abundant but, reflecting on the work of this thesis, there are range of suggestions for tools to support policy processes that could be developed for both neighbourhood planning and wider LPA policy processes through the agenda of the White Paper. With central government and PropTech seen as the solution to developing such tools, research could also explore alternative models of technology development.

8.5 Recommendations for Planning Policy and Practice

Here I make specific recommendations for planning policy and practice based on this research. I begin with specific recommendations for neighbourhood planning with actions for local and central government, as well as wider support organisations. I then move to detail recommendations applicable to the wider policy landscape, including neighbourhood planning, to call for changes to cultures and practices.

8.5.1 Neighbourhood Planning Recommendations

1. Re-design the neighbourhood planning process
   The neighbourhood planning process is in need of renewal to address the complexity and challenges faced in enacting the citizen-led policy tool, and this would require two main steps.

   Firstly, central government should amend legislation to address the embedded inequalities to ensure all communities, including urban areas, are able to embark on the process of neighbourhood planning from an equal standpoint. This would include changing the way in which a formal body is defined and ensuring that both parished and un-parished areas have an equal change to undertake a plan. It is important to note, however, that such changes should account for the differences in community capacity and so changes should move to an equitable solution. Other amendments to legislation would include addressing further challenges faced whereby neighbourhood planning groups are cut out of the process once a plan is submitted, and the ways in which examination is carried out. For the former, introducing new mechanisms by which the formal body have a voice within the process and, the latter would need to introduce criteria and guidance to ensure examinations are consistent.

   Secondly, the guidance created by Locality and other organisations should be amended and a new process of neighbourhood planning detailed based on citizens' experiences. Many of the practices of neighbourhood planning have developed over time, replicated from professionalised policy processes, and a cultural change is needed to

amend the process as it currently stands to something which is more community focused.

2. Central government should support neighbourhood planning appropriately
   As well as the need to re-design the neighbourhood planning process, central government should continue to support neighbourhood plans as a policy tool and provide appropriate support. This would include refining current support mechanisms such as revising advice to address the informational needs of citizens as well as amending the way in which funding is provided and allocated. This should reflect the ways in which funding can enable communities to undertake a plan or provide a barrier to larger areas with more complex needs. Furthermore, funding should be made available to enable communities to continue to monitor and review the plan with resources to support the task.

   Furthermore, within any government support, urban and deprived communities should be prioritised to provide the means for such areas to undertake a neighbourhood plan. Central government should provide greater support which accounts for the needs of urban and deprived areas which could include more funding, support in establishing a group, and advice to help communities in considering the complex issues within urban neighbourhoods.

   Finally, central government should make funding available to LPAs to provide specific neighbourhood planning support within local government. LPA support can vary from authority to authority and the resources can also differ, central government should resource LPAs to increase their ability to support neighbourhood planning groups.

3. Ensure the neighbourhood planning process is truly citizen-led
   Neighbourhood planning was introduced to be a citizen-led policy process and the legislation and regulations allowed for flexibility in the production and final format of the planning policy. However, the practices of policymaking have tempered this factor with a policy

production process established and neighbourhood planning groups often dictated to with regards to the format of the planning policy.

Central government and LPAs should return to the citizen-led policy process, ensuring plans are led by communities. They should provide support and advice to ensure neighbourhood plans are useable in day-to-day decisions whilst also ensuring citizens have flexibility in the production and formatting of policy documents.

4. LPAs to make clear their remit of supporting neighbourhood planning and their strategic position
   The level of support for neighbourhood planning and the resources within LPAs vary between authorities, however, the duty to support contained within legislation ensures LPAs must provide groups with some guidance. In this sense, LPAs should make their remit clear to any neighbourhood planning groups in a way which can set expectations and provide clear roles from the beginning of the process. One approach to this would be through a service agreement. Furthermore, such agreements should also include how the various departments of the LPA will provide support or comments to avoid issues later in the process.

   In addition to the level of support, LPAs should also work with neighbourhood planning groups to make clear the strategic position of the authority with regards to their local plan and evidence base. This would enable more joined up approaches to policymaking across neighbourhood and local policy tiers.

5. Neighbourhood planning and LPAs to work more closely together
   As well as the general support, remit and commitment of LPAs, there should be closer working with the variety of departments and professionals that make up a planning authority, including development management, environmental, conservation, infrastructure and many more. This would enable neighbourhood planning groups to receive advice early in the process from a wide range of professionals rather

than the current approach where detailed comments are provided at the end. In addition, development management, as the team to use policy in decisions day-to-day, are often not part of the policymaking process, but it is important that there are opportunities for citizens to liaise with the team to understand how policy is used and what is required to ensure policy is fit for purpose.

6. Suitable support and guidance on monitoring and reviewing
   There is a need for greater support and guidance for neighbourhood planning groups to monitor and review their policy plans once complete and adopted by LPAs. There is currently very limited advice and no funding to support this important task and this leaves an uneven picture of which groups stay involved beyond the plan production process. In this sense, central government should provide advice and funded support, LPAs should encourage groups to remain involved and provide locally appropriate support to do so, and support organisations should provide greater advice on what this entails.

8.5.2 Wider Planning Policy and Practice Recommendations

1. A greater focus on equity and inclusion in policymaking
   Equity and inclusion should be the basis of policymaking to ensure the needs of all citizens are accounted for in planning policy. To do so, inclusive engagement should be prioritised in ways that ensure all groups within society are able to participate in policymaking processes. This is often discussed both in academia and practice, but little is done to actively change practices in real world policy processes. Traditional engagement approaches are accepted as the norm and it is rare that policymakers move beyond such methods. Furthermore, the policy itself is rarely considered in terms of equity, particularly thinking about how policy outcomes would benefit or disadvantage various citizens and communities. A change in focus within policymaking is needed toward equitable and inclusive policies that can create places which account for the needs of all of society. This requires a cultural shift in planning practice to recognise such concepts as important as well as

practical steps to achieve inclusivity and equity in practice which recommendations 2-4 below will address.

2. Acceptance of multiple forms of knowledge
   It is well documented in academic literature that technical evidence is privileged over other forms of knowledge. Yet, a contradiction emerges with the increase in participation in policymaking and calls for greater, more effective engagement, which fails to acknowledge how such participatory responses will sit alongside the technical evidence. A wide, cultural shift is required in the field of planning (and beyond) to recognise that knowledge comes in many forms and that even technical evidence seen as superior, is created through political processes. The planning field must move away from a simplistic understanding of what constitutes evidences and look to incorporate citizens experiences within policymaking processes. Furthermore, a full shift to accepting the wider forms of knowledge and evidence would also require legislation and regulations which recognise this so such changes can be fully brought to fruition in the quasi-legal planning system.

3. A greater focus on engagement practices and skills
   Citizen participation requires knowledge and skills to carry out such tasks well, and this includes knowing how to configure participation, the ability to choose appropriate methods and making the range of decisions involved in designing participatory activities. Such skills are often lacking within policymaking processes and it is important that planners and others involved in policymaking, including neighbourhood planners, are able to gain such skills to engage communities in decision-making processes.

   A number of approaches could be taken to improve knowledge and skills of engagement practices, beginning with greater planning education focused on the design of participatory processes and how the decisions made impact on the outcomes and who can be involved, to events organised for continuing professional development focused on

engagement, of which there are often a number by a wide range of organisations. Support for training and skill development is particularly important with the introduction of new digital modes of participation and the potential for such approaches to become more common within planning practice. In addition, there was a recognition throughout this research that the skills of 'experts' are required to support citizen engagement but that this does not need to be a planner. Therefore, a consideration of embedding community development practices and approaches would also support this element.

4. Development and adoption of digital technologies for planning
   There is increased interest in the development of digital technologies to support various elements of planning and policymaking, including digital modes of citizen participation. Firstly, development of digital tools should continue with alternative models of development explored beyond commercial modes. Central government should continue to develop tools through user-centred design methodologies and should seek to involve a wider range of users to inform development. Links should be created to academic technology developments, of which there is many, and ways to take forward such ideas into planning practice should be explored.

   Secondly, digital tools should be developed to support the array of tasks within policymaking, including citizen participation, gathering and interpreting evidence, and imagining new future for places. Digital technology provides the means by which to create a myriad of new, interactive digital tools that can both seek to open up the policymaking process to a wider audience and support the task if policy creation itself.

   Furthermore, the use of creative and imaginative technologies should be encouraged and developed that can enable the sharing of experiences. The use of Bootlegger as a participatory media tool within this research showed the value in enabling citizens' to capture their situated and everyday experiences. The development of tools that

further encourage creativity and support future imaginings of place should also be developed and adopted.

Finally, support is required for the adoption and use of such tools within planning practice at national, local and neighbourhood level. Citizens and planners often lack knowledge and skills in relation to digital technology and those involved in making decisions about the configuration and use of such tools require support and training to understand their role and how decisions can be made to account for inclusivity.

8.6 Final Remarks

There have long been calls for citizens to be more directly involved in policymaking and decision-making in planning both from academia and practice. The undulating history of citizen participation has highlighted the challenges and barriers where the decisions made about how to conduct engagement, the reliance on traditional methods and the level of influence on outcomes have all become key concerns. Furthermore, the foundation of planning has embedded within that a scientific approach to decisions remains superior to incorporating the lay experiential knowledge of citizens' experiences of place. With the dawning of a new era, where the introduction of neighbourhood planning enabled citizens to directly create policy, a positive step was taken for those who champion public participation. However, the continuance of the barriers to participation, the continuing devaluation of experiential knowledge and the complexity of the neighbourhood planning process ensured that the opportunity was reserved for communities with the skills and resources to take part.

With research evidencing the complexity of the neighbourhood planning process, more research was needed to gather the in-depth qualitative experiences of citizens enacting this policy process. When the full extent of the challenges citizens face in undertaking a neighbourhood plan are considered alongside the evidence of significant inequalities in who takes part, the need to re-design and renew the policy tool is clear. Where

challenges and inequalities are embedded within the foundational structures and legislation, it must be necessary to breakdown those structures and rebuild in a way which promotes equity and inclusion.

The support available for neighbourhood planning groups, at first glance, seems abundant with Locality providing financial and technical support along with online documents as guidance, and a range of other planning organisations also providing online guidance. However, in listening to citizens engaged in the process of neighbourhood planning, the support continues to vary and does not support citizens in *how* to produce a plan – a key missing link. Further support of the right type and kind is needed to enable citizens to engage with ease and to encourage a wider demographic of communities to take part. With the first step to that support being the need to re-design the process, other forms of non-digital support are also required beyond this to provide new methods of engagement and new guidance that addresses citizens' needs.

An important element within this research was to also consider the need for digital support for citizens in neighbourhood planning. Working across disciplines can bring new innovative approaches as researchers learn from one another and merge the learning from various fields of study – in this case, planning and HCI. The use of digital tools for participation in HCI has seen a rapid growth with the civic turn within the field and the emergence of the digital civics research agenda whereby technology to support planning and place-based participation has significantly increased. However, the use in planning practice remains limited and no research had been conducted in neighbourhood planning. Through this research, it is clear that digital technology could play a vital role in supporting citizens in engaging with and undertaking a neighbourhood plan but it is essential that such tools are designed inclusively and equitably – the same as the approach to designing policy processes.

This research has sought to understand citizens' experiences of enacting the neighbourhood planning process as a way to centre their needs in developing and designing much-needed support. Thousands of

communities across England have embarked upon a neighbourhood plan as a way to have their voice heard directly in planning policy. Arguing the need for an appropriate and fit for purpose policy process, and providing support within that, places citizens at the heart of neighbourhood planning.

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Appendix A: Digital Tools in Planning

As part of the review of literature, a comprehensive search was carried out to identify digital tools used within planning participation and found a significant number of technologies in research and beyond. Here, I outline the breadth of digital tools used in planning participation across multiple modalities of engagement, first detailing the ways in which such tools have been categorised and providing a table of individual tools.

To review technology in a rapidly evolving and developing field, I use academic literature, relevant non-academic reports and, where possible, include commercially available products. To provide a structure to the review, I used the relevant categories from the Civic Tech Field Guide – a globally crowdsourced online database that categorises technology to create a collection of tools and projects (Stempeck and Sifry, 2015). It must be noted here that the Civic Tech Field Guide also evolves and changes as a crowdsourced tool and so the framework from March 2020 has been used in this thesis.

In addition to this, as part of the review I consider the type and level of participation in two ways. Firstly, I use Saldivar et al's (2018) definition of government- or citizen-centric technology which states that the former is used by cities for services, civic engagement and data analysis to inform decisions, and the latter is tools that enable citizens to connect, collaborate and be empowered with each other and government. Secondly, I use an adapted participation framework developed by Involve (Warburton, Wilson and Rainbow, 2007) which shows the increasing level of public influence that can occur in participation (see Figure 38).

The results of this can be seen in Table 11 below. Using the above frameworks, I was able to categorise tools by type of technology (e.g. ideation and voting, or games and play). I was also able to place the tools within the framework seen in Figure 38 by understanding what the tools aimed to achieve, whether they were owned or led by citizens or government, and the level of influence that was achieved through the use of the tool.

Figure 38: Levels of participation framework

(adapted from Involve (Warburton, Wilson and Rainbow, 2007) and Saldivar (2018))

Increasing level of public influence →					
Gov-Centric	**Inform** The government provides information to assist the public in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions that they have identified.	**Consult** The government obtain public feedback on analysis, or decisions they have made.	**Involve** The government work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure they understand and consider the concerns, needs and aspirations of the public.	**Collaborate** The government partner with the public through the decision process to collaboratively develop alternatives and identify preferred solutions.	**Empower** The government share power by placing the final decision in the hands of the public.
Citizen-Centric	Citizens provide other citizens with information to gain support and connect, or citizens report information to government. **Inform**	Citizens provide feedback on citizen-led policy, action or decisions and provide opinions or data to support/oppose the course of action. **Consult**	Citizens work together or with government to embed their needs into a process, action, or decision. **Involve**	Citizens work together or with government to support decisions to be made through active participation e.g. citizen science. **Collaborate**	Citizens take local action through activist means or citizen-led local projects. Alternatively, citizens are given direct power by government to make decisions. **Empower**
Increasing level of public influence →					

Table 11: Comprehensive review of digital tools in place-based research

TECHNOLOGY CATEGORY	STUDY/TOOL	DESCRIPTION	LEVEL/TYPE OF PARTICIPATION
Ideation and Voting	PosterVote (Vlachokyriakos et al., 2014)	Simple poster displaying a question with multiple choice options as responses that citizens select. Incorporates low-tech hardware which collects responses and downloads data to a central point.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Ideation and Voting	Neighborland (2020)	Ideation platform that documents, shares and connects different project ideas for local neighbourhoods. Combines online and offline methodologies, encouraging ideas to be suggested, shared and digital comments geotagged to help show the most popular suggestions (Lydon and Garcia, 2015).	Citizen-Centric Involve
Ideation and Voting	Better Reykjavik (Lackaff, 2016)	Site to promote participation and problem-solving where citizens submit policy proposals, debate, vote and prioritise with commitment from institutions that the top five suggestions each month would be taken forward.	Gov-Centric Involve
Ideation and Voting	Osalee.ee (Astrom et al., 2013)	Citizens comment on proposals and vote on the content with a government response also expected.	Gov-Centric Involve
Ideation and Voting (Social Media)	ACTion Alexandria (Hansen et al., 2014)	Web platform and social media enables citizens to brainstorm ideas for specific local community challenges and vote on their potential, encouraging the involvement of underrepresented groups.	Citizen-Centric Empower

Online Forums	Speakers Corner and Policy Forum (Moss and Coleman, 2014)	Two forums to provide a two-way link between government and citizens which allowed discussion of key political topics. Issues in practice reduced communication and limited government responses.	Gov-Centric Consult
Online Forums	MindMixer (Lydon and Garcia, 2015)	Enabled citizens to register and receive notification of engagement events or activities related to their interests, and it served to widen engagement.	Gov-Centric Inform
Online Forums	CityCard (Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Kouzmin, 2003)	Pilot project enabling citizens to report issues through a forum, expanding on the traditional reporting mechanisms where citizens could debate issues, suggest solutions and produce collaborative documents.	Gov-Centric Involve
Online Forums	RegulationRoom (Farina et al., 2014).	Used prompts, detailed posts and data to enable discussion of political decisions encouraging citizens to comment to support constructive and useful debate.	Gov-Centric Collaborate
Online Forums	Loomio (Jackson and Kuehn, 2016)	Encouraged debate about decisions with the wider community rather than a few, key expert decision-makers, and many were able to provide information and resources to support discourse.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Map-Based Tech	MakePlace (Peacock, Anderson and Crivellaro, 2018)	Enables pins to be placed on a digital map and was used with young people to help them make sense of data. Enabled a thoughtful process encouraging peer-to-peer extended discussion.	Citizen-Centric Empower

Map-Based Tech	Web-based planning support system (Kingston and Vlastaras, 2020)	Developed a web-based platform to enable individuals and communities to access and use evidence that is already in the public domain, together with evidence that they collected themselves, using volunteered geographic information approaches to prepare their neighbourhood plan.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Map-Based Tech	WebMapMedia (Nuojua, Soudunsaari and Hentilä, 2010),	App piloted in three locales allowing citizens to express feelings about their environment by placing comments and media onto a digital map, enabled flexibility in participation, provided continuity throughout a longer engagement process, and encouraged mediated participation between citizens and the local authority.	Gov-Centric Involve
Map-Based Tech	Paint the Town (Hanzl, 2007)	Presented information, created scenarios and gathered local expectations on planning proposals.	Gov-Centric Consult
Map-Based Tech	Virtual Slaithwaite (Kingston et al., 2000)	Enabled citizens to zoom and pan on a map to select features, retrieve information and add comments.	Gov-Centric Consult
Map-Based Tech	Argumentation Map (Keßler, Rinner and Raubal, 2005)	Allowed comments on a map which were geo-referenced and could link the text to the map for easy reference and viewing.	Gov-Centric Consult

Map-Based Tech	FixMyStreet (MySociety, 2007)	An app and website to allow citizens to report problems in their local neighbourhood to local government using a map.	Citizen-Centric Inform
Map-Based Tech	Commonplace	A commercial digital map platform allowing citizens to input comments on a map to submit within planning consultations.	Gov-Centric Consult
Map-Based Tech	Place Check (2017)	Website application to walk your local area and asks questions to respond to about your local neighbourhood.	Gov-Centric Consult
Online Events	AmericaSpeaks (Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2002)	Within a traditional public meeting, networked computers enabled online flipcharts, recording ideas and transmitting data to a central point. Also enabled in-person meeting to combine with online world through voting and feedback functionalities.	Gov-Centric Consult
Crowdsourcing	Your Freedom (Moss and Coleman, 2014)	Enabled citizens to suggest laws and regulations that should be repealed and received a high rate of participation.	Gov-Centric Consult
Crowdsourcing	I See Change (2012)	Combining citizen science and crowdsourcing, the tool allows citizens to investigate how weather and climate change is affecting their environment. Enables citizen data collection such as posting instances of flooding, use pictures, geotagged locations, storytelling and descriptions (Nugent, 2018).	Citizen-Centric Collaborate
Crowdsourcing	Rhavakogu (People's	Site to crowdsource proposals for policy that were categorised into topic areas. It enabled	Gov-Centric Collaborate

	Assembly) (Astrom et al., 2013)	commenting to discuss and ended with voting in-person.	
Crowdsourcing	PolicyScape (Kim et al., 2019)	Incorporates deliberative practices into the crowdsourcing of policy ideas encouraging citizens to share how a policy would affect their daily lives.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Crowdsourcing	Consider.It (Kriplean *et al.*, 2012)	Designed to encourage public deliberation on contested policy topics within elections. Uses a pros/cons framing to encourage citizens to deliberate personally and then explore other opinions to aggregate positions.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Crowdsourcing	SpokesPeople (Maskell *et al.*, 2018)	App to allow cyclists to collect, curate and make visible everyday cycling journeys to use as routes to action.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Crowdsourcing	Sense My Street (Puussaar, 2018)	Enables citizens to commission sensor kits to capture their own data of local environmental conditions and use the data to support campaigns.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Data Visualisation	Community Viz (Berna, 2010)	Simulates future states after the input of data such as exploring development proposals or policies and helps citizens understand their impact and provide feedback.	Gov-Centric Consult
Data Visualisation	What if? 2.0 (Hanzl, 2007)	Projects future land-use patterns after inputting policy choices to visualise consequences of decisions to provide feedback.	Gov-Centric Consult

Data Visualisation	SeePlan (Hemmersam et al., 2015)	Developed to visualise archives of planning to highlight planning issues. Consists of three mediations of data: 1) *PlanAR* uses augmented reality to map the archive back into the city; 2) *Planimator* visualises temporal snapshots that focus on trends in the data; and 3) *DynaPlan* uses visual analysis to reveal structural factors at play in urban development.	Gov-Centric Inform
Data Visualisation	Data:In Place (Puussaar et al., 2018).	An open source web tool supporting citizens to access, interpret and make sense of open data available to them to support involvement in decisions or collective action.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Games	Play the City (Tan, 2018)	An organisation that brings together stakeholders to apply gaming to complex challenges in cities. Digital interfaces, data and visualisations support the game and decisions within it (Play the City, 2020).	Gov-Centric Collaborate
Games	Community Conversational (Johnson et al., 2017).	Hybrid table-top game incorporates a map, prompt cards, a form of digital capture using a video camera and markers that can be moved to locations on the map that are tracked for later analysis, all to capture everyday deliberative talk about places as part of a participatory planning process.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Games	LocaLudo (Huyghe et al., 2014)	Family game to explore the qualities, concerns and values of local communities and which	Citizen-Centric Consult

		enabled the creation of new ideas for the future of place.	
Games	Wired Whitehall (Hanzl, 2007)	Site which allowed exploration of the historic centre of London whilst interacting with objects to make common decisions with other game players about future development proposals.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Games	@stake (Gordon, Michelson and Haas, 2016)	Table-top card game that encourages players to gain a deeper understanding of community needs by considering different perspectives and moving to make collective decisions.	Citizen-Centric Collaborate
Augmented and Virtual Reality	Second Life (Foth et al., 2009)	Provided a virtual neighbourhood that allowed citizens to explore proposals for the area through a series of tasks and enabled citizens to role-play, considering the proposals from multiple perspectives.	Gov-Centric Consult
Augmented and Virtual Reality	Participatory Pokémon Go (Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, 2017)	Using the popular Pokémon Go, engaged young people to identify and celebrate meaningful locations to them and their community by creating short video clips with a youth-led review process resulting in clips being included in the augmented reality app.	Citizen-Centric Inform
Augmented and Virtual Reality	AR ARTHUR (Broll et al., 2004)	Used to enhance round table discussions about design and planning decisions with professionals.	Gov-Centric Inform
Augmented and Virtual Reality	AR CAVE (Hanzl, 2007)	Using a white room to project videos and the use of sensors to capture interactions with	Gov-Centric Consult

		simulations of future developments to gather feedback.	
Digital Media	Vox Populi (Bhimani et al., 2013)	A tool story creation and sharing of user generated video context which aimed to create community narratives of experiences of place.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Digital Media	Civic Life Online (Rheingold, 2008)	Media production tools where youth publicly communicated issues they care about in activist roles.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Digital Media	Interactive Design Documentaries (Green, Crivellaro and Tidey, 2015)	A lightweight approach to creating media documentaries that can facilitate encounters and exchanges across public and online spaces to catalyse community dialogues and empower citizens to act.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Digital Media	StoryTrek (Khaled et al., 2011)	Citizens create a narrative through real-time, location-aware stories whilst moving through physical space. It enabled agency in creating their narrative whilst allowing them to consider alternative perspectives, reflect on their stories and, when used with other citizens, create a shared experience.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Digital Media	I'm Your Body (Korn and Back, 2012).	Location-based mobile storytelling platform to share thoughts and feelings about a place as a political tool.	Gov-Centric Consult
Physical and Situated Tech	Viewpoint (Taylor et al.,	Takes the decision-making processes to sites where everyday talk occurs, provided	Gov-Centric Consult

	2012; Johnson et al., 2016)	opportunity to gather feedback from citizens to support political decision-making.	
Physical and Situated Tech	Discussions in Space (Schroeter and Foth, 2009)	Publicly visible screen sharing questions and data-based answers to encourage discussion about civic issues.	Gov-Centric Inform
Physical and Situated Tech	ChangeExplorer (Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones and Comber, 2019)	Apple Watch and counterpart app to notify citizens of the potential of development change when they entered an area. It allowed citizens to respond to quick and easy prompt questions with further engagement encouraged via the app.	Gov-Centric Consult
Physical and Situated Tech	Voting Boxes (Koeman, Kalnikaité and Rogers, 2015)	Used low-tech input devices in shops and visualisations along the street enabling citizens to vote on local questions.	Citizen-Centric Collaborate
Physical and Situated Tech	Vote as you go (Hespanhol et al., 2015).	Screens for voting with interactive visual graphics overlaid on a live camera feed to attract attention and further situate the interaction in place.	Gov-Centric Inform
Physical and Situated Tech	JigsAudio (Wilson and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019)	Using low-tech hardware in the form of a jigsaw, encouraged citizens to draw and record their views in a range of engagement events to capture citizens' experiences and feelings of places.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Physical and Situated Tech	Techno-tapestry (Gant et al., 2015)	Co-designed hybrid digital and physical engagement devices created by young people	Citizen-Centric Empower

		that resulted in a techno-tapestry to elicit feelings about place.	
Physical and Situated Tech	Vox Box (Golsteijn *et al.*, 2015)	A physical, tangible system for gathering opinions to use at events and explore a range of topics.	Gov-Centric Consult
Digital Messaging	WhatFutures (Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2019)	Large-scale global engagement using WhatsApp in a game format using the features available to users, including organising citizens into groups, and sharing voice notes, links, and images, to create a global vision.	Gov-Centric Collaborate
Digital Messaging	Young Adults' Political Experience Sampling (Heiss and Matthes, 2017)	Data collection using WhatsApp messages which enabled young people to explore issues in their everyday lives related to place.	Citizen-Centric Involve
Social Media	A Pool of Dreams (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2014)	Studied citizens' appropriation and use of Facebook to enable virtual participation in a way that suits them to campaign and take action for local places.	Citizen-Centric Empower
Social Media	Various (Mascaro and Goggins, 2011; Crivellaro *et al.*, 2014; Semaan *et al.*, 2014)	Using social media to raise awareness of issues, debate and encourage action in planning decisions.	Citizen-Centric Empower

Social Media	Neighbourhood groups (Afzalan and Evans-Cowley, 2015)	A way to connect citizens about their immediate locale. Not all discussions centre on planning, but those that do can inform future decisions.	Gov-Centric Consult
Social Media	Microblogging (Evans-Cowley and Griffin, 2011)	Where short comments, phrases, images, videos and other data from social media could be captured for analysis as part of planning processes.	
Social Media	Geotagged posts (Shelton, Poorthuis and Zook, 2015)	Social media to analyse spatial factors to support participatory practices and gathering citizen feedback. Example: 5.7 million tweets were used to consider the socio-spatial mobilities of neighbourhoods that, when analysed, showed a clear divide between areas that defined the city.	
Games Online Forum Social Media	Let's Talk Parks (Crivellaro *et al.*, 2019)	A large-scale engagement using a suite of tools to engage citizens in the future of the city's parks. Used a game, website for discussion and Twitter to prompt questions.	Citizen-Centric Consult
Digital Media Data Visualisation Augmented and Virtual Reality	Electronic Neighborhood (Holmgren *et al.*, 2004)	A virtual public space for citizens to connect and virtually visit sites to discuss the vision for future development.	Gov-Centric Consult

Appendix B: Embedding in an Urban Neighbourhood Plan

During the research in this thesis, I was involved in another case study with a potential neighbourhood planning group in Meadow Well, North Tyneside. The intention was to work with this group long-term throughout the PhD research to understand how citizens enact the process (RQ1) and explore a variety of tools that I would co-design with citizens along the way (RQ2 and RQ3). However, the neighbourhood plan did not go ahead and, thus, I report the failed case study as a way to reflect on the challenges present in the neighbourhood planning process, particularly from the perspective of an urban, deprived area.

In this Appendix I begin by outlining the context of the research, including the participants involved and the methods used as well as reflecting on the intention for future research. I then move to reflect on the process of working with Meadow Well, highlighting the issues with community capacity and confidence and the LPA relationships as well as reflecting on some of the reasons for the eventual disbanding of the neighbourhood planning group. Finally, I reflect on the ways in which this research contributes to the findings within the main body of the thesis by discussing the need for change and improvements to the neighbourhood planning process and the need for greater support.

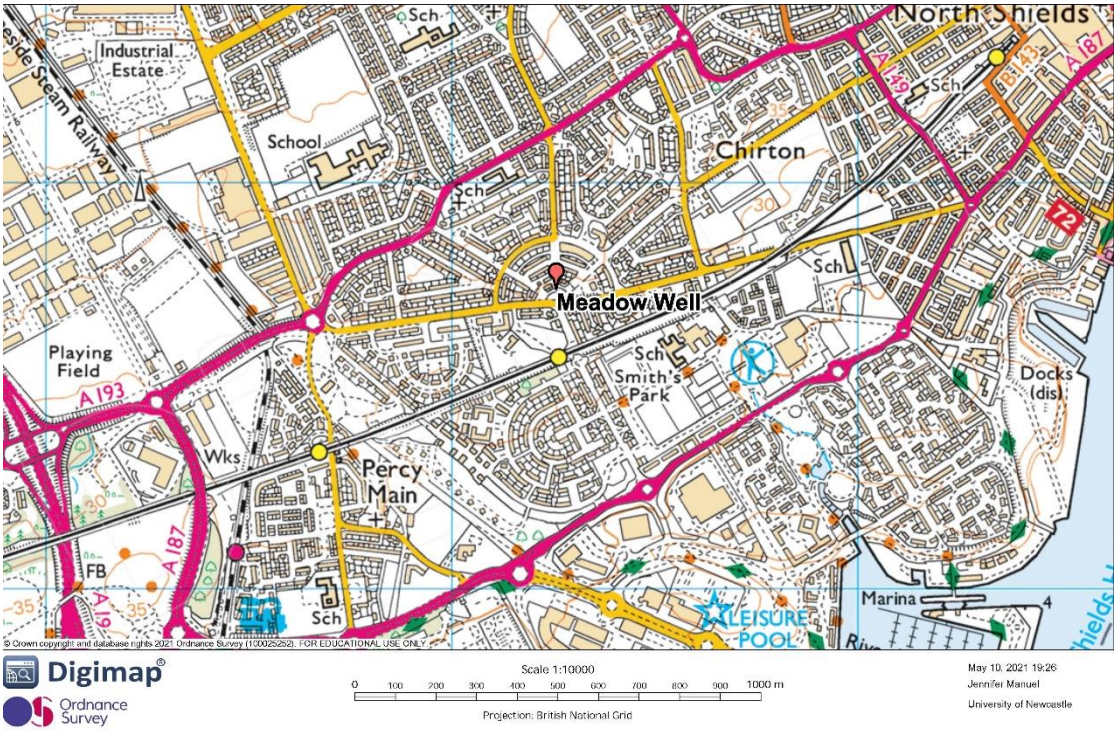
Research Design

Meadow Well Context

Meadow Well is an urban area in North Tyneside, located approximately 6 miles east of Newcastle upon Tyne (see Figure 39 and 40 below). The Meadow Well estate mostly consists of housing, with a few local shops and two charitable organisations, Cedarwood Trust and Meadow Well Connected, which provide a range of services and support to citizens. The estate is physically separated in two by the Nexus Metro line.

Figure 39: Regional location map of Meadow Well

Figure 40: Location map of Meadow Well



As a brief introduction to Meadow Well, the estate was originally constructed in the 1930s to house residents from a nearby slum clearance programme, but the housing was of poor quality and required

improvements and upgrades in 1970s. Issues such as poverty, overcrowding, and poor quality housing have persisted and, although it is beyond this thesis to provide a detailed history, it is important to understand the complex social, economic and environmental factors at play over time. Currently, Meadow Well is within the top 10% most deprived areas according the Index of Multiple Deprivation (MHCLG, 2019), with almost one third of residents holding no qualifications, a lower life expectancy for residents compared to the borough average, and child poverty over 25% (North Tyneside Council, 2019). Residents surveys have shown issues of anti-social behaviour, poor quality housing, a lack of options with regards to housing tenure and poor job prospects, and residents reported significant economic barriers such as difficulties affording food, paying bills including rent and mortgage, and a reliance on high interest money lenders (North Tyneside Council, 2019). In many cases, Meadow Well is often most known for the 1991 riots, a stigma that persists today and one which many residents feel is an unfair representation of the neighbourhood (Johnson *et al.*, 2018).

Meadow Well Neighbourhood Plan

This research joins Meadow Well in 2016 as a group of citizens and staff from a range of local organisations began meeting together at Cedarwood Trust with the intention of beginning a neighbourhood plan. Meadow Well was selected as one of the areas to take part in the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Neighbourhood Planning and Capacity Building Programme delivered by planning consultancy Renaisi. The programme aimed to educate and train communities before undertaking a neighbourhood plan with the intention to support urban and deprived areas to take up the opportunity (Renaisi, 2016). There is a lack of information available regarding the scheme, however, the programme was set up to be delivered over three months with a phase of education which moved into a phase of action to begin formulating a group and plan. The intention was that, by the end of the programme, the group would be in a position to submit a formal application to the LPA to become a forum and a recognised neighbourhood planning area. Thus, Meadow Well were at

the earliest stages of neighbourhood planning – attempting to understand the process and decide whether this was the right tool for them to take forward. The group consisted of approximately 20 members, with a regular attendance of 14-18 individuals – Table 12 provides a summary of all participants and their role.

Table 12: Summary of participants in Meadow Well

Note: The pseudonyms will be used throughout the findings.

Pseudonym	Role
Mark	Planning consultant, Renaisi
Peter	Planning consultant, Renaisi
Paul	CEO of local charity
Debra	Community Organiser of local charity Local resident (Had worked on neighbourhood planning in the area previously)
Diane	Project Worker of local charity
Hayley	Engagement Officer at North Tyneside Council
Kacey	Part of the Engagement Team at North Tyneside Council, also a local resident
Rachel	Community Development Officer of local charity
Geoff	Development Manager of local charity
Miriam	Chief Officer of local charity
Tanya	Local resident Board member of local charity
Sarah	Local resident
Lauren	Local resident
Sylvia	Local resident
Rebecca	Local resident
Kate	Local resident
Monica	Local resident
Amber	Local resident
Hannah	Local resident
David	Local resident

It is important to note that the previous year Cedarwood Trust had secured six months of grant funding to undertake a neighbourhood plan during which Debra conducted research to understand what a neighbourhood

plan is and how to go about it. The staff member was able to establish a group of 21 residents to create a forum and drew a boundary for the plan which consisted of the Meadow Well estate. However, the process stalled as the funding came to an end and the group felt they did not have the knowledge to take forward the plan alone. Furthermore, there was no LPA involvement in the plan due to a lack of trust between residents and the local authority. Debra was involved in the new neighbourhood planning group, but no other forum members remained.

Method

I became involved with the neighbourhood planning group in Meadow Well through a wider collaboration between two PhD students within Open Lab, also part of the Centre for Doctoral Training in Digital Civics. One student had worked with Cedarwood Trust on an unrelated project previously and I was introduced due to the connection to neighbourhood planning. The two PhD students remained involved and all three of us attended the neighbourhood planning meetings with differing interests. Taking an action research approach, I became involved with the neighbourhood planning group, attending meetings, building relationships, familiarising myself with the area and issues faced as well as supporting the group through my own skills and knowledge. This enabled me to observe, contribute and interpret the interactions of this research as a participant researcher.

The intention with this project was to work alongside the neighbourhood planning group long-term, supporting the plan production where possible and doing so throughout my PhD. However, research with the Meadow Well neighbourhood planning group was conducted over a nine-month period when the engagement stopped and the group gradually disbanded. During this time, I collected data through written reflexive field notes of my experiences based on my observations and reflections during meetings and wider associated activities, including the email communication with the group and my fellow PhD colleagues. The wider communication is important to understand how the neighbourhood plan was organised and

to be able to investigate some of the failings of the neighbourhood planning process and the research.

Findings from a Failed Neighbourhood Plan

The findings from this research highlight the difficulties faced by urban and deprived communities in undertaking a neighbourhood plan. Below, I reflect upon the capacity and confidence of the group, the LPA relationship and the loss of momentum which affected the plan's success.

Capacity and Confidence

Previous academic research has identified the lack of community capacity in urban and deprived areas as a specific barrier to undertaking a neighbourhood plan (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011; Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015b), particularly highlighting the lack of existing governance structures and resources as well as the lower rates of volunteering (Gallent, 2013; Parker, 2017). The capacity and confidence of the community were a particular issue in this research, particularly linked to the capacity building programme, and manifested in many ways.

Firstly, it was common throughout this research that local citizens continuously referred to Debra as a fellow local resident who was also recognised as a community leader and knowledgeable in neighbourhood planning due to her previous work. This continued beyond the initial training phase of the DCLG Capacity Building Programme where local residents expected Debra to take on the neighbourhood planning tasks and would not volunteer themselves. The overall lack of commitment by residents became a concern to the planning consultants and local organisations and, in particular, Debra was concerned that her fellow citizens would prefer her to do all of the work: *"It's a little worrying just because Denise, you can't do everything. It seems they are really hesitant to volunteer"* (Mark). At this stage, the various stakeholders were uncertain why this was the case and how to empower citizens to take on a larger role, but the issue of community capacity was central to the discussion.

Secondly, the Capacity Building Programme was delivered to citizens in a way which limited their ability to engage and develop their skills and knowledge. The education phase of the programme was delivered through a series of sessions in which Mark and Peter would deliver long presentations to citizens explaining the neighbourhood planning process with little two-way communication. Throughout this phase, planning jargon was regularly used and the mode of delivery resulted in the alienation of local residents who were reluctant to ask questions and engage with the material. The training also failed to provide sufficient education regarding planning and non-planning issues and their relationship within a neighbourhood plan. Consequently, the education programme did little to materially improve citizens' capacities through the lack of information in an understandable format. This became evident in later sessions when citizens shared a range of issues they hoped to address through the process and all were not related to planning and count not be addressed through a neighbourhood plan.

Another key issue was that the capacity of citizens was further limited by the approach to the setup of the capacity programme which saw power retained by the planning consultants and local organisations. The opportunity to take part in the capacity building programme materialised due to discussions between Renaisi, the LPA and local organisations with no involvement from local citizens in Meadow Well. During the neighbourhood planning group meetings, the consultants introduced a ready-made action plan which had been created from the initial bid used to access the capacity scheme. The action plan, therefore, was created without citizen input and did not relate to the meetings of the group that had taken place for over a month. Through this, it was evident that the power was retained with the planning consultants and local organisations instead of handing power to citizens in a way which provided support and built their capacity to lead. The conflicting picture of neighbourhood planning as an empowerment tool whilst power remained with others reminded citizens of other consultative processes where they had not been listened to and felt their views to be worthless.

The capacity programme had a very limited impact on the neighbourhood planning group and the issues of capacity and confidence continued to emerge. The underlying issues surfaced when I invited the group to attend a Locality networking event in Durham which was for North East neighbourhood plans. No citizens volunteered to attend the event and, during a later discussion, citizens stated that only *"groups in posh areas do this, so I don't want to go sit in a room with them all"* (Lauren) and *"they'd just look down their noses at us"* (Kate). The discussion highlighted the significant lack of confidence of citizens and their feelings that the policy tool was not created for groups in urban and deprived areas, something which the capacity programme had not addressed. The earlier issue of a lack of volunteers to take on tasks in neighbourhood planning and the constant referral back to Debra stemmed from the lack of confidence and was seen to be a major barrier despite the capacity building programme:

> *"I think they don't have confidence. And it's not because they're not capable. Even in this group, I think there's still a bit of that 'what's the point' mindset because they still don't see how powerful neighbourhood plans can be. Like, they're still thinking 'well the council won't listen anyway'. So then they don't want to put themselves forward for tasks because they don't have the confidence to from years of being told 'no'"* (Debra)

Finally, the lack of community capacity and confidence and the efficacy of the capacity building programme was evidenced through the lack of progress made during the three-month programme. The programme intended that the neighbourhood group would be in a position to submit a formal application to the LPA by the end of the scheme, having decided a boundary and created a forum. However, none of these tasks had been completed before the end of the support from the planning consultants and no mechanisms were put in place to support the continuation of the neighbourhood planning group. The community were unable to step up to take responsibility at this stage and the local charities were left to step into the unknown role of facilitating the neighbourhood plan.

LPA Relationships

The LPA have a 'duty to support' neighbourhood planning groups and the policy process requires working with the LPA to varying extents. The relationship between neighbourhood planning groups and the LPA is important and there were significant issues with this element in Meadow Well.

The local residents in attendance at the Meadow Well neighbourhood planning group shared their distrust of North Tyneside Council from early in the process and this legacy of poor relationships impacted the neighbourhood plan. During the second session the group had with the planning consultants, Mark and Peter explained the need to work with the LPA and were met with negative responses from local residents:

> *"So we have to work with the local authority? Well, they ever listen to us so what's the point? They'll just turn down the application or make it difficult."* (Sarah)

> *"But would they even pay any attention to anything we wanted? Like what difference does this thing make?"* (Sylvia)

This negative relationship had developed over many years with residents feeling the neighbourhood had been neglected by the local authority. Residents felt the status of the area – one of the country's top 10% most deprived areas – meant the local authority did not want to spend time and resources on improvements. Some residents and staff from local organisations went so far as to suggest that the local authority benefits from the deprived status, particularly when applying for grants to draw on the community need to win funding. There was, however, an interesting contrast with the council staff in attendance at the meeting who were seen as different and were accepted as part of the community due to the long-term relationship that had been built up: *"The council never listen to us. Well, with the exception of Hayley and her lot. They're different. They don't count"* (Lauren).

During the capacity building programme, the planning consultants suggested the need to connect with the LPA to build a productive relationship for the neighbourhood plan and to seek advice from planners in the borough. In preparation for this meeting, a lot of effort was given over to preparing the group to speak with confidence to the planning officer about the neighbourhood plan. The consultants provided advice to focus on the protection of green spaces, I was asked to deliver a small session focused on planning and non-planning issues, and immediately prior to the meeting with the LPA, the consultants encouraged the residents to rehearse the issues to ensure the meeting stayed focused and productive. The level of support required and the approach taken in preparing for the meeting further highlights issues of capacity, but it also signifies the extremely strained relationship between the community and the LPA.

During the meeting with the LPA, the residents felt their concerns and fears were confirmed with a negative approach taken by the planning officer in attendance. The planning officer listened to the residents' issues and suggestions however, the officer kept reaffirming the purpose of neighbourhood planning and questioning how the group met that. After the meeting, residents were disheartened and felt the LPA would not support the neighbourhood plan. In the following week, the planning consultants received an email from the planning officer which confirmed the residents' suspicions in which the planning officer made it clear that the group should not pursue a neighbourhood plan. This led to an emergency meeting with the planning consultants and local organisations in which the stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to the process and, a later meeting with the wider neighbourhood planning group, explored the potential to move forward. However, the negative relationship between the citizens and the LPA had a major impact on the neighbourhood plan and confirmed the fears of local residents. Despite the educational programme showing citizens that neighbourhood planning provides them with a statutory voice in decisions, the LPA meeting meant residents reverted back to *"Well, they ever listen to us so what's the point?"*.

Losing Momentum

With the range of issues mentioned above along with the complexity of the neighbourhood planning process, the group began to lose momentum and eventually disbanded. Here, I reflect on the decline of the group and some of the events that contributed to this.

Following the meeting with the LPA, the local organisations reaffirmed their support to take forward the neighbourhood plan and the group continued to meet regularly. The crisis point of the LPA meeting coincided with the planning consultants reporting on their progress in relation to the DCLG capacity building programme. Soon after, the capacity programme came to an abrupt end with no further contact with the consultants, but the group continued to meet regularly with the support of Debra and I was asked to help guide the group where possible. The group gradually lost momentum with less members attending each meeting until the group was no longer feasible and the local organisations placed their resources elsewhere. However, I observed three key issues that compounded the challenges described above: the challenge in reaching the step of submitting a formal application to become a recognised neighbourhood planning group; the lack of a leader to facilitate the plan; and the intrusion from external researchers which diverted the agenda away from neighbourhood planning.

The tasks to decide a boundary, engage the community and create a forum were a significant challenge to the group. The capacity programme supported citizens to think about these elements, but ultimately the group stalled as they were uncertain how to carry out the tasks and faced issues in decision-making. For example, deciding the boundary of the plan involved an attempt to define the community's identity and make decisions about which areas and residents would be included and which would be excluded. The group felt this was a particularly challenging task in an urban area with no clear boundary and where communities blur into one another with complex and multiple identities. In addition, it was also felt that engaging the community would be a difficult task in an area which has a history of

low participation in democratic processes and where citizens were facing poverty and deprivation:

> *"It was quite difficult to get people interested at first though. When you talk about it, as soon as you mention the council, they're instantly not interested...I had to make it sound more exciting and not focus on the council side of it. You've got to make it interesting to people or they just won't be interested" (Debra)*

> *"People won't read it [a flyer]. They'll just chuck it away. There's always so much rubbish that gets put through the door and most people just pick it all up and put it in the bin thinking it's all junk mail." (Sylvia)*

> *"It's hard to get anyone to come along to stuff. I don't know how we'd get them involved in this, people just don't bother because what's the point, nothing will happen anyway" (Monica)*

The challenges faced to complete these early tasks highlighted the difficulties faced in urban areas to set up a neighbourhood plan in comparison to rural or parished areas which already have governance structures in place and a defined community boundary. The lack of progress with these tasks was demoralising over time, compounded by the lack of capacity for citizens to take on these roles, and this significantly contributed to the gradual loss of momentum.

Beyond the capacity programme, the group required someone to lead the facilitation of the neighbourhood plan and ensure the momentum of the group continued. The role would be to organise meetings and share information with group members, but no volunteers came forward. The group expected Debra to take on that role but she was unable to: *"They see us as the workers and because I spent 6 months doing this kind of stuff for the neighbourhood plan, I think they want me to lead the group when you go. But I can't. Like, I don't want to but also I don't have the funding to be able to do that. It would need a conversation with Phil about me leading the group"*. Further to this, the two charitable organisations were engaged in a continuous power struggle to ensure their organisation was seen as the 'home' of the Meadow Well neighbourhood plan whilst, at the same time, were unwilling or

unable to provide practical resources to the group. I was able to support the group initially with the intention that it would give the citizens time to organise and find a new leader, however, the membership continued to decline and no progress was made. The lack of leadership meant the meetings quickly became unproductive and little was done to progress toward producing a neighbourhood plan.

Finally, during the research discussed here, two PhD colleagues also attended the neighbourhood planning meetings and were interested in the use of technology in empowering citizens to have their say in local decisions and providing ways to access open data. The neighbourhood planning group were positive about the research and felt it provided them with a useful resource as well as access to support tools that could help with the policy process. The first deployment of technology by researchers was conducted during the capacity building programme and fit with the neighbourhood planning group's agenda at that time which was to engage the community. A community day was held at one of the local charities, and the deployment was part of that event. Following this, the researchers continued to plan to deploy technology to support the neighbourhood plan, however the wider issues of the group losing momentum, having no leader and the uncertainty about the next steps for the neighbourhood plan surfaced. As the needs of the group changed, the researchers did not adjust their plans and, in an attempt to continue with their deployments, they organised further community events to deploy the technology. The second deployment was at a community day, however, the neighbourhood planning group had not met for almost a month and so the tool was only tested with staff from local organisations as no residents attended. Following this, no further neighbourhood planning meetings took place but a further deployment was organised which, again, tested the digital tools with staff members from the local organisations. The technology itself could have supported the neighbourhood plan to provide new approaches to engagement and to support the group in accessing and using evidence and data. However, the approach to the design, development and use of these tools did not support the goals of the neighbourhood plan and,

over time, began to divert the agenda toward the research rather the supporting citizens with the neighbourhood planning activities. The digital technology was not integrated into the process and the approach to the research did little to support or recognise the wider ongoing issues with community capacity and the neighbourhood plan. Although this factor does not account for the failure of the neighbourhood plan, it is important to consider the ways in which research is conducted in such circumstances and the ways in which technology is designed, developed and deployed in real world contexts.

Final Reflections

The challenges faced by Meadow Well in attempting to begin a neighbourhood plan were significant, even with the support of the DCLG Capacity Building Programme, and, here, I provide some final reflections on the research and implications for neighbourhood planning as a citizen-led policy process.

The challenges faced by Meadow Well as an urban area attempting to begin a neighbourhood plan were significant in highlighting the inequalities in the process as set out in legislation. Compared with rural areas and those with parish or town councils, the process was more complex, more time-consuming and altogether more difficult to establish a group that could take forward a neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood planning process does little to recognise the complexities in defining urban boundaries where communities blend into one another and have complex identities. Furthermore, the issue of exclusion surfaces where boundaries may exclude citizens that feel they identify with the community identity, but their location falls outside of the neighbourhood plan's remit. There are several extra stages to setting up a neighbourhood plan in urban areas which have an impact on the ability to take forward the plan and, without changes to the process, the low take up of neighbourhood planning in urban areas will remain. This becomes more pronounced in deprived neighbourhoods where community capacity is low – a factor which is more likely to occur in urban areas as shown by previous research (Gallent, 2013).

The DLCG Neighbourhood Planning and Capacity Building Programme aimed to provide support to urban and deprived neighbourhoods but, on the whole, it failed to achieve its aims and still presented the neighbourhood groups with inaccessible information. The programme did little to make the neighbourhood planning process understandable to the citizens in Meadow Well and this was not helped by the delivery of the sessions which continued to use professional language and provided one-way information. The lack of opportunities in the early stages of the programme to actively engage citizens in the policy process in a way which supported learning and skill development, made the programme feel like something done *to* communities rather than *with* them. Ultimately, the programme was inaccessible to the citizens taking part and, thus, failed to sufficiently raise community capacity in a way which would support them to undertake a neighbourhood plan.

The neighbourhood planning process assumes there is wider support provided to groups and relies on the LPA 'duty to support' as set out in legislation. However, Meadow Well already had a strained and difficult relationship with the local authority and this had a significant impact on the neighbourhood plan – something which the 'duty to support' does not account for. The planning consultants had stressed the need to work with the LPA but were unaware of the local politics and issues, and the negative response of the LPA to the Meadow Well neighbourhood plan meant the process was instantly met with barriers. The community felt the neighbourhood planning process was futile as long as they would be required to work with the LPA. This points to wider issues in urban and deprived neighbourhood where strained relationships with the LPA mean communities feel unable to take on the task and feel they would not be listened to.

The issues faced in Meadow Well suggest the need for changes to the neighbourhood planning process in a way which can account for the inequalities and provide better support for urban and deprived areas. The differences between rural and urban areas in establishing a neighbourhood plan are stark and those with parish and town council benefit from high

community capacity, greater resources, greater existing links with the LPA, existing boundaries and existing governance structures. Changes to the legislative process for establishing a neighbourhood plan are required to provide an equitable approach to the citizen-led policy tool and provide all communities with a fair chance to get involved. Furthermore, an equitable approach to neighbourhood planning would also require wider support mechanisms for urban and deprived neighbourhoods that can address the issues of community capacity. This must move beyond pilot educational programmes which do little to develop the skills and knowledge of citizens in any meaningful way, and must be available to all urban and deprived neighbourhoods. The main body of this thesis through the findings (Chapter 4-6) and discussion (Chapters 7-8) provide a greater discussion of support mechanisms through digital and non-digital tools.

Finally, the development and deployment of technology in real world research must be done with citizens in a way which supports their agenda and does not move attention away from the needs of the community. The digital tools developed and tested are positive examples of tools that could support neighbourhood plans, however, the approach to development in this context did little to support citizens' needs. It is beyond the scope of this research to analyse the digital tools themselves, but it is important to recognise the ways in which technology can both support and hinder community-led processes. The design and use of digital tools in neighbourhood planning, and other community contexts, must account for their needs and provide a sustainable approach which supports the real-world use over time.

Many of the reflections link to the findings, discussion and recommendations in the main body of this thesis, and this case study further adds to that.

Appendix C: Participatory Media Consent, Materials & Outputs

1. Information Sheet

Used for all participatory media workshops in Berwick, Kingston Park and Wooler.

NEW MEDIA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

We would like to invite you to participate in a Newcastle University project to explore how video technology can be used in neighbourhood planning to see how media can be used to represent views and opinions as well as to collect views and opinions from a wider population.

What is this project about?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced in 2011 by the Localism Act and allows local people to write their own planning policy for their area. Developing planning policy would normally be carried out by Planning Officers at the local authority, however, neighbourhood planning allows local people to be in control of the policies they create. The goal is to produce planning policy that will be adopted as the official policy by the local authority and used in decision-making about development.

Developing planning policy takes a long time and is a complicated process. Also, planning policy is often seen as inaccessible because of the lengthy documents and the documents filled with jargon. This project explores how media can be used to portray this kind of information in a more interactive and accessible way and to explore whether it would encourage a different group of people to have their say in neighbourhood planning. Your participation would help us to explore this.

How will the video be captured?

To capture the video, the project uses Bootlegger, a mobile app developed by Open Lab, Newcastle University. It is designed so that first-time film-makers can create video productions using Bootlegger's easy-to-use templates. It provides descriptions and overlays to show where the subject should be placed in the shot with onscreen hints and countdowns. The app allows a film shoot to be set up so anyone can contribute footage which will all be stored in one place. To view your footage and other people's footage, you must have contributed video to the shoot.

The film shoot for this particular project will be set up for anyone to contribute, however initially, you will only be able to view your own video. Should you want to review all the video collected, the researcher will provide a specific link to do so.

People who do not contribute cannot access this video. Video is stored in a secure location, and your identity on the system is stored in line with Data Protection Act 1984. If you want to find out more about Bootlegger, visit http://bootlegger.tv

Who is conducting this research?

This research is being conducted by Jennifer Manuel as a researcher in Digital Civics, an EPSRC funded project. Digital Civics is part of Open Lab at Newcastle University.

What am I being asked to do?

The project would involve using Bootlegger to capture film during organised workshops or small group meetings. The mobile app is available on the Android and iPhone app store and can be downloaded to your personal device, or a phone can be provided for the purpose of the workshop. The app will be fully explained by the researcher. You will be able to review your footage once captured. No further involvement is required unless you would like to take part in future work.

What information will you be collecting and who can access it?

The video footage captured during the activities will be the data that is collected and used by the researcher as well as the information provided through an evaluation form.

The footage will be visible in the Bootlegger app to be viewed by others that are part of this specific film shoot and will also be used by the neighbourhood planning group when developing the planning policies. It will not be visible to the wider public unless you have given consent otherwise.

How will the information I give be kept and used?

The footage and information collected will be used to inform academic research to explore how media can be used in neighbourhood planning. The neighbourhood planning group will also be able to use the footage in developing their policies.

We would also like to share your video content with the wider public as part of the neighbourhood planning development. The consent form will provide the option for you to opt-in or opt-out of this.

The information will be stored securely, initially on the Bootlegger cloud and on an encrypted external hard drive. Apart from its use as promotional material where anonymity is not completely assured, all the information will be anonymised and treated as confidential in that you will not be identified by name.

What if I change my mind or have questions?

It's important that you know that at any time, even during or after the project that you can ask questions, stop your participation, or withdraw completely at any time by contacting the lead researcher. In this instance, all data and footage will be removed.

After reading this information, if you would like to take part in the project, please complete the informed consent form. You will be provided with a copy of the form for your own records and the one copy will be kept by a member of the project team.

Contact details

Researcher: Jennifer Manuel

Address: Open Lab, Floor 4, Newcastle University
89 Sandyford Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8HW

Email: j.manuel2@newcastle.ac.uk

Phone: 07960 006 001

2. Participant Consent Form

Used for all participatory media workshops in Berwick, Kingston Park and Wooler.

NEW MEDIA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I can confirm that (please tick as appropriate):

- ☐ I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided
- ☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation in it
- ☐ I voluntarily agree to my participation
- ☐ I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing
- ☐ I understand that other members of the community can view my footage
- ☐ I understand that other researchers who are part of this project can access the footage

From your recorded footage from this project, video clips and screen shots can be used by (please tick as appropriate):

- ☐ Written academic and non-academic publications and conference presentations about the project
- ☐ The neighbourhood planning group in your area
- ☐ The general bootlegger.tv website for advertising and promotion
- ☐ Newcastle University audio-visual promotional materials, including the official Newcastle University website

I can confirm that (please tick as appropriate):

- ☐ I understand that the researcher will protect my identity by not referring to me by name in any of the dissemination of the data or results
- ☐ In the case where video clips and discussion data are used in Newcastle University promotional materials or by the neighbourhood planning group, I understand that anonymity is not possible but that no identifying information will be shared alongside the video without prior consent.
- ☐ I understand my name will not be distributed alongside video without prior consent

Would you like to take part in future work of this nature? ☐ Yes ☐ No

P.T.O

PARTICIPANT:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

If you would like to be able to view all of the footage collected, as described in the information sheet, please provide your email address to allow the researcher to add you to the closed viewing group.

_____

Email

RESEARCHER:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Contact details

If you have any questions about this research, please contact either of the researchers involved in the project:

Lead researcher: Jennifer Manuel

Address: Open Lab, Floor 4, Newcastle University
89 Sandyford Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8HW

Email: j.manuel2@newcastle.ac.uk

Phone: 07960 006 001

Supervisor: Rob Comber

Address: Open Lab, Floor 4, Newcastle University
89 Sandyford Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8HW

Email: robert.comber@newcastle.ac.uk

3. Kingston Park Workshop Materials

The main workshop activity consisted of six stations around the venue each focusing on a planning topic which can be seen below: retail, housing, leisure, transport, community and growth. Each station provided consisted of a small display of photographs of the area to serve as inspiration, relevant planning policy, and a set of questions that asked the citizens what was good or bad about this topic/area, what needs to be improved and what their aspirations were for the future. The citizens formed small groups of 2-3 and took turns to interview one another using the questions from the display and using Bootlegger to capture the responses for each topic.

LEISURE
INCLUDING SPORTS FACILITIES, PARKS, EVENING ACTIVITIES, CULTURE & TOURISM
KINGSTON PARK NGA

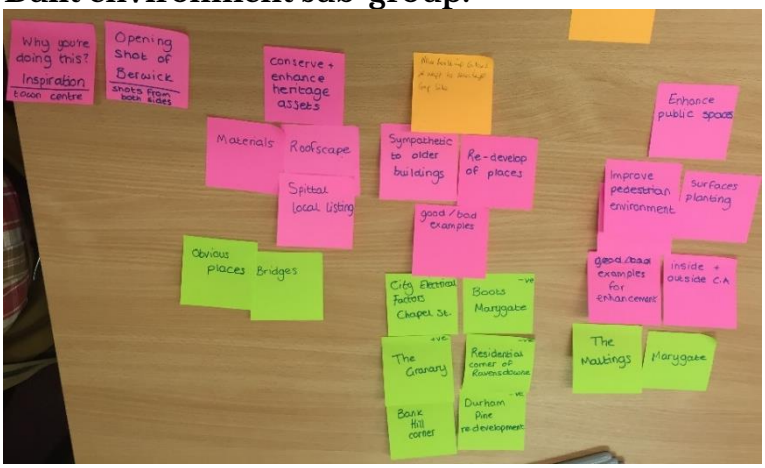
COMMUNITY
INCLUDING COMMUNITY FACILITIES, WELLBEING, ACCESS TO HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE, COMMUNITY IDENTITY & PLACE-MAKING
ADD YOUR OWN QUESTIONS HERE

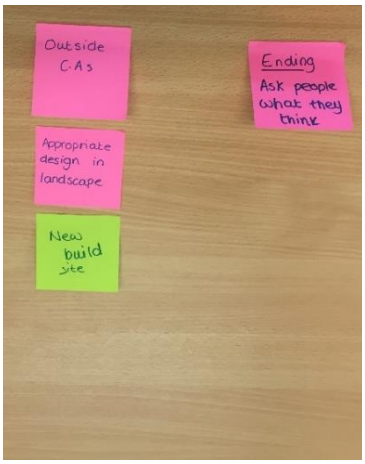
HOUSING
INCLUDING EXISTING & PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENTS, CARE HOMES & SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION
NEWCASTLE CITY POLICY
KINGSTON PARK NGA
NEWCASTLE CITY POLICY
HOUSING
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS GOOD ABOUT HOUSING IN KINGSTON PARK?
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS BAD ABOUT HOUSING IN KINGSTON PARK?
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO IMPROVE ABOUT HOUSING?
ARE THERE ANY HOUSING YOU THINK IS PARTICULARLY GOOD?
WHAT KIND OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN KINGSTON PARK?
WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE CORE STRATEGY POLICIES?
HOUSING LOCATIONS
SPATIAL STRATEGY
GREEN NETWORK
ADD YOUR OWN QUESTIONS HERE

4.Berwick Storyboard Examples

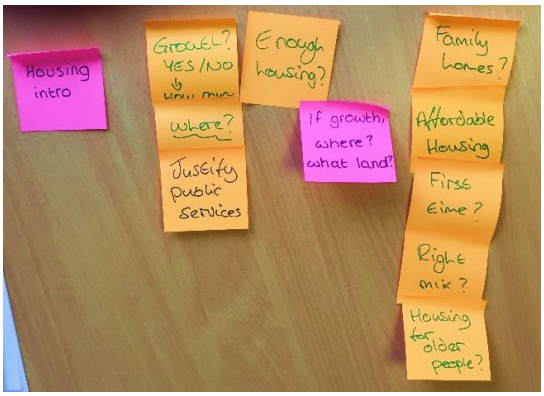
Each workshop with the sub-groups began with a storyboarding exercise to determine what the citizens would like to film in their neighbourhood, setting a flexible narrative and identifying locations. Two sub-groups did not complete a storyboard: the tourism group had a clear idea to capture video around the town walls, and the youth group had planned a series of engagements with young people.

Built environment sub-group:

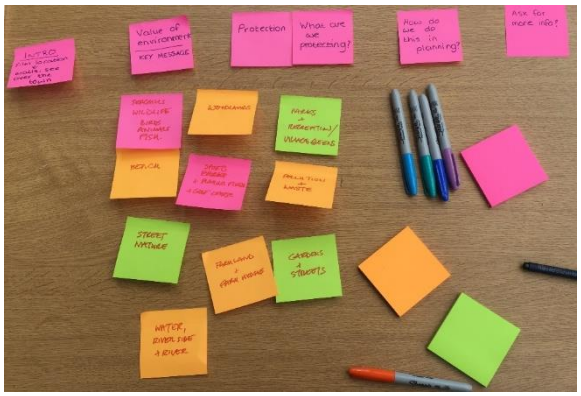




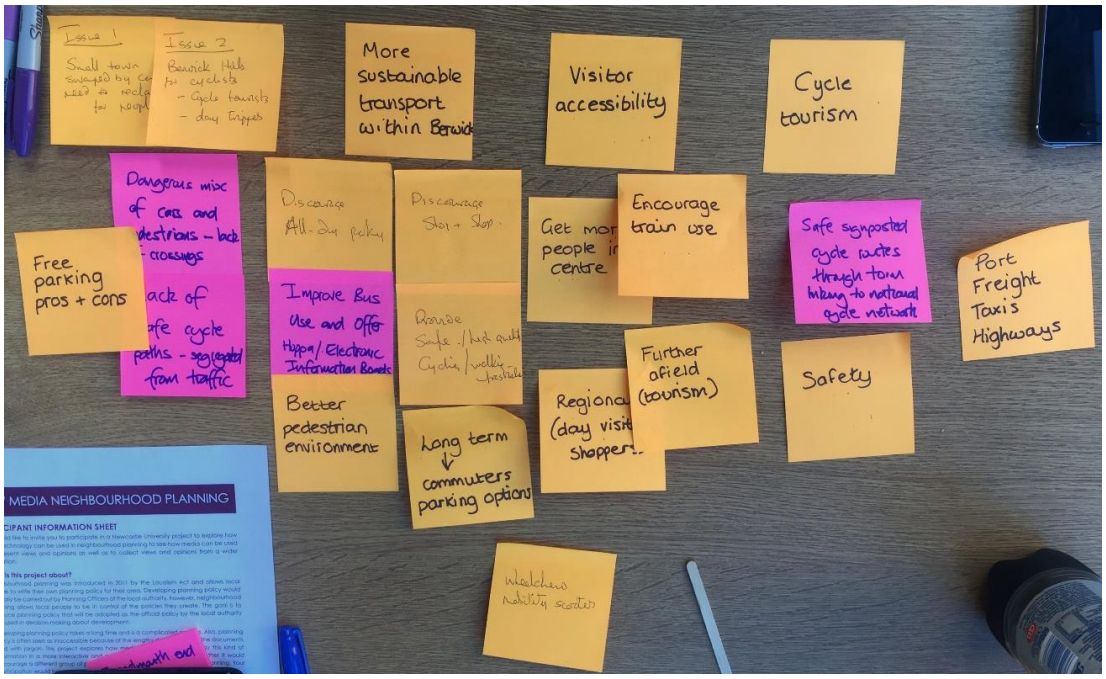
Housing sub-group:



Natural environment sub-group

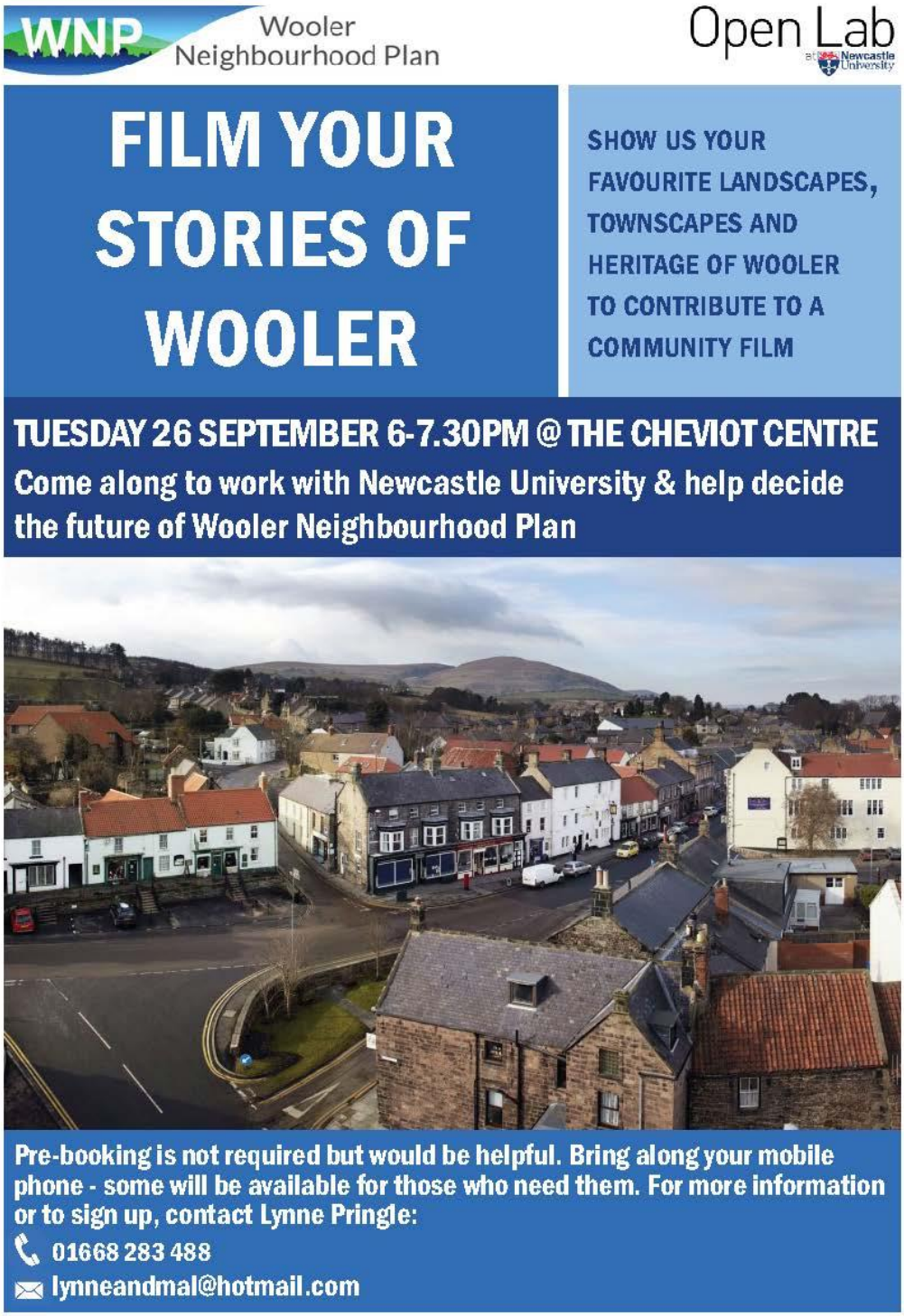


Transport sub-group:



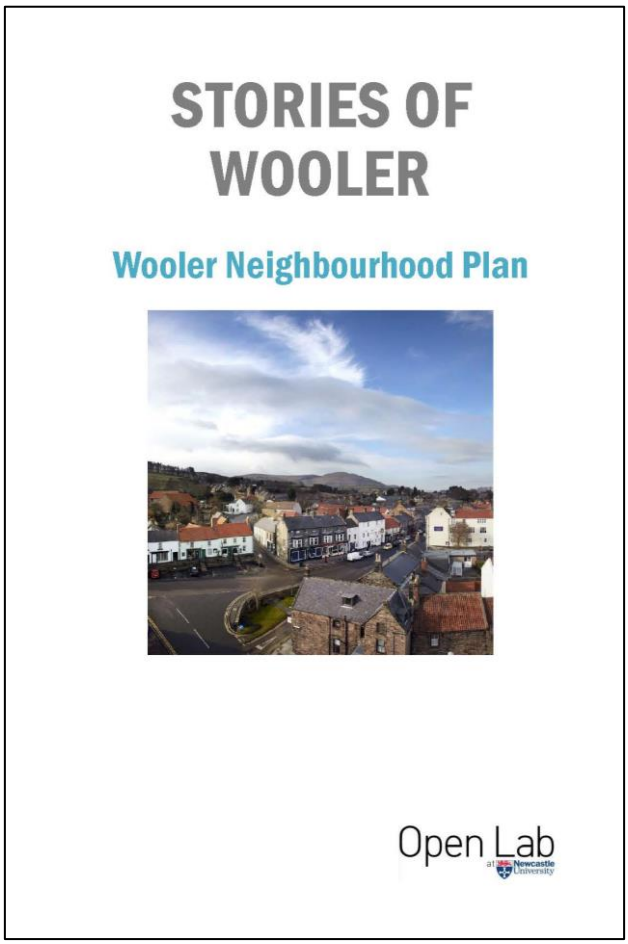
5. Wooler Workshop Poster

Poster designed to advertise the workshops within the community, developed with the neighbourhood plan's branding in mind.



6. Wooler Workshop Booklet

Prior to the first workshop, and using the identified topic, a number of questions and prompts were developed that would be the focus of the participatory media activities. A booklet was designed which included the questions and activities, allowing space for notes to be written by participants, and included technical instructions and advice about the mobile app. This was seen as one way in which the participatory media activities could become sustainable. By providing materials, such as a booklet which could be edited, alongside the Bootlegger technology, a toolkit approach could go some way to enabling neighbourhood planning groups to use the method independently.



WOOLER'S LANDSCAPE

Using the filming prompts provided which match with the app, write down some locations and thoughts about places you want to film. Think about what you will say when filming too.

SHOWING VISITORS: What would you show a visitor of Wooler's landscape and why?

FAVOURITES: What is your favourite landscape in Wooler and why?

VIEWS: What is your favourite viewpoint in Wooler and why?

2

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GROUP HAS DRAFTED THIS DESCRIPTION OF WOOLER'S LANDSCAPE:

Wooler Parish is part of a deeply rural landscape of dark skies and far horizons, rich in history and prehistory. Wooler town nestles against the hillside where the Cheviot Hills meet the Glendale Plain, and looks towards the ridge which surrounds the Plain. From this ridge, coming over the hill from Chatton, is one of the most striking views in Northumberland. From here, Wooler town appears as surrounded and interspersed with trees. Views towards and out of the town, and the landscape generally, is valued by locals and visitors alike as very beautiful. This landscape is a key asset for our future, attracting visitors and new residents, and enriching the lives of all who live and work in the area.

DESCRIBING WOOLER: What would you record to match the above description and what would you say about it? What do you think is missing from the description?

3

LANDSCAPE PROTECTION: What landscapes do you think should be protected in Wooler? Why and how?

WOOLER'S TOWNSCAPE

Using the filming prompts provided which match with the app, write down some locations and thoughts about places you want to film. Think about what you will say when filming too.

SHOWING VISITORS: What would you show a visitor of Wooler's townscape and why?

FAVOURITES: What is your favourite part of the townscape in Wooler and why?

4

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GROUP HAS DRAFTED THIS DESCRIPTION OF WOOLER'S TOWNSCAPE:

Wooler is a small historic market town, characterised by traditional sandstone buildings and panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. The sloping topography has a strong influence that is expressed in steep or winding roads and terraced developments. The historic core of the settlement, which is a Conservation Area, developed around the central market place and gradually expanded in a radial pattern on the hillside, contained by areas of steeper topography and the river. More recent development is situated to the east of the Wooler Water.

DESCRIBING WOOLER: What would you record to match the above description and what would you say about it? What do you think is missing from the description?

5

LIKE: What do you like about the townscape of Wooler and why?

CHANGE: What areas of Wooler do you think need to change and why?

WOOLER'S HERITAGE

Using the filming prompts provided which match with the app, write down some locations and thoughts about places you want to film. Think about what you will say when filming too.

SHOWING VISITORS: What part of Wooler's heritage would you show a visitor and why?

6

FAVOURITES: What is your favourite part of Wooler's heritage and why?

LIKE: What parts of Wooler's heritage do you like that others might not know about and why?

HERITAGE PROTECTION: What heritage assets do you think should be protected in Wooler? Why and how?

7

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GROUP HAS DRAFTED THIS DESCRIPTION OF WOOLER'S TOWNSCAPE:

Wooler is rich in ancient and recent history and prehistory. In addition to the designated Conservation Area, there are protected ancient monuments scattered across the Parish. This heritage adds to the attraction of our area for visitors, and also to the how residents value our place.

DESCRIBING WOOLER: What would you record to match the above description and what would you say about it? What do you think is missing from the description?

8

NOTES

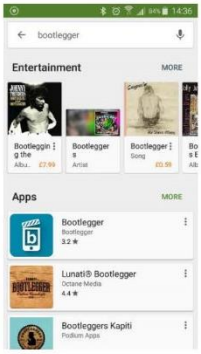
9

NOTES

BOOTLEGGER

The following instructions will support you in using Bootlegger should you need it. If you need further support or have any technical issues, please get in touch with Jen by calling or texting 07960 006 001 or emailing j.manuel2@ncl.ac.uk

STEP 1: DOWNLOADING BOOTLEGGER



In the Play Store for Android or App Store for iPhone, search for and download Bootlegger

10

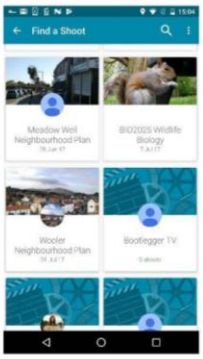
11

STEP 2: LOGGING IN

Once downloaded, open the app.

In the top right corner, click the 3 small dots icon and select 'Login'.

You can login via Facebook or a Google account.

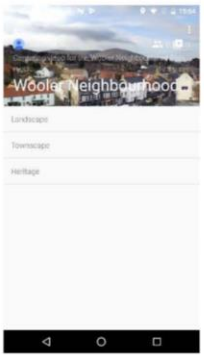


STEP 3: JOINING THE SHOOT

Once you're signed in, it will show you this screen.

Scroll through the available shoots.

When you see 'Wooler Neighbourhood Plan' click on that shoot.



STEP 4: STARTING TO FILM

You will then see a screen similar to this which shows you what topics choices you have available to film at any time.

To start filming, select the appropriate option.

STEP 5: PRIVACY SETTINGS

When you first select the shoot, it will show you this warning message. This provides the information about the shoot which we have already discussed.

Select 'Ok' to take part.

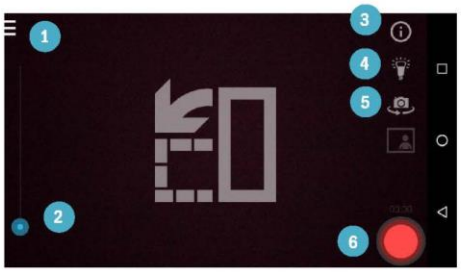
Once you select 'Ok', the next screen will appear. Then, select the cross in the top right corner.

12

13

STEP 6: NAVIGATING THE SHOOT

Once you've joined the shoot, you will see this screen with the camera. The diagram below describes all the icons and functions:



1. This icon opens up the menu (menu described in next steps)
2. Slide this button up to zoom in to a shot
3. Click this to see help information
4. Click bulb icon to turn on the phone's light as a substitute for a camera flash
5. Click this icon to rotate the camera into 'selfie' mode
6. Click the red button to start and stop recording. When you start recording, this button will also show you the remaining time you have left to film

STEP 7: STARTING TO RECORD

To start recording, click the Menu button and you will see this screen:

To start recording, select 'Change Camera Position'.

Then select the appropriate choice of what you would like to video.

You will then see this screen:

Hopefully you should recognise these prompts as relating to the prompts in this booklet.

Click the appropriate selection for the video you would like to record.

Repeat this step for each video you would like to record in each different category.

STORIES OF WOOLER

This research is being conducted by Jennifer Manuel from Newcastle University. The project is overseen by Rob Comber and Geoff Vigar (Newcastle University) and is supported by the local neighbourhood planning group.

For further information, contact:

Jen Manuel
Open Lab, Newcastle University
j.manuel2@ncl.ac.uk

Appendix D: Mapping Workshop Consent & Materials

1. Information Sheet

Newcastle University

Open Lab at Newcastle University

MAPPING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

We would like to invite you to participate in a Newcastle University project to explore how neighbourhood planning works in practice.

What is this project about?

Neighbourhood planning is a long and complex process – as I'm sure you understand! Although there are a range of guidance documents online, many provide more strategic level advice or focus on following processes that qualified town planners would undertake. This project is seeking to understand how neighbourhood planning works in practice and to seek innovation in moving away from the traditional planner-led approaches to more community-friendly ways of planning your neighbourhood.

Who is conducting this research?

This research is being conducted by Jen Manuel, a PhD candidate from Newcastle University. The project is overseen by Rob Comber and Geoff Vigar (Newcastle University).

What am I being asked to do?

The project would involve meeting with the researcher, Jen Manuel, to discuss your neighbourhood plan. It would simply be about talking through your experiences from starting the neighbourhood plan in the very beginning through to your current position with the plan, explaining what you did and how you went about it. There will be several structured activities which will centre around mapping the process using notes and post-it notes on large paper as well as questions to prompt discussions about different aspects.

What information will you be collecting and who can access it?

The process maps and notes will be collected and, in addition, providing consent is given, the discussions will be audio recorded to allow the researcher to listen back to the conversations. All data will be stored securely, anonymised and only be accessed by the research team.

How will the information I give be kept and used?

The information collected will be used to inform academic research to explore the neighbourhood planning process and will contribute to the development of a more community-friendly process to share with the wider public.

What if I change my mind or have questions?

It's important that you know that at any time, even during or after the project that you can ask questions, stop your participation, or withdraw completely at any time by contacting the lead researcher. In this instance, all data will be removed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Jennifer Manuel
Open Lab, Newcastle University
j.manuel2@ncl.ac.uk

2. Participant Consent Form

Newcastle University

Open Lab at Newcastle University

MAPPING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I can confirm that (please tick as appropriate):

- ☐ I have read and understood the information sheet provided.
- ☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation in it. All questions have been answered fully to my satisfaction.
- ☐ I understand the workshop will be audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of this research, and that this will be anonymised.
- ☐ I understand that anonymised information may be used as part of the writing up of this research in academic publications and reports.
- ☐ I understand I can withdraw my participation at any time without giving reasons and that I will not penalised for withdrawing.
- ☐ I understand that my personal information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- ☐ I understand that other researchers who are part of this project can access the data providing they agree to preserve the confidentiality as specified in this form.
- ☐ I voluntarily agree to my participation

Participant's Statement:

I _____ agree that the research project has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study.

Signed: **Date:**

If you wish to contact the researcher, please use the details provided below:
Jennifer Manuel
Open Lab, Newcastle University
j.manuel2@ncl.ac.uk

3. Prompt Questions

During the three-hour workshops, I used pre-prepared question to prompt discussions, similar to those used in a semi-structured interview. I devised and ordered the questions based on the neighbourhood planning process and used the questions to elicit as much detail as possible from participants about their policy journey. There were a lot of questions needed to cover the whole process and they were printed into a booklet format to make them easy to navigate during the facilitation of the workshop. Below are the pre-prepared questions used:

GETTING STARTED

1. How did it come about that you started a neighbourhood plan?
    a. Are you a parish/town or forum group?
    b. How did the group get together?
    c. What year/when did the process start?

2. Did you know for certain that a neighbourhood plan was the right tool?
    a. Did you have any advice/guidance about what a NP was and what it was NOT?
    b. Did you look at the LA existing policies before deciding NP was right?

3. Did you do early publicity/engagement to widen interest in the plan?
    a. Why? Why not?

THE GROUP

1. How many people were part of the working group?
    a. Was that too many/just right/not enough?

2. Did you think about the skills needed within that group?
    a. If so, what skills?
    b. If not, do you think that would have been helpful for the NP's future?

3. Did people take on roles e.g. secretary, chair etc.?
    a. Was that helpful?

4. Did the group generally share the workload?

5. Did you contact any businesses or local services about the group?

DECIDING THE BOUNDARY

1. How did you go about deciding the boundary?

a. What were the considerations for the boundary?
b. Did you look at identity/location/infrastructure/services?

2. Was it decided instantly or was there some debate?

3. Did you discuss the boundary with the local authority?

FORMAL APPLICATION

1. When did you get in touch with the local authority?
   a. Was it too soon/not soon enough?
   b. Were they supportive?

2. How did you find putting together the formal application to become a NP group?
   a. Easy or difficult?
   b. Did one person do it or the whole group help?
   c. Did you have to write a constitution? Was it easy?
   d. What type of thing did you write in the supporting statement?

3. What did the LA do for the formal consultation?
   a. Did the group contribute or support this in any way?
   b. Did the group do any additional engagement at this point?

4. Did you get a timely decision from the LA?

DUTY TO SUPPORT

1. Did you feel the LA were supportive?
   a. Why? Why not?

2. Did they make evidence available?

3. Did they attend meetings?
   a. Was this helpful?
   b. Did they contribute or stay impartial?

4. Did they support the group with LA policy interpretation?

5. Did they provide legal advice on the regulations of NP?

6. Did they share contacts and information relevant to the group?

7. Did they check the plan prior to formal submission?

8. Did they provide technical support?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. When did you first get in touch with local stakeholders?
    a. Who were they?
    b. Councillors, shops, businesses, communiy groups, local trusts, charities, schools, churches, local centres etc?

2. What was the purpose of this consultation?

3. What did you do?
    a. Why those methods and did you consider any others?
    b. What about anything digital?
    c. Who did that engage?
    d. Did you do anything creative?
    e. When did you hold events? (evenings, daytime etc.)

4. On reflection, do you think there were any missed opportunities for engagement or groups that were not reached through the engagement?

5. How difficult or easy did you find organising the consultation?
    a. Did everyone in the group help with this?

6. Did you print any leaflets or flyers etc.?
    a. How were they made?

7. How did you garner support for the neighbourhood plan?

ANALYSING ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

1. How easy or difficult did you find it to make sense of the feedback you got from consultations?

2. How did you go about it?
    a. Did you use any tools to help you make sense of this?

3. Did you find it easy to summarise the data?

4. What did you do with the data collected?

EVIDENCE BASE

1. What kind of evidence did you need to collect?
    a. How did you know you needed evidence for that topic?

2. Did the LA support you with evidence they already had?
    a. How did you make sense of the existing evidence?
    b. Did the technical documents make it difficult?
    c. Did you agree with the evidence or dispute it?

3. Did you seek to use evidence to support your own claims against that of the LA, for example?
    a. If so, how did that work?
    b. Was it challenging with the LA? Did they recognise the evidence?

4. Did you collect any of your own evidence?
    a. If so, how did you do that?

5. Did you look at demographic data for the area?

COMMUNITY VISION

1. Did you create a community vision?

2. What was the vision based on?
    a. The group/the consultation or something else?

3. How did you go about putting the vision together?

4. Did you consult on the vision?
    a. Why? Why not?
    b. What was the reaction to the vision? Did you later amend it?

DRAFTING POLICIES

1. At what point did you move from the rest of the process to turning that into some kind of policy?

2. Did you consider the 'policy language' at the early stages of policy development?

3. Did you find it easy to do?

4. What were the policies based on?

5. Did you consult on the policies?

6. Did you consider specific site allocations?
    a. How did you go about this?
    b. Who identified key sites?

c. How did you decide what the allocations should be?

7. Did you consider infrastructure in relation to new development?
   a. What new development?
   b. What types of infrastructure?

8. Did you develop any 'options' to choose between?
   a. How did you go about this?
   b. Did you consult on the options?
   c. How did you decide between options?

9. Did you split into themes to start drafting policies?
   a. What were they? How did that process work?
b. Why not?

FINALISING POLICY

1. How did you reach a point where the policy was finalised?

2. Was that based on engagement and revisions?

3. Did you feel you had collected all the evidence you needed to support the policies?
   a. Both existing and new evidence?

4. How did you feel about the wording of policy?
   a. Did you struggle with this?
   b. Did you get any support for this? From who?

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1. When did the LA do a screening?

2. Was it needed or not?

3. Was it clear what the SEA screening was and why it was being done?

4. Did you understand why or why not it was or was not needed?

5. If needed, what was the process?
   a. Were you involved?
   b. Did it affect the content of the plan?
   c. Did you have to make any revisions?

PRE-SUBMISSION

1. When did this happen?

2. How did you go about it?

3. Did the LA provide any support?

4. Did you simplify the plan in any way to make it more accessible?

5. What methods of engagement did you use for this?

6. Did you make any changes based on the consultation?
    a. What were they?
    b. How did they come about?

LPA SUBMISSION

1. When did this happen?

2. How was the consultation statement written?
    a. Who wrote it?
    b. Had you logged all activity?
    c. Did you feel it was enough?

3. How was the basic conditions statement written?
    a. Was it easy or hard?

b. Did you find it easy to demonstrate the basic conditions?

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

1. When did this happen?

2. Did you know how the examiner would be?
    a. Were the LA helpful?

3. Did you have a public hearing or just a written representation?

4. Did you find this stage helpful or hindering?

5. Did you have any suggested modifications?
    a. Did you have many?
    b. Did you feel they were fair?
    c. Did the LA do these and were you happy with them?

6. Did you feel like the examiner understood your plan and what you were trying to achieve?

REFERENDUM

1. When did this happen?

2. Were the LA helpful?

3. Did you feel it was well organised and well publicised?

4. Did you support the LA in publicising the referendum?

5. Did you have a good turnout?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. Would you have liked more people to attend?
    c. What would have made more people attend?
    d. Why didn't many attend?

Appendix E: Co-Design Workshops Consent, Materials & Outputs

1. Information Sheet

Newcastle University

Open Lab at Newcastle University

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING ENGAGEMENT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

We would like to invite you to participate in a Newcastle University project to explore how we can use technology to engage citizens in neighbourhood planning.

What is this project about?

Neighbourhood planning involves engaging with your community throughout the process and it's so important to ensure the plan you produce is community-focused. In many cases, as with so many engagement processes in planning, there are many who do not get involved and contribute their views. This project is exploring how we could use multiple channels of communication to be able to reach as many people as possible in your community. Can technology help? What are the barriers? How do we use technology in an appropriate way?

Who is conducting this research?

This research is being conducted by Jen Manuel, a PhD candidate from Newcastle University. The project is overseen by Geoff Vigar, Clara Crivellaro and Tom Bartindale (Newcastle University).

What am I being asked to do?

The project involves attending a workshop facilitated by Jen Manuel. During the workshop, there will be different interactive activities aiming to explore, firstly, what engagement is and what it means to engage, and then to prompt innovative thinking into how we can use technology. The activities will be done in groups and is intended to be thought-provoking and fun!

What information will you be collecting and who can access it?

The results of activities will be collected and the discussions will be audio recorded, providing consent is given. The audio is recorded for no other reason than to allow the researcher to listen back to the conversations for analysis. All data will be stored securely, anonymised and only be accessed by the research team.

How will the information I give be kept and used?

The information collected will be used to inform academic research to explore community engagement in the neighbourhood planning process. The results of some of the structured activities will contribute to the development of an online engagement toolkit produced *with* neighbourhood planning groups *for* neighbourhood planning groups.

What if I change my mind or have questions?

It's important that you know that at any time, even during or after the project, you can ask questions, stop your participation, or withdraw completely by contacting the lead researcher. In this instance, all data will be removed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Jennifer Manuel
Open Lab, Newcastle University
j.manuel2@ncl.ac.uk

2. Participant Consent Form

Newcastle University

Open Lab at Newcastle University

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING ENGAGEMENT

PARTICIPANT CONSENT SHEET

I can confirm that (please tick as appropriate):

- ☐ I have read and understood the information sheet provided.
- ☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation in it. All questions have been answered fully to my satisfaction.
- ☐ I understand the workshop will be audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of this research, and that this will be anonymised.
- ☐ I understand that results from the workshop will be used to create an online toolkit that would be available for the general public.
- ☐ I understand that anonymised information may be used as part of the writing up of this research in academic publications and reports.
- ☐ I understand I can withdraw my participation at any time without giving reasons and that I will not penalised for withdrawing.
- ☐ I understand that my personal information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- ☐ I understand that other researchers who are part of this project can access the data providing they agree to preserve the confidentiality as specified in this form.
- ☐ I voluntarily agree to my participation

Participant's Statement:

I _____ agree that the research project has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study.

Signed: **Date:**

If you wish to contact the researcher, please use the details provided below:

Jennifer Manuel
Open Lab, Newcastle University
j.manuel2@ncl.ac.uk

3. Workshop Flyers

During the recruitment of participants to attend the workshop, a flyer was used to communicate the purpose of the workshop and advertise the opportunity to attend. The flyer was shared on social media and sent within all invitation emails to neighbourhood planning groups and other organisations. The same flyer was produced for the Northumberland workshop.

4.Workshop Presentation

During both workshops, a slide deck was used to guide participants through the co-design process. This included an introduction, information on the research thus far and a break down of all the tasks. The slide deck can be seen below:

TASK 2: WHAT TOOLS WILL YOU USE?

Using your card deck, select what tools you will use and discuss why

- You must use at least 1 digital and 1 analogue method
- You can use as many tools as you want
- Why those tools for your audience?
- What are the challenges and opportunities?

TASK 3: HOW WILL YOU USE THE TOOLS?

Create an engagement plan for your activities and tools

- What activities will you do with the tools?
- What questions would you ask?
- How would you promote the activity?
- What do you need to do to make this happen?

WHAT'S NEXT?

MORE WORKSHOPS
WRITING AND FEEDBACK
WORKING WITH GROUPS – INTERESTED?

5. Card Deck

I developed a card deck to support the activities within the workshop which categorised and outlined 20 methods that represented both digital and non-digital approaches. There were 12 digital methods cards developed from the 'Civic Tech Field Guide' (Stempeck and Sifry, 2015), and there were 8 non-digital methods cards developed from Wates' (2014) 'Community Planning Handbook' The full card deck can be viewed below:

DATA VISUALISATION

A WAY TO DISPLAY AND SHARE DATA IN MORE EASILY ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

TELL ME MORE...

Gathering feedback on complex data or information, such as transport statistics or draft policies, can be difficult as they are not accessible to citizens.

A digital tool could visualise complex information to enable citizens to access it in a simple and interactive way, and gather their views.

EXAMPLE: COMMUNITYVIZ

- Plays out scenarios from policies or proposals
- Used in design workshops with communities
- Comparing multiple competing community preferences
- Informed decisions on the consequences and impacts of policies and proposals with citizens

VIRTUAL & AUGMENTED REALITY

A WAY TO SIMULATE AND VISUALISE NEIGHBOURHOOD FUTURES

TELL ME MORE...

Virtual reality is a digitally-generated world that you can immerse yourself in. Augmented reality superimposes a digital image onto an image of the real world.

Both allow simulations and visualisations of real neighbourhoods. It could help to assess the impact of policies or be an interactive way to experience places.

- Used to engage young people in deciding where new Pokemon should be placed within the game
- Short video clips explained why their location choice was meaningful to them
- Youth-led selection decided the winning clips to be included in the game
- The videos revealed youth opinions of places

DIGITAL MEDIA

CREATING AND SHARING DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT INTERACTIVELY

TELL ME MORE...

The use of digital technology to create and share videos, photographs, audio and more. The creation and sharing is interactive to engage citizens.

Participatory media could, for example, create a community video about your neighbourhood which, when shared, would encourage other citizens to respond.

EXAMPLE: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- Small groups of citizens captured issues using video
- Each group filmed in locations around the area
- Process of filming helped to understand issues from different perspectives
- Footage could be used to make short films to share with the wider community

DIGITAL MESSAGING

ONE-TO-ONE OR SMALL GROUP DIGITAL MESSAGING

TELL ME MORE...

Messaging is a private form of communication between individuals or small groups of people. Although it can be used for personal circumstances, it can also be a way to engage citizens.

Tasks and questions posed through messaging services could provide a quick and simple way to reach the community.

EXAMPLE: WHAT FUTURES

- A 10 day game to imagine the future using WhatsApp
- Over 3000 young people involved from 120 countries worked in small teams
- Players each had a role such as cultural expert
- Creative challenges were used to structure the game involving videos, articles, chats and audio

'TOWN HALL' MEETINGS

OPEN EVENTS FOR THE PUBLIC IN A FORMAL SETTING

TELL ME MORE...

Town hall meetings, or open public meetings, are usually in a formal setting in a local space. Citizens attend to listen to presentations before opening the floor for comments and questions.

It can provide citizens with information but can be a way to gather views of those that contribute.

EXAMPLE: OPEN MEETING

- Open event is held to invite anyone interested
- Leaders of the project or proposal provides information through a presentation
- Citizens are encouraged to ask questions and put forward comments

DROP-IN EVENTS

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE IDEAS OR ISSUES IN AN INFORMAL SETTING

TELL ME MORE...

Drop-in events, or exhibitions, provide an opportunity for citizens to give their views at a time convenient to them.

Drop-in events are usually informal, with posters and other material providing information to citizens. There is usually a way for citizens to provide feedback and people to discuss the topic with.

EXAMPLE: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- Printed displays provide information on issues or proposed solutions
- Leaders of the project are available to talk to citizens
- Post-it notes are used to invite ideas and comments
- Surveys can also gather feedback from citizens

COMMUNITY ART

A CREATIVE WAY TO GATHER COMMUNITY OPINIONS AND PRIORITIES

TELL ME MORE...

Creative art could include drawing, painting, theatre and much more. It can be an interactive way to consider issues in a neighbourhood and generate ideas.

Citizens could draw their world to see what they think of as part of their community or theatre could use performances to open up debate.

EXAMPLE: THE TOWN MEETING

- The Town Meeting is a play developed by academics and a producer
- Sets a scenario which is acted out for an audience
- Citizens make decisions about changes throughout the performance
- As the play continues, changing political situations mean decisions must also change

PRINTED MEDIA

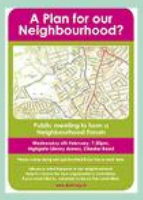
WRITTEN AND DESIGNED MATERIAL TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

TELL ME MORE...

Printed media includes posters, leaflets, newspaper articles and much more. They can be used to provide information about a project or to advertise other events.

Printed media enable mainly one-way communication but can be important to ensure citizens know about local projects and plans.

EXAMPLE: LEAFLETS & POSTERS



- Well-designed posters and leaflets can be an eye-catching way to inform citizens of projects
- Posters can be displayed in local businesses and centres
- Leaflets could be distributed to the whole area

IDEATION & VOTING

A WAY FOR CITIZENS TO GENERATE IDEAS AND GAIN SUPPORT FOR THOSE IDEAS

TELL ME MORE...

Imagine a way for citizens to submit ideas for policies or changes in the neighbourhood and other citizens can vote.

Or, there could be some kind of physical technology in places around your neighbourhood that allows idea submission and/or voting.

EXAMPLE: NEIGHBORLAND

- Communities post ideas
- Citizens vote for their favourite ideas
- Posts are tagged to a location
- Platform provides basic statistics about posts
- Suggestions from face-to-face meetings can be shared with a wider audience

MAP-BASED TECHNOLOGY

INTERACTIVE MAPPING SOFTWARE TO GATHER PUBLIC OPINIONS

TELL ME MORE...

Also known as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), map-based technology can display local information. It can also be used to gather citizens' views.

Citizens could tag locations, submit comments, photos and videos, as well as location-aware information.

EXAMPLE: MAKE PLACE

- Citizens drop pins at relevant locations
- For each, comments, photos or videos are posted with opinions
- Questions could be posed that citizens must answer when selecting a location
- Dashboard shows all the comments for analysis

CROWDSOURCED DATA

SYSTEMS THAT ALLOW PEOPLE TO CONTRIBUTE DATA TO A COMMON COLLECTION

TELL ME MORE...

Citizens can collect their own data to help provide evidence of issues, support potential solutions, or to contest existing data.

Data could mean community opinions, or it could be surveys of, for example, local transport.

EXAMPLE: ISEECHANGE

- Citizens gather data to show how climate change is affecting their neighbourhood
- From documenting flooding to pollution with sensors
- Create a repository for citizen-collected data to use as evidence for policy and action
- Using media and location tagging to collect data

GAMES & PLAY

DIGITAL OR ANALOGUE GAMES THAT PROMOTE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PLAY

TELL ME MORE...

A fun and interactive way to imagine future possibilities for a neighbourhood. It can focus on serious issues while safe rule bound games allow for honest opinions in the future scenarios.

Digital or analogue games and play could be used to solve problems in teams, create ideas or build a story of community issues.

EXAMPLE: @STAKE

- Table-top or online card game
- Encourages players to get a deeper understanding of community needs
- Encourages citizens to think from different perspectives
- Collective decisions promote a consensus
- Turn taking and time limits keep it fun and collaborative with each other

SOCIAL MEDIA

VIRTUAL NETWORKS TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

TELL ME MORE...

Social media is huge! Some networks include:

Facebook
- Individuals or groups post to the public
- Facebook Pages allow collectives to come together
- Facebook Groups can be a more private citizen group
- Comments, media sharing, voting polls, open conversations

Twitter
- Individual or group profiles that others can 'follow'
- Short 'tweets' to communicate to large numbers
- #Hashtags to target messages, voting polls, sharing media

Instagram
- Individual or group profiles that others can 'follow'
- Main aim is to share photos and videos
- #Hashtags to target messages

EXAMPLE: LET'S TALK PARKS

- Weekly live twitter chat
- Posing questions for citizens to respond to
- Each week focused on a different theme
- Engaged with a large number of Newcastle residents

PHYSICAL TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY SITUATED IN PLACES AROUND YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

TELL ME MORE...

Interactive displays and physical technology can be permanently or temporarily installed into spaces in your neighbourhood.

Interacting with physical technology could give citizens the opportunity to provide feedback, vote, or complete tasks while they are situated in places.

EXAMPLE: VIEWPOINT

- Connected interactive touch-screen displays in local supermarkets, pubs, local centres and more
- Surveys gathered feedback and allowed free responses
- Posed questions about development priorities
- A total of 2040 votes were cast in 2 weeks and 699 reponses were recorded

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS

HANDS-ON SESSIONS FOCUSED ON YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

TELL ME MORE...

Also known as charrettes, workshops are interactive ways to involve citizens in considering issues of importance.

Activities are designed and structured to encourage creative thinking in small groups. It could be open-ended to generate ideas or work towards possible solutions to issues.

EXAMPLE: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLACEMAKING

- Intergenerational workshop with over 150 school children, students and designers
- Around tables, small groups discuss neighbourhood issues then share back to the wider group
- Generate ideas and design solutions

FIELD VISITS

VISITS OR ACTIVITIES SITUATED IN PLACES AND SPACES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

TELL ME MORE...

Although you might know your neighbourhood well, field visits can often help you notice new things or think from different perspectives.

Organised local walks or structured activities during field visits can help citizens think about places and spaces while being situated in them.

EXAMPLE: STREETS FOR PEOPLE

- 54 children from 2 schools walked a structure route with activities
- Each person had a role such as explorer, scribe, or photographer
- Structured activities helped them think about current issues and future changes
- Gathered issues, ideas, photos, audio clips and much more

SURVEYS & QUESTIONNAIRES

WRITTEN FEEDBACK FROM INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS

TELL ME MORE...

A way to ask citizens questions and receive written, textual feedback. The way questions are crafted is essential to ensure you don't ask leading questions or sway results.

Surveys can use open-ended questions to gain rich responses, or closed, multiple choice questions to get basic statistics.

EXAMPLE: KINGSTON PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- Forum wanted to gather community opinions
- General views about the area to identify issues
- Delivered to all households and businesses, and available online
- Open ended questions to ask what is good/bad about the area and what needs to change

DOOR KNOCKING

A SIMPLE WAY TO REACH CITIZENS

TELL ME MORE...

Door knocking in your neighbourhood is a simple way to speak to as many residents as possible. A team of people visit each household and speak to them about the project.

It provides residents with information or it can be combined with a survey to gain feedback on the neighbourhood.

EXAMPLE: LAWRENCE WESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD

- Local team were trained in community research
- Door knocked whole area to collect views from all residents
- Over a 5 month period, 951 responses were recorded
- Results were used to form community priorities for the neighbourhood plan

6. Design Scenarios

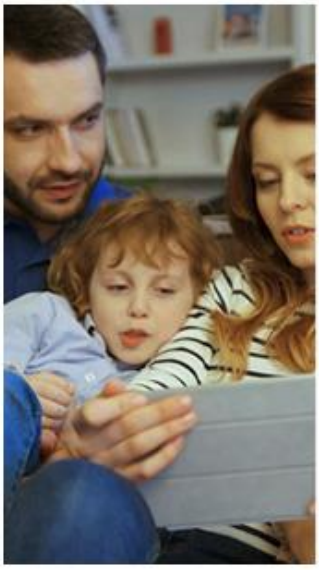
The focus of the design tasks centred on five scenarios, with each group designing engagement activities for one scenario. The five scenarios were developed from data collected throughout this research as well as academic literature and described specific groups in the population that are typically thought not to engage in planning matters. Below are the five scenarios:

ROB AND HIS SIBLINGS

Rob is 16 years old and lives in a village with his family. He's one of three children. His young brother, David is 12, and he has an older sister, Cara who is 21.

Rob is in his final at the secondary school nearby. Everyday he walks the 30 minutes to school with David. Rob's due to start college next year but he's not sure what to study yet. School have encourage the students to think about their future and it's made Rob look at his home in a different light. He likes where he lives but he doesn't think there's many opportunities for him. His sister has the right idea. She works in the local shop on a weekend and travels to university in the city but she's soon planning to move permanently.

Outside of school, Rob has a large group of friends, most who live nearby. Most evenings and weekends, they hang out and play football on the field near Rob's house. On a Friday evening some of his friends go to the local youth club but Rob doesn't like it. He

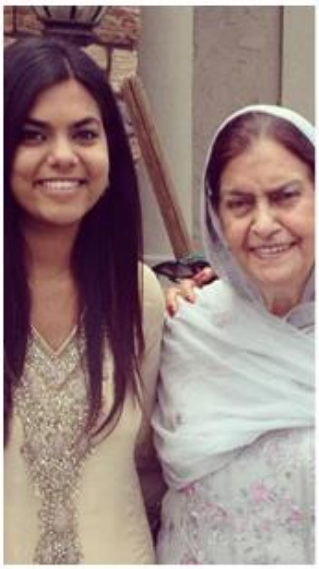


THE JONES FAMILY

The Jones family moved to in a suburban part of a small town last year after buying a new house on a new estate that had just been built in the town.

Lucy and Dan, the mum and dad, work long hours. Lucy is a full time social worker while Dan works part time for a large accountancy company in the city. Dan works long shifts to make up his hours so he can take care of his mum 2 days each week. Their two children, Alex and Sarah, are 6 and 10, and go to the local junior school. They both have hobbies - Alex plays football and Sarah is in the swimming team.

The daily routine for the family is always hectic. Early mornings are a struggle. Mum needs to leave early for work, and the children need to get up and ready for school in time for dad to take drive them. The evenings aren't much better. Mum collects the children from school then the rush of cooking, homework, sports clubs and the bedtime routine begin. By 8pm, Lucy and



SAMINA, POWEL AND FAMILY

Samina lives in the centre of a small town with her husband, Powel. They are a busy, young, professional couple who dream of moving to a bigger city but family ties mean they have stayed in the area. Despite this, they still enjoy what the town has to offer and try to visit the local cafes and bars often. Samina works in HR and Powel works a close to home as a supply manager at a construction company.

Their evenings are rarely their own. Samina's family live nearby and her grandmother, Maheen, who lives in the next street, needs a lot of support. Maheen has mobility issues but likes to meet up with friends so Samina often drives her to places. She also helps with Maheen's medical appointments as a translator.

Powel often feels that they don't know many people in their area other than their family networks. Samina's family are always attending prayer meetings and other events, but Samina and Powel keep to themselves.

HEWITT'S AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The local area is very much reliant on the business community who provide important services and facilities to local people. There's a good range of businesses with small, local companies mixed with a few larger national companies. They create jobs and keep the town's economy strong.

In the local high street, Hewitt Estate Agents is owned and managed by the local Hewitt family. The business opened 10 years ago and is still going strong today. They are a well-known name in the area and bring important business. In recent years, some businesses have closed down leaving gaps in the high street and Hewitt's are working to ensure they don't become the next victim.

The Hewitt family are incredibly busy, working long hours and ensuring they continue to thrive. Their family friends say they work too hard, always in meetings and rushing off to meet clients.

CULLINGWORTH AND THEIR COMPETITORS

Cullingworth Ltd are landowners in the area. They own a mix of brownfield sites, some which are small infill plots but others are larger, more strategic sites. They know, however, that some larger landowners also have strategic greenfield development sites in the area which may be easier to develop.

Cullingworth Ltd have just been approached by a small, local development company who was interested in developing some of their land. The developers are known to the local community and Cullingworth know they develop high-quality housing. However, a large house builder has been in long discussions with their company about the site in question for some time.

Those involved in market decisions in the company often feel frustrated in these types of situations. Competition for land and development is hard and sharing information between different land-owning and development companies is almost impossible.

7. Workshop Resources

As the groups in the workshop are unfamiliar with co-designing in this way, each group was provided with resources to support the discussions. This continued to break down the design task into smaller activities as well as providing a way to record notes about their discussions.

WHO ARE YOU DESIGNING FOR?

WHAT TOOLS WILL YOU USE?

ARE THE ANY BARRIERS TO USING THE TOOLS? HOW COULD YOU OVERCOME THEM?

WHAT ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU DO WITH THE TOOLS?

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

HOW WOULD YOU PROMOTE THE IDEA?

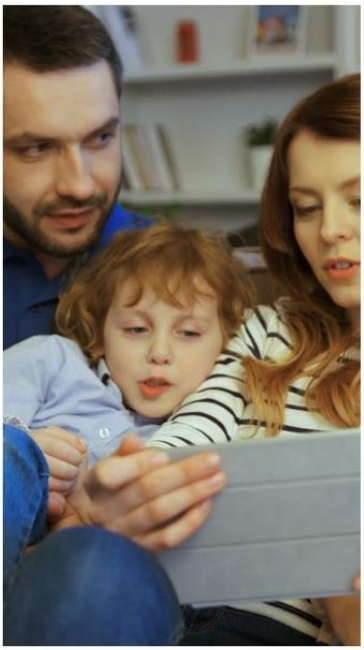
SET OUT YOUR ACTIVITY PLAN

NOTE DOWN HOW THIS ENGAGEMENT WOULD FIT INTO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS

ANY OTHER THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

Appendix F: Final Design from Co-Design Workshop

The third task within the co-design workshops was the main design challenge. Each group within the workshop was given a fictious scenario and tasked with creating an engagement plan that would seek to involve the citizens in their scenarios. The summary of the findings are provided within the main body of the thesis (see 6.2.3). Below are the final outputs of the task are detailed with a reminder of the scenario.



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The daily routine for the family is always hectic. Early mornings are a struggle. Mum needs to leave early for work, and the children need to get up and ready for school in time for dad to take drive them. The evenings aren't much better. Mum collects the children from school then the rush of cooking, homework, sports clubs and the bedtime routine begin. By 8pm, Lucy and Dan are exhausted.

Group 1 Design

Barriers

- Lack of time to engage
- Potential lack of communal spaces
- Family are new to the area
- Young people are harder to reach
- Parent has carer responsibilities

Opportunities

- Young people attend clubs that could be used to engage
- Schools could take an active role and this could extend to the parents
- New residents could bring new ideas to a neighbourhood plan

Final Design

Requirements: after school hours for convenience; has to interest this particular group; simple, quick and easy to take part

- Online events and social media – two methods used together to livestream town hall meetings via social media. Using social media to hold interactive voting polls and to encourage question submissions that can feed into the livestreamed event. Makes it convenient for the busy family to engage the parents but would benefit others in the community too.
- Community art – link to drop-in events by hosting activities for children and parents using creative and artistic methods.
- Printed media - send out leaflets to all households that would inform citizens of other methods of engagement such as surveys and livestreamed meetings.
- Drop-in events – stalls to be set up in locations where the family would already attend e.g. children's clubs, and other local events. Family-friendly drop-in events at weekends to provide activities for the whole family.

Group 2 Design

Barriers

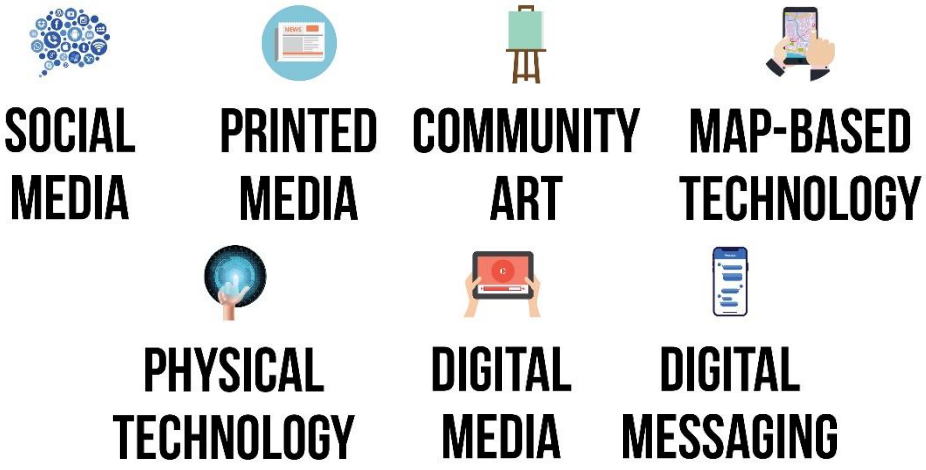
- Hard to reach group that is often not identified
- Challenge as to whether a neighbourhood plan would be relevant to them
- Lack of free time to engage

Opportunities

- Engaging other groups and agencies to be able to cater for their needs in a plan
- Young people attend clubs that could be used to engage
- Schools provide an opportunity for engagement

Final Design

Requirements: ensure engagement is kept minimal and simple; branding materials to ensure consistency; volunteers to manage the technology



- Social media – use the variety of features available to engage the family at a convenient time, making posts appealing and using hashtags to make posts searchable and easy to find.
- Printed media – deliver leaflets to all households and display posters in locations which would be frequented by the family.
- Community art – carried out in school using a range of mediums and engage the parents through this via exhibitions of the outputs as well as running a community-based logo competition for branding.
- Map-based technology – lightweight activities to pin comments and opinions which are simple, convenient and quick.
- Physical technology – developing an app that uses in-location sensors to notify citizens about engagement opportunities or proposed plans/changes when travelling through an area.
- Digital messaging – broadcast messages to the whole community with key information such as event reminders or opportunities to engage.
- Digital media – using QR codes on printed material to encourage further engagement which could link to videos of areas to prompt opinions on the future of the area.

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Group 3 Design

Barriers

- Youth transitioning from school
- Potential transport issues in the area
- Lack of opportunities for youth
- Certain engagement methods unsuitable
- Potential difficulty of engaging parents

Opportunities

- Potential to involve wider youth and family
- Sports and existing activities as a way to engage

Final Design

Requirements: multiple methods to reach different people; volunteers to manage the technology

GAMES & PLAY

VIRTUAL & AUGMENTED REALITY

COMMUNITY ART

- Games and play, and VR and AR – use two methods together to consider serious issues in the community in a fun, interactive way with the ability to think through consequences of decisions.
- Community art – painting, poetry, drawing, filmmaking and photography to explore places and hosting an exhibition to share.
- Digital media – taking photos and videos of their area showing the issues that they care about and hosting an exhibition to share.
- Social media – encouraging the sharing of media produced through activities to invite further comments and conversations about the area.
- Field visits – intergenerational visits to the neighbourhood to consider issues from a variety of lenses and to encourage conversations between youth and adults. Using props and games linking to other methods to make the visits interactive.

Group 4 Design

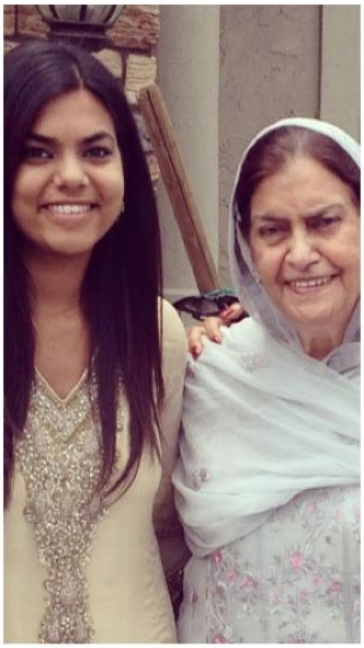
Barriers
- Not all youth reached through clubs
- Traditional methods unsuitable
- Engaging youth is skilled work
- Schools can be difficult to engage, particularly the practicalities of the curriculum

Opportunities
- Making use of existing networks
- Social media to reach youth
- Schools subjects where the curriculum would fit
- Using everyday activities, such as walking to school, to encourage input from youth

Final Design

Requirements: engaging young people early in the process; anonymity to avoid embarrassment with peers; fun; integrating skill development

- Interactive workshops – using activities in schools to identify issues of importance to young people to be further explored through surveys and crowdsourcing. Activity could be to draw routes to school or their neighbourhood to understand what youth recognise as important.
- Community art – using a variety of mediums to encourage youth to share their opinions of the area, could also use digital media.
- Surveys and questionnaires – produce surveys on key topics and engage their peers and family, helping to develop skills and youth become agents for the plan to encourage feeling of ownership.
- Social media – reaching out to youth that don't attend existing clubs and services, recruiting youth volunteers to engage their peers. Longer term engagement to keep youth informed throughout whole process.
- Crowdsourced data and field visits – young people supporting the crowdsourcing of data of issues that are relevant to them. Example could be crowdsourcing data about local businesses and opportunities serving to inform the plan and to support youth in future opportunities. Further topics could be identified through workshops. Field visits would support the data collection.



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Group 5 Design

Barriers

- Language barrier
- Seen to be isolated from the community
- Seen as an invisible group
- Caring and mobility issues
- Traditional methods wouldn't reach this group

Opportunities

- Family attend events at their place of worship
- Young couple often act as translators and could support engaging older family members

Final Design

Requirements: face-to-face engagement is favoured; digital methods to reach out to overcome the lack of involvement with the wider community

- Social media – connect with young couple and religious group, promoting events and asking questions about the neighbourhood.
- Community art – activities delivered at the family's place of worship to link into the existing events that they attend, allowing for expression without language barrier issues.
- Surveys and questionnaires – surveys produced for the neighbourhood plan are translated into a variety of languages.
- Printed media – advertise face-to-face events and activities by delivering leaflets and displaying posters in relevant places.
- Drop-in events – hosting events asking questions about the neighbourhood with usual activities with maps and post-it notes.

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The Hewitt family are incredibly busy, working long hours and ensuring they continue to thrive. Their family friends say they work too hard, always in meetings and rushing off to meet clients.

Group 6 Design

Barriers

- Engaging businesses can be political locally
- Some businesses are usually uninterested
- Difficult to engage with national chains
- Showing businesses why neighbourhood planning is relevant is a challenge

Opportunities

- Business and trader networks already exist and could support engagement
- Can visit businesses to build relationships

Final Design

Requirements: multiple methods to engage a range of businesses in different ways; ongoing methods of engagement to ensure businesses are kept informed and engaged; traditional methods as the best approach; face-to-face methods seen as important

- Door knocking – visit each business in the area to build rapport and engage them on a one-to-one basis. Potential to leave a survey or promote other events to attend.
- Drop-in events – plan around business hours. Deliver usual activities with maps and post-it notes but aim activities at businesses and the issues they care about.
- Social media and/or online forums – encourage discussion about the area in relation to the business community and encourage discussion between businesses. Online methods used after face-to-face engagement to continue the engagement. Forums or posts on social media could focus on pitching ideas for improvement.
- Surveys and questionnaires – visit businesses to conduct a survey or leave a survey with them to complete in their own time. Could also link to an online survey.