DECISION MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL – THE MISSING LINK?

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE LOCALISM ACT AND SURE START
2010–2012

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Declaration

I declare that, except where acknowledged, this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted for a higher research degree at any other university or institution.

Jayne Meyer Tucker
27 September 2017
Acknowledgements

There are many points of acknowledgement and recognition to be made for this thesis. I am most appreciative of the varied support received in assisting me in shifting from strong aspirational deep thought into the current completed physical written format. There is, of course, an order to the thesis’s physical form, including the structure that commences with the Introduction. The Introduction provides the reader with an outline of the exciting puzzle around top-down policy implementation and its influence on decision making at the local level. This is followed by the fusion of two literatures, those of political and complexity sciences, which in turn leads to the chosen methodology and the exciting findings and introduction of the three discoveries. Explorations and provision of arguments are summarised as concluding thoughts, leaving the reader with an invitation in the form of future recommendations, whether they be a researcher, policy maker or advocate for decision making at the local level.

To complement the thesis structure, these acknowledgements will follow a similar framework. As with the the Introduction and framing of the thesis, there would be no thesis without some key people. Most importantly, Ronnie Tucker, my husband and soul mate who, for as long as he has known me, has supported my desire to pursue this puzzle – even at the point in time when the puzzle was more a feeling than an articulated contribution to knowledge and academia. His support has been unconditional and runs so deep that its essence lives in every single word. Every thought, every word of this thesis are only possible because of his unquestioning support for my indulgence in deep thought and absence from everyday commitments.

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It is important at this point to note the year of my graduation: thirty years earlier I experienced a life tragedy, suffering serious injuries and becoming a widow at a young age in consequence of a tragic car accident. In light of this experience, there are for me many reasons that completing a PhD has been a challenge. I therefore devote this PhD to three important people who, though having departed this world, played a very important part in my life before and after the accident – my first husband, Garry Meyer, and my Mother and Father who, through their unconditional love, gave me the strength for my second chapter of life. Just like a methodology, a framework was established for me in the earlier chapter of my life, laying foundations that gave me the resilience to cope with the ups and downs of a PhD, to value each moment and to embrace change.

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In summary, it is through all of the above that I have completed this thesis and – just like a Conclusion – I thankfully conclude it is done!
Preface

As a seasoned senior executive within the not-for-profit sector, I have over three decades of policy implementation experience that has crossed each of the sectors including the for profit, public and community sectors. This experience has also provided me with opportunities to work in both Australia and the UK. It is the accumulation of this experience that has led me to the desire to complete a rigorous enquiry into the tensions I have experienced between top-down command and control policy implementation and the desire for bottom-up decision making at the local level. In my enquiry I have introduced and explained these experiences as relationship tensions, which, in my experience, have been the one common denominator over the last three decades.

In my attempt to reduce any research bias, particularly within the application of a single case study model, I have chosen to adopt the role of an analytical spectator of the whole policy system, but from afar. Although my interpretive enquiry is focused on a particular reform I was involved with (Sure Start), I no longer live in the UK or work within this reform. My past Sure Start role has provided me with benefits, such as access to key actors and own local knowledge, particularly within the chosen location (Dover, Kent UK). I now live, work and study in Australia and have done for the past decade. Although my physical removal from the project has provided an opportunity to be both objective and reflective, my previous involvement has provided me with the ability to ask insightful questions about the nuances within and between top-down and bottom-up relationship tensions.

In writing this preface, I am expressing an acute awareness of the top-down and bottom-up relationship tensions from shared experiences, not just from my experiences within the reform. Many elite central policy makers speak warmly of ‘doing’ citizen engagement that promotes decision making at the local level. Unfortunately, this is often interpreted differently by the end user and frequently described as lack of openness to change. Such relationship tensions are overlaid with an often ‘messy’ arrangement between citizen engagement, local leadership and central governance. Along with many esteemed scholars, these tensions are of interest
to me as a result of my personal implementation experience and I believe that, while these tensions cannot be solved or avoided, it is important to understand how they can be used constructively in certain circumstances.
Abstract

The tension between top-down directives and local-level decision-making is a constant theme running through implementation studies. Through the case study of Sure Start (a UK early childhood program introduced in 1997, which brings together services for children under four and their families and has a particular focus on local level decision-making), this thesis provides a deeper understanding of these relationship tensions by examining the impact of the Localism Act 2011 (UK) on decision-making at the local level. (The aim of the Localism Act, introduced in November 2011, is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals, communities and local councils).

The research involved interviews with local-level service providers and bureaucrats, county- and national-level bureaucrats, government ministers and national peak bodies involved in the implementation of Sure Start. Interviews with key actors revealed little evidence of the Localism Act positively influencing decision making at the local level.

As well as identifying the reasons why the Localism Act has had so little impact on local-level decision making, the thesis combines policy implementation and complexity leadership theories to develop a new way of thinking about the complex relationships that characterise implementation of local-level programs initiated and funded by central government.

This new way of thinking about complex relationship tensions is based on three discoveries. The first is the importance of adequate resources in managing complexity and change. The second is the need for a generative leadership style to nurture an enabling approach to leadership. The third is that fragmentation can have positive as well as negative impacts.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Overview

The title of this research may evoke debate by challenging deeply held beliefs about how best to achieve desired policy outcomes while engaging at a local level. My argument examines the tensions arising where too much of a ‘command and control’ stance stifles local engagement, but where too much ‘freedom and flexibility’ can affect lines of accountability. The greater the need for central consistency, the more prominent such tensions become, and they are often manifested through less responsiveness to local need.

Tensions cannot be eradicated by this or any other study, but better understanding the nuances, particularly over periods of time, can assist in navigating constant change and deciding the most effective way to influence decision making at the local level. I have chosen to adopt the role of an analytical spectator of the whole policy system, but from afar. Building on each chapter (see Section 1.7), I argue that decision making at the local level is inhibited and negatively influenced by the inability of policy directives to enable conditions for local engagement. Within this context, I argue that top-down policy directives do not support decision making at the local level. Through my argument, I contribute towards knowledge and understanding of this topic, concluding with three recommendations that straddle top-down and bottom-up relationship tensions. To achieve this, I pursue an interpretive analysis, using the constructive engagement between key components of political science and complexity science to present a theoretical link that is particularly helpful for policy implementation literature. In sum, further exploration of policy implementation, using a non-traditional approach, is needed to address the central tension between top-down and bottom-up relationships – a tension presented in this study as a paradox.

As the study’s title, Decision making at the local level – the missing link? suggests, in this thesis I examine what the missing link may be. I do this through an exploration of the missing links found within relationship tensions related to local engagement. The relationship tensions in question include those arising from decision making at the
local level and those related to joined-up-working – particularly the absence of
decision making at the local level and the resulting silos. The term ‘silo working’ is
used throughout the study to describe non–joined-up ways of working, the polar
opposite of being collaborative. I do not explore the multitude of reasons for barriers
to collaboration, but I do examine the missing links of the relationship tensions that
arise from the gaps and entrenched silos.

1.1 Why decision making at the local level?

Many traditional approaches to change at the local level commence with a needs
analysis and are often based on the deficiencies and needs of communities. In the
spirit of engagement, it would be preferable to proactively seek communities’ values,
concerns and aspirations and build these into a decision-making process or processes.
Ultimately, establishing an ongoing partnership to ensure that the localities’ priorities
and values continue to shape any future decisions.

Understanding the needs of localities is often achieved through a process referred to
as ‘community engagement’. As argued by Stuart (2013; 2016), there is no widely
accepted definition of community engagement. In attempts to describe community
engagement, it is often considered in the terms of planning and decision making. This,
of course, brings an immediate set of challenges, primarily around how the role of
planning is led and who has the ultimate decision-making authority. It is widely
accepted that the preferred approach includes engagement with a representative
collective of community stakeholders, exchanging information and/or negotiating
mutually acceptable actions.

More recent approaches to community engagement describe the preferred approach as
a strengths-based or ‘glass half full’ approach. This approach, also known as
appreciative inquiry, ‘identifies and analyses the community’s past successes. This
strengthens people’s confidence in their own capacities and inspires them to take
action’ (Cunningham and Mathie 2002, p.1). Recent examples of appreciative inquiry
around community engagement were collated and cited in Stuart (2013, p.1), whose
summary reflected on four foundations of addressing local need (previously
summarised by Kretzmann 2010; Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Mathie and Cunningham 2003): 

1. Focus on community assets and strengths rather than problems and needs; 
2. Identify and mobilise individual and community assets, skills and passions; 
3. Community driven – ‘building communities from the inside out’; and 
4. Relationship driven.

Although all four foundations are of interest in this study, it is the fourth – *relationship driven* – and, more importantly, the tensions found between relationships that are further examined. There is an argument to be made about the difference between community engagement or decision making at the local level as a two-way process, and a perspective to obtain census or agreement taken from a predetermined position. These tensions in decision making at the local level are not dissimilar to a recent challenge posed by Matthew Taylor, CEO of the Royal Society of Arts (2015). Taylor expressed the tensions surrounding decision making at the local level in the form of ‘emergent impact’. He was inviting a new way of thinking about change, particularly at a time when the pace of change is faster than ever and the impact of change at the local level is a moving target:

‘[E]mergent impact’ involves setting out with a clear mission and set of goals but then being able to shift focus and method as the project develops. On the one hand, social impact assessment has often failed to provide consistent, reliable useful metrics its advocates promised, while, on the other hand, a focus on measurable cause and effect tends to favour narrow, linear interventions over more emergent system level change (Taylor 2015, p.1).

The importance of change in relationships, local need and neighbourhood are subjects that involve, and invite debate from, many standpoints, and all place importance on community engagement. For the purpose of this study, I have adopted Sullivan’s (2010) term of *neighbourhood*, which I extend to include ‘citizen engagement’. The phrase ‘citizen engagement’ builds on both the four foundations of Stuart’s addressing of local need, and the four principles of neighbourhood governance origin (Lowndes and Sullivan 2008), namely *empowerment, partnership, government* and *management*. In these four principles of neighbourhood governance, there is a direct link between citizen engagement and decision making at the local level, often described as a ‘grass roots’ or ‘bottom-up’ relationship.
Another way of describing citizen engagement is as bottom-up dynamics, a term also adopted throughout this study. Bottom-up policy implementation similarly occurs when policies enable change through the inclusion of those primarily affected in the planning and execution of the policy or social programs. The best way to achieve citizen engagement – or connected and empowered local communities – is when decision making is guided by the desire to be collaborative and promote self-actualisation, rather than paternalism. The opposite of citizen engagement and collaborative action is entrenched ‘silos’. Later in this thesis, I describe the implications of entrenched silos as the ‘parent/child syndrome’ and ‘missing link’. The concept of the missing link is of interest to this research, not only in how it relates to policy implementation, but also in how the missing links can be explored and understood through the subsequent links to governance and leadership.

1.2 Why joined-up-working?

Joined-up-working can be challenging due to the complexity of links and events, including horizontal (working across systems or sectors) and vertical (seeking change at the individual, family and community level) arrangements. There are also governance tensions in balancing vertical and horizontal relationships between those implementing and those affected by policies. Navigating these levels of complexity can be difficult due to the extremes of changing contexts, the flexible and evolving nature of interventions and the breadth and range of outcomes being pursued.

Relationship tensions and joined-up-working will be considered across two policy directives: a top-down policy directive (the UK’s Localism Act 2011) and a bottom-up policy directive (Sure Start). Both are discussed later in this chapter and in more detail in subsequent chapters, which establish how, in their design, they share an ambition to tackle social issues and encourage citizen engagement. There is considerable controversy and debate over the relationship between and governance of decision making at the local level and policy decisions – particularly in early childhood reforms, as demonstrated by Sure Start. These controversies are best defined as relationship tensions between the governance mandates to reduce child poverty on the one hand and to engage the children and communities affected by child poverty on the other.
Child poverty

The significant economic costs of social issues such as child poverty are often exacerbated by a lack of joined-up-working and decision making at the local level. This tension is particularly salient in citizen engagement and changes that could affect particular communities. This is most prominent in the field of child poverty, as those most affected are often the voices least heard (Howarth et al. 1999; Bradshaw 2001; Eisenstadt 2011; UN 2015). Collective responsibility for reducing child poverty need not be based solely on altruistic reasons, but for society to flourish it must be built on a base of healthy children growing to be engaged, productive adults (UNICEF 2012).

Academic research on child poverty reforms indicates that the best results are achieved by joined-up-working and engaging communities through decision making at the local level, as well as intervening early in life transitions (CYPU 2001; Willow 2002). Such influences on decision making at the local level will be explored in the following chapters, utilising Sure Start as the case study. Sure Start, a UK reform intended to reduce child poverty, is a cross-departmental policy directive aimed at bringing together services for children under four and their families, emphasising the need for decision making at the local level and involvement in managing local programs. As a UK policy directive commencing in 1997, it had a strong emphasis on joined-up-working, citizen engagement and decision making at the local level. In this study I will not be presenting a chronological account of Sure Start, as other commentators have more than adequately explored this (Eisenstadt 2011). Sure Start is presented as a useful platform for governance in child poverty through which to examine top-down policy influence on bottom-up decision making at the local level. My focus is on Sure Start as representative of an attempt at systemic change via a policy directive designed to encourage decision making at the local level.

In a paper by the UK’s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), joined-up-working is used as an umbrella term for planning, development and management of decisions that involve the end user:

The process of getting communities involved in decisions that affect them… including ‘the planning, development and management of services, as well as activities which aim to improve or reduce health inequalities’ (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE] 2014, p.692; emphasis added).
The topic of joined-up-working and community engagement is of significant global interest. As part of an Australian paper, Stuart (2016, p.1) argued the importance of encouraging community engagement through four broad suggested types. These four broad types of community engagement were influential in my choice of governance arrangements (Collective Impact framework and Localism Act, see Chapter 4). In addition they describe the rationale for the inquiry into the experiences of Sure Start key actors:

1. Community engagement with a focus on community development or community building – such as Sure Start bringing services together with an emphasis on the need of decision making at the local level and community involvement in local programs.
2. Community participation in consultation and decision making – such as the community consultations collective experience as provided by Sure Start key actors.
3. Community engagement that helps organisations, businesses etc. improve their service delivery or achieve their goals – Sure Start as a cross-departmental policy directive designed to enhance joined-up-working.
4. Community engagement as part of social change movements or as part of the work of voluntary community organisations – such as the policy desire to reduce complex societal issues (child poverty) and enhance citizen engagement through Sure Start.

Since the launch of Sure Start, and over the last two decades, the issue of governance arrangements in child poverty initiatives has become increasingly topical. The purpose of this study is to explore a specific top-down policy directive, the *Localism Act 2011* (DCLG 2011), and the influence of that Act on decision making at the local level (that is, on implementation of Sure Start). The Localism Act was designed to address social issues and ensure community visibility of government accountability. The research question (What is the influence of the Localism Act (top-down policy) on decision making at the local level?), reflects this purpose. I am concerned with exploring this governance arrangement and the Act’s influence, if any, on decision making at the local level.
1.3 The literatures

At its most general level, this thesis contributes to understanding the value of adding Complexity Leadership Theory to policy implementation studies. This includes an examination of the most recent policy implementation paradigm of governance, but from a non-traditional Complexity Leadership Theory perspective. Complexity Leadership Theory is grounded in the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), and this study combines elements of policy implementation literature (see Chapter 2) with Complexity Leadership Theory (Chapter 3). The three relationship tension domains (*financial, interpersonal* and *political*) introduced by Staites and Rogers (2012) are drawn from a detailed examination of the relationship between central and local government, and therefore provide a descriptive frame to further explore the subsequent links and causal chain of events between governance and leadership. The constructive engagement of these two literatures provides a useful backdrop to better understand relationship tensions and their entanglement. Although the linking of the two literatures was not specifically outlined in their concluding statements, the approach I have taken builds on the cumulative work of Uhl-Bien and Marion (2001, 2007, 2008 and 2009).

Future studies need not be quick fixes and it requires qualitative research that explores quantitative explorations, simulations and modeling (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p.467).

As a starting point for the third paradigm of the policy implementation literature, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) described top-down policy directives and decision making at the local level as a form of *synthesis* that rests on the balance between support for hierarchy and control on the one hand, and spontaneity of problem solving on the other. Synthesis – the process of balancing relationship tensions – is described as occurring between those who support spontaneity, learning and adaption as approaches to problem solving on the one hand and those who support structure, hierarchy and control on the other. Although this paradigm has since been superseded by other policy implementation paradigms (see Chapter 2), I have continued to examine the notion of balance and, as part of my conclusion, propose a possible sixth policy implementation paradigm – an *enabling paradigm* (see Chapter 8). Throughout this interpretive examination of synthesis and relationship tensions, I refer to the
influence of the current ‘knowledge era’, particularly in relation to the policy
implementation literature (see Chapter 2). I note that the rate of change, and resulting
tension, is without historical precedent. It is partly due to this pace of change that
policy directives are seeking innovative ways for citizen engagement to create and
influence positive systemic change.

For innovation to occur, new ideas must be generated that have the potential to create positive
change in the organisation, and these ideas must then flow into the formal organisation systems
and structures to create this change (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2008, p.638).

In considering this changing environment, Frye and Webb (2002, p.2) note the
importance of ensuring such joined-up partnership or collaboration is fit for purpose,
recognising that collaboration is not the panacea to all societal issues. Huxam (2003,
p.403) agrees, arguing that collaboration is not always the best way of achieving
policy objectives. Both Frye and Webb and Huxam acknowledge that partnerships
and collaboration don’t always work and, in drawing on their work, I argue that the
key reason for this is often lack of resources to support the type of balance and
leadership required, especially when confronting fragmented and complex societal
issues requiring systemic change.

The difference between complex and complicated issues is introduced in Chapter 2,
with the following chapters building on how these differences demand policy
directives that balance and navigate shifts in between linear and non-linear design.
Non-linearity creates uncertainty, which Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) describe
as being in a state of disequilibrium. Top-down or traditional policy directives are
created within a linear structure and it is this relationship tension, or disequilibrium,
between linear policy and a non-linear environment that creates other relationship
tensions. The constant state of disequilibrium between linear and non-linear
experiences often intensifies relationship tensions leading to entanglement. In my
exploration, entanglement refers to the relationship tension between formal top-down
administration and bottom-up dynamics – the task of navigating a balance.

Entanglement functions explain relationship behaviors rather than individual leaders. The
‘behaviours’ that individuals engage in and their effects on the organisational systems and their
dynamics (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p.633).
In navigating the tensions between policy directives and decision making at the local level, a generative leadership style is introduced as key to navigating a balance for policy design whilst nurturing an *enabling leadership* approach – one of three leadership approaches introduced in Chapter 3 and further discussed in Chapter 6. To assist in understanding the effects of these three leadership approaches, and drawing on existing Complexity Leadership Theory (March 1991; Uhl-Bien and Marion 2007, 2008 and 2009; Goldstein et al. 2010), I introduce a normative model, the *Enabling Continuum* (Chapter 3).

### 1.4 Normative model – Enabling Continuum

The Enabling Continuum is introduced as a navigation and analysis tool to assist in further exploring responses elicited from the research question – namely, what influences the Localism Act, as a top-down policy directive, has on decision making at the local level. The work of Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), March (1991), Matland (1995) and Goldstein et al. (2010), and their attempts to describe the important balance between top-down and bottom-up tensions, has been fundamental to my examination of relationship tensions. I have introduced a normative model, not to solve or avoid these relationship tensions, but rather to use them constructively in certain circumstances. In all these scholarly works there is the common thread of a relationship tension described as the tension between *structure* and *spontaneity*.

The relationship tensions between structure and spontaneity are found and represented at the extreme ends of the Enabling Continuum (for further detail see Figure 3E, p. 65). When applied to complex societal issues, the continuum offers an ability to navigate entanglement and provide an enhanced understanding of influences on decision making at the local level. March (1991) describes this tension as the between *exploitation* and *exploration*. By engaging in exploration at the cost of exploitation, March argues, systems are ‘likely to find that they suffer the costs of experimentation without gaining many of its benefits. They exhibit too many undeveloped new ideas and too little distinctive competence’ (March 1991, p. 71). Conversely, March describes how ‘systems that engage in exploitation to the exclusion of exploration are likely to find themselves trapped in suboptimal stable equilibria’ (March 1991, p. 71).
At one end of the Enabling Continuum, linear (top-down) experiences are those of exploitation, where planned or established certainties are favoured. At the other end, non-linear (bottom-up) experience is presented as exploration, encouraging unplanned new possibilities. March (1991, p.71) argued that maintaining an appropriate balance between exploitation and exploration was a primary leadership factor in system survival and prosperity. In chapters 5, 6 and 7, I present my findings and examine the tensions to be found in system survival (structure) and prosperity (spontaneity).

As part of the research design, I have overlaid on the Enabling Continuum the pathway to criticalisation described by Goldstein et al. (2010), which provides a framework for how systems adapt to change (see Chapter 3, p. 63). Criticalisation is designed to articulate the complexity of change, such as moving from clarity (linear) to chaos (non-linear) in a changing environment. Focusing on the governance of policy directives (particularly policy systems or directives that encourage decision making at the local level), I use the Enabling Continuum as an analytical tool to better understand the shift and balance between linear and non-linear adaptive systems (discussed later in terms of fragmentation; see Chapter 7, p.152).

1.5 Governance and Complexity

Although my exploration does not set out to defend Complexity Leadership Theory, its importance in understanding the complexities of governance arrangements cannot be ignored. Likewise, I am not attempting to debate the definition of policy implementation, or canvass arguments for or against Complexity Leadership Theory; the focus of this thesis is more on exploring constructive engagement between these two literatures and, most importantly, the shared subsequent links and causal chain of events of their most recent paradigms as explored through two governance contexts – the Collective Impact framework and the Localism Act.

Governance and complexity are presented and described with reference to two governance contexts: frameworks (soft governance) and legislation (hard governance). The soft governance framework is based on the belief that the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda will be able to solve a specific social problem. This is represented by Kania
and Krammer’s (2011) ‘Collective Impact framework’, further described in Chapter 4. The Collective Impact framework is a global concept first developed by Kania and Kramer following an analysis of successful organisations that deal with complex issues crossing over the political, public administration/sociology and economic spheres. The five conditions of the Collective Impact framework are considered and underpin the structure of the semi-structured interview questions, being presented in the form of three pre-conditions and five conditions (Appendix C). The fifth Collective Impact framework condition (backbone organisation) describes a set of common activities and leadership characteristics that are further explored across non-traditional approaches to leadership (see chapters 3 and 6).

The hard governance context is represented by the Localism Act, which was passed in England to address issues in society by facilitating devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals and communities (DCLG 2011). Localism (both old and new – see Chapter 2) aims to ensure community visibility and government accountability (DCLG 2011). England’s Localism Act represents the first legislative attempt to articulate and advocate for citizen engagement, in that it sets out targets and strategies for enabling decision making at the local level, whilst placing duties on government ministers and local authorities to act in ways designed to increase localism and citizen engagement (DCLG 2011). The Localism Act provides a governance timeline that is reflected in the research design, with data being collected for the periods 1997–2010 (before passage of the Act) and 2011–2014 (after passage of the Act.) The reason for commencing in 1997 is that this was the date that Sure Start was established. As a result of the analysis of the findings, the period between 2010 and 2012 subsequently became the key focal point of the research.

1.6 Purpose and central argument of study

Because the introduction of the Localism Act brought a renewed focus on the tensions and controversies between governance mandates and the less-heard voices of the community, I seek to understand how best to influence decision making at the local level. Examining the relationship tensions and areas where governance is effective and where it is problematic, the subsequent links and casual chain of events between governance and leadership indicate a role for non-traditional leadership. It is through
such exploration that adding a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective to policy implementation studies enables governance to be considered from a non-traditional and enabling paradigm. Hence, the purpose of this research is to better understand the subsequent links and causal chains of events between governance and leadership, and to investigate top-down policy directives and their influence on decision making at the local level.

To date, explorations of the process of policy decisions are mostly to be found within the policy implementation literature. In honouring this approach I consider governance from a policy implementation perspective and explore the current governance paradigm, which represents the fifth generation of policy implementation literature (Hill and Hupe 2009). Complexity leadership Theory, with its theoretical roots in Complex Adaptive Systems theory, presents as an effective way to describe the relationship between the (change-impeding) governance paradigm and a possible sixth paradigm – enabling paradigm (see Chapter 8) – and particularly, the parts of a system that give rise to collective behaviors of governance and how these interact and form non-linear relationships within any environment. The linking of the two literatures provides a greatly improved perspective from which to explore the complex relationship tensions between policy directives and their influence on decision making at the local level.

Through my argument, my research will contribute to understanding the value of adding Complexity Leadership Theory perspectives to policy implementation studies, and, through the Enabling Continuum, demonstrate how Complexity Leadership Theory offers thinking about governance from a non-traditional perspective to consider an enabling paradigm. The Enabling Continuum is not designed to solve or avoid the inevitable tensions between top-down and bottom-up approaches but to assist policy makers use these tensions constructively in certain circumstances.

1.7 Thesis structure and chapters

The argument within this thesis is presented across eight chapters commencing with this first chapter providing an introduction and overview of my study. The theoretical literature is then presented over two chapters (2 and 3), followed by a single chapter.
describing the research methodology and boundaries of the research (Chapter 4). The findings are presented across three chapters (5, 6 and 7) with Chapter 8 providing a conclusion and recommendations for future research including presentation of an enabling paradigm. An overview of the content of each chapter is presented below.

**Literature Review 1: Policy Implementation (Chapter 2)**

The first literature chapter presents the case of policy implementation drawing on the five paradigms of policy implementation thought I expand on the paradox that, in the 1980s and third policy implementation paradigm, was described as the debate around synthesis. This included thinking around the topic of policy implementation across two main fields of inquiry, one arguing that hierarchical control does not bring results, and a second introducing the importance of citizen engagement and joined-up-working. Hill and Hupe (2009) describe how the paradox is more complex than a top-down/bottom-up synthesis.

The debate over the paradox has continued through various generations of policy implementation thought, moving from a strong top-down first generation (Bardach 1977) to a second, bottom-up focused generation (Nakumura and Smallwood 1980). The third generation had a clear focus on synthesis of the two perspectives (Sabatier 1986), while the fourth generation argued policy implementation was actually dead/dormant (De Leon 1999). Bringing the same tensions and controversies into recent literature, Hill and Hupe (2009) argue there is a fifth generation and current paradigm focusing on governance. The conclusion of Chapter 2 notes the importance of expanding the policy implementation exploration to include the subsequent links and causal chain of events between governance and leadership, which is considered through a detailed analysis of Complexity Leadership Theory.

**Literature Review 2: Complexity Leadership Theory (Chapter 3)**

The second literature chapter drawing from complexity sciences examines the subsequent links and causal chain of events that emerge from governance, leadership and decision making at the local level. Complex Adaptive Systems theory provides a theoretical scaffold that can assist with such exploration. Complexity Leadership Theory describes the need to create conditions that enable a system to generate positive change, whilst providing some form of basic structure. Chapter 3 further explores
Complexity Leadership Theory, which has its roots in Complex Adaptive Systems theory. Complexity Leadership Theory is expanded upon using the domains of a Cynefin framework (Mintzberg et al. 1998) and theory of change (Weiss 1995), which are introduced to assist with the discussions of change including obvious, complicated, complex, and chaotic disorder, all further expanded in the findings chapters (5, 6, and 7).

Chapter 3 presents the Enabling Continuum, a normative model that is used to plot emergent behaviours, patterns from differences between linear and non-linear environments and dynamic networks of interactions. The relationship between the two ends of the Enabling Continuum, exploitation and exploration, assists with reviewing the relationship tensions of interest in my study. I examine the experiences of Sure Start key actors along the Enabling Continuum using the two governance arrangements, frameworks (the Collective Impact framework) and legislation (the Localism Act). Following a series of semi-structured interviews, I explore governance and leadership and any influence on decision making at the local level as reflected through the Sure Start program.

The Enabling Continuum provides a suitable navigation tool for an analysis of cycles of interactions that represent non-linear and emergent change environment. Such explorations are important for understanding change, although most policies are set within a linear term and, based on an assumption of cause and effect, and attempt to predict the steps of change. Chaos is the opposite position, related to the behavior of non-linear dynamic networks and therefore closely related to emergent and changing situations. This calls for a different, non-traditional form of leadership. Complexity leadership theory presents three leadership approaches, and the addition of these leadership approaches to policy implementation offers a paradigm for thinking about governance from a non-traditional perspective.

Methodology: Collective Impact framework and Localism Act (Chapter 4)

In the methodology chapter I describe the relevant framework surrounding the study as an interpretive exploration. It is an exploration of a top-down policy directive, the Localism Act, and its influence on decision making at the local level. Commencing with an outline of the research setting and design the two governance arrangements
are described and presented in two governance forms (soft and hard). The first arrangement is presented in the form of soft governance utilising the governance framework referred to as Collective Impact framework (Kania and Kramer 2011). This framework of soft governance was utilised to underpin the semi-structured questions and prompts used to interview the key actors. The responses from the interviews were considered across the timeline of the Localism Act. The Localism Act is presented as the second governance arrangement, hard governance, utilising the time period pre- and post-the Localism Act.

The research methodology is presented in three phases: exploration (the interviews of the Sure Start key actors), implementation (the influence of The Localism Act, pre- and post-implementation) and analysis (the identification and expansion of common themes). The scope of the research details the use of the Enabling Continuum as a tool to navigate the experiences of entanglement across the three relationship tension domains (Staites and Rogers 2012 – financial; interpersonal; political). The final part of Chapter 4 is the outline of the research boundaries and limitations, particularly the issues that surround single case studies. Drawing on the three relationship tensions within the findings chapters (5, 6 and 7) I introduce and discuss briefly the three discoveries: key principle adequate resources; leadership as a missing link; and paradox of fragmentation. Six scenarios provide the framework to explore and interpret the relationship tensions that are identified between top-down policy (Localism Act) and its influence on decision making at the local level (Sure Start key actors). These are presented in the form of streamlining of funds, starving of funds, communication, dynamic networks, principles-first approach and application-first approach. The findings chapters, the three discoveries and their six scenarios emerge from an analysis of the three relationship tension domains.

Financial domain – Discovery 1: Key principle and adequate resources (Chapter 5)

Along with the literature, the findings of my research support the argument that the link between reduced funding and inadequate resources is extremely strong. Two scenarios are introduced in Chapter 5 – streamlined funding, and starving of funds. The creation of streamlined funding and starving of funds more often than not reinforces a silo approach to working, being the opposite of joined-up-working.
Interpersonal domain – Discovery 2: Leadership a notable missing link (Chapter 6)

Generative leadership is examined across the three leadership approaches, with particular interest in traditional and non-traditional leadership approaches. Consideration is given to non-traditional leadership behaviours that not only embrace emergence but also provide a useful way to navigate the pathway to criticalisation. As demonstrated on the Enabling Continuum the two scenarios of communication and dynamic networks are considered as integral to a non-traditional and non-linear approach to achieving systemic change.

Political domain – Discovery 3: Paradox of fragmentation (Chapter 7)

Fragmentation is presented as a paradox wherein the design of policy is often at odds with the policy intention. Extending the political rhetoric of a parent/child syndrome (discussed in Chapter 2), the Sure Start case study reveals a constant tension between positive and negative experiences of fragmentation and change. Two scenarios are introduced in Chapter 7 to assist with the discussion of the paradox. The first scenario presents as a principles-first approach, or deductive approach, which derives conclusions or facts from general principles or concepts. The second scenario is an application-first approach, which aims for open access to information but not within any pre-set boundary. Although set within a principles-first approach the purpose of the Localism Act is more akin to an application-first approach. The Act aims to address issues in society, supporting citizen engagement policy directives (such as Sure Start) to ensure community visibility of government accountability. While the Localism Act was designed to reduce tensions between central and local levels of government, its very design appears to achieve the opposite and exacerbate such tensions.

My argument is based on the assumption that the Localism Act would positively influence decision making at the local level. However the interviews with Sure Start key actors revealed little evidence of the Localism Act positively influencing decision making at the local level. Through this study I have examined explored the entanglement of relationship tensions to understand these influences.
1.8 Thesis conclusion (chapter 8)

The research findings indicate that, as a result of limited funding and inadequate resources, Sure Start moved closer to the exploitation end (increased bureaucracy) of the Enabling Continuum. I argue as a result, entrenched silos, reduced leadership and decreasing decision making at the local level emerged as unintended outcomes of the Localism Act. Consequently gaps in funding and inadequate resources resulted in a gap in generative leadership. It was recognition of this gap that resulted in leadership being described as an important second discovery (a notable missing link). The reduction of resources negated the conditions for a generative leadership style and, consequently, for an enabling leadership approach to lead emergence and change. Leadership as a missing link reduced the capability for effective communication and linkage of networks, which in turn further heightened entrenched silos and increased bureaucracy. Less communication and more confusion were other results of the missing leadership link. This created fragmentation and distortion of the necessary networks, thus limiting the position at the exploration end of the Enabling Continuum, innovation and change.

The six scenarios are fundamental to the exploration of the subsequent links and causal chain of events between governance and leadership. The streamlining of funds causes an adverse impact on resources. Equally the starving of funds results in resources being reduced with blame for not achieving results. Both of these scenarios leading to inadequate resources have been used to describe how such experiences resulted in the creation of entrenched silos. Silo working is the opposite to joined-up-working and thus not positively able to influence decision making at the local level. The role leadership played in these silos was highlighted more from a position of it being a missing link particularly in joined-up-working. The missing link was intensified through lack of communication and inability to build dynamic networks.

Many Sure Start key actors reported the disruptive challenges of communication being compromised by inadequate resources. I argue how the lack of communication constrained their ability to enhance conditions and utilise the strengths of all involved, and thus having reinforced the working in silos. The changes in communication also meant the dynamic networks that had previously enhanced a generative leadership style were now finding it difficult to navigate and be successful with change.
inadequate resources leading to reduced enabling leadership styles that could navigate
dynamic networks the resulting experience was often one of confusion and further
entrenched silos.

Confusion can also be a way to describe fragmentation, or what is referred to in
Complexity Leadership Theory as disequilibrium – the state needed for change. Of
the two forms of fragmentation, principles-first can create too much bureaucracy and
be too linear, whilst application-first can enable freedom of direction with room for
creativity but be too non-linear. Both approaches create disequilibrium. I describe the
varying states of disequilibrium and use the six scenarios to describe how they are
significant and collectively considered across the Enabling Continuum normative
model.

It is the inadequacy of resources that limits a generative leadership style, which in
turn prevents an enabling leadership approach to navigate fragmentation. It is the
navigation of fragmentation that is relevant to enabling decision making at the local
level. I conclude my argument that it is through the inability of top-down policy
directives to enable decision making at the local level that bottom-up experiences are
inhibited and negatively influenced. As part of the conclusion I offer three
recommendations relating to the need to extend the parameters of policy
implementation literature to include Complexity Leadership Theory. I conclude my
recommendations in the form of a visual format setting the scene for future studies to
consider an enabling paradigm and Enabling Theory of Change.
Chapter 2. Literature Review Part 1 – Policy Implementation Literature

2.1 Introduction

Harold Lasswell (1951) introduced the idea of seven stages of the policy process: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination and appraisal. This was later expanded by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), with their considerations of policy implementation as an important separate stage. In their seminal work, Pressman and Wildavsky defined policy implementation as ‘the ability to forge links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results’ (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973, p.xv). This definition was based on their description of how the study of implementation required an understanding of apparently simple sequences of events, and how this in turn depended on complex chains or reciprocal interactions – the forging of subsequent links. Pressman and Wildavsky also recognised that each sequence should be considered in relation to the others. In later studies, the failure to consider such sequences was described as the *missing link* and became the topic of further work (see for example, Hargrove 1975; DeLeon 1999). The concept of the missing link is of interest to this research, not only in how it relates to policy implementation, but also in how it can be explored and understood through the subsequent links to governance, with a particular focus on top-down policy making, and decision making at the local level.

Interest in policy implementation as an issue independent of decision making extends beyond policy scholars. For example, Ottoson and Green, well-known scholars in public health and education, found much of their work aligned with policy implementation. In their 1987 review of the concept and context of the theory of implementation, they contributed to the policy implementation debate through their observations on some of the scholarly work:

Implementation is variously described as a stage, a process, or as actions. For Williams (1976), implementation ends when program operations begin, but for Weiss (1972) implementation is program operations. For Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), implementation is a process of interaction; for Berman and McLaughlin (1976), implementation is more specifically an organisational process (Ottoson and Green 1987, p.356).
Ottoson and Green concluded that the debate as to whether policy comes before, during or after implementation was a theme running throughout most of the literature (1987, p.376). This realisation was foreshadowed by Kingdon (1984) who identified the importance of agenda setting, with Lipsky (1980) over a period of three decades introducing the term street level bureaucracy to describe how policy agenda setting was often experienced by those responsible for implementing the policy. This was an important piece of work: it provided insight into the tensions that exist before, during and after policy implementation. Interest in the tensions between policy setting and policy implementation continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s and into the new millennium. Barrett conducted research throughout this period and at the turn of the century noted a shift in approaches to policy implementation. In her reflection on policy implementation studies she concluded further exploration was needed to ‘address the central paradox of control and autonomy’ (Barrett 2004, p.261). While this central paradox is also referred to as a tension between top-down administration and bottom-up dynamics, Hill and Hupe describe how the paradox is more complex than a top-down/bottom-up dichotomy.

While the top-down/bottom-up debate was heavily influenced by the question of how to separate implementation from policy formation, that was only part of a wider problem about how to identify the features of a very complex process, occurring across time and space, and involving multiple actors (Hill and Hupe 2009, p.44).

The debate over complexity has continued through various generations of policy implementation thought as detailed in Table 2.1.

### 2.2 Policy implementation

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the changes in both the practice and the study of policy implementation over the last fifty years.

**Table 2.1: Five generations of thinking about policy implementation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm shifts</th>
<th>Five Generations policy implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The problem-solving</td>
<td>Top-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The policy-implementation paradigm</td>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Public Management paradigm</td>
<td>Synthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The embedded market</td>
<td>Dormant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The governance paradigm</td>
<td>Governance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hill and Hupe (2009)
My research focus is on the subsequent links and causal chain of events explored in the most recent paradigm, the governance paradigm. The governance paradigm is considered to be particularly relevant when considering relationship tensions and will be utilised in this study to explore the subsequent links and causal chains between governance and decision making at the local level. The five schools of thought are explored in the five subsections below, through examination of a small but representative sample of views from scholars considered to be the leading contributors to each generation of thought.

**Generation One: the problem-solving paradigm**

The top-down spectrum formed much of the first generation of implementation studies. Bardach (1977) was not necessarily an advocate of the top-down approach but his work heightened understanding of the tension between the popularity of community control (decision making at the local level) and bureaucracy. In understanding that social scientists could offer much to the complex area of public policy, Bardach designed an analytical framework for examining implementation issues. Although this framework was based on four distinct types, Bardach recognised that there was often a mixture of types in the real world and that any grouping was somewhat arbitrary. Bardach likened much of policy implementation to a game, with the role of a *fixer* required to know who should be the stakeholders and what should be the stakes.

Bardach’s first framework for examining implementation issues was the distribution of resources, with particular attention to issues around funding. Funding and adequate resources will also be an important concept within my study, being the key principle of the findings (three discoveries, Chapter 5) and one of the three domains (financial) detailed in Section 3 below. The second distinctive type of policy implementation was around deviation from the policy goals stipulated in the original mandate. Lipsky (1980) wrote extensively about this area, describing the actors that often deflected from formal policy goals as *street level bureaucrats*. Deflection was described as a tension by Lipsky and a as game by Bardach; either way, a shared constant was the
constant controversy between the accountability frameworks being applied and the direction chosen by the workers on the ground. The third type of policy implementation represented a form of social entropy, interpersonal and personal forces in the social world that confounded the system, adding to the complexity. Bardach noted that there was a tension and premise ‘that nearly all control systems operate on a premise that a certain degree or standardisation is possible and desirable’ (Bardach 1977, p.129). In his early thinking it was already becoming apparent that the effectiveness of top-down approaches was already being questioned.

There is a mistaken notion on the part of many people that the problems of social entropy – incompetency, variability in the objects of control, poor coordination, and perhaps others can be solved by designing better management tools and procedures and by giving more power to institutions specialising in management (Bardach 1977 p.139).

It was this notion, of tension and controversy, that, gave rise to Bardach’s fourth distinct type of policy implementation – the dissipation of personal and political energies in game playing and, more importantly, the energy that was taken away from the ‘end game’ (1977).

Having considered the four distinct types of implementation issues as a way to further understand policy implementation, Bardach argued that ‘problems of implementation should somehow be “taken into account” in the design and adoption stage.’ (Bardach 1977, p.250). He reminded those involved in policy implementation that any social issue that was worthy of change, or having a government policy about it, was more than likely to be a complex societal wicked issue and, therefore, a complex situation not allowing of an easy “one size fits all” solution. It was at this point Bardach introduced the idea of the fixer, being a person, or a position, that would focus on either repairing or adjusting tensions to achieve the end game. Bardach was most active during a period when the top-down approach to policy implementation was dominant. As the concept and role of the fixer expanded, so too did awareness and recognition that the fixer role could not always be imposed from above: bottom-up perspectives in the policy implementation paradigm were gaining momentum as generation two began to emerge.
Generation Two: the policy implementation paradigm

With Generation Two, policy implementation thinking moved into a period of exploring different approaches to policy implementation. Nakumura and Smallwood (1980) focused on case study literature of policy implementation and noted how it had grown rapidly since Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). Their exploration considered policy implementation from the perspectives of various actors (e.g. policy makers, bureaucrats and social scientists) including the politics of policy implementation. The underlying question behind their case studies was whether it was ‘possible to construct a meaningful model of policy implementation that captures the complexities or circularity in a manner that is both comprehensive and comprehensible’ (Nakumara and Smallwood 1980, p.vii).

Nakumura and Smallwood reported that the case studies on policy implementation that appeared during the 1970s revealed a progressive shift away from the classical hierarchy model (Nakumara and Smallwood 1980, p.18). Their work identified that policy implementation was best characterised as a fluid series of interrelationships, thus challenging the classical model of hierarchy and top-down spectrum where action, particularly for change, was directed from the top toward the bottom. To better understand the top-down spectrum Nakumura and Smallwood developed a conceptual framework that introduced three policy environments: policy formation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. The key finding of their 1980 conclusion was that there was a circular relationship between all three policy environments (a line of thought foreshadowed in the work of Rein and Rabinovitz (1977) and their principle of circularity). A common theme was that the tensions of a top-to-bottom functional approach could not be ignored. Nakumura and Smallwood, in embracing these tensions and the three policy environments, designed five criteria to assist with the subsequent links and casual chain of events: policy goal attainment, policy efficiency, constituency satisfaction, clientele responsiveness and system maintenance.

Our analysis has indicated that the policy implementation process is characterised by a complex series of diverse linkages among policy makers, implementers, and evaluators, and that a high degree of political judgment and leadership is required to tie this system into an integrated whole (Nakumara and Smallwood 1980, p.181).
The issue of leadership was recognised, although not included as part of these criteria. The recognition of there being some alignment and linkage with leadership did, however, prompt many of the second generation thinkers to explore the best way to enable change and move a policy proposal to successful fruition. Mazmanian (1983), Nakumara et al. (1980) and Berman (1978) were some of the second-generation thinkers to characterise how a shift in the top-down spectrum, to a less authoritative and administrative approach, was needed to incorporate bottom-up perspectives. One commonality in their collective work was the view that bottom-up policy implementation was only successful when those primarily affected were actively involved in the planning and execution of relevant programs. It was at this point that the literature began to recognise that consideration of both ends – top-down spectrum and bottom-up perspectives – was important and a third generation of thought focused on synthesis or balance emerged within the New Public Management paradigm.

**Generation Three: the New Public Management paradigm**

The third generation of policy implementation thought and the New Public Management paradigm brought a period of synthesis between the top-down spectrum and bottom-up perspective, with Sabatier (1986) one of the key authors of this synthesis. However Matland (1995) and Ingram (1990) also presented contingency theories in an attempt to balance top-down and bottom-up tensions. The 1980s saw considerable debate and development of thinking around the topic of policy implementation across two main fields of inquiry: one arguing that hierarchical control does not bring results, and a second focusing on the importance of citizen engagement and networks.

These two lines of inquiry were explored extensively – together and separately – by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989). As part of their early work, Sabatier and Mazmanian identified six conditions for effective policy implementation. The first three conditions related to the initial policy decision (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979, p.291). The latter three conditions were less structured and ‘largely the product of subsequent political and economic pressure during the subsequent implementation process’ (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979, p.291). Keeping the focus
on the policy implementation process, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) later proposed five conditions for evaluating when to adopt a top-down spectrum, a bottom-up perspective or both. This is described and further detailed in the next paragraph as five conditions of effective policy implementation. Various third generation scholars (Sabatier 1986; Elmore 1978; Lane 1987) identified the goal of synthesis as balancing out the controversy between those supported hierarchy and control (structure) and those who supported learning, adaption and problem solving (spontaneity). In Chapter 3 this controversy is presented as an entanglement of relationship tensions.

Returning to Sabatier and Mazmanian’s (1980) five conditions of effective policy implementation, a common bonding denominator was identified: leadership. Both sets of conditions (the six from Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979 and the five from Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980) highlight the importance of accountability for those overseeing, or being the recipients of, the policies being implemented. The earlier work of Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) recognised the importance of characteristics of the implementing agencies of policy implementation. Building on this, Sabatier and Mazmanian increased the number of necessary characteristics to include recruitment of committed and skillful officials to lead the accountability of the interest groups being supported. It was at this point of the third generation that recognition of the need to lead the policy implementation process was at its peak. In Sabatier and Mazmanian’s attempt to contemporise the conditions for effective implementation, they re-summarised the focus onto the style of leadership so as to balance the tensions between structure (hierarchy and control) and spontaneity (adaptive problem solving). Although their exploration of leadership was limited, awareness of the need for a balance between relationship tensions had emerged. This resulted in a feeling of paralysis that was, at the time, considered to be reflective of the market; hence the introduction of the fourth generation of policy implementation thought and its ‘embedded market’ paradigm.

*Generation Four: the embedded market paradigm*

By the time of the fourth generation of policy implementation thought, scholars such
as De Leon (1999) were labeling policy implementation studies as being at an intellectual dead end with DeLeon arguing that rational choice and game theory was the way to navigate out of this intellectual dead end. DeLeon’s thinking represents an early signpost of a constructive engagement that was later to emerge between political sciences and complexity sciences; the two literatures I examine in this chapter and in Chapter 3.

However not all scholars agreed that policy implementation was an intellectual dead end. For example, Barrett (2004) preferred to explain the fourth generation as the generation that wasn’t. In using the phrase ‘wasn’t’ Barrett was emphasising that it was not the end for policy implementation, quite the opposite as a new paradigm was emerging. Scholars, such as DeLeon (1999), O’Toole (2000) and Barrett (2004), who were interested in pushing the boundaries of thinking about policy implementation, looked for a more contemporary paradigm, focusing on the outcome and consequences of policy implementation, rather than the structures or processes that had framed much of the thinking in the previous generations.

The combination of greater emphasis on a democratic orientation, buttressed by more of a post-positivist orientation and methodology and a realistic assessment of what implementation can deliver (as opposed to promise) may not win any Nobel Prizes (DeLeon 1999, p.30).

Barrett (2004) wrote extensively about her experience of earlier policy implementation research and the importance of understanding what actually happens at the policy recipient level. In this, Barrett reflects on her own experience ranging from the mid-1960s which saw a focus on strategic plans, to the 1970s where independent skilled research staff were appointed to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy implementation. Barrett’s discussion of policy analysis set the scene for the fourth generation, particularly its focus on understanding policy implementation failure. Her focus on the links between actors, and thus on the need for an improved understanding of the subsequent links and causal chains of events, was evident in her presentation of four factors required to prevent policy implementation failure: clear and unambiguous policy objectives (increased emphasis on specific performance targets and standards); formal contracts (no doubt as to what
was regarded as satisfactory achievement); resource availability (introducing the private sector); and control of agencies’ personnel (line management accountability). These factors demonstrated a shift in focus, with leadership becoming more prominent, as Barrett was very clear on the responsibility and accountability of those in leading roles.

Managers were now responsible for putting policy into effect and also to blame if things went wrong. Success or failure was judged on the basis of meeting pre-set targets for ensuring delivery on policy targets (Barrett 2004, p.258).

In reviewing the embedded market paradigm, it could be argued that the fourth generation of policy implementation was simply the beginning of the next paradigm.

*Generation Five: the governance paradigm*

As the main architects of the governance paradigm, Hill and Hupe (2009) promoted governance as the focus of the next era of policy implementation studies. Lynn et al. (2000) had earlier introduced a hierarchy of relationships as a way to further understand the logic of governance: those relationships that exist between citizens’ preferences and legislative choice; between legislative preferences and formal structures; between formal structures and management; between management and the primary work of public agencies; between public agencies’ focus on outputs/results; between outputs/results and stakeholder assessments; and between stakeholders’ assessments and political preferences and interests – which should relate to citizens’ preferences. Many of these considerations demonstrated the importance of horizontal and vertical relationship tensions, and Hill and Hupe considered how governance could play a role in balancing such tensions.

Practitioners in public administration are working under an action imperative. They constantly need to answer questions for themselves about how to act. The study of implementation is about those acts (Hill and Hupe 2009, p.164).

Hill and Hupe also agreed that the new governance paradigm was all about moving forward to better understand complexity.
Governance makes the top-down/bottom-up debate seem rather dated, and the top-down control emphasis in the work of some of the top-downers writers particularly irrelevant. Implementation theory has developed and moved away from that debate to take on board complexity in respect both of the process and of the related issues of control (Hill and Hupe 2009, p.201).

Osborne (2006) described the shift, and the new governance paradigm, which he referred to as New Public Governance and levels of governance, as a transitional stage in the move away from traditional public administration.

The two specific examples of hard and soft governance explored in this thesis are described in Chapter 4. First, however, I will discuss two important points of tension identified within the governance literature; namely, collaboration and joined-up-working, and the division between localism and centralism.

2.3. Governance

Collaboration and joined-up working

Collaboration and joined-up-working are phrases often used within governance dialogue, particularly in relation to subsequent links and causal chains of events. The term ‘silos’ is often used to describe non-joined-up ways of working. Silos and non-joined-up working, and how silo working becomes further entrenched, are discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 in the context of the case study (Sure Start program). In Chapter 3 the tensions between collaborative working and silo-based working are expanded to include the concept of leadership for collaborative advantage.

To get the real advantage out of collaboration it is argued that something has to be achieved that could not have been attained by any of the organisations acting alone (Huxam 2003, p.403).

Huxam extended his inquiry to better understand the dilemma that Lipsky (1980) referred to as the relationship tensions of street level bureaucracy. Lipsky’s and Huxam’s collective discussions were particularly interested in what contributed to collaboration inertia with Huxam articulating this inertia as policy rhetoric.
If collaborative advantage is the goal behind the policy rhetoric of partnership and the ambitions of practitioners who initiate them why is collaboration inertia so often the outcome? (Huxam 2003, p.404).

In this study, policy rhetoric is identified as the ‘parent/child’ syndrome, which is also used by those implementing a particular program as a reactive tactic to survive inadequate resourcing. Both Frye and Webb (2002) and Huxam (2003) have made reference to evidence of such relationship tensions, especially the impact on collaboration and/or being a suitable partner. Further examples of these tensions are identified within the discussions of ‘old’ and ‘new’ localism presented in this chapter. This is not to say that all governance must be achieved collaboratively or in partnership: in some cases, such as discussed in Frye and Webb (2002), there has been a strong trend towards not working in partnership, with some tasks being better suited to single working frames.

One particular tension which, manifests in silo working, is the attitude or mentality that results in people and organisations not wanting to work together. As previously noted, the ability for departments within government to work in a joined-up way is often difficult to achieve in practice. However such difficulties have not diminished government’s enthusiasm and attempts to achieve joined-up or interagency working. Chapman (2002) concluded that successful interagency working requires a change in systems and governments needing to think differently. In relation to pursuing such inter-agency collaboration, Hardy et al. (1992) identified five barriers to systemic change and collaboration. These could be structural (such as fragmentation of service responsibilities across inter-agency boundaries); financial (particularly in the stocks and flows of resources); professional (differences in ideologies and values); and status or legitimacy related. However, whether it be reduction of silos or collaboration for improved joined-up-working, some commentators (Frye and Webb 2002; Huxam 2003; Dickson and Glasby 2010) argue that partnership working doesn’t always work.

We believe that current misunderstandings about the nature and the potential of partnership working mean that many partnerships are designed in ways which mean that they are unlikely to meet the very high aspirations of those who form them (Dickson and Glasby 2010, p.815)
This study does not explore the multitude of reasons for such arguments around governance partnership tensions, but it does explore the missing links of the relationship tensions that arise from entrenched silos. Some of these missing links can be presented as gaps in human resources; duplication of service delivery; or as disconnects in alignment of individuals and service delivery. Stanton (2015) identified other examples of missing links in his study on decentralisation and empowerment.

Despite certain provisions seeking to develop powers to local authorities, councillors do not feel that decentralisation had happened in any meaningful way (Stanton 2015, p.990)

Duit and Galaz (2008) also examined empowerment, suggesting further research is needed to incorporate Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory as part of social, political and ecological contexts. The importance of engaging end users and shifting away from command-and-control governance is described under many different forms.

A plethora of different schemes of self-government, public-private partnerships, collaborative efforts, policy entrepreneurs, and participatory initiatives usually gathered under the umbrella term of ‘governance’ (Duit and Galaz 2008, pp.328–29).

Sullivan (2010) described this governance experience of empowerment (citizen engagement) using the term neighbourhood – reflecting her thinking about the rationales, challenges and relationship tensions that she consequently labeled neighbourhood governance.

The attractors that make up neighbourhood governance have a focus on supporting “more bottom-up involvement and decision making and countering the highly centralised system of local government in England (Sullivan 2012, p.1).

For the purposes of this study, the term neighbourhood has been extended to include ‘citizen engagement’, as this is what is implied particularly when considering decision making at the local level. In earlier work, Sullivan and Lowndes (2008) linked the importance of neighbourhoods and citizen engagement when attempting to balance the relationship tensions that arise when policy actors attempt to manage complex societal issues.

The potential value of exploring ‘life-episodes’ and ‘wicked issues’ from the perspective of the neighbourhood offer a different dimension to how to consider ‘place’ and to determine what is the appropriate ‘point of need’ in commissioning terms (Sullivan 2012, p.5).
Throughout this study, I utilise the four principles of neighbourhoods as presented by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) to underpin the concept of what is later presented as dynamic networks (in chapters 3 and 6). These four principles (neighbourhood empowerment, neighbourhood partnership, neighbourhood government and neighbourhood management) are often caught within an entanglement of relationship tensions. It is the relationships tensions found within these four principles that form complex dynamic networks. In contrast to traditional policy approaches, such entanglements cannot be controlled by national rules and procedures.

The Government should face the issue of how decentralisation to communities relates to decentralisation to local authorities, and recognise this relationship cannot be dealt with by national regulations that control the relationship through national rules and procedures (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.5).

In an attempt to navigate this tension, in 2010 the Cameron Government launched ‘The Big Society’, a political strategy, which aimed to balance the free market and citizen engagement. With a clear policy mandate of giving communities more power, ‘Big Society’ was meant to encourage people to take an active role in their communities, transfer power from central to local government, support co-ops, mutual, charities and social enterprises, as well as making more government data available to the public (Cameron 2010). This study is not a critical examination of The Big Society, a topic, which has been tackled by many commentators (see for example, Jones and Stewart 2012; Stanton 2014; Lowndes and Prachett 2012). In this study, reference is made to the Big Society as a symbol of the policy drive within the Cameron Government to encourage neighbourhood governance and citizen engagement.

Centralism and Localism

Centralism and localism are two terms often used to describe the differentiation between the extremes of governance. Additional governance tensions also exist between balancing vertical and horizontal relationship tensions between those implementing and those receiving policy.
Under centralist ideologies or strategies,

[g]overnment clearly wishes to bring forward mechanisms that enable a better relationship between the individual citizen and the state at a local level and it wishes to see citizens better connected and more self-sufficient in dealing with local matters with an associated decrease in dependence on the state (Briggs 2012, p.4).

On the other hand,

[l]ocalism seems to be a way of squaring the circle by using local knowledge and action to reduce costs of service delivery, support cheap community action and improve its local fit (Zacharzewski 2013, p.33).

If the shift in governance paradigm calls for closer contact with the end user, localism encourages interaction with that end user. This change in approach calls for central government to work closely with communities, mitigating the entanglement of relationship tensions. Part of achieving this balance includes reducing the impact of centralism, which Jones and Stewart (2012) suggest will prevail as long as local governments are dependent for their resources on central government. In addition, Diamond (2013, p.27) argues that for too long the language of localism has been spoken by politicians and policy-makers even as their actions have resisted attempts to transfer any substantive powers. Many commentators (Bentley 2012; Bovaird 2012; Briggs 2012; Coulson 2012; Jones and Stewart 2012; Raine 2012; Staite and Rogers 2012; Sullivan 2012) argue that while future-orientated policies (such as the Localism Act) are welcomed in principle, genuinely shifting into the new public governance paradigm requires government to embrace new ways of engagement.

Central government apparently knows no other way to act in local affairs than through command and control expressed in regulation, guidance and detailed prescription. If localism is to develop, central government has to learn new ways (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.6).

The description of centralism to date is based on the entrenched workings of central government, including its inability to hand power back to citizens. The UK Localism Act is the top-down policy directive and a most interesting piece of policy, because it remains wedded to a top-down approach even though it is intended as a progressive framework for future policies. Jones and Stewart (2012, p.1) go so far as saying the Act may as well have been referred to as the Centralism Act, noting that until
fundamental changes to central government are made the Act’s potential for reduced centralism cannot be realised. Jones and Stewart (2012, p.1) argue that the actions around decentralisation between both central government and local communities/citizens have not been thought through, and by default have actually come to undermine each other. Diamond (2013, p.24) describes these issues as unresolved debates in British politics.

With a focus on reducing centralism and increasing localism, the concept of being connected has become more prominent. Connected localism highlights the need for all stakeholders to be connected to achieve localism. In a collection of writings about connected localism (Local Government Information Unit (LGIU 2013), Diamond wrote about structural connections; Parker considered the types of innovation; Zacharzewski considered the future of localism; and Reeves examined what would be required for a locally connected community. Much of the earlier thinking on connected localism stems from the work of Sen, who, as a development economist, was interested in improving the resilience, self-development and autonomy of citizens and communities (Sen 1999). The LGIU collective work around connected localism incorporated Sen’s work by focusing on the importance of meeting local need, thus encouraging decision making at the local level. Diamond (2013, p.12) argued that ‘Britain, and more particularly England, remains one of the most centralised states among the industrialised nations with power concentrated at the centre of government’. He later explained how a contradiction has emerged leading to a paradox and struggle

[b]etween the impulse to reform the state and hand power back to citizens; and the desire of ministers and Whitehall policy-makers to keep their hands firmly on the levers of power (Diamond 2013, pp.12–13).

Much of the thinking around connected localism was that it would provide a way to balance relationship tensions, as well as recognising the importance of trade-offs being resolved as close as possible to the end users, citizens or neighbourhoods, as defined by Lowndes and Sullivan (2008). In this study I explore how, unfortunately, such actions have been a distant prospect in what is best described as the centralised British state.
It is important to accept that a statue itself does not secure change and there is a need for central government’s approach to localism to recognise ‘the need for change in the centralism entrenched workings of central government itself’ (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.4).

Both the Blair and Cameron governments shared a commitment to localism (Game 2012). The shared commitment held a particular focus on frameworks that enabled devolved budgets and on designing services to engage with the hardest-to-reach families. While the two administrations went about it in different ways, the end goal was to ‘give local communities the power to change lives, and help save money at the same time’ (Game 2012, p.4). It was the Cameron government who took a step towards legislation to achieve engaging governance arrangements through the Localism Act.

The 2011 Localism Act

It has been argued that the governance arrangements of the Localism Act encourage an increase in transparency to ensure effective local authority member scrutiny can be achieved. Reflecting the need to support citizen engagement, the Act contains two provisions: the Community right to challenge and the Community right to bid.

The Community right to challenge ‘gives the right to voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, parish councils and groups of (at least two) council employees delivering a service to challenge council by “expressing an interest” in providing or assisting in providing any of its services’ (Bovaird 2012, p.3). There is a similarity to the earlier call for citizen engagement (Community call to action – duty to involve) but, unlike measures under the previous Labour government (Blair and Brown), this provision was seen as a way to mobilise The Big Society. The drive behind this devolutionary provision was to make greater use of citizen engagement and change to be led from a bottom-up perspective.

An obvious way that councils are managing this tension is to advertise the potential outsourcing of its services and be clear in advance when “expressions of interest” can be made (Bovaird 2012, p.3).

In implementing the Community Right to Challenge there are some obvious differences for local authorities already operating under a Conservative central government who were only able to provide low levels of service provision. Kent, the
location of the case study in my research, definitely falls into this category. Dover, particularly at the time of the field work (2014), was also operating under a Conservative government and the key actors in both Kent and Dover form part of the cohort of interviews undertaken to explore their views on their ability and ‘right to challenge’. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 speak to the paradox where often the design of the policy (particularly the Act) was at odds with the policy intention.

The right to challenge does not include services that ought to be provided but which are aligned purely with the services a local authority is providing. There is a challenge that this should be extended to include Whitehall departments and government agencies. There is much debate around the definition of community bodies with the right to challenge. The Act describes this as any body that carries on its activities primarily for the benefit of the community, but does not restrict this to bodies having local connections with the area of the council concerned (DCLG 2012). This, of course, enables larger bodies to work across more than one council area. This again can be interpreted more as an old form of localism that is linked to competitive tendering rather than the new localism and a right to challenge. Adding to the layers of complexity, the Community Right to Challenge is followed by the Community Right to Bid:

Communities will be given the chance to develop bids and raise capital to buy council assets which come up for disposal on the open market (Bovaird 2010, p.4).

The key purpose of the Community Right to Bid provision is to enable communities to save sites that are important for community social wellbeing, which could include cultural, recreational or sporting interests. A challenge in actioning this provision was identified by the Local Government Association (LGA 2011) as the limitations due to the powers of the Home Secretary. Conventional wisdom argues that the power held by the Home State would be better placed at the local level. Bovaird argues that ‘there is now little dissent from the notion that public assets will often be more cost-effectively managed when the management is vested in the community in which they are located’ (2012, p.12). Although not only relevant to the Community Right to Bid, one of the broad questions about the Act is whether such a governance structure reform in England can truly engage the citizens, such as those represented by the lowest levels of democratic representation (parish and town councils).
As discussed in Chapter 4, data collection for this study took place in Kent. Kent is the biggest county in England and consists of two complex governing arrangements: a two-tier authority, with a unitary authority (Medway) residing within the county. Earlier work undertaken in Kent by the Local Government Association and The Smith Institute suggested that what is needed is ‘smart localism’.

Smart localism involves blurring of the traditional divisions across government, both horizontal and vertical. Local government must be willing to let go of responsibilities in return we are to achieve democratic, responsive and whole-systems approach to public service (The Smith Institute 2005, p.79).

Having considered the five generations of policy implementation thought across the most recent governance paradigms and relationship tensions, a deeper examination of complicated and complex governance challenges follows.

**The paradox of complicated and complex governance challenges**

Major social change is accelerating at a rate fast enough to challenge the adaptive capacity of whole societies (Fuerth 2011, p.32).

Governance challenges are further intensified by the difference between complicated issues and complex issues. Tensions that are classed as complicated tend to be aligned with the top-down spectrum, while complex tensions have more alignment with the bottom-up perspective (in Chapter 3 these two tensions are further outlined using Complex Adaptive Systems theory). Fuerth (2011) defines complicated governance challenges as being linear and complex problems as being non-linear and constantly changing.

Linear [complicated] problems can be broken down into components, and then sequentially administered and resolved… Complex problems are the result of concurrent interactions among multiple systems or events. Complex challenges cannot be permanently resolved because they continuously mutate. Instead they must be constantly monitored and managed (Fuerth 2011, p.33).

Faced with both complicated and complex issues, policy makers need to be able to deal with governance challenges in a non-linear way. By its very nature non-linear
requirements can result in high levels of ambiguity, which in turn can make government extremely nervous, resulting in non-flexible and restrictive approaches to governance. The need to lead and enable change is further described in Chapter 3 where a constructive engagement between policy implementation and Complex Adaptive Systems theory literatures is deepened.

Within the policy implementation literature, relationships between central government and local government are often described as being more complex rather than complicated. With the Localism Act representing legislation designed to enhance communication and more of a conversational approach to encouraging decision making at the local level, tensions between policy makers and end users intensify as the conversation becomes more complex.

Although decision making at the local level is generally regarded as a good thing the governance challenge of balancing control and autonomy is primarily due to the manner in which central government promotes decision making at the local level. Decision making at the local level can lead to improved accountability and responsiveness, providing new pathways for participation and partnership, a state of affairs often described as active citizenship or citizen engagement (see for example, Newman 2014; Lowndes and Stoker 1992). When the policy directives designed to facilitate this type of local decision making are overly prescriptive, a ‘centralist creep’ results.

 Whilst, on the one hand, local authorities are perfectly placed to facilitate and encourage citizen empowerment, the difficulty that they then face are having to deal with the plethora of conflicting views that this can present (Stanton 2015, p.989).

An example of centralist creep can be found at the point of the Localism Bill’s second reading, where the 405 pages, 208 clauses, 24 schedules and at least 142 orders and regulation-making powers set out the way in which local decision making will take place. Ironically, this was in opposition to the policy desire for devolution and was not reflective of the ‘post-bureaucratic age’, which had previously been promoted by the government.
With this in mind, various reforms have been introduced to bring about this devolution, particularly with regards to local planning. The Localism Act 2011, for instance, sets out a number of community rights, giving localities the opportunities to take over local services and shape local areas, and introduces changes to neighbourhood planning, giving neighbourhood for the power to inmate and determine the nature of local developments (DCLG 2011, p.981).

To better understand the paradox between the desire to promote local level decision making and the desire to retain a high level of control over how this happens, I use two descriptors that are examined in the political domain and findings around fragmentation in Chapter 7. The first descriptor ‘principle first’, describes the importance of passing statutory provision to do certain things (see Stanton 2015). Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) described this as ‘structure’ and the need for order. The second descriptor, ‘application-first’, describes the importance of empowering citizens to do certain things (Stanton 2015). Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) described this relationship tension as ‘spontaneity’. Jones and Stewart have argued that in the case of the Localism Act, these two descriptors will always remain paradoxical because ‘the [Localism] Act is based on the assumption that empowering communities and local government requires central-government prescription’ (Jones and Stewart 2012, pp.363–4). For example, under the Localism Act, the Secretary of State has the power to overrule a local authority or individual.

In considering the shifts required to navigate complex governance challenges, commentators such as Stanton (2015, p.991), point to the ‘need to cut away the centrally-set targets and objectives, remove the over-prescriptive supervision of local power and afford councils the freedom necessary to operate appropriately and effectively…’ The scope for decision making at the local level to be based on local level initiatives, rather than being prescribed by the centre, is closely examined in this study. One identified major challenge is the influence of funding (Zacharzewski 2013, p.30), the importance of which was recognised by the Cameron government.

The parties will promote the radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups (Coalition Agreement 2010).
Diamond (2013, p.16) believes personalised provision that ‘is set within a framework of social rights and guarantees overseen by the state’ is the best way to achieve connected and empowered local communities. In other words, when decision making is guided by the desire to promote self-actualisation rather than paternalism, or the opposite to the parent/child syndrome as further described in Chapter 6.

Moreover, reconciling growing conflicts over resources means that the state and statutory agencies will have to innovate, working in partnership with a diversity of places, neighbourhoods, social networks and families, unlocking the ‘social productivity’ of communities (Diamond 2013, pp.14–15).

In considering whether personalised provision does indeed provide an opportunity to achieve connected and empowered local communities, Reeves (2012) argued that while central government displayed an interest in trying to level the playing field, most opportunities continued to be controlled or produced at the centre. However, “[f]actors such as social networks and norms cannot be generated from Whitehall” (Reeves 2012, p.69). It is important to accept that an Act of Parliament cannot in itself secure change, and that there is a need for central government’s approach to localism to recognise ‘the need for change in the centralism entrenched workings of central government itself’ (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.4). The Act, and its essential actions espouse policies to devolve power to communities. The essential actions accept that citizen engagement requires active bottom-up perspectives that are not controlled by central government.

The Government should face the issue of how decentralisation to communities relates to decentralisation to local authorities, and recognise this relationship cannot be dealt with by national regulations that control the relationship through national rules and procedures (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.5).

In this review of different approaches to policy implementation, its potential to influence decision making at the local level has been clearly established. Firstly, the definition of policy implementation and its ability to forge links to obtain desired results points to a heightened need for collaboration. The role and impact of
governance, and the need for collaboration, is further intensified as alignment with
decision making at the local level (neighbourhood governance and citizen
engagement) and introduces additional levels of complexity. Secondly, these levels of
complexity have been debated over five generations of policy implementation
thought, with the common denominator being the paradox between control and
autonomy. The conclusion of this chapter suggests the need for further exploration of
literature that extends the discussion around complexity; thus the constructive
engagement with Complex Adaptive Systems theory, which is the focus of the next
chapter.
Chapter 3. Literature Review Part 2 – Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

Introduction

Complexity science aims to understand the dynamics of networks and emergent events through both mathematical modeling and philosophical foundations. The focus of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory is on investigating how relationships between parts of a system give rise to the collective behaviours of a system and how the system interacts and forms relationships with its environment. This is a useful framework for this thesis, as complexity science provides a theoretical scaffold that can assist exploration of subsequent links and causal chains of events between governance and decision making at the local level. The relationship tensions between policy decision makers and those, on whose behalf the decisions are being made, represent the collective behaviours of the system and are of most interest to this study.

In setting the foundation for the study, it is useful to consider the CAS literature emerging from complexity science in three specific areas. Firstly, to understand the parts of complex adaptive systems, which relate to leadership and introducing Complexity Leadership Theory. Second, to further understand Complexity Leadership Theory, including its propositions and governance properties. Third, to recognise the presence of emergence and change, particularly the influences and tensions found between the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. This chapter examines the subsequent links and causal chain of events that emerge from these three broad areas, with a particular focus on CAS theory and its roots in governance and leadership.

3.1. Complex Adaptive Systems theory

Complex adaptive systems are special cases of complex systems. They are complex, in that they are made up of dynamic interconnected elements, but they are also adaptive in that they have the capacity to change (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2008 p.10). The complex adaptive systems I will explore in my research are best described as a dynamic network of interactions, rather than a multi-agent system. The differences between a dynamic network of interactions and a multi-agents system are further
explored in this research as part of the emergent behaviour patterns that will be plotted along the normative model of the Enabling Continuum (see later in this chapter and Chapter 4). Dynamic networks along with the importance of communication are presented through two scenarios in Chapter 6, along with the argument for their importance in shifting and enabling complex systemic change.

In this chapter I will consider complex adaptive systems by focusing complex leadership theory (section 1); self-organisation (section 2); and emergence (section 3), all of which are presented as components of leadership for collaborative advantage (Huxam 2003 p.419). In presenting the case for collaboration, Huxam argued that the concept of external influences or missing links could be described as part of the reason for working arrangements not being collaborative (Huxam 2003 p.415).

Extending the discussion around collaborative leadership McKelvey and Lichtenstein (2011 p.346) proposed that CAS theory considered leadership less as a role held by any particular person, but more as a process embedded in all the interactions amongst all agents in a system. Complex adaptive systems are widely considered to be capable of creative problem solving (see for example, the characteristics between complex and complicated tensions as described later in this chapter). Creative problem solving is the focus of any leadership endeavours, particularly with complex issues affecting society, such as child poverty. Accepting that complex societal issues are better aligned with complex adaptive systems approaches reinforces the role of dynamic networks. Dynamic networks operate across interactions, and encourage open and evolutionary agents bonded by a common goal, purpose or outlook.

Rather than focusing on top-down control and alignment, complexity leadership theorists agree that leaders should temper their attempts to control organisations and futures and instead focus on developing their ability to influence organisational behaviour so as to increase the chances of productive futures (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001 p.4).

Chapter 2 introduced the concept of the tension between top-down and bottom-up perspectives in relation to policy directives. I will now examine these further within the field of CAS theory.
Top-down and Bottom-up

Top-down coordination refers to coordination by a central authority... Bottom-up refers to emergent events that occur because of normal, uncoordinated interaction among constituents/units (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, pp.341, 391).

In reviewing the third generation of policy implementation thought, the relationship between top-down and bottom-up approaches was described as a tension between structure and spontaneity (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980). These tensions are expanded upon in CAS theory, which describes the relationship of the tensions as experiences between interactions and dynamic networks. The dilemmas, tensions and/or challenges between top-down control and necessary conditions for bottom-up perspectives are well documented across all five generations of policy implementation thought. Complexity leadership, in the context of policy implementation, requires policy leaders to have the skills to balance this tension. CAS theory describes the need to create conditions that enable system skills able to generate positive change (emergence – see Section 3.3), whilst providing some form of basic structure. Keeping the system focused along the way requires a different form of leadership. This process has been expanded upon using insights from complexity science and social networks; thus the concept of Complexity Leadership Theory emerges.

Complexity theory focuses leadership efforts on behaviours that enable organisational effectiveness, as opposed to determining or guiding effectiveness (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, p.389).

In exploring how complexity thinking might translate into leadership theory – with a particular interface with policy implementation – the focus cannot be solely on the full body of work around complexity sciences. My research does not seek to present a mature and full discussion of Complexity Leadership Theory; this is a separate topic and not appropriate for the study at hand. The constructive engagement of the two literatures – policy implementation and Complexity Leadership Theory – is the topic of interest, and the remaining sections in this chapter further explore this interface, after first identifying the difference between complex and complicated issues.
In Chapter 2, the differences between ‘complex’ and ‘complicated’ were considered as important tensions, particularly between top-down policy directives and decision making at the local level. In this chapter, characteristics of this tension are further examined. An example of these tensions is detailed in a Stanford paper considering strategic philanthropy for a complex world (Kania et al. 2014). This paper drew on Snowden and Boone’s 2007 study of the evolutionary nature of complex systems, which were based upon and referred to as the ‘Cynefin’ framework.

Cynefin – Welsh word that signifies that multiple factors in our environment and our experience that influence us in ways we can never understand (Snowden and Boone 2007, p.22).

This study does not present a detailed analysis of Cynefin, as this is dealt with more effectively in other sources. What is of interest, and will be further examined, is the relationship tensions that exist between the five domains of the Cynefin framework. These five domains are defined as simple, complicated, complex, chaotic and disorder. The five domains are useful descriptors when examining relationship tensions. When a tension is simple it often has a well-understood formula for successful resolution; there is an easily prescribed strategic plan or map to follow.

Simple contacts are characterised by stability and clear cause-and-effect relationships that are easily discernable by everyone (Snowden and Boone 2007, p.2).

Examples of complicated tensions, include developing a vaccine (Kania et al. 2014) or building a rocket (Hanleybrown et al. 2012). Complicated tensions are best navigated by sensing first then analysing, before any response is made. In examining top-down policy directives, some complicated tensions are necessary – but as the situation becomes more complex those at the top are not always best placed to achieve ‘sensing’.

Complicated contexts, unlike simple ones, may contain multiple right answers, and though there is a clear relationship between cause and effect, not everyone can see it (Snowden and Boone 2007, p.3).
A common denominator across complicated tensions is time, and there is often a trade-off between making a timely decision and finding the right answer. Particularly in complicated situations of a social nature, data plays a large part in the decision making process. When social issues, are described as ‘wicked’, decisions are frequently made with incomplete data. This is a good sign that the situation in hand is more complex than complicated. It is this tipping point of relationship tensions, between complicated and complex, that heightens the importance of the need to encourage constructive engagement between policy implementation and Complexity Leadership Theory. Firstly complexity is best defined as being non linear and because most policies are set within a linear term and based on assumptions of cause and effect, any attempts to predict steps to change are futile. The fourth Cynefin domain, chaos, reminds policy practitioners of the constant need to continue to change.

Leaders who try to impose order in complex context will fail, but those who set the stage, step back a bit allow patterns to emerge, and determine which ones are desirable will succeed (Snowden and Boone 2007, p.5).

Chaos is related to the behaviour of certain non-linear dynamic networks and therefore closely related to changing situations.

Research regarding complexity dynamics needs to capture the nature of mechanisms, which are nonlinearly changeable, unpredictable in the long term (and sometimes in the short term), temporarily based and interactively and casually complex (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, p.314).

Chaos or changing situations can also be described as organised disorder.

The complex leader does not closely control, for controls limit the organisation’s potential; rather, the complex leader creates organised disorder in which dynamic things happen at multiple locales within the system (Regine and Lewin 2000; Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, p.406).

Whilst chaos as explored through the lens of the three relationship tensions resonate with the study, what is of most interest is the governance and leadership approach and consequent reaction to chaos or a state of disorder (the fifth Cynefin domain). This situation is described later in this chapter using the work of Goldstein et al. (2010) and March (1991) (see section 3). Snowden and Boone describe the stage of chaos as ‘turbulence’ leading to disorder, and this study is most interested in the relationship tensions leading into and out of cause and effect and/or organised disorder.
The relationships between cause and effect are impossible to determine because they shift constantly and no manageable patterns exist – only turbulence (Snowden and Boone 2007, p.5).

Relationship tensions are not always negative. Turbulence can describe mixed experiences, some of which are linear (static) and some non-linear (moving). The sentiments as presented in the Stanford paper (Kania et al. 2014) noted that complex problems are dynamic, non-linear and counter-intuitive as if on a tipping point. As the constructive engagement of the two literatures became more focused on this tipping point, the focus of organised disorder could not be ignored.

Navigating organised disorder and relationship tensions between complicated and complex cases requires dynamic movement, non-linear leadership and emergent change. Another way of describing this movement of change is interaction.

Interaction is a constant and dominant characteristic of being social, one that creates both stability and change (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, p.397).

Building on the collective work of Marion, Uhl-Bien and McKelvey, Goldstein et al. (2010) refer to these interactions as a pathway of criticalisation. The pathway of criticalisation is important in this study and is further expanded upon later in this chapter. The interactions between organised disorder and change, and the influences of decision making at the local level, are best described as a collection of attractors, that is, ‘phenomena that arise when small stimuli and probes resonate with people’ (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, p.264), or when ‘A leads to B, B leads to C, C leads to D and D (perhaps in combination with B and/or C) catalyses added production of A (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, p. 398).

The identification of interactions as attractors as non-linear and constantly changing is an aspect of Complexity Leadership Theory that is particularly relevant to the implementation of programs, which aim to tackle complex social issues. The use of the phrase ‘attractors’ in this study simply represents non-geographical boundaries, such as the varied locations of Sure Start key actors, all with differing socially constructed meanings and values. Although not a commonly used phrase in policy implementation literature, the term ‘attractors’ is commonly used in Complexity
Leadership Theory to describe the development of individual and collective identities facilitated by connections and interactions with others. This becomes relevant to complex social issues because it is able to represent situations that fulfill basic non-linear needs and sources of non-predictable encounters. In other words the ability to be flexible and spontaneous in the face of the ever changing needs.

A useful example of attractors and their interactions is the 2007 Global Financial Crisis. This crisis appeared to come out of nowhere, but in fact the pieces, like a complex system, had been building for a while. The strained economy, the pressures of competition within Western economies, difficulties with political shifts – these were the attractors, with their interactions representing the ‘coming together’ precipitously, almost as if overnight. As described by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001, p.402), ‘much construction goes behind the scene before the pieces collapse together, and the change only seems to be precipitous’. Another way of considering this change is that, rather than a collapse, pieces come together slowly, networks build into new networks and, at some point, opposing dynamic networks work together to create emergence and change. Networks, particularly dynamic networks, can also be considered as catalysts for change.

We perceive problems as events that happen to us and fail to understand that we are part of the networks of events that happen to us and fail to understand that we are part of the network of events that created the problem (Marion and Uhl 2001, p.406).

In Chapter 6, I expand on catalysts for change by further examining the interpersonal domain and relationship tensions concluding in Chapter 8 a new paradigm and enabling theory of change. By adopting the language of Uhl-Bien and Marion and Complexity Leadership Theory, I describe these tensions in the form of entanglement. Entanglement is used to describe the relationship tensions, as expressed between formal top-down administration and bottom-up dynamics.

Entanglement functions explain relationship behaviours rather than individual leaders… the ‘behaviours’ that individuals engage in and their effects on the organisational systems and their dynamics (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p.633).

The value of adding a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective to policy implementation studies is that it offers a paradigm for thinking about governance
from a non-traditional perspective. Such an approach includes replacing traditional leadership with complex leadership traits where issues are ‘shared, distributed, collective, relational, dynamic, emergent and adaptive’ (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p.631).

3.2. Complexity Leadership Theory and propositions for governance

Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), then, is a framework for studying emergent leadership dynamics in relationship to bureaucratic superstructures (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, p.313).

Another way of considering non-traditional leadership or Complexity Leadership Theory is that of a leadership change model, with the addition of complexity conveying a sense of rich interconnectedness and dynamic interaction.

Social systems are non prescriptive in their detail but subject to prescription (in general sense) in their broad holistic behaviours. In other words, once the proper conditions are created for bottom-up dynamics, leaders need to leave the system alone to generate positive emergence … yet still provide general control … to keep the system generally … focused and to maintain – and further enable – its complex structure (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, p.403).

Traditional leadership models have been products of top-down bureaucratic paradigms, which are more suitable for an economy focused on producing physical goods and services rather than an economy focused on producing knowledge. As a result of these changes leading commentators within Complexity Leadership Theory began to further explore non-linear leadership. In a paper focusing on shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era, Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) argued that the paradigm had shifted, but many managerial and governance systems were still stuck in the industrial era. In a follow-up paper, complexity leadership was presented as a necessary paradigm shift for traditional leadership.

In fact, we believe that exploring alternatives – such as complexity theory – to traditional thinking dominated by the industrial age models is imperative for leadership researchers and practitioners (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2008, p.viii).

After many years of work in this area, Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) concluded that complex adaptive systems were a basic unit of analysis within complexity science. It was from this conclusion that they further elaborated on Complexity Leadership Theory. In my
own study, having previously discussed the differences between ‘complex’ and ‘complicated’ I find the framing of Complexity Leadership Theory useful for better understanding relationship tensions (financial, interpersonal, political) and the entanglement between policy implementation directives and the end user.

Complexity leadership theory is a framework for leadership that enables the learning creative, and adaptive capacity of complex adaptive systems (CAS) in knowledge producing organisational units... This framework seeks to... integrate complexity dynamics and bureaucracy, enabling and coordinating, exploration and exploitation, CAS and hierarchy, and informal emergence and top-down control (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, p.304).

Understanding that traditional leadership relies on a leader’s vision, inspiration and execution through alignment and control, a more contemporary approach is presented using Complexity Leadership Theory. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) described three approaches to leadership with each having particular qualities that are required at varying times.

- Administrative leadership ‘is the actions of individuals and groups in formal managerial roles who plan and coordinate organisational activities (the bureaucratic function)’.
- Adaptive leadership ‘is an emergent, interactive dynamic that is the primary source of which adaptive outcomes are produced’.
- Enabling leadership ‘serves to enable (catalyse) adaptive dynamics and help manage the entanglement between administrative and adaptive leadership (by fostering conditions and managing the innovation-to-organisation interface)’ (pp.305–6).

Of the three leadership approaches, enabling leadership is considered to be of most importance to this study, particularly in exploring the influence of top-down policy directives on decision making at the local level. Leadership conditions and the interface between top-down policy implementation and decision making at the local level are considered in depth across Chapters 5, 6 and 7 which discuss the research findings. However the complexity leadership literature is useful in considering the relationship tensions that exist between governance and leadership and each of the three leadership approaches will be considered in detail.

*Administrative leadership*

The administrative leadership approach shares many traditional leadership qualities. It is often aligned with the messaging around command and control, and is considered
by some as a barrier rather than a gateway to systemic change (Cohen, March and Olsen 1976; Donaldson 1996; Manz and Sims 1987; Weick 1976, 1979). A good example of this is the role of the UK Home Secretary in relation to the Localism Act where the intent of the Act is toward citizen engagement, but local decisions can be overruled through a command-and-control action at the Secretary of State’s discretion. Uhl-Bien et al (2007, p.305) note that

> top-down control (i.e., administrative leadership) can hamper the effective functioning of complex adaptive systems. This is particularly evident in systems with only top-down, hierarchical chains of authority, in systems with closely monitored, centralised goals, or in systems whose dominant ideology is authoritarian.

The relationship between the leadership approaches is not as simple as selecting one approach over another. Although administrative leadership can function in conjunction with adaptive leadership, there is an entanglement of relationship tensions to be managed. The actions of individuals and groups in formal managerial roles, must be balanced against the more informal style of adaptive leadership. Traditional or administrative leadership in the policy setting focuses on top-down influences to motivate and align the end user with the goals of those at higher levels of government. There is something in the notion of control that relates to administrative leadership, but this in itself is a paradox – particularly when attempting to control change and emergence, which are both non-linear and fluid and cannot be controlled.

*Adaptive leadership*

The key shift in Complexity Leadership Theory as opposed to traditional leadership is that, with complex leadership, the leader’s role is more about creating the conditions for followers to produce structure and innovation, rather than providing the direction to do this. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001 p.396) referred to this as results orientated behaviour. They also noted that adaptive leadership comes with some risks as it ‘exists on the edge of chaos, just shy of anarchy’.

Adaptive leadership is defined as emergent change behaviours under conditions of interaction, interdependence, asymmetrical information, complex network dynamics, and tension. Adaptive leadership manifests in complex adaptive systems and interactions among agents rather than in individuals, and is recognisable when it has significance and impact (Uhl-Bien 2007, p.309).
Goldstein et al. (2010), in their pathway to criticalisation, argue that the adaptive leadership style is necessary for new systems to evolve. There is broad agreement that the greatest creativity, productivity and innovation come from people who are provided opportunities through an adaptive leadership style that promotes bottom-up perspectives.

Complexity Leadership Theory is about setting up organisations to enable adaptive responses to challenges through network-based problem solving… tools for knowledge producing organisations… subsystems dealing with rapidly changing, complex problems… systems dealing with less complexity but for whom creativity is desired (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, p. 304).

Adaptive leadership enhances adaptability and performance by creating conditions that allow the transformation (or pathway of criticalisation) to navigate fundamental shifts. In this transformation dynamic networks are often present, or are trying to be present, which can look like new ideas, innovations, workarounds, pushbacks, pro-social rule-breaking or anarchy. This ability to champion new ideas contributes to bottom-up emergence, which in turn leads to systemic change. Later, in section 3 of this chapter, such systemic change is presented in the form of relationship tensions between exploitation and exploration. Adaptive leadership is more akin to the qualities of exploration and new possibilities where an administrative leadership approach is more akin to known certainties. The adaptive leadership approach is an informal leadership process that ‘occurs in intentional interactions of interdependent human agents (individuals or collectives) as they work to generate and advance novel solutions in the face of adaptive needs’ (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p. 633). Adaptive leadership recognises that human beings have capacity to make choices in the world both as producers and as products of the social system.

Adaptive leaders (individuals or collectives) are most adept at ‘reading’ complex dynamics in which they operate by engaging in nonlinear thinking … rather than linear thinking (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p. 640).

The case study, Sure Start, was a policy directive that at its inception strongly promoted the role of an adaptive leader. The ability of Sure Start leaders to foster information flow and structure, by engaging in dialogue that assisted with connecting the past, present and future with decision making at the local level, was integral to the role of Sure Start key actors and leaders. However, there was a notable shift in Sure
Start leadership approach at the time of the implementation of the Act, as discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. As with the early Sure Start leaders, an adaptive leader sees interconnections and has a sense of timing and understanding of the importance of interconnections and interdependencies. By their very presence they are able to inject ideas and information into the system for those in the system to consider and process.

Both administrative and adaptive leadership can be presented as two ends of a continuum. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) explain these extremes as differences in tightening and loosening behaviours. Administrative leadership attempts to tighten behaviours, standardise and reduce variance and choice, thus restricting information flows. Conversely, adaptive leadership attempts to loosen behaviours, creating opportunities for experimentation and information flow and thus enabling interaction. When dealing with behaviours a myriad of relationships will occur and insofar as they represent organised disorder, reactions of entanglement and tensions exist. This creates the context for an additional form of leadership – *enabling leadership*.

**Enabling leadership**

A key role of enabling leadership is to effectively manage the entanglement between administrative and adaptive structures and behaviours in a manner that enhances the overall flexibility and effectiveness of the organisation (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, pp.313–14).

An enabling leadership approach tailors administrative and adaptive leadership behaviours so that they function in tandem, rather than in an entanglement or at the extreme ends of relationship tensions. Another function of the enabling leadership role is to manage entanglement between administrative systems and structures on the one hand and adaptive dynamics and spontaneity on the other.

Enabling leadership works to catalyse the conditions in which adaptive leadership can thrive and to manage the *entanglement*... between the bureaucratic (administrative leadership) and emergent (adaptive leadership) functions of the organisation (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, p.305).

An enabling approach to leadership works best in navigating experiences of entanglement because it presents as an interface between administrative and adaptive leadership, moderating the control preferences of administrative leadership by emphasising the adaptive conditions (see Figure 3A).
The four quadrants identify four relationship tension conditions, showing where enabling and collaborative results are the most preferred. Quadrant A identifies a well-integrated model of relationships where administrative and adaptive leadership work seamlessly together. Although an enabling leadership approach is not apparent, this does not mean that it is not in operation. Quadrant A simply shows the results of effective enabling leadership. Quadrant B identifies a relationship tension or entanglement, where administrative leadership is stifling the adaptive leadership approach and an enabling leadership approach is required to foster collaborative conditions. In Quadrant C, a different type of entanglement and relationship tension is presented, where the adaptive conditions are in play but the stifling control of administrative leadership is dominant. In these situations, adaptive leadership needs to be integrated at a deeper level into an administrative leadership approach.

It is important to note that Quadrant C provides an example of the need for an enabling leadership approach to understand when more structure is required or when less structure and more spontaneity is necessary. In the case of Quadrant C, the
enabling leadership approach described is one of enhanced structure for collaboration, appreciating that collaboration may not be the most effective approach for all situations. Frye and Webb (2002) argued strongly that collaboration, or partnership working is not always the most effective governance arrangement; at times, particular issues may be better dealt with independently rather than through joined-up-working. In applying Frye and Webb’s argument to Complexity Leadership Theory, the question is not so much around an exact style of leadership, but choosing a leadership style that will enable suitable conditions. This situation is shown in Quadrant D.

The fourth and final quadrant, D, is a point of tension where administrative and adaptive leadership approaches are both occurring but are not connected. This is the point of organised disorder and chaos, where change is emerging and an enabling leadership approach is needed to make the connection between a reduction in choice and opportunities for experimentation. The issue is not so much whether or not to be in collaboration or partnership, but rather how to create conditions that will enable the organisation to navigate its way through the chaos. It is the role of an enabling leadership approach to navigate not only the examples set out in these four quadrants, but the myriad of other possible combinations that could exist, with the aim of navigating change and finding to a pathway where relationship tensions are less entangled. Such change situations are often more collaborative, but the key is the enabling condition/s that is/are created. Returning to the point raised in section 1 above, one way of describing a void in the enabling leadership approach within any of these quadrants is that collaboration and leadership is the ‘missing link’.

*Leadership for Collaborative Advantage*

Huxam (2003) argued that the kind of leadership style required for collaborative advantage could be developed through nurturing relationships. Surie and Hazy (2006) later identified five processes of nurturing leadership styles that have the capacity to catalyse interactions. The theory of complexity leadership describes nurturing leadership as *generative*. Generative leadership catalyses interactions to generate possible futures for organised disorder and changing systems (Surie and Hazy 2006). This style of leadership is optimal for changes requiring citizen engagement because it encourages a flexible, non-linear and fluid state that does not stifle change.
Generative leadership also differs from traditional leadership approaches in that a generative leadership style begins with innovation. The assumption is that human interaction dynamics must be enabled and cannot be externally controlled. Enabling dynamic tension across the five Cynefin domains was presented by Snowden and Boone (2007) as being foundational for innovation.

In discussing the ways in which such innovation can be nurtured Surie and Hazy (2006) identify a set of five leadership processes and interactions. The first generative leadership process is being able to understand interactions as experiences, where communication as way of expressing experiences is identified as a key quality of a generative leader.

Generative leaders focus on helping to evolve a language that evokes meanings that are well understood in the organisational context (Surie and Hazy 2006, p.17).

The second generative leadership process to be considered is how interactions align to achieve system goals. In the case of the Quadrants in Figure 3A, each quadrant represents varying alignments between administrative, adaptive and enabling leadership approaches. The quadrants collectively demonstrate that insufficient attention is given to interaction alignment.

Generative leaders ensure the goals are specified in advance to ensure that all group members participating in the innovation project are aware of them (Surie and Hazy 2006, p.17).

The third process of generative leadership focuses on the speed of interactions; for example, the rate of change and how new technologies can enhance complexity absorption and permit rapid interactions. Both the second and third processes are explored in my research by considering how key actors align the pace of their interactions. I am interested to understand whether the rate of change has had any influence on their experience of decision making at the local level.

The fourth process of generative leadership, interaction partitioning, is where resources are allocated dynamically across sub-systems and operate to manage the interfaces between them. Surie and Hazy (2006, p.18) claim that
Generative leaders also recognise that complex tasks must be sub-divided into simpler tasks and performed in independent modules to enable collaborative interactions without overloading the system.

The fifth process of generative leadership, interaction leveraging, is the ability to simultaneously induce interactions while reducing and absorbing the resulting complexity. This balancing of inducing and reducing interactions creates organised disorder and emergence, which is further explored in section 3.3.

3.3 Emergence and change

In exploring Complexity Leadership Theory, some commentators (see, for example, Uhl-Bien et al. 2007; Uhl-Bien and Marion 2008; Surie and Hazy 2006) have argued that nurturing change is a fundamental part of leadership, particularly across emerging change. In the next sub-sections I consider emergence and change separately, although in practice they are closely interconnected.

Emergence

Many commentators (Snowden and Boone 2007; Lichtenstein and Ploughman 2009; Uhl-Bien et al. 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009; Kania et al. 2014), including Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine (1997), describe studies in Complexity Leadership Theory and understanding organised disorder as influencing the logic of uncertainty. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) argue that uncontrolled futures require the ability to understand global interactions, rather than focusing narrowly on known events. Kania et al. (2014, p.2) expand this argument, taking a systemic approach based on an understanding that ‘the most effective solutions are not necessarily those that are controlled or owned but more often than not those that emerge when interactions occur’.

To assist in understanding the role of emergence, Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) identified four contextual conditions conducive to enabling emergence. The first of these conditions is being in a ‘disequilibrium state’, which is simply identifying or being aware of the need for change. The second condition of emergence is ‘amplifying actions’, as it is not sufficient to just be in a disequilibrium state – there
must also be reason or need for change. In appreciating Complexity Leadership Theory, the key role for the enabling leader is closely linked to this second condition. For example, the ability to shift around the domains of the Cynefin framework (Snowden and Boone 2007) and engage in a generative leadership style (Surie and Hazy 2006) to nurture the disequilibrium state is how entanglement or relationship tensions are best navigated. The third condition of emergence is presented as ‘recombination/self-organisation’, and it is at this point that the leadership role is a shared one: those involved (who Goldstein et al. (2010) refer to as ‘attractors’) ignore geographical boundaries in developing both individual and collective identities. The fourth and final condition of emergence is ‘stabilising feedback’, which involves governance arrangements that can account for behaviour and effectively operate at multiple levels at the same time. Zivkovic (2012, p.3) extended this condition to include being aware that this is where the new adaptive state becomes integrated and the new system begins. Following Zivkovic, I argue that it is through the inability of policy directives to enable such conditions that decision making at the local level is inhibited and negatively influenced.

In summary, for many commentators (Lichtenstein and Plowman 2009; Goldstein et al. 2010; Uhl-Bien and Marion 2008; Surie and Hazy 2006; March 1991; Huxham 2003) their detailed experiences of emergence are interconnected and set within a moving framework. The style of governance needed to enable the leadership style for emergence must be able to set the right conditions for bottom-up dynamics whilst applying top-down alignment. To be successful in this, it is necessary to adopt a generative leadership style that can nurture an enabling leadership approach. To achieve this, it is important to be able to embrace uncertainty (emergence) and to be successful in disrupting existing patterns to generate a disequilibrium state. Along with these two actions comes an ability to bring conflict to the surface, to create controversy and continue with the subsequent disequilibrium thereby setting the scene for fluid experiences of exploration and exploitation (as detailed later in this sub-section and explored as part of the normative model, the Enabling Continuum).

Emergence is an important concept within Complexity Leadership Theory research because it describes the balancing of the tensions and controversies that may exist between governance and leadership. As Brown (2012) argues, there are difficult
requirements involved in leading emergence and fostering conditions in which new behaviours and directions can emerge. The first of the leadership traits discussed by Brown (2012 p.6) is the ability to accommodate and embrace uncertainty. The ability to lead and influence organised disorder and the logic of uncertainty is a common theme for an enabling leader. Another leadership trait as identified by Brown is the ability to bring conflict to the surface and create controversy, which in turn encourages another trait, allowing experiments and fluctuations. The first three leadership traits are important in setting the scene for fluidity and enabling conditions for change.

Brown identified a further three leadership traits that create and foster opportunities for experimentation. The fourth leadership trait fosters the right conditions for emergence and enabling conditions for change.

Complex leadership is the process of fostering conditions in which the new behaviours and directions of the organisation or system emerge through regular, dynamic interaction. Rather than trying to control or exactly direct what happens within the organisation or system, they influence its behaviour through the management of networks and interactions (Brown 2012, p.6).

Brown (2012 p.6) described the next leadership trait as encouraging rich interactions, which allow for the development of dynamic networks. Dynamic networks create the capacity for supportive collective action to contend with emergence. Other traits, creating correlations through language and symbols, provide shared understandings of the logic of uncertainty and the emerging system are important behaviours in enabling change.

Brown (2012 p.7) described other leadership traits as the ability to combine resources and the ability to bring people together. The final behaviour trait re-establishes the importance of stabilising feedback, which becomes key to navigating the disequilibrium state. These leadership traits are further discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to research findings, in the exploration and exploitation experiences of governance and leadership.
The generative leadership style, and how it nurtures an enabling leadership approach, cannot be examined without considering supportive strategies. The major source in this field is Mintzberg et al. (1998), and Figure 3B presents diagrammatically how an emergent strategy works.

**Figure 3 B: How emergent strategy works**

Mintzberg et al. (1998) developed the emergent strategy to assist in understanding that, no matter how much control or top-down influence is applied, the variables that affect decision making at the local level cannot be controlled. The belief that ‘initial intentions collide with, and accommodate to, a changing reality’ supports the view that, regardless of plans, a strategy will emerge and change over time (Kania et al. 2014, p.3).

Historically it was believed a strategic approach was achieved through development of an intended strategy and that the past could be helpful in predicting the future through the adoption of a deliberate strategy or set of agreed predictive strategies. Recognising that the predictive strategy methodology was becoming obsolete, Mintzberg et al. (1998) developed an emergent strategy. The unrealised strategy, as shown in Figure 3B, refers to an expanding realisation that the predictive or deliberate approach to strategy setting is not necessary in line with the intended strategy. What is needed is an approach that embraces fluidity and can adapt based on learning and
feedback from what works in practice. In an ever-changing fast-paced setting the approach to strategy setting requires the ability to be non-linear and emergent.

Later in this chapter (section 3.4) the normative model Enabling Continuum is introduced, providing an analysis of cycles of interactions that represent the non-linear and emergent change environment. A mapped out journey is usually described as predictive; that is, it is like a complicated map with a clear line of direction – the old certainties of exploitation (March 1991). As reality is experienced, and unknown changes are encountered, an emergent strategy is presented which is more like a compass inviting non-linear direction – the new possibilities of exploration (March 1991). Mintzberg et al. (1998), and later Kania et al. (2014), argued that an emergent strategy was better suited to complex social issues facing contemporary policy makers.

The Enabling Continuum will be used to assist with further describing the emergent strategy in relation to governance and leadership as the continuum describes shifts between exploitation and exploration. The relationship between exploitation and exploration represents a state of disequilibrium, a concept discussed by March (1991) and Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) who developed four contextual conditions of emergence defined in this study as a non-linear, evolving process of constant change (Mintzberg 1998; Snowden and Bonne 2007; Lichtenstein and Plowman 2009; Uhl-Bien et al. 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009; Kania et al. 2014).

Change and its theory

Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) describe the basis for change as disequilibrium, where the need for change becomes heightened to an intense level. Although this study is not a detailed analysis of the shift from old certainties to disequilibrium, it does explore how change can be influenced, particularly from the perspective of top-down policy directives. Change was described by Goldstein et al. (2010) in the form of non-linear dynamics, where particular attractors agitate the collective behaviours, thus creating an idea of some form of new entity. Change becomes a new reality when sense making of this new entity enables changes to take effect.

In the mid 1990s, a group of US community evaluators, scholars and practitioners worked through the process of evaluating complex community challenges. The roundtable of experts considered and collated their work around decision making at
the local level under the rubric of ‘comprehensive community initiatives’ (CCI). In an analysis of the roundtable, Connell et al. (1995 p.3) reported that the group recognised ‘social science research has begun to identify the linkages and interconnectedness among the various strands of an individual’s life and of the importance of family and neighbourhood influences in determining individual-level outcomes’.

Weiss (1995) continued the work of the roundtable and defined the theory of change as a theory of how and why an initiative or directive works, including being able to evidence change at the local level. Although this study does not provide a detailed analysis of the theory of change, considering its qualities or attributes may provide insight for future policy implementation, particularly around governance and leadership which supports decision making at the local level. In building on the work of Weiss (1995), Connell and Kubisch (1998, p.3) identified three attributes of the theory of change that have been summarised within my study through the research question (see Chapter 4).

- **It should be plausible.** Do evidence and common sense suggest that the activities, if implemented, will lead to desired outcomes?
- **It should be doable.** Will the economic, technical, political, institutional, and human resources be available to carry out the initiative?
- **It should be testable.** Is the theory of change specific and complete enough for an evaluator to track its progress in credible and useful ways?

In an analysis of the origins of theory of change, James (2011) noted that initiatives encouraging decision making at the local level can be difficult to evaluate across these three attributes due to horizontal and vertical complexity, the importance of context, the flexible and evolving nature of interventions, the breadth of outcomes being pursued, and the absence of appropriate control groups for comparison purposes. Considering the state of disequilibrium as defined by Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009), the theory of change and the effectiveness of an initiative or directive could be described as becoming better acquainted with the variable attractors undergoing change.
A theory of change specifies up front, how activities will lead to interim and longer-term outcomes and identifies the contextual conditions that may affect them (Connell and Kubisch 1998, p.2).

Figure 3C sets out the basic components of a theory of change project – CLC (Community Vitality Through Lifelong Learning)

**Figure 3C: Theory of Change**

The long-term outcome describes the goal that the project wanted to reach; that is community vitality for lifelong learning (CLC) is embedded in government policies. As shown on the diagram, listed above this long-term outcome is the impact, which can often transcend what is possible and/or achievable through individual efforts. This is demonstrated in the form of a dotted line and described as an accountability ceiling.

Your group will not hold itself accountable for this goal, but it may be important to link your efforts to it in the causal framework to communicate your vision (Taplin and Clarke 2012, p.2)

The intermediate outcomes (shown in yellow in Figure 3C) provide steps in the pathway to the long-term outcome. In Figure 3C these are presented as representatives of further details of CLC (assumptions, rationales, interventions and indicators) that
all align to meet the long-term outcome. The long-term outcome is shown in blue –
All CLC’s are embedded in government policies.

In many cases of complex social issues, policies aim to make a positive change, but
often result in minimal traction, and at times are counter-productive. Upon further
exploration, many commentators (Taplin et al. 2013; James 2011; Connell et al. 1995)
found a similar tension within the theory of change; that is, the theory was designed to
achieve outcomes, but in practice the opposite effect was evident. In my research I
consider this to be the paradox which exists across the entanglement of the
relationship tensions – financial, interpersonal and political – and which is explored in
the context of my research finding in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

The theory of change model defines entanglement as the ability to consider
interventions, particularly interventions that assist with alignment, across a myriad of
changes. The challenge with this is that interventions work best when designed to
meet a need rather than the reverse; that is, making the need align with the
intervention (James 2011 p.4). If an intervention does not align with the theory of
change, decisions to continue with these activities can become particularly difficult to
navigate. An intervention must be able to demonstrate how it contributes significantly
to desired outcomes. However, this is not the only point of contention. The theory of
change concept includes the concept of boundary partners where the modeling or
desired impacts of the behaviours of others is also identified. Such involvement with
other actors brings an element of emergence and chaos. The consideration of the
theory of change and emergence and their place in the paradigm and thinking about
policy implementation and governance from a non-traditional stance informs much of
my research.

Emerging change

Goldstein et al. (2010) described the process of emergence and change as
‘criticalisation’ and present the merging of adaptive processes in the form of a ‘five-
panel’ model. The model provides an exploration of the criticalisation experience,
which is useful in understanding the adaptive process of emergence and change,
including why at times a balance is difficult to ascertain and chaos may prevail. The
five-panel diagram is represented in Figure 3D.
The five-panel model begins with a current state of play where the norm is no longer evident and a need for change is recognised. The letter A and the numbers 1 and 2 represent individual and collective identities (attractors). The second panel represents a situation in which the need for change is becoming more intense. This corresponds to the scenario where the bottom-up needs, or decision making at the local level, are not being met by top-down policy decisions. This is often a stage of unrest and where traditional leadership approaches are not very effective. The third panel is where chaos exists and the two attractors (A1 and A2) can no longer operate effectively, meaning something must be changed.

In this study entanglement is represented by ineffective top-down policies with end users reporting unrest and disengagement. Moving into the fourth panel, having navigated emerging change, new attractors emerge which displace old attractors. The systemic change of the fifth panel is a new form of stability and balance that leads to systemic change. The pathway of criticalisation has been useful in influencing the \textit{Enabling Continuum} model described next.

3.4 Exploitation and exploration (Enabling Continuum)

As noted earlier, the work of March (1991) provides a useful framework to further explore complex social change and influences on decision making at the local level. Tensions such as entanglement are presented with a focus on relationship tensions at extreme ends of the scale and/or proximity to the experiences in between. The model used in this study is in the form of an ‘Enabling Continuum’ (Figure 3E).
At one end of the Enabling Continuum, the top-down experiences are those of *exploitation*, where planned or established certainties are favoured. At the other end, the bottom-up experience is of *exploration*, encouraging unplanned new possibilities. March (1991, p.71) established that maintaining an appropriate balance between exploitation and exploration was a primary leadership factor in system survival and prosperity. With a particular focus on the governance of directives (particularly policy systems or directives that encourage decision making at the local level), I utilise the Enabling Continuum as an analytical tool to better understand cause and effect and organised disorder (referred to later in the thesis as fragmentation).

If systems engage in exploration to the exclusion of exploitation, March suggests, ‘they are likely to find that they suffer the costs of experimentation without gaining many of its benefits. They exhibit too many undeveloped new ideas and too little distinctive competence’ (March 1991, p.71). Conversely, March describes how ‘systems that engage in exploitation to the exclusion of exploration are likely to find themselves trapped in suboptimal stable equilibra’ (March 1991, p.71). Understanding the level of exploitation and exploration and how entanglements of tensions are related is key to better understanding how influential the Localism Act was/is as a policy directive on decision making at the local level.

Understanding the level of exploitation and exploration, and how leadership for collaborative advantage experiences emerge across two governance arrangements, is a key focal point of the findings reported in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In focusing on the type of leadership needed to manage emerging change, and building on the domains of the Cynethin framework, Snowden and Boone (2007) created five tools that underpin
complex leadership systems. I have drawn on these five tools firstly, being able to open up discussions and foster network construction is the first stage in recognising that change is afoot and a new attractor needs to be considered. The next two tools set barriers or boundaries and stimulate attractors to create bottom-up networks, recognising that this will lead to some form of chaos as identified at the third stage. The fourth tool is to encourage dissent and diversity, the ‘dropping seeds’ of emergence. This is achieved through identifying, empowering and fostering communication between all parties and, in line with Goldstein et al. (2010), identifying opportunity tensions and information differences. The fifth tool considered by Snowden and Boone (2007) utilises the conditions of emergence to think systemically and guide the new attractor into the change that has taken place.

The importance of a generative leadership style and tracking of emerging change will be further explored in the context of my research findings in chapters 5, 6 and 7. How this will be done is described in the following chapter, which outlines the research setting, research design, research methodology and research boundaries.
Chapter 4. Methodology

Introduction

This study is an interpretive exploration of a top-down policy directive, the *Localism Act 2011* (DCLG 2011) (‘the Act’), and its influence on decision making at the local level, representing bottom-up perspectives. The essence of interpretive research is its ability to examine the entanglement of relationship tensions between such perspectives. In this study I provide not only a contribution to knowledge, but recommendations for straddling top-down and bottom-up tensions. In Chapter 3 I introduced a normative model, the *Enabling Continuum*, which presents a tool to navigate the experiences of entanglement. Applied specifically to complex societal issues, it is hoped this tool’s ability to navigate entanglement will provide an enhanced understanding of influences in decision making at the local level, contribute to theories of change and assist with understanding the experience of emergence.

Such understanding is necessary if policy directives aimed at tackling complex social issues are to deliver desired outcomes.

This study investigates one research question – what is the influence of the Localism Act on decision making at the local level? The study considers the Act, and its influence on decision making at the local level, through a case study, ‘Sure Start’. Sure Start was, and is, a policy directive designed to reduce child poverty in the UK, with a strong emphasis on citizen engagement and decision making at the local level.

This chapter comprises of four sections. Section 4.1 describes the research setting. The use of grounded theory across a single case study through Sure Start Dover is discussed, along with considering the research application. Section 4.2 discusses the research design. Section 4.3 outlines the research methodology, with further explanations of the three relationship domains previously introduced in Chapters 2 and 3. Section 4.4 describes the research boundaries.
4.1 Research setting

Selection of case study

Many commentators have addressed the gap between policy directives and citizen engagement: Diamond (2012) wrote about the structural reforms, Sullivan (2012) considered the types of bottom-up engagement making counteracting the highly centralised system of local government, Zacharzewski (2012) considered a localist future, whilst Reeves (2012) examined what an empowered community would need. Diamond (2013, p.12) argued that ‘Britain, and more particularly England, remains as one of the most centralised states among the industrialised nations with power concentrated at the centre of government’. He further explained the struggle between reality and rhetoric, with a contradiction emerging between the impulse to ‘reform the state and hand power back to citizens; and the desire of ministers and Whitehall policy-makers to keep their hands firmly on the levers of power’ (Diamond 2013, pp.12–13).

The identified case study, Sure Start, is a cross-departmental program aimed at bringing together services for children under four and their families, emphasising the need for handing power back to citizens and involvement in managing local programs. In addition, the case study Sure Start focus is focused on a social phenomenon, namely reducing child poverty. Sure Start was a cross-departmental program aimed at bringing together services for children under four and their families, emphasising the need for decision making at the local level and involvement in managing local programs.

Kent has been chosen as the case study setting for two key reasons. Firstly, it is one of the largest counties of England and has been involved in all rounds of the Sure Start early childhood reform. Secondly England is the only country in the world so far to attempt to legislate decision making at the local level through the Localism Act (2011). Although Sure Start was an initiative of the Blair government, which commenced in 1997, in the period between 1997 and 2014 there were three UK prime ministers, as well as a change of government in 2010. Key policy events during this period include the Serving Children Well Local Government Report in 2002 (LGA 2002); introduction of Sure Start Children Centres in 2003 (DfES 2003), representing a shift away from the Sure Start Local program policy; the creation of Every Child
Matters (Cm 5860) as an overarching outcome framework; the introduction of the Local Area Agreement Partnerships in 2004 (ODPM 2004); and the Localism Bill 2010 leading to the *Localism Act 2011* (DCLG 2011). Again, in my study I do not plan to present a chronological analysis of all the relevant policies, but have listed them at Appendix B, presenting them as contributing factors to the experience of entanglement. The exploration of policy directives (Localism Act and Sure Start) and the interconnected governance links and causal chain of events are presented as dynamic networks where all agents, both the individual and the aggregate, are constantly changing.

Recognising that experience of a centralised British state may vary depending on an individual’s role in decision making at the local level, it was important to the research setting that varying levels of Sure Start key actors were interviewed. The case study of Sure Start Dover was selected as it provided a broad sample of key actors with Kent being one of the largest counties of England and one that has been involved in all rounds of the Sure Start since its inception in 1997. These key actors were divided into three broad cohorts (micro, meso and macro). At the micro level, key actors within included those closely linked to Sure Start Dover in either service delivery or as staff at Dover District Council (local government) level. All these interviewees have had personal experience of decision making at the local level. The second cohort, the meso level, comprised representatives from the local authority, Kent County Council (Dover is a district council located in County Kent), national civil servants (active and retired) and Sure Start commentators. All had, at various points in time, been involved in influencing decision making at the local level. The final cohort (the macro level), included government ministers who reported locally but held varying political administrative commitments at either the district, county or national level. To maintain anonymity, key actors are recorded as participants in the order they were interviewed. The key actors summary is listed in Appendix A; for alignment with the cohorts, see Table 5.1 (Chapter 5, p.91).

There were 12 Sure Start local programs in Kent. The local program selected for this case study (Dover) was chosen based on the availability of data. During the period from 2001 to 2012, Dover was one of the randomly selected sites for the National Sure Start Evaluation (Belsky et al. 2007). Consequently, a significant amount of
secondary data is available. Secondary data, where it exists, it treated as complementary to the responses from the semi-structured interviews.

Selection of case study method

In creating the research setting I adopted a case study approach, selecting over 50 key actors who had some involvement with Sure Start pre- and post- the implementation of the Localism Act. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with both individuals and focus groups to provide a more in-depth understanding of decision making at the local level (Appendix D). Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they offer the optimal opportunity to understand set themes whilst exploring the experiences of those being interviewed.

There are a series of set questions to be asked and space for some divergence, with the interviewer then returning to the structured interview questions (Wisker 2001, p.168).

In contrast to traditional hypothesis-testing studies that rely on statistical sampling, case studies offer an opportunity for more in-depth exploration. Case studies belong to grounded theory, where the theories are generated empirically from, and constantly checked and tested against, the data (Wisker 2001, p.188). Strauss and Corbin, in commenting on grounded theory, argue that ‘one doesn’t begin with a theory to prove it, rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that is allowed to emerge’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p.23). Grounded theory tends to be more selective and localised, rather than being generalisable. In grounded theory, case studies are used to clearly set out and explain each phase of the research and are chosen for their weighted ability to draw on theoretical results. Wisker (2001) explains this as being important for ensuring that limitations and constraints are expressed and findings seen in context. Sure Start Dover represents a single case study and provides opportunities for an in-depth exploration of top-down policy implementation (the Act) and decision making at the local level (bottom-up perspectives). Shively explains that a purposive sample, such as Sure Start Dover, does not attempt to replicate the full population, but rather draws subjects to ‘maximise variation in the independent variable of interest, so that the relationships being looked for will be very clear’ (Shively 2011, p.103).
With a key interest in understanding governance and the entanglement of relationship tensions, a single case study approach is most suitable for this study. Shively and Wisker both promote and highlight the challenges of using a single case study: Wisker (2001 p.190) argues that ‘one of the issues is that you cannot easily generalise from one case, so the case needs to be contextualised, carefully described and then others can consider its usefulness in other contexts and examples’, while Shively (2011 p.104) warns that there is ‘much to be gained by taking the relationship of interest rather than randomly drawing the case’. Sure Start Dover provided easy access to data and an empirical investigation opportunity between governance and relationship tensions at varying key actor levels. The collection of such data provides an opportunity to better understand how top-down policy directives such as the Act influence decision making at the local level (as reported by Sure Start actors).

**Data gathering**

The aim of the data collection is to identify themes and understand the subsequent links and casual chain of events experienced by the key actors who, at varying levels, had involvement with Sure Start Dover. Data gathering from key actors included opportunities to interview government politicians and officials as well as representatives of non-government organisations. The semi-structured interview questions are underpinned by prompts framed around the Collective Impact framework conditions (common agenda, shared data, mutual reinforcing activities, continuous communication – Appendix C. These insights consider key actor experiences (between 1997 and 2014), pre- and post- the Act. The interview data assists with interpreting how top-down policy, in the form of the Act, influences decision making at the local level.

In this study, I will not be presenting a chronological account of Sure Start, as others have more than adequately explored this (see Eisenstadt 2011). My focus is on Sure Start as representative of systemic change and a policy directive designed to encourage decision making at the local level. Another key part of the Sure Start story is a shift in the language from ‘Sure Start Local programs’ to ‘Sure Start Children Centres’. Although the name ‘Sure Start’ has weathered both time and changes in political administration, the Sure Start of 2014 is very different to the Sure Start of 1997. Many of the key actors over the 17 years maintained a link with Sure Start in varied ways;
as a result, some referred to it as Sure Start and some as Sure Start Children Centres. As this changing nomenclature has had no impact on the findings, I will continue to use Sure Start as the overarching title. Among those being interviewed, the name change was never highlighted as being important to their perceptions. Key actors simply chose the descriptive label that suited their personal preference or experience.

Another important factor is that Sure Start was assessed at a national level, with this evaluation known as the National Evaluation of Sure Start. I have drawn on material from the evaluation throughout the findings chapters, primarily because Sure Start Dover was randomly selected as one of the sites involved in the National Evaluation of Sure Start and I interviewed two key actors (from the meso cohort) who were part of the National Evaluation of Sure Start research team. My research is neither an analysis of the National Evaluation of Sure Start nor a reflection of the impact of Sure Start Dover, but rather an analysis of any reference to governance arrangements and how these may, or may not, influence decision making at the local level. Sure Start is presented as a useful platform through which to examine bottom-up decision making at the local level and the Act, as a timely piece of top-down legislation, which aims to facilitate bottom-up decision making. The semi-structured interview questions are based on a soft governance framework, with the time periods of the research enquiry being aligned with legislation as a form of hard governance. Further details of these two governance arrangements are described below as part of the research design in Section 4.2.

4.2 Research design

The research design was set to explore the research question by examining the impact of the 2011 Localism Act, an example of hard governance on decision making at the local level. The soft governance framework that formed part of the research methodology is the Collective Impact framework (Kania and Kramer, 2011) and this framework was used to underpin the semi-structured questions used at interview.

Soft governance – Collective Impact framework

The Collective Impact framework is a concept devised by Kania and Kramer (2011), following an analysis of organisations that deal successfully with societal issues across political science, public administration/sociology and economics. The key focus
of their study was the not-for-profit sector, in particular the processes by which not-for-profit organisations were funded. The Collective Impact framework is, in essence, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific problem. It has been suggested that the Collective Impact framework reverses the traditional not-for-profit social change process.

Traditionally, a nonprofit identifies an isolated need, creates a service for that need, demonstrates results, and scales their service to more people in hopes of creating larger societal change. Collective Impact instead begins with changing the community overall and works backward (Schmitz 2012 accessed 10/4/13 posted 9/27/12 4.54pm).

In understanding the differences between a traditional not-for-profit and one that embraces the Collective Impact framework, a key differentiator is the way success is measured. Measurement was highlighted in the Collective Impact framework seminal paper in 2011, where Kania and Kramer identified five conditions that underpinned successful Collective Impact framework initiatives to date; common agenda (the group being focused on same outcome); shared measurement (using data to learn from each other); mutually reinforcing activities (all operating differently but all activities aligned and coordinated through a shared strategy); continuous communication (regular updates at all levels); and backbone organisation (infrastructure that holds everything together across the participating organisations).

Five conditions offered a more powerful and realistic paradigm for social progress than the prevailing model of isolated impact in which countless nonprofit, business, and government organisations each work to address social problems independently (Hanleybrown et al. 2012, p.1).

The five conditions are important elements of the Collective Impact framework; however, since its inception and pilot stages a further three pre-conditions have also been identified and are considered within this study. Hanleybrown et al. (2012) identified the importance of these three pre-conditions, presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Collective Impact Framework – three preconditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-condition 1</th>
<th>Pre-condition 2</th>
<th>Pre-condition 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case for change</td>
<td>Champion/s</td>
<td>Adequate resources (capital allocation)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Regarding the first pre-condition, Hanleybrown et al. (2012) argue that to even initiate action there needs to be a reason for the change; similarly, Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) emphasised the importance of setting the scene for dissipative structures or disequilibrium (theory of change) in action. The second pre-condition highlights the importance of a champion being identified and how an influential champion may consist of either singular or plural characters: the key attributes include having the energy to pursue change or demonstrate leadership, which Surie and Hazy (2006) describe as the generative leadership style needed to nurture interaction. The third pre-condition plays an important role in ensuring adequate resources or capital allocations are established. Kania and Kramer summarise the three pre-conditions and claim that ‘the creation of a new set of non-profit management organisations that have the skills and resources to assemble and coordinate the specific elements [is] necessary for collection action to succeed’ (Kania and Kramer 2011 p.39). A combination of the three pre-conditions, together with four of the five conditions were utilised as prompts that underpinned the semi-structured questions (Appendix D). The relevance to the research design and relationship tensions study are briefly described below.

As the first Collective Impact framework condition the results of a common agenda involve stakeholders imagining, believing, owning and being accountable to the social project. Achieving this requires spending time on the vision, and to do this effectively the right stakeholders need to be involved. Although stakeholders at all levels need to be included, Kania and Kramer (2011 p.2013) found it was vital for those with the most senior influence to take the lead in the first instance to give the concept adequate gravitas. Diversity of views is also essential, so consideration must be given to all actors, ensuring there is a good cross section of different perspectives than just the ‘usual suspects’ from one community or sector or organisation. The common agenda is inclusive of the first pre-condition and is one of the important stages of the first phases of the Collective Impact framework. From a generative leadership perspective, the common agenda is described as setting the early stages of the theory of change (Weiss 1995) and in emergence (Lichtenstein and Ploughman 2009).

The common agenda is most important in structuring governance arrangements, especially balancing spontaneity with hierarchy and control. This process requires
trust to be built, particularly with the end user, to achieve citizen engagement. The common agenda involves skilled facilitation that can make a big difference by enabling all actors are on an equal level when it comes to decision making. All stakeholders entering these discussions must be prepared to leave their comfort zone, to put their egos aside, and to change their views. Expecting the process to seem and feel unclear or, as later described in this study, as fragmentation (Chapter 7), is an important pre-stage in arriving at a common agenda. Even before the common agenda is agreed, some form of tracking of progress is important; a more detailed tracking process is managed within the second condition of the Collective Impact framework – shared measurement.

It is widely accepted that metrics provide a sense of clarity and allow better understanding for any outcome of change in complex societal issues. It is also well understood that setting outcomes provides clarity on the problems to be solved and/or area of focus. Focus is key to the Collective Impact framework, and goals need to be defined as much as possible on the data that is available. It is also equally important to note areas of focus where there is no available data, as this sets a very clear goal in itself. Kania and Kramer (2013) and Blatz (2013) argue that decisions must not be made unless sufficient data is available. As data is central to the change agenda, it is important to publish and share the results of the baseline analysis to identify key issues and gaps. Keeping data transparent and available is a powerful lever for change, both for improvements and failures. These combined factors, along with the focus of the collective being on what can be done together rather than what can be done separately (isolated impact) is fundamental to sharing data.

Blatz (2013) emphasised the importance of knowing what data can be shared, what will help stakeholders make better decisions, what activities can be better coordinated if working together and what advocacy issues need to be progressed. The shared measurement process presents an opportunity to develop a system to hold all involved to account. In return, this provides a platform that makes clear what needs to happen to ‘shift the needle’ (enact the theory of change) in the right direction (Blatz 2013). Failure and setbacks are not to be seen as a negative but as something to learn from; in particular, failures should not by followed by funding cuts but rather considered as
part of the framework for mutual decisions to be made. The third successful condition focuses on *mutual reinforcing activities* to align such purposes.

Mutually reinforcing activities become very clear once the work of many different organisations can be mapped out against the same set of indicators and outcomes (Hanleybrown et al. 2012, p.5).

In this study, I have extended the exploration to consider the broad mutual reinforcing activities of the key actors within Sure Start. As part of this analysis, a number of scenarios (as identified from the key actor responses) are considered. These scenarios, discussed in detail in the findings chapters, are streamlining and starving of funds (Chapter 5), communication and dynamic networks (Chapter 6) and principle-first vs application-first approaches to decision making (Chapter 7). It is important to note how one particular scenario, communication, shares characteristics with the fourth condition of the Collective Impact framework.

The process of continuous communication is part of the value-setting process, which is also a prerequisite for building trust. There is, of course, a balance to be achieved, and patience is required throughout this process. Blatz (2013) reported on the success of the pilot Collective Impact framework scheme commenting on how communication techniques were used to get the message across and engage service users, funders, advocates, service providers, government and the business community. To establish continuous communication, face-to-face meetings are essential, especially in the early stages while trust is being established (Blatz 2013). As part of the research design I examine similar experiences particularly whilst relationship tensions, entanglement and chaos are being navigated. I use the Enabling Continuum to outline the various stages that require different forms of communication, mobilising and enabling adaptation around, between unplanned possibilities and known certainties.

Although not used as part of the prompts, the backbone organisation presents as a crucial leadership condition of the Collective Impact framework as without a well-funded backbone entity or entities (sometimes this can be a shared role) any citizen engagement directed project engaging in complex societal issues is unlikely to be a success. The right leadership in the backbone organisation requires the creation of a new set of organisation abilities. For collective action to be created organisations need
to have skills and resources to assemble and co-ordinate specific elements (Turner et al. 2012, a; b; c; d). The specific elements and a key differentiator is the difference between a coalition or alliance where the backbone organisation represents the latter’s ability to focus on the ‘whole’ or collection of attractors rather than ‘itself’.

The focus on the whole is detailed in Figure 4A drawn from the work of Hanleybrown et al. (2012). There is a strong requirement for the ability of a backbone organisation to be able to build trust with all stakeholders. The key staff skills include project management and data gathering and analysis. A key role of the backbone is to ensure those most affected are involved throughout negotiations due to the crucial role in holding all stakeholders involved in the process to account. This requires the ability to identify what needs attention so that any concerns are discussed until agreement about what to do is achieved.

Figure 4A: Backbone leadership – common characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Characteristics of Effective Backbone Leadership</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visionary:</strong> ‘In addition to setting the agenda items, she has a very clear vision of where we need to focus and has the ability to drive focus towards those.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results-Oriented:</strong> ‘This is a really results-oriented staff, and they are constantly pushing the community and all of us to not just talk about something but to act on it.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative, Relationship Builder:</strong> ‘[Her] style is a collaborator, consensus builder, she works very well with partners. We do a good job with making everyone feel like they’re important.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focused, but Adaptive:</strong> ‘[There is a] combination of laser focus, a willingness to listen to almost any idea, [and an ability to] cut to the chase and not act on every idea. They are so focused on being sure that whatever is done is focused on the end goal.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Charismatic and Influential Communicator:</strong> ‘[She] is extraordinarily articulate and passionate about her work and… she is a true leader in the field.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politic:</strong> ‘Probably a little political savvy, and more of an ability to filter what they say than I have. [He] understands when to listen.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humble:</strong> ‘[He] sees himself as a ‘servant-leader’.’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

‘Someone who has a big-picture perspective—[who] understands how the pieces fit together, is sensitive to the dynamics, and is energetic and passionate.’

*Source: FSG interviews*
The common activities of the backbone organisation prompted questions put to the Sure Start key actors which explored the subsequent links and causal chains of events, how the key actors were supported, if any shared practices were achieved with a focus to building public will and/or advancing policy, as well as any evidence that funding was better mobilised.

In their attempt to share learnings about implementing Collective Impact framework and measuring of backbone organisation contributions, Turner et al. (2013, Part 2) considered findings from The Greater Cincinnati Foundation and nonprofit consulting firm FSG. In this two-part review, seven characteristics of backbone leadership (Figure 4B) were identified. Again, along with the six common activities, these seven characteristics (with 27 indicators) have been considered as part of the analysis themes (Figure 5A, p.92) that have been drawn from the interview responses of the Sure Start key actors.

**Figure 4B. Backbone Effectiveness – 27 Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guide Vision and Strategy</th>
<th>Partners accurately describe the common agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners publicly discuss/advocate common agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners’ individual work is increasingly aligned with common agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board members and key leaders increasingly look to backbone organisation for initiative support, strategic guidance and leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Aligned Activities</th>
<th>Partners articulate their role in the initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant stakeholders are engaged in the initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners communicate and coordinate efforts regularly, with and independently of backbone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners report increasing levels of trust with one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners increase scope/type of collaborative work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners improve quality of their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners improve efficiency of their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners supported and recognised in their work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establish Shared Management Practices</th>
<th>Shared data system is in development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners understand the value of shared data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners have robust/shared data capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners make decisions based on data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partners utilise data in a meaningful way</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Build Public Will</th>
<th>Community members are increasingly aware of the issue(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community members express support for the initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community members feel empowered to engage in the issue(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community members increasingly take action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advance Policy</th>
<th>Target audience (e.g. influencers and policy makers) is increasingly aware of the initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target audiences advocates for changes to the system aligned with initiative goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public policy is increasingly aligned with initiative goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobilise Funding</th>
<th>Funders are asking nonprofits to align to initiative goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funders are redirecting funds to support initiative goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New resources from public and private sources are being contributed to partners and initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FSG and Greater Cincinnati Foundation
The four conditions and three pre-conditions of the Collective Impact framework have been amalgamated within the four prompts to assist discussion throughout the interview process. Having presented soft governance through the Collective Impact framework, hard governance is represented by the Localism Act. The Act represents a form of legislation (hard governance) and policy directive which aims to enhance civic engagement and decision making at the local level, but also provides an opportunity to consider key actor experiences both before the Act (1997–2010) and after its introduction (2011–2014).

**Hard governance – Localism Act**

The aim of the Localism Act was to create an enabling environment for promoting citizen engagement and community/social wellbeing and for addressing complex social issues experienced by local authorities, and local communities and citizens. The Act represented a global first for legislation in setting targets and strategies for enabling decision making at the local level, whilst placing duties on ministers and local authorities to act in ways designed to increase localism (DCLG 2011). During the consultation phase of the Localism Bill 2010 and in advance of the Act being legislated, a Plain English guide to the Act was released by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG 2011). This guide highlighted six essential actions to ensure decentralisation and a cross-governmental focus could be maintained. That is,

1. Lifting the burden of bureaucracy.
2. Empowering communities to do things their way.
3. Increasing local control of public finance.
4. Diversifying the supply of public services.
5. Opening up government to public scrutiny.
6. Strengthening accountability to local people.

The six essential actions provided a platform for the government of the day’s (Cameron Government) decentralisation agenda. However, it is difficult to assess their impact given the adverse effects of austerity distortions (financial relationship tensions) that plagued the Cameron Government and resulted in ‘acute financial stress
for the public sector, for local government for community organisations and for communities and citizens’ (Raine 2012, p.5). In addition, individual choice may only suit some public services and can therefore work against greater consistency, equality and equity in standards.

We can’t rely on the present culture, attitudes and laws for protecting what should be the proper relationship between central and local government. (Staite and Rogers 2012, p.4)

In the two decades prior to 2010, the role of government had changed, moving from delivery to commissioning of services. In 2013, the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU 2013) predicted that over the next twenty years the focus will move from commissioning services to fewer services being provided by government at all. This change can only be achieved by the shifts and relocation of policies being made regardless of which political administration may hold office. In reporting on localism and relevant shifts in policy factors, Carr-West (2013, pp.4–6) argues that achieving this relocation of policies depends on three interrelated factors. The first is ensuring localism has a ‘democratic premium’, meaning it is grounded in people’s priorities rather than politicians’ interpretations. The second is that local innovation must be responsive to the civic capacity of local people; this reflects the unsuitability of a ‘one size fits all’ approach, but requires a response to public service challenges that still permits engagement with the granularity of specific local contexts. The third and final factor is the necessity of a collective approach, one, which draws on government, politicians and individual members of civic society for collective action

have to think about how they engage communities in the design and delivery of public services and about the relative role and responsibility of citizens and the (local) state (LGIU 2013, p.3)

Much of Carr-West’s (CEO of LGIU) thinking comes from a collective piece of work on connected localism which, I argue, differs from any other academic works on the Collective Impact framework of Kania and Kramer 2011. Carr-West also noted that everyone is local to some community, but possibly not the one they work in. This adds to the conundrum of directed local engagement, especially when government and policy workers are trying to assist a community where the workers are not the end user. This conundrum was recognised in the LGIU’s collective writing on connected localism
s]eem out of kilter with a world that is increasingly globalised and connected and in which people identify with many communities beyond the local/geographic and seek to act in these communities more than in the ones they live in (LGIU 2013, p.8).

However, the Act professes support for citizen engagement while binding the local sphere to means that central government can control. While the Act appears to provide a base for change, in reality such change may only be enabled by a shift away from the ‘command and control’ approach at central government level.

It is ironic that a Localism Act contains so many means by which central government can prescribe how local authority powers are to be used, their procedures developed and criteria to be applied by them… It could be argued that at times localism is seen by both ministers and departments as giving freedom to local authorities to do what central government wants (Jones and Stewart 2012, pp.2–3).

This paradox has various facets and is closely related to fragmentation, often arising from the entanglement of relationships. Possibly the best example of entanglement and tensions found in connected localism is in the content of the Act itself.

The Act contains provisions for 12 regulations, 5 directions and nearly 200 pages of guidance specifying how local government should introduce structures to enable the Localism Act, 100 orders and regulations in addition to the 483 pages in the Act with its 223 clauses and 34 schedules (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.2).

The Act represented, in intent at least, a change in approach; an example of hard governance designed to empower local authorities to work closely with communities, thereby striking the locally appropriate balance between exploitation (e.g. policies to ensure full representation, accountability, financial and legal probity) and exploration (i.e. flexible approaches and community empowerment). However, achieving this balance requires reducing the influence of centralism, which Jones and Stewart (2012) suggest cannot occur as long as local authorities are dependent for their resources on central government. In addition, Diamond (2013, p.27) proposes that for too long the language of localism spoken by politicians and policy-makers has been belied by their actions, which have resisted attempts to transfer any substantive powers.

Central government apparently knows no other way to act in local affairs than through command and control expressed in regulation, guidance and detailed prescription. If localism is to develop, central government has to learn new ways (Jones and Stewart 2012, p.6).
Throughout this study, localism is referred to specifically in terms of the Act but can also be used to describe the act of decision making at the local level. In the research design the six essential actions of the Localism Act are distributed across the three relationship tensions, and are further discussed within the findings chapters and detailed in the scope of the research section found in the research methodology below.

### 4.3 Research methodology

To fully explore the research question, I divided the study into three stages: exploration, implementation and analysis.

*Exploration*

The first stage (exploration) consisted of interviews with key actors of Sure Start. For these interviews I used the soft governance arrangement of the Collective Impact framework. The Collective Impact framework was used to structure the interview questions around four of the five conditions of the framework; namely, common agenda, shared data, mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication.

These four Collective Impact framework conditions were used as prompts to explore the extent and type of local decision making which characterised Sure Start prior to the introduction of the Localism Act. For example, the first condition was used to tease out any evidence of a common agenda and whether it had any influence on decision making at the local level. Shared data, is the second condition and was used to prompt discussions relating to data, particularly how formal or informal the information being shared was considered. The third condition relates to mutually reinforcing activities, and prompted consideration of whether there were any experiences (or counter-examples) of joined-up-working. Continuous communication is as the fourth condition of the Collective Impact framework and this prompt encouraged key actors to reflect on their experiences of communication, or lack of it.

Human research ethics approval to conduct interviews for this study was granted by the Australian National University in October 2013, in accordance with the University’s ethics policies and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human
Research (2007) issued by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council. At the beginning of each interview, permission for the interview to be recorded was sought, which enabled each interview to be transcribed. Interview participants were selected on the basis of their standing in the areas of Sure Start policy formulation, implementation or service delivery. Fifty-two participants were chosen (one represented trial for research) and levels applied to their area of representation: macro level (politician), meso level (government officials/policy implementation) and micro level (representatives of non-government organisations/service delivery). Using the responses from the interviews, I explored the experiences of the key actors and identified themes for further analysis. NVivo was utilised as a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package to assist with identifying three discoveries that are discussed in detail within each of the findings chapters.

- Discovery 1 – key principle adequate resources (Chapter 5).
- Discovery 2 – leadership as a missing link (Chapter 6).
- Discovery 3 – the paradox of fragmentation (Chapter 7).

Implementation

The second stage of the study (implementation) examined the key actors’ experiences of Sure Start before and after implementation of the Act. The experiences of the key actors were mapped along the timeline before and after implementation of the Localism Act to better understand the influence, if any, on decision making at the local level. It was as a result of this approach that the period 2010–2012 became particularly significant (as reported by key actors), and makes up the major part of the discussion in the findings chapters.

Analysis

The third stage of the study is the analysis, designed to examine and interpret the interview responses and explore the themes of influence on decision making at the local level. As part of the analysis the key actor experiences are plotted along the Enabling Continuum to further understand their experiences of exploitation (planned, established certainties) and exploration (new possibilities). This analysis incorporates elements of complexity and Complex Adaptive Systems theory, including the extremes between exploitation and exploration (March 1991); ‘five panels of change’
tools that underpin complex leadership conditions (Snowden and Boone 2007); contextual conditions for emergence (Lichtenstein and Plowman 2009); generative leadership to enable emergence (Surie and Hazy 2006); and leadership behaviours of emergence (Brown 2012).

Scope of the research

In Chapter 2 complexity was presented using three relationship tensions between centralism and localism. These relationship tension domains (financial, political, interpersonal) provide descriptive terms of complexity, such as the shift between uniformity and flexibility (Ruff and Olsen 2016), or what Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) refer to as the balance between structure and spontaneity. The final part of the research methodology is the three relationship tension descriptors. These three relationship domains, first identified by Staites and Rogers (2012) in their examination of the relationship between central and local government, facilitate exploration of the subsequent links and causal chain of events between governance and leadership. The rationale for and choice of each domain descriptor is discussed below.

Financial relationship tension

The financial relationship tension domain covers all aspects of financial influence. This tension was strongly evident among all cohorts at the time of the field work (2014) due to austerity measures being implemented, or experienced, over the same period. The evident impact included how boundaries and decisions were managed, especially when some cohorts were delegating responsibilities to areas where the other cohorts were being pressured to expand their capacity. Much of this tension appears to be due to historical relationships between levels of government, service delivery agents and end users, especially where the experience of managing downwards and upwards has not always been positive. These tensions are further explored in Chapter 5 in the form of two scenarios (streamlining and starving of funds).

Among the various financial relationship tensions within the financial domain, one in particular, council tax (although separate from Sure Start), was frequently raised by key actors. In proposing a progressive tax system, the New Policy Institute Report (2015) outlined a strong case for setting a new form of property bands to make
taxation fairer and more progressive. To achieve this, the central government (Westminster) would need to grant powers to enable local authorities to vary the basic and higher rate of income tax, subject to a popular mandate and local referendum. While council tax is outside the scope of this study, this example of a policy directive being designed with a goal of enabling local decision making but resulting in more tensions due to a top-down centralised system parallels the experience of those interviewed in relation to the Act; this is further explained in chapters 5 and 7.

Interpersonal relationship tension

Jones (2012) and Staites and Rogers (2012) note that balancing relationship tensions happens in the interpersonal domain, the second of the three key relationship descriptors between top-down policy making and bottom-up decision making. As well as arguing for the importance of financial devolution, these commentators present a case for interpersonal relationships being equally important. In this study, the balancing of tensions extends to the involvement of the end user, which I refer to as the community.

In Chapter 2, I noted that Lowndes and Sullivan (2008, p.2) describe communities as neighbourhoods that represent several linked aspirations and key characteristics. In considering the interpersonal tensions between entities, Lowndes and Sullivan used the phrase ‘key characteristics’; in Complex Adaptive Systems theory and in introducing Complexity Leadership Theory, Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) used the phrase ‘attractors’. As discussed in Chapter 3, attractors consist of the development of individual and collective identities or key characteristics; are facilitated by connections and interactions with others; fulfill basic non-linear needs; are sources of non-predictable encounters; and therefore have no geographic boundaries but with meaning and values that are socially constructed. Continuing the constructive engagement between the two literatures, and recognising the governance paradigm introduced in the fifth and most recent generation of thought around policy implementation (Hill and Hupe 2009, Table 2.1, p.26), the interpersonal relationship tension expands this line of thought to consider attractors, and specifically the key actors’ experience of attractors.

In Chapter 6, I further my exploration by using the Enabling Continuum to consider the experiences of key actors at points on the continuum between exploitation and
exploration. This examination includes consideration of two scenarios (dynamic networks and communication) and Key actors talked about these two scenarios as an entanglement of poor alignment between structure (for example, transformed services and job descriptions) and spontaneity (for example, innovation). As suggested in much of the literature, this resulted in a deeply ingrained suspicion of collaboration (Huxam 2003; Frye and Webb 2002) which led to further entrenched silos.

*Political relationship tension*

The political relationship tension domain is used to explore the impact of the changes identified between the timelines of the *Local Government Act 2000* to the 2011 Localism Act. The question of whether a top-down policy directive is capable of supporting bottom-up decision making dogged central government attempts to support local level decision making under both the *Local Government Act 2000* and the *Localism Act 2011*. Jones and Stewart (2012 p.2) note that under the Localism Act, local authorities are only able to ‘flex’ within the confines of a centralist framework, which limits any proposed general power of competence under the Act. For example, under the Act a local authority must consider an expression of interest from a community group; however, it is the Secretary of State who has the power to override a decision in relation to such an expression of interest based on the central definition of proposed value. This tension is exacerbated when opportunities to make decisions at the local level, the goal of a policy directive, is limited by the design of the policy directive. In the case of the general power of competence example, the local authorities are required to compile a list of local assets for community value, allowing the distribution of assets to be determined locally rather than centrally and, in particular, not by the Secretary of State who has created legislation to ensure such decisions are determined locally. Key actors often raised the issue of council tax as an example of how central government policies constrain rather than support the capacity of local government to respond locally. This conundrum is not unknown to scholars of political administration.

The immediate prospects and priorities for most councils are probably more about protecting valued frontline services and balancing budgets – which, ironically seems more likely to push authorities in an opposite direction to localism – towards the more centralising and standardising initiatives of “shared services”, “joint management” and merger arrangements, in pursuit of necessary financial savings (Raine 2012, p.3).
The Act, and its focus on citizen engagement, can be broadly divided into two scenarios of how the tension between central power and local autonomy can be understood: that is, a principles-first approach (develop concrete formulas for problem solving) and an application-first approach (factual and decisions made on real world observations). Chapter 7 focuses on this tension along with examining the experiences of the key actors. This tension is not new, but understanding the role it plays and its effect on decision making at the local level is key to this study and the new knowledge it generates.

### 4.4 Research boundaries

Any research or study ‘only takes place in a specific point in time and place, with specific events or individuals or groups involved, and also taking the researcher into the question’ (Wisker 2001, p.193). This study considers two timelines (pre- and post-implementation of the Act), which provide a temporal boundary for exploring the experiences of the key actors of Sure Start. Examination across the pre- and post-Act timelines highlighted the period 2010–2012 as of particular importance. The research limitation of a single case study is that it represents a nominated point in time (2010–2012) through the lens of the researcher. Unlike positive quantitative research, statistical significance cannot be achieved. The advantage of single case study over statistical significance is its scope for saturation, crystallisation, persistent observation and broad representation. My research will primarily be mobilised through significant crystallisation and by building a rich and diverse understanding of the subsequent links and casual chain of events between governance and decision making at the local level.

Conventional wisdom is that single case studies present an opportunity for rich and diverse understandings. Robson suggests that bringing the more technical and scientific report format into the qualitative method of case study helps mitigate concerns over rigour, subjectivity and focus (Robson 1993, p.416). I adopted more the technical report approach than scientific report. This approach was complemented by using the support of NVivo. In using NVivo I was able to manage, shape and make sense of the unstructured information I had gathered giving rigor to any subjectivity that may occur. Wisker proposes that methodological diversification is part of this mitigation process:
Essentially, problem-based or inquiry-based learning, or research, in this case, involves the researcher conceptualising the problem or underpinning question, and then all literature searches, experimental work, questionnaires, and so on, and other methods of finding out and scrutinising data and information, spring from there (Wisker 2001, p.217).

Methodological diversification describes the research boundary like making sense of a puzzle. Using the puzzle metaphor it is like placing pieces of a puzzle on a table and constructing different images from the same pieces. The software of NVivo provides sophisticated tools to develop complex web of connections, build relationships and construct deep meanings. Such a matrix expands empirical sources to include what people have to say whilst setting boundaries that enable exploration of the complex reasoning which lie behind conversations. These conversations are further considered in detail across the three Findings chapters.
Chapter 5. Findings: Discovery One – Funding

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore a specific top-down policy directive, the Localism Act, and whether the Act has had any influence on decision making at the local level. A close consideration of the data collected for this thesis suggests there has been very limited positive influence on decision making at the local level – a far remove from the bottom-up intended reforms. However, from my analysis of the experiences of the Sure Start key actors I have identified three discoveries as having had some influence on local level decision making. The following three chapters consider each of these discoveries in turn. In this chapter I introduce funding, which I identify as a key principle whilst arguing for the importance of the link between funding and adequate resources.

Several commentators (e.g., Jones 2012; Staite and Rogers 2012) have identified the financial domain as one of three key relationship descriptors between top-down policy implementation and bottom-up decision-making at the local level. Taking a financial perspective, Jones (2012) argues that without financial devolution, both decision-making at the local level and local relationships are unlikely to deliver desired outcomes. He describes success as being characterised by financial responsibility and I have examined this responsibility along with responses from Sure Start key actors. In this chapter, I discuss the results of the interviews I conducted with each of the seven cohorts (see Table 5.1). I analyse their experience of the level of financial delegation given to them under the Act and the effect this has had on Sure Start funding. Many of the key actors in the cohorts identified the need for funding, but described a more complex scenario than the straightforward allocation of money. The key actors focused primarily on the need for monetary support and an environment that allowed for adequate resources. This was of greater concern than the level of financial delegation and support. The first section of the chapter explores this need for adequate resources through a narrative describing the alignments, gaps and duplications identified in the relationship tensions across the seven cohorts of actors (see Figure 5A).
The highlighted Box in Figure 5B (see page 98) contains the categories that will be the focus of the argument in the second section of Chapter 5. The second section of the chapter directly addresses the research question, namely, what is the influence of the Localism Act as a top-down policy directive, on decision making at the local level? Building on the argument of adequate resources, two scenarios (the streamlining of funds and the starving of funds) are explored which demonstrate how inadequate resources leads to entrenched silos. Across chapters 5, 6 and 7 I consider the six essential actions of the Act. In 2011, in advance of the Act being approved, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) released a Plain English guide to the Localism Act (DCLG 2011). This guide highlighted six essential actions necessary to ensure effective devolution and hence effective decision-making at the local level:

1. Lift the burden of bureaucracy.
2. Empower communities to do things their way.
3. Increase local control of public finances.
4. Diversify the supply of public services.
5. Open up Government to public scrutiny.
6. Strengthen accountability to local people.

I will not consider these essential actions in numerical order, but rather in relation to the findings as identified in the study. In Chapter 5, I consider two of these essential actions those that closely relate to the key principle of funding for adequate resources, namely; increase local control of public finances; and diversify the supply of public services. The interviewees’ experiences between 2010 and 2012 are collated and, through presentation of relevant quotes, tensions are identified for deconstruction purposes (see Figure 5A page 92). The 2010–2012 period was a turbulent period in the UK with the global financial crisis (GFC); changes in political leadership; changes in how Sure Start was governed and implementation of the Localism Act. Given these tensions and this pace of change, I assess whether local experience matched the assumption that the Act would provide a balancing position between policy directives and resource allocation. It was assumed that the Act could be an integrated and coherent balancing process and would have a positive influence on decision-making.
at the local level. This assumption was not upheld because the number of top-down policy directives increased despite the Act.

In the final section I examine governance arrangements using a reflective assumption in the form of the Enabling Continuum normative model (as detailed in Chapter 4, Figure 3E, p.76.) To gain an insight into the disconnect between the expectations of the Act’s influence on decision making at the local level and the outcome as experienced at the micro, meso and macro cohort levels, the relevance of funding (the first discovery) will be examined in detail.

5.1 Funding as a key principle

As part of the research process I interviewed key actors across seven cohorts (see Table 5.1) about their experiences of Sure Start over two time periods: 1997–2010, (prior to the introduction of the Act), and 2011–2014, (after the Act’s implementation.)

Table 5.1: Cohort key actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Level</th>
<th>Key actor group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>A. Local, private and not-for-profit organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>B. Local civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>C. Kent County Council civil servant/ (active &amp; retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>D. National civil servant (active &amp; retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>E. National peak body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>F. Individual Localism/Sure Start commentators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>G. Ministerial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narratives of each of the cohorts revealed alignments, gaps and duplications of experiences that resulted in relationship tensions. Figure 5A is a summary of the sources of relationship tensions as related by the interviewees. These have been collated into sixteen representative categories and ranked from the highest (i.e. the qualitatively strongest source of tension) to the lowest.
Lack of open communication was rated highest and all the key actors across the seven cohorts remarked on the lack of open communication. The tension arising from this was repeatedly described as a shift in the level of shared vision and joint approaches to working collaboratively. The literature on Collective Impact framework (Kania and Kramer 2011) shows a heightened interest in, and discussion of, this issue. Many commentators identify shared vision as one of the key facilitators of collaborative working, along with the missing links between communication and leadership. Kania and Kramer (2011) describe communication and leadership as two of the five conditions in their Collective Impact framework, which made these conditions an essential inclusion in the question prompts (see Chapter 4, Section 3 – Research design). The Collective Impact framework conditions were used in the interviews and focus groups to explore leadership issues around isolated impact – a common response to a lack of open communication and non-joined-up working. This research reveals a strong link between communication and leadership (which is further
discussed in Chapter 6). Of particular interest is the fact that interviewees reported a reduction in funding and lack of resources as having strong negative impact on communication and leadership. As described by one national civil servant, adequate resources are a key driver for any form of change:

It’s relatively easy to get change when you’re paying for it, relatively easy, but it’s really hard to get change when you’re not paying for it (Participant 43 – Group D).

This quote is one of many indicating that Sure Start activities, when well funded, resulted in adequate resources for leadership, which in turn meant those in positions of leadership at the local level were able to communicate the relevant change agendas. The tensions, particularly around change and the policy directives focusing on local reform, increased as funding decreased and detailed examples of change tensions can be found in interviews across all seven cohorts (Table 5.1). Members of Group C who held roles at the local authority (and were responsible for the service transformation of Sure Start), primarily referred to this change as the Act being a replacement for grants. Their reflections focused on the shift from grant provision and how the Act motivated local authorities to commission local initiatives. Much of their feedback suggested that the Act placed restrictions on the way local authorities were able to commission local initiatives. For example, playgroups, which needed support, were required to meet certain financial criteria before support could be provided. More often than not, the playgroups requiring support when Sure Start programs were adequately resourced were the ones that also required financial assistance. When funding criteria became more stringent, they found themselves unable to meet the requisite financial criteria to obtain the necessary support.

Interview data also revealed a tension between the members of Group C (County Council civil servants) and Group D (national level civil servants). For example, for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the national level department responsible for the Act strongly supported devolved financial targets. A key actor from Group D noted the DCLG had intentions to ‘set up a network of people who think there is a different way to do things and enable them to share learning and inspire each other’. Taking the playgroup situation as an example, the line of argument from Group C was that they had lost the ability to provide adequate resources through grants to the playgroups requiring assistance. The other side of the
argument from Group D was that continuing to hand out grants created an environment of dependency, referred to by some as a ‘parent/child’ syndrome. Although shifts in funding methodology may have been introduced with the intention of increasing local autonomy, these tensions suggest a disconnect between the expectations of the theory (as expressed by Cohort D) and the practice (as reported by Cohort C). The tensions surrounding the parent/child syndrome provide a good example of how the three attributes of the theory of change as presented in Chapter 3 can be used to assess whether results are plausible, doable or testable results. In this case, the opposing views between Group D and Group C provide an example of policy and local needs not being in alignment resulting in tensions which link back to the importance of adequate resources.

This tension is not an isolated occurrence. One of the focus groups with national peak bodies (Focus Group 3 -Group E) reported that the key point of difference in terms of resourcing for the period 2010–2012 could be illustrated through the type of business cases being prepared by government. The government had set up a Treasury Advisory Group (TAG), which established a cost-benefit mechanism to be applied to particular activities. Unfortunately, the designers of the mechanism showed little evidence of local knowledge. Focus Group 3 reported that, in trying to avoid silos, the mechanism in fact created them and, as a result, data used at the local level differed from that used for the purpose of deciding bridging finances or achieving outcomes as set by the Act.

I think the driver for that is not really the Localism Act. For my money the driver is the extent to which we were in financial crises. We’re trying to get difficult things done across government departments and therefore there’s this sort of drive from the central civil servants to make sure the evidence base is really strong. Mainly to enable them to have the conversations they need to have in order to convince people to do something they don’t particularly want to do (Focus Group 3– Group E).

During group discussions, there was a focus on the relationship between decision making at the local level and funding to enable change. In addition, the ability to collect and collate relevant data and measure the extent and impact of influence on local decision-making was noticeably dependent on the availability of funding for accountability systems.
As identified by key actors, accountability tensions also reflected varying levels of responsibility and leadership ability. In exploring Complexity Leadership Theory, Uhl-Bien and Marion (2008) and Surie and Hazy (2006) argued that responsibility is a fundamental part of leadership, particularly across emerging change. In the case of Sure Start, the issue of leadership became more prominent as the challenges of inadequate resources and funding for responsibilities increased. The common mantra from key actors was ‘no funding, no resources; no resources no leadership’. This interplay of funding and leadership was further complicated due to the nature of Sure Start being community-based. Community-based programs require a relatively high level of autonomy at the local level so that service providers are able to respond to the individual needs of clients, which will differ from region to region as well as individual to individual.

The ability of Sure Start service providers to respond to individual need was closely linked to the relationship between funding and leadership. This changing landscape is described by Goldtsein et al. (2010) as five waves of change along the pathway to criticalisation (see Chapter 3). As changes occurred, so too did tensions, which were described by those interviewed as ‘moving’ and ‘emerging’ tensions. Although these tensions were ongoing, they become more prominent when changing and fragmented experiences were not effectively led. Being effectively led, or being led with effective funding, is dependent on having adequate resourcing for leadership. Furthermore, leaders need to operate in a non-traditional way, which in this study is described and referred to as a generative leadership style, to nurture an enabling leadership approach (see Chapter 6). The difference between traditional leadership and generative leadership can be summarised as the ability to cope with emergence or fragmentation. Fragmented tensions, particularly around policy issues, can be either positive and/or negative and require adequate resources and leadership to maintain any level of policy effectiveness.

As noted earlier, it was hoped that the introduction of the Act would increase the capacity of local level actors to cope with emergence and fragmentation and increase local level control over public finances. To better understand this aspiration the timing of the Act requires closer scrutiny. Despite a separate policy directive during 2010–2012 aimed at increasing local decision making, the funding available for Sure Start
decreased, and this in turn caused a shift in how the processes that had originally supported the program were structured. This change in process resulted in significant fragmentation, particularly in how services were delivered and data collected.

The Localism Act per se, from my perspective is relatively limited, but in terms of what we see manifest. It’s much more driven by the economics such as the changes in ring fencing. By no ring fencing, by the changing of every child matters, and all those other things, which happened to coincide with the emergence of the Localism Act, and certainly the philosophy of the most recent government. The government’s drive was to leave it to local areas, which manifested itself into the Localism Act. This has led to a pushing back on to local areas to say you’ve got to build your own local trust, and that’s very hard for local areas that are under financial pressure (Participant 35 – Group E).

This fragmentation made it difficult for local ownership to be effective, while the downward spiral of increasing tensions and entrenched silo approaches created a gap in services that even those involved found difficult to navigate. Thus, the ability of the interviewees to control public finances was often negatively affected and impacted upon. For example, there was a direct link between the reduction of funds and National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) priorities.

For those authorities where Sure Start was not such a high priority, the Sure Start program could suffer, with more cuts than the areas where Sure Start was a high priority for the local authority (Participant 50 – Group F).

The NESS also revealed the importance of adequate funding to enable adequate resources to produce quality services. In a concertina-like reaction to reduced funds, the creation of streamlined funding and starving of funds more often than not reinforced a silo approach to working. It was reported by key actors that inadequate resources also constrained the ability of leaders at the micro and meso levels to break down the silo approach to working.

Due to the cut backs, that’s what’s stopping the success of the Localism Act I think everyone agrees with it, everyone believes that we need it, but no one has grabbed it. No one’s made the most of it; it’s been lost here (Participant 2 – Group A).

Chapter 6 discusses how the lack of a flourishing leadership style and approach is consistent with Goldstein et al.’s (2010) pathway of criticalisation, where the inability to create emergent leadership through a generative leadership style prevents the
systemic change required for empowering or diversifying local decision making. In the case of increasing end-user control of public finances, I argue that the key principle of funding must be adequate resources to support the type of leadership required, especially when confronting fragmented and complex social issues. The Enabling Continuum does not solve the challenge of how to fulfill this key principle, but later in this chapter it will be used as a point of reference to better understand the process needed to successfully increase end user control of public finances.

The key actors representing political positions, as well as service delivery key actors, described experiences of fragmented political tensions. The bottom-up (localism) tensions, as summarised in Figure 5A, are further presented in this chapter in the form of two scenarios, involving streamlining and starving of funds. Top-down tensions were also identified but, as shown in Figure 5A, these were related to issues around networks and leadership dynamics. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2008) argue that the problem is not that the tensions between funding and dynamic networks are unresolvable but, rather, that the frameworks for dealing with these tensions use traditional leadership methods and therefore do not align with a generative leadership style or enabling leadership approach. Complexity Leadership Theory regards changes to traditional leadership style as the bedrock of any transformation, particularly for those at risk of fragmentation because of political tensions and the challenges of joined-up-working.

Interviewees identified changes in joint approaches and joined-up-working as being particularly prominent when Sure Start funds were not ring fenced. The financial tensions described above were closely aligned with inadequate resources and could be thought of as a lead up to leadership being classified as a missing link (discussed further in Chapter 6). Interpersonal tensions, although presented at the lower end of Figure 5A, were often found together with many of the preceding tensions, such as lack of communication, and each of these always had some causal link with inadequate resources. Jones (2012) and Staite and Rogers (2012) noted that even legislation designed to promote joined-up-working, as articulated in the Act, is not the best way to maintain relationships. Consequently, without adequate funds and resources for processes such as regular open communication, the influence of decision-making at the local level was limited, no matter how the legislation was designed.
5.2 Influence of the Localism Act

Figure 5B outlines how themes were subsequently determined from the categories of tensions identified by the key actors. This chapter describes how the key actors identified funding as the first discovery and key principle. The key principle includes the important role that funding and adequate resources play in influencing decision making at the local level. When considering the various perceptions and tensions as outlined in the shared stories, some common topics emerged and these have been summarised in the form of two scenarios. Figure 5B outlines these scenarios and I continue the discussion and argument on how streamlining and starving of funds can influence decision making at the local level. Adequate resources and the two essential actions of the Act are considered as part of my analysis.

Figure 5B: Discovery One: Key Principle
Adequate resources

As described by many key actors, the link between reduced funding and inadequate resources was so strong the two were almost interchangeable. Here I argue that adequate resources are essential to enable the championing of any case for change. Many of the key actors reported that, as Sure Start funds were being stream lined, a fundamental shift was evident in resources available to complete existing demands. At the local delivery level, observations about the shift in resources included the following:

You can’t engage with lots and lots of young people or children or families without any funding at all and we’re moving more and more towards that direction (Participant 32 – Group A).

Often tensions between the service delivery and policy directive level became evident, with challenges being identified as policies were implemented.

Minister Pickles can talk about localism until the cows come home but I think the actual reality of the delivery of it is something else and one of the things we have to manage. We’re trying to manage demand down. There’s a real dichotomy of what central government want and how we translate that into a local framework (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

The policy/implementation tension intensified as the impact of inadequate resources and competing existing demands intensified at local authority level.

I can see returning to work in silos with some gestures towards partnership working but I think people withdraw and it’s to do with budgets (Participant 29 – Group C).

Although manifested primarily at the central government level (Cohort G), much of this tension was described as a form of defensiveness.

If you’re asking people to work differently what they hear often is that you don’t like the way they’ve been working and so the defenses go up. It is staggering how much effort people will put into telling you why a change that works elsewhere won’t work for them (Participant 43 – Group D).

At central government level a different tension was evident, with the focus for central agencies being more on where best to apply their resources.
Well the ring fencing of Sure Start funds went and we spent a long time campaigning for the return of ring fence around Sure Start. In a sense our focus then went very quickly to making the case for services for families at a time when the local authorities were on the front line delivering major cuts. If you look at different layers of government local authority have been on the front line so our focus became less about the philosophy of it which you know was a done deal and became more pragmatic fighting to save Sure Start centres that were under threat of closing (Participant 5 – Group E).

Sure Start is a useful case because it traverses the micro, meso and macro levels. Through the exploration of cohorts across these levels the impact of the tensions, and how these impacted on local priorities, was identified and referred to as fragmentation.

You now have diverse agendas and not a common clear directive coming from central government that sets out what that vision is for local service called Sure Start and shared understanding of how you might go about putting that in place I think what we’ve got now is more fragmented, I mean is just isn’t that there is less money and less resources I think there’s less surety about what priorities are now (Participant 51 – Group F).

Even at ministerial level, recognition of the tension and its impact at the local level was evident, as was recognition of its correlation with adequate resources.

Because people’s heads have been down because they’re struggling with the budgetary problems that I outlined earlier they’re inclined at the moment to be less ambitious and visionary. At a time of deep cuts in public expenditure, people tend to focus on survival rather than innovation and I think that’s a real worry at the moment (Participant 44 – Group G).

Rather than resources continuing to support collaborative approaches, a silo effect was developing and the reduction in resources meant capacity was not only limited, but at times unable to support a collaborative approach.

As previously argued, the collaborative approach can only be adopted and sustained if sufficient resources and leadership are available (Frye and Webb 2002; Kania and Kramer 2011; Huxam 2003). The experience of the Sure Start key actors confirms the importance of adequate funding, in particular the link between adequate funding, generative leadership style and an enabling leadership approach. In addition, the Sure Start case reveals a constant tension between positive and negative experiences of fragmentation and change.
The most obvious shift and period of tension within Sure Start resources was during 2010–2012. During this period, three factors contributed to this shift and heightened tension. First, the global financial crisis (GFC) had led to austerity measures being introduced in the UK. Second, there was a change in political leadership and major changes to the way Sure Start was governed, including streamlining of funds and data misappropriation. Third, the Act (2012), although intended as a progressive framework for future policies, remained a top-down directive.

Under the Localism Act you’ve got to locally deliver things that the government tells you centrally. You have the responsibility but accountability is passed down so governments at the central level can say it’s down to the local authorities or local systems to deliver that so they have no responsibility. They control what they’re able to do and don’t do through inspections, through commissioning through the funds that come down (Participant 52 – Group F).

To understand the impact of adequate resources it is necessary to further explore the relationship described by Sure Start key actors as ‘no funding, no resources; no resources no leadership’. Although Sure Start key actors did not describe its leadership style in any explicit way, I argue that Sure Start’s leadership style pre-2010–2012 was consistent with what Surie and Hazy (2006) refer to as a generative leadership style. Another way of describing generative leadership is ‘sense making’ (Weick et al. 2005); that is, the ability to articulate the meaning of circumstances in a way that serves as a springboard to action. Surie and Hazy extend their work to include processes of generative leadership, presenting key considerations that are inclusive of sense making and sense giving interactions and relationships. These five processes are useful in further exploring the alignment between funding and adequate resources, which I argue must precede generative leadership.

Stories shared by key actors highlighted the limitation that reduction of funds and inadequate resources imposed on Sure Start, a limitation that was particularly noticeable because of the comparison with the period leading up to the introduction of the Act and the changes in funding methodology. In the post ring fencing period, the micro level cohort, in particular, reported a reduced ability to interact with partners. In describing the five types of processes required for generative leadership, Surie and Hazy (2006, p.17) note the importance of interaction experience with others in relation to the first process required for generative leadership. In this context, the
micro cohort key actors – the key representatives of service delivery outcomes – reported a strong sense that reduced funds correlated with no or limited leadership.

Unless the Localism Act gets a special leader or something like that, whose driving it forward, who’s got a vision? Without someone who wants to bring people together I don’t think it’s going to happen (Participant 2 – Group A).

The alignment with reduced funds, and the impact on leadership and positive interaction experiences, was a common theme.

Local government experience at the moment is so dominated by austerity and cuts that any apparent shift in any powers down to them are not really experienced very meaningful. Where there has been a growth in local authority autonomy, it is often because very good leaders who have pulled together coalitions and put in place structures (Participant 34 – Group E).

In the second process of generative leadership, Surie and Hazy (2006, p.17) outlined the importance of interaction alignment. This was summarised in Figure 5A as changes in shared vision and joint approach. Interaction alignment became an obvious gap across the cohorts, especially in relation to ownership of responsibility.

I don’t think it’s the government’s role to do that it’s down to local people. We almost need a local leader or entrepreneur almost someone who will take that challenge on board (Participant 2 – Group A).

At the meso level, key actors identified both the reduced funding and governance arrangements as contributing to fragmentation. While fragmentation was presented at the lower end of the graph in Figure 5A, it played a part in each of the tensions that were summarised. This tension was best articulated in the example of council tax.

More and more central government guidance and then prescription comes along. Actually localism at the most fundamental level should be about what people want locally. How can you reconcile localism versus council capping where central government will determine what local councils are able to charge. For example the issues around council tax. The spirit of the Localism Act is right but I’m not sure that it’s made a huge amount of difference on the ground (Participants 12 & 13 – Group B).

One key actor, who resided in the DCLG and was a keen promoter of the Act, considered alignment at the local level to be separate from the giving of funds. Critiques of this line of thinking were well represented in other cohorts, but in theory
the argument to reduce dependency and promote innovation is a shared one. Although aspirations of reduced dependency were evident when confronted with inadequate resources for a generative leadership style relationship tensions easily shifted and not for the better. Surie and Hazy (2006, p.18) identified interaction speed as the third process of generative leadership and this emerged across the cohorts as a discourse strongly related to reduced funding and inadequate resources.

Retreats, cuts, austerity, and shrinking time horizons and visions are parked. God that sounds terrible (Participant 34 – Group E).

Surie and Hazy’s fourth and fifth processes of generative leadership focus on interaction partitioning and leveraging, and describe clearly how resources are allocated dynamically across sub-systems and operate to manage the interface between sub-systems. Likewise, the challenges as described by the seven cohorts of key actors in this study are a dynamic set of sub-systems as demonstrated in the challenges they have collectively experienced in both partitioning and leveraging Sure Start funds. While it was assumed that the Act was designed to assist with co-ordination across such sub-systems, this assumption was not upheld.

Streamlining of funds

Many of the key actors interviewed recognised that ‘streamlining of funds’ was commonplace, in particular during the period between 2010 and 2012. I argue that there was little evidence such streamlining reflected local needs. For example, a key actor based in Dover reported that streamlining their budget, when it had already been heavily reduced, caused an adverse impact on resources. It was noted that Dover was unlike other locations in Kent that were able to streamline funds and still maintain the same services (Participant 32 – Group A). One of the Focus Groups held with Kent County Council civil servants observed that the more central government pushed funding cuts and streamlining of funds, the more ‘precious’ and reluctant to be streamlined the community became. Another actor and local civil servant (Participant 28 – Group B) agreed. In her opinion, it was clear Dover had demonstrated inclusive decision making at the local level long before the Act. After the Act’, this was more difficult.
I think it’s just that every department in this county has had funding changes and restructure and movement so they’re looking after themselves. To be part of a bigger group was quite difficult I feel. But pre the Localism Act I feel we had good partner relationships, which was very good (Participant 28 – Group B).

Although the focus of this research is on the period 2010–2012, the preceding period is also of interest. As funds were streamlined an important change in the allocation of Sure Start resources began to emerge. Between 2006 and 2010, funding for Sure Start was no longer ring fenced and the local authorities had the power to do whatever they wanted with the funding. A notable tension between policy and funding emerged in Sure Start in the period leading up to 2010–2012. This shift was strongly reported by local civil servants whose members reported how ‘year by year [it] gets worse and worse’ with (Group B).

One Kent County Council civil servant referred to the experience of streamlining of funds and the impact on resources between 2010–2012 as a ‘watershed’. This was based on the fact that the consultation period of the Act coincided with the removal of ring fencing Sure Start funding streams to local authorities. The comment also reflected the fact that the process of un-ring fencing of funding was quite cyclical and typical of historical government changes.

Interestingly they always creep back. There’s always a temptation for just one hypothecated funding stream: it is overwhelming. If there’s going to be one there’s going to be two, then there’s going to be 30 and then in 15 years’ time another government will abolish them all and start again (Participant 27 – Group C).

The purpose of the Act was to address issues in society and ensure community visibility of government accountability. It is notable that the timing of the consultation and implementation of the Act coincided with austerity measures, which in turn created reductions in funding. Of most importance to my analysis is the influence these funding reductions had on Sure Start, due predominantly to the ring fencing being removed. More importantly, at a time when the demands upon local authorities were becoming intensified, reduced budgets were resulting in reduced services and changes in priorities. Many key actors described the streamlining of funds, leading to a reduction in resources, as a byproduct of the un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds.
Starving of funds

In general, starving of funds was described as being given responsibility for providing services previously been delivered at central government level, but with reduced funding. There was little evidence that such starving of funds reflected any local needs. For example, starving of funds was discussed at length by local civil servants who identified the fact that responsibility for funding distribution had been devolved to the county level as the key point of tension. They collectively expressed a strong view that despite this devolution not all funding decisions were left to the discretion of local authorities. For example, decisions to do with council tax and the ability to maneuver around its allocation was controlled by the central government and therefore local authorities had very little discretion. Likewise, key actors from national peak bodies noted an increase in tensions across Sure Start partners as a result of being starved of funds. The starving of funds was described as being most obvious where resources were reduced and then actors were blamed for not achieving results.

The remit to diversify the supply of public services was another essential action of the Act. However the diminished capacity of local level actors to control finances also led to a reduction in their capacity to deliver flexible, individualised public services.

One of the dichotomies is that I actually think that we’re getting more disparate between areas not as a product of the Localism Act but as a product of the reduced funding (Participant 35 – Group E).

Sure Start had more success in providing diversified services in its early stages, and the rationale for removing this diversity was heavily questioned as part of the National Evaluation (DfE 2010, p.ix). The National Evaluation results argued strongly that unless funds were ring fenced for Sure Start, then many of the quality assurance measures, including data gathering, would become fragmented. This is precisely what occurred, particularly during 2010–2012, when major shifts in funding occurred and the gathering of Sure Start data was almost discontinued.

For example, across Kent evidence as to what constituted the most cost effective practice was unknown. With such gaps in knowledge it is difficult to make decisions on the most effective use of funds – particularly when budgets ‘are being reduced by
over 50 per cent of the previous allocation, as was the case for Kent’ (Participants 6 & 7 – Group G). Many key actors made the point that, while the policy directive still expected the same level of service provision, service providers were expected to operate with less funds than previously allocated. Their ability to diversify public services while funds were being streamlined and reduced was a common theme across all seven cohorts.

At the micro level, more than one key actor described the feeling as one of ‘losing control’.

I’m actually seeing the negative from the statutory bodies, as they’re not giving us our authority to do what we want to do in the community and just leave it up to us. Actually we’re now being told they are going to control us (Participant 2 – Group A).

When the funding was no longer ring fenced, or when that ring fenced funding was taken away Sure Start became the poor partner (Participants 16 &17 – Group B).

Other key actors at the meso level recognised that enhanced control at the local level did not necessarily lead to enhanced ability to achieve desired outcomes because of reductions in funding.

Broadly the Localism Act would encourage local programs but there are of course far fewer programs now because there is far less money for that to be an issue in the same way (Participant 43 – Group D).

Key actors at the macro level noted the irony, not just in the reduction of funds, but also in the inability of the Act to have any impact.

One of the ironies is that I actually think that we’re getting more disparate between areas not [as] a product of the Localism Act but as a product of the reduced funding (Participant 35 – Group E).

I think the driver for that is not really the Localism Act. For my money the driver is the extent to which we were in financial crisis. We’re trying to get difficult things done across government departments and therefore there’s this sort of drive from the central civil servants to make sure the evidence base is really strong to enable them to have the conversations they need to have. The conversations need to be made in order to convince people to do something they don’t particularly want to do (Participant 33 – Group F).
I think the Localism Act is just a cover really because government has completely cut the funding to the local authorities and in saying, which is the essence of the Localism Act, completely over to you guys. They’re just abdicating responsibility for any minimum standard of service across the country (Participant 4 – Group G).

With so few key actors seeing any link between Sure Start and the Act, considerations around what could be done to ameliorate the silos were not really discussed during interviews and focus groups. Feedback from the national civil servants (Group D) was more around funding, not silos, and how the responsibility for Sure Start expenditure had become a matter of absolute priority.

The logic of the financial meltdown in particular was to move as many or as much of available funding into general funding to work out how to spend it which means there is supposed to be a lot less prescribed funding (Participant 43 – Group D).

One respondent reported how the changes to Sure Start ring fencing may not have been welcomed but were almost a foregone conclusion.

As the cuts go deeper and deeper it becomes harder and harder to hold people to account. Local Authorities are left with whatever are the absolute statutory responsibilities (Participant 42 – Group D).

Cohorts at the meso level also provided examples of the increased tension around starving of funds, associated particularly with the way council tax was handled. The capping of council tax was cited as an example of tension between the prescriptive central government guidelines that led to the dialogue around localism becoming lost. It was suggested the council tax structure is most difficult to reconcile with local needs because it represents a scenario in which central government determines what local councils can charge. Using the capping of council tax as the example of starving of funds, it was suggested the Act on its own was not enough to bridge the tension between central directives and local needs. Council tax was also used as an example of the kind of financial reform required at all levels of UK government, especially Westminster.

If you are not willing to devolve and distribute freedom over tax raising then anything else is marginal. If it was possible for local authorities and local communities to actually have a decent tax base they could make decisions about very different approaches to delivering services. Since they can’t control that and it all comes from central government their room to maneuver is very limited (Participant 34 – Group E).
The need for financial reform at the level of central government to truly enable the Act, or any form of successful decentralisation, supports the conclusion of Jones (2012) regarding the financial domain and its dependency on financial devolution.

None of the seven cohorts believed that the Act was, in itself, capable of reducing the tensions associated with inadequate resources, despite the fact that this was one of the principles underlying the design of the Act (DCLG 2010). One national civil servant suggested that ‘the Localism Act could encourage and strengthen the local agenda but there were far fewer local programs because there was far less money’ (Smith Group D). A key actor from a national peak body noted the link between the Localism Act’s philosophy and adequate resources.

The current government came in with a philosophy, an explicit philosophy of devolving power downwards and it was mixed up with a couple of different agendas. It was mixed up with things like the ‘Big Society’ and localism was part of that and then the wider context was a context of cuts. There were worries that we had as an organisation that the localism agenda could be a means for starving the local authorities of the funding that they needed to carry out the duties that they were responsible for and then carry the blame for the cut (Participant 5 – Group E).

The tensions summarised in Figure 5A describe the most common tension arising from lack of adequate resources as being a loss of focus. This lack of focus was most evident when bureaucrats were trying to achieve desired outcomes or make a desired case for change. Large-scale reforms, such as reducing child poverty, are often tied to governance mandates to achieve large-scale change, and Sure Start was no different. The findings of the study identified that when streamlining and starving of Sure Start funds occurred, tensions between the funder and service deliverer increased and the two groups were therefore less likely to be focused and work together. This deterioration in the relationship between funder and service provider led to entrenched silos and a reduced level of service.

The difficulty is when you have significant budget cuts as we have had in terms of Sure Start. The overall cuts since 2010 has been 28 per cent so that’s over a quarter – 1 pound in 4. That’s a lot of money and of course the whole of the public sector has had significant cuts. Well once you have budget cuts it’s even more important to work together but less likely that you are going to work together. This is because people retreat into their own service pressure for what their priorities are and its much harder to be generous with your time (Participant 42 -Group D).
This reduced level of service and increased tension was particularly evident once ring fencing was removed from Sure Start funds. The decision to un-ring fence Sure Start funding was not aligned with any political paradigm, nor was it introduced as part of any austerity measure. The decision to remove ring fencing from Sure Start funds can be traced to the transition period of Sure Start, which commenced in 2006 (DfE 2006). This transition period also coincided with a period of imposed collaboration, with varying challenges, as noted by different levels of key actors.

The stories shared at the micro level were from a service delivery perspective where much of the available funding had been reduced but with an expectation of the same level of service delivery.

In Dover we’ve always been streamlined to make the best use of the resources of what we’ve got whereas in other districts in Kent the suggestions were for their staff to work differently (Participant 32 – Group A).

Central government have un-ring fenced a number of budgets. So whereas before they’d give us some sort of money for very specific things they’ve said to local government this is no longer ring fenced you can spend this on what you like. If you’re a budget master you priorities are slightly different, you have the freedom to use the money in a different way and if you’re a recipient of the money or were and we decide to spend differently you can get a bit animated because we’re not going to fund you in the same way (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

Key actors at a meso level reported an appreciation for the imposed collaboration, but recognised the tension as an interesting one. In particular, one of the peak organisations recognised that the philosophy behind the directive to be collaborative was inclusive in intent, although unfortunately the results had not been well received in practice.

It was not so much the policies of the Localism Act but the philosophy behind it was a very interesting one. We did get into quite a few debates with the government and more widely on it because the principle of decisions being made as close as possible to the people who take up the services has a lot to commend (Participant 5 – Group E).

Some of the tensions identified at the micro and meso level were described as ‘predictable’ at the macro level. I argue that the reduction in Sure Start funding was, in large part, the reason why changes initiated at central government level constrained rather than facilitated local level decision making.
Sure Start included all sorts of different activities and that money had always been in the past ring fenced so it could only ever be spent on that specific set of children’s activities. I think it’s fair to say from a local government perspective that Sure Start centres had a lot of money to play with and a lot of them had more money than they knew what to do with. While the rest of children’s services were struggling so other services like child protection adopting fostering were struggling. The incoming government as part of the general austerity measures stopped the ring fence and also reduced it substantially by about a third overall. That’s had a number of consequences, and those are pretty predictable it just means there is less money to go around (Participant 49 – Group G).

In discussing the need for collaboration, key actors noted that, when resources were inadequate, the case for change might not only be limited, but they also felt like they had been simply set up to fail. Frye and Webb (PSPP 2002, p.11) alluded to this scenario in their analysis of the challenges of partnership working, although they did not clearly identify adequate resources as being a key factor. Huxam (2003) presents findings similar to Frye and Webb’s, although with a greater focus on collaboration. The shared argument of these commentators is that partnerships or collaboration do not always work, and this study argues that the reason may well be lack of funding and inadequate resources.

Through the example of Sure Start, this study explores whether collaborative working relationships can survive inadequate resourcing or reductions in funding. As argued by Frye and Webb (2002, p.10), if particular programs are not adequately resourced, or if funds are streamlined or significantly reduced, the likelihood of achieving policy outcomes is reduced. Taking this consideration a step further than Frye and Webb (2002) and Huxam (2003), in this chapter I have focused directly on the key principle of adequate funding and how a lack of adequate funding leads to fragmentation and loss of a shared vision.

You have more diverse agendas and not a common clear directive coming from central government that sets out what that vision is for local Sure Start services. Previously a shared understanding of how you might go about putting that in place existed and what we’ve got now is more fragmented. I mean it isn’t just that there’s less money and less resources I think there’s less surety about what the priorities are now (Focus Group 3 – Group E).
The streamlining and starving of funds created tensions that aggravated the impact of inadequate resources, with one key actor describing how the streamlining and starving of funds and the consequent creation of silos resulted in even deeper divides between funders and service deliverers.

People experiencing so many cuts have become quite precious, and not willing to share maybe as much as they would have done before (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

In many cases Sure Start key actors reported that, as resources decreased, the role of the champion in Sure Start diminished. This was either through unavailability of funds or through the role being expanded to such a degree that any focused commitment by the champion to leading a case for change was no longer possible. It was also recognised that the inability to champion the case for change, and inadequate resources through reduced funding, also impacted upon the type of communication which could be conducted about decision making at the local level.

Those honest conversations in terms of localism are what we’re going to have to have and more of them. To actually say to the public, you know this is what we do, this is what we can do and this is the cost of it and if you don’t like it that’s the reality you know. I think sometimes we shy away from engaging with the public because they may not like what we’re going to tell them (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

Earlier in this chapter, council tax was highlighted as a good example of the two scenarios where funds are linked to expectations but set within inadequate limits. Setting these expectations, and the two scenarios of streamlining and starving of funds within a future focus, the UK 2015 Spending Review (HM Treasury, 2015) identified three reasons why tensions would become more challenging in the future. Firstly, funding is decreasing and previous ways of operating, such as simply increasing and distributing funds, are no longer possible. Secondly, confusion exists with limited understanding at the local level as to whether central government is encouraging empowerment or shifting responsibility. Thirdly, while there is a lot of discussion about the need for a new way of managing resources when funding is reduced, no clear model has emerged. These three reasons are set against the growing background of the UK’s social problems, which continue to increase whilst funding continues to decrease.
The period between 2010 and 2012 marked not only the Act and legislation to drive the localism agenda forward, but also the cumulative effect of austerity, with social problems becoming more pressing as funding levels declined. The period following the launch of the Act, leading up to the interviews with key actors (2014) and the Spending Review (2015) illustrates the case for change. As collated in the summaries of the 2015 Spending Review verdict reactions (HM Treasury 2015, p.1), the UK General Secretary, Dave Penman, commented on the need for change but questioned how it could be achieved within the limitations of the proposed budget cuts.

Despite months – if not years – of preparation, the government has once again failed to demonstrate, to both public servants and to taxpayers, how it will but resources so dramatically while ensuring public services are maintained.

Almost as if defending the tensions and challenges ahead, Penman acknowledged that without the funds, and being stripped of resources and people, the civil service would be unable to deliver the necessary public services.

5.3 Enabling Continuum

Throughout the study the effects and distortion of inadequate resources have been established as influencing the first of the three discoveries, thus positioning funding as a key principle. Whilst it is important to clearly articulate the experiences of reduced funds as expressed by key actors, section 5.3 explores these experiences alongside policy directives at both design and implementation stages. To explore the research question of how top-down policy implementation influences decision-making at the local level, it is important to track the key principle of funding across the Enabling Continuum as presented Figure 3E (Chapter 3). Relationship tensions, as summarised in Figure 4E, are represented on the Enabling Continuum as the points where the relationship between the two ends of the Enabling Continuum, exploitation and exploration, are in a state of tension. Goldstein et al.’s (2010) concept of criticalisation describes how attractors such as time, place and participants self-organise at varying points along the continuum to re-shape and make changes to achieve different outcomes. I use the Enabling Continuum to assist my argument by better describing how the first discovery and key principle of funding lays the
foundation for navigating tensions, particularly between top-down policy, such as the Act, and bottom-up decision making at the local level.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3 the period of policy implementation and, more often than not, the resulting fragmentation, usually takes place between the second (complicated) and third (complex) wave of the criticalisation pathway. When the two attractors (complicated and complex), representing the second and third waves of change, are in tension or in conflict, the process of emergence begins. Emergence is not always clear and, therefore, often presents as fragmentation. When there are inadequate resources, implementation is negatively affected and results in silos, which lead to conflict. In the context of Sure Start, the key actors described this conflict as a tension between streamlining and starving of funds leading to entrenched silos. The result of the silos was a reduction in collaborative working, most noticeably at the departmental level.

The Treasury absolutely sees the benefits of working across public services as it identifies it as a way of making savings without disseminating delivery on the ground. The big spending departments don’t see the world like that so they’re difficult to engage with. Departments such as DfES have their own set of priorities I don’t think that’s changed much over the course of pre and post the Localism Act (Participant 33 – Group F).

This disconnect was evidenced within Whitehall itself, continuing into future projections, as evident in the tension around council tax and as recorded in the Spending Review (Spending Review 2015, p.1).

Transformation will, however, require Whitehall to work in new ways as well as managing with many fewer civil servants.

The pathway to criticalisation comprises five waves of change and any point on the Enabling Continuum can be used to explore how top-down policy implementation (exploitation) can influence decision making at the local level (exploration). In the case of Sure Start and the Act, the policy intention was to embrace changes initiated at the local level. Ideally this places the policy intention at a balancing point on the Enabling Continuum. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) described this point as finding a balance between support for hierarchy and control and spontaneity of problem
solving. To achieve such a balance, adequate funds are required for the relevant leadership style to deal with and navigate fragmentation. This process is not static, meaning that adequate resources will be required at crucial stages to prevent silos being created. Funding is necessary not just for services but to ensure leadership during periods of chaos, particularly as the pathway of criticalisation moves between the third (Chaos) and fourth (Disorder) wave of change. In the case of Sure Start, the un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds not only reduced the funding, but shifted the priorities and challenged the previous leaders of Sure Start programs at the local level, who now had no influence over funding decisions being made by the local authorities.

Some local authorities strongly committed to enhancing the Sure Start model as well as they could. Others adopted a halfhearted approach to it, so we started to see that differentiation. That differentiation became particularly amplified with the 2008 recession because with cuts to money that had gone through to local authorities they were under great pressure for saving costs (Participant 50 – Group F).

This process was most evident in the period 2010–2012. I argue it was lack of funding and inadequate resources that contributed to the inability of Sure Start to maintain the necessary balance between support for hierarchy and control and local level autonomy. The key actors reported that the shift in the type of data being generated by individual Sure Start programs was causing an information disconnect between national level statements and what was happening at the local level.

Ultimately they are about national policies and the debate that the economy is now booming. Well it might be if you look at indicators like GDP and bankers salaries but if you actually look at lifestyle, wellbeing or ordinary people with terrible low pay its completely meaningless. So you have got to have national policies that address inequality and of course since removing Every Child Matters ours don’t. In fact they increase it as inequality has risen (Participant 51 – Group F).

The use of data can play an important part in ensuring funds are adequately utilised, as it offers insights that can be used to influence resource allocation decisions. In the case of Sure Start, the data trajectory shifted from having limited data uniformly available (pre Every Child Matters), to a central base line (Every Child Matters), to a situation where there was no uniform data (post Every Child Matters) (DfCSF 2007).
The result of this changing data trajectory was to restrict the ability of Sure Start actors to achieve the necessary balance between hierarchy and spontaneity. The discourse can be described by using the two extremes of the Enabling Continuum – at one end ‘exploitation’ of old certainties, and at the other ‘exploration’ of unplanned possibilities. I am arguing that, particularly with policy directives, a tension is created when there is an instruction from central government requiring local level actors to conform to many top-down processes (exploitation). As shown in the Sure Start case study, the attempt to implement such a directive within a remit for local ownership and flexible arrangements (exploration) ultimately results in further chaos. Such an arrangement creates tensions between exploitation and exploration. The most effective place to balance these tensions as shown on the Enabling Continuum is not at the extreme ends of the Enabling Continuum as this risks creating more tensions and entrenched silos.

In other words, operating at either of the extremes of the Enabling Continuum is ineffective. For example, whenever key actors found themselves heavily focused on spontaneous arrangements (exploration), there was increased reporting of experiences of lack of open communication (Figure 5A), especially in the absence of generative leadership. The key actors expressed this lack of open communication through the two scenarios of streamlining and starving of funds where tensions were created by the financial arrangements, primarily by inadequate resources to provide effective leadership. At the other end of the Enabling Continuum (exploitation), the two scenarios of streamlining and starving of funds resulted in entrenched silos and thus constrained attempts to meet identified local needs.

There’s a number of funds where they’ve actually said we’re not going to do this centrally we’re just going to give Kent County Council two million pounds to do this. That reduces monies from what they were delivering before and that in itself, or that element of localism doesn’t necessarily work. Especially if what you are saying is of course you can have the money but it’s not as much as [we] were using before the cut. You can do what you want with that so then as a county council we are left in this position where we can’t actually deliver without subsidising ourselves (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

Whenever the focus is at extreme ends of the Enabling Continuum, progress is limited – especially without leadership to manage emergence and fragmentation arising from
the tensions between exploitation and exploration. This can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, although it is evident that even funding and adequate resources on their own are not enough.

There are still issues around collaborative locally based programs and we’d had so much trouble with this. Where we gave relatively large sums of money to local groups to regenerate areas there was a problem with the speed of spend. Ministers were very interested in getting it spent and Treasury was anxious if the money wasn’t spent. Treasury even tried to get some of the funds back so there was a lot of effort put into trying to get the programs up and running and spending (Participant 43 – Group D).

What is even more interesting is that while the Act was designed to reduce tensions between central and local levels of government, its very design appeared to enhance such tensions. This was particularly evident during the period 2010–2012, when the Sure Start structure shifted to the extreme exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum. This was clearly articulated through the examples discussed above and tensions in collaboration.

Tensions around collaboration, while described in many ways, were a common point of conflict across all levels of the seven cohorts, as summarised in Figure 5A. The Enabling Continuum is designed to explore this experience, with the hope that it will assist policy design and implementation to manage this point of conflict. As a state of conflict develops, any collaborative working approach cannot return to what it was before and will change, not necessarily for the better. As March (1991) describes, any negative outcomes tend to move actions closer to the exploitation end. Policies that are maintained at the exploitation end encourage a singular focus, which results in increased silo working. I argue that, almost from its inception, this is what happened with the implementation of the Localism Act. The design of the Act may have reflected all the right principles, as demonstrated by the six essential actions, but its implementation appeared to be at odds with the needs of the end users.

Post the Localism Act, and I’m not sure whether its to do with the Localism Act but perhaps more to do with austerity and generally the changing ways in which localities have acted we did a project looking at different collaborative arrangements. The project I was researching tried to explore what was likely to happen with the advent of austerity. Most importantly was
collaboration going to disappear as an approach? Was collaboration going to be more likely as there was less resources around to do things or was collaboration still going to be contingent on all types of other things. We surmised that there would be a continuing pressure on collaboratively activity precisely because there was little resource around and people were going to have to start thinking very differently about what they did (Participant 52 – Group F).

From its inception, Sure Start was designed with a leadership remit of collaboration and innovation. However, a shift in this leadership style was experienced at the point in time when the ring fencing of Sure Start funds was removed. With the Act a point of tension was evident in the fact that funding for leadership was never planned or supported. The design of the Act did not account for supporting any emergent trends, even though its six essential actions espoused this. In terms of the Enabling Continuum, the more prescriptive the central level is, the closer the instructions are to the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum and the less responsive to the needs of the end user. In the case of Sure Start, the level of bureaucracy increased as the initiative intensified, and this became a crisis when the un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds occurred. In other words, the Act was created with such a heavy burden of bureaucracy that, across all cohorts, only one interviewee (employed by DCLG and responsible for the Act) could see how the Act could be effectively utilised to deal with such a crisis.

In the case of Sure Start and the Act, the point of difference sits around the challenges with bureaucracy. The more bureaucratic a directive, the more it moves actions towards the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum, thus limiting the directive’s ability to influence decision making at the local level. In addition to describing actions that relate best to the exploration end of the Enabling Continuum, funding for adequate resources for generative leadership was required. Leadership in Sure Start was more successful when funding was ring fenced, or when funding for adequate resources was instigated. From the outset, the potential of the Act to mobilise and empower communities was limited by its very design, which was set to the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum. As discussed, the essential actions of the Act reflected a desire to encourage localism but, in reality, they reinforced exploitation-type tendencies. While this balanced desire may have existed on paper, in practice, the Act’s own structure and design – as the Sure Start key actors described – prevented the desire becoming reality.
This chapter has described how Sure Start was negatively affected when the ring fencing of Sure Start funds was removed between 2010 and 2012, and argues that it would have been preferable to maintain a balanced position between exploitation and exploration on the Enabling Continuum. As described by the Sure Start key actors, the inability to find that balance was aggravated by lack of open communication and their inability to influence decision-making at the local level. It appears that, as a result of limited funding and inadequate resources, Sure Start moved closer to the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum and, as a result, entrenched silos and reduced leadership became the unintended outcomes of policy directives and legislation like the Act. Chapter 6 will further develop the discussion around leadership as the second discovery and notable missing link in unintended outcomes.
Chapter 6. Findings: Discovery Two – Leadership

Introduction

In Chapter 6 I develop the discussion, which began in Chapter 5, of the relationship between inadequate resources and leadership, with leadership being described as a notable missing link. In that discussion, the missing element was described as a generative style of leadership, one with the ability to balance relationship tensions. Several commentators (for example, Jones 2012; Staites and Rogers 2012) note that balancing relationship tensions happens in the interpersonal domain, the second of the three key relationship descriptors between top-down policy implementation and bottom-up decision making. As well as arguing for the importance of financial devolution, these commentators present a case for interpersonal relationships being equally important. In this chapter I examine such relationships, along with the interview responses from the key actors across each of the seven cohorts. I analyse their relationship experiences and delegations in Sure Start following the implementation of the Act and the influence these had on leadership. Many of the key actors noted that inadequate resources reduced leadership; in this chapter, through exploration of Complexity Leadership Theory, I will further examine leadership and its influence on decision making at the local level.

The first section of this chapter explores the notion of leadership as a missing link, through a narrative describing the alignments, gaps and duplications identified in the relationship tensions (see Figure 5A, p.92) across the seven cohorts (see Table 5.1, p.91). I examine how one assumption about the Act was not upheld, with the number of policy directives having increased despite the intentions of the Act.

The second section directly addresses the research question, namely, what is the influence of the Localism Act, as a top-down policy directive, on decision making at the local level? Building on the argument that inadequate resources adversely affect leadership, I also explore two scenarios (communication and dynamic networks) and two of the essential actions of the Act that closely relate to leadership as a missing
link; namely, ‘empower communities to do things their way’ and ‘strengthen accountability to local people’. As in Chapter 5, the interviewees’ experiences between 2010 and 2012 are collated and, through presentation of relevant quotes, tensions are identified for deconstruction purposes.

In the final section, I re-examine leadership arrangements using a reflective assumption in the form of the Enabling Continuum. To gain insight into the disconnect between expectations of the Act’s influence on decision making at the local level and the outcome actually experienced at the micro, meso and macro cohort levels, the relevance of leadership will be examined in detail.

6.1 Leadership as a notable missing link

As part of the research process I interviewed key actors across seven cohorts (see Table 5.1, p.91) about their experiences of Sure Start over two time periods, 1997–2010, prior to the Act, and 2011–2014, after the Act’s implementation. The narratives of each of the cohorts revealed alignments, gaps and duplications in experience that resulted in relationship tensions (see Figure 5A, p.92). These relationship tensions have been collated into 16 representative categories, greatly resembling the behavior and relationship traits of Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) as presented in Chapter 3. Although this thesis does not set out to defend Complexity Leadership Theory, its importance in understanding complexity in governance arrangements cannot be ignored. The top-down administration and bottom-up dynamics of policy implementation are often encased within relationship tensions that become intensified when applied to complex societal issues. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009) describe the leadership required to use an enabling approach to effectively navigate complex tensions.

CLT is also unique in its addition of enabling leadership to leadership theory… it serves two roles: it fosters conditions that enable the emergence of complexity dynamics and adaptive leadership… and it mediates the relationship between the administrative structure (bureaucratic system) and the complex interactive dynamics of the adaptive function (p.631).
In Chapter 5, I argued that Sure Start’s leadership, before 2010–2012, exhibited a generative leadership style. The generative leadership style is a behaviour trait of Complexity Leadership Theory (Surie and Hazy 2006) and is well positioned as the foundation of an enabling leadership approach. A generative leadership style is required to nurture relationships. As argued in the preceding chapters and demonstrated through Sure Start key actor responses, the generative leadership style required for such relationship nurturing, and for an enabling leadership approach, is dependent upon adequate funding and resources. Gaps in funding and inadequate resources resulted in a gap in generative leadership. It was recognition of this gap that resulted in leadership being described as an important second discovery and a notable missing link.

In this chapter, to further understand a generative leadership style in action, I use Complexity Leadership Theory descriptors such as traditional leadership, adaptive leadership and enabling leadership where enabling leadership represents dynamic relationships and the kind of leadership required to fill the gaps of a missing link. The missing link, particularly around enabling leadership, can be described as a form of entanglement. I adopt the term ‘entanglement’ from Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009) as the most prominent Complexity Leadership Theory authors. Entanglement is used to describe the relationship tensions, as expressed by the key actors, between formal top-down administration and bottom-up dynamics.

Entanglement functions explain relationship behaviours rather than individual leaders… the ‘behaviours’ that individuals engage in and their effects on the organisational systems and their dynamics (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p.633).

This study was based on an assumption that the Act would positively influence decision making at the local level. The findings from key actors did not uphold this assumption. The main argument of this chapter is that, despite assumptions and hopes to the contrary; there is little evidence of the Act, especially in the form of any leadership trait, positively influencing decision making at the local level. Whilst entanglement is not linear, Figure 5A (p.92) provides a summary of the categories of relationship tensions as described by the interviewees. The 16 representative categories were ranked from the highest to the lowest (that is, qualitatively strongest
to weakest source of entanglement). Lack of open communication was reported as the highest sources of entanglement, and key actors at varying cohort levels perceived this relationship tension differently. For example, at the micro level the experience, as noted by community representatives, was perceived as a lack of respect manifested through lack of communication from the Local Authority (meso level) and national direction from central government (macro level).

I recently went to a strategic partnership meeting, which consists of mainly quite a lot of volunteer groups. They had asked for the leader of the District Council to come to the meeting. Really their message was that they were fed up hearing on the radar that volunteer groups would pick up what was being dropped nationally but actually no one was talking to them. All they wanted was for someone to come to them and say we want you to run ‘so and so’. We’ll show you what you need and then you can work out if you’re able to run it or not. This is what they were really quite angry about as they really felt there seemed to be that gap (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

The District Council (micro level) and Local Authority (meso level) also described their relationship with the Act in terms of its effect on communication. That is, rather than describing the Act as an effective mechanism for communication, the Act was described as a requirement or action that had to be complied with. In an attempt to form dynamic networks, the District Council had made more of an effort to work with local level actors. This action was deemed to be part of normal practice but was also considered to have a distant connection to the Act.

It’s interesting as you’ve got 12 District Councils in the County Council, the Localism Act I think has pushed the County Council to think more about commissioning local, and not ‘we’re the big County Council we do the strategy we decide everything and we decide the policy and you adopt it in our 12 District councils’ I think it’s changed that somewhat and the Local Authority Leader has actually gone the extra mile to work with the 12 District Council leaders and sees the role as getting on with them and work with them. I think localism has had that impact (Participant 19 – Group C).

At the macro level, the perception of central government was one of local areas being distracted. Key actors at the ministerial level reported that, even though there were cuts in funding, there were clear expectations that, regardless of challenges, the local
level should uphold national level aspirations. One key actor at the ministerial level reflected on the frustrations as expressed by community representatives.

It’s early days and because people’s heads have been down because they’re struggling with the budgetary problems that I outlined earlier they’re inclined at the moment to be less ambitious and visionary than they would be at a time of deep cuts in public expenditure. People tend to focus on survival rather than innovation and I think that’s a real worry at the moment (Participant 44 – Group G).

Rather than the Act itself influencing decision making at the local level, much of the data demonstrated that experiences of entanglement related more to interpersonal attributes or personalities themselves. The link to interpersonal traits reflected the importance of the interpersonal domain as expressed by Jones (2012). Key actors across the cohorts reported tensions similar to those identified within the interpersonal domain.

Personally I think some communities like things done by handing it to them on a plate, other communities get on with it. The Dover community is one that expects everybody to do everything for them and there are some groups out there in certain areas that will respond to that and look after themselves and there are other areas where there’s no real sense of community and there’s no real ability to be able to do things. There’s a mentality out there that if they want something the Council does it (Participants 14 & 15 – Group G).

An in-depth discussion of Complexity Leadership Theory, including interpersonal attributes, personalities, behavior and relationship traits, is presented in Chapter 3. Complexity Leadership Theory is grounded within the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) and my exploration engages with both the policy implementation literature and Complexity Leadership Theory. The constructive engagement of these two literatures provides a useful backdrop to better understand entanglement and relationship tensions, particularly for policy directives. Policy implementation theory builds on the five generations of thought, noting that as part of the third generation relationship tensions were described in terms of a ‘synthesis’. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), the leading scholars of this generation, described synthesis as the process of balancing controversies between those who support spontaneity, learning and adaption as approaches to problem solving and those who support hierarchy and control alignment. Describing a similar experience using entanglement with its
theoretical links to Complex Adaptive Systems theory suggests a balancing or type of synthesis through the lens of system change. A key Complex Adaptive Systems source, Goldstein et al. (2010), describes synthesis as a way of developing a wave of change or pathway to criticalisation. Criticalisation is designed to articulate the experience of moving from clarity to chaos in a changing environment. Later in this chapter I explore synthesis and the pathway of criticalisation, using the Enabling Continuum model, but before such examination can occur it is necessary to further explore the key actors’ experiences, across the cohorts, of the missing links, key alignments, gaps and duplication of relationships in line with the tensions as presented in Figure 5A.

In exploring the tensions in Figure 5A and the interpersonal domain, the phrase ‘missing’ occurred in many comments from the key actors as well as being described as a ‘hole’ that needed filling.

Local communities need to feel empowered and some have been empowered but I think it needs to go further. I’m not sure what the missing link is there whether it’s money or whether it’s time for people to do it. I don’t think it’s missing skills ‘cause we brought together in Sure Start lots of different skills so the skills are there in the community (Participant 2 – Group A).

Key actors identified relationship tensions whilst reporting missing links in differing ways. At the micro level, the ‘missing link’ was identified as a gap in human resources – people.

We always need someone to give us new enthusiasm in the role. The supervision role or the mentoring role or whatever you want to call it you need a mentor. You need a coordinator something like that, and someone not from their own point of view, they need to be completely free of their own opinion (Participant 2 – Group A).

I think that for us, the partners are pretty much the same and their behaviours are pretty much the same so I don’t think that’s really changed. Partnerships in the end for me are really about people and so even a great partnership is really dependent on a group of people at any moment in time. So you move that forward a few years and you get a change of personalities and a change in the players and the partnership goes into a different cycle. The partnerships may then change again and go into a different cycle so I think all partnerships you know they have their purple patches, and rough patches. The test of a long-term partnership is that you ride those things out you have your difficult periods and your good moments and it’s up and down. To me it isn’t governed by the framework nor the legislation, it is really about the people (Participant 3 – Group B).
I think generally there are fewer people available, more people are in work and there are fewer spouses at home that have time on their hands and work is more time consuming more stressful and therefore there are few people who are able and willing to get involved in helping out (Participant 1 – Group A).

At the meso level, the ‘missing link’ was presented as duplication of service delivery.

The Localism Act didn’t do anything to unlock that chain of contact and command that public service is structured around and that for me is the missed opportunity. Organisations don’t listen and respond to the people who work on the ground. Policymaking is fantastic when it’s informed by reality. You need to have that global commissioned view but the policy needs to be real. You’ve got to be able to get a hold of it and understand what it looks like and feels like and tastes like when you’re sitting in the middle of it. This is all in order to make the line of connection back up to strategic priority. The Localism Act didn’t do that it just put more boxes around the conversation for me (Focus Group 2 – Group C).

And at the macro level, the ‘missing link’ was presented as a discourse in alignment of individuals and service delivery.

We’re altering the structures in Sure Start at the moment to streamline the management element but it really boils down to the managers of the centres, the personalities and how they interact with the others (Participants 6 & 7 – Group G).

What you do need to do is think more broadly about how to make those savings and that requires a strong evidence case to justify why you’re doing that. It has a broader impact than just slicing things off existing spending and I think that feels to me like the sort of reason why we’re in the position we are. The order of magnitude of the types of changes we’re making demand a heavier investment in the evidence base. The decisions we’re making are having a much greater impact than say slicing 2% over here or whatever it might be, it’s kind of like remodeling the way in which public services operate (Focus Group 3 – Group E).

With both the financial and interpersonal domains supporting the dominance of how adequate resources impact on leadership style and approach, it is clear the three levels, as represented across all the cohorts, were not working collaboratively.

Huxam (2003) argued that the concept of a missing link could be described as ‘not being collaborative’ and discussed increasing the importance of leadership for collaborative advantage. Leadership for collaborative advantage is important for managing complexity, a factor in both Sure Start and the Act. In the case of the
interviewees, their ability to use collaboration to navigate complex issues was constrained due to inadequate resources; thus, the necessary leadership style and approach was missing.

I think pre-2012, certainly in the early days, so I’d probably be going from 1997 to 2005, even then think there was a really strong intent to develop these things in collaboration. Now all kinds of things, which I’ve mentioned get in the way, the nature of professional status, the role of politics, all of those things. I think there was a commitment to do things differently to work in better ways with real development activities, visions, understanding and joint approaches. While that is all very difficult you know lots of organisations didn’t manage it. There was certainly a clear intention, a clear message from the government, it clearly shaped the framework that Sure Start was working within and you could clearly see some evidence of that happening (Participant 52 – Group F).

Some of the cohorts described the missing link as having some resemblance to a power imbalance. A power imbalance is described in this study through two scenarios, streamlining and starving funds, as outlined in Chapter 5. Other elements of a power imbalance identified by the key actors included entanglement and relationship tensions when attempting to collaborate (for example deciding on a chairperson’s role, or choosing a location to meet). These examples correspond with the second component of leadership for collaborative advantage in Huxam (2003): the changing position of emergence.

In Chapter 3, emergence is presented in the form of an emergent strategy (Mitzberg 1998) describing the need for a shift from a predictive strategy to an emergent model. Such an emergent model better suits the complexity of social changes such as child poverty. Many commentators (for example, Snowden and Boone 2007; Lichtenstein and Ploughman 2009; Uhl-Bien et al. 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009; Kania et al. 2014) argue that emergence contributes to the evolving process of moving Complex Adaptive Systems theory from the arena of metaphor to one that can influence science. Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine (1997) describes this as influencing the logic of certainty. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) argue that uncontrolled futures understand global interactions rather than focusing narrowly on local known events. Kania et al. (2014, p.2) expand this argument based on an understanding that the most effective
solutions are not necessarily those that are controlled or owned but those that emerge when interactions occur.

Emergent strategy gives rise to constantly evolving solutions that are uniquely suited to the time, place and participants involved.

It is at times of heightened emergence that an enabling leadership approach is required, to assist with interactions as they occur or, as Huxam (2003), to be self-organising. The third component of leadership for collaborative advantage (Huxam 2003) is based around self-organisation; the leadership role is a shared one that enhances the importance of all evolving solutions – time, place and participants. Both Sure Start and the Act were designed with policy drivers to ensure evolving solutions were enhanced through local empowerment. This form of self-organisation was often reflected through key actors reporting that they had been part of a social experiment.

There have been experiments both in physical engagement and online engagement with communities to get them if you like to participate firstly in decision making about priorities and difficult issues relating to where money should be spent. More importantly whether they wanted to be co-deliverers, whether they wanted to be part of the process, whether it was actually being involved in having a much greater say in the local nursery provision (Participant 44 – Group G).

6.2 Influence of the Localism Act

Drawing on relationship tensions, and with leadership being identified as a notable missing link across the key actor cohorts, I have identified two scenarios (shown in Figure 6A). The first scenario deals with the importance of communication – the lack of communication became most apparent with a reduction in leadership support, more often than not compounded by inadequate resources. The second scenario reflects the link between networks, in particular the links between dynamic networks. A key factor is the influence that inadequate resources have on the ability to build dynamic networks. These two scenarios, and the narrative of the alignment gaps and duplication of relationships as identified by the key actors, will now be examined in detail, commencing with lack of open communication.
In an attempt to mitigate the fallout from the austerity measures, there was a clear central government directive between 2010 and 2012 for local authorities to encourage people in the community to take responsibility for themselves. Many of the key actors reported that the local authorities’ directive was due to a reduction of funds and a requirement to reduce the support being offered. This action of reducing grants was designed to prevent an environment of dependency (or parent/child syndrome, as described in Chapter 5). With lack of open communication being identified as the highest tension (Figure 5A, p.92) the messages from central government of responsibility and preventing dependency were not internalised across all the cohorts. This in itself caused a tension, with the Department responsible for the Act suggesting any confusion was due to old habits. Another view of these relationship tensions saw the parent/child syndrome as a tactic to survive inadequate resourcing.
Frankly there is 40 per cent of cash available so it seems to me as someone looking broadly at that time frame [2010 to 2012] there has been notable, changes with local government. It is interesting that five/six years ago when you talked to people about service transformation that there was a sense – yes we know what we are doing. Then massive financial crisis hit and I think there was a second phase where people were in just a sort of panic and it was just like, ‘how do we slash 10 per cent off the budget?’ When you weigh it all up it’s all service transformation and systemic change and I’d love to talk about that but no time unless what you are going to say to me is going to save me money this year. If no, let’s have this conversation another time, I can’t do it now (Focus Group 3 – Group E).

Only one key actor advocated reducing the parent/child syndrome: the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which had previously cited the issue of the parent/child syndrome as a need for old habits to be changed, and was also the Department responsible for the Act. Within the interview findings from this key actor, there was no reference or evidence of this approach being aligned with any theory of change. Of all the interviewees, the DCLG was the hardest to interview in terms of limited availability– raising additional questions about communication and leadership style, given its role as the gatekeeper for the Act and its ability to influence the Act.

Our intention is to set up a network of people who think there is a different way to do things and enable them to share learning and inspire each other. Generally, we’ve found where people get the idea and understand it and take it on, they can inspire others to do likewise. (Participant 46 – Group D).

Although the DCLG was keen to encourage local accountability and break what they referred to as the parent/child syndrome, manifestations of the syndrome continued to be cited across the seven cohorts. For example, at the macro level,

[i]t feels like that there are now more people out there from the community and public sector providers who do want to have a more grown up conversation, and be equal partners in looking at improving services (Participant 46– Group D).

The local level perspective on the parent/child syndrome, and the actions central government took to generate support for local decision making, were not necessarily shared or appreciated by the meso and micro level key actors requiring the support.
Although the parent/child syndrome appeared to be a consequence of austerity, many of the key actors referred to this period, and particularly 2010–2012, as one also affected by lack of communication. At the service delivery level of the Act, continuity and information was identified as a missing part of the structure.

The Localism Act should have enabled local groups to do those kind of things. It hasn’t happened and that’s the one thing that is missing from the Localism Act. The aims and objectives haven’t materialised – somewhere along the line it’s got lost (Participant 2 – Group A).

It was also noted that communication was prominent before the introduction of the Act, but less so after its implementation.

Those early days (pre 2010–2012) were great but they were a bit disheartening because we were trying to find a role. We were the instigators of that all coming together. Now (post 2010–2012) I think we want the same communication, we want to work as a team but it’s been notoriously difficult to get others on board (Participant 31 – Group B).

Key actors noted how community consultation before the Act had laid effective foundations, thus preventing fragmentation.

We needed to involve the community key partners and be clear about the strategy and decide what’s important to the community and then take things forward and commission services. I think that sort of thing is embedded in the spirit of the agenda and consultation of the Localism Act (Participant 29 – Groups C).

Likewise, the importance of communication and its relationship to leadership was affected by the challenge of inadequate resources. Key actors reported the Act had been unable to positively influence the need for communication, as it appeared to have its roots firmly placed in financial priorities.

So there’s got to be more communication about the impacts of what each one of the public services partners might be doing, in order to make sure we’ve got a sort of system that operates effectively because I think there’s stronger recognition of that now but I think the primary driver for it has been the financial situation as opposed to the Localism Act (Participant 47 – Group F).

This disruptive challenge – of communication being compromised by inadequate resources – was reported by many key actors to have constrained their ability to
enhance co-ordination and utilise the strengths of all involved and, thus, having reinforced the parent/child syndrome and working in silos.

Over the years I think there was a time when we each thought we could do each other’s jobs and we looked at the child as a whole person and tried to be integrated. Now the only way that you can provide services to the child is to play to your strengths (Participant 40 – Group G).

With inadequate resources leading to reduced leadership, and thus impacting on communication levels, the resulting experience was often one of confusion, further entrenching silos. Confusion can be described as part of fragmentation or a state of disequilibrium (Lichtenstein and Plowman 2009) or, as Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) describe it, a way to navigate entanglement. With much of their study being devoted to emergence, Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) and Uhl-Bien and Marion (2008, 2009) describe disequilibrium/entanglement as the position in which the need for change is heightened to an intense level. Examples can include changes of political administration or changes in policy direction. Sure Start was a policy directive that experienced three changes in governments and political leadership. The impact of this change included increased confusion and fragmentation flowing from the results of inadequate resources. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001, p.394) describe such change as the missing link in a causal chain of events that requires less control and more enabling.

Thus, leadership effectiveness cannot be built exclusively around controlling the future: rather it depends on being able to foster interactive conditions that enable a productive future.

The difference between trying to control the future and shifting to conditions that enable a productive future requires a form of enabling leadership of the kind Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) introduce through Complexity Leadership Theory. My argument is that an enabling leadership approach will have limited impact unless adequate resources are also present. Inadequate resources limit a generative leadership style, thus preventing the nurturing required to create an enabling leadership approach. This assessment is supported by many of the interviewee responses. It also extends the importance and the role of communication to influence and enable dynamic networks – the second scenario to be considered in this chapter.
**Dynamic Networks**

The kinds of networks most likely to be dynamic are described by Uhl-Bien and Marion (2008, p.4) as open, evolutionary, supported by theories of change and bonded by a common goal.

Rather than focusing on top-down control of an alignment, complexity leadership theorists agree that leaders should temper their attempts to control organisations and futures and instead focus on developing their ability to influence organisational behavior so as to increase the chances of productive futures.

Many of the key actors described how Sure Start had initially provided a dynamic network platform. Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) described a similar dynamic network platform in the form of a commitment to Neighbourhood Governance. The four principles of Neighbourhood Governance, as discussed in Chapter 2, describe dynamic networks in the form of life episodes that provide a new paradigm for thinking about governance. Although drawing from different forms of literature, the value of a Complex Adaptive Systems perspective for policy implementation studies is that it offers a paradigm for thinking about governance shifting from a traditional leadership model to a non-traditional leadership perspective. This includes replacing traditional leadership with an enabling leadership approach. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009, p.631) describe non-traditional leadership as dealing with complex issues through sharing, distributing and being collective, relational, dynamic, emergent and adaptive.

In Chapter 3 the three types of leadership – administrative, adaptive and enabling – were discussed in detail. The feedback from the key actors identified not only that inadequate resources had resulted in leadership becoming a missing link, but also that the style of leadership was important, with inadequate resources causing a shift in leadership style. The changes in communication meant that the dynamic networks that had previously enhanced a generative leadership style were now finding it difficult to navigate the entanglement.

With entanglement, as defined by key actors, becoming increasingly tenuous, generative leadership styles were retreating and increasingly unable to nurture an
enabling leadership style. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009) described the importance of the relationship between enabling leadership and entanglement in the following way.

Enabling leadership operates in the interface between administrative and adaptive leadership and the domain of enabling leadership is to help in managing entanglement (p.634).

To assist in understanding this entanglement, the five tools that underpin an enabling leadership approach as defined by Snowden and Boone (2007) are further examined. The first and second tools are the abilities to foster network construction and set boundaries to manage interactions, particularly between administrative and adaptive leadership responsibilities. In the case of Sure Start and the Act, this became most difficult to achieve when Sure Start funds were un-ring fenced and the Act was implemented with no leadership structure in place. Surprisingly, Sure Start and the Act were both designed to achieve the second interaction tool (setting boundaries to manage interaction and develop dynamic networks), being catalysts for bottom-up network construction. However, respondents reported that any bottom-up networking, particularly at the micro level, was affected by changes in funding where an ability to voice local needs became restricted for some, particularly for those employed by the local authority.

If you are dealing with a community organisation, voluntary, or something else, it becomes political and de-commissioning services becomes difficult (Participants 16 & 17 – Group B).

Most key actors reported that Sure Start was designed for the creation of dynamic network platforms and, before the Act, developing such platforms was at the very core of their culture. Dynamic networks were required to create governance arrangements that empowered local decision making. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2009, p.405) describe such empowerment as involving the ability to influence, not control – to ‘become leadership tags’ that bind people together. Although the key actors did not use the phrase ‘leadership tag’, many of the characteristics of influence, rather than control, were mentioned. A common theme in relation to Sure Start was how people across all sectors had the right to say what they wanted and how this was encouraged at all levels. It was noted across all cohorts that in Sure Start before 2010–2012, even though there was not always agreement across all parties, there was a sense of
equality and agreements were therefore easier to reach. The micro level in particular expressed the view that, prior to Sure Start, silos (of ‘us’ and ‘them’) existed between the community, the voluntary sector and statutory bodies, but that Sure Start had removed the silos through its clear outcomes and leadership role.

We weren’t there to score points, we weren’t there to say how good am I. It was how good can we make this community, how can we turn this whole community around. Give them what they want and give them what they need. So they can empower themselves (Participant 2 – Group A).

It appears the dynamic networks, and the style and approach of leadership were directly influenced by the key principle of adequate resourcing. Inadequate resources also had a negative impact on the ability of leadership to stimulate some level of chaos to enable change whilst dropping ‘seeds’ of emergence (the third and fourth tools of Snowden and Boone 2007, p.6). Less communication and more confusion were the result of leadership being a missing link, limiting innovation and creating fragmentation and distortion of the necessary networks. Almost as a cumulative effect, these barriers prevented the two scenarios – communication and dynamic networks – from supporting Snowden and Boone’s fifth tool; that is, to create a dynamic network platform and an option of thinking systemically (2007, p.6). This, in turn, impacted on trust building and had a negative influence on decision making at the local level.

Despite leadership appearing as a notable missing link, and the two scenarios of communication and dynamic networks being negatively affected by inadequate resources, some Sure Start key actors still held high hopes for the Act.

So my hope was that the Localism Act would be something that would regenerate how public services are delivered. It would change the nature of provision and the nature of the interaction with communities especially all the smaller organisations delivering very locally in their own communities (Participant 20 – Group C).

This hope was reflected in the essential actions of the Act, two of which (‘empower communities’ and ‘strengthen local accountability’), are closely related to leadership as the notable missing link. In considering leadership in its three forms (enabling, adaptive and administrative) it was mostly the administrative approach that framed the Act.
There were three key powers that were created in order to give communities more rights to things. So one was neighbourhood planning whereby a community can come together. A parish or tenant council or even a group of 21 people who are on an electoral register could run it. They come together to create a forum and then work with their local community to produce a neighbourhood plan. It’s a very specific legislative process that they have to go through and has a public inspection and it has to go to a referendum. The local community through the referendum approves it, and if it gets a yes vote, it then becomes part of the local planning network (Participant 46 – Group D).

This administrative leadership perspective was an isolated one and was also held by the representative of the DCLG. The DCLG had responsibility for the Act and in relation to the Act’s impact on local level decision making, held a completely different view from the other key actors. Most key actors reported how the Act represented an increase in bureaucracy as a result of the increase in silo working.

We relied on statutory bodies when we set up Sure Start, we couldn’t have done that as community organisations. For someone who had the staff to do that it was most helpful but I don’t think most borough or district councils have got the ability to do that now, due to cut backs. That’s what’s stopping the success of the Localism Act as I think everyone agrees with it, everyone believes that we need it, but no-one has grabbed it, no-one’s made the most of it (Participant 2 – Group A).

Leadership as a missing link reduced the ability for effective communication and linkage of networks, which in turn further heightened entrenched silos and increased bureaucracy, thus limiting positive change. Key actors described this unfortunate result of the Act, and the consequences of reduced leadership, as ‘limited empowerment’, which led to a reduction in decision making at the local level. Ironically, one of the essential actions of the Act captured the importance of empowering communities to do things their way. The key actors reported that it was often a lack of leadership and communication that prevented the Act from enabling such empowerment.

I think the challenge of the governments new drive to Sure Start is being more focused and more targeted. The reason why I believe they’re becoming more challenging is because, you know, partnerships are difficult to maintain. I do occasionally sit on the local children’s trust group, I think they used to be called the Board. It’s the same people sitting around the table and sometimes I just feel that the focus on outputs is a bit too wide. They should be better targeted and joined-up to other areas like troubled families, community safety, community development, economic development and social regeneration (Participants 12 & 13 – Group B).
Key actors identified the importance of locally informed leadership as a key ingredient of being able to focus on relevant local needs and break through silos. It was recognised at the meso level that the dual role of implementing the Act whilst engaging at the local level was a responsibility of locally informed leadership.

There’s a moral imperative to come together and work together, which is an important and integral part of keeping your business safe (Participant 20 – Group C).

As previously argued, leadership challenges are often found in dealing with emergence, such as empowering and encouraging emergent change. One flaw of the Act was that it articulated how such engagement was to be achieved without supporting a leadership approach with the genuine freedom and flexibility to do so. Challenges around freedom and flexibility also appeared to have a relationship with the period within which the Act was being created.

I think the initial government’s Sure Start 10 year plan should really have been a 20 year plan because we should be going back to those families now and seeing the difference it’s made. If we did I think we would be astounded at some of the stories that had come out of that. I think Sure Start has succeeded where a lot of initiatives have failed and its only finances from another government that’s stopped it. They were frightened by the amount of money they had to put into it but actually the initiatives like that need funding. If you believe in what you want to do and you genuinely believe in Sure Start or the Localism Act you’ve got to fund it. Funding shouldn’t be the object cause you’ve also got to put the research in to make it happen. It won’t work without the evidence base and it needs people, it needs vision and it needs funding to achieve those goals (Participant 2 – Group A).

The streamlining and starving of funds – leading to reduced communication and inhibiting a generative leadership style capable of an enabling approach to building dynamic networks – was evident in many ways. One specific example was the reduction in an integrated style of service delivery.

For example when funding was ring fenced – if a childcare worker met a problem, if she/he was a bit unsure about the health of a child or whatever it may be, they would feel it much easier to ring up the health visitor to seek advice on or maybe refer that family onto another agency, or whatever for them to seek help. Often the people working with these children and families particularly the more unskilled ones, less experienced ones would feel a level of uncertainty about where to go next and being able to discuss that problem with a member or a friend from another agency and make their decisions clearer and act more appropriately, that led to better integration between services. Common training across services was a very important mechanism for service integration on the ground service integration (Participant 50 – Group F).
In Kent, bureaucratic tensions resulted in increased silos and thus increased the entanglement and relationship tensions. Due to inadequate resources, leadership was less effective and it was this that caused the feeling of a game being played. In his exploration of the first generation of top-down policy implementation literature, Bardach (1977) had earlier described this feeling, of ‘games’, as a common experience of entrenched silos, arguing that the top-down approach to policy implementation was limited and different forms of leadership were required.

One key form of leadership expressed in the sixth essential action of the Act is ‘strengthening accountability to local people’. Again, key actors reported that the challenge appeared to be more around implementation of freedom and flexibilities at the policy level, rather than articulating strengthened accountability. For example, key actors described the importance of accountability but expressed increased levels of entanglement, although this was reported differently at varying levels of the cohorts.

Group A identified the shared relationship, which they had with the central government before the introduction of the Localism Act.

> When we came together we brought a greater understanding of each other’s needs, and that reflected in Board meetings. We shared information on a one to one basis. Communication such as emails, all communication channels, we shared everything (Participant 2 – Group A).

Group B identified how such leadership was also important to the end user.

> I’ve done some work with some of the Sure Start parent groups and when you talk to them about the changes with Sure Start they say that actually the children centre is of equal value to them as it is to their children. Which I’d never thought of before when they were talking about the value to them as parents. It was almost a secondary thing to them that the children really enjoyed it. In some of the recent changes the value to the parents seems to have been lost (Focus Group 1 – Group B).

Group C described how, pre-2010–2012, parents’ voices had been linked where possible to government and government held a responsibility to maintain an element of openness and communication.

> It was the Localism Act so things evolved over time, but I know that the parents’ forum, for example, would meet with some members to talk about various things and to apply for funding. I know that the district politicians also had some involvement in Sure Start and would take on particular causes (Participant 29 – Group C).
Group D held strong views regarding the influence of leadership, the need for communication and importance of personal relationships.

Yes my sense is that a lot of these collaborative programs (like Sure Start) that central government participated in had strong emphasis on communication. How central government talk to each other out there is quite an interesting issue. We had all sorts of partnerships and some of them worked and some of them didn’t its all about relationships between the people whether they gelled or whether they didn’t (Participant 43 – Group D).

Group E noted that the drivers of decision making at the local level were more aspirational and were not always followed through in practice.

The philosophy behind the Localism Act was a very interesting one and we did get into a few debates with the government and more widely on it. The principle of decision making being made as close as possible to the people who take up the service has a lot to commend it (Participant 5 – Group E).

Group F expanded on the importance of personal relationships in translating rhetoric into reality.

[T]he development of trust as I said in earlier answers was not an automatic procedure, it developed gradually over time. Many of these services pre-Sure Start had very little to do with each other, and often it depended on as much as personal relationships as it did on professional status or professional linkages. If people happened to know each other outside of the working situation they would collaborate much better within the working situation whether those people were working for different agencies (Participant 50 – Group F).

Group G provided an example of how the opening up of government to public scrutiny was more a case of information sharing, rather than consultation or other avenues of influence. Examples were given of where more was done than required, suggesting that the local level should be grateful for what was received.

I went out to visit 23 Kent Sure Start centres that were earmarked for closure and I met with lots of parents, health visitors, centre managers, members of the public and people who were involved in setting up the original centres. In essence, my role has been to try and minimise the impact on funding reductions on the services that we provide and moving away from a focus on buildings to one that protects services. The commitment I make is to protect services so they may now be delivered through village halls and community centres and not necessarily through dedicated children services buildings (Participant 6 & 7 – Group G).
In defending the rhetoric surrounding the Act, the key actor representing the DCLG argued that protocols were in place to give the local community a voice, pointing to

[t]he community right to challenge…[which] gives voluntary organisations the right to challenge their local authority if they think they can run a service better than the local authority (Participant 46 – Group D).

The two scenarios, of communication and dynamic networks, are limited in their ability to navigate entanglement, such as the parent/child syndrome, particularly when an administrative leadership approach becomes the dominant trait. As a result, silos became further entrenched and interpersonal relationships become distorted. The Emergence Continuum provides a useful tool to examine these distortions with a particular focus on leadership as a missing link.

**Enabling Continuum**

Throughout this chapter, the missing link of leadership has been the most prominent discourse. The research question emphasises the context of leadership and how top-down policy implementation (the Act) influences decision making at the local level. Having previously introduced the Enabling Continuum and the link between the adequate resources and leadership, this chapter will further explore leadership and relationship tensions using the Enabling Continuum.

As a tool, the Enabling Continuum provides the ability to consider relationship tensions and how they are positioned between ‘exploitation’ of old certainties and ‘exploration’ of unplanned possibilities. The two ends of the Enabling Continuum are similar to the complex leadership theory traits of administrative leadership (exploitation) and adaptive leadership (exploration). In this chapter I further examine the points of entanglement, as identified by key actors, by considering which end of the Enabling Continuum is being activated. This analysis has assisted understanding, not of just leadership as a missing link, but of the influence of inadequate resources and the two scenarios of communication and dynamic networks as set within the interpersonal domain.
When considering key actors’ responses across the interpersonal domain, and focusing on leadership, the common theme of lack of leadership was most evident among the cohorts outside central government.

I saw the Localism Act as the mechanism to achieve that, but sadly it hasn’t happened to this day. Yes there have been some amalgamations, the East Kent volunteer bureaus have all come together and they’re all talking as East Kent. It’s still got a long way to go, and everyone was worried about his or her own little areas, everyone wanted their own little empires (Participant 2 – Group A).

For example, local children trust boards, were disbanded with little consultation (Participants 16 & 17 – Group B).

When analysing the sort of top-down and bottom-up tensions described above, Sabatier and Mazmanian’s (1980) concept of spontaneity and structure is used as a reminder that the discussion should not simply be around the absence of leadership, but around what leadership style and approach is missing or required. Applying this argument to the Enabling Continuum, I focus on finding a balance point between exploitation and exploration. In its earlier days, Sure Start had leadership, and resources to fund spontaneity and encourage enabling leadership approaches. With the reduction of resources around the time of the Act, actions under Sure Start shifted toward the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum (see Figure 6B). In further reviewing pathway to criticalisation, the inability to shift from the third stage of chaos appears as a block to developing dynamic networks. In many cases, this described the restrictive positioning and entanglement that the key actors of Sure Start experienced from the Act.

Figure 6B: Enabling Continuum – exploitation tension

In the case of Sure Start and the Act, leadership as a missing link also related to the type of leadership that was missing. Moreover, the leadership approach required to
enable change was more aligned with innovation, providing effective communication and navigating through dynamic networks. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2008, p.638) reinforced the importance of the conditions and process of innovation.

For innovation to occur, new ideas must be generated that have the potential to create positive change in the organisation, and these ideas must then flow into the formal organisation systems and structures to create this change.

As shown in Figure 6B, what Sure Start key actors were experiencing was a reduction in innovation and increasing frustration at being unable to shift out of the chaos that characterises existence at the extreme exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum. With the reduction of resources, the conditions for a generative leadership style were negated, constraining the key actors’ ability to adopt an enabling leadership approach to lead emergence and change – hence the description in this study of leadership as a missing link.

In re-examining Figure 5A, the changes in the political environment, shared vision and joint approach tensions present as useful categories for further investigation of the relationship tensions between Sure Start and the Act. Sure Start key actors reported that they were unable to find a comfortable alignment between Sure Start and the Act. Many of these tensions were embedded in long-term entrenched silo working behaviours where departments continued to work in isolation regardless of changes in political environments.

My experience with working across partners, cause this was in the very early days where we didn’t have public health working jointly with councils, my experience working between various NHS community providers and the council and the health authority at the time was actually quite painful. They weren’t used to working together, the council forever wanted to run the show they didn’t really understand partnership working (Participant 19 – Group C).

I argue that inadequate resources and reduced leadership created a constant point of tension and entanglement, thus further entrenching the silos. This meant groups could not self-organise or stabilise and often leaned to the extremes of the Enabling Continuum. For example, Figure 6C shows relationships being at extreme ends of the Enabling Continuum where councils were considering partnerships through the lens
of their ‘old certainties’. Complexity leadership theory describes this lens as the administrative leadership approach, demonstrated on the Enabling Continuum at the exploitation end of the continuum. At the other end of the Enabling Continuum, the community workers reported that their interactions with the councils created internal tensions. With a preference for interdependency, and a lens of unlimited possibilities (exploration), being forced to conform created many painful experiences and further entrenched silos. Without communication to bring these dynamic networks together, the extreme ends of Enabling Continuum provide an example of what entrenched silos look like.

**Figure 6C: Enabling Continuum – entrenched silos**

Using the Enabling Continuum to illustrate my argument, I draw on the pathway to criticalisation and Complexity Leadership Theory to show how the interactions between self-organisation and stabilisation are required to produce dynamic networks and encourage ‘the network of linkages across which information can flow and connect’ (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007, p.309). This is why the Enabling Continuum is presented with numerous cycles representing interactions of *disorder, complexity, chaos, complicated* and *new*. These cycles of interactions represent the constant change environment of enabling leadership in action. In the case of Sure Start and the Act, the missing leadership link prevented the emergence of a generative leadership style capable of reducing relationship tensions. The end result was that the silos became more entrenched, becoming a form of internal protection from the disorder.

As Uhl-Bien et al. (2007, p.3011) describe, the function of the enabling leadership approach is ‘to manage the entanglement between Complex Adaptive System dynamics and formal administrative systems and structures’. The importance of a champion to take the enabling leadership approach was discussed in chapters 2 and 3 when I argued for the importance of engaging with both the policy implementation
literature and complex adaptive systems literature. This combined literature exploration was further considered against the responses of the key actor interviews and examined across the Enabling Continuum. Although the funds originally allocated to support the leadership role, or for championing the case for change, were not justified using the language of the Collective Impact framework (Kania and Kramer 2012), early Sure Start supported much of the framework origin. With Sure Start having been designed around the need for champions to advocate for change, the shared focus of the Sure Start leaders was on reducing child poverty. All the key actors who were interviewed were also described as Sure Start champions, and each held a leadership role, albeit at varying levels. As Sure Start champions, they were appointed to achieve innovative societal change (adaptive leadership) as shown in Figure 6D.

**Figure 6D: Enabling Continuum – exploration tension**

Key actors reported a noticeable shift over time as inadequate resources impacted on the scope for such champions or for an enabling leadership approach. For example, there was an immediate negative impact on the championing role when Sure Start funds becoming un-ring fenced. Although the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) was not reporting directly on the impacts of championing and leadership, it did clearly report the shifts in ring fencing as a major negative issue leading to differences in quality of services across the country, and particularly to constraints on enabling leadership roles.

Surie and Hazy (2006, p.13) note the importance of generative leadership to quality service provision, in particular its role in fostering learning that will lead to innovation. Scholars such as Surie and Hazy emphasise the importance of relationships: the fact that complex systemic change requires interactions between all parts of the system and consideration of the behavior of the system as a whole. Both
Sure Start and the Act espoused holistic aspirations, but with inadequate resources and limited capacity for leadership, the ability to champion the case for change became much more limited. Figures 6B, 6C and 6D provide examples of the entanglement that arises and of how being situated at one end of the Enabling Continuum, or at the two extremes of the Enabling Continuum, presents as imbalanced.

Key actors noted that Sure Start had previously been instrumental in setting the scene for interpersonal interactions and, thus, in promoting effective communication between groups and individuals. The leadership needed to achieve this action was severely reduced as a result of the un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds, which resulted in inadequate resources for the leadership roles to champion the case for change. This outcome became evident in interagency and interdisciplinary training. The Sure Start key actors noted that there had been much better alignment in joint service training the period before the Act (1997–2010). This alignment was also identified in the NESS, which found evidence of navigation through challenges or, as I define it, entanglement.

It is important, to get the service agencies collaborating. One of the problems of course is that health has a completely different hierarchy and administrative infrastructure compared to all of the other agencies. Most of the other agencies come under the local authorities but health was completely separate, so what I think happened was usually if the local authority was fully committed to the Sure Start model it was usually easier to get integration of the services (Participant 50 – Group F).

Participant 50 identified the presence of a champion to oversee these alignments as fundamental to the alliance between health and local authorities. In Kent, this relationship became most fraught when budgets were undergoing intense reductions. At some point, the budget cuts and un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds meant that the experience of local actors shifted from a positive to a negative experience and, as shown in Figure 6D, silos become further entrenched. Prior to the un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds,

The leadership role allowed people to have equal opportunities. Everyone had the right to say what they wanted and we were involved and encouraged to bring all of our information to the
table. We could bring in all of our experiences, and although we didn’t always agree it was lovely, we felt parity with our counterparts. Until that time I’d never felt parity with statutory bodies I’d always felt there was a ‘them and us’. Previously it had been a divide between community, the voluntary sector and the statutory bodies and I think Sure Start actually brought that together, certainly in the Dover areas (Participant 2 – Group A).

After the ring fencing of Sure Start funds, champions became hard to find.

Unless the Localism Act gets a special leader or something like that whose driving it forward someone who’s got the vision someone who want to bring people together I don’t think local decision making is going to happen (Participant 2 – Group A).

In considering the Enabling Continuum, attention is drawn to Figure 3E (Chapter 3, p.76), where the movement along the continuum can be emergent and innovative but never static or linear. The notion of being non-linear sits at the heart of Complexity Leadership Theory.

This also reinforces why innovation is negatively affected by overly bureaucratic structures with centralised controls. The ability to balance linear and non-linear rules are an important process for network flows, which enable the emergence of bottom-up, interactive spontaneous processes. For example, the changes to the ring fenced Sure Start funds meant there were inadequate resources, and this impacted upon the ability to align interactions. This, in turn, reduced the ability to manage the speed of change and develop an enabling leadership approach to ensure progress. I argue that the excessive reduction of Sure Start funds led to inadequate support for the generative leadership style needed to nurture an enabling leadership approach and had an adverse effect – the reduction and weakening of dynamic networks, and further entrenchment of silos.

The Act was introduced with the goal of reducing entrenched silos, but this policy goal was constrained by the design of the Act. The Act was endeavouring to create change between disorder and chaos, in particular by reducing the parent/child syndrome. Key actors described this syndrome as being ‘squashed’ (or even as a ‘damp squib’). Again, it was the design of the Act that pushed everyone to the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum. While the Act’s nominal intentions were
weighted toward the exploration end of the Enabling Continuum, in reality its design was more aligned with the exploitation end of the continuum.

The key actors expressed similar experiences of the entanglement of relationship tensions (as outlined in Figure 5A p.106). The tensions recorded at the lower end of that graph included emergence, fragmentation and hierarchy, and provide an example of gaps and elements missing from an enabling leadership approach. Brown (2012) describes these gaps in terms of collective leadership behaviours that not only embrace emergence but also provide a useful way of navigating the pathway to criticalisation. Brown (2012, p.7) identified the first three leadership traits as embracing uncertainty, surfacing conflict to create controversy and allowing experiments and fluctuations. As Sure Start had been designed before the consultation period for the design of the Act, many shifts away from the behaviours proposed by Brown were evident. Although uncertainty had been among the emergent trends in Sure Start, it had become more financially driven and, in the case of inadequate resources, there was significant evidence of its impact on the leadership roles within Sure Start.

Sure Start had all likeminded people working in there and we all wanted to make a difference and support families in our local community. I grew so much personally because I was allowed to have my ideas and run with them, if there was a need then I could research what the need was and then go with that. I could see what support was needed in the area, rather than be directed all the time or micro managed. I think it was a lovely way to work, because it got the best out of people and we were really able to use our specialisms and our skills to work in the community. For me that was a wonderful way of working and I don’t think I’ll ever have that way of working again (Participant 28 – Group B).

Instead of finding a balance along the Enabling Continuum between exploitation and exploration, the creation of silos (Figure 6C) shows how the approach of Sure Start has shifted since its inception. Conflict and controversy, the other behaviours of Brown’s argument, were evident as part of this shift. The conflict observed by key actors is best described by using the third stage, ‘chaos’, in the pathway to criticalisation (Goldstein et al. 2010). However, actors were unable to shift to the fourth stage, the wave of change for a new identity to start taking shape. Unfortunately, the end point of such a scenario presents more like fragmentation. An
example of such fragmentation is the inability to stay focused on purpose and instead a heightened ego approach takes place, sometimes referred to being ‘stuck in a rut’ or ‘the voice of the usual suspects’.

Perhaps down to the individual players but certainly across the many players within Sure Start, and they were such a diverse group of people. Community and statutory there were people there who were sometimes power hungry who perhaps shouldn’t have been on Boards but everyone came together to share information and we built that trust up (Participant 2 – Group A).

Some key actors defined the Act as being experimental, and the third emergence leadership behaviour trait (Brown 2012, p.7) is ‘encouraging experiments’. There are examples of encouraging experiments across all cohorts; however, the central government as the main driver of both Sure Start and the Act, found being experimental extremely difficult to navigate. The central government’s political position prior to the introduction of the Act was to promote local leadership but, as Participant 50 (Group F) described, the shift in ring fencing which coincided with the inception of the Act was the beginning of the decline of experimentation particularly for Sure Start.

Naomi Eisenstaedt, who had been the inspirational leader of Sure Start up until the point of the changes to the ring fencing, moved on to another job. This meant that the improving picture we’d seen of Sure Start started to drop off (Participant 50 – Group F).

For Sure Start, in particular, the period 2010–2012 was when the leadership role shifted from Local Sure Start programs to the local authority, resulting in removal of ring fencing and much change (for example a shift from Figure 6D to Figure 6B). Conversely, the limitations of the Act were noted by majority of key actors, with shared responsibility being promoted by the Act but without any funding for it. It was not clear whether it was the politics of the period, the introduction of the Act or the issue of un-ring fencing that were the main causes, but key actors described this as a period where everything changed, and not for the better.

Key actors saw a definite link between collaboration and building relationships, which were identified as being key to leadership of any case for changes to Sure Start. This was agreed across all levels of the key actor responses. At the micro level,
it was down to local people and how those local people all gelled together. I think we had some very good personalities at the time, people who were more positive than negative and I think that helped. Sure Start in those early days, the positivity that was there, because everybody agreed what the outcomes and the goals of Sure Start were. Everybody knew what they were doing locally (Participant 2 – Group A).

At the meso level,

[All] participants in Sure Start have a shared vision and a common understanding of the problems. I think pre the Localism Act that was very much what Sure Start was about. As a concept, as a resource it had clear purpose so I think the common understanding was around establishing services, resources for young children and their families within a community to improve their outcomes. The outcomes were linked at the time to school readiness and to being able to participate within their community and society generally (Participant 29 – Group C).

And at the macro level,

Sure Start unequivocally showed that if people were engaged, in any way this developed social capital as well as savings. In other words, if they had any kind of stake in society then they would participate more broadly, in the political with a small ‘p’ arena as an active citizen (Participant 44 – Group G).

Brown’s (2012, p.7) next three leadership behaviors (embracing emergence by allowing experiments, encouraging rich interactions and supporting collective action), provide some assistance with understanding silos. In theory, and at a surface level, both Sure Start and the Act appeared to fare well in terms of the first two behaviors: Sure Start, in particular, was often referred to as Britain’s 21st Century social experiment (Gustafson and Driver 2005), while the Act espoused six essential actions (DCLG 2011) encouraging rich interactions. For both governance arrangements, the design of the Act appeared to embrace the leadership qualities described by Brown, but they were constructed with a top-down environment that severely constrained its ability to embrace emergence. One of the strong critics of the Act identified a dichotomy within the Localism Act.

There is thus a dichotomy running through the legislation, between the desire to release local initiative and get local buy-in and ownership of proposals and national considerations like the need to find the land for more house building, to get the economies of sale which come from large projects and shared services, and the need for national standards (Coulson 2012, p.5)
In their work on the collective impact framework, Kania and Krammer (2011, p.38) referred to a similar dichotomy as *isolated impact*. Isolated impact is used to describe how organisations involved in working to address social problems operate independently and the concept of collaboration is not encouraged. Literature from both traditions was quite challenging when considering the case for change and how relationships may not support collaboration. Frye and Webb (2002, p.2) note the importance of ensuring collaboration is fit for purpose, accepting that it is not a panacea for all societal issues. Huxam (2003, p.403) agrees, arguing that collaboration is not always the best choice. The key actors identified two interrelated complexities of managing change, collaboration building and leadership: first, the decision to be collaborative was often an assumption and not explicitly articulated and, second, that complexity increased as resources dwindled as did the desire to work collaboratively.

Huxam (2003) and Frye and Webb (2002) argue that a conscious decision on collaboration is best made upfront, as some processes are best completed, not necessarily in isolation, but with one clear lead rather than a shared lead. There was agreement across all cohorts that such decisions had often been based on trust and what was best for the end user.

What is best for each volunteer, what’s best for that family, what is best for the objectives. It’s not their own achievements, its not for their own rewards or their own aims and objectives its’ got to be what’s best for the community (Participant 2 – Group A).

The last of Brown’s (2012, p.7) leadership behaviours for embracing emergence are re-combining resources, becoming a ‘tag’ for leadership and stabilising feedback, all of which are useful in exploring the key actors’ experiences and their limitations in operating collaboratively to influence decision making at the local level. Interviewees noted that such changes are only possible if the direction is clarified and the processes to achieve are left open, as was the case in Sure Start prior to the implementation of the Act. Visionary leadership, and being focused on achieving results particularly when tackling a case for change, was weakened when inadequate resources limited a generative leadership style and (in turn) an enabling leadership approach. This led to confusion, adversely affected dynamic networks and further entrenched silos.
Drawing on key actor responses, I argue this experience is best summarised as fragmentation.

Fragmentation of intended results (results described by Sure Start actors as citizen engagement benefiting children under four and their families) can be caused through external negative feeds, especially when combined with inadequate resources, entrenched silo working and reduced communication. The resulting impact is on the end user, thus limiting the influence of decision making at the local level. In Chapter 5, I explored how the two scenarios of streamlining and starving of funds impact the creation and establishment of silos and identified leadership as a notable missing link. In Chapter 6, I have presented a further two scenarios, adding communication and dynamic networks as significant influences on leadership and decision making at the local level. Having considered the relationship tensions drawn from key actor interviews, I have noted the impact of these scenarios along the Enabling Continuum and, in particular, the importance of a generative leadership style in creating an enabling leadership approach to lead through emergence. Chapter 7 will develop the discussion and argument of emergence, with fragmentation being presented as a paradox and the third discovery.
Chapter 7. Findings: Discovery Three – Fragmentation

Introduction

In Chapter 5 I argued that inadequate resources play a significant role in creating entrenched silos, while Chapter 6 explored how leadership became a missing link, exacerbating the problem of entrenched silos. In Chapter 7, I further develop the discussion around entrenched silos and the importance of emergence, presenting fragmentation in the form of a paradox and the third discovery. Considering the third domain of political relationships (Jones 2012; Staites and Rogers 2012), the experiences of a principles-first approach (as opposed to an application-first approach) to political relationships will be considered, with a particular focus on the entanglement of political, emergence and fragmented tensions, often experienced by the key actors and described as relationship tensions. To this end I will further explore fragmentation and its influence on decision making at the local level.

The first section of this chapter follows the pattern of chapters 5 and 6, using the key actors’ narratives to describe the alignments, gaps and duplications as identified in the relationships tensions across the seven cohorts. The aspects of the relationship tensions follow the characteristics of emergence demonstrating how fragmentation can be equally disruptive and welcomed.

The second section directly addresses the research question; namely, what is the influence of the Localism Act, as a top-down policy directive, on decision making at the local level? Building on the argument that inadequate resources adversely affect leadership, the link to fragmentation is further examined. Having previously examined the scenarios of streamlining and starving, both funds and communication, I explore two additional scenarios specific to fragmentation. The first is based on a principles-first approach to relationships, where the preference is to develop a concrete formula when there is a problem that needs solving. Focusing on a single course of action, becomes an immediate source of fragmentation when applied to complex issues, which are never static or linear. The second scenario is presented in
the form of an application-first approach to relationships (where general patterns are factual and taken from real world observations), which functions best in complex, fragmented arrangements that constantly change.

In the final section I re-examine fragmentation, using a quadrant matrix drawn along the Enabling Continuum. This format provides a deeper examination of the disruptive and welcomed fragmentation experienced by interviewees between 2010 and 2012. To gain insight into the disconnect between expectations of the Act’s influence on decision making at the local level the relevance of *fragmentation* will be examined in detail.

### 7.1 The paradox of fragmentation

The topic of emergence has been woven throughout the findings chapters, but is more closely examined in Chapter 7. As discussed in Chapter 3, emergence is considered a non-linear, evolving process of constant change (Mitzberg 1998; Snowden and Boone 2007; Lichtenstein and Ploughman 2009; Uhl-Bien et al. 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009; Kania et al. 2014). It is this constant movement that creates entanglement. When an enabling leadership style is not able, or not available, to navigate this entanglement, the outcome is often fragmentation which can be disruptive, welcomed, or somewhere in between.

The fact that fragmentation can be disruptive or welcomed means that fragmentation can have two sides, both of which are true but which, in reality, cannot both be true at the same time. One key actor expanded upon this paradox, describing such tension most eloquently.

> It can’t be localism when it is mandated from above, what we have seen from governments both colours, that really cannot let go. The British political system by its nature is authoritarian and top-down, it has a thin veneer of democracy sort of painted over it (Participant 27 – Group C).

Other key actors, particularly at the meso level, provided examples of paradoxical behavior and how these were fundamentally purposeful actions by the central government which encouraged fragmentation.
Our aim is to encourage people to tell their stories and get them out to other people. It’s about enabling people to get out there and do it for themselves—encouraging people to do good stuff and celebrate it (Participant 46 – Group D).

While comfort levels with the ‘postcode lottery’ approach were not explored across key actors, a parallel can be drawn with the issue of council tax capping discussed in Chapter 5. It is difficult to implement local requirements if direction is being imposed centrally. With changes in the government’s approach, particularly in relation to public engagement and policy-making, key actors reported how it became more difficult to withstand the effects of fragmentation. This was demonstrated in experiences of change for example, where policy directives were imposed through a top-down style of government, leaving the local authority in a disruptive state of fragmentation.

There has been little or no support for the change process and what that might mean. It’s often the [local] authorities that are under the most pressure, [particularly those] with the smallest budgets and the greatest weaknesses and challenges. Without some sort of catalyst process, it’s actually very hard for them to move to a new model of working (Participant 35– Group E).

When instances of disruptive and welcomed fragmentation are mapped across the sixteen relationship tensions, as identified by key actors in Figure 5A (Chapter 5, p.106), it is clear that the experiences recorded as most disruptive varied across all levels of the cohorts.

For example, Group A described experiencing disruptive fragmentation in the way the local authority (Kent County Council) managed relationships between decision makers and those at the local level.

KCC is a big machine, I mean you can understand how people from different departments don’t talk to each other because it’s just such a big body. In a sense it’s nonsense that silos can happen but in a sense that’s just one of the problems. What I’ve witnessed is a lack of coordinated direction. It’s also very political as you’ve got your political leaders, you’ve got your council leaders and so on and then you’ve got the officers. What I’ve seen is that what the officers say to the councilors is not necessarily the reality. Partly because the officers try to be non-committal in any conversation and I think it is deliberate due to the fear of getting it wrong. If they get something wrong, you know there are consequences and it’s quite significant, so they sit half way between those of us on the ground and the councilors and say what seems to be right (Participant 32 – Group A).
Group B identified disruptive fragmentation specifically in the central government’s support for Sure Start.

But I think in terms of the government Sure Start has fallen off the agenda, in those early years with Labour and Blair Sure Start was there flagship. It was almost like their baby and they threw money at it and it was high on their agenda. Gradually it has got more and more lost and more fragmented to now being the poor relation (Participants 16 & 17 – Group B).

Group C, consisting of those reporting to councilors and those responsible for Sure Start, described disruptive fragmentation occurring as a result of increased competition – an unintended consequence of the Act.

For me I think part of the problem is the whole competitive nature and the way in which the Localism Act is structured and even the language used. For example the ‘right to challenge’ – it sort of implies who can do it better than the current public services. The way in which you have to evidence that is all a bit akin to the compulsory competitive tendering. Actually we need to be moving more towards more working together – consensual co-design – rather than struggling with the whole fragmented bidding sort of culture (Focus Group 2 – Group C).

Group D felt very strongly that the fragmentation of targets had now reached an extreme level, which was in many ways quite disruptive.

So I think there were literally hundreds of targets agreed – very disjointed. I think there were probably key targets backed up with secondary targets. I don’t remember actually seeing a single plan as such, and all of that was abolished with the new government with its new anti-bureaucracy work. I wouldn’t be surprised if departments hadn’t held on to this with some of their internal planning because it was quite useful to sort out its priorities, but in terms of a sharp focus on whole stream of outcomes with central government, that has gone. It may come back, but it’s gone (Participant 43 – Group D).

Group E referred to the tension between spending and local needs as a form of disruptive fragmentation.

I think the conservative philosophy on localism was they are not a big state party. They have an approach whereby they want to decentralise and that’s their first instinct. I think to move the state out of this shift is the problem. They talk the language of devolution and decentralisation, but not necessarily deliver on it. I think that some of the backlash against this was querying if this is the best use of spending on Sure Start for everybody. You have the conservative predilection for localism and then you have the cuts as well, so all of those things are kind of packed together (Participant 5 – Group E).
Group F identified the tension between top-down direction and accountability as a form of disruptive fragmentation.

Under the Localism Act you’ve got to locally deliver the things that the government tells you centrally and you have the responsibility and accountability. It’s passed down so governments at the central level can say, ‘oh well it’s down to the local authorities or local systems to deliver that’, so they have no responsibility but they control what they’re able do and don’t do through inspections, through commissioning through the funds that come down (Participant 51 – Group F).

Group G key actors many of whom were former ministers, now in opposition identified disruptive fragmentation as a political pretext for abdicating responsibilities.

But I think it’s just a cover really because this government has completely cut the funding to the local authorities and in saying, which is the essence of the localism act, ‘completely over to you guys’, they’re just abdicating responsibility for any minimum standard of service across the country (Participant 4 – Group G).

It is the relationship between disruptive fragmentation and emergence that shifts the argument into the consideration of welcomed fragmentation.

Welcomed fragmentation occurs where emergence provides an opportunity to disrupt existing patterns and generate a state of disequilibrium. Although this state of disequilibrium may bring to the surface conflict and controversy, it is at this point that new order can take shape. Both Sure Start and the Act were policy directives designed to shape a new order, primarily by facilitating decision making at the local level. The aspiration to empower local level decision making, in regard to both Sure Start and the Act, was evident across all levels of the key actor cohorts. For example, Group A described experiences of welcomed fragmentation, using examples of data sharing, an area often fraught with constraints.

Whereas we were sharing data within Sure Start and we were sharing it anonymously we were doing it, but we weren’t naming people, but we were doing it anonymously and you can protect people’s identity but still share that knowledge and information and we did do that with Sure Start (Participant 2 – Group A).
Group B provided an example of the benefits of welcomed fragmentation in the way local areas were consulted, most evidently in connection to the election cycle.

I think the opportunities to make decisions at the local level has come on leaps and bounds, especially how we consult, and making sure that this in most cases a meaningful consultation. We do consider feedback and it’s done in a proper structured manner and within a reasonable timeframe. That is something that historically local government, and I think central government as well to be fair, has not really adhered to. In the last two years we’ve had a number of elections underway and people are always a lot more interested to hear peoples voices especially around the election period, but that’s not a bad thing, that’s how it should work (Focus Group 2 – Group C).

Group C identified 1997–2007 (the Blair government) as a period of opportunities – a time that contained welcome fragmentation.

Certainly for myself, the 5 years of the new Labor government seemed to be very promising, and we thought that maybe there was a third way, maybe things were going to happen, maybe it was time for a new balance that had been found between private enterprise on one hand and social means on the other, with a fourth capitalism that could be managed and maintained, benign and good for everybody, inclusive, all of those kind of words that get used (Participant 27 – Group C).

For one key actor in Group D, who represented the department responsible for the Act, welcomed fragmentation was manifested in the varied forms of legislation and the heightened numbers of individuals engaged in local level planning.

In addition to the Localism Act there are over 900 designated local neighbourhood plan areas which means local communities have got together and talked to their local authority and agreed with their local authority. The area that can be designated and covered by the neighbourhood plan and the legislation has been in for about 18 months, so I think getting 900 areas getting designated is pretty good. At last count, there have been 8 referendums all of which have been a yes so all have been accepted. As you can imagine getting things designated throughout the whole process is actually quite a long time period, but basically they are coming through in the pipeline and producing results (Participant 46 – Group D).

Group E used the phrase ‘silver lining’ to describe welcomed fragmentation, providing an example of how it forced people to consider changes and face situations previously ignored.
The other silver lining is that it has made people face up to some of the longer term challenges that we weren’t facing, so people for once are thinking, ‘well we know the population is aging and in 60 years how are we going to redesign for example social care’. People knew that but weren’t doing that pre-2010 and now they are (Focus Group 3 – Group E).

Group F described how lack of communication, one of the highest recorded relationship tensions in Figure 5A, had in fact provided an opportunity for welcomed fragmentation, ultimately resulting in a more integrated approach. This is an example of needing to move through ‘chaos’ as defined by Goldstein et al. (2010).

I think my experience on the ground is that joined-up collaborative action because of less resources has had to happen. So I think there is probably better communication, cause what we had before was lots of central and locally delivered initiatives all operating in their own bubble, so there wasn’t much communication between them all, so I think that is much better (Participant 51 – Group F).

Group G, comprising several shadow ministers from the opposition party, identified how welcomed fragmentation generated through the Act provided an opportunity to tackle local decision making, noting that effective consultation at the local level is a struggle for any political administration.

Yes the Localism Act is something that has been very high profile on the political front and it’s often said that political parties in opposition talk a lot about localism and then when they get into government they don’t like localising decision making. I think one of the key things about the Localism Act is that within it, it says that it’s not just about localising in the sense of local political and government structures, it’s also about being devolved out to the people and neighbourhood and so there are really powerful examples of that, especially around planning, even though it is early days – administratively quite difficult (Participant 44 – Group G).

Having explored the key actors’ experiences of both disruptive and welcomed fragmentation, I turn to closer examination of the Dover case study. Across most cohort levels, key actors noted that Kent County Council’s being a two-tier authority made localism in localities like Dover difficult to navigate.

It might be worth noting that Kent is a two-tier authority, which does make a lot of difference to localism because it’s not just passing things down to town councils or parish councils or voluntary sector groups. You have to pass it down to district and borough councils as well. I think it’s fair to say that hasn’t happened as much as it could have done (Focus Group 2 – Group C).
This tension was evident in an example cited by civil servant leaders at the macro level in Dover District Council.

The Localism Act has given the public the opportunity to be able to take on their own causes, take on responsibility for assets, and in some ways what it’s done is bring communities together, but only when they want to be brought together. At that same time the Localism Act also has some constraints attached to it, so when people start quoting the Localism Act to you, you also start quoting the constraints back to them, and they say, ‘well it’s not what we thought it was’, but you go back and say ‘there’s enough for you to start doing things if you want to’. And we won’t stand in your way (Participant 14 & 15 – Group G).

It was also evident that some of the tension around allocation of accountability was due to ignorance about the Act. This was most obvious at the macro level, where knowledge of the Act was high, but less so at the Sure Start micro level where key actors had considerably less knowledge of the Act.

Very sadly, at any of the Sure Start organisations that I’ve been to, [none of ] the children’s centres, and I’ve been to many of those… have never actually mentioned the word Localism Act, not one. It’s just not something, which is in people’s consciousness (Participant 18 – Group G).

In evaluating how top-down policy implementation influences decision making at the local level, it is particularly interesting that one particular cohort (meso level) experienced heightened levels of fragmentation. A good example of the difficulties experienced by those operating at the meso level can be drawn from the examples reporting to central government on national outcomes. The meso level was accountable for ensuring Sure Start programs operated effectively at the local level whilst contributing to national targets. Often the biggest noted challenge was the pace of change and, even before the Act, experiences such as ‘losing the plot’ and/or the Sure Start directive being ‘muddled’ made the meso role difficult to navigate.

I think that pre the Localism Act and pre changing government where we lost [the plot] was in growing too fast. We kind of lost the plot because it all became about how many Children Centres [are there], rather than did we know what they were doing and did we know what we were doing? (Participant 42 – Group D).

So I think that now, in reflection, the period before the Localism Act was about early intervention and evidence-based programs and reaching the most disadvantaged. There was this notion that there were these families that weren’t using Children Centres and that we needed to
make sure that they used the Children Centres and we weren’t that bothered if the families that were currently using them were not happy about these new families. I thought it just got very muddled (Participant 42 – Group D).

Another meso level key actor noted the link between fragmentation and the timing and pace of change. In their advisory role to the Prime Minister they were responsible for implementation across the broader social agenda.

I was intuitively in favour of the integrated approach and methods of involving the parents in running Sure Start centres and really having a mixed economy of provision. The Treasury and I were pretty nervous then when it was scaled pretty fast and scaled much faster than the evidence quite justified, but then it’s like many of these things, they become very politically … popular and symbolic and stay slightly ahead of their reality (Participant 34 – Group E).

The link between the timing and pace of change and fragmentation was also evident after the Act was introduced. At the meso level, key actors noted the need for clarity of priorities whilst describing how the Localism Act appeared to have done nothing towards addressing the priority agenda.

Because… you have more diverse agendas and not a common clear directive coming from central government that sets out what that vision is for a local service called Sure Start and shared understanding of how you might go about putting that in place, I think what we’ve got now is more fragmented, I mean, it isn’t just that there’s less money and less resources, I think there’s less surety about what priorities are now (Participant 51 – Group F).

In the earlier part of Chapter 7, the experiences of fragmentation were presented as both disruptive and welcomed fragmentation; at the meso level, however, far more experiences of disruptive fragmentation were reported.

You had DCLG and their predecessors sending down policies to councils, you had the NHS sending policies down to the NHS and the two, well there was just friction when they came together locally. Having worked in the NHS all those years, localism meant nothing to people (Participant 19 – Group C).

The Cabinet Office had joined together for a strategy for under fives but it is less driven than it was and it’s joined-up across departments, particularly health and education, but neither department is resourced to be as joined-up as it was. I would say things go on more of departmental arrangements than in a big effort to join up government, but then how it plays out on the ground varies (Participant 45 – Group D).
At the meso level much of the discussion of fragmentation was in terms of their experiences of entrenched silos and the missing link of leadership, as interviewees described being left to their own devices without the support needed to achieve their goals.

The Localism Act per se, from my perspective, is relatively limited. In terms of what we see manifest, it’s much more driven by the economics, by the changes in ring fencing by no ring fencing, by the changing of Every Child Matters, and all those other things, which happened to coincide with the emergence of the Localism Act... Certainly the philosophy of a government that came in and said, ‘we want to leave it to local areas’, which manifested itself in the Localism Act has led to a pushing back on to local areas to say, ‘you’ve got to build your own local trust’, and that’s very hard for local areas that are under pressure (Participant 35 – Group E).

Possibly one of the clearest examples of key actors being left to their own devices was the experience of recording data. Before the Act, data from Sure Start formed part of the ‘Every Child Matters’ suite of data gathering (DfE 2003), which played a prominent role in joined-up-working but ceased to exist after the Act. In examining the period between 2010 and 2012, the Act’s impact on data gathering was identified as both welcomed fragmentation and disruptive fragmentation, depending on the specific roles played by the key actors.

At the macro level, ministers oscillated between seeing the changes in data gathering as welcomed or disruptive fragmentation – not always encouraging specific forms of data collection, and especially not wanting data that identified any failures.

What politicians want is that it’s proving to be a success. What service delivery want is that if it’s a failure, what can we learn from it, what are the weaknesses, how can we learn from it? Politicians don’t want loads of data telling them where their weaknesses are if they’re going to be published… I think you have to remember that there’s a dis-alignment of people’s interests underneath all of that and that’s where you get use and abuse or misinterpretation of data (Participant 40 – Group G).

Key actors at the meso level reported that their experiences in relation to the data requirements kept shifting between being welcomed to being disruptive, and that the fragmentation that resulted, particularly for the macro level, increased their anxiety about losing control. The ability to welcome fragmentation and emergence includes
the ability to embrace ambiguity, but many actors reported that ambiguity made central government (Whitehall) nervous.

I think this really became something that was much more pronounced maybe in the early period. I think that in all of these place-based initiatives (Sure Start) there was a rush of enthusiasm for localism and for local control and for local determination, and that very quickly got followed by a central Whitehall department … getting a bit nervous about what was being done, getting a bit concerned about what data was being collected, what was being reported, what wasn’t being reported – becoming much more determined to have some sort of central coordination. So there’s a central coordination from the policy centre at Whitehall, but that then feeds into whatever is being done at a local level, so I think that one of the challenges for these action plans [is] that they risked becoming simply performance management mechanisms for reporting upwards and didn’t [provide any] sort of coherent framework for the Sure Start program across the areas. So I think that again was part of the Labor government’s anxiety about losing control of what was happening (Participant 52 – Group F).

Other key actors related examples of similar anxiety on the part of central government which they had experienced in other Sure Start related policy directives, such as Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education Children’s Services and Skills 2007), community budgets which were part of the Coalition government’s decentralisation agenda, or Local Authority Children Trusts.

Overwhelmingly governments move during the 2000s to collecting data as they did – numbers of participants, progress measures of children in all sorts of ways – undoubtedly produced greater consistency of provision of understanding of how you provide [services] and doing that, it enabled us to start having some really good dialogue with Ofsted, and it enabled Ofsted in turn to be saying some very specific and very powerful things and I think you’ve got that running right through this period here (Participant 35 – Group E).

Community budgets embrace the concept of data sharing whether at a macro level or a micro level. Data is absolutely up there on the agenda for everyone and our neighbourhood level pilots wanted to spend time mapping what was spent in their area and getting the data from other providers, - there are challenges to this – such as getting a local authority or health provider who isn’t set up to produce data at a neighbourhood level. But even though it remains a big struggle, some of the pilots have achieved it (Participant 46 – Group D).

As a local government officer it wasn’t so much about my voice it was very much more about what the local district partners had to say about it, and for the majority of them they were only concerned, to be honest, about the bits that affected their lives and their function. It’s very much about the collective way of working and looking at less decisions being taken at even a county
council level, less at a district level, but more down to local forums, local groups and local partnerships. So they were the key issues that we were looking at – using data, using information to work out what the issues were and then coming up with some solutions to try to take things forward. So within the forum it’s called the Local Children’s Trust, that’s where those conversations took place and we decided on key issues we wanted to fund, develop and work towards to achieve some key objectives that were identified (Participant 29 – Group C).

These examples show how political relationship tensions were repeatedly dealt with by Whitehall, but the macro level never addressed the tensions experienced at lower levels of government, with solutions often the reflecting preferences of central level actors.

The only level that found fragmentation to be equally welcoming and disruptive was the macro level. The other two levels reported disruptive fragmentation was more common, with the level of disruption worsening as the distance from central government increased. There was also a strong perception of disruptiveness being a result of government control with an unfortunate negative impact on data being the consequence.

Sure Start was part of the Labour government and as soon as the Conservative government got in it was, ‘we can’t have anything to do with that’. I mean they said they supported it, but they haven’t – they’re running it down. Even the fact that they’ve changed the Every Child Matters outcomes…[which] made sense even to parents. For example, at a recent workshop to identify outcomes for children it came back to Every Child Matters outcomes and people kept trying to put it in different ways and every time they did, well that’s to be healthy, that’s stay safe that’s enjoy and achieve and even they try to label it in lots of different ways when all the government is trying to do is remove themselves from that label of an initiative – it’s not about data (Participants 16 & 17 – Group B).

In examining the political relationship tensions, two types of fragmentation have been presented and described using polarised definitions. Disruptive fragmentation, both before and after the Act, often resulted in complications around data gathering and further bureaucratic red tape, particularly for those at the meso level.

The Localism Act was supposed to free statutory bodies from all that red tape but I don’t see it having done that they’re still just as worried now as they were before and as a result they have recently removed the need for data (Participant 2 – Group A).
Likewise, welcomed fragmentation as outlined by key actors, may have heralded freedom and innovation, but was still a key tension and problem, particularly at the meso level. Along with these tensions came the feeling of ‘losing the plot’ or being ‘muddled’, which was again strongest at the meso level. The National Evaluation of Sure Start (Eisenstadt 2011) reported that it was this pace of change, driven by political tensions, which ultimately led to further fragmentation.

What has blighted the Sure Start program and most areas of service development in this area are the political considerations reflected around our electoral system where in the UK we have a 5 year cycle typically of elections and often politicians will make decisions that are heavily influenced by that electoral cycle, and that will not necessarily be the right decision. For example I think the call for the expansion of Sure Start to 3,500 children’s centres, by 2010 was heavily influenced by the government seeking greater electoral approval They thought it was a popular decision, [but] it wasn’t the right decision, and everybody in the services, almost everybody in the service recommended that that decision not be taken, yet the politicians decided they would take it anyway because they thought it would lead to electoral approval (Participant 50 – Group F).

Having considered the tensions surrounding the two types of fragmentation (disruptive and welcomed) the paradox behind this tension will be further examined in relation to Localism Act and its influence on decision making at the local level.

7.2 Influence of the Localism Act

So far I have discussed how fragmentation can be both a positive and a negative outcome of emergence. This paradoxical situation can be further examined by considering the Act and its influence on decision making at the local level. To assist with this exploration, two scenarios, relating to all the tensions identified in Figure A (Chapter 5, p.106), are outlined in Figure 7A below. The first scenario is a principles-first approach, the second an application-first approach. Both scenarios will be further considered in line with the final two essential actions of the Act, namely, ‘lift the burden of bureaucracy’ and ‘open up Government to public scrutiny’.
Principles-first approach and ‘Lift the burden of bureaucracy’

The first scenario presents a principles-first approach, a deductive approach, which derives conclusions or facts from general principles or concepts. In the case of Sure Start, and particularly in its early years before the introduction of the Act the leadership of the program was not reliant on bureaucracy, rules or regulations and it was this style of leadership that the Act was intended to promote. Moreover, the essential action ‘lift the burden of bureaucracy’ (DCLG 2010) recognised that deriving conclusions from pre-determined general principles was limiting public engagement and decision making at the local level.

This first scenario forms one element of the paradox, because it represents an attempt to develop a concrete formula and apply it to a variety of both complex and complicated problems. Sure Start was intended to address the complex issue of child poverty. Chapter 3 outlined the differences between complicated and complex social issues, with a particular emphasis on how this is intensified when applied to social
issues. In this chapter I discuss how a principles-first approach is more suited to tackling a complicated situation as opposed to a complex social issue. All levels of key actors identified the tension arising from a principles-first approach particularly when applied to a complex social issue. For example, at a micro level, the topic of council tax capping illustrated very clearly how a principles-first approach might have been theoretically sound but, in practice, inhibited decision making at the local level.

More and more central government guidance and then prescription comes along and localism at the most fundamental level should be if you want local freedom to act then it means to tax and to have the finances to do what people want locally. I am not sure how you can reconcile localism versus a council tax capping regime which actually says we the central government will determine what local councils can charge. I think the spirit of the Localism Act is right but I am not sure that it’s made a huge amount of difference on the ground (Participants 12 & 13 – Group B).

Strong views were also expressed at the meso level, ranging from recognition that a principles-first approach was not needed before the Act, but became necessary after the Act.

When the Localism Bill consultation was taking place I think the work that we were doing with the range of agencies and sectors incorporated the local agenda and the voice of users. I think within all of the work in children’s services it’s been quite fundamental to how services are developed especially the thinking behind the 2004 children act... So although it was something new, the localism agenda, I think the way we’d been working incorporated some of the elements of that particularly around decision making. I think the way we worked before, it evolved from the community, for them to have a voice and a say in policies and development. In fact the use of funds as well, so from a grassroots level it was a way of working and that was what we did (Participant 29 – Group C).

Unfortunately, the shift in approach after the introduction of the Act did not necessarily achieve better outcomes, particularly collaboration across silos.

The Localism Act didn’t do anything to unlock that chain of command and control that public service is structured around, and that for me is the missed opportunity. We’ve still got a situation where large organisations don’t listen and respond to the people who work on the ground. Policy making is fantastic when it’s informed by reality [and] you need to have that global commissioned view, but the policy needs to be real and you’ve got to be able to get a hold of it and understand what it looks like and feels like and tastes like. When you’re sitting in the middle of it all it is a tall order to make the line of connection back up to the strategic priority and the Localism Act didn’t do that, it just put more boxes around the conversation (Focus Group 2 – Group C).
When you put together local partnerships or local collaboration it’s not instinctive that what they want to do is go out and spend the money. They want to think and talk about it for a very long time, which may be very sensible but at the centre there were opposing issues. We’ve had this tension I think on a number of these kind of locally based collaborative programs. There are always difficulties in getting these partnerships up and running and willing to connect (Participant 43 – Group D).

The Act almost pre-empted the tension around collaboration, recognising the need to lift the burden of bureaucracy and hence framing it as one of the essential actions of the Act. Although the sentiment of this essential action was clearly articulated, the cumulative impacts of inadequate resources, missing leadership style and application of a principle-first (or command and control) approach to complex social issues created the opposite to what was intended. For example, at a macro level the Act was not described as providing any assistance to collaborative joined-up-working or as enabling decision making at the local level.

The Localism Act is short hand [for] how the government wants to conduct affairs (Participant 40 – Group G).

The Localism Act was in place effectively from 2012 and there were lots of trumpet blowing and things to herald it’s coming and then at the end of it they might have been playing on a tin whistle. So it’s just something that sort of came and appeared in everybody’s consciousness and it was something that all organisations that were involved in government had to play lip service to and the quality of the whole program for localism to my mind has not worked (Participant 18 – Group G).

Although the macro level key actors did not articulate it specifically, there appeared to be agreement that systems at central government level needed to change. Stanton (2015, p.978) argues there is a ‘shared conviction that the days of big government are over; [and] that centralisation and top-down control have proved a failure’. Central governments, both before and after the Act and across all political paradigms, have argued that decentralisation was justified by an apparent need to correct the ‘centralist creep of decades’, replacing it with local control (Stanton 2015, p.980). With the Act being considered the ‘backbone of the Big Society’, and with essential actions such as ‘lifting the burdens of bureaucracy’, the approach taken in Kent was a principles-first approach. This fact was integral to the resulting fragmentation, and hence is described
in this study as a paradox where often the design of the policy was at odds with the desired policy intention. For example, engaging in the Act’s ‘right to challenge’ was intended to encourage greater ownership at the local level but this was not the case as noted by some Sure Start key actors.

I think in the case of the right to challenge and so on it has largely been that the whole procurement process associated with that has proved to be pretty cumbersome and challenging and therefore for many groups there’s actually been a relative lack of willingness to oversee such fragmentation. We’re in the business of whole scale transformation of many of these services at the moment, anyway and that may well involve taking another bite of that particular cherry. But in a sense, we’ll be doing that under our own steam and in our own way rather than being particularly driven by the Localism Act as such (Participant 6 & 7 – Group G).

I argue that the principles-first approach represents one side of a paradox thus leading to increased fragmentation. It is a paradox because while the intent is to devolve knowledge and empower those best placed to find solutions, such an approach is not embedded or supported in the culture of government. For example, the Act aimed to lift the burden of bureaucracy but, with much of the process and funding arrangements being set within a principles-first approach, key actors reported that the centralised approach prevailed.

Yeah, I think the difficulty here is, and for all parties, that there are particular elements in each of the major parties [that] were not inculcated into or fundamentally imbedded in the processes, the culture and the funding arrangements. We’re speaking the right words but they’re not engaged in the central decision making processes of departments. They’re not embedded in the working of the civil service or of government. I have often said that initiatives both as Leader of city council in the 1980s and then as a Minister for 8 years in the Blair government, the initiatives were right but we didn’t embed a change of culture so when the Ministers who were committed to it went and the foot came off the political accelerator then the system just reverted back to the normal methodology of the top-down approach (Participant 44 – Group G).

**Application-first approach and ‘Open up Government to public scrutiny’**

The second scenario (an application-first approach, Figure 7A) is entwined with the essential action of ‘opening government up to public scrutiny’ (DCLG 2010). An applications-first approach focuses less on why and more on the how decisions are made, leaving creative space and room for the unknown. Opening up government for scrutiny is much the same, and can be described as presenting information in a transparent way without known certainties. As a result of such action, much
fragmentation surrounds the partnership between an application-first approach and opening up government for scrutiny. Key actors provided examples of this, albeit extending beyond Sure Start and occurring both pre- and post-Act. Adult elderly social care was one such example.

So if what you are saying is somehow we want people to get more engaged in service delivery we want people to do more for themselves...actually I think the tragedy of this government is that it is royally screwing up the Localism Act... We know (take older people) that you will not meet the rising demand for adult elderly social care by increasing the demand for spending as there is not enough money in the world to do that, so you need to think innovatively... [about what] is likely to involve people making more provisions for themselves, communities, looking after each other more (Focus Group 3 – Group E).

In alignment with the Act, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) referred to ‘Total Place’ (OPM 2010), a program developed to reduce fragmentation and create a ‘whole area’ approach to ensure public services lead to better services.

The Government constantly wants to appear to be joined-up and integrated and you know breaking down the silos in Whitehall and all the rest of it, but it’s a massive struggle and although they’re making valiant efforts with things like, well local area agreements was the precursor and Total Place and all of that sort of thing and now community budgets, it is a massive struggle, so you have some departments who are naturally in favour of that way of working and others that are not (Participant 33 – Group F).

Key actors also expressed frustration with the inconsistent application of the application-first approach, for example when funding arrangements between different sectors were not consistent with the central government principle that local governments should determine how their budget is spent.

What I have really been upset about and one could say is part of the Localism Act is that there is no identifiable money for young children. So there is no capacity if you want to leave things up to local areas then you have to campaign at a local level about what the spending should be on young children. I’m particularly cross that schools have been protected in a way that the other services haven’t. I think this is backward and I also think in terms of the Localism Act that the difference between what local government can do and what local schools can do because you have taken the key funding out of local government, which is schools. There is not any consistency on the application of the principles for me which were about give local government a lump of money and let them decide (Participant 42 – Group D).
With this example, in particular, the frustration was intensified because decision making on school funding had been removed from the local government system. Schools funding had been ring fenced, taken out of the local sphere and funded from central government. Regardless of need in other pre-ring fenced areas, schools comprised the lion’s share of the children’s budget with millions of pounds of excess funds sitting in reserves for schools’ budgets to which no-one had access. Key actors were particularly frustrated with the schools example because directives with un-ring fenced funds (such as Sure Start) were required to support an application-first approach particularly to ‘open up government’, yet the ability to make decisions for children outside of the school system was restricted. This situation exacerbated the scenario of fragmentation and constitutes the second half of the paradox. An applications-first approach is in line with bottom-up dynamics, but key actors across all cohort levels described experiences of political relationship tensions between bottom-up and top-down – in particular, giving examples where central government had a policy of open government, but government actions were not held up to local scrutiny.

Key actors at the micro level reported top-down tensions between the opposing political parties undermining the original purpose of Sure Start

[T]he Tories never agreed with Sure Start. It was a Tony Blair idea and I don’t think they ever agreed with it and it was always a case of when they got in they’d have to do something, but they knew they couldn’t be so radical about it, so they tried to tweak it and that watered it down even more and I think we’ve just completely lost direction (Participant 31 – Group B).

At the meso level, the tensions were accepted as part of the normal process with change dynamics being the only known certainty.

I think there is in my experience a process in government, which means that big ideas tend to get diluted as time moves on. They get diluted for all sorts of reasons. They get diluted because the kind of political and scale context can change so something that seemed terribly important at the time is now less important. They can become diluted because the financial situation changes – where there was money there is no money, or there is a different direction or whatever. There is always a dynamic about the kind of leaders that pin their name to something moving on. Some things can survive that for a while, but it is natural for leaders to want to stamp their own different take on things (Participant 43 – Group D).
At the macro level the tension was primarily around issues of top-down prescription.

I think considering that there’s no force about the Localism Act, this is the issue or this is the local problem you’re on the ground and you’ve got to do it the way you think it suits your local circumstances. Being prescriptive about it is not going to be the right way to do it (Participants 14 & 15 – Group G).

The same key actors who also identified mentioned the entanglement of relationships tensions due to inadequate resources.

Previously a lot of the functions that were undertaken by local authorities were forced on them by central government and some of these responsibilities could quite easily be done at a lower level and get public involvement. This could be through a residents group, or it might be a parish council, or even a total community. I think over the years they felt disempowered by the way local government has responsibilities placed on it from central government and really taken some of the functions of what was regarded in the community as being taken away from them (Participants 14 & 15 – Group G).

Having considered how, in theory, an applications-first approach sets a platform for open government, key actors noted that theory did not necessarily play out as expected in practice. Key actors also noted that in the period prior to the introduction of the Act there were more opportunities for decision making at the local level.

Back in those days, in the middle periods of 2001 to 2005, we were talking about the capacity of agencies, agencies at a local level to do more… than they were currently doing. But in the current context you couldn’t be more different from that. Whatever the rhetoric, is it’s all about how you do less and how you achieve cuts (Participant 30 – Group B).

The issue of the key principle of adequate resources appears to be fundamental to resolving this paradox. When adequate resources were in place to ensure an enabling leadership role, fragmentation was better navigated. Navigating this fragmentation in Kent, the Act was identified as an opportunity to navigate (unknown) opportunities. Those with responsibilities at the local authority (meso level) predominantly held this opinion. For example, those setting policy within Kent County Council were quite clear that the Localism Act, in itself, had limited significance.

The spirit behind the Localism Act is something that Kent County Council does take seriously, and I’m assured… [this] would have come through in what we’ve said. There is recognition, particularly given the grave demands and squeezed budgets, we must be co-designing stuff with the communities and achieving (Focus Group 2 – Group C).
Those with departmental leadership responsibilities within Kent County Council echoed the views of their colleagues.

Well it certainly hasn’t hindered it, it has assisted, you know, it just reinforced the direction of travel for Kent County Council but the reality is it’s been an evolution. Whether the Localism Act drove it, or whether the Localism Act sort of emerged from some of the experience to date, it’s chicken and egg stuff isn’t it. But it certainly did reaffirm the direction of travel and you know it’s very commendable (Participant 11 – Group C).

The belief that the application-first approach provided opportunities for decision making at the local level was less frequently expressed at the micro and macro levels. Key actors at both levels reported that opportunities and ‘open government’ were more evident before the introduction of the Act.

Certainly within Dover we involved everyone. We even had the Chairperson come from the community and that was really empowering. With local people deciding what they wanted to do, we listened to the local community. It wasn’t us saying what they needed, it was the local community telling us what they wanted and that was throughout Sure Start (Participant 2 – Group A).

Key actors at a macro level noted the difficulties in tackling fragmentation and, at times, described as a political wedge, particularly when inadequate resources resulted in entrenched silos. The political wedge represented a political block that, for example, the opposing political party would use when debating issues and holding the justification of the other political party to account. In situations where silo approaches were dominant, fragmentation was considered more disruptive than welcomed and a principles-first approach prevailed. As previously argued, such silos became further entrenched due to inadequate resources and leadership, in particular the lack of the necessary style (generative) and leadership approach (enabling) required to navigate fragmentation. In contrast, even though the application-first approach and ‘open government’ encourages bottom-up dynamics, the use of political wedges would create the opposite result.

The Minister Pickles one is interesting- I don’t mind what you do as long as you don’t raise an army. It doesn’t work all the time and then suddenly they’ll put a political wedge in which isn’t just not only can you not raise an army but you can’t do this as well (Participants 14 & 15 – Group G).
In this section I have argued that the two sides of fragmentation can be described as a paradox. The principles-first approach requires deductive reasoning from general principles, but then flips to a desire and intention to take an application-first approach, leaving room for the unknown. The paradox that results from this entanglement of the unknown is not necessarily easily resolved as the fragmentation and tensions can be both welcomed and/or disruptive. These tensions will now be further considered utilising the Enabling Continuum.

*Enabling Continuum*

Attention now turns to how the Enabling Continuum sheds further light on the tension between a principles-first versus application-first approach. Fragmentation as the third discovery is presented as the end product of the argument in chapters 5 and 6; namely, that inadequate resources result in reduced opportunities to develop a generative leadership style, thus limiting the enabling leadership approach required to navigate fragmentation and emergence. This tension is particularly difficult to navigate because at times of chaos opportunities can either be positive (welcomed fragmentation) or negative (disruptive fragmentation).

Figure 7B presents the fragmentation of relationship tensions as reported by key actors. These experiences are presented and described using the frame of a quadrant matrix presented in addition to the extreme ends of the Emergence Continuum. Chaos is proposed as the central point to describe the key actor relationship tensions (frustrations) across the two extremes of fragmentation (welcomed and disruptive). The extreme of exploitation represents the first scenario (a principles-first approach) while the extreme of exploration represents the second scenario (an application-approach) to fragmentation.

*Quadrant 1: Disruptive fragmentation and exploitation*

Fragmentation levels in Quadrant (1) exhibit low levels of entanglement combined with high levels of structure and prescription. While Sure Start and the Act were designed as policy directives espousing flexibility for decision-making at the local level, both were encompassed within a very prescriptive policy design. Key actors recognised this as a difficult basis on which to form an enabling leadership approach. These tensions were referred to as bureaucracy from central government, or the
centre, and countered with attempts at flexibility to avoid what was often referred to as a ‘postcode lottery’.

And then there’s the whole set of issues about postcode lotteries and what should be prescribed from the centers so that people don’t lose out by virtue of where they live, and what should be left to local discretion, and how do you prescribe quality frameworks and say as long as you have this very high quality as a result we don’t mind how you do it. Now is that really helpful, or is it really unhelpful. Should the Localism Act be about that, or should it be about setting priorities? If you’re told you’ve got to be excellent at everything, it’s a hard job (Participant 43 – Group D).

**Figure 7B: Enabling Continuum – quadrants**

Quadrant 1 is heavily populated with examples of opposition between the intention behind the instruction and the *kind* of instruction being issued. This example of opposition is a constant and underpins fragmentation and the paradox that has formed much of the argument in this chapter. A good example of this paradox was described in Chapter 5 using the case of council tax capping, where the tax structure was imposed and could not be influenced at the local level. These paradoxes are evident.
between the *kind* of instruction, e.g. the set approach to collecting taxes (principles-first approach), and the *intention* of the instruction, e.g. taxes to meet local needs (application-first approach). This principles-first approach meant concrete formulas were being applied to solve complex problems that did not conform to a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Based on my findings With I argue that inadequate resources limit a generative leadership style, preventing an enabling leadership approach capable of navigating fragmentation, thus resulting in entrenched silo working. Entrenched silos influenced by principle-first approaches (political, centralism, top-down) were reported in Quadrant 1, resulting in fragmentation presenting more in its disruptive form. As argued earlier, fragmentation that presented as welcomed was better equipped to enhance emergence, which in turn enables decision making at the local level (see Figure 7B, Quadrant 2).

**Quadrant 2: Welcomed fragmentation and exploitation**

Conversely, Quadrant 2 (Figure 7B) is populated with key actor responses supporting the importance of a prescriptive and heightened principles-first approach. This was evident across all cohorts, particularly in relationship to the measurement of potential long-term benefits, such as, economic benefits or social benefits. For example, Early Years was described by key actors as a shared topic of political prescription and deemed to be a particularly important direction for all.

So in the last 20 years that has been a major political change with regard to early years services which is now seen as integral to state responsibilities in a way that was not the case pre 1997… That has been partly the result of evidence, partly the result of the experiences of the Sure Start programs and the introduction of the early education program universally, and partly the result of the government seeing itself, the UK government seeing itself, as being part of the OECD and European community and G20. In terms of relative status in the provision of services, they’re also seeing the potential long-term benefits, economic benefits and social benefits. That is not to say that everybody has a uniform view on what should be done in the early years but they certainly all agree on the fundamentals about the state involvement in early years services (Participant 50 – Group F).

The difference between Quadrants 1 and 2 is similar to the difference between administrative leadership and adaptive leadership discussed in Chapter 6. Both leadership traits are necessary to achieve the balance between structure and
spontaneity and if administrative leadership is emphasised at the expense of adaptive leadership, or adaptive leadership emphasised at the expense of administrative leadership, less joined-up-working becomes the result. In Quadrant 1 the example of a ‘postcode lottery’ described how ‘one size could not fit all’. In contrast, Quadrant 2 demonstrates how a concrete formula, particularly an evidence-based formula, was especially effective when underpinned by both an administrative leadership approach and application-first approach to innovation. This also reinforces the need for a generative leadership style to nurture an enabling leadership approach, creating the most appropriate leadership style for the situation at hand.

Quadrant 2 presents the entanglement of tensions that arose between outcomes accountability, data, financial, and policy implementation. The desire for known certainties and control of resources either swayed the outcomes to become more centrally controlled, or data to have less co-ordination and financial decisions being less about local needs and more about ‘one size to fit all’. Once again, the opportunity to navigate fragmentation is inhibited if resources for a nurturing generative leadership style are not in place. In some respects, the tensions that appear in Quadrants 1 and 2 further explain the challenges of collaboration (Huxam 2003) and partnership working (Frye and Webb 2002) and why the end result is processes pulling in two different directions. A policy directive (such as the Act) is unable to influence decision making at the local level when structured as described in the opposing Quadrants of 1 and 2 (Figure 7B, quadrants 3 and 4)

**Quadrant 3: Disruptive fragmentation and exploration**

Welcomed fragmentation and the Enabling Continuum extremity of exploration are presented in Quadrant 3 (Figure 7B) and provide the most fertile ground for innovation. This is how many key actors described the original local Sure Start, and the intention, if not the implementation, of the Act.

If you could change the phraseology from Localism Act to effective local decision-making or bottom-up decision-making which incorporates the Localism Act, you’d be somewhere near it because that’s what the revolution is out there (Participants 14 & 15 – Group G).
As presented in Quadrant 1, being at the extreme end of innovation, or inductive reasoning with general conclusions being based on patterns of factual observations from the real world, achieving efficiency is definitely a challenge. To design legislation in a way that satisfies the boundaries of Quadrant 3 is possibly what the Act attempted to achieve, but its success would always be dependent upon its ability to uphold the scenario of ‘chaos’. In some ways, the Act was edging more closely to chaos. For example, the way the Act was designed was, at times, organic and therefore some of its sections had good reasons for their inclusion, even though the reasons behind some of the sections did not always align. The requirement to not be ‘one size fits all’ demands less imposed instruction; for a piece of legislation to achieve this is the ultimate form of entanglement. This is the essence of the paradox presented throughout this chapter. An enabling leadership approach capable of navigating fragmentation is not necessarily enhanced unless heightened abilities for leadership for collaborative advantage and joint working increase as shown in Quadrant 3. This is primarily due to the impact of inadequate resources, which creates a constant tension between Quadrants 2 and 3 – as was evident in both Sure Start and the Localism Act.

I think the Localism Act was used as a vehicle, which is to say that the central government didn’t have responsibility for local decision making. In one way there’s a kind of dilemma here because … there’s less central direction through the Localism Act, but in another way the central control is very prescribed about what money can be used for and how the accountability is measured through certain kinds of outcomes. In a way what’s been done is pass responsibility down the system but not control or power (Participant 51 – Group F).

**Quadrant 4: Welcomed fragmentation and exploration**

Finally, in Quadrant 4 (Figure 7B) key actors reported other non-Sure Start examples of an enabling leadership approach in action (bottom-up, shared vision or localism), as was the case in Dover where a key actor discussed the Big Local approach.

[A]s far as I’m concerned, Big Local encapsulated the opportunity to let communities have their say but also take the responsibility, take these responsibility which we as local elected representatives have to deal with on a daily basis. Give some of that back to the community and say to them, ‘well this is what we have to do now – you start making choices. If localism is to work properly, it’s your choice it’s not us. And then if ten years down the road if you say what have we gotten out of this, then you can reflect on whether or not you’ve done something well
for your community, or alternatively it’s been frittered and basically there’s not been a great deal of benefit. And I think a year on that’s the conversation that’s being had, how can we benefit the community rather that just picking up schemes on a whim from one powerful individual who wants to do something. Communities now are actually saying ‘things this is how we want it, this is the legacy’. So we’re not doing it, we’re helping in the background, we’ve got our officers working with them to do that, but the elected councilors who could be forceful in a group and possibly sway things are not allowed to take that role. Let the community build on its own (Participants 14 & 15 – Group G).

The most prominent tension noted in Quadrant 4 is open communication, with lack of open communication being the highest rated relationship tension identified by key actors (Figure 5A, Chapter 5, p.106). Its position on the matrix is important as it is close to the notion of chaos and set in the quadrant that favours welcomed fragmentation, and an application-first approach with encouragement of a disequilibrium state. It is in Quadrant 4 that real change can happen and this is the most conducive position, as reported by key actors, for influencing decision making at the local level. It is also, unfortunately, the most unlikely position for a sustainable policy directive or piece of legislation. Early Sure Start shared many characteristics of Quadrant 4, but as resources were reduced and leadership style and approach changed, its position shifted to Quadrant 1. The policy direction moved toward the exploitation end of the Emergence Continuum with the result that local level actors had less influence in decision making at the local level.

The Enabling Continuum provides a description of the tension and entanglement that lies between exploitation and known certainties on the one hand and exploration and unknown possibilities on the other. The quadrants further describe the range of Sure Start key actor experiences with the Act in terms of what they see as having an influence on decision making at the local level. Quadrant 1 presented the tension, and paradox, that arises when a top-down policy directive, such as the Act, is used to encourage bottom-up action and, because of its design, produces perverse outcomes. Quadrant 2 contains tensions, which drove a shift from the exploration end to the exploitation end of the Enabling Continuum. The key actors identified what occurred during the first decade of Sure Start as falling into Quadrant 3. Finally, there were isolated examples, of local action being taken to enable fragmentation, but with an
understanding that at some point in time the pieces would need to be picked up and
the process begun again (Quadrant 4).

Chapter 7 completes the three findings chapters, which discuss and explore the three
discoveries. The importance of adequate resources, defined as the first discovery in
Chapter 5, has been a prominent point throughout the following chapters. The second
discovery, around leadership being a missing link, pointed to the need for a generative
leadership style to nurture an enabling leadership approach. The importance of
recognising approaches in leadership was discussed in Chapter 7, particularly in
relation to how fragmentation can be both welcoming or disruptive – the third
discovery – and can play an important role for navigating emergence that is integral to
influencing decision making at the local level.
Chapter 8. Conclusion and Implications for Practice and Research

Overview

In this concluding chapter I re-visit the research question and interpretive exploration of a ‘command and control’, top-down policy directive, the Localism Act 2011 (DCLG 2011), and its influence on decision making at the local level. My conclusions are considered in light of the case study findings, suggesting practical lessons for researchers, policy makers and advocates. The premise of the thesis has been explored across three domains, drawing out the implications for future policy decisions and proposed future research to positively support decision making at the local level. The constructive engagement of two literatures and analysis of findings has resulted in three discoveries and six scenarios that have been fundamental to the exploration of possible systemic change and the subsequent links and causal chain of events between governance and leadership.

The three domains, grounded in earlier work (Jones 2012 and Staite and Rogers 2012), established that the relationship frame required in creating a collaborative environment was not only a necessity but also a prerequisite for achieving systemic change. The three domains, political, interpersonal and political, were drawn from a detailed examination of the relationship between central and local government, and therefore provided a descriptive frame to further explore the findings. The findings themes, as presented in Figure 5A, represented a summary of the sources of relationship tensions as reported by the interviewees. The 16 representative categories (see Figure 5A) were considered across the three domains, which led to the identification of six scenarios. These six scenarios then provided the framework to explore and interpret the relationship tensions identified between top-down policy (the Localism Act) and decision making at the local level (Sure Start key actors).

The six scenarios have been presented in detail in preceding chapters and are summarised below. Collectively, the six scenarios point to the main argument where,
at its most general level, this thesis contributes to understanding the value of adding Complexity Leadership Theory to policy implementation studies.

By way of the Finding chapters, I argue in Chapter 5 that inadequate resources and streamlining and starving of funds play a significant role in creating entrenched silos. Chapter 6 explored how leadership becomes a missing link with negative shifts in communication and inability to form dynamic networks, ultimately creating further entrenched silos. Chapter 7 confirms the paradox of fragmentation, wherein the design of policy is often at odds with policy intention. The differing forms of fragmentation can limit the ability to navigate the silos and enable change. I argue that the key reason for this is often lack of resources to support the type of balance and leadership required, especially when confronting fragmented and complex societal issues requiring systemic change.

Fragmentation is also presented throughout this study as a paradox between linear and non-linear policy design. This paradox is also one in which the design of policy is often at odds with the policy objectives. An example is the UK attempt to mitigate fallout from austerity measures, where there was a clear central government directive between 2010 and 2012 to encourage people in the community to take responsibility for their localities but reduced funding for initiatives designed to build community capacity. This paradox, particularly in relationship to policy directives like Sure Start and the Localism Act, provided a common thread throughout the thesis, including the literature reviews (chapters 2 and 3), the introduction of the Enabling Continuum (Chapter 4), the discussions of the findings and three discoveries (see Section 8.2) and the concluding recommendations for future policy implementation studies – the enabling paradigm and enabling theory of change (see Section 8.5). The study was based on an assumption that the Localism Act would positively influence decision making at the local level. The data obtained from Sure Start key actors identified that this assumption was not upheld.

8.1. Significance of the six scenarios

The six scenarios were introduced in the three findings chapters to assist with further exploration of the relationship tensions found within the financial, interpersonal, and
political domains. In the financial domain (Chapter 5) the scenarios of streamlining of funds and starving of funds helped to explain the incidence of non-joined-up working, because streamlining and starving of funds caused a decrease in resources available for program activities. In addition, blame was laid on local actors for not achieving results. As a result of streamlining and starving of funds, entrenched silos were created, which did little to encourage decision making at the local level. Leadership was identified as being important, in that lack of resources made it less likely that a generative style of leadership could emerge. Thus, leadership was identified as the missing link.

Leadership as the missing link was discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 and two scenarios, lack of communication and dynamic networks, were identified that, combined with inadequate resources, meant there was little capacity to build the communication and dynamic networks necessary for development of a generative leadership style that would nurture an enabling leadership approach. In Chapter 7, which focused on the political domain, two scenarios, principles-first and application-first, were identified. Neither scenario is presented as being always effective; principles-first approaches can create too much bureaucracy and be too linear, but application-first approaches, while enabling freedom of direction and room for creative space, can be equally inappropriate, creating disequilibrium. Together, the six scenarios led to three discoveries and four recommendations, which are outlined later in this chapter.

The six scenarios and arguments presented throughout the thesis have been grounded in the seminal work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), including their definition of policy implementation as ‘the ability to forge links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results’ (p.xv). I have expanded this definition, and their recommendation that the study of policy implementation include an understanding of apparently simple sequences of events that, in turn, depend on complex chains of reciprocal interactions – the forging of subsequent links. Pressman and Wildavsky also recognised that each sequence should be considered in relation to other related sequences. The preceding chapters have extended the thinking about policy implementation by examining and including insights from Complexity Leadership Theory.
The focus of the research has been on relationship tensions between top-down and bottom-up approaches, particularly those that affect decision making at the local level. The exploration of these tensions revealed a connection with dynamic networks and, thus, pointed to the relevance of complexity science literature. The complexity sciences and Complex Adaptive Systems theory provide a theoretical scaffold that supports systemic change. Complexity Leadership Theory describes the need to create conditions that enable decision making at the local level and result in change for the better. Providing some form of basic structure, while keeping the system focused, requires a different form of governance and leadership. When added to policy implementation, Complexity Leadership Theory, with its roots in Complex Adaptive Systems theory, offers a new way of thinking about governance, which supports the development of this different form of leadership.

However, the process of trying to balance top-down and bottom-up approaches not only generated relationship tensions, but also led to three contributing factors being identified. First, the global financial crisis (GFC) led to austerity measures being introduced in the UK. Second, there was a change in political leadership and major changes in the way Sure Start was governed, including streamlining of funds and data misappropriation. Third, the Act, although intended as a progressive framework for future policies, remained a top-down directive.

This study was based on an assumption that the Localism Act would positively influence decision making at the local level. The findings from those interviewed reveal that this assumption was not correct. However, the findings did highlight the importance and value of adding a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective to policy implementation studies, in that it offers a paradigm for thinking about governance from a non-traditional perspective. The constructive engagement of the two literatures, policy implementation and Complexity Leadership Theory, offers a different way to consider governance. I refer to this as the enabling paradigm, supported in this study by the introduction of an Enabling Continuum and an Enabling Theory of Change.

Research findings also identified the importance of building collaboration and leadership in the process of enabling change. However, the relationship between
collaboration and leadership was not straightforward. The decision to be collaborative was often assumed rather than explicitly articulated and, as leadership resources dwindled, so too did the desire to work collaboratively. The ring fencing of Sure Start funds, for example, demonstrated that when streamlining and starving of Sure Start funds occurred, tensions between the funder and delivery increased and the two groups were therefore less likely to collaborate or be focused on working together. In the case of Sure Start, the deterioration in the relationship between funder and service deliverer led to entrenched silos, a reduced level of service to the end user and reduced decision making at the local level. The main conclusion is that, despite assumptions and hopes to the contrary, there is little evidence of the Localism Act, positively influencing decision making at the local level.

### 8.2. Summary of findings

At one end of the Enabling Continuum, top-down approaches are presented as ‘exploitation’, wherein planned certainties or linear cause-and-effect models are favoured. At the other end of the Enabling Continuum, bottom-up or non-linear approaches are presented as ‘exploration’ encouraging unplanned new possibilities. The cycles as plotted on Figure 3E (page 65) represent the interactions and waves of change that require different forms of leadership. The three leadership approaches (*administrative, adaptive and enabling*), can be thought of as relationship tensions, which encompass in levels of control and discretion. Administrative leadership is a more linear (principle-first) approach and adaptive leadership a more non-linear (application-first) approach, while the enabling leadership operates in the interface between administrative and adaptive leadership, which I refer to as the ‘straddle’ between structure and spontaneity. The enabling leadership approach enables researchers, policy makers, advocates and even the end user at the local level to navigate the relationship tensions that exist at the two extreme ends of the Enabling Continuum.

These relationship tensions include a paradox: fragmentation can be both positive and negative, but is essential if leaders are to move from one point of the Enabling Continuum to another. The need for non-linear dynamic networks is relevant to policy implementation design and, most particularly, to combating complex societal issues. The analyses of the relationship tensions and movement of experiences along the
Enabling Continuum identified three discoveries. The key learnings of each discovery and their arguments are summarised below.

**Discovery One: Key principle and adequate resources**

The first discovery, detailed in Chapter 5, builds on two interrelated points of chaos: inadequate resources during periods of emerging change, and leadership for collaboration building. In detailing two scenarios, streamlining of funds and starving of funds, I introduce the key principle (adequate resources) and argue for the importance of the link between funding and adequate resources. With streamlining of funds, the more the central government pushed funding cuts and streamlined funds, the more ‘precious’ and reluctant to be streamlined those at the local level became. The second scenario, starving of funds, was described as being given responsibility for maintaining services with reduced levels of funding. The issue of adequate resources became a key principle because when resources are limited so is the ability to positively influence decision making at the local level. The consequence of this is that opportunities for an enabling leadership approach were also reduced. I have presented the case of how the un-ring fencing and excessive reduction of Sure Start funds led to inadequate support for the generative leadership style needed to nurture an enabling leadership approach. This had an adverse effect, reducing and weakening dynamic networks and creating further entrenched silos, and leading to the second discovery of an important missing link – leadership.

**Discovery Two: Leadership – a notable missing link**

The discovery of leadership as a notable missing link was grounded in the concept of the current governance paradigm being set within traditional leadership boundaries rather than a non-traditional formula. The argument was based on the need to navigate chaos or, as Goldstein et al. (2010) describe it, the pathway of criticalisation. Criticalisation is presented in Chapter 6 as the ability to cope with a state of disequilibrium, also described as entanglement and/or fragmentation. The position of inadequate resources, as argued in Chapter 5, becomes difficult to maintain, particularly during times of chaos. If the necessary leadership approach – argued as enabling leadership – is not provided to navigate the period of chaos and fragmentation, there is a notable negative impact on collaborative working, resulting in entrenched silo working.
Building on the argument that inadequate resources adversely affect leadership, an additional two scenarios were introduced. The first scenario was the importance of communication and how its opposite (lack of communication) became evident due to a reduction of leadership support, more often than not compounded by inadequate resources. The second scenario reflected the link between networks, in particular dynamic networks. The ability to lead and communicate complex problems requires a dynamic and non-linear approach, because complex societal issues are counter-intuitive and constantly changing. The ability to create dynamic networks presents as a definite link between collaboration and is integral to reducing silo working. Leadership is a necessity in building relationships, which will facilitate decision making at the local level.

I have clearly presented the case how the reduction of resources limits leadership, and makes nurturing generative leadership style difficult to achieve. Nurturing a generative leadership style is integral to navigating chaos and establishing decision making at the local level. An enabling leadership approach means leaders are able to make positive change whilst maintaining some form of basic structure. Thus, successfully navigating chaos and change goes hand in hand with encouraging decision making at the local level. However, a third discovery emerged from the research findings, namely, that there is a tension between design and implementation – what I have called the paradox of fragmentation.

Discovery Three: The paradox of fragmentation

Having established that a paradox arose from the design of policies, I argued that, to combat this paradox, non-traditional leadership approaches and an ability to navigate systemic change are essential. This is particularly so when the downward spiral caused by increasing relationship tensions and entrenched silo approaches creates gaps in services that even those involved find difficult to navigate. Across the study, it was unclear whether it was the politics of the period, the introduction of the Localism Act or the un-ring fencing of Sure Start funds that were the main cause, but in the 2010–2012 period fragmentation increased markedly, bringing changes and intensifying this paradox.
The difference between traditional leadership and non-traditional generative leadership can be summarised as the ability to cope with the paradox of fragmentation. The position of inadequate resources was found to work in complete opposition to the anticipated leadership approach. The resulting entrenched silos, in turn, created the opposite of what the Localism Act was designed to achieve. As previously argued, such silos became further entrenched due to inadequate resources, in particular the lack of the necessary generative leadership style and enabling approach required to navigate fragmentation.

The next section will consider the implications of the findings and lead to recommendations for the future. Drawing from the different forms of literature, the value a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective adds to policy implementation studies offers a paradigm for thinking about governance, shifting from a traditional leadership model to a non-traditional perspective. This includes replacing traditional leadership with an enabling leadership approach that embraces fragmentation.

8.3 Implications of the findings

In exploring how top-down governance arrangements (such as the Localism Act) influence decision making at the local level, attention is drawn to the concept of freedom of officialdom. This concept refers to the goal of unravelling the entanglement of relationship tensions in such a way that neither top-down nor bottom-up policy take precedent. Freedom of officialdom is another way of describing the balancing of relationship tensions, or achieving synthesis. The preferred model is one that can generate positive change whilst providing some form of basic structure. This requires a different form of leadership. Drawing on the earlier work of Jones (2012) and Staite and Rogers (2012), the three key relationship tension descriptors between top-down policy implementation and bottom-up decision-making at the local level provide a framework to consider the consequences of not achieving freedom from officialdom.

1. Financial domain

In the case of Sure Start, the issue of leadership became less prominent as the challenges of inadequate resources increased and funding decreased; ‘no funding, no
resources, no resources, no leadership’. This is an extremely important consequence; I have argued that, in any policy implementation design, the principle of funding must include adequate resources to support the type of leadership required, especially when confronting fragmented and complex social issues. More importantly, with complex social issues adequate resources, the key principle and first discovery, are essential to enable the championing of any case for change. The un-ring fencing and reduction in Sure Start funding was, in large part, the reason why changes initiated at central government level created silos rather than facilitating decision making at the local level. This coincided with the launch of the Localism Act, with its design of promoting decision making at the local level. Paradoxically, the design of the Act did not provide adequate resources for an enabling leadership approach. Consequently, entrenched silos, officialdom and the paradox of fragmentation increased or intensified.

2. Interpersonal domain

The interpersonal domain provided the insight that it was not just leadership that was missing, but, more importantly, a type or approach of leadership. The generative leadership style and non-traditional enabling leadership approach were most appropriate to the circumstances, but harder to maintain due to inadequate resources. I have argued that an enabling leadership approach will have limited impact unless adequate resources are available. This supports the second discovery, which refers to leadership as a missing link. Again, the Localism Act was intended to create engagement at the local level, but to do so effectively, locally relevant models of leadership approaches are required. Without an enabling leadership approach, the ability for a ‘one size does not fit all’ or non-linear environment becomes difficult to achieve; such an approach demands less imposed instruction, so for legislation to achieve this it must support rather than constrain the autonomy of officials.

3. Political domain

The political domain provided the insight that fragmentation arises not only from complex societal issues but also when policy design and policy implementation are inconsistent. Fragmentation can be positive; for example, when emergence begins
and forms the basis for enabling systemic change. Particularly from a political point of view, engagement in systemic change at the local level is often desperately desired but unfortunately somehow gets lost in translation. I argue that this form of loss results from ignoring the demand for adequate resources to provide a generational leadership style and resultant enabling leadership approach that can navigate fragmentation. More importantly, and as concluded later in the recommendations of this chapter (see Section 8.4), shifting from such action is paramount for any policy directive if it is to navigate such complexities, be free of officialdom and support decision making at the local level.

It was due to inadequate resources that the Localism Act was unable to positively influence decision making at the local level; it was due to inadequate resources that Sure Start followed a negative trajectory, creating entrenched silos and, paradoxically, shifting further from its original mandate of collaborative working to enable decision making at the local level. Both policies (the Localism Act and Sure Start) had the mandate to increase citizen engagement and decision making at the local level, yet almost the opposite resulted. As shown in the Sure Start case study, no matter how bottom-up the perspective may be, if set within a top-down policy agenda (such as the Localism Act) then decision making at the local level becomes less achievable.

With a title of decision making at the local level – the missing link, my study clearly advocates and argues that policy directives that aim to have positive affect on complex societal issues and engage citizens will not succeed, if applied through traditional linear means. More importantly, top-down policy design, including traditional top-down linear approaches with only a facade of espousing citizen engagement, will not positively influence decision making at the local level. Historically, traditional leadership models have been products of top-down bureaucratic paradigms, more suitable for an economy of physical production rather than a knowledge economy. Now is the time for policy implementation to embrace a change of paradigm. This requires researchers, policy makers and advocates developing skills that balance the tensions between top-down and bottom-up scenarios.
8.4 Recommendations for practice

The three discoveries and their arguments as presented within the findings chapters provide insight into numerous interconnected ideas that are aligned and supported within both policy implementation and complexity leadership theories. Embracing this diversity, the conclusion of this study presents recommendations that are relevant for researchers, policy makers and advocates, extending the current governance paradigm of policy implementation. With governance as the most recent generation of policy implementation thought, I conclude that its parameters need to be extended to embrace fragmentation and non-traditional leadership governance approaches. The value of adding a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective to policy implementation studies is that it offers a paradigm for thinking about governance from a non-traditional perspective. I refer to this as the enabling paradigm.

There are three recommendations I present as integral to realising an enabling paradigm. In theory, they draw on the generations of policy implementation thought highlighting an important role of ‘enabling’ as defined by combining the Complexity Leadership Theory approaches. In practice, these three recommendations are presented as most relevant for reducing the relationship tensions between policy design and implementation, particularly for supporting decision making at the local level.

1. Attention must firstly be given to adequate resources, which play an important role in establishing collaborative environments, a prerequisite for systemic change. It is the collaborative environment that has a positive influence on decision making at the local level. It is most important to note the nuances of resource allocation; the primary focus should be on where and how resources are made available for local support rather than on the amount of resources to be allocated. This requires an ability for resources to meet local needs and encourage a ‘one size does not fit all’ approach, in other words, an ability to balance the structure (principles-first approach) with spontaneity to meet required outcome (application-first approach).
Sure Start and the Localism Act espoused holistic aspirations but, due to inadequate resources and limited capacity for leadership, the ability to achieve those aspirations was reduced. Although the aims of the Localism Act were clearly articulated, the cumulative impacts of inadequate resources and the application of a top-down approach created entrenched silos – the opposite of what was intended.

2. The second recommendation considers the style and approach of leadership. An enabling leadership style is integral to effectively navigating a synthesis and balancing the tensions involved in supporting decision making at the local level. The Complexity Leadership Theory interface with policy implementation demands policy leaders have the skills to adopt non-traditional, non-bureaucratic paradigms whilst accepting that complex societal problems are dynamic and non-linear and therefore counter-intuitive. Enabling and supporting decision making at the local level requires the ability to navigate emergent change.

One flaw of the Localism Act was that, while it articulated empowerment of citizens, navigating emergent change was to be achieved without any support for the development of an enabling leadership approach. Inadequate resources limited the ability of leaders to adopt a generative leadership style, which in turn prevented an enabling leadership approach. This enabling leadership approach was identified as the missing link, particularly as it is the approach that best navigates fragmentation and prevents entrenched silo working. The enabling leadership approach is a pre-requisite for policy design, particularly for complex societal issues. An enabling leadership approach requires different forms of interactions, which anticipate organised disorder and change in encouraging and supporting decision-makers at the local level.

3. The third recommendation relates to fragmentation and the need to navigate emergence (described as both welcomed and disruptive fragmentation). Such uncertainty must be expected, particularly when decision making at the local level is experiencing changes often associated with complex societal issues. Traditional leadership works against chaos, particularly within the current governance paradigm. Extending the current paradigm requires a non-traditional approach to provide the focus needed and the freedom to innovate where
required. Developing a non-traditional enabling leadership approach creates the opportunity to shift from chaos to the preferred change agenda.

The ability to welcome entanglement and emergence includes the ability to embrace fragmentation, but accepting such ambiguity makes central government nervous. For example, the Localism Act presented externally as promoting engagement, but its design was more akin to a traditional top-down bureaucratic paradigm and more suitable for a physical production economy than a knowledge economy. Policy makers need skills to adopt non-traditional, non-bureaucratic paradigms whilst accepting that complex societal problems are dynamic and non-linear. Enabling leadership approach is a prerequisite for policy design particularly for complex societal issues. The paradigm shift required must support an approach that requires less imposed instruction. For policy makers to achieve this, future legislation must support rather than constrain autonomy of officials.

8.5 Contributions to future research – Next Steps

The need for the shift to a new paradigm is something those in policy settings with responsibilities for policy directives must take ownership of. The ability of policy makers to take a collaborative approach to decision making at a local level is further complicated as they manage what Uhl-Bien et al. (2008, p.205) refer to as the ‘governance gauntlet between administrative leadership and adaptive leadership’. The Enabling Continuum was introduced as a tool to assist with navigating the governance gauntlet. The need for a non-traditional approach is well documented by many of the commentators who have contributed to Complexity Leadership Theory.

Future studies need not be quick fixes and it requires qualitative research that explores quantitative explorations, simulation and modeling (Uhl-Bien and Marion 2009, p.467).

In adopting the frameworks of non-traditional approaches the commentators of complexity science have much to offer the scholars of policy implementation. The welcoming of fragmentation or disequilibrium (Lichtenstein and Plowman 2009) and pathway to criticalisation (Goldstein et al. 2010) both stem from Complexity Leadership Theory. In considering the interface with policy implementation theory,
and drawing on Complexity Leadership Theory, Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) described the challenge of Sabatier’s (1986) third policy implementation thought – synthesis – as ‘struggles over symmetrical preferences’ (p.307). Similarly, Mintzberg et al. (1998) presented the emergent strategy to assist with the understanding that, no matter how much control or top-down influence is applied, the variables that factor into decision making at the local level cannot be controlled. It is the interface between the need for change that calls for a non-traditional approach to governance. In summarising the paradigm shift for a future non-traditional approach to policy implementation thinking, the concept of an Enabling Theory of Change (see Figure 8A) will assist with what could be the next steps in the future of policy implementation thinking – quantitative explorations, simulation and modeling.

**Figure 8A: Enabling Theory of Change**

In contrast to the Theory of Change presented in Figure 3D, the argument behind the Enabling Theory of Change (Figure 8A) draws on the various positions as described along the Enabling Continuum. In Chapter 5, the extremes of the Enabling Continuum – exploitation (linear; principles-first approach) and exploration (non-linear; application-first approach) – describe the purpose and resulting relationship tensions that can have adverse effects when they occur at extremes; for example, when reduced collaborative working and entrenched silos occur at the two extreme ends of the Enabling Continuum. In Chapter 6, I identify the need for chaos to achieve a
synthesis between the two extremes of the Enabling Continuum (exploitation and exploration) and the essential requirement of an enabling leadership approach to navigate chaos, disorder and the fragmentation process to tackle complex societal issues. In Chapter 7, of the four quadrants that overlay the Enabling Continuum, Quadrant 4 (Figure 7B) is the identified position for achieving a high level of performance, which involves real change, as well as supporting decision making at the local level.

The positions, as shown along the Enabling Continuum and diagram of the Enabling Theory of Change, lead to a proposed shift in the order of stages within the Theory of Change from the order presented in Chapter 3 (Figure 3C). As shown in Figure 3C, the top of the framework begins with Impact and then lists long-term and immediate outcomes. The shift in order is shown in the Enabling Theory of Change, where outcomes are agreed before decisions around impact are concluded. In some respects, this is returning to the former foundations of the Theory of Change and the work of Weiss (1995), which I have prefaced with three p’s: purpose, process, performance. It is the order of the three p’s, and how they align with the three attributes of the theory of change, that provides a base to begin a non-traditional and enabling paradigm for future studies of policy implementation.

- **Purpose:** should be plausible. Do evidence and common sense suggest that the activities, if implemented, will lead to desired outcomes?
- **Process:** should be doable. Will the economic, technical, political, institutional, and human resources be available to carry out the initiative?
- **Performance:** should be testable. Is the theory of change specific and complete enough for an evaluator to track its progress in credible and useful ways?

The Enabling Theory of Change (Figure 8A) is used diagrammatically to support the three recommendations of this thesis. The adoption of an enabling leadership approach, particularly for those responsible for policy design, creates a new enabling paradigm for policy implementation, one that is worthy of further attention. Enabling leadership operates at the interface of administrative and adaptive leadership approaches, and the
recommendation of the Enabling Theory of Change is to assist in leading and enabling change, particularly with dealing with complex social issues.

Drawing on the Enabling Continuum, I concluded that Quadrant 4 (page 173) is where real systemic change can happen; this is the most conducive position for influencing decision making at the local level particularly when dealing with complex societal issues. In recognising this challenge, I note the need to re-establish approaches to strategies and the importance of emergent strategy as described by Mintzberg et al. (1998). The Enabling Theory of Change provides the visual concept for an expansion of policy implementation thinking. Recalling the words of Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009), as presented in the beginning of this chapter, such a paradigm shift is not, and cannot be, a quick fix. The value of adding a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective to future policy implementation studies is that it offers a paradigm for thinking about governance from the non-traditional perspective which accepts that the only real known is change itself.

8.6 Final thoughts

This study has revealed an important gap in policy implementation literature and the value of adopting Complexity Leadership Theory, particularly the benefit of adopting an enabling leadership approach. Future policy advocates interested in positively influencing decision making at the local level would benefit from welcoming a state of disequilibrium and emergence, accepting it as an important step in supporting decision making at the local level. Future research could usefully focus on the value of adding a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective to policy implementation studies as this offers a new paradigm for thinking about governance from a non-traditional perspective – an enabling paradigm. An Enabling Theory of Change is proposed in the form of a visual concept (Figure 8A) to assist such developments. It is the argument of this thesis that by taking such actions researchers, policy makers and advocates will better navigate the missing link for decision making at the local level.
## Appendix A – Key Actors interviewed 2014

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<th>Macro</th>
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<td><strong>Group A</strong>&lt;br&gt;Local private &amp; Not For Profit</td>
<td><strong>Group C</strong>&lt;br&gt;County Civil Servant (active &amp; retired)</td>
<td><strong>Group E</strong>&lt;br&gt;National Peak Body</td>
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<td>Participant 1</td>
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<td>Focus Group 2</td>
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<td>Participant 21</td>
<td>Focus Group 2</td>
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<td>Participant 22</td>
<td>Focus Group 3</td>
<td>Participant (Trial)</td>
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<td>Participant 23</td>
<td>Focus Group 3</td>
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Appendix B – Glossary of key events & dates

1997  Labour comes to power after 18 years of Conservative government. Tony Blair as Prime Minister. Establishment of Comprehensive Spending Review – (CSR)

1998  White Paper; *Modernising social services*, recommended improving partnerships to ensure more effective co-ordination of services for children through joint working between health, social services, housing and other services

1998  Establishment of a national Compact – an agreement between UK Government and civil society organisations for the benefit of communities and citizens in England

1998  Health White Paper; *Our healthier nation*, established requirements for improved partnerships between the NHS and local authorities

1998  Crime and Disorder Act established multi-agency youth offending teams, including representation from education, police, probation and social services

1998  White Paper; *Meeting special educational needs: a programme of action*, required local authorities to improve agency collaboration to strengthen support for children with special needs


1998  Launch of Quality Protects, requiring inter-agency collaboration to ensure that children in need gain maximum benefits from education opportunities, health and social care

1998  CSR on services for Children under Eight published, Sure Start funding announced in Parliament: total allocation of £450 million over three years, budget £184 million in final year of spending period, 2001/02

1999  Sure Start launched, involved joint working to improve services for pre-school children. Prime Minister Tony Blair announces the pledge to end child poverty in a generation and halve child poverty in 10 years

1999  Health Act established a statutory duty of partnership between NHS bodies and local authorities

1999  Revised guidance on child protection issued, *Working together to safeguard children*
1999  Following ministerial shuffle joint responsibility of Sure Start between Department of Health (DH) and Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)

1999  Compact codes considered - The compact Code of Good Practice

2000  Public Service Agreements (PSA) detailed the mains and objectives of UK government at all levels and departments for a three-year period.

2000  Publication of the shared Framework for the assessment of children in need and their families

2000  First CSR after establishment of Sure Start in 1998, programme doubled from 250 local programmes to 500, (extending budget settlement for final year of spending review -2003/04- £499 million

2000  Local government Act placed on local authorities a requirement to prepare community strategies

2000  Development of local Compacts

2001  Health and Social Care Act placed a duty of partnership on relevant agencies

2001  The Performance Innovation Unit (PIU) and to identify innovations needed for the future. This included a Childcare Review and baseline for changes in Children’s services

2001  Non-statutory guidance Co-ordinated Service Planning for Vulnerable Children and Young People in England

2001  Children’s Fund launched to reduce social exclusion for children aged 5-13

2001  Children and Young People’s Unit established at the DfEE to coordinate all policy on children and young people across Whitehall and to administer the Children’s Fund

2001  Connexions service launched to provide universal careers and general support to young people aged 13- 19 through multi-agency working and partnership with other agencies

2001  General election (Blair re-elected) Publication of Tackling Child Poverty as part of Pre-Budget Report. Creation of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) separated from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
2002 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) formed by Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to set out the vision of an area and co-ordinate and drive the delivery of local services leading to improved outcomes for citizens that go beyond the remit of any one partner represent the needs of communities.

2002 CSR announcements include the merger of the Sure Start Unit with early years and childcare responsibilities at the DfES, and joint responsibility for Sure Start shifts from the DH and DfES to the DWP and DfES.

2002 CSR settlement announced for combined childcare and Sure Start Children’s Centres, budget for final year of CSR period (2005/06) was £1.5 billion.


2002 Non-statutory guidance Local Preventative Strategy Not a plan but an improved strategic approach to services for children and young people at risk that crosses service and agency boundaries.

2003 First Children’s Minister with overall responsibility for children bringing into remit of DfES - Sure Start, early years and childcare, children’s social care and aspects of family law.

2003 Publication of the green paper Every Child Matters (ECM), creating the framework for a radical restructuring of children’s services in England. The plan for a Children’s Centre in every community (2007) was underway, resulting in previously earmarked funds for Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLP) needing to be utilised on a wider scale.

2003 Lord Lamming Report The Victoria Climbie Inquiry – Key recommendations were made that reinforced the earlier proposals made by the PIU (Childcare Review 2001).

2004 ECM – Next Steps Consultation around the Children’s Bill with a new role of government in promoting change shifting form micro-managing to being a catalyst and enabler.

2004 Children Act passed, encompassing most of the recommendations in the ECM green paper.

2004 CSR settlement announced for combined childcare and Sure Start Children’s centres, £2.27 billion for final year of spending period (2007/08).
2004  Publication: *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Childcare Strategy*

2005  Local Area Agreement (LAA) piloted as the way of joining up all parts of government. This included individual blocks with one of the blocks established as the Children and Young People’s Block. PSA’s were redefined into the LAA

2005  Local Compact – Revision of Codes of Good Practice

2005  ECM – Change for Children Consultation *Engaging the Voluntary and Community Sectors in Children’s Trusts*

2006  Wanless Report into the cost of social care where investment would have to reach £29.5 billion by 2025 (equivalent to 3% of GBD)

2006  Centre for Social Justice publishes its *Breakdown Britain* report that helps to shape the Tory party policy on social justice

2006  Change in Prime Minister Gordon Brown and ODPM was replaced by the DCLG

2006  Childcare Act passed, encompassing many of the commitments in the 2004 Ten Year Strategy on childcare

2007  Tony Blair succeeded as the leader of the Labour Party and as Prime minister by Gordon Brown

2007  Commission for the Compact established

2008  Children’s Secretary Ed Balls orders inquiry into the death of Baby P

2009  Compact refreshed – capacity for change

2009  Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act passed, making the provision of Children’s Centres a statutory requirement for local authorities. Celebrating marking 3,000 Children’s Centres

2010  General election, Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government formed and government elected David Cameron as Prime Minister. PSA’s and ECM were abolished

2010  Decentralisation and the Localism Bill: an essential guide presented by DCLG

2010  Compact renewal
2010 Prime Minister David Cameron speech Big Society - Transfer from Big Government to Big Society

2010 Deputy Prime Minister (Nick Clegg) speeches on *Putting a Premium on Fairness* and Social Mobility. Alan Milburn (Labour party) accepts appointment to review social mobility

2011 Establishment of the Localism Act 2011 – to facilitate the devolution of decision making powers from central government control to individuals and communities

2011 DCLG issued *A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act*

2011 Closure of the Commission for the Compact with oversight shared between Office of Civil Society (based at the Cabinet Office) and Compact Voice which represents the voice of the voluntary sector and a charity based at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations

2011 Report issued: *A new approach to child poverty: tackling the causes of disadvantage and transforming families’ lives*

2011 *Social Mobility Strategy* launched

2011 *Early intervention: smart investment, massive savings* Report launched

2011 *Social Mobility and Child Poverty Review* – call for evidence

2011 Report issued: *Big Society innovation aims to get families out of deprivation*

2011 Report issued: *Fair and free – every child must be able to do better*

2012 Update on progress since 2011 – *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility*

2012 Report issued: *Social ‘Trackers’ to measure fairness in society*

2012 Deputy Prime Minister launches *Inspiring The Future Report (aspiration army)*

2013 *Measuring child poverty consultation* Commission response

2013 Free childcare to be available for toddlers who turn two (*from April 2013*)

2013 Free childcare extended to working families on low incomes

2013 Deputy Prime Minister speech: *Making Britain fit for modern families*
2013  *Social Mobility – Next Steps*

2014  *Child poverty strategy: Consultation response*

2014  Report issued: *Child poverty and social mobility: how non-government groups can act*

**Note:** Not all of these policies are considered within the study. The list is presented to demonstrate the mass attempts of child poverty related policies designed to influence decision making at the local level. The period in bold represents the period of interest that my study does further examine.
Appendix C – Interview Collective Impact Prompts

1. All participants in Sure Start have a shared vision and common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed actions.

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2. Collecting Sure Start data and measuring Sure Start results consistently across all participants ensures all efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.

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3. Participant activities must be differentiated while still being co-ordinated through mutual reinforcing Sure Start action plan.

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4. Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players of Sure Start to build trust, assure mutual objectives and appreciated common motivation.

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## Glossary

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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>citizen engagement</td>
<td>A process of consultation and/or involvement of end users or other stakeholders at the community level to inform and increase uptake of policy.</td>
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<td>Collective Impact framework:</td>
<td>A global concept first developed by Kania and Kramer (2011) following an analysis of successful organisations that deal with complex issues the political, public administration/sociology and economic spheres.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex Adaptive Systems theory</td>
<td>A theory that investigates how relationships between parts of a system give rise to the collective behaviours of the system and how the system interacts and forms relationships with its environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>complex/complicated</td>
<td>Complicated problems are linear and can be broken down into components and sequentially resolved. Complex problems are the result of concurrent interactions among multiple systems or events and cannot be permanently resolved because they continuously mutate; they must be monitored and managed (Fuerth 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity Leadership Theory</td>
<td>Complexity Leadership Theory explores the qualities and activities required to create conditions that enable a system to generate positive change while providing basic structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>connected localism</td>
<td>An approach to localism that preserves the value of the local while simultaneously tapping into broader networks across services, places and the public realm (LGIU 2013).</td>
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<tr>
<td>criticalisation</td>
<td>The effect of internally or environmentally generated shocks that disrupt the inner workings of an organisation (Goldstein et al. 2010).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cynethin framework</td>
<td>A conceptual framework that offers managers five decision-making contexts or domains (simple, complicated, complex, chaotic, and disorder) to define situations, and to make sense of behaviour.</td>
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disequilibrium: A state in which the need for change (organisational, policy etc.) is recognised as the equilibrium or status quo is no longer optimal for producing the desired outcomes.

dynamics, bottom-up: In a bottom-up system, policy or dynamic decisions, capabilities or requirements at the organisational levels closest to the end user influence the structure or design of policy.

dynamics, top-down: In a top-down system, policy or dynamic decisions, requirements or capabilities at a central organisational level control, determine or influence activity at levels closer to the end user.

emergence: Emergent outcomes, behaviours etc. are those which are not directed or centrally controlled but which arise out of the interactions of an operating system.

enabling paradigm: A proposed approach that considers appropriate resourcing and leadership style to navigate emergence and fragmentation.

entanglement: Entanglement is used to describe relationship tensions between formal top-down administration and bottom-up dynamics.

exploitation: A linear or top-down management approach that favours planning and established certainties.

exploration: A non-linear or bottom-up management approach that favours responsiveness and exploring new possibilities.

fragmentation: Another term for disequilibrium – the state needed for change. The two forms of fragmentation, principles-first and application-first, reflect but are not synonymous with top-down and bottom-up dynamics.

governance paradigm: The ‘fifth generation’ of policy implementation theory, which focuses on synthesising previous top-down and bottom-up theories to better address complexity.

joined-up-working: An umbrella term for planning, development and management of decisions that involve the end user.

leadership, adaptive: An emergent, interactive dynamic that is the primary source of which adaptive outcomes are produced (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007).
| Leadership, Administrative | The actions of individuals and groups in formal managerial roles who plan and coordinate organisational activities (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007). |
| Leadership, Enabling | A leadership style that serves to enable (catalyse) adaptive dynamics and help manage the entanglement between administrative and adaptive leadership (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007). |
| Localism | (a) An act of or approach to decision making at the local level; (b) Localism as defined in the Localism Act 2011. |
| Localism Act 2011 | UK legislation that changed the powers of local government in England. The aim of the act is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals and communities. |
| Macro Level | In terms of focus group interviews, the macro level represents those actors in closest proximity to centralised authority, or the acme of a top-down approach. |
| Meso Level | In terms of focus group interviews, the meso level represents those actors intermediate between micro and macro levels. |
| Micro Level | In terms of focus group interviews, the micro level represents those actors in closest proximity to the target community, or the base of a bottom-up approach. |
| Relationship Tension | Tension in the relationship between those at differing levels of the policy process, such as those designing or funding policy and those implementing, delivering or affected by policy outcomes. |
| Ring Fencing (Funds) | Dedication of funds to a specific purpose or function. |
| Silo Working | Execution of planning or functions in isolation from others performing similar, related or affected functions, leading to inefficiency, gaps in service delivery and possible conflict. |
| Starving (Funds) | Reducing the amount of funding to a service deliverer without any concurrent reduction in the level or standard of services to be provided. |
| Streamlining (Funds) | Removal or reduction of ring fenced or hypothecated funding streams to simplify financial management. |
Sure Start | A UK Government area-based initiative aimed at ‘giving children the best possible start in life’ by improving childcare, early education, health and family support, with an emphasis on outreach and community development.
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