

PLANNING FOR TRANSITIONS? A case study of Frome, Somerset (UK)

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ii. Ethical considerations

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¹ See Appendix A - Interview Schedule and Consent Form.

iv. Abstract

This thesis explores how 'formalised' policies, practices, and spheres of governance relate to 'bottom-up' activities in pursuit of new models of socio-political development in and around the planning process. In particular, whether rights bestowed to local authorities under the Localism Act (2011) offer a mechanism to lock-in *relocalised* (ultra-local, sustainable) or subversive agendas within mainstream development processes. The case study of the market town of Frome (Somerset, UK) has pushed an innovative sustainable placemaking agenda since a group of town councillors who reject party politics, the Independents for Frome (IfF), were elected in 2011. Using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), this study explores the conditions for the influence of relocalised actors and entities on Frome's placemaking and politics, whether 'niche' protagonists possess and retain this identity when occupying formal spaces of power, and the role of the 'regime' in cultivating and contesting or development alternatives and broader shifts in environmental, social and political arrangements. The findings reveal autonomy and independence as crucial frames used to justify an orchestration of transition governance, with both emergent and strategic foundations. Pre-existing ties and reciprocity helped to express and advance relocalised place-based artefacts using the structures of the state to weave in institutionalised forms of alternative governance to support local placemaking initiatives. Multiple praxes of the niche and planning and party-political 'regimes' were invoked, rendering the terms more fluid than is typically understood within *intersecting regimes of transition*. The findings highlight a need for greater attention to the cultural qualities of placemaking and scale as a basis for social ties that support inclusive and emergent governance. Cycles of transition and the intergenerational phases between old and new were key drivers in transition processes for individuals and organisations. The notion of *placemaking transitions* is offered to explore how the politics of place influences sustainability transition arenas.

v. Key words

Frome, Independent Politics, Localism, Neighbourhood Planning, New Economy, Relocalisation, Regimes of Transition, Sustainability Transitions, Planning Transitions Theory, Placemaking Transitions, Transition Movement.

vi. Preface and acknowledgements

My own background working in the charity sector in the UK, Africa and Brazil is motivated by the pursuit for social justice, transparency and creative, locally-driven solutions to development. Particularly where the interactions between community, government or other stakeholders give rise to innovative ideas and solutions for effective change.

My then partial disillusionment with international development led me to explore 'genuinely' authentic models of bottom-up development, without the intervention of the government or the international regime dictating which models are pursued. In 2009, a friend told me about the Transition Town Movement.² From the moment I discovered it, I had a feeling of finding something I had been searching for, and a continued interest in the evolution of this movement was born. What I liked about *Transition*, in particular, was its strong narrative of authentic grassroots development, which took a celebratory angle to respond to climate change. I was drawn to its spiritual and radical undertones of constructing 'parallel infrastructure' to build a movement for a post-capitalist and post-carbon society. One of the elements I challenged, however, was its independence from the government in its early narratives, where it was seen to be 'part of the problem', not the solution. This research is set within a growing attention to the 'political' within sustainability transitions.

The journey for this Ph.D. has been tumultuous, sprinkled with excitement about pursuing a fascinating research topic and navigating the complexity of the strands through which Frome's story can be told. I experienced doubts about my capacity to carry the weight of the demands of this thesis together with competing personal commitments. I am truly grateful to everyone who has supported me on this path, particularly my family who have given so much as I have drawn on them for time and space: I will do the same for you now. Thank you to Mum for always being there. I am sincerely grateful for all the precious time my supervisors and examiners contributed to help me bring forward an improved thesis and to refine fuzzy ideas. I am thankful for the financial contribution towards my studies from the University of Reading's Real Estate and Planning departmental studentship. Thank you to the respondents of Frome who shared their fascinating stories, their feedback and patience. I look forward to taking this token of learning and experience with me into what comes next.

² Herein referred to as *Transition*.

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x. Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
BIES	Department of Business, Industry, Energy and Strategy
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CCC	Committee on Climate Change
CfSH	Code for Sustainable Homes
CIC	Community Interest Company
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CLT	Community Land Trust
CRtBO	Community Right to Build Order
CSE	Centre for Sustainable Energy
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DECC	(Former) Department for Energy and Climate Change
EU	European Union
FiT	Feed-in-Tariff
FoE	Friends of the Earth
FTC	Frome Town Council
FRECo	Frome Renewable Energy Co-op
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HSR	Housing Standards Review
IdGN	Identity Governance Network
Iff	Independents for Frome
LDF	Local Development Framework
LPA	Local Planning Authorities
MCTI	Market and Coastal Towns Initiative
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MDC	Mendip District Council
MAP	Multi-Actor Perspective
MLP	Multi-Level Perspective
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NDO	Neighbourhood Development Order

NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OPL	One Planet Living
PCPA	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
REP	Real Estate and Planning
RQ	Research Question
SCC	Somerset County Council
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SHMAA	Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment.
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SNM	Strategic Niche Management
TI	Transition Initiative
ToR	Terms of Reference
TN	Transition Network
UK	United Kingdom
UoR	University of Reading
V4F	Vision4Frome
WoW	Ways of Working
XR	Extinction Rebellion
ZCH	Zero Carbon Homes

“[T]he possibility that green policy is more acceptable from Independents than green politicians is an interesting topic that bears further discussion” (Macfadyen, 2014, 95).

I Introduction

I.1. Fragmentation and opportunity in a changing world – the role of planning

How we can shape genuinely 'sustainable' development is a key question for our time; the means with which to achieve it are complex and subject to competing visions of what needs to be done, by whom and on what scale. The current rate of environmental destruction and species decline, population growth, the use of fossil fuels, pollution, declining food security, drought, flooding, and obesity are all trends that, left unchecked, will adversely impact human and environmental well-being³. Now more than ever we require a robust framework to guide and critique the type of world we are 'transitioning' towards.

However, which discourses of 'sustainable development' are invoked, and by whom, may seek either a more transformative agenda or encourage a post-political 'fix' in development and planning practice (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; North, 2011). In 2013, Hodson and Marvin (2013, p.29) suggested that a viable alternative to neo-liberalism is not yet formed: any such alternative would need to see "new power relationships coalesce to develop a view of state-space that seeks to redistribute state resources, forms of knowledge and categorisation in ways that seek to reinvigorate places and regions".

Peer-to-peer technologies, such as crowdfunding and internet-based movements are helping to link disparate actors through networked platforms which could give rise to more rapid diffusion and uptake of new models for development. Some have suggested that these trends reflect a "new era" in politics, where the innovative and the everyday are central as new actors seek to destabilise the status quo (Adnan, 2016) as an effect from globalisation and technology (Castells, 2007). Meanwhile, recent UK government austerity measures may have begun to open up opportunities for social enterprises to fill the spaces in between market and state; and advances in technology have increased affordability and availability of renewable energy (IRENA, 2017).

³ See ONS, 2018 for UK environmental data.

These trends may pave the way for a surge in new conversations about (low-carbon) political alternatives. Indeed, it appears that a new wave of eco-political discourse is gaining traction, emphasising notions of degrowth and socio-cultural experimentation. Purcell (2009, p.144) claims that within neo-liberalism “cracks and instabilities emerge as a matter of course”. Why these cracks emerge, how these are seized, and the form they take is essential to know how to generate development alternatives. In particular, whether these might result in widespread ‘transformation’ or smaller-scale ‘transitions’ and the most appropriate arenas to cultivate new imaginaries of development in a more ‘sustainable’ future.

A supportive planning system is key to managing complex environmental and social issues at local level, for instance supporting low-carbon design of buildings, influencing the physical terrain for ‘sustainable communities’ and encouraging people to become active in shaping plan-making.⁴ Planning theory itself is an array of perspectives on these different elements of planning. Authors exploring how planning could cultivate development alternatives have highlighted how these might (re-) organise the distribution, production and consumption of resources to promote the commons (Bunce, 2016; McGreevy and Wilson, 2017). Others have explored how citizens and planning authorities can co-produce sustainable development and the power dynamics of such an engagement (Watson, 2014; Albrechts, 2013).

The UK government reforms under the English localism policy agenda (through the Localism Act, 2011⁵) may well be a mechanism to enable these approaches to gain traction which bestowed a number of rights for communities to promote community-led development where they live and work, giving greater power to development and manage assets and set local development policies through Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). However, some perceive planning as a heavily developer-influenced regime that can crowd out alternative imaginaries to grassroots-led development (Flynn, 2016).

⁴ However, the UK has one of the least energy efficient housing stocks in Europe, with housing accounting for 27% of CO₂ emissions, compared with 38% for transport and 18% for industry (CSE, 2013). The UK’s Committee on Climate Change claims that emissions from buildings account for 17% of the country’s direct greenhouse gas emissions and reductions in this sector are marginal compared to other sectors (see CCC, 2015).

⁵ See chapter 3 Localism - a potential entry point for development alternatives?

1.2. Using sustainability transitions research to explore the politics of planning for transitions

Gunn and Hillier suggest that how ideas are lost, captured or transformed are essential in understanding planning practice (Gunn and Hillier, 2012). Yet planning theory has not yet fully addressed the growing, interdisciplinary body of research exploring how to cultivate sustainability transitions. Key concepts are useful to help understand the contribution of planning to broader transition processes, for instance the 'niche' (i.e. radical protagonists) and the 'regime' (i.e. institutions and state rules) and how they move in *transition arenas*.⁶ Whether such ideas remain 'niche' or if these can penetrate planning policy better if protagonist occupy positions of the state is explored.

Sustainability transitions literature seeks to understand how societies can actively promote sustainable outcomes across sectors⁷ and has recently looked deeper into power and politics (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015). Yet there remains a need to understand the broader role of placemaking – a collective effort of those within a given spatial remit to reimagine or stabilise local character and form – and an historical understanding of social network influence on the nature of particular constellations of 'transition'. Placemaking itself has morphed from narrow design strategies towards a tool for empowerment by change agents (see Strydom et al., 2018); the term's relation to planning renders the interaction of 'community-based' placemaking (niche) and spatial planning (regime) a fruitful study to explore the praxis between informal and formalised transition strategies and arenas.

This thesis aims to explore planning's contribution to development alternatives in the English local policy context and explore what linkages planning arenas, such as NDPs, have with broader placemaking and political arrangements and how these dynamics affect the conditions for development alternatives to take root. In particular, the role of planning to solicit environmental, social or even political sustainability transitions and what these concepts mean within a given

⁶ A term used by sustainability transitions scholars, notably those exploring Transition Management, to describe the purposeful governance arrangements to solicit 'transitions'. It is recognised here that these may not always be purposeful, and some arenas may be subject to group capture for subversive (i.e. niche-directed) transitions. See chapter 2.

⁷ See section 2.1.

spatial context. The next section introduces the key areas of investigation of *Transition*, independent politics and their potential contribution to a *New Economy*.⁸

1.3. The *Transition* movement and the pursuit of a 'New Economy'

The New Economy is a global banner – a meta narrative - for progressive ideals and practices that emphasise collaboration, wellbeing, self-reliance and shared resources (the commons), in an attempt to cultivate democratic, fair and sustainable alternatives to globalisation. The term was originally used to describe the transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based service economy in the 1990s and was recently co-opted by transition actors, such as the Transition Network-supported REconomy Project⁹ and the New Economics Foundation to emphasise local trade and action to produce multiplier effects to enhance local resilience, self-sufficiency and well-being; it also promotes alternative forms of exchange such as timebanks within the 'gift economy' and the value of natural capital is foundational to these types of approaches.¹⁰

The Real Economy project suggests that the New Economy is an (informal) federation of social movements, where it claims “we start to see this *transformational* ecosystem made up of many 'tribes', each with traits, characteristics, areas of interest and activity”¹¹ grouped within the following domains:

⁸ See Appendix B - Glossary of terms used in the thesis.

⁹ <http://reconomy.org/> (last accessed 10.10.16).

¹⁰ Rob Hopkins, co-founder of *Transition* summarises the New Economy in 50 words:

“Connected, delicious, entrepreneurial, hoppy, co-operative, inviting, nourishing, imaginative, caring, educational, dexterous, appreciative, enabling of inward investment, inspirational, viral, mindful, low carbon, local, resilient, raucous, playful, celebratory, generous, appreciative of beauty, skilled, content, diverse, reciprocal, deeply democratic, healthy, resourceful, attentive, empowering, crafted, empathic, collaborative, co-creative, inquisitive, patient, seasonal, welcoming and magnificent.” (See <https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/new-economy-50-words/> (last accessed 4.6.19).

¹¹ <http://reconomy.org/> (last accessed 10.10.16).

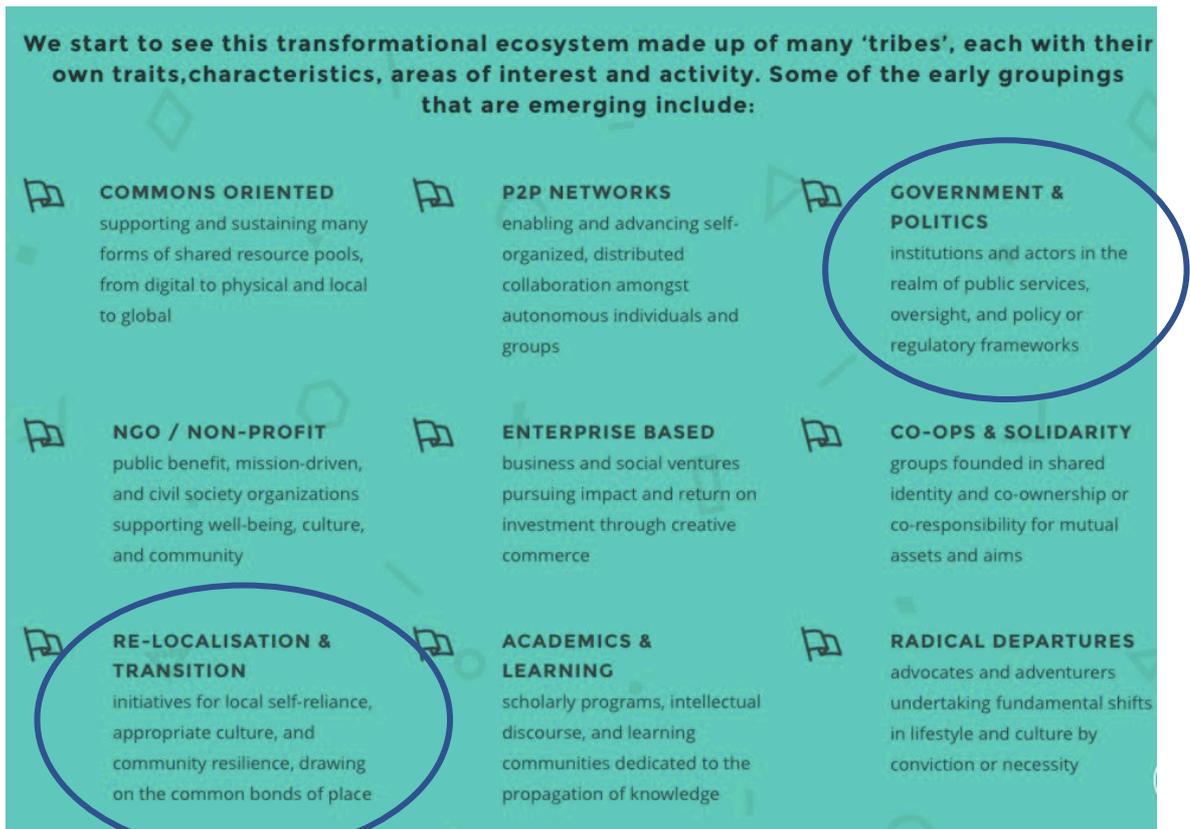


Figure 1-1. Tribes of the New Economy (Real Economy Lab, 2016)¹²

Some commentators believe the New Economy has great transformative potential due to its capacity to act like a rhizome¹³ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Morgan suggests that the New Economy is “a fertile site to building bridges between its emerging experiments and the global climate change architecture” (Morgan, 2014, 1740) while Tompt (2016, p.10) suggests that these initiatives may even “begin to decentralise economic power and create spaces for new politics and democratic practices to emerge”. The REconomy Lab also suggests that organisations within the New Economy can play many roles to support transitions, for instance as a disruptor, visionary, enhancer, facilitator, amplifier, connector or stabiliser.¹⁴

This thesis focuses on two of these tribes in particular: i) *Re-localisation and Transition* and ii) *Government and Politics*. It is not possible to map out how all of the different tribes intersect.

¹² <http://reconomy.org/> (last accessed 10.10.16).

¹³ A rhizome is plant whose roots and shoots are formed from its nodes (creeping rootstalks). Deleuze and Guattari used this term to describe the spread of network influences of a non-hierarchical and creeping character. This framing challenged linear, hierarchical root cause epistemologies and is influential in social movement research (e.g. Funke, 2012).

¹⁴ <http://realeconomylab.org/> (last accessed 15.9.17) [NB: website has malware].

Assessing these two elements together can help reveal the strategies *Transition* actors use to achieve more subversive objectives through formal political channels, such as the plan-making process to incite sustainability transitions in arenas in and around 'mainstream' institutions. *Transition* is, notably, itself a different tribe to government and politics; the thesis explores the conditions and linkages between them when transition actors occupy formal political roles and the effect this has on placemaking dynamics and the form of transition, if any.

1.3.1. The *Transition* movement and relocalisation

Transition Network describes *Transition* as "a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world"¹⁵; moreover, "ultimately it's about creating a healthy human culture, one that meets our needs for community, livelihoods and fun"¹⁶. The movement is a self-proclaimed social 'experiment' and has often prided itself as being a 'niche' organisation, protecting its radical edge from dilution (North and Longhurst, 2011).

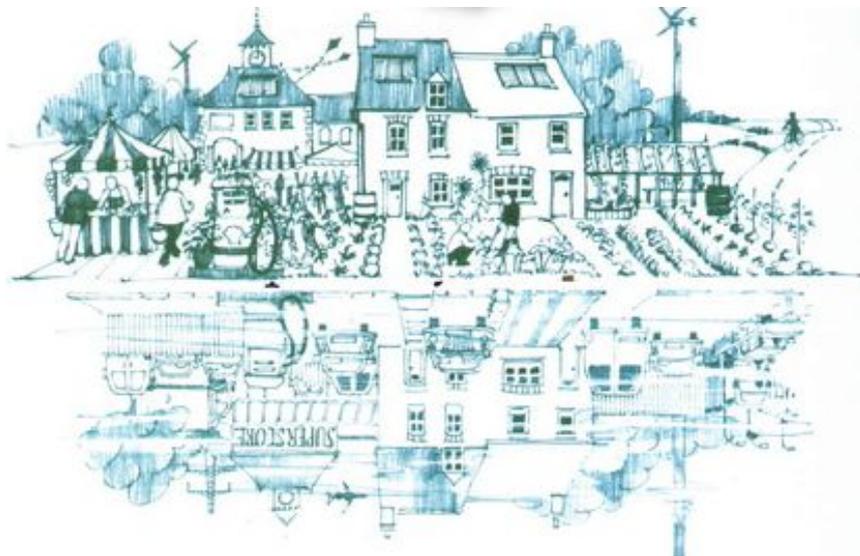


Figure 1-2. A vision of *Transition* – A snapshot from the *Transition Handbook* (Hopkins, 2008, front cover)¹⁷

¹⁵ <https://transitionnetwork.org/> (last accessed 7.1.19).

¹⁶ More information on the movement can be found at <https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/> (last accessed 7.1.19).

¹⁷ Reproduced with the kind permission of Rob Hopkins.

As indicates, the *Transition* movement is a principal actor within the New Economy, which it has willingly co-opted itself into. Transition was founded by Rob Hopkins, Naresh Giangrande and Ben Brangwyn in Totnes (UK) in 2006 building on experimentation with the ideas of relocalisation and permaculture¹⁸ in Kinsale, Ireland. There are over 1500 *Transition Initiatives* (TIs, community groups registered with Transition Network) registered in more than in 35 countries; regional and national *Hubs*¹⁹ help to coordinate the movement (Transition Network, personal communication).²⁰

In order for a TI to be registered with TN, potential initiatives are required to demonstrate they have followed various 'steps' to demonstrate compliance to the values and practices of the movement which were document in the Transition Handbook (Hopkins, 2008).²¹ However, the growth of the movement has recently plateaued in the UK (Transition Network, personal communication) which suggests valuable exploration of the effect of Transition's engagement within more mainstream processes, and the effect this might have on the configuration of the movement.

¹⁸ Permaculture is a sustainable design concept for agricultural systems that is sensitive to nature's rhythms as a basis for socio-environmental management and promotes self-sufficiency. See Mollison and Holmgren (1978).

¹⁹ The majority of Hubs are concentrated in Europe, with a recent increase in activity in Central and South America and Asia. Hubs are located in the following countries, with a majority signing an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Transition Network (TN) about their inter-organisational roles and responsibilities: Austria, Brazil (MoU), Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Germany (MoU), Hungary (MoU), Israel, Italy (MoU), Japan (MoU), London & South East England, Luxembourg (MoU), Mexico (MoU), Paris region, Portugal, Scotland (MoU), Slovenia (MoU), Spain (MoU), Sweden, USA (MoU), Wallonia-Brussels (MoU), with an emerging Hub in the Netherlands. Some of the countries with the highest numbers of Transition Initiatives include the UK, USA, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Canada, Spain, Portugal and Romania. Transition Initiatives tend to work at the community scale, whilst Hubs liaise between the Transition Initiatives in their country and the international Transition Network, and with national bodies, such as government or other national organisations.

²⁰ More information on the Transition Movement can be found on its website: <https://transitionnetwork.org/> (last accessed 28.1.19).

²¹ See Appendix C – The 12 steps (ingredients) to Transition.



Figure 1-3. Global distribution of Transition Initiatives and Hubs (TN website, 2019)²²

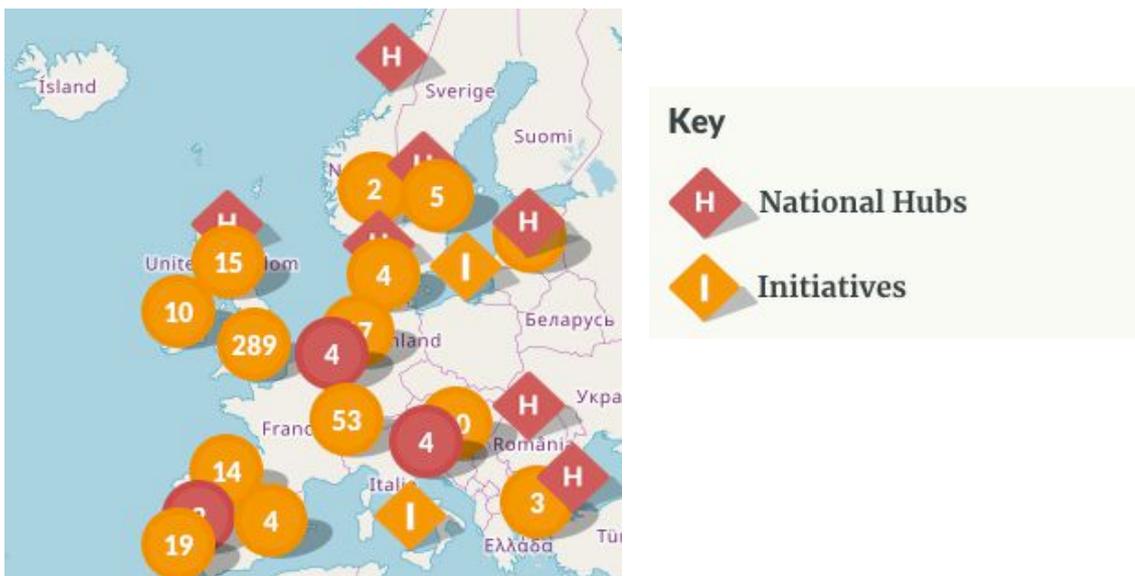


Figure 1-4. Spread of Transition in Europe (TN website, 2019)

Typically, Transition Initiatives work on a range of themes and related projects, such as community food, local currencies, community energy, energy descent plans and reskilling, which are examples of relocalisation in action. Relocalisation seeks to:

²² <https://transitionnetwork.org/transition-near-me/> (last accessed 27.1.19). Figures 1-2 and 1-3 reproduced with the kind permission of Transition Network.

“[B]uild societies based on the local production of food, energy and goods, and the local development of currency, governance and culture...to improve environmental conditions and social equity”²³

Transition also emphasises the role of Inner (psycho-social) Transition, asking questions such as “are we personally sustainable?” and attending to relational aspects of personal and social resilience and wellbeing, drawing on the work of Joanna Macy and ecopsychology (Power, 2015). Transition’s governance seeks to be purposeful, even transcendental, using reflective and meditative practices; more recently, the movement is deepening its experimentation with agile self-organisation and innovative decision-making - seeking inclusive practices that cultivate spontaneous action and learning or emergent, fluid forms of governance.

Notable examples include Open Space (which allows participants to self-organise their agenda items), the Law of Two Feet (which allows people to move freely in meetings to where they feel their energies are needed most), holocracy (which has a distinct emphasis on role autonomy) and sociocracy (which emphasises democratic decision-making by *consent*, not consensus)²⁴. Some authors perceive that *Transition’s* experimentation with Open Space and other socio-technical tools for collaborative community decision-making are new forms of community governance that encourage legitimacy and help communities to frame their own agenda (Barr and Devine-Wright, 2012; Hardt, 2013).

However, Transition Initiatives are increasingly finding themselves constrained and threatened by pressures on land and the built environment, including development proposals on community spaces or allotments, conversion of employment sites to residential, or development is often not sufficiently integrated into a sustainable transport network and renewable energy systems. To have an impact, Bollier (2016) suggests that relocalised practices need to be safeguarded by legal and institutional structures.

These pressures have led to an increasing interest among some Transition Initiatives on the relevance and importance of planning to counteract these pressures and to formalise relocalisation; thus, effectively galvanising Transition Initiatives to act in increasingly political and

²³ <https://www.postcarbon.org/relocalize/> (last accessed 9.6.19).

²⁴ The Transition Network is undergoing an organisational change project experimenting with deepening these governance approaches at an organisational level initially, with the anticipation these practices will become further embedded in the movement itself. Indeed the Hubs – which were established after Transition Network – have begun to utilise these (Transition Network, personal communication). See (<https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/opportunity-freelance-organisational-development-work/>) (last accessed 4.6.19).

institutional arrangements²⁵. In particular, how the UK government's localism agenda - a set of rights introduced to enable community-led development – might support this endeavour²⁶. Felicetti (2013) points to four assumptions the Localism agenda (UK government) shares with relocalisation (Transition). These include:

- i) People should have more control over decision making and services,
- ii) Stronger, accountable local government
- iii) Community ownership and the Community Right to Bid, where communities can buy and manage local facilities formally in public ownership

The localism agenda, has, in principle, increased opportunities for Transition Initiatives to influence the planning process (Felicetti, 2013) their contributions and their effect is telling of the reach of alterity – (radical) difference to the 'other' - in formal institutionalised processes. Notably, the capacities of New Economy actors like *Transition* to engage (or confront) regime practices and whether this results in claiming some discursive ground on development trajectories. However, Felicetti suggests that localism, as proposed by the government, is couched in neo-liberal rather than *Transition* values (Felicetti, 2013). Thus, begging the question as to whether the spaces opened by localism are a conduit for alternative, low-carbon development pathways to be incorporated into statutory, local instruments.

However, some development alternatives may encourage a middle-class, even elitist engagement that fails to challenge the status quo (Merritt and Stubbs, 2012), with homogenous grouping of already actively engaged citizens or "enclaves" - many of whom have a background in environmental action and related professions (Felicetti, 2013, p.570). *Transition's* action 'under the radar' - as a niche experiment - is considered to compromise the movement's capacity to challenge capitalist logics that penetrate globalised society (North and Longhurst, 2013). As the movement expands its presence around the world, and it increasingly engages with institutional actors, the extent to which *Transition* as a movement - or as individual Transition Initiatives - can sustain and advance its radical edge is a key area of interest (Barnes, 2015).

²⁵ *Transition* Energy Descent plans that have been core to the emergence of the *Transition* movement and were cited as a form of community-based planning for energy projects (see Clark, 2011).

²⁶ See chapter 3 for an overview on key debates within English localism and neighbourhood planning.

1.3.2. Transition and government

One of the steps to become a Transition Initiative is demonstrating efforts to forge a link with the local council (see Rowell, 2010)²⁷. Indeed, new alternative political approaches are considered in the fold of the New Economy.²⁸ However, as a movement, *Transition* has typically shied away from being political, instead distancing itself from more mainstream debates on party politics. At the same time, mainstream politics has either ignored it or it has not been on its radar (Bollier, 2016). This has led some to question its transformative potential (Chatterton and Cutler, 2008; North and Longhurst, 2013). Others call out a tension in its apolitical stance, since normative positions and alternative practices to encourage ecological and socio-cultural transitions are in themselves political endeavours (Storey, 2011; Barnes, 2015).

Felicetti suggests that whether *Transition* engages with institutions on a non-confrontational basis requires greater scrutiny (Felicetti, 2013). Barnes suggests that it is time *Transition* recognised its inherently political role in shaping development pathways and the dichotomy of *Transition's* non-partisan stance as it “forays” into institutionalised spaces may “finally be confronting political reality”; Transition Initiatives, and *Transition* more broadly, should re-evaluate its relationship to local government and instead channel institutional policy-making and implementation powers towards *Transition's* objectives, particularly around planning-related issues (Barnes, 2015, p.323).

At the same time, broader political, social and economic trends affect the context in which *Transition* operates. Recently, there has been increasing interest in a more ‘progressive’ type of politics²⁹. *The Alternative: towards a new progressive politics* (Nandy et al., 2016), written by self-proclaimed progressive MPs, practitioners and thinkers sets out a manifesto for a collaborative politics to challenge the UK’s adversarial party-political system. They define progressive politics as:

“Progressives want to move beyond the current system and create a better one... Progressives are, by definition, radicals. We reimagine the way our society and our economy works from the bottom up. We wish to reform the socially isolating and environmentally degrading mainstream

²⁷ See Appendix C – The 12 steps (ingredients) to Transition.

²⁸ The effect of Transition on political actors is becoming more prominent in recent times, whereby Transition Network’s *Municipalities in Transition* project is mapping the movement’s influence on local government in case studies worldwide (see <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/transition-in-action/municipalities-project/> (last accessed 27.1.19).

²⁹ For instance, at a national level there have been moves towards a cross-party coalition of progressive MPs known as the Progressive Alliance, championed by a movement for progressive politics, Compass <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/> (last accessed 27.1.19).

*economics that has dominated our political discourse for several decades... We...want power and wealth **distributed**, and corporations **regulated**...We share a **rejection** of the politics of fear and division, and wish to move towards a more **inclusive** society in which every citizen has the opportunity to **develop themselves** to their full potential but has as much control as possible over **their own destiny** and the chance to shape the society in which they live. This way we believe we will build a society that both empowers people and allows us to live **within environmental limits**". (Nandy et al., 2016., p.xix-xx, emphasis added).*

Progressive politics, like other elements of the New Economy, emphasises collaboration which is "negotiated with others, not imposed by one group" (Nandy et al., 2016, p.xxii). Lawson refers to this type of politics as '45-degree politics'³⁰ - "the point between traditional governance and modern-day activism in all its forms. This fault line is the space progressives must understand, own and occupy if we are to shape the future of a politics that is of and for the people" (Lawson, 2016, p.14). Indeed, Rowell suggests that Transition Initiatives need to form meaningful relationships with local authorities, and, in addition, people involved in Transition should put themselves forward for election (Rowell, 2011, p.11).

What happens when Transition engages with institutional actors or willingly co-opts itself within the systems they seek to change needs further examination. The notion of subversion can help to frame such a study and explore what the interaction of the different tribes of the New Economy reveals about the politics of subversive placemaking. Subversion here is understood as the "undermining of an institution or of the state, often by infiltrating offices and turning them against themselves"; *being* subversive is "intending or intended to subvert an established order, especially to undermine or overthrow an established government"(Scruton, 2007³¹).

Whilst there has been a move away from a more siloed conceptualisation of the 'niche' and the 'regime' in sustainability transitions research more recently, the case study of Frome can explore how placemaking dynamics weave into or are set apart from the structures of the state. The thesis aims to dissect what these concepts mean when protagonist actors – many rooted in non-partisan backgrounds – occupy a town council and the barriers to entry (and opportunities) in using the state to challenge traditional conceptions of politics and development.

³⁰ See also Compass, 2016. In April 2019, Compass recently launched The Commons Platform: a new stage of alliance-based and participatory politics (see Spours et al, 2019).

³¹ Online resource with no page number.

1.4. Research scope and objectives

This research hypothesises that localism rights can be used to engender relocalised development initiatives. This thesis investigates the extent to which *Transition* has influenced the conditions for development alternatives to take place and the role of planning and placemaking dynamics on the form of resultant transition pathways.

The planning process is a critical arena in which to critique how the values of the New Economy intersect with existing policies and practices through a negotiated, yet politicised, experience. The planning system affects the way tensions are dissipated, contained and spread (Rootes, 2003). Indeed, such a spatial focus is vital in understanding sustainability transitions because “local context and agency may filter the effects of global transformation” (Blanco, 2013, 279). Planning itself can be a significant disruptor to identities – giving physical form to particular activities among groups in society and setting the terrain in which we relate to our environment.

Understanding how transition dynamics play out at a local level and their linkages to wider phenomena can help explain planning's role for shaping transition pathways. Debates within planning theory have highlighted conflict and contestation are inherent to the planning process; multiple agendas – community, Local Planning Authority (LPA)³², developers, landowners and national government – affect both the discursive parameters and eventual outcomes of ‘appropriate’ development.

If ‘progressive’ actors take power in formal, institutional roles, whether their original intentions are carried with them through the planning process or renegotiated by institutional actors is telling of the reach of alterity in formal institutionalised processes of governance. Can these actors retain a ‘niche’ identity when they occupy formal spaces of power or do they cultivate their own ‘regime’? This raises a question over how development alternatives travel from the grassroots (placemaking networks) through planning and how these spaces might act as “terrains of resistance” for imagining alternative futures and degrees of their institutionalisation, or not, into mainstream processes of governance and planning arenas (see Routledge, 1996). As Tompt suggests “the

³² The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines an LPA as “the public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area” (MHCLG, 2018a, p.67) defines an LPA as “the public body whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area”.

models are there. How can we create the conditions to put them into practice?" (Tompt, 2016, p.11).

This thesis explores key debates in sustainability transitions research and invokes and challenges core concepts such as the 'niche' and the 'regime', transition arenas and the notion of transition itself to explore the politics of placemaking dynamics that either cultivate or contest 'sustainable' development alternatives.

Meanwhile, the crafting of future-orientated, resilient, and sustainable places also brings the question of what is to be resilient or made sustainable, and for whom. There is a need to explore the political nature of why actors come together in placemaking arenas: what shared motivations, or identities, create the conditions for shaping planning outcomes or resisting dominant development narratives (Markard et al., 2016). Namely, how the plan-making process sustains or reconfigures the personal, collective, organisational and spatially defined goals of those involved in placemaking networks. Or, if the planning process does not appear to live up to its claimed refashioned role of enabling bottom-up voices to have greater influence on the nature of placemaking, what other strategies can lead to possible transition pathways?

The theoretical task at hand is thus, in the words of Davies and Featherstone (2013, p.244): "how different trajectories of activity are combined and reworked" in transition arenas that brings together – or exclude - 'niche' and 'regime' actors. For instance, exploring whether the introduction of localism rights and a new spatial level – the 'neighbourhood' – may have affected the politics of sustainability transitions: how these are conceived, how ideas travel within the planning process, and their effect on broader change processes, by providing an entry point to redefine sustainable placemaking. Notably, this research explores whether the rights bestowed to local authorities under the localism policy agenda offer a mechanism to lock-in relocalised identities within 'mainstream' development processes. Fundamentally, the research explores whether transitions can be planned and the balance between steer and emergence in cultivating development alternatives.

However, it is essential to understand the relationships, contributions, strategies, and experiences of those engaged in broader placemaking activities. In particular, whether inter-organisational relationships act as a praxis for alternative development models to be formalised.

Table 1-1 Overarching objective, research objectives and questions

Overarching objective	
To investigate the scope for implementing (New Economy) transitions through mainstream institutions or initiatives at the local scale	
Overarching research question	
To what extent have mainstream institutions enabled or frustrated transitions at the local scale for either i) <i>Transition</i> and relocalisation ('niche' transition arenas) or ii) government and politics? ('regime' transition arenas)	
Objective	Research Question
<i>Objective 1. To understand the role of placemaking networks in shaping the form of Frome's transition arenas</i>	1. <i>How do local conditions influence the terrain (networks) for relocalised transitions?</i>
<i>Objective 2. To interrogate whether the 'niche' and the 'regime' are appropriate concepts when protagonists occupy the structures of the state</i>	2. <i>To what extent do 'niche' actors advance their objectives when they occupy formal spaces of government 'regimes'?</i> 3. <i>How do formal and informal ties affect the politics of transition?</i>
<i>Objective 3. To understand the form of transitions in Frome and their reach</i>	4. <i>What are the consequences of the occupation of the state by protagonists on the form (steer vs. emergence) of niche-directed transitions?</i>

The effect of the occupation of the political roles on local placemaking networks can give a longitudinal and multi-level perspective on placemaking transitions, if any.

1.5. Introducing the case study of Frome

This thesis explores the journey towards ‘transitions’ in the pioneering market town of Frome in Somerset, UK (population 26,203: ONS, 2011). Frome is pushing a sustainable place-shaping agenda in many innovative ways since Frome Town Council (FTC) became independently controlled when a non-party political group - the Independents for Frome (IfF)³³ - came to power in 2011 and won 10 out of 17 seats and, since 2015, IfF now occupy all 17 seats in the council – having repeated a full house win in the 2019 local elections. Some of the town councillors who took power in 2010 from the perceived ineffective, incumbent town council were members of the local TI, Sustainable Frome, including Macfadyen as the “chief theorist” of Flatpack Democracy³⁴ as Sustainable Frome founding member (Harris, 2015).³⁵

IfF purposely rejects party politics as a “poison” that “infects” the capacity of political representatives to make fair decisions (Macfadyen, 2014). Instead, IfF uses a set of formalised rules and values, the *Ways of Working* (WoW), to frame their decision-making which respects the diverse personal views within the group and aims to put Frome’s interests (rather than party politics) first. IfF’s politics are claimed to be inclusive, emergent and draw upon maximising collective action, where the town council plays a *facilitating* role as opposed to following the ‘party line’ and is increasingly known for a strong political and social movement with a distinctly green tinge, which emphasises social wellbeing.

A vigorous local narrative reflected within IfF’s politics enabled FTC to latch onto to the policy discourse of localism - but with subversive objectives. As Peter Macfadyen suggests in the publication *Flatpack Democracy*, there is potential for new localism legislation to be used – quite probably not as it was intended (Macfadyen, 2014). Under IfF, FTC’s approach is to fuse relocalisation and the government policy of localism and to showcase New Economy practices in the UK and has established many bold and ambitious initiatives since 2010 - both inside and outside the remit of spatial planning.

³³ <http://iffrome.org.uk> - (last accessed 22.9.16). Town and parish councils are the lowest tier of political administration in England.

³⁴ <http://www.flatpackdemocracy.co.uk> (last accessed 22.9.16).

³⁵ See Table 5-1 Previous experience of IfF councillors (both 2011 and 2015 administrations) as either having links to Sustainable Frome or experience of working in government as either a councillor or in a professional capacity.

FTC used its NDP to promote strongly relocalised ideas and practices on co-housing, self-build, shared space schemes and One Planet Living (OPL) principles, which was 'made' (adopted) in October 2016. In 2016, FTC even made the bold announcement that the town would become fossil fuel free by 2046, which was superseded by the target to become carbon zero by 2030, following a broader campaign for decarbonisation in 2018.³⁶ FTC's approach has been to crowdsource local knowledge and resources to boost socio-environmental regeneration from a commons approach, community-led stewardship of resources for the good of all. For instance, in 2014 it supported a crowdfunding initiative to save a local field from development and co-facilitated the first Share shop in the UK³⁷ (where people borrow otherwise unused goods for a small fee, established in 2015), and from 2016 a local solidarity fridge that has the support of local businesses to promote a circular economy.

Frome itself has undergone a shift in its reputation as a slightly down at heel town (compared to other neighbouring Somerset towns), and relatively unknown outside of this area, to being defined by national media as one of the 'coolest' places to live. The Sunday Times reported it to be the best place to live in South West England (The Sunday Times, 2018) and independent boutique retailer Trouva.com named Frome as the most "stylish" place in the UK. An article in The Guardian proclaimed Frome as the "People's Republic of Frome" (Harris, 2015), given the town's strongly independent stance. IfF has since ignited a broader movement of political change in the UK, several European countries, and the United States under the Flatpack Democracy "do it yourself" independent political banner.

Frome's innovative mix of alternative governance arrangements, the strong links to the local Transition Initiative, its radical (non-) party political agenda, and FTC's determination to encourage low-carbon development make it an extremely relevant case study to the study of sustainability transitions. The thesis seeks to reveal the tools, strategies and transition arenas that were employed by actors in Frome to incite transitions towards alternative development models, including Frome's NDP. In addition, these can be a lens to understand the degrees of contestation between the 'niche' and the 'regime' and what this means if protagonist actors occupy the structures of the state. The extent to which these alternative practices and ideas have become institutionalised within the remit of the town council and its influence on the planning system and the broader political-institutional effects of *Transition* are at the core of this research.

³⁶ See <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/resilience/clean-future/> (last accessed 4.6.19).

³⁷ <https://sharefrome.org/> (last accessed 31.12.17). More information on these initiatives can be found in section 5.3 and Appendix J – Relocalised image library summary.

1.6. Summary of the methodological approach

How these transition arenas intersect, evolve and shape new development pathways can illustrate the diffusion of relocalisation and independence over time. Frome offers an opportunity to explore whether the organisational identity of *Transition* is carried into spaces of government through the actors involved with a longitudinal and multi-level analysis and how ties to the movement are retained, carried forward or transcended as actors weave in and out of various entities and transition arenas in the town.

The empirical study for this research was between March 2014 to October 2017³⁸. The NDP process was an entry point through which to chart transitions to collective and organisational relationships and their embeddedness in particular networks, and how their participation in these arenas may have resulted in changes in network characteristics and flows.

A detailed coding of 32 in-depth interviews with 27 respondents in Frome³⁹, local authority representatives and selected national level actors using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) informed a conceptual framework (outlined in chapter 4)⁴⁰ to trace placemaking transition dynamics in Frome. These accounts were supplemented by a review of relevant documents, such as the NDP and its supporting evidence base, including Frome's Community Plan, local and national media articles, images, and observations at Frome-based events I attended (captured in a research diary)⁴¹. These multiple sources captured salient entities and critical events in Frome's relocalised journey. The relational ties between these entities over time was mapped to demonstrate changing network relations of the relocalised network under study from 2006 (when Sustainable Frome was established) up until 2016 (when the NDP was made).

³⁸ Owing to the break in my research over two maternity leaves within the course of my studies, see Table 4-2 Summary of research carried out and timeline.

³⁹ I.e. some respondents were interviewed more than once.

⁴⁰ See Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-1.

⁴¹ For a summary list of sources reviewed see Table 4-7.

1.7. Summary of contributions

The study has valuable contributions (methodologically, empirically and theoretically) to several disciplinary areas. The findings hope to contribute to wider (popular) debates and movements including transition, placemaking, local politics and planning by revealing the ingredients of successful strategies (or otherwise) of fringe ideas becoming mainstream and institutionalised in and around the fabric of government institutions.

By showcasing development and governance alternatives in Frome, this thesis seeks to shed light on the complexities and realities of Frome's success, either for those seeking to replicate the Flatpack Democracy model (Macfadyen, 2014) or those involved in community-based planning (e.g. neighbourhood planning) who seek to cultivate positive placemaking.

The research aims to reflect on how innovative, and potentially transformative, ideas are carried within and between government and the implications for upscaling and increasing the resilience of community initiatives in different settings, and the role of market towns⁴² as urban contexts to successfully promote sustainability transitions. Fundamentally, this thesis seeks to build the foundations to understand how planning practice can contribute to socio-technical, and socio-political transitions, and the development of a wider body of *planning transitions theory*.

By using a multi-level and longitudinal perspective, the research explores the intersection between place, power and politics and the relationship planning has to broader sustainable development pathways. The thesis also explores role of social movements (*Transition*) in clustering, transmuting and channelling networks of alternative socio-political pathways and the extent different 'tribes' of the New Economy might be 'coming together' – for this study i) relocalisation and *Transition* and ii) government and politics⁴³ - and what this means for a more coherent approach to planning for transitions. Such an approach is critical to understand the drivers for such a change or whether a niche movement for change can penetrate planning and its related socio-technical system, the development sector. Moreover, the case study offers the opportunity to explore whether independent politics can transcend often conceived 'sticky' transition dynamics in planning practice.

⁴² A town of moderate size where a regular market is held, a term which has roots in the middle ages.

⁴³ See Figure 1-1.

1.8. Chapter summaries

Table 1-2 Chapter Summaries

Chapter	Chapter summary
Chapter 2: Sustainability transitions theory and its relevance to planning for transitions	This chapter turns to sustainability transitions literature to explore how these debates might enrich planning theory's approach to understand the intersection between alternative development models as protagonist approaches to planning 'regimes'. It outlines a conceptualisation of the political within sustainability transitions as well as gaps in understanding the spatial and social ties that may straddle the niche and the regime within the politics of transition dynamics.
Chapter 3: Localism - a potential entry point for development alternatives?	An overview of the localism policy context to cultivate sustainable development, as defined in the NPPF is discussed. The chapter outlines different forms of localism and critiques in the application of localism rights, including neighbourhood planning to date and questions the potential for localism to enable entry points for inciting development alternatives.
Chapter 4: Methodology	How and why particular methods were chosen in response to the research questions are presented. Notably, the methodological framework and a stage-by-stage account of the research design and implementation process, including the interview design. The triangulation of interviews with other data sources is outlined, together with processes for data analysis and ethical and practical data management considerations.
Chapter 5: A background to Frome and its transition arenas	This chapter presents the in-depth case study and describes the relationships between principal entities involved in Frome's transition arenas and a summary of key achievements to date towards relocalised placemaking in the town. This chapter serves as a background to the subsequent empirical chapters (6 – 11).

Chapter 6: Frome's placemaking dynamics	This details the coming together of actors that became part of Frome's relocalised placemaking network using respondents' own perspectives, why they were attracted to Frome in order to understand the spatial and the socialisation of relocalised practices.
Chapter 7: Navigating the politics of subversive localism, a): transitioning from placemaking into the spheres of local government	lff's route to power and the skills and experiences of those involved in a journey to reconfigure the governance of the town council, as well as the key party-political challenges in doing so, is explored.
Chapter 8: Navigating the politics of subversive localism b): ambition vs. rules in localism transition arenas	Explores key developmental challenges in Frome, as understood by respondents, and how Frome's NDP responded to these. For instance, as an attempt to advance development alternatives and the challenges and opportunities in doing so. The chapter explores experiences of regime control and obstruction within the planning process.
Chapter 9: Navigating the politics of subversive localism c): relational ties in the planning and political regime	The relational ties between FTC and formal entities within the NDP process and district and national government are unpacked. Key blockages and potential for partnerships are explored.
Chapter 10: Navigating the politics of subversive localism d): relational ties in and around Frome's placemaking networks	The chapter explores how informal ties in Frome's placemaking networks flowed into, mutated or were redirected as some placemaking actors moved into formal roles when lff took control of the town council or used the NDP as a mechanism to advance relocalisation.
Chapter 11: The effects of lff on the form of transition in Frome's placemaking networks	This chapter explores the concept of transition in various forms, including organisational transitions, personal and political transitions and the challenge of 'jumping scale'; preferred relationships between the niche and regime are offered as respondents' vision for change.

<p>Discussion - evaluating Frome's contribution to the study of planning for transitions at the niche:regime interface</p>	<p>Discusses the findings in response to the research questions and what the results offer to debates on sustainability transitions, planning and the concept of placemaking. The concept of <i>placemaking transitions</i> is put forward to bring together debates in planning theory and sustainability transitions research to enrich the intersection between alternative development models and their influence on sustainability transition pathways. <i>An intersecting regimes of transition framework</i> is offered to understand the nexus between niche and regime and suggests related avenues for future research.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>Outlines a summary of the research and significant findings in addition to key recommendations. The chapter offers reflections on Frome's experience in the context of Brexit and the Extinction Rebellion movement.</p>

2 Sustainability transitions theory and its relevance to planning for transitions

To understand how development alternatives interface with formal and informal processes, such as the planning system, and how they can contribute to a more sustainable society, this chapter explores key debates in sustainability transitions theory. This chapter outlines the state-of-the-art in current sustainability transitions literature including key terminology used to explore how grassroots, or 'niche' actors influence mainstream, or 'regime' actors and institutions. However, though recent work has focused on the politics of sustainability transitions there is still a need to consider the interplay between spatial and political-institutional configurations and their effect on transition pathways, particularly within a planning context and wider placemaking networks. Whilst sustainability transitions literature has an explicit focus on the notion of 'transition' the intention of making sustainable places also has strong correlations with placemaking and planning more broadly, particularly more radical approaches suggested by some planning scholars. This thesis argues that in order for planning theory to be situated in the local application of broader sustainable development systems these two bodies of research should be integrated further.

2.1 Relevant concepts in sustainability transitions

Social movement scholar Doherty suggests that a unified 'environmental movement' does not exist and there is a broad range of ideas, values and coalitions across the environmental sector (Doherty, 2007). Melucci suggests that social movements need to think critically about what type of change they are seeking and what bearing this has on their social movement identity (Melucci, 1989; see North, 2011). Deciding, for instance, whether to change policy, engage in lobbying or construct radical new types of knowledge outside of formal institutions. Authors have suggested that climate activism embodies a movement containing diverse "convergent" spaces or networks which consist of networks at different scales that act independently, coalesce and then disperse (Routledge, 1996, Featherstone, 2008 in North, 2011; Tompt, 2016).

Sustainability transitions research focuses on the mechanisms, strategies and the potential for replication towards more sustainable (socio-technical) systems; notably, how innovative actors and ideas can penetrate and reconfigure dominant structures and practices towards low-carbon alternatives, for example in sectors such as energy, housing or food networks. This field of research was pioneered by Dutch academics in the late 1990s (Kemp et al., 1998; Kemp et al., 2001; Rotmans et al., 2001; Geels, 2002), which had roots in innovation theory, including processes of diffusion and replication of innovation, science and technology studies, systems thinking and environmental and sustainability studies.

The study of a move towards a more sustainable future can tend to be split between concepts of *transition* and *transformation*. Summarising a review of definitions of transformation, Feola (2015, p.377) suggests the term is broadly understood as a “major, fundamental change” whilst transition is perceived as something more “incremental” (see also Hölscher et al, 2018). As Feola argues, some authors draw a clear distinction between the two concepts whilst others see transition as a condition of transformation in society. Similarly, there are nuanced differences within sustainability transitions research on defining a transition as gradual, disruptive, continuous or as tipping points; each description tending to have a slightly different emphasis within a broader theory of change:

“[A transition is] a gradual, continuous process of change where the structural character of a society (or complex sub-system of society) transforms” (Rotmans et al., 2001, p. 16).

“A long-term, fundamental change in societal subsystems and are seen as encompassing co-evolutionary and mutually reinforcing processes in the economic, technological, institutional and socio-cultural domains.” (Holz et al. 2008, p.623)

“Transitions are disruptive changes that develop in a shock-wide manner rather in a gradual way... [similar to] punctuated equilibria and tipping points in evolutionary biology and ecology” (Loorbach et al., 2007, p.607).

Stirling suggests that the distinction between transition and transformation is heuristic “the real value lies in considering implications on a concrete case by case basis, by reference to real-world examples and settings” (Stirling, 2014, p.13).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This thesis maintains the use of the word sustainability transitions due to the discursive links between *Transition* and the broader body of research exploring the ties of the movement towards goal-directed sustainability transitions.

The role of an increasingly transdisciplinary sustainability transitions research agenda takes a normative perspective to further “insight[s] into the persistency of unsustainable societal regimes and transition pathways and transition management strategies to escape lock-in...to advance and accelerate desired transitions” (Loorbach et al., 2017. P.601; p.602). In particular, this research explores the assumption that sectors act like socio-technical regimes - a set of structural relations tied to process of control, typically of the status quo, and an alignment of activities which stabilise existing trajectories (Geels and Schot, 2007). Two definitions of the socio-technical regime are presented below:

“[P]atterns of artefacts, institutions, rules and norms assembled and maintained to perform economic and social activities” (Berkhout et al., 2003, p.1).

“A strongly institutionalized core organizational field which may encompass dominant technological paradigms but also specific professional identities, commonly held beliefs, sectoral culture, dominant societal discourse or shared problem agendas which give rise to a specific mix of institutionalized logics.” (Berget et al., 2015, p.54).

Those operating within regimes typically experience lock-in within institutions that prevent individuals from exerting freedom to break through institutional norms and roles, extending their reach into everyday practices, echoing Foucault’s notion of governmentality (Foucault, 1982). Scott and Geels suggest the socio-technical regime becomes embedded through normative, cognitive and regulative dimensions (Schot and Geels, 2008). They suggest that institutional rules are based on normative dimensions (roles, values and behavioural norms), cognitive dimensions (belief systems, agendas) and regulative dimensions (standards, policies etc). They also suggest that these rules are carried through symbols, relationships, routines and artefacts which help to standardise practices and norms. These may be enacted and diffused either through coercion, imitation or shared values (Genus, 2014).

Optimal outcomes that result in regime shift (Kemp et al., 1998) occur when social and technical elements are mutually reinforcing towards sustainable goal-directed pursuits (Schot and Geels, 2008), with regimes becoming more responsive to ecological concerns. Such a change is considered to then lead to a re-ordering of societal functions.

Studies relevant to the role of planning in transitions include energy transitions (Kem and Smith, 2008), building materials (Smedby and Quitzau, 2016) and sustainable transport (Goyal and Howlet, 2018). More recently the spatial configurations necessary for transition have received greater attention, such as scalar issues related to the state administrative arrangements (Ehnert et

al., 2018) the city (Wolfram, 2015), regional transitions (Späth and Rohracher, 2012) communities (Smith, 2012; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012), arrangements between stakeholders (Grin et al., 2011; Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015) and the politics these types of interactions invoke (Patterson et al., 2017).

Pressures for regime shift may arise from many angles – social movements, changing resource and consumption patterns, government policy, business or policy drivers. These pressures are typically assumed to arise as either from 'niche' or 'landscape' pressures that either cause the regime to reinforce/stabilise or innovate/deconstruct the status quo depending on the configuration and pressures around the regime (Avelino and Rotmans, 2009). If an innovation penetrates a regime this will either lead to degrees of reconfiguration (or even collapse) towards a new stabilisation pattern to become a new regime or the innovation may be unsuccessful due to lock-in (Loorbach et al., 2017). For instance, Hodson et al's (2013) review of 30 alternatives to retrofitting in Manchester (UK) demonstrates how the buy-in of regime actors affected niche actors' radical capacity to 'fit and conform' or 'stretch and transform' (Lauber and Jacobsson, 2016 in Raven et al., 2016; see Smith and Raven, 2012).

Transition scholars explore these potential entry points through different sub-sets of the research field. The 'niche' is typically perceived to be innovative, the challenger or protagonist. Strategic Niche Management (SNM) explores ideas that are cultivated within protected *experimental settings* to develop norms and practices which depart from those of an incumbent regime (Rip and Kemp, 1998) in an effort to retain a radical vision without being co-opted into existing systemic relations (Berkhout et al., 2003). Transition Management explores transition arenas as purposeful governance arrangements that encourage innovation in a 'safe zone' to cultivate a market innovation (Kenis et al., 2015). Niche actors may also take advantage of opportune moments to challenge incumbent regimes – windows of opportunity (Geels, 2002). Similarly, landscape pressures such as policy change, economic slowdown or environmental pressures may force a regime to change course. Successful transition initiatives can also arise from within regimes themselves.⁴⁵ Change may also arise as co-production or interdependencies between many actors within and outside of state institutions.

The highly influential Geels (2002) depicted the interaction between the 'levels' of the niche, regime, and landscape to effect change processes within their Multi-level Perspective (MLP) conceptual framework.

⁴⁵ NB: note the distinction between a generic transition initiative in sustainability transitions research and Transition Initiatives within the context of the Transition movement.

Increasing structuration
of activities in local practices

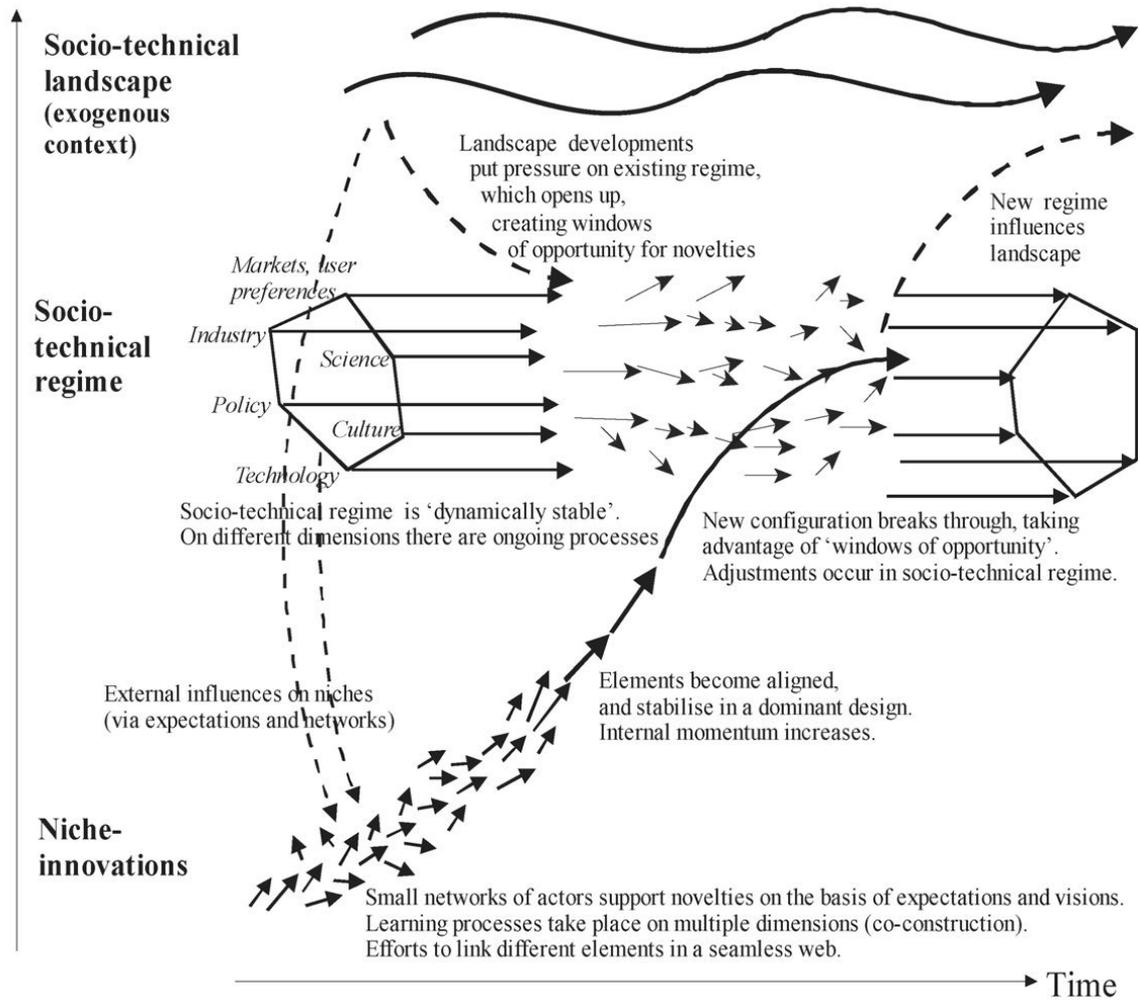


Figure 2-1. The Multi-Level Perspective (Geels, 2002, p.1263, adapted by Geels and Schot, 2007).⁴⁶

Other authors have suggested there are different phases of an innovation process such as predevelopment, take-off, acceleration and stabilisation which are rooted in historical, path dependent processes (Rotmans et al., 2001). Geels and Schot present a typology of distinct transition pathways which are characterised by whether change occurs due to pressure from the niche, regime or landscape domains, which result in rupture and new stabilisation processes:

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Transition pathways	Main actors	Type of (inter)actions	Key words
1. Transformation	Regime actors and outside groups (social movements)	Outsiders voice criticism. Incumbent actors adjust regime rules (goals, guiding principles, search heuristics)	Outside pressure, institutional power struggles, negotiations, adjustment of regime rules
2. Technological substitution	Incumbent firms versus new firms	Newcomers develop novelties, which compete with regime technologies	Market competition and power struggles between old and new firms
3. Reconfiguration	Regime actors and suppliers	Regime actors adopt component-innovations, developed by new suppliers. Competition between old and new suppliers	Cumulative component changes, because of economic and functional reasons. Followed by new combinations, changing interpretations and new practices
4. De-alignment and re-alignment	New niche actors	Changes in deep structures create strong pressure on regime. Incumbents lose faith and legitimacy. Followed by emergence of <i>multiple</i> novelties. New entrants compete for resources, attention and legitimacy. Eventually one novelty wins, leading to restabilisation of regime	Erosion and collapse, multiple novelties, prolonged uncertainty and changing interpretations, new winner and restabilisation

Figure 2-2. Main actors and interactions in transition pathways (Geels and Schot, 2007, p.414).⁴⁷

However, early sustainability transitions theory is challenged by some scholars for being siloed, focusing on specific aspects of the sustainability transitions process and under-emphasising the interdependent, relational nature of ‘niche’ actors and institutional ‘regime’ actors. For instance, SNM has been perceived to ignore the niche-regime interaction, focusing almost exclusively at the ‘niche’ or grassroots level as the critical driver of regime change (Berkhout et al., 2003; Nykvist and Turnheim, 2015). While Kenis et al demonstrate how the politics of representation can exacerbate unequal power relations and undermine the legitimacy of transition processes (Kenis et al., 2015).

Co-evolutionary approaches to sustainability transitions increasingly recognise that change occurs within ‘multidomain’ processes of interactive change across sectors (Loorbach et al., 2017) where ‘niche’ and ‘regime’ interactions generate co-transform over time (Avelino et al., 2015a; Berget et al., 2015; Hoffman and Lober, 2015; Raven et al., 2016). Change is a result of the influence of many actors who compete, align, and compromise on an on-going basis, rather than resulting in a distinct ‘shift’ between different levels (Garud and German, 2012). As social movement scholars Davies and Featherstone argue, jumping scales “fails to situate resistances as always already the products of different trajectories” (Davies and Featherstone, 2013, 244).

Avelino et al., (2016, p.559) suggest that the pervasive dichotomy between niche and regime in sustainability transitions literature indicates a “Cartesian bias in its political ontology”. While Avelino and Wittmayer suggest that the task at hand is to “search for regime elements as well as

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niche elements in each and every sector, including the state" (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015, p.12); in doing so one can understand how niche and regime connections reconfigure one other to uncover the dynamic interweaving, or nexus, of niche/regime relations (Smith, 2007). Viewing the discursive struggle to gain legitimacy between socio-technical configurations as political enables politics, mechanisms and forms of organising to be carefully explored (Hodson and Marvin, 2013; Raven et al., 2016).

2.2 Power, politics and institutional arrangements in sustainability transitions

There has been an increasing move towards recognising the politics of transition dynamics which can be understood in either a narrow (i.e. the state) or a broader conception of the political (i.e. society and organisations) (Hay, 2002). Avelino (2017) has expanded on exploring the power dynamics between and within transition processes, notably by developing a typology of power building on earlier work that draws in debates on political and sociological theory about Luke's three dimensions of power (Avelino, 2011; Lukes, 1974; see Akram, 2011).

Type of relation	Manifestation of power relations		
Power 'over'	A depends on B but B also depends on A => A and B have power over each other	A depends on B but B does not depend on A => B has power over A	A and B do not depend on each other => A and B have no power over each other
	mutual dependence	one-sided dependence	independence
'More / less' power to	A exercises more power than B, but A and B have similar, collective goals	A exercises more power than B, while A and B have mutually exclusive goals =>	A exercises more power than B, A and B have independent co-existent goals
	cooperation	Competition	co-existence
'Different' power to	A's and B's different power exercises enable and support one another	A's and B's different power exercises restrict, resist or disrupt one another	A's and B's different power exercises do not (significantly) affect one another
	Synergy	Antagonism	neutrality

Figure 2-3. Typology of power (Avelino 2011, p75)⁴⁸

Moreover, the way power is exercised throughout institutional, economic, social, political and material dimensions is considered by Avelino and Rotmans to have different expressions of

⁴⁸ Reproduced with the kind permission from Flor Avelino.

power relating to given dimensions (Avelino and Rotmans, 2009). Avelino expands on earlier conceptions of the change processes to destabilise regimes as dimensions of power, as either *reinforcive* (of the status quo - regimes), *innovative* (dreaming new resources and ideas - niches), or *transformative* (creating new structures and institutions – which transcends debates on the niche:regime dynamic, through niche-regimes) (Avelino, 2017), echoing the call for parallel infrastructure by the *Transition* movement and relocalisation. Furthermore, she distinguishes between moderate niches: regimes and radical niche: regimes – those capable of countering macro trends.

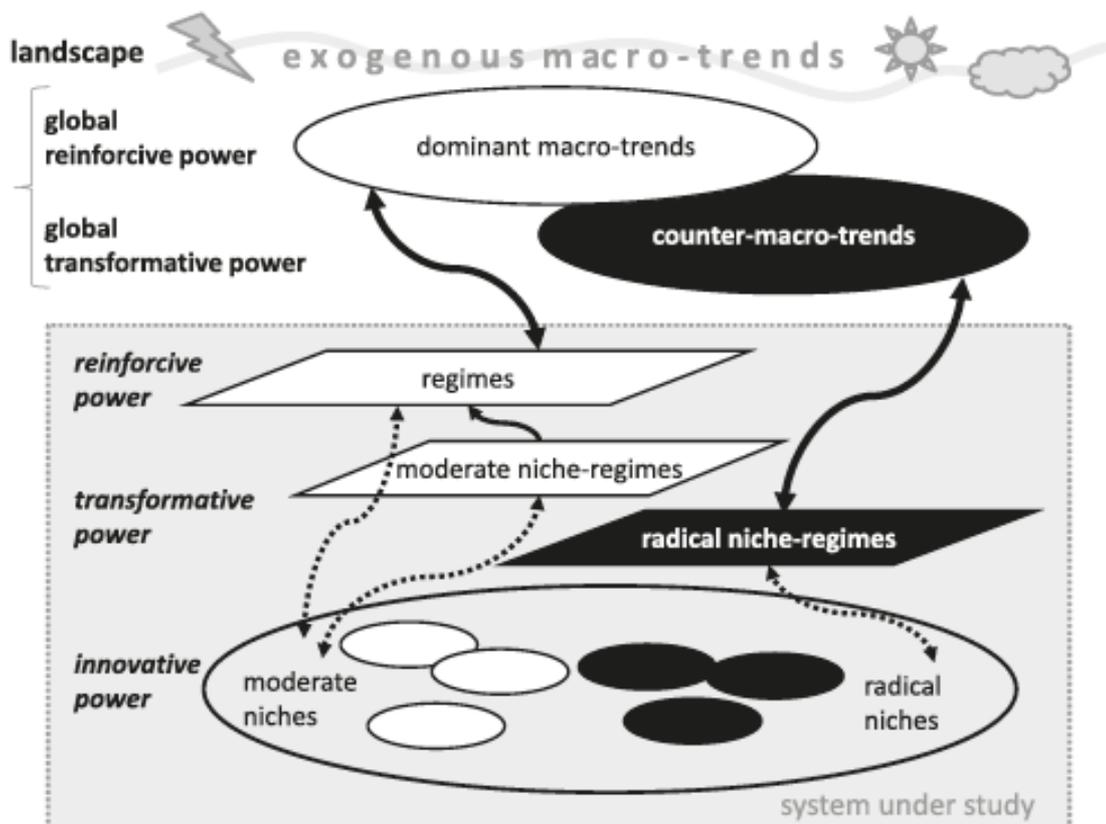


Figure 2-4. A distinction between moderate niches and radical niches (Avelino, 2017, p.511).⁴⁹

Transition scholars have explored the political through multi-level institutional arrangements in facilitating or constricting innovation and determining the distribution of administrative power, resources and legitimacy (Ehnert et al., 2018; Hodson and Marvin, 2010; Berget et al., 2015). Jørgenson (2012) suggests that the form and function of organisations and alliances are central to underpinning the dynamics that lead to innovation.

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Focusing on governance reflects the symbiotic nature between individual and collective structure-agency dynamics (Nykvist and Turnheim, 2015) and can address the previous lack of attention to actors in transition roles and arenas (Pesch, 2015; Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015), including how roles become appropriated or assigned. Governance and the “rules of the game” within the planning process are seen as critical in determining outcomes (Chess and Purcell, 1999; Parker and Murray, 2012; Purcell, 2009). Indeed, the institutional logics of an organisation affect which actors are invited to plan-making activities, which issues receive attention, and which are ignored (Doak and Karadimitriou, 2007; Edelenbos et al., 2011; Campbell and Marshall, 2002).

For instance, Benhabib (1996) distinguishes between *associational space* where people work together and *agnostic space* where people compete which can affect the form of interaction, and may exacerbate or ameliorate existing adversarial relationships with planning authorities (see Valderrama and Jørgenson, 2008). Chantal Mouffe's distinction between antagonist and agonistic politics is particularly pertinent to understanding the niche-regime interface. Mouffe suggests that antagonism is “between enemies”, the “other” to be “destroyed”, whereas agonism is between “adversaries” - “a legitimate enemy, an enemy with whom we have in common a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of democracy” (Mouffe, 1999, p.755). She suggests that “to come to accept the position of the adversary is to undergo a radical change in political identity, it has more of a quality of a conversion than of rational persuasion” (ibid). Indeed, Avelino's typology of power (Figure 2-3) indicates this delineation of relational ties.

Organisations that engage in reflexive processes are perceived to be more self-aware, which is believed to encourage second order learning, which invokes “a sense of agency, intention and change. Here, actors seek to reflect on and confront not only the self-induced problems of modernity, but also the approaches, structures and systems that reproduce them”, acting transformatively in the systems in which they find themselves, rather than merely navigating institutions (Hendricks and Grin, 2007, p.335). However, it is also essential to be attentive to the “political context of reflexive processes, and the politics that they generate” (ibid, p.333).

Swilling et al. (2015) suggest that *socio-political* conditions need to be changed before socio-technical shifts can be expected; any state-directed transition will not be achieved unless the wider strategic (political) coalition shares the paradigm commitments/interests. In response to a need to reveal the political dynamics in sustainability transitions, Swilling et al. (2015, p.656) propose a *socio-political*, as opposed to socio-technical regime as:

“[A] specific constellation of actors who have agreed on a set of ground rules for conducting the business of everyday politics within and outside the formal institutions of the political

system. These actors (interests) subscribe to certain underlying beliefs about the legitimacy of the system, control institutional resources in various ways, and they get organized into competing factions or alliances to secure advantages in the policy-making space.... In order to manage the overall stability of the political system and the direction of policy."

This definition arguably could extend the notion of a regime to allow in new niche actors within a regime. The socio-political regime does not preclude either 'niche' or 'regime' actors from engaging in regime-like activities. Indeed, the capacity to direct policy-making in and around formal institutions opens up the study of the niche-regime interface and competing factions and alliances within transition arenas. Meanwhile, not all transition arenas may be purposefully crafted as such, i.e. these could be subject to capture of particular interests to advance transition. In other words, "steering for sustainability involves an ongoing and fundamental review of the governance system itself; the institutions of the state, the market, civil society the scientific community, as well as their mutual alignment" (Hendricks and Grin, 2010, 334; Berget et al., 2015).

However, how different levels of governance intersect to foster climate policy innovations is underdeveloped (Jordan and Huiteima, 2014). For instance, Lockwood's study (2016) explored how the institutional layering of regulatory actors added new rules and regulations to existing ones⁵⁰. Heuristics to evaluate governance characteristics and functionality are required, particularly those that highlight the constraining and enabling functions of the political system and their capacity for either steer and emergence (Nykqvist and Turnheim, 2015; Berget et al., 2015; Avelino et al., 2015) and how local, regional, national and international networks interact to foster transition pathways (Späth and Rohrer, 2012). Kenis et al. suggest a recognition of the political fault lines within and outside transitions arenas to highlight fundamental tensions and opportunities (Kenis et al., 2015).

It is also important to consider the effect of network structures; since 'information flows, influence flows, and hidden organising appear to be impacted differently by different network structures' (Oliver and Myers, 2003, 198; Murdoch, 1995; Ansell, 2003; Diani, 2003). Bergek et al. introduced the notion of 'external links' and 'structural couplings' to differentiate between the push: pull factors and degrees of interdependence between actors within and across organisations (Bergek et al., 2015). External links are exogenous influences that are not affected by internal transition innovation processes at the landscape level; whereas structural couplings are within the

⁵⁰ See also Gunn and Hillier who had similar findings in a planning context (Gunn and Hillier, 2012).

influence of the transition innovation and can influence the allocation of resources and its legitimisation (see also Granovetter, 1983). Berget et al. suggest that structural couplings vary in the strength of their ties, 'ranging from fully independent to very strongly resonating systems' and are affected by the nature of alliances as well material (physical) constraints (Berget et al., 2015, p.53).

The concept of homophily - the tendency to align with like-minded people - is a common feature of theory seeking to explain collective action (Olsson and Hysing, 2012; Saunders in Rootes, 2007; Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng, 2011; Strang and Meyer, 1993; Ingram and Morris, 2007; see Gould's influence model, in Oliver and Myers, 2003). Homophily as one of the main reasons that Totnes in Devon became a site counter-cultural idea (Longhurst, 2010). Moreover, 'green consumers' tend to congregate even when factors such as location, income, gender and age are considered (Kahn and Vaghn, 2009 in Feurst et al., 2014) — thus suggesting that the existence of green values may create an additional weighting within the propensity to form alliances. The strength of ties is also set against the conflict of multiple - and sometimes competing - goals, constraints in the form of the alliance established among actors, and the degree of flexibility of physical infrastructure (Berget et al., 2015).

Social movement and planning scholars can add to these insights. Agency is enhanced by building coalitions and alliances – or "chains of equivalence" (Watson, 2014; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Purcell, 2009); the types of alliances built can affect their ability to challenge dominant discourses. For instance, Abernathy and Clark (1985) have proposed that radical innovations are often affected by degrees of 'transilience' between organisations, or the network ties of one or more organisations that experiment with new organisational forms. Indeed, "the relations that bind or break between social movement actors alter the shape of the social movement itself" (Davies and Featherstone, 2013, p.242).

2.3 Role occupation and transfer on transition processes

Hermans (2001) suggests that the roles people adopt in organisations influences their capacity to innovate. However, merely pointing to the existing ties between innovators and adopters lacks explanatory value (Nichols et al., 2013). Role occupation is a significant determining factor in the

performance of roles within organisations and their governance arrangements. However, Avelino and Wittmayer suggest that strands of transitions research that seek a more critical lens on power and politics have developed in parallel, thus failing to explain the interaction between different types of actors (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015; Wittmayer et al., 2017).

Uyarra and Flanagan (2010) suggest that innovation literature, which underpins much sustainability transitions research, tends to focus on the presence or absence of classes of actors rather than their roles, relationships and performance (see also Davies and Featherstone, 2013). Indeed, individuals are positioned by multiple spatialities – through personal values, professional experience and habits (Leitner et al., 2008 in Nichols et al., 2013).

Transition scholars have sought to respond to these concerns. Jørgenson suggests "the stability of ... institutions may be interpreted very differently by actors, depending on their relationship to the configurations" (Jørgenson, 2012, p.997). Hoffman and Loeber (2015) demonstrate how roles are constructed over time and how role identities help to position actors within transition processes. Competing differences among and within different actors and organisations can frustrate the policy and placemaking processes as actors seek to both differentiate and integrate themselves into and outside of these networks (Bryson et al., 2006). As Lovell (2009) suggests, policy entrepreneurs are often active across several sectors, and their positionality is hard to determine. Some may even have transformative ambitions within their role, such as Santoro and McGuire's institutional activists (Santoro and McGuire, 1997).

Avelino and Wittmayer develop the Multi-Actor Perspective (MAP) as an approach that considers the multiple roles performed by actors (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015). Multiple membership - being a member of one or more related groups - has been considered by social movement scholars as essential for the cross-fertilisation of ideas within and between actor groupings and can significantly impact an agent's positionality and propensity for influence within a network (Mische, 2003; Diani, 2003). The presence of multiple group memberships can enable hybrid identities to form and encourage solidarity (Mische, 2003). For instance, an actor may simultaneously engage in 'niche' networks at a personal level although they may be considered to be a 'regime' actor. Alternatively, in the words of Michael: "a spectrum of selves emerges, from the local to the institutional to the cultural to the global" (Michael, 1996, p.11). Chilvers and Longhurst (2016) suggest that participation within socio-technical transition processes coproduce identities and roles where objects, subjects, and procedures form 'an ecology of participation'. These authors suggest identities and roles, such as innovation adopters, are in continual process of *becoming*. Nunes also suggests that there is a need to move beyond essentialism towards

pluriversal notions of distinguishing features of the 'other' in 'neoliberal' and 'prefigurative' organisations - towards an emergent, hybrid form of co-constituted alternatives (Nunes, 2017).

The MAP seeks to capture shifting power dynamics between actors (individual and organisations) and sectors – horizontally and vertically - to challenge assumptions that types of actors hold distinct forms of power (i.e., as champions or resisters of change). In particular, the MAP highlights which groupings of individuals and actors accord with different discourses and the shifting of power and roles over time, as well as being attentive to the disempowerment of actors within multi-level transition processes, and their motivations. Within this approach, ties between actors, sector and institutional context act as discursive fields, where groupings of actors intersect (Pesch, 2015; see also Low, 2005).

However, Avelino and Wittmayer do not adequately consider the extent to which governance can affect the forms of power that arise nor the micro-political conditions of how and why actors come together in the first place. Moreover, *who* performs roles affects outcomes since actors have distinct characteristics that affect how information travels, which may be more than the sum of relational ties or prescribed 'roles.' Indeed, individuals "come to arenas of governance with their own situated knowledge", constructed through education and experience (Haraway, 1991 in words of Irázabel, 2009). Towards whom (or what) one feels greatest affinity towards has implications for how discourses, practices, ideas, and experimentation for how sustainability might 'jump' scale (Cox, 1998 in Cowell, 2013). Indeed, Blake has suggested that "personal social identity and personal experiences are a rich source of innovations that have the capacity to change the landscape of material reproduction fundamentally" (Blake, 2005, 689).

Rauschmayer et al. (2013) also highlighted the lack of attention of the individual's agency and capabilities and offer a further layer beneath Geels' MLP 'niche' level to emphasise the power of the individual. They include Sen's Capability Approach (Schot and Geels, 2008; Sen, 1999) in their analysis of transitions to convey an individual's sense of purpose and goal-directed behaviours; this focuses on the capabilities individuals have to enact change, emphasising *functionings* – the resources that endow individuals with the ability to act with degrees of freedom, such as job security and associated responsibilities.

Closer attention to the role of informal ties within the planning process could also add much value to the study of the politics of transitions. An understanding of the influence of impersonal ties in institutional settings and its effects on policy-making dynamics has also been highlighted by the number of authors in planning theory, social movements and network analysis (Armitage et al., 2012; Considine, 2005; Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012; Diani, 2003) to facilitate partnerships

(Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012; Doak and Parker, 2005; Doak and Karadimitriou, 2007; Parker and Wragg, 1999) or lock agents into particular arenas that constrain or enable action (Irazábel, 2009). Friendship ties and informal networks are seen to by organisational development scholars as critical in influencing peripheral actor behaviour since friends are perceived to be as influential (Burkhardt and Brass, 1990). Moreover, these may become institutionalised within 'a shadow planning system' (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014; Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012; Arentz et al., 2012). If pre-existing ties do not exist, some authors suggest that engagement is likely to be more on an incremental basis, since relational ways of working have not been established (Bryson et al., 2006; Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Ansell, 2003). Informal networks can, therefore, help to transmit social identity and norms within institutions (Podolny and Baron, 1997 in Sparrow et al., 2001). However, the role of friendship has thus far not been considered by transition scholars.

Rarely are the cognitive and affective commitment of group ties recognised by sustainability transitions research in the politics of niche-regime dynamics (Seyfang and Hexaltine, 2012) or the unconscious dynamics of agency (Akram, 2011). Meanwhile, the spatial setting of transitions can embody the historical grievances and resistance of actors in a particular context where the identity of a place has a lasting effect as a future setting for collective action (Martin, 2013; Næss, 2016). Existing socio-technical transition literature can neglect the affective commitment of place and its internalisation in the self (see Lertzman, 2012; Kyle et al., 2014). Johnston and Hielscher (2017) suggest that place identity affects the broad coalition of values and preferences for change. Place identity can also be co-opted and in some cases led to examples of eco-gentrification, where regime actors can co-opt grassroots ideas by endowing "symbolic value to the area, as a signifier of its gentrification and edgy, creative culture" (North and Longhurst, 2013, p.1432; Håkansson, 2018).⁵¹

⁵¹ North and Longhurst point to the case of Lambeth Council's appropriation of the Brixton Pound for marketing purposes as an example of such a co-option (North and Longhurst, 2013).

2.4 The relevance of debates in sustainability transitions for planning

Urban planning is the decision-making processes related to the components between different land uses (e.g., residential dwellings, employment and industry, leisure and tourism and services more broadly) (Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017). Spatial planning is the policy configuration to determine planning in a given area. Næss (2015) suggests that urban development and planning is a synthesis of social, technical, physical and political phenomena. Planning has a vital contribution to make towards low-carbon, sustainable development; it can enable evolution of place through a "continuous process of change and development" within a broader strategic programme of managing land use and environmental change at a national, regional and local level (Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017, p.1231).

The (now defunct) UK Homes and Communities Agency suggested that "planning is the main way we shape places"⁵². The siting and scope of renewable energy projects, mandating or incentivising energy efficiency measures and design, retrofitting, the location of future employment, encouraging proximity of new development to or integration with public transport, flood management and the protection of green spaces all depend on the planning system. Planning itself can be a significant disruptor or stabiliser of the relationship between the built, natural and socio-cultural environment and identities (Myers, 2005).

Several authors have pointed to a number of discourses that underpin various approaches to low-carbon development (Dryzek, 2005; Muir et al., 2000). Planning is an inherently political issue where actors enrolled in plan-making to seek future-orientated, resilient, and sustainable places also raises the question of what is to be resilient or sustainable, and for whom (Bradley, 2017). Moreover, while definitions of sustainability are often defined at the national level, its outcomes are (re)negotiated at local levels, resulting in what Gibbs and Jonas describe as "selective discursive decentralization and localization" (Gibbs and Jonas, 2000; Spâth and Rochracher, 2012). Cowell suggests spatial planning "tests national policy in the light of its implications for specific places and environments, and allows cross-scalar deliberation of development alternatives" (Cowell, 2013, p.40).

⁵² HCA website (now removed, last accessed 5.8.14).

The presence of environmental groups is fundamental to articulate environmentalism to local government (Muir et al., 2000) and may encourage development of more 'sustainable communities'. There are many spawning alternatives to dominant planning and development practice that promote community-led development models and low-carbon development, such as community energy, Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and community-led planning.⁵³ The planning system therefore has potential for inviting new discourses for development alternatives in communities to reconfigure established planning delivery mechanisms.

Friedman (1987) points to two forms of planning practice: as societal guidance, directed by the state, or as social transformation, such as radical planning by grassroots actors. Approaches can have varying engagement with the state, the private sector or cultivate approaches outside of established rules of the state, acting as niche experimentation to placemaking (Albrechts, 2013; Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan, 2010; Watson, 2014; Ostrom, 1996).

Some planning theorists perceive planning as counter-hegemonic if it is used to expose and distort power structures to consciously enrol new actors in a radical assemblage (Forester, 1989; Rutland and Aylett, 2008; Watson, 2014). Alternatively, planning might enable innovative (niche) 'mutations' in the status quo by developing alternatives outside of mainstream development processes (Grabow and Heskin, 1973; Williams, 2013), or by 'federating' with other actors to contribute to broader shifts, directed at the planning regime. Zhang and Roo (2016, p.12) suggest that spatial planning can create an "engaged interdependency, mutually adjusting coexistence or achieving balance" between self-organised approaches and process-driven planning practice.

At the same time, planning approaches can be used to actively incite change, either using conflict strategies to incite change and expose inequalities of power and land ownership (Miraftab, 2009) or by seeking a reformist agenda to empower minority groups in the planning process (Davidoff, 1965; Friedman, 1987; Beard, 2003). A broader focus on emancipation and occupation of neglected spaces can focus on more autonomous strategies (Honeck, 2017; Vardy, 2009; Lefebvre, 1974; Harvey, 2008; Newman, 2011).

Meanwhile, *Prefigurative* approaches seek to elicit a change in everyday practices in order to model development alternatives in action - a "revolution of everyday life" (Stimer, 1995, in Newman, 2011) - which some have suggested contributes to greater levels of community-led governance (North and Longhurst, 2013). These approaches draw on performative ontologies

⁵³ See Chapter 3.

(Gibson-Graham, 2008; López et al., 2017), new conceptual spaces, and alternative orderings that indicate a 'performative turn' in planning (Honeck, 2017). Vardy (2009, p.138) suggests these organisations represent an ecology of alternative networks within planning, "with an activating component that is the equivalent of direct action through governance practices".

However, actors seeking more radical change are also circumscribed by the surrounding context and prevailing discourses as much as they can generate counter-hegemonic ideals (Bailey and Wilson, 2009; Wilson, 2012). A key concern for grassroots actors with more radical ambitions is that engagement with their LPA, or lower tiers of government, may result in the group becoming 'de-radicalised', 'domesticated' or 'co-opted' into institutional agendas, creating financial or other resource dependencies (Böhm et al., 2010; Bunyan, 2008; Doherty, 2007).⁵⁴ Becoming too closely aligned to the discourse of others can dilute endorsement from an organisation's own members (Mische, 2003), particularly for more radical organisations where being too closely aligned with the principal network (i.e. 'regime') can "deactivate its critical capacity undiluted its original aims" (Ibarra, 2003, 10-11). Meanwhile, planning policy literature often ignores the role of alternative, or niche actors, instead prioritising the role of institutional actors and developers (Berget et al., 2015).

Planning policy itself is underpinned by core normative principles directed toward promoting key policy objectives of sustainable development. Rydin suggests that the planning consent process ties together social actors and "acts as an obligatory passage point, marshalling actants into a sub-network for detailed negotiation work" (Rydin, 2012, p.36). Planning scholars have critiqued whether the contemporary planning process can be truly innovative, citing planning's perceived rigidity and its temporally fixed nature (Friedmann, 1987). Planning can close down policy cores from serious pressure by channelling opposition into formal consultations, or participatory processes may be hijacked to achieve pre-conceived planning goals of 'regime' actors, such as planners, developers and landowners (Parker and Street, 2015; Few, 2002; Mirafteb, 2009; Beard, 2003). Even within participatory processes, the 'we' of those who are represented necessarily entails a 'they' who may be excluded (Hillier, 2002; Purcell, 2009).

Some authors have suggested that developers and elites have exclusive access to the planning system, undermining the notion of local participation (Flyvbjerg, 1998). The heavily institutionalised space of (UK) planning practice has led some authors to question the

⁵⁴ For instance, Doherty and de Geus (1996) suggest that few green organisations engaged in planning in the 1990s since it they perceived it as too bureaucratic and centralised, and preferred decentralisation as a strategy to secure green gains.

transformative role it can play in fostering genuine development alternatives (Tulumello, 2015), which has been suggested to hold back practices to stimulate socio-technical transitions due to the relationship of planning to wider macro-economic systems (Tompt, 2016, p.10).⁵⁵

Planning scholars have explored adaptive planning approaches, such as co-production (Albrechts, 2013), yet often these tend to conflict with planning as a government-led policy process alongside the “perpetuation of reactive and precautionary planning cultures” (Caroli, 2018, p.82). At the same time, whilst the ‘communicative turn’ in planning theory has emphasised participation, inclusion and building consensus (Healey, 1996; Innes and Boher, 1998), (communicative) planning theory has failed to adequately conceptualise the spaces in which participation occurs and often ignores micro dimensions of power (Purcell, 2009; Watson, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2003; McGuirk, 2001). Such accounts are also critiqued for ascribing a ‘space blindness’ and the rejection of the importance of spatial-structural conditions that affect agents’ capacity and social phenomena (Næss, 2015).

Caroli suggests that there is an inherent – but not insurmountable – dichotomy between planning – which seeks to stabilise the management of space and land on a precautionary basis – compared to the more radical solutions solicited by sustainability transitions research (Caroli, 2018). As she suggests “planning and transitions are not oppositional or exclusive, but fulfil differing relational roles within a policy mix for sustainable development at multiple spatial scales” (Caroli, 2018, p.81). Planning scholars also tend to use the term ‘transformation’ over ‘transitions’ (Alexander, 2005), indicating to date there has been insufficient engagement with sustainability transitions research.

To date, however, sustainability transitions literature has been lacking on the ‘translation’ processes whereby niche ideas become mainstream in the context of local government (Smedby and Quitzau, 2016), particularly in a planning context. Caroli’s review of 30 papers on planning, sustainability transitions and infrastructure identified that:

- There is a disconnection between traditional planning instruments to deliver sustainable development and build momentum for niche actor responses

⁵⁵ For instance, the high price of land, the undistributed nature of land ownership and land banking, the UK’s relatively less regulated land use system compared to its European counterparts, or even the high proportion of vested interests by homeowners to see house prices rise and its impact on affordable housing Andy Whightman speaking in Gordon-Farleigh, 2016, 21). The UK policy and planning regime are discussed in chapter 3.

- The segmented nature of the planning regime is a challenge for co-evolutionary, reflexive and exploratory approaches to transition, yet at the same time could enable a more directed and federated form of regime transition in the longer-term
- Strong path dependence in planning creates lock-in, e.g. unchanging planning instruments
- Whilst city scale LPAs have potential to support the federation of niche experimentation, initiatives remain localised although within niche planning interventions planning culture has shifted from passive to active; however, resistance can hamper regime learning and result in niche-regimes where experimentation occurs, but the regime is largely unaffected
- New policy and organisational arrangements are required to respond to the effects of technological transitions
- The agency of planners is critical in the extent they leverage the planning process for new ideas or whether they assert conformity to routine procedures
- Opportunities for demonstration projects within planning to support learning and adaptation are generally supported by policy drivers
- Any innovation was underpinned through leadership, learning and place-based coalitions

Carroli suggests there are “[o]pportunities for new ways of performing planning open[,] but [these] seem to remain as threshold or localised events that do not breakthrough, scale or broaden. This suggests the planning in its current form may be unlikely to flow with transitions pathways, despite other capacities for innovation.” (Carroli, 2018, p.86). Writing 25 years ago, Burningham and O’Brian (1994) suggested that the institutional constraints of planning policy encourage particularistic, localist arguments that lack a transformative agenda, indicating that planning as a sector or regime is resistant to change over time. Purcell suggests that without systemic change throughout the planning regime democratic processes will likely be captured by neo-liberals or mainstream institutions where possibly these “will likely suffocate a very promising strategy of resistance” (Purcell, 2009, p.147).

Carroli suggests that in order to explore these challenges – and opportunities – for the role of planning and sustainability transitions further than an examination of multi-level, spatial dynamics is necessary; particularly focusing on culture, structures, relational and practice arrangements of planning within sustainability transition processes. Meanwhile, “the fuzziness and extensions of boundaries and interfaces” should be considered, exploring the roles between actors involved in spatial transition processes and their role in enabling or undermining transitions learning and innovation (Carroli, 2018, p.87). Moreover, the influence of policy mixes on innovation potential in planning can help provide further insights into the configuration between niche and regime in a planning context.

Meanwhile, though planning theory recognises communities as being heterogeneous (Aitken, 2012), there is also a need to explore the political nature of why actors come together in placemaking arenas: the shared motivations and values create the conditions for shaping planning outcomes or resisting dominant development narratives (Markard et al., 2016). Namely, how the plan-making process sustains or reconfigures the personal, collective, organisational and spatially-defined goals of those involved in placemaking networks and their formal and informal arrangements. However, Beard suggests that most planning literature fails to uncover how communities gain the skills, or social and political capital, to engage in planning (Beard, 2003). Moreover, the growing interest in the collaborative spirit of the commons (Morgan and Kuch, 2016) indicates a need to consider the role of reciprocity and mutuality within planning transition arenas which has been overlooked by transitions research.

Places also have unique attributes and characteristics that become a setting for relationships and the realisation of one's identity and life goals (Proshansky et al., 1983; Hummon, 1992). Carter (1977) suggested that place is a "unit of environmental experience" - the product of social action, place concept and physical attributes (in Uzzell et al., 2002). Environmental psychologists such as Devine-Wright have contributed significantly to identity in placemaking by exploring the effect of place attachment on actor's behaviours and values (Uzzell et al., 2002; Devine-Wright, 2012; von Wirth et al., 2016). These issues bring attention to the politics of constructing place identities and how places are contested and remodelled in processes to define future development trajectories.

Bradley suggests that the lack of theoretical attention within planning to both place attachment and the emotional aspects of community planning needs redress, particularly since planning can be perceived as "a threat to personal autonomy or identity" (Bradley, 2017, p.234). Manzo and Perkins (2006) suggest that it is essential that planning theory, community development, and environmental psychology enrich one another and reveal the reciprocal nature between place, planning and social action. Thus, highlighting a potential gap of identity politics within planning theory and practice.

This research responds to these avenues for future research by taking a socio-institutional account of sustainability transitions (Loorbach et al., 2017) integrating the role of planning within sustainability transitions through an exploration of power, politics and institutional arrangements, role boundaries and transfer on transition processes, and place and scale in transition. To do so, this research explores the interplay between local administrative political structures and their relationship in bridging the niche and regime through spatially situated networks.

The following chapter explores the role of the UK Localism Act as terrains of resistance (Routledge, 1996) or potential transition arenas to incite sustainability transitions and more radical (low-carbon) development approaches.

3 Localism - a potential entry point for development alternatives?

Planning theory and practice have, over time, become increasingly embedded in the discourse of sustainable development. The politics of defining it within and around the planning process is illuminating to reveal which actors and ideas can navigate 'regime' institutions and contribute to new definitions and strategies for sustainability transitions. This chapter outlines the institutional arrangements of the UK planning 'regime' and the government policy terrain of localism, which covers English planning policy, and the definitions of sustainable development that underpins these reforms. The current assessment of the potential for grassroots influence using the rights under the Localism Act (2011), such as neighbourhood planning as potential entry points for low-carbon localism is discussed. The chapter concludes with the implications the current assessment might have on places seeking sustainability transitions using localism rights.

3.1 The different forms of localism

Stoker (2004, p.117) defines localism as a term that refers to the: "(D)evolution of power and/or functions and/or resources away from central control and towards front-line managers, local democratic structures, local institutions and local communities, within an agreed framework of minimum standards". Localism can encompass a range of approaches that endow varying degrees of control at the local or regional level. Deas suggests localism is an instance of "eroding [the nation state's] pre-eminence, and creating more space for non-state actors" (Deas, 2012, p.9). In contrast, Wills suggests that "localism represents a challenge to the model of government and politics that developed during the twentieth century and in theory at least, it marks a new phase of statecraft" (2016a, p.44).

Such debates tend to draw on Hildreth's (2011) distinction between three types of localism - *conditional, community and representative*. Conditional localism is a decentralisation of power, which is conditional on local actors delivering central government's policy agenda. Community localism places emphasis on 'communities' to take decisions. Representative localism is a hybrid approach with central government mediating the conditions through which locally-driven service delivery arises. In representative localism - the 'Western European model' - "local authorities are placed at the heart of local governance" (Hildreth, 2011, p.708).

The form and function of decision-making and prevailing policy narratives have a considerable impact upon the opportunities for non-state actors to engage and influence (re-)localised policy and planning. Indeed, at a local level there are different types of approaches that might be filled with a more devolved state, as summarised by Lowndes and Sullivan's (2008) typology of neighbourhood governance. Here, different arrangements are influenced through discourses of 'empowerment', 'partnership', 'government' or 'management' affects the type of governance and decision-making that follows, each with a different configuration between communities and central and local institutions.

	Neighbourhood empowerment	Neighbourhood partnership	Neighbourhood government	Neighbourhood management
Primary rationale	Civic	Social	Political	Economic
Key objectives	Active citizens and cohesive communities	Citizen well-being and regeneration	Responsive and accountable decision making	More effective local service delivery
Democratic device	Participatory democracy	Stakeholder democracy	Representative democracy	Market democracy
Citizen role	Citizen: voice	Partner: loyalty	Elector: vote	Consumer: choice
Leadership role	Animateur, enabler	Broker, chair	Councillor, mini-mayor	Entrepreneur, director
Institutional forms	Forums, Co-production	Service board, mini-LSP	Town councils, area committees	Contracts, charters

Figure 3-1. Forms of neighbourhood governance: four ideal types (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008, p.62)⁵⁶

Localism is affected by organising practices and political cultures, which shape the terms of negotiation, based on the solidarities within and between places (Chatterjee, 2005 in

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Featherstone et al., 2011).⁵⁷ Indeed, "localism is the product of diverse trajectories and engagements" (Featherstone et al., 2011, p.180); the interplay between local, regional, national and international structures in terms of the size, population, resources and formal links to higher tiers of governance affects the context in which localism is played out and the distribution of power and resources (Gallent and Robinson, 2013; Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017).

Hildreth suggests that there are indicators for different localism arrangements, as set out in Figure 3-2., which suggests the essential need to explore power arrangements, capacities and resourcing underpinning any localism strategy by government.

Accountability	To whom is the devolved or decentralized body primarily accountable? For example, local government is accountable both to the centre (e.g. through receiving grant funding, inspection and performance regimes) and to their communities (e.g. through elections, as consumers of services and community planning). However, in practice the balance of accountability will vary within these three models.
Leadership	How will leadership be provided to make devolution and/or decentralization effective? How strong and robust is the leadership model? Where does the balance of responsibility lie to take decisions? Does leadership work best top-down or bottom-up?
Coordination across boundaries	How will solutions to multidimensional problems be coordinated across organizational, sectoral and geographical boundaries? What priority is given to cross-boundary working? Who initiates the cross-boundary working?
Trust	How will the issue of trust between those running the devolved or decentralized services and those to whom they are accountable be addressed? Trust can have a relational meaning, for example between electors and elected. Also, it can be explored through concepts such as or the 'principal-agent' problem, where there may be an imbalance (or asymmetry) of information between the centre and local government.
Finance and incentives	What is the relative proportion of funding from local and central sources? What flexibility does the local body have to spend its resources? How will it be incentivized to deliver outcomes that are satisfactory to those to whom it is accountable?

Figure 3-2. Characteristic indicators for localism (Hildreth, 2011, p.705)⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Indeed, the process of creating the NPPF was through the practitioner-led Practitioner Advisory Group, which could be interpreted as a protected niche within a regime since the arrangements were to preclude intervention from civil servants to enable a new approach to be taken to planning and to reduce its complexity (Slade, 2018).

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Localism can, by definition, support more localised approaches and could be a potential entry point for local action to foster more resilient placemaking or more transformative agendas, such as challenging growth; or the motivations for devolution of power at a local level may be decoupled from such an agenda. For instance, Hines (2000, p.27) defines localisation as “a process which reverses the trend of globalisation by discriminating in favour of the local”. Hopkins, co-founder of *Transition* goes one step further and suggests that *relocalisation*⁵⁹ is distinct from localisation in that it is “a much deeper process of refocusing infrastructure to local provision and consumption...[and] adjustment of economic focus from the global to the local” (Hopkins, 2010, p.20).

Table 3-1 Conceptual similarities and differences between localisation and relocalisation (Adapted from Hopkins, 2010)

Domain	Localisation and Relocalisation – Shared concepts	Localisation and Relocalisation – Conceptual differences
<i>Structures</i>	Concerned with governance and political structures	Relocalisation is a far-reaching adjustment of an economic focus from the global to the local; underpinned by an ethic of sustainability
<i>Politics and governance</i>	Local people should have more control over local services and decision-making	Relocalisation requires strong government alongside community engagement
<i>Assets</i>	Community ownership is important	Localisation transfers state assets into community ownership Relocalisation focuses on <i>control</i> from private to community (i.e. management)
<i>Economy</i>	N/A	Localisation operates in the context of economic globalisation Relocalisation seeks to increase the tightness of local feedback and resilience

⁵⁹ For a definition of relocalisation see section 1.3.1 The *Transition* movement and relocalisation.

3.2 Localism in the UK – the verdict so far

The UK's move towards localism has been characterised as a reaction to an increasingly centralised state, which evolved partly as a product of the need to protect the national interest during the world wars of the 20th century but has roots further back to the reformation and John Stuart Mill who influenced the notion of local representation and self-government (Wills, 2016b).

The localism agenda has cross-party political support which has seen a move towards devolved parliaments in the four nations of the UK with calls for an English parliament from some campaigners (Wills, 2016b). There has been an increasing appetite for distributed powers at the local and regional level, indicated by the Scottish Referendum and notably Brexit which while seeking national freedom is indicative of the wider sense to 'take back control' from seemingly remote political institutions. Deas argues that the Conservative policy agenda to break down parts of the state, rather than reform them, is a crucial difference in approach between the Coalition government (2010-2015) and Labour governments (1997-2010) (Deas, 2012).

Under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010-2015), the UK Government championed localism to give greater autonomy to local actors, such as town and parish councils, residents and community groups under the banner of the *Big Society*. A conservative party Green Paper (The Conservative Party, 2014)⁶⁰ Open Source Planning sought "radical change" to:

- 1) Restore democratic and local control over planning system
- 2) Rebalance the system in favour of sustainable development and
- 3) Produce a simpler, cheaper and less bureaucratic system

The paper argued:

*"If we get this right, the planning system can play a major role in decentralising power and strengthening society – **bringing communities together, as they formulate a shared vision of sustainable development.** And, if we enable communities to find their own ways of overcoming the tensions between development and conservation, **local people can become proponents***

⁶⁰ A green paper is a tentative government report that is published in order to provoke debate and discussion inside and outside feedback.

rather than opponents of appropriate economic growth.” (Conservative Party, 2014, p.1, emphasis added).

These policy instruments actively invited local people to become more engaged in planning and broader placemaking initiatives and to dismantle the power of the state and allow for locally-driven ideas to enter into the fabric of the planning system. These intentions were formalised in the (English) Localism Act 2011 which set to deliver on this agenda and bestowed greater power to local councils through the *General Power of Competence*, which essentially allows local government to carry out any legal action as they see fit (for an overview see Wills (2016b) and Ricketts and Field (2012)). These reforms included the abolition of regional government and spatial strategies - perceived to be an unnecessary regulative burden that interfered with locally-driven development – and in exchange gave greater emphasis to local authorities (i.e., city councils, unitary authorities and county/district) and a transfer of responsibility to the lowest levels of government (i.e. town and parish councils).

The Localism Act set out a series of rights conferred to local actors to actively contribute to placemaking and increase community influence over the management, ownership and development of assets and sites.⁶¹ Examples of these forms of English localism is depicted in the figure below, where Hildreth includes many of the rights bestowed under the UK localism policy agenda under community localism.

Conditional localism	Representative localism	Community localism
Requirement for chair of LEP to be a business leader Freezing council tax increases	Power of general competence Opportunity for elected mayors Local plan reforms Duty to cooperate Reform of council housing finance Elected police crime commissioners	Neighbourhood planning Community right to challenge Community right to buy Local referendums Right to veto excessive council tax rises Community right to build Requirement to consult communities on very large planning applications

Figure 3-3. Examples of forms of localism (Hildreth, 2011, p.712)⁶²

⁶¹ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-localism/2010-to-2015-government-policy-localism> for a full list of localism rights bestowed under the 2010-2015 government (last accessed 6.6.19). However, a Locality report found that 79% of people are still unaware of community rights (Locality, 2018), despite a significant appetite for more powers to be bestowed on communities.

⁶² Reprinted with permission from SAGE.

The use of these rights in a planning context is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - MHCLG, 2018a)⁶³, including the need to be in 'general conformity' to extant national and European Union (EU) legislation. Of particular interest for this study is neighbourhood planning as a community-led planning instrument. NDPs permit designated *neighbourhood areas* (typically parish and town councils, or neighbourhood forums in cities) to develop a plan to complement the Local Plan and other relevant national and EU legislation.

However, these reforms have been perceived as "permissive" legislation that anticipates citizens will automatically step up (Wills, 2016b). Indeed, other authors have suggested that moves towards decentralisation are purposive attempts by regime actors to "rescale policy and decision-making processes to those scales where popular pressure can be muted or diffused and where state resources are insufficient to implement democratic decisions" (Peck and Tickell, 1994 in words of Nicolls et al., 2013, p.9). Paddison argues that the consensual, deliberative model of localism focuses on how decisions on particular policy matters are made, rather than whether these issues should be on the agenda in the first instance (Paddison, 2009, in Deas, 2012). In the words of Cowell, this risks "massaging consent for, and thereby depoliticizing, fundamental questions about justice, markets, environments and the public sphere" (Cowell, 2013, p.40). While Deas suggests that "[t]he [UK] localism agenda might be viewed more accurately as envisaging a circumscribed form of interaction between state and citizen which limits the possibility for departing from a narrow range of policy prescriptions" (Deas, 2012, p.11).

Meanwhile, the UK political system is adversarial whereby party politics actively pitches those from different political persuasions against one another (the House of Commons chamber is an obvious case in point). Smaller parties are under-represented because of the first-past-the-post system and a previous attempt to force change with a referendum on a proposed Alternative Vote being voted down.⁶⁴ This has the effect of shrinking political debate "when there is a growing clamour to expand it", particularly towards debates on post-Brexit institutional reform (Nandy et al., 2016, p.xiii), or as Lawson suggests "we have one foot in the past and it clamps us into a cycle of political failure" (Lawson, 2016, p.4). Thus, attention to the political/planning praxis and how these affect the local application of localism is an important consideration to the institutional arrangements for niche innovations in sustainability transitions.

Moreover, local authorities are working within an austere resourcing environment to support the delivery of localism. In 2014, the National Audit Office projected a 37% decrease in funding from

⁶³ The NPPF was revised in 2018; this study assesses neighbourhood planning under the 2012 original framework (NPPF, 2012).

⁶⁴ <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/alternative-vote/> (last accessed 19.1.19).

2010-11 to 2015-16 in local authority funding (NAO, 2014). The “Barnet graph of doom” – when receipts and spending meet on a downward income forecast trajectory⁶⁵ - depicted that the London borough local authority’s entire projected budget would be consumed by children’s services and adult social care. The Office for Budget Responsibility’s economic and fiscal outlook published data that indicated the extent of the cuts on different statutory services, including planning, and how this was projected to decline further in the medium to long-term (OBR, 2014).

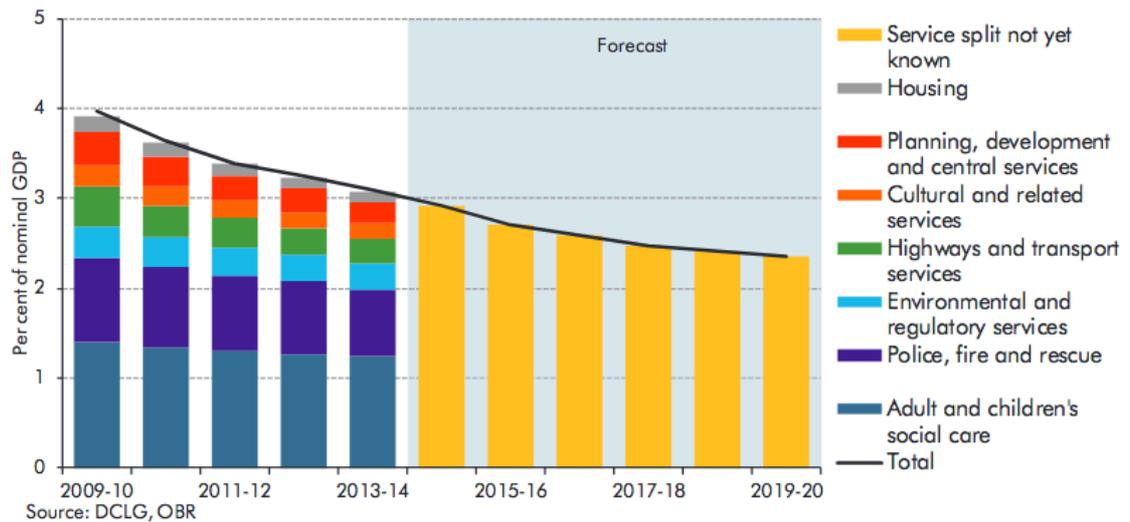


Figure 3-4. Local authority current spending in England (OBR, 2014)⁶⁶

This could be a potential entry point for new solutions to the provision of statutory functions and development models. Yet the configuration of these government structures, and their responsiveness, will largely determine how these are realised and the form these responses take. The following section explores how the planning regime has been shaped by the NPPF and NDPs in greater detail to explore what kind of (low-carbon) localism the actors engaging with this new policy terrain might generate.

⁶⁵ See Figure 3-4.

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3.3 The UK planning regime

The *planning regime* has been referred to by a number of authors but is often not defined (Doak and Parker, 2005; Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017). This section explores the planning regime as the structures, procedures and powers through which hold the planning process is held together. This includes formal powers endowed to local authorities by legislation, planning policy and guidance set by the government, planning documentation, and the spaces of participation (i.e. consultation channels). These powers and procedures can play either a restrictive or an enabling function. It is noted that this assumption of a planning regime is used to frame the empirical work to test whether conceptualising the planning regime thus is helpful to conceptualise the interaction between 'niche' and 'regime' actors who interact in planning processes as a transition arena.

In the 19th Century, the roots of planning in the UK originated in the drive for modernism and industrialisation, to support the comprehensive (re-)design of settlements to promote healthy and safe communities (Adams, 1994 in Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017). In the 20th century, urban planning shifted to promote development as a function of state policy (Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017), reflecting the centralising tendencies of the state outlined in section 3.2.

Since 2012, in England planning policy is governed by the NPPF (explored more fully in section 3.4) and its accompanying planning practice guidance (PPG). This policy agenda sought to counter a belief within government that planning had become too top-down with frequent interventions from the Secretary of State. The NPPF was an attempt by the government to streamline planning policy architecture to make it more accessible to the layperson and render the planning system more efficient.

More recently, neighbourhood plans have crossed the local/strategic divide, in theory giving communities greater influence over planning decisions. This shift in responsibility towards the local level brings with it the potential for alternative development models to be incorporated. Although, as section 3.2 discusses, some have questioned the extent to which localism genuinely affords local authorities with the powers to influence development under conditions of austerity.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Locality is a government-supported charity that provides guidance and funding to actively promote communities - as development agents - to invoke the rights afforded to them under localism to own and manage community assets; notably neighbourhood planning, neighbourhood development orders, co-housing and CLTs. See

3.4 The NPPF and low-carbon development

Sustainable development is a contentious term that many agree is open to interpretation (Moss and Grunkemeyer, 2010). A government's attitude toward sustainable development is reflected in what objects are obligatory and which are discretionary (Cowell, 2013). In the UK, sustainability has been constructed through political discourse to have a particular relationship to planning, especially through EU legislation that requires Environmental Impact Assessments, for example (Cowell, 2013, p.28). The UK is also required by law to comply with international agreements to reduce carbon emissions through the Climate Change Act 2000 through carbon budgets that incrementally reduce the number of emissions generated⁶⁸.

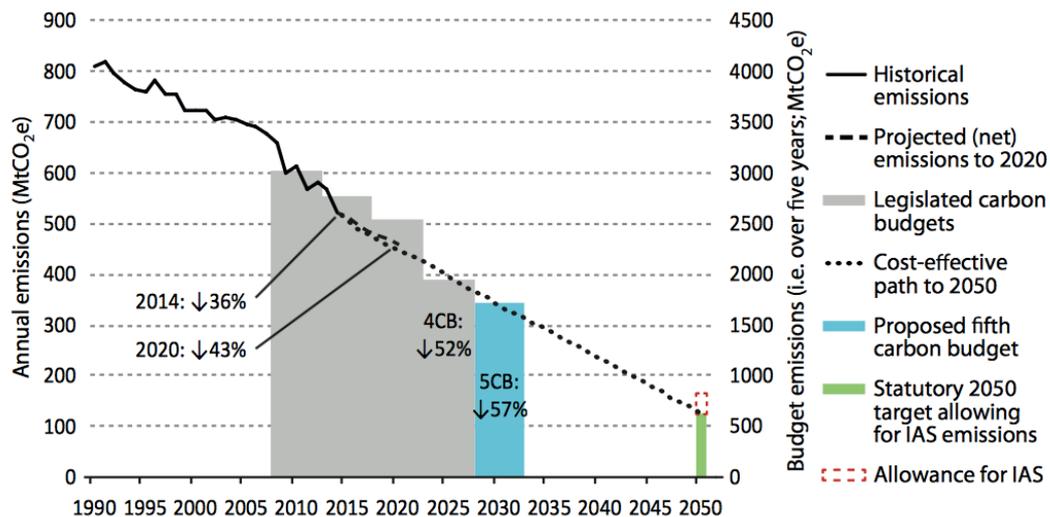


Figure 3-5. UK greenhouse gas emission projections under the 5th carbon budget (CCC, 2015)⁶⁹

The NPPF clearly states that “[t]he purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development” (NPPF – DCLG, 2012, para 6) and seeks to promote a ‘three-legged stool’ of sustainability: economic, social and environmental⁷⁰ as defined in paragraph 77¹.

<https://locality.org.uk/services-tools/support-for-councils-service-providers/building-community-led-homes/> for more detail (last accessed 14.1.19).

⁶⁸ See Figure 3-5.

⁶⁹ Reprinted with kind permission from CCC.

⁷⁰ A definition common to much sustainable development practice, influenced by the UN-commissioned Brundtland Report, also known as Our Common Future (1987).

⁷¹ Which remained unchanged in the 2018 revision to the NPPF, bar some grammatical tweaks.

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

Figure 3-6. 2012 NPPF definition of sustainable development (DCLG, 2012, para 7)⁷²

The 2012 NPPF was underpinned by 12 'core planning principles' in order to achieve *Economic, Social and Environmental* sustainability – commonly referred to as the 'three pillars of sustainability'. Section 10 of the 2012 NPPF states that:

*"Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure **radical** reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing **resilience** to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure"* (NPPF, 2012, Section 10, para 93, emphasis added).⁷³

The notion of development within urban planning and its stakeholders is often considered a symbiotic relationship, yet these relationships have tended to be framed around the notion of growth as a driving force for development (Cobbinah and Darkwah, 2017). This is formalised in the NPPF where the discourse of sustainable development is strongly correlated to a *competitive* growth agenda:

*'Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a **competitive** world...So sustainable development is about **positive growth** – making*

⁷² Reprinted under the Open Government License 3.0.

⁷³ The bold text indicates commonalities between a *Transition* approach to sustainable development and the government's framing of the role of planning to deliver low-carbon solutions. See Table 3-1.

economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations” (NPPF, 2012, i, emphasis added).

Such a move is considered to be a longstanding trend; Cowell argues that “(s)ince 2000, the environmental protection role of planning has been weakened in the UK as successive Westminster governments have ‘streamlined’ the system and reduced the scope for challenges to economic development on environmental grounds” (Cowell, 2016).

Notably, soon after the government won a majority in May 2015, the Conservatives scrapped the Zero Carbon Homes (ZCH) target because low-carbon standards were to be tied to the updated Part L of the Buildings Regulations.⁷⁴ The Deregulation Act 2015 consolidated this move, withdrawing the Code for Sustainable Homes (CfSH) as a voluntary low-carbon buildings framework, thus removing the ability for local authorities (and NDPs) to set targets for energy-efficient dwellings.⁷⁵ The main arguments against the CfSH were that it encouraged a ‘box-ticking’ approach where the overarching design and use of buildings became less important than the credits awarded for the inclusion of specific technologies (RICS, 2016). Higher level CfSH codes (i.e., 5 and 6) were few and often tied to demonstration social housing projects awarded by the government’s Homes and Community Agency (HCA) funds.⁷⁶

Despite these criticisms, some industry experts have suggested that the CfSH helped to generate a common framework for low-carbon design and construction (RICS, 2016). The removal of the CfSH withdrew a policy framework for several areas that were covered in the scheme, including ecology, and the sustainability and embodied energy of building materials (see BRE, 2015). This move echoes what RICS describes as a retreat from “prescriptive regulatory approaches” since the mid-1990s (RICS, 2016, 9). These changes are depicted in the figure below:

⁷⁴ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conservation-of-fuel-and-power-approved-document-l> (last accessed 12.3.19).

⁷⁵ Since the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) was not adopted as a Government voluntary standard it was not affected by these changes in the commercial sector.

⁷⁶ While low-carbon homes halved in cost between 2011-2014, only 233 completed CfSH Code Six were completed by 2013 (2013 Element Energy Study in RICS, 2016).

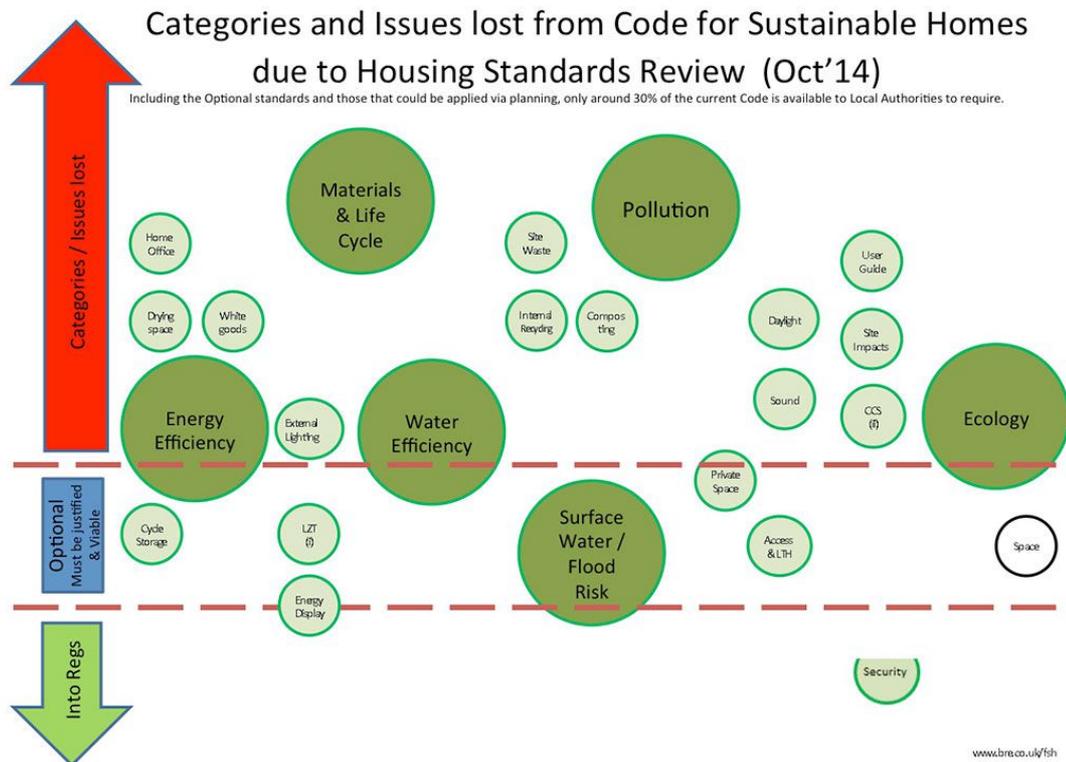


Figure 3-7. Effect of removal of CfSH on energy and environmental areas (BRE, 2015)

Some authors have suggested that these types of changes made with regards to housing energy efficiency standards encompass *technical* and *environmental*, rather than *social* dimensions (Pickvance, 2009). A strong correlation between sustainable development and growth implies an ecological modernisation discourse, which emphasises economic growth without genuine attempts to encourage lower-carbon lifestyles (Hajer, 1997). Moreover, commentators have criticised the government's current approach to low-carbon buildings for failing to recognise the role of strong regulation for encouraging innovation. Without wider policy goals the consumer can be disconnected from broader innovation diffusion practices and too much emphasis is placed on individual housebuilders delivering ambitious low-carbon buildings (RICS, 2016; Hodson and Marvin, 2013).

The relationships between government are considered constrained in their capacity to coordinate and deliver on sustainable development. Currently, the only statutory mechanism for cooperation on strategic issues, such as climate change, is the 'duty to cooperate' among neighbouring local authorities,⁷⁷ involving a heavy reliance on voluntary partnerships to deal with complex regional

⁷⁷ The Duty to Cooperate was introduced through the Localism Act (section 110), adding a new Section 33A to the

issues (Cowell, 2013; Baroness Young cited in Ricketts and Field, 2012). The capacity for such coordination is stretched as LPAs become increasingly constricted amid 'austerity localism' (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2011) or as some councils move towards outsourcing of key statutory functions (e.g. Barnet), leading some authors to question the value of planning when its regulatory role is increasing hollowed out by the state and where local authorities are expected to have lost 75p out of every £1 by 2020 (LGA, 2017). Furthermore, Cowell argues that with the abolition of regional government the political spaces to ask what the most sustainable solution for the region or nation as a whole is was curtailed; "[t]he best answers may not equate to the aggregate consequences of local determinations", and varied interpretations pose a challenge to coordination (Cowell, 2013, p.34).

These pressures lead Allmendinger and Haughton to suggest that "planning and sustainability have both been curtailed – individually and in conjunction – by hostile ideologies of 'stake shrinkage'" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011 in Cowell, 2013, p.40). Similarly, Cowell has suggested that the NPPF is a "device for meta-governance", which gives market actors undue preference given localism's alignment to economic growth at the expense of effective regulatory instruments (Cowell, 2013). Hodson and Marvin have suggested that deregulation represents the active reshaping of sub-national governance (under the umbrella of localism) to create competition for limited resources and to put in place institutional mediators to support entrepreneurialism; low-carbon action is to 'emerge' rather than to be encouraged through policy measures (Hodson and Marvin, 2013, p.82).⁷⁸

Other examples of the curtailment of the integrated role of planning and (environmental) sustainability include the presumption in favour of sustainable development, outlined in para 14-16 of the 2012 NPPF⁷⁹, which may give undue favour to developers and encourage speculative development (see Wootton, 2017). Moreover, in 2018 Friends of the Earth (FoE) criticised the government for allowing the revised NPPF to incite future investment in coal, acting as a "frackers' charter" and not applying a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to the government's own NPPF revision process.⁸⁰ Similarly, the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013, while allowing share raises for community energy, denied local authorities the right to contest fracking (Cowell, 2013).

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (HMG, 2004).

⁷⁸ Indeed, the failure to create sufficient inter-governmental mechanisms on climate change may be one contributing factor towards the declaration of climate emergencies, often with a commitment to become carbon-neutral by 2030 (see <https://climateemergency.uk/> last accessed 30.4.19).

⁷⁹ See paras 10-14 in the 2018 revised NPPF.

⁸⁰ See <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/legal-and-planning/government-faces-legal-challenge-friends-earth-over-new-planning-rules> (last accessed 28.1.19).

Other critiques of recent planning reforms include the conversion of employment to residential uses as permitted development in some areas – which were more or less protected from development since 1948 – meaning LPAs cannot now uphold environmental and design standards through the planning system, including enforcing sustainable locations for development (Remøy and Street, 2018).

The rebranding in 2016 of the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to the Department of Business, Industrial Strategy and Energy⁸¹ and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are seen to formalise an entrenchment of a shift towards housing and growth over sustainable development. Such moves may suggest that “the dominant low carbon transition that is being constructed is based on techno-economic fetish, objectification and a narrow economic calculus of creating market opportunities for capital” (Hodson and Marvin, 2013, p.68).

Despite moves under localism to devolve power, the UK is still considered as one of the most top-down and restrictive national state governance arrangements in the West (Hodson and Marvin, 2013; Ehnert et al., 2018). However, the NPPF definition neglects these political dimensions of sustainability. NDPs – and planning more generally - are inherently political. For instance, the NPPF also alludes to the ‘right type’ of land, the ‘right’ places’ and the ‘right’ time for development and what constitutes ‘opportunities for growth’ (NPPF, 2012, p.i). However, these are not uncontentious issues. Moreover, whose definition of a “strong, vibrant and healthy community” (NPPF, 2012, para 7) is not a clear-cut response (Wills, 2012b).

The rest of this chapter explores the role of NDPs as arenas for community-directed low carbon localism⁸².

⁸¹ The rationale for which was that energy issues would be better addressed through an overall industrial strategy and that climate change was already a ‘mainstream’ issue. However, critics point out that the current government Cabinet includes prominent climate deniers and pro-Brexit figures that seek to entrench the dismantling of environmental regulation. See <http://www.desmog.uk/2016/07/20/brexit-what-going-happen-uk-climate-change-policy> (last accessed 20.7.16).

⁸² A term used by the Centre of Sustainable Energy, Bristol, UK and their support for projects that use localism for low-carbon objectives (see <https://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1198>).

3.5 Neighbourhood Development Plans - a mechanism for (low-carbon) grassroots influence?

NDPs enable 'communities' to create a plan that set out local priorities for development in their areas. NDPs are only concerned with development and use of land in line with Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (HMG, 2004). An NDP can only be carried out by a qualifying body, which must be an existing local government where this exists (i.e., parish or town councils), or (in the case of a city) a neighbourhood forum.⁸³ NDPs set out local development priorities and can add local flavour to existing strategic planning policies set by the LPA (such as county and district councils). Once made' an NDP becomes part of the Local Development Framework (LDF)⁸⁴, together with other key planning documents – including the Local Plan - to determine decisions on planning applications made by the LPA. To date over, 2,000 community groups have initiated the NDP process, with over 500 made plans.

⁸³ NDPs have distinct phases that they must go through according to the Neighbourhood Planning (2012) Regulations: i) establishment of a steering group or Neighbourhood Development Forum, with a Link Officer (from the LPA) in an Observer capacity, ii) approval of the neighbourhood area (by a six-week consultation led by the LPA), iii) community consultation to support objectives and policies, iv) collation of an evidence-base to inform policies, including a Consultation Statement, a Habitats Statement and a Sustainability Appraisal (SEA), v) Regulation 14 – local (minimum six-week consultation) on the Pre-Submission NDP and modifications, vi) Regulation 16 on the amended plan 'Submission' version, vii) formal Examination by an independent examiner, viii) modifications on the Reg 16 (Submission) Version), unless it fails examination xi) referendum on the plan and xii) adoption of the 'made' plan. A neighbourhood forum can be established with 21 members of local community groups.

⁸⁴ See Figure 5-15.

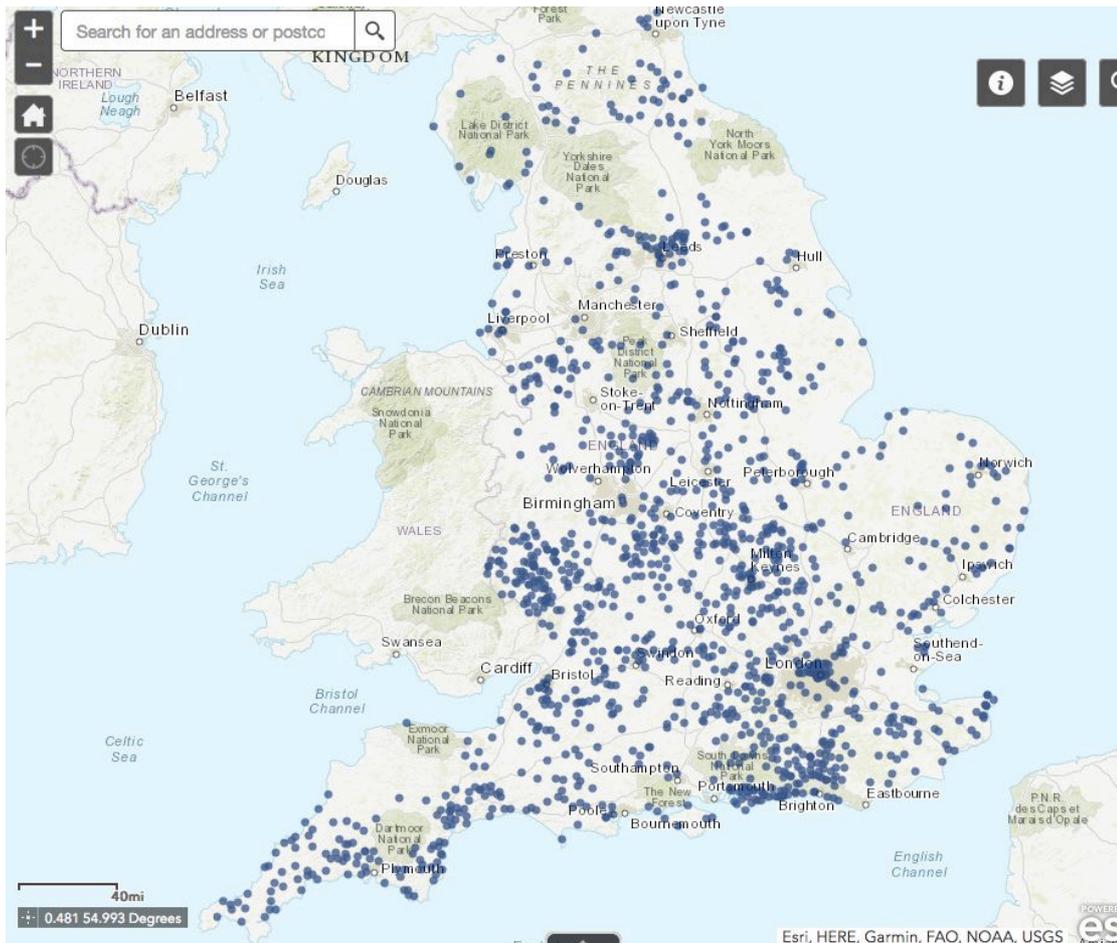


Figure 3-8. Geographic distribution of NDP groups in England (MHCLG, 2019)⁸⁵

Since the NPPF was published, there have been several related policy documents that have sought to clarify the position of planning to meet government housing targets and to the relationship between Local Plans and NDPs. The Neighbourhood Planning Act was passed in July 2017 to strengthen NDPs⁸⁶ and aims to make the planning process more reflexive, including a revision of both Local Plans and NDPs at least once every five years. In 2018, the NPPF was updated which included provisions for encouraging development on smaller sites, expanding the definition of affordable housing, a greater emphasis on design codes, encouraging LPAs to use compulsory purchase powers to bring forward sites and set out a standard methodology for calculating housing need (MHCLG, 2018a). Importantly, the Housing Standards Review (HSR) effectively prevented any NDP or LPA from setting additional local technical criteria (e.g. energy

⁸⁵ <http://communities.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d195c3134caa46b5a638ad0c4f0cce77> (last accessed 28.1.19). Reprinted under the Open Government Licence 3.0.

⁸⁶ Changes included bringing NDPs into the LDF after referendum stage, rather than being formally 'made' as a separate procedural step, and that LPAs must inform town and parish councils of any planning applications being put forward within a designated neighbourhood area.

policies) on development. The Deregulation Act (2015) scrapped the CfSH and energy standards could not go beyond current building regulations although the effect of these changes varied across policy areas.⁸⁷

The following table sets out some examples of how NDP were used to advance low-carbon, relocalised development (as of 2016).

Table 3-2 Examples of low-carbon NDPs (adapted by the author from CSE, 2015)⁸⁸

Area	Non-plan making mechanisms	Examples
Low-carbon ambitions (general)	Aspiration to be carbon neutral	Draft –Bradford on Avon,
	To establish a community energy group	Made - Ashton on Hayes
Energy (renewables) ⁹⁰	To encourage BREEAM Excellent ⁸⁹	
	Adhere to One Planet Living principles	Made – Frome
	Supporting community energy schemes	Draft – Boston Spa Made – Coniston, Hough on the Hill
	Specific types of renewable energy	Made – Anslow, Much Wenlock
Energy efficiency	Targets for onsite renewables generation in new development	Made – Tickhill
	District Heating	Made – Wolverton
Sustainable Transport	Upgrading existing dwellings	Made – Wirksworth
	Criteria for new builds to be walking distance from the town centre	Made – Chapel-en-le-Frith; Wye
	Encouraging cycle pathways	Made – Frome, Buckfastleigh

⁸⁷ See Appendix D – Policy parameters for low-carbon development (as of 2016) (Burnett and Stone, 2016).

⁸⁸ Engagement with CSE led to a minor contribution to CSE's low-carbon handbook (see CSE, 2015).

⁸⁹ OPL, community energy and BREEAM were all previously proposed as policies in earlier versions of Frome's NDP.

⁹⁰ Some NDPs were hoping to set additional measures to secure reduced emissions through local policies through the CfSH. However, NDP groups, such as Frome, were forced to remove these policies after the HSR.

		Made – Arundel, Barnham and Eastergate, Thame
	Re-order priorities between cars and pedestrians	Made – Frome
Biodiversity	Protection of ecosystems through Wildlife Corridors	Made – Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale, Yapton, Anslow Made – Barnham and Eastergate
	New development should integrate with existing green infrastructure	
	Habitat creation, woodlands and wetlands	Made – Wye
	Local Green Space designation	Made – Hough on the Hill
Water	Encourage the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage	Made - Tattenhall, Bersted, East Preston, Yapton, Buckingham
CIL spending	Bus interchange, cycle routes	Made – Barnham and Eastergate, Laurence Weston

Indeed, in their updated (2017) Guidebook to Low-carbon Neighbourhood Planning, CSE have even suggested it is a *legal* duty for NDPs to address climate change (CSE, 2017). Thus, encouraging NDP groups to be as ambitious as possible (which conflicts with some of the policy aims of encouraging standardisation in low-carbon building standards) and using government's own international climate policy commitments and national targets to elicit (local) low-carbon policies. Indeed, such guidance was inspired by an Examiner who suggested that if NDPs set additional housing targets for development over the LPA's five-year land supply⁹¹ then additional technical standards are possible on these sites.

While NDPs seek to broaden engagement and influence placemaking there appears to be a spatial fragmentation of localism within the NDP process (McGuinness and Mawson, 2017), raising questions over its legitimacy as an emancipatory planning instrument. For instance, NDPs

⁹¹ A 5 year land supply is a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing against a housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against a local housing need figure where appropriate in accordance with paragraph 73 of the (2018) National Planning Policy Framework. See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment> (last accessed 23.1.19).

had an average 89% in favour⁹² of the plans but only 32.4% average turnout (total electorate 335,000).⁹³ The think tank Res Publica found that ten local authorities with the most deprived areas in England also had the fewest designated NDPs, and the opposite was true for more affluent areas.⁹⁴

Gallent and Robinson (2013) investigate the extent to which these local aspirations were formalised within planning institutions. Their work highlights how cliques emerged within the process and communities could not assume 'expert' planning discourses and roles. Moreover, they found alliances between parishes and other agencies were short-lived. Their work highlights that the process went into a 'black hole' in the eyes of one parish councillor (Gallent and Robinson, 2013). Meanwhile, Wills found that the NDP process had quicker and more effective results when they built on pre-existing capacities in placemaking and social networks (Wills, 2016a).

Parker and Slater (2017) found that of 130 NDPs that had passed referendum by Spring 2016, almost half required major modifications required by the Examiner. Such changes may be indicative of 'modulation', or a process of 'rescripting' community intentions (Parker et al., 2015; Parker and Street, 2015; Parker et al., 2017). Parker et al. suggest the highly prescriptive nature of the NDP process requires "pliant communities" - the "good citizen" who abide by "technologies of power" through which the government's planning intentions (e.g., to build more houses) are channelled (Parker et al., 2017, p.448-449). They also suggest that outcomes are necessarily bounded; the governance of NDPs rests on prescriptive, overtly technical and complex parameters. Felicetti also argues that an often bi-lateral engagement of Transition Initiatives with formal government institutions in the context of localism has only served to formalise exclusionary tendencies, rather than promoting grassroots activism (Felicetti, 2013).

There seems to be overwhelming sentiment that NDPs are a disappointment compared to the early ambitions of the government discourse. Parker et al., even suggest, "our view is that innovation is being constrained if not entirely suppressed" (Parker et al., 2017, p.446). Moreover, they invoke Mouffe's concept of agonism as present in the early stages of the process (Mouffe, 1999), but these morphs into antagonism as the plan progresses through its regulatory hoops.

⁹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-landmark-with-200-communities-now-approving-neighbourhood-plans> (last accessed 12.7.16).

⁹³ As of August 2016 <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1406239/analysis-finds-average-neighbourhood-plan-turnout-324> (last accessed 5.10.17).

⁹⁴ <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Deprived-communities-missing-out-on-Neighbourhood-Plans-says-think-tank/41533> (last accessed 5.10.17).

Parker et al. propose that the social and spatial belonging to particular places can be used to create oppositional identities that encourage antagonism against the seeming governmentality of the NDP and broader planning processes.

Nevertheless, Parker et al., draw on May (2008 in Parker et al., 2017, p.450) to suggest that NDPs remain a “foot in the door” for a “hope” towards more progressive local politics. For instance, co-founder of *Transition* Rob Hopkins suggests that government reforms have actively encouraged Transition Initiatives to link to broader mainstream processes of government design and, in effect, for Transition Initiatives to become developers (Hopkins, speaking at a public event, 21/5/14). He suggests they utilise community-based planning mechanisms such as CLTs, and Community Right to Build Orders (CRtBOs) to influence development outcomes through community ownership of assets (Hopkins, 2015). Hopkins has also proposed invoking discursive counter-arguments, for instance turning NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) from a perception of resistant, progress-hampering residents to SWIMBY (Something Wonderful In My BackYard)⁹⁵; Transition Initiatives should also actively withdraw their consent for proposed applications that are seen to be unsustainable (Hopkins, 2015). *Transition* also resonates with shared, community-managed assets and cohousing (intentional communities run by their residents with a mix of self-contained and shared community spaces)⁹⁶ which could become viable alternatives supported by or channelled through localism rights and NDPs.

Yet Wills suggests that the current local infrastructure for engagement in the polity is a “weakness” in fulfilling the promise of localism and there are significant inequalities in the geographic distribution of power and ability to respond to greater involvement (Wills, 2016b, p.1). Not recognising power and inequality of representation in NDPs means that “austerity localism envisions decentralizing power to certain local people” – the ‘default actors’ existing resources and expertise (Featherstone et al., 2011, 178). This may risk deepening inequalities within and between places. There is also a danger that there is a lack of skills and capacity for those expected to deliver localism outcomes (such as within LPAs and NDP groups) to effectively respond to the challenges of ‘sustainable development’ (Fiona Reynolds, cited in Ricketts and Field, 2012; Wills, 2016a).

To be effective, this requires both new civic infrastructure and increased capacity for people to engage in public life, to create “new political ecosystems”, or else this may risk a transfer of power

⁹⁵ See Hopkins (2014) for a refreshing SWIMBY manifesto.

⁹⁶ Cohousing originated in Scandinavia in the 1970s. There are 19 operational cohousing schemes in the UK, notably Lilac in Leeds, Stroud/Bicester and 60 groups actively developing projects. For more information see <https://cohousing.org.uk/> (last accessed 7.1.19).

to a new set of elites empowered through government localism reforms. Indeed, this should reflect a move towards more horizontal approaches that younger people who are accustomed to more 'networked' approach to technological interaction (Wills, 2016a, p.19). Indeed, Wills also suggests that NDPs may yet encourage a new form of politics that is not yet present in academic research (Wills, 2016b).

There has been an increasing drive towards using NDPs to achieve low-carbon objectives, despite the restrictive policy conditions (see CSE, 2017). However, analysis of neighbourhood plans for sustainable outcomes is underdeveloped, although there have been some valuable practitioner research carried out (CSE, 2018; TCPA, 2018). NDPs are a critical mechanism to consider within a broader placemaking strategy because they can indicate the extent to which ideas are contained, constrained, loosened or dispelled by the plan-making process. They play a clear role in understanding how existing institutional, spatial, social and political "configurations in urban and regional contexts are able to absorb, resist or reshape the dominant pathways" (Hodson and Marvin, 2013, p.69). Yet Felicetti suggests that LPAs often seek only limited involvement with community organisations, such as *Transition*, which may limit how localism can encourage genuine community-led alternatives (Felicetti, 2013). This then begs the question on the potential for the UK planning context to incubate new sustainable development models such as those explored in this chapter.

However, as Padgett and Powell (2012, p.1) suggest in their chapter "The Problem of Emergence", theoretical approaches can often suggest how or what alternatives exist, but these "have little to say about the invention of new alternatives in the first place." For instance, how did actors come together, through which formal and informal processes, what motivations and shared interests and experiences enabled ideas to emerge from a latent to an active state to challenge growth-centred logics. The next chapter sets out a methodological approach to explore such a research agenda, attentive to the concerns of the historical dynamics of place and how these inform the politics of local transition arenas, of which an NDP may be one of many.

4 Methodology

So far, this thesis has explored in detail the orientations of the *Transition* movement, key concepts in sustainability transitions research, the role of the planning process in enabling sustainable development – in its various forms – and the effect that political-institutional arrangements and place can have on entry points for such ideas to take root. This chapter sets out a stage-by-stage methodological design and analytical process to explore the dynamics transition in Frome, the politics of the 'niche' and 'regime' and the duality of steer and emergence. The rationale for the selection of the case study of Frome (Somerset, UK) within the period of time under study (2006 – 2016) is presented, together with key conclusions from a preliminary desk-based study and informative interviews exploring the role of *Transition* on low-carbon neighbourhood plans in England. The justification for the selected methods – Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) - and triangulation with secondary data sources is outlined, together with data analysis procedures together with key ethical and practical data management considerations.

4.1 Research objectives and questions

The theoretical task at hand is, in the words of Davies and Featherstone, “how different trajectories of activity are combined and reworked” in various transitions arenas in Frome, which can shed light on how the assumptions of 'niche' and 'regime' actors compete and align towards different framings of sustainable development. Few (2002) suggests that research on power (influence) can focus on different levels: societal structures, discursive processes, social networks or individual agency. This research took a multi-level approach – appropriately for the study of transitions research – to understand the interaction between spatial characteristics, organisations, individuals, policy agendas and arenas and the structuring and fragmentation of change processes.

By exploring the notion of placemaking, the research aims to give a spatially situated account of the role of place in defining and shaping the selection environment for protagonist actors who seek development alternatives and how these definitions are mediated through and within the

institutions of the state. For instance, by revealing the specific entities that provide a foundation for protagonist actors to craft and use for their own (politicised) ends.

Table 4-1 Recap of objectives and research questions

Overarching objective	
To investigate the scope for implementing (New Economy) transitions through mainstream institutions or initiatives at the local scale	
Overarching research question	
To what extent have mainstream institutions enabled or frustrated transitions at the local scale for either i) <i>Transition</i> and relocalisation ('niche' transition arenas) or ii) government and politics? ('regime' transition arenas)	
Objective	Research Question
<i>Objective 1. To understand the role of placemaking networks in shaping the form of Frome's transition arenas</i>	1. <i>What conditions led to a strong relocalised character in Frome's relocalised placemaking networks?</i>
<i>Objective 2. To interrogate whether the 'niche' and the 'regime' are appropriate concepts when protagonists occupy the structures of the state</i>	2. <i>To what extent do 'niche' actors advance their objectives when they occupy formal spaces of government 'regimes'?</i> 3. <i>How do formal and informal ties affect the politics of transition?</i>
<i>Objective 3. To understand the form of transitions in Frome and their reach</i>	4. <i>What are the consequences of the occupation of the state by protagonists on the form (steer vs. emergence) of niche-directed transitions?</i>

A summary of relevant entities and issues relating to the two literature reviews, chapters 2 and 3 and their correlation to the research questions is illustrated in the figure below:

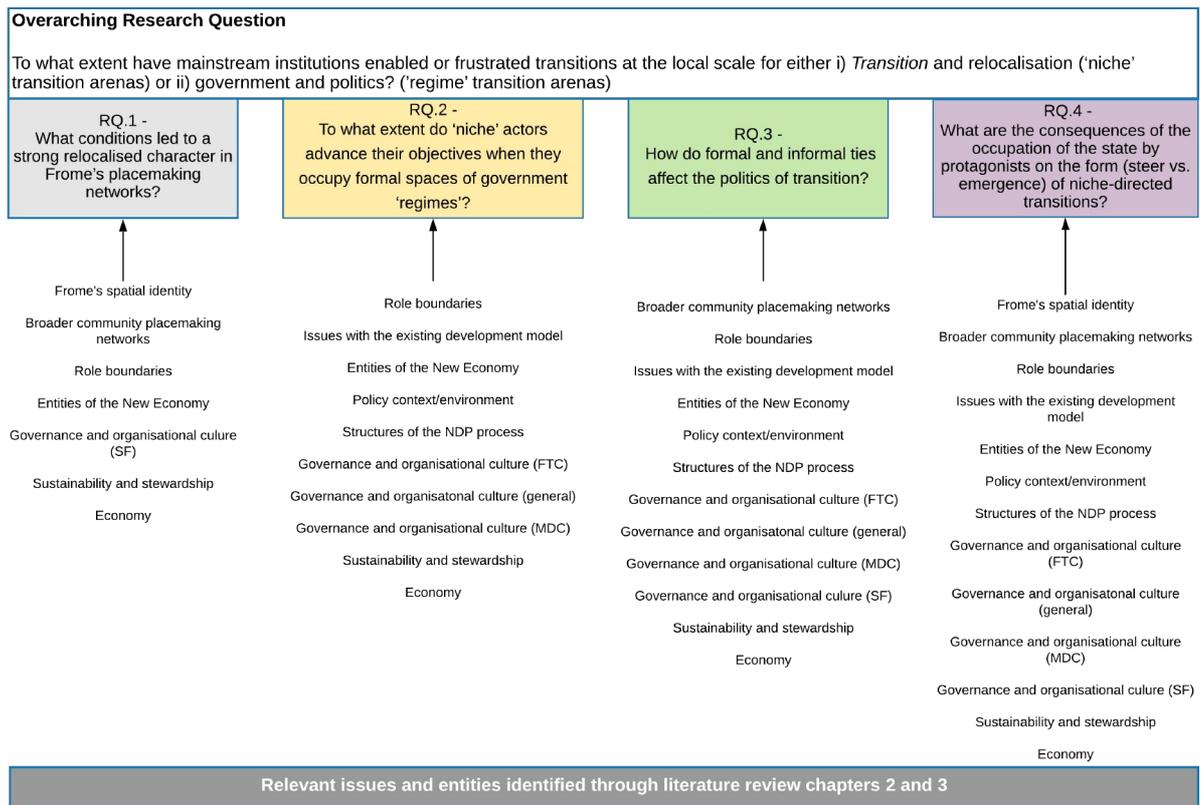


Figure 4-1. Entities and issues relating to RQs

Crotty (2003, p.3) compares the distinction between methodology and method, whereby the former is a “strategy, plan of action, process or design” and method is “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data”. This research is a qualitative investigation, the methodologies of which Vaismoradi et al define as “the philosophical perspectives, assumptions, postulates, and approaches that researchers employ to render their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and/or adaptation and to choose research methods” (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, 398). Qualitative methods differ in the extent to which the data is transformed in the analytical process from description to interpretation (Sandelowski and Barroso in Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The underlying methodology and specific methods to explore these phenomena are outlined in the rest of this chapter.

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was selected since it is a relatively flexible approach for analysing a range of data sources, either as an inductive (data-driven) or deductive (theory-driven) approach, depending on the epistemological orientation of the researcher (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). QCA is “a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1278). It is used to help answer what, why and how research, whereby text is

analysed to (hopefully) lead to new theoretical insights. QCA was used to identify themes and patterns from the transcribed interview data, informed by a review of secondary data sources (see Table 4-7).

Due to the potential for subjectivity in qualitative research, such inquiry is often judged against its credibility, transferability to other research contexts and its dependability – or the consistency in its approach (Guba, 1981). Elo et al., (2014) suggest a checklist for inductive QCA (see Figure 4-2).

Phase of the content analysis study	Questions to check
Preparation phase	<p>Data collection method How do I collect the most suitable data for my content analysis? Is this method the best available to answer the target research question? Should I use either descriptive or semi-structured questions? Self-awareness: what are my skills as a researcher? How do I pre-test my data collection method?</p> <p>Sampling strategy What is the best sampling method for my study? Who are the best informants for my study? What criteria should be used to select the participants? Is my sample appropriate? Is my data well saturated?</p> <p>Selecting the unit of analysis What is the unit of analysis? Is the unit of analysis too narrow or too broad?</p>
Organization phase	<p>Categorization and abstraction How should the concepts or categories be created? Is there still too many concepts? Is there any overlap between categories?</p> <p>Interpretation What is the degree of interpretation in the analysis? How do I ensure that the data accurately represent the information that the participants provided?</p> <p>Representativeness How do I check the trustworthiness of the analysis process? How do I check the representativeness of the data as a whole?</p>
Reporting phase	<p>Reporting results Are the results reported systematically and logically? How are connections between the data and results reported? Is the content and structure of concepts presented in a clear and understandable way? Can the reader evaluate the transferability of the results (are the data, sampling method, and participants described in a detailed manner)? Are quotations used systematically? How well do the categories cover the data? Are there similarities within and differences between categories? Is scientific language used to convey the results?</p> <p>Reporting analysis process Is there a full description of the analysis process? Is the trustworthiness of the content analysis discussed based on some criteria?</p>

Figure 4-2. A checklist of a qualitative QCA (Elo et al., 2014, p.3).

The rest of this chapter aims to respond to these considerations starting in the next section with an outline which units of analysis were selected to respond to the research questions, and the approach to select the case study, the respondents and other secondary data.

4.2 Research design

Sharp and Richardson suggest that an explicit description of the data selection process is critical since it indicates the level of replicability of the research process (Sharp and Richardson, 2001).

The opportunity for NDPs to contribute to community-led planning and the emphasis on sustainable development under the NPPF⁹⁷ was the initial subject that framed the research design, particularly the extent to which low-carbon issues were being explicitly addressed within NDPs.

There were four key aspects to the research design:

- i) Literature review and identification of research topic
- ii) Preliminary assessment with the intent to identify potential case studies consisting of:
 - a) a desk-based assessment (descriptive content analysis) from a sample of NDPs across England to reveal the range of policies and low-carbon discourses employed and
 - b) informational interviews with *Transition* and actors engaged with the (low-carbon) NDPs at the time
- iii) Selection and design of the case study of Frome and the conduct of interviews and empirical work in Frome
- iv) Coding and analysis of data

Table 4-2 Summary of research carried out and timeline.

Research activity	Period
Literature review	September 2012 – September 2013; then ongoing
Maternity Leave (I)	October 2013 – December 2013
Preliminary assessment	March – August 2014
Selection of case study and research scope	September 2014
Empirical research, including interviews and attending Frome-based meetings and events	October 2014 – July 2015

⁹⁷ For a review, see section 3.4.

(observations captured via memos and research diary)	
Gathering and reviewing secondary data (e.g. NDP documents)	October 2014 – July 2015; ongoing
Transcription of interviews	April 2015 – July 2015; March 2016 – June 2016
Maternity Leave (2)	July 2015 – March 2016
Secondary data comparison	March 2016 – October 2017
Viva	January 2018
Re-familiarisation with transcribed data and initial coding of interviews to identify emergent themes and sub-themes ⁹⁸ in MS Excel	June – October 2018
Second phase review of initial themes and sub-themes (using Mindmeister) ⁹⁹	November 2018
Third phase and final compilation of themes and sub-themes (using Lucidchart) ¹⁰⁰	December 2018

These research design phases are explored in more detail in the following sections of this chapter.

4.2.1 Preliminary assessment of *Transition* and NDPs

During the period March – August 2014 a preliminary assessment of low-carbon neighbourhood plans aimed to refine the research agenda and elucidate key challenges for environmental organisations engaged in them. In particular, I focused on how *Transition* actors engaged in these processes and how discourses of alternative sustainable development were diffused, or not, within NDPs (as a predominantly institutional process).

⁹⁸ Since this is a re-submission of my thesis, only the coding process carried out after my viva is included in this table. See

Appendix E - Thematic codes - coding phase I.

⁹⁹ See Appendix F – Codes exported through MindMeister (stage 2 coding).

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix G – Themes and sub-themes depicted through Lucid Chart (stage 3 coding).

This study comprised of a descriptive content analysis of 13 NDPs¹⁰¹ selected from a list of extant plans (as of 2014¹⁰²) to understand the scope of environmental ambition in NDPs. NDPs were in draft form or had been adopted 'made', selected in alphabetical order.

At the time, the preliminary assessment revealed that a number of policies were emerging with local-level energy targets (e.g. CfSH Level 4 and above), green infrastructure and sustainable transport (e.g. development within walking distance to the town centre), which were quite standard policies arising from early plans. As I became more acquainted with the ideas of relocalisation, alternative development concepts such as self-build and cohousing became indicators of the diffusion of the *Transition* agenda – these were not indicated in the NDPs I reviewed. Thus suggesting a lack of awareness of these approaches, or the lack of influence of *Transition* on these particular NDPs.

As a result of the preliminary assessment, criteria were then developed for the selection of case studies to have:

- i) Formally taken a pro-active approach to address low-carbon development in their NDP and broader placemaking initiatives
- ii) Specific low-carbon policies in their NDP
- iii) A Transition Initiative to be directly involved in the NDP process

As such, I contacted Transition Initiatives and other actors working on low-carbon issues and NDPs to understand low-carbon (development alternatives) from a range of perspectives as informational interviews to explore potential case studies and whether they met the criteria above. A summary of these respondents is detailed in the table below:

Table 4-3 Actor type and rationale for informational interviews

Actor type	How identified	Rationale
Transition Initiatives and environmental	Screening of the Transition Network (TN) website for Transition Initiatives engaged in	To explore their active contribution to low-carbon development and development alternatives through

¹⁰¹ Using key words energy, low-carbon, zero-carbon, carbon footprint, carbon dioxide, climate change, mitigation, adaptation, ecological, trees, green belt, village green, sustainable, unsustainable, environment and brownfield.

¹⁰² From <http://www.communityplanning.net/neighbourhoodplanning/frontrunners/frontrunners.php> (last accessed 1.12.18). The plans reviewed were and their respective LPA were: Acle (Broadland), Adderbury (Cherwell), Allendale (Allerdale), Ardingly (West Sussex), Arundale (Arun), Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale (Windsor and Maidenhead), Backwell (North Somerset), Bembridge (Isle of Wight), Billesdon (Harborough), Bishop's Stortford (East Hertfordshire), Bilston (Wolverhampton), Barwick-in-Elmet (West Yorkshire) and Allenwick and Dewick (Northumberland) at the time had green ambitions but there was not sufficient information to review them.

groups involved in NDPs: n4	NDPs (draft and adopted) and the content of NDP websites that indicated such a presence ¹⁰³ .	NDPs. Explored the contributions they had made, the strategies used to negotiate their agenda and the challenges and opportunities for low-carbon development, at both a policy and practical level.
Planning Aid intermediaries and the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE, Bristol) ¹⁰⁴ : n3	Personal contact with intermediaries attending a Planning Aid event in Bristol in 2014 and online search for low-carbon NDP resources.	Explored the demand for support on low-carbon policies, the implications of the recent policy change under the HSR ¹⁰⁵ , and their level of interaction with other organisations (with a low-carbon remit).
CLTs ¹⁰⁶ : n3	Contact with regional CLT networks.	To explore their active contribution to low-carbon development and development alternatives through NDPs and CLTs.

Since this was an exploratory exercise to seek out an appropriate case study, these interviews were not transcribed as they were for informational purposes only; a specific methodology for the selected case study was applied when Frome was selected. However, these insights were incorporated into the research design, such as capturing relational ties between groups. Observations were captured in a research diary, for instance, key challenges and successes in influencing low-carbon outcomes which are summarised below. These interviews informed a

¹⁰³ Although it is recognised that some innovations in low-carbon NDPs may have been hidden from an initial screening if their draft plan had not been publicly released.

¹⁰⁴ At the time PlanLoCal, part of the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE, Bristol), had developed a guidebook for supporting NDP groups on low-carbon NDPs (CSE, 2015). A draft guidebook in 2015 also included suggested policy wording and guidance on creating an evidence base to support low-carbon NDPs. Engagement with CSE led to collaboration with Dan Stone from the Centre of Sustainable Energy, who co-authored a think piece with me on the Transition Network website (Burnett and Stone, 2014; Burnett and Stone, 2016). The preliminary assessment also contributed to the CSE's Low-Carbon Neighbourhood Planning Guidebook (2015; 2016) and were published in Bradley et al., (2017).

¹⁰⁵ The implications of the HSR are discussed further in section 3.4.

¹⁰⁶ The National CLT network, which supports UK CLTs, defines them as "a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community, like community enterprises, food growing or workspaces. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier". See: <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/what-is-a-clt/about-clts> (last accessed 23.1.19).

desire seek out case studies that had successfully engendered more radical forms of governance arrangements to expedite the influence of *Transition* on formal planning instruments.

Informational interviews revealed that representatives from environmental organisations, such as Transition Initiatives and Friends of the Earth (FoE) had begun to engage in NDPs as a means to advance alternatives to growth-dominated discourses. Transition Initiatives were using their own organisational documents to influence the NDP evidence base and policies, such as using a Transition Initiative-created *Energy Descent Plan* or a sustainable transport strategy. Moreover, where Green Party councillors were engaged (such as town, district or county) this enabled formal links between the NDP, the Transition Initiative and elected (green) actors. In one case *Transition* could thus drive its own agenda forward through the NDP process, particularly since the sustainability working group of the NDP was co-opted into the Transition Initiative itself.

In Wivenhoe (Essex) a member of a Transition Initiative suggested they were accepted into the NDP group because *Transition* was seen as “not too threatening” or likely to disrupt the status quo; this *Transition* group believed there were synergies between the NDP and cultivating relocalisation to build a stronger community and promote wellbeing “a sort of carbon reduction through increased liveability” (TI Wivenhoe). CLTs did not see an explicit role to engage in NDPs and low-carbon development, which tended not to be a core aspect of their development approach; focusing mainly exclusively on affordable housing.

Whilst there was clearly a significant level of ambition to include low-carbon policies by environmental groups and other actors, many of the respondents in the preliminary assessment took an incremental approach, rather than a radical one. A key challenge for such actors was developing an NDP that was ambitious and at the same time implementable.

As part of the formal governance of the NDP groups, some environmentalists took care to avoid radical sustainability discourse. A member of FoE Alnwick (Northumberland) suggested they did not believe more radical policies would be accepted by more conservative members of the NDP steering committee and therefore were left off the agenda. Another TI member said they faced a lack of support at the local level and had to engage other sympathetic groups in consultations to make it appear as if the environmental voice was louder than it actually was on the ground. Other groups had pro-actively sought to enrol national-level supporters of a low-carbon agenda, such as

the CSE or planning consultants with a reputation for low-carbon policy-making (e.g. Welton and Lawrence Weston, Bristol).¹⁰⁷

4.2.2 The rationale for selecting Frome as a case study and alternatives considered

As Stake suggests, a case study is a “bounded system” (Stake, 2003, 135, in Juppenlatz, 2015); these are important units of analysis since they can provide insights into how specific circumstances generate certain outcomes over others (Tsang, 2013; Davies and Featherstone, 2013). As part of my familiarisation with the practice of NDPs, I attended an event organised by Planning Aid in Bristol which led to an encounter with the LPA Planning Officer at Mendip District Council who corroborated that Frome had an interesting and innovative NDP.

At this particular juncture other potential case studies were being considered (Bridport, Marlborough, Lewes, Bristol and Bradford on Avon - which had an independent low-carbon grassroots organisation rather than a TI engaged in its plan). Frome stood out from other NDP groups reviewed in the pilot study because of its innovative policies towards a relocalisation agenda in its NDP, which was coupled with a local political strategy of independent politics in an attempt to challenge the status quo of development – and party-politics. In order to delve deep into placemaking dynamics, I selected Frome as the sole case study to allow for repeated exposure to the case study. Frome was chosen on the basis of its innovative mix of alternative governance arrangements, the strong links to the local TI, its radical (non-) party political agenda, and FTC's determination to encourage low-carbon development. Whilst a comparative secondary case study would have been valuable, the level of detail in the analysis of Frome's case prevented the me from engaging with another case in the same way.

The methodological task in this research became how to unpack the flow of green and (politically) radical identities as they moved through Frome's placemaking networks and the NDP. Notably, the relationships between the radical *Independents for Frome* (IfF - who control Frome Town Council, FTC), the LPA and other tiers of government, the local Transition Initiative (TI,

¹⁰⁷ These early findings from the scoping study were published in Bradley et al., 2017.

Sustainable Frome) and other stakeholders who were involved - either directly or indirectly - in Frome's NDP and the wider move for relocalisation in Frome. A principal objective of the research was to understand how *Transition* values had influenced Frome's NDP process and the politics of IFF.

Whilst there is an explicit focus on the NDP process in Frome, the research also draws on experiences pre-dating it, which can illustrate the diffusion of relocalisation within placemaking networks over time, the emergence of Frome's broader political context of independent politics, and the town's engagement with shifting policy discourses at the national level through the discourse of localism and broader political trends. At the time of the empirical work, the policy context was at the cusp of abandoning the CfSH through the Deregulation Act (2015) and the watering down of policy objectives under the Allowable Solutions (ZCH) policy.¹⁰⁸ Of particular interest was to understand how NDPs adjusted from a given low-carbon policy domain and what strategies Frome-based actors had to maintain the original objectives of a low-carbon NDP.

The research evaluates events that occurred in Frome, primarily between 2006-2016, although relevant historical context and drivers are key to this study. This particular period was chosen because of several significant events that occurred during this time that actively contributed to Frome's relocalised and independent identity. The NDP process is therefore used as an entry point to chart (any) transitions to collective and organisational values, the socio-cultural relations between social actors and their embeddedness in particular networks, and how their participation may have resulted in changes in network characteristics and flows and how broader agendas intersect. In particular, the research responds to one respondent's call to capture the "messiness" of the contention in transition processes. The salience of key events to the study of Frome's relocalised placemaking transitions is explained in the table below:

Table 4-4 Key events in the study of Frome's relocalised and independent placemaking.

Key event	Salience to the study of Frome's relocalised and independent placemaking
2006 - Establishment of Sustainable Frome	Sustainable Frome was established by Peter Macfadyen, in parallel to the <i>Transition</i> movement. Its simultaneous separation and affiliation to the wider movement indicates

¹⁰⁸ See section 3.4.

<i>2011 – The election of lff to FTC</i>	<p>the strength in local vs. social movement belonging.</p> <p>Winning 10 out of 17 seats, lff's success can reveal the conditions to win power and how incumbents are squeezed out by the incomers within the structures of the state.</p>
<i>2013 – The establishment of the Neighbourhood Planning steering group</i>	<p>Indicates how a set of actors coalesce and interact when party-political and independent councillors engage in planning arenas.</p>
<i>2015 - lff's win of all 17 seats at FTC</i>	<p>Can help to reveal the conditions that enabled lff to consolidate power as protagonists.</p>
<i>2015 – The coining of the phrase “The People’s Republic of Frome”¹⁰⁹</i>	<p>A phrase coined in a national newspaper article (Harris, 2015), shortly after lff won all 17 seats and represents the factors behind a rebranding of independent politics on the national scale.</p>
<i>2016 – The adoption of Frome’s NDP</i>	<p>Can shed light on the political contestation between actors in planning arenas seeking alternative development models.</p>
<i>2016 - The rise of house prices rise by 14.5% in a year (Dec 15 – Dec 16)</i>	<p>This highlights the tensions of a changing socio-economic profile attracted to Frome as it increases in popularity has on ecocultural identity ties in the town.</p>

4.2.3 Respondent selection and interview schedule

A snowball methodology was applied in the first instance to uncover the actors and organisations that contribute to relocalised initiatives in Frome or those engaged in the NDP. This implies following a network wherever it leads, as opposed to setting system boundaries, thus helping to

¹⁰⁹ See Figure 6-5.

“define spatial dimensions based on the way actors themselves develop relations over space”¹¹⁰ (Coenen et al., 2012, 977). In recognising networks are not entirely traceable, the results remain a partial (and contingent) presentation of the key issues within Frome’s relocalised politics and its approach to placemaking (Ramarajan, 2014).

The starting point and key node was Peter Macfadyen, the then Mayor of Frome who founded Sustainable Frome, co-found Iff and pioneered the Flatpack Democracy independent political movement with the publication of “Flatpack Democracy: a guide to DIY Politics” (Macfadyen, 2014).¹¹¹ This led to introductions to the Chair of Frome’s NDP steering group and the Energy and Recycling Officer (now Resilience Officer), members of the steering group (which included a representative from MDC as a Link Officer)¹¹² and Sustainable Frome members and directors.

It is recognised that there may be an inherent bias within the snowball approach. For instance, the Sustainable Frome-Iff-FTC dynamic crowded out a more thorough investigation on other actors and *their* networks or placemaking dynamics that did not fall within these organisations. At the same time this was the logical entry point and the network under investigation, so the methodology worked well to reveal it, and to understand the nature of ties of these ties.

Any new identified actor or organisation was given a randomised unique actor or organisation id to protect anonymity.¹¹³ Interviews and secondary data identified 186 actors involved in planning for transitions in Frome as either agents of relocalised initiatives or individuals within roles that had an influence on these ambitions, including representatives of local authorities who complemented perspectives of the ‘in-group’ of Sustainable Frome or Independents for Frome. This list also included developers, landowners, architects, planning bodies, party political councillors and national-level New Economy actors that sought to use localism for relocalised or subversive intent.

As key actors were identified and the scope of the NDP and its networks were revealed, I applied additional criteria to the respondent selection process to identify those with a deep knowledge of the issues under study (purposive sampling). I consciously chose to focus on the relocalised

¹¹⁰ Although it is recognised that this is partly dependent upon the entry point via the Mayor and the NDP Chair.

¹¹¹ Flatpack Democracy sets out Iff’s approach as a model for other communities to self-replicate independent non-party-political representation in local government, namely town councils. ‘Flatpack2’ will be released Summer 2019.

¹¹² Link Officers are officials from the LPA who mediate between the planning authority and the designated body representing the neighbourhood area, with a view to ensure the NDP is in general conformity to extant planning policies.

¹¹³ In some cases, Peter Macfadyen, Mel Usher and Katy Duke are mentioned explicitly, with their consent, because they were central characters in the case study’s story.

placemaking network with Sustainable Frome (as a Transition Initiative) and relational ties to local government (FTC and lff) and planning arenas (the NDP) as my core area of investigation. This necessarily included members of the NDP steering group, consultants working on the plan or local authority representatives. However, while it would have complemented these perspectives, I did not approach developers and landowners during the live NDP process to avoid any charge of influencing the scope of the plan or relational ties within Frome. Moreover, focusing on those with an affiliation with or active role in Sustainable Frome, lff and FTC who were also involved in Frome’s NDP gave an entry point to understand degrees of formal and informal interactions between relocalised and government entities, and how *Transition* had influenced the governance transfer between different organisations through multiple membership¹¹⁴.

Between September 2014 – July 2015, interviews were conducted following an interview schedule that explored the linkages between transition, alternative political approaches, and the role of planning to facilitate or frustrate development alternatives. A total of 32 interviews were carried out, totalling 31.55 hours. *The views expressed in quotations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any organisation.*

A summary of the role type and the number interviewed for this research is listed in the table below:¹¹⁵

Table 4-5 Frome respondent type and number.

Role type/characteristic	n	%
All	27	100%
Male	18	67%
Female	9	33%
lff councillor	4	15%
FTC staff member	4	15%
NDP steering group	7	26%
Local authority representative	2	7%
NDP/FTC planning consultant	4	15%
Member of Citizens Panels – with either as Sustainable Frome or V4F links	6	22%

¹¹⁴ See Table 4-6 for the rationale for each actor type..

¹¹⁵ Some categories were not mutually exclusive and fell into more than one category; the bottom figure is the absolute number of interviewees and time spend during interviews.

Regulation 14/ local consultee (Neighbourhood Plan)	6	22%
Former Sustainable Frome member	4	15%
Active Sustainable member e.g. as Director or attendee of monthly meetings	4	15%
Member of Sustainable member spin-off group (exc. IfF)	4	15%
Involved in previous Community Plan	3	15%
Actor external to Frome but part of relocalised and/or independent political networks	4	15%
Interview time total (hours)	32	31.55 hours

Key NDP documentation and an initial review of secondary information was carried out to become familiar with the context before conducting initial interviews. At the time of the first round of interviews in Frome in 2014 the NDP had been formally submitted to the LPA; a number of areas of disagreement between FTC and MDC on key policy areas meant that plan had not been formally signed off by the LPA to proceed to examination.

Semi-structured interviews sought to understand how and why respondents enrolled into relocalised initiatives in Frome, including reasons for moving to the town, being contracted into the NDP (e.g. as a consultant), the contributions they made to the process and the challenges – and opportunities - they faced. Interrogating the concept of 'transition' in its various forms in and around the NDP process was also key, including transition between roles or to spatial characteristics to understand how a different kind of politics moved within the contours of Frome's placemaking networks. Two new IfF councillors elected in 2015 were interviewed to elicit how they anticipated to use their new role to reconfigure extant relationships with *Transition* or initial impressions of working within the second IfF administration.

Some actors involved in the NDP were asked about the ties to others involved in the NDP to ascertain the key conduits or relational blockages between actors. These results highlighted the degree of either friendship or pre-existing ties in Frome's relocalised initiatives.

Recommendations for how to change blockages (e.g. between the policy context, FTC and MDC, or Sustainable Frome and FTC) were also solicited where appropriate.¹¹⁶

The following actor types were sent a request for interview by email together with the research overview¹¹⁷; the table below sets out the rationale for their involvement:

Table 4-6 Actor types interviewed and rationale

Actor type	Rationale for interview
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the relationship between Sustainable Frome, broader placemaking networks, FTC, MDC and the planning process to date. • Why Frome-based actors are attracted to the town
All NDP steering group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the role of personal values and the influences behind people's involvement. • To understand the origins of innovative ideas and development alternatives. • To understand steering group members' experience of the NDP process, governance and community engagement.
Local authority representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand LPA experience of the NDP process, governance and community engagement. • To understand the difference between Frome and other NDP groups in Mendip district. • Reflections on low-carbon policy context and relationship to the planning sector (e.g. developers).
Consultants involved in Frome's NDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand consultants' experience of the NDP process, governance and community engagement –

¹¹⁶ As set out in Appendix A - Interview Schedule and Consent Form I had anticipated carrying out a Social Network Analysis. However, due to the need to cover relevant topics in sufficient detail, this was only carried out with some respondents and is therefore not used in this research. However, the questions that explored friendship and social ties significantly informed chapter 9 and chapter 10.

¹¹⁷ See Appendix A - Interview Schedule and Consent Form.

	<p>including degrees of inclusion and exclusion and network ties (to <i>Transition</i> or 'regime' actors).</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the influence of consultants on the content of the plan vis-à-vis the policy context.
<p>Individuals identified as having links to Sustainable Frome <i>and</i> had sought involvement in the NDP <i>or</i> were engaged (e.g. Sustainable Frome members that also participated in the NDP Citizen Panels)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the role of Sustainable Frome in influencing the content and procedural aspects of Frome's NDP. • To understand the relationship between <i>Transition</i>, FTC and MDC as well as broader social movement ties. • To understand the origins of innovative ideas and development alternatives.
<p>External New Economy actors that had been identified as having links to Frome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the diffusion of any of the ideas set out in Frome's NDP regarding relocalisation and the New Economy to other places (or vice versa) to explore how pathways of transition were being carried, i.e. via the NDP process. • Probe partnership and network ties in the New Economy.
<p>National organisations representing core policy objectives in Frome's NDP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand how Frome's experience sits within the national political context; notably how independent politics at different levels – town, district, national – is encouraging alternative models of politics. • To seek alternative accounts for the sudden change in supportive policy context for community-led housing and self-build.

Predominantly, interviews were face-to-face in Frome – either at respondents' own houses, a public space or at FTC offices or other office premises or conducted via skype. Saturation became apparent when all key areas of investigation had been explored from a range of perspectives. Some respondents had more than one interview in order to access the depth of their experience and insights, where this was felt appropriate; though it is also recognised that this

may distort the balance of perspectives it was the depth of detail that was sought, which was corroborated with other perspectives and sources.

All case study interviews were recorded; interviewees were asked to sign a UoR Ethics Form indicating their consent in the research process.¹¹⁸ Audio recordings were transcribed using InqScribe and some interviews were assisted by the voice recognition software Dragon Dictate (which often had to be manually corrected). A limited number (n6) of interviews, and those that did not contain any sensitive information, were transcribed using a professional transcription service¹¹⁹. These were then rechecked for accuracy against recordings. Anonymised transcribed interviews and analysed data will be made available for future research use as part of UoR protocols.¹²⁰ Transcriptions noted verbal clues, such as pauses and laughter, and body language.

Data presented in the findings has been anonymised and was stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. The actor type is indicated in the use of direct quotes from transcribed interview data in Chapters 6-11 - Findings.

4.3 Data sources and triangulation

A range of data sources can help to determine networks as “constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space” (Somers, 1994, 616 in Ramarajan, 2014, 631). Interviewing key stakeholders was essential to understand people’s experiences and to probe relational ties, roles and belonging, motivations for moving to Frome and their experiences of participating in Frome’s transition arenas. Attention to aligning statements towards particular organisations act as identity qualifiers and indicate allegiance and affective ties towards groups, place and salient ideas, norms and practices (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993, p.269; Mische 2003; Souto-Manning, 2014). Other sources of information were also important to follow the travel of

¹¹⁸ As mentioned in section 4.2.1, initial, exploratory interviews were not recorded since these were to give an entry point into the field of study, rather than requiring detailed analysis within the remit of the selected research focus. See Appendix A for an example of the research information sheet and consent form for empirical work carried out in Frome.

¹¹⁹ This was to expedite the transcription phase after I returned from maternity leave and to relieve a debilitating case of tendonitis.

¹²⁰ UoR data management policy states that “research data should be made available for access and re-use by other researchers within a reasonable length of time after the completion of research, providing there is no legal, ethical or commercial reason why this should not be done (para 6.2)”. See <https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/res/ResearchDataManagement/AboutRDM/reas-RDMPolicies.aspx> (last accessed 8.6.19). It is noted that some longer interviews (of 1.5 hours) took up to 4 days to transcribe and code.

ideas and events of relocation or independent politics, including local media sources and planning documents (see Table 4-7 for more detail on secondary data sources). Meanwhile, photographs and video material can help to depict material possessions, dress and other cultural visible expressions of identity (Dittmar, in Michael, 1996).

Interviews were the principal unit of analysis, but other forms of data gathered during the research process helped to triangulate respondent views. A rich source of data can probe the complexities of social interactions with 'regime' actors. For instance, policy documents can show which particular discourses gain traction. Such data used in this study included published documents obtained as formal consultation documentation on FTC's website, as well as those published by the LPA (Mendip District Council, MDC), including the Local Plan. Older versions of the NDP and initial documentation and minutes not in the public domain were also reviewed, including the "wish list" of initiatives identified by the steering group as a follow through from the Frome Community Plan (Vision4Frome).¹²¹ The NDP Examiner Report was a critical document in deciding the framing of policies – with several key elements reframed or deleted entirely¹²².

Local media articles gave a flavour of the dynamics of placemaking, which sometimes were adversarial towards MDC. Printed and social media were also used to obtain information on the NDP and wider planning issues within Frome while webpages and videos, such as FTC and Sustainable Frome's websites or lff's 2015 election campaign video, provided essential information on organisational purpose and initiatives. I also attended several events that enabled empirical observation of actors, organisations and spatial context and maintained a research diary to document observations at events and during interviews as well as indicate any initial impressions as the research process progressed.

These sources helped identify a number of entities, such as organisations, individuals and material phenomena, which linked phenomena that relate as part of a greater whole to Frome's relocated

¹²¹ All of the documents listed on the Frome NDP website were reviewed <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/planning-for-frome/planning-for-fromes-future/draft-neighbourhood-plan-submitted/> (last accessed 6.10.17).

¹²² However, my own personal constraints hampered the extent I could engage in activities in Frome, such as taking an action research approach, for instance, which would have resonated better with FTC's own organisational identity and my own. Ideally, I would have attended FTC's planning committee events, lff election campaign events (2015), and other activities associated with the NDP and Sustainable Frome, many of which were in the evening.

placemaking (Edwards et al., 2014)¹²³. These were compared to the entities identified in an initial coding phase to indicate salient transition arenas and artefacts of transition¹²⁴.

Diagrams were used to help visualise relationships between key actors and organisations to visually depict the change in network composition over the time period 2006 – 2016 (see section 5.4). In some cases, respondents drew maps to visually depict the relationship between Sustainable Frome and FTC and other organisations in Frome. Thus, responding to Considine's (2005) call for methods that can indicate directionality and the measures and flows among actors.

Some studies have shown theoretical development is richest when researchers have extensive and on-going links to case studies with high levels of self-learning (Rynes et al., 1999 in Suddaby, 2006). This is certainly the case here, where the two maternity leave requests within the course of my research has meant I have necessarily elongated the period of my Ph.D. studies. My second maternity leave¹²⁵ enabled a more longitudinal approach, paying close attention to how Frome and its wider socio-political dynamics affected relocalised objectives that fed into Frome's NDP over a longer period of time than is usually the case with a full-time Ph.D. This enabled me to stay abreast of emerging outcomes in Frome from Spring 2016 - October 2017 via local media channels, Google Alerts on "Frome" and "Flatpack Democracy" and informal follow-on engagement with Frome-based individuals, which included corroborating my findings with some respondents.

A summary of empirical guiding questions and their key data sources are outlined in the table below¹²⁶:

Table 4-7 Summary of empirical guiding questions and data sources.

Empirical research guiding questions – interviews and secondary data exploratory focus	Data source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which actors are involved in Frome's relocalised placemaking? 	Interviews

¹²³ See Section 5.3 for a description of these entities and 5.4 for a visual depiction of their interaction between 2006 and 2016. See Appendix H – Consolidating the relocalised agenda in Frome (2019) for a snapshot on how these have continued to transition up to 2019, with recent phenomena such as Extinction Rebellion and increasing gains for independent councillors in the UK local elections.

¹²⁴ See Figure 4-1 which summarises the principal issues and entities identified and section 4.4.1 for a description of the coding approach used.

¹²⁵ For a duration of 9 months between July 2015 – March 2016.

¹²⁶ Again, refer to Appendix A - Interview Schedule and Consent Form for a comparison.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of these actors were involved in the NDP process? 	<p>Snowballing respondent process and capture of all actors and organisations mentioned in an Actant ID database</p> <p>Local media articles</p> <p>Citizens Panel participant list</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the relational ties between these actors? 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Attendance of key events including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somerset Town Forum development and community plans (October 2014) • One Planet Sunday (November 2014) Democracy Day (September 2015) • Sustainable Frome monthly meetings • Holocracy meetings (April 2016) • Sustainable Frome AGM (May 2016) <p>FTC conflict of interest forms.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did the NDP set out to achieve and who or what were the main contributors? • What key differences were there between intentions and the adopted plan and why? • Who was excluded from the NDP process and why? • What has since happened to actors involved in Transition and the NDP? • What key events have happened in Frome to promote or counter relocalised intent?¹²⁷ 	<p>Frome's NDP (versions 1, 2, 3) and related documents (evidence base, including Consultation Statement and NDP meeting minutes)</p> <p>Frome's Community Plan (Vision4Frome)</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Local media articles</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Local media articles</p> <p>Google Alerts</p>

¹²⁷ This includes a longitudinal follow-up of key relocalised entities during the write-up stage, highlighted in Appendix H – Consolidating the relocalised agenda in Frome (2019).

4.4 Research analysis

4.4.1 Coding and qualitative research

Coding is a method of abstraction, a process of “taking away or removing some characteristics from something to reduce it to a set of essential characteristics” (Edgley et al., 2016, 322).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a six-phase guide to identifying themes (recognising these are not always carried out in a linear fashion), which consists of key stages in the coding process: to become familiar with the data, generate initial codes (and notes), search for themes, review themes, define themes, write-up. A researcher can either approach coding manually or with assistance from computer-aided qualitative data analysis programmes (e.g. NVivo, Quirkos and ATLAS).

QCA is a method that involves key steps, notably: selecting the unit of analysis, creating categories that cluster data with similar meaning into mutually exclusive categories, and establishing themes which connect categories together (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Cho and Lee, 2014). Cho and Lee depict the steps associated with an inductive QCA in the figure below:

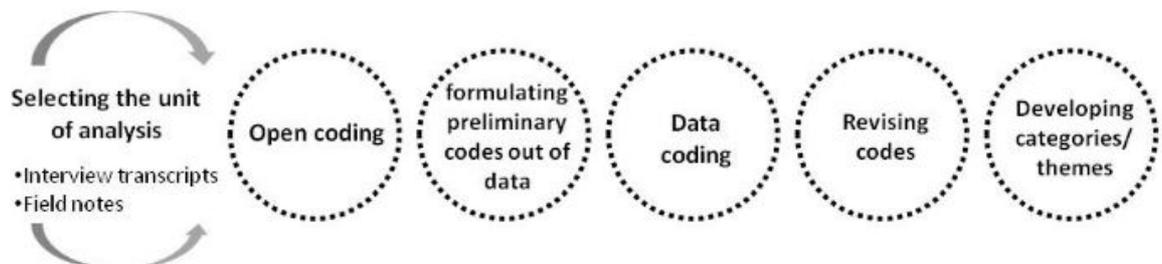


Figure 4-3. Steps associated with an inductive QCA (Cho and Lee, 2014, p. 11).

Braun and Clarke distinguish between the semantic (explicit or surface meaning of the data) and latent themes (uncovering the underlying assumptions and ideologies that inform the semantic content of the data) (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Any analytical piece of work must move beyond semantics to the interpretative task of uncovering latent meanings (Bree and Gallagher, 2016).

Scholars differ in their suggestions for how to carry out the coding process and what to look out for. Strauss (1987) suggests analysing conditions, interactions, strategies, tactics and the consequences of acting in a certain way. In a policy context, Sabatier (1986) suggests exploring financial resources, legal/bureaucratic powers or constraints, political/interest group support,

official/bureaucratic commitment and social/economic environment. While Lofland et al., (2006) suggests that codes can be derived by analysing i) acts: brief events, ii) activities: of a longer duration in a particular setting and who is involved, iii) meanings: what do things mean to people, what concepts they use to understand the world and their significance, iv) participation: involvement in a setting what do they do and roles they play, v) relationships: between people, place, and vi) setting: the general context.

The analysis of the data was driven by a quest to understand broader placemaking dynamics and how this reveals tensions and new insights into the qualities of 'niche' and 'regime' interaction in the context of placemaking in Frome. As discussed in section 4.2.3, salient areas for this study were how and why respondents enrolled into relocalised initiatives in Frome – including the NDP, including reasons for moving to the town, seeking out accounts of 'transition' including pathways and blockages – systemic or relational. Whilst these were key areas of investigation these were not a priori (pre-determined) categories.

Coding was applied to the transcribed interviews only; secondary data was not coded but it did help to corroborate key assumptions in the emerging categories as supporting evidence that represent ideas, concepts and expressions of relocalisation, examples of which are included in chapters 6-11.

Codes that revealed the nuances of this rich and complex socio-political landscape were identified in a first round of line-by-line coding of transcribed interviews, which Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest enables inductive researchers to stay 'true' to their data without imposing data labels in the first instance. After re-familiarising with interview transcripts, an initial paper-based coding process was trialled. Excel was preferred as the tool to capture the emerging codes in the first instance. Excel has been suggested by Mayer and Avery (2009) and Ose (2016) to be a useful tool to assist with the qualitative analysis process. Excel was used in the initial coding process because it allowed for a more multi-layered coding process than either paper-based or qualitative analysis software allowed.

Date of interview	07/11/2014	Female	58	Actor type=Q30	FTC	First wave coding (textual level)	
Theme	Code	Relating to (aspect of Frome's placemaking/entity)	Exact question asked	Response - possible quote range in bold	Date coded in coding book	Memos/ Comments on participant obs. (could be from Research diary)	Memos/ Comments on process or future research
Blazing a trail	Using the governance (technologies) of Transition	Consultation in Frome's NDP	How did the citizens panel contribute?...Did some not come to any events or they generally came to all?...Did that involve any new responses or ideas?	They came to the meetings and they got their feedback and they were obviously consulted as part of the statutory consultation. Some of them made further comments independently and some of them didn't. It's difficult to get people interested...There were about five events altogether and these are the people that attended. Not all of them attended every one. There were probably about 20-25 people at each event. ...Not particularly. The trouble with world café is that you tend to get some more quirky ideas as well. I think one of them was setting up a wildlife park in one of our open spaces. It's always a bit of a risk doing those kinds of things because we had little model elephants. We are not going to set up a wildlife park, but someone thought it would be a good idea. 20:54. What it did highlight is perhaps we should look at how we should deal with our open spaces. But then that's a different project if you like.	15/10/2018	But not used effectively and model elephants - animals influencing suggestions?	
Navigating the politics of subversive Localism	Helping to filter through steering group priorities	Consultation in Frome's NDP	How did the citizens panel contribute?...Did some not come to any events or they generally came to all?	Yeah, definitely [gulps tea]. We did it on a series of topics, these are the things that could be dealt with in the plan which ones do you think are the most relevant and important. Which was really helpful I suppose as the steering group had their own ideas but it's about what the people want to see so they helped as filter that through. And we did some world café sessions in case there was anything we had missed and any other issues they might want to bring up.	15/10/2018		
Navigating the politics of subversive Localism	Asking people what they want gives impractical suggestions	Consultation in Frome's NDP	How did the citizens panel contribute?...Did some not come to any events or they generally came to all?	They came to the meetings and they got their feedback and they were obviously consulted as part of the statutory consultation. Some of them made further comments independently and some of them didn't. It's difficult to get people interested. There were about five events altogether and these are the people that attended. Not all of them attended every one. There were probably about 20-25 people at each event. ...Not particularly. The trouble with world café is that you tend to get some more quirky ideas as well. I think one of them was setting up a wildlife park in one of our open spaces. It's always a bit of a risk doing those kinds of things because we had little model elephants. We are not going to set up a wildlife park, but someone thought it would be a good idea. 20:54. What it did highlight is perhaps we should look at how we should deal with our open spaces. But then that's a different project if you like.	15/10/2018	Impractical vs. innovative vs. quirky ideas	
Navigating the politics of subversive Localism	Unusually well resourced town council staff	Governance and organisational culture (FTC)	Was the environmental manager post an outcome of the NP and the conservation of the river?	No, we have a parks department who maintain the land the TC owns and we have quite a few parks and open spaces. And they cut the grass and tidy it up and empty the bins. And the manager has left recently. They have tried to restructure the post but it's not a result of the NP.	15/10/2018	Ownership of parks and open spaces?	
Navigating the politics of subversive Localism	Assets owned and controlled by government	Sustainability and stewardship	Was the environmental manager post an outcome of the NP and the conservation of the river?	No, we have a parks department who maintain the land the TC owns and we have quite a few parks and open spaces. And they cut the grass and tidy it up and empty the bins. And the manager has left recently. They have tried to restructure the post but it's not a result of the NP.	15/10/2018	Can improve management of parks and open spaces as FTC-owns many	
Moving On	Developing a varied skills set within a career in government	Former roles/experience	What was your previous experience in planning?	I started working at Mendip district council in 1998. I actually started on a youth training scheme on the admin side of the planning department. I was there for 17 years. But through that process sort of worked my way up and ended up as the manager of a technical team within the planning department. So, whilst I wasn't actually a planning officer, I was working with the planning officers and the policy team to make sure that the applications that were submitted have got all the necessary information and having to send out the consultations to all the statutory consultees, neighbours and so on. So I suppose my experience in planning has been working in the planning department for 18 years.	15/10/2018		

Figure 4-4. Screenshot of code book used to code transcribed interviews and capture memos

Elo et al highlight the importance of setting out the unit of analysis to increase the credibility of QCA research (Elo et al., 2014). Initial codes (open coding) were summaries of the essence of an excerpt of text (descriptors), i.e. granular expressions of the data which generated a significant number of codes. Initial thematic codes were captured which were refined through later iterations of the coding process.

Memo writing is a core feature of the coding process; Creswell (2007) suggests are notes help capture ideas during the research process, which can be used to explore theoretical hunches and cluster ideas for the analysis of data. Detailed memos were captured for both potential theoretical aspects of the coding procedures, methodological aspects and potential areas of future research.¹²⁸

This round of coding revealed the historical and current spatial identity of the town, the role of party-political contestation and institutional tensions in using localism rights, and distinctions between transition and broader change processes. However, an extremely high number of codes were generated which needed to be refined. For instance, the initial category of 'navigating the politics of subversive localism' was not nuanced enough and needed to be broken down further.

¹²⁸ As depicted in Figure 4-4.

As such, initial codes, categories and entities were assimilated and simplified in phase 2 of the coding process, initially on paper, as key themes and sub-themes were mapped using a spider diagram which centered around the culture of transition, representation, push and pull factors in transition, and the cycles of transition.

These were then mapped into visual software (MindMeister – a helpful tool to create detailed concept maps to find patterns and relationships between codes and emerging themes) and exported as a text file¹²⁹. These codes were refined further using visual mapping software (Lucidchart – an initiative online tool to represent different concepts) to represent these themes into a conceptual map indicating conceptual themes and theoretical categories,¹³⁰ which informed the structure of the findings in chapters 6-11.

A thematic coding schema relating to the Research Questions and their description is illustrated in the figure below¹³¹:

¹²⁹ Documented in Appendix F – Codes exported through MindMeister (stage 2 coding). See <https://www.mindmeister.com/> (last accessed 5.1.19).

¹³⁰ Documented in Appendix G – Themes and sub-themes depicted through Lucid Chart (stage 3 coding). See <https://www.lucidchart.com/> (last accessed 5.1.19).

¹³¹ See Figure 5-19 which depicts how these themes relate to their respective chapter.

Overarching Research Question		
To what extent have mainstream institutions enabled or frustrated transitions at the local scale for either i) <i>Transition</i> and relocalisation ('niche' transition arenas) or ii) government and politics? ('regime' transition arenas)		
Research Question (RQs)	Themes relating to RQs	Theme description
RQ.1 - What conditions led to a strong relocalised character in Frome's placemaking networks?	1. Impressions of Frome	Perceived spatial and affective markers of Frome's identity
	2. Independence	Personality and culture of independence in the town and key actors involved in relocalised placemaking in Frome
	3. Kindred spirits	Organisational or personal affinity ties/matching between actors and material entities in Frome's relocalised networks
RQ.2 - To what extent do 'niche' actors advance their objectives when they occupy formal spaces of government 'regimes'?	4. Breaking down the boundaries	Captures the strategies used by lff to challenge incumbent party political actors and cultivate more autonomous decision-making.
	5. Resourcing alterity	Reveals the mechanisms and strategies cultivated to formalise democratic alternatives within formal institutions.
	6. Role conflict and pushing at the boundaries	Highlights conflict and antagonism between incumbents and protagonists when challengers seek to formalise power
	7. Planning and the rules of engagement	Explores the structures and rules within the English 'planning regime' as a container for relocalised placemaking.
RQ.3 - How do formal and informal ties affect the politics of transition?	8. The politics of representation and legitimacy – formal ties	Explores formalised relational ties between actors working within local government and government-induced transition arenas, notably Frome's NDP and any other localism rights invoked.
	9. The politics of representation and legitimacy – informal ties	Explores informal arrangements (ties) between relocalised entities in Frome's placemaking networks and the degrees to which these actors were enrolled within and influenced Frome's NDP.
	10. Representation below the parapet: citizens interests, class and gender	Explores the mechanisms, capacities and interests of groups who may disengage in planning, political action and placemaking.
RQ.4 - What are the consequences of the occupation of the state by protagonists on the form (steer vs. emergence) of niche-directed transitions?	11. Moving on (steps to transition)	Explores the decision or experiences in moving or transitioning between roles and places.
	12. Blazing a trail (adoption)	Explores the direction of travel of pathways, including processes of diffusion at a more than local scale.

Figure 4-5. A thematic coding schema of themes and description as they relate to the RQs

4.5 Methodological challenges encountered and mitigation

Focusing on a recalled form of reason (ex-post research) can explain the types of pathways that ensue but are less effective at capturing possible options at a particular point in time, and to (accurately) recall why these did not take place (Elder-Vass, 2010). Indeed, some respondents indicated they could not recount more procedural aspects of the NDP process.

Respondents differed regarding how much conflict they revealed regarding relationships with the LPA or with other groups and individuals, but most were very open about their experience of the politics of transitions. Some interviewees volunteered more information than others over key topics, either for personal reasons or due to time constraints. Whilst a single case study can be more in-depth, and the selection was based on its capacity for sustainability transitions and its innovative political approach, not having other case studies did at times mean that interviewees were less likely to volunteer information due to a perception their anonymity would be compromised.

Additional interviews of LPA officials indirectly involved in the NDP would have also presented additional insights from the 'regime' perspective although my focus was on those who engaged with the NDP process specifically. I was also careful not to interview anyone if it could disrupt relationships or the fruition of the NDP as it was being finalised, including developers which omitted some actors from the respondent selection process. I decided not to ask general public about NDP process before referendum so as to mitigate the risk of any potential effect of any negative feedback on the process and relationships between local actors.

This meant in some cases that there was an imbalance in terms of the data sources, which skewed the perspective of some actor groups over others. In addition, some people did not respond to requests for interview, particularly those from party-political organisations represented at FTC¹³². This *may* be because I was perceived to be an 'insider' and alienated them from participating, and perhaps more likely, requests for interviews coincided with the 2015 party election campaigns. Therefore, their direct contributions are missing (apart from one party political respondent); only shadow data (third-party perspectives) is recorded and there was no

¹³² Some respondents/ groups did not engage with the research e.g. national level cohousing schemes, which may be suggestive of exclusionary tactics for those considered 'mainstream' (through my focus on NDPs).

triangulation of 'othering' in this instance.¹³³ Some (former or active) members of Sustainable Frome did not respond to a request for interview. Due to the timing of my maternity leave I could not conduct two intended interviews. Moreover, as someone who shares the concerns and values of the *Transition* movement¹³⁴ I was always careful to ensure that I took a critical approach to my work and ensured the presentation of my findings was sensitive to local power dynamics. All quotes used have been checked with respondents and a full version shared with FTC and MDC prior to publication.

¹³³ An intended survey of Transition Initiatives engaged in NDPs did not go ahead due to time constraints, which would have been to complement the wider policy trends towards relocalisation within NDPs.

¹³⁴ As set out in vi Preface and acknowledgements.

5 A background to Frome and its transition arenas



Figure 5-1. *Independents for Frome logo*



Figure 5-2. *FTC logo and slogan*



Figure 5-3. *Frome Independent Market slogan*

The following six chapters (6-11) seek to critically assess how 'radical' approaches that challenge 'mainstream' development trajectories – and politics – are crafted and contested within placemaking transition arenas in the case study of Frome. Frome has gone from being a relatively 'normal' town with representation from political parties at the town council¹³⁵ to a strong political and social movement that promotes relocalisation in the context of the broader localism agenda. This chapter sets out the context of Frome and explains why the town is of particular import to the study of sustainability transitions. Principal relocalised actors and entities – i.e. those advocating for relocalised objectives - are described, including relevant organisations and objectives, a visual depiction of the relationships between them – both independent and dependent – and which of these might be considered transition arenas for the purpose of this case study.¹³⁶

Notably, IfF has ties to *Transition* that influenced – in part – its political approach; the shared organisational objectives and the transfer and flows between them and the broader *Transition* movement is a key object of study to understanding the movement's role in stimulating relocalised initiatives. As a case study, Frome can reveal the politics around the potential conflict in the growth-centred discourse of localism (Featherstone et al., 2011) and *Transition's* relocalisation agenda with its claims to political neutrality (Barnes, 2013). Moreover, IfF's consolidation of power can shed light on the conditions in which these protagonists acquired power and ousted incumbents or shifted the political landscape in the town and within and between the structures of the state, and whether these are appropriate terms to frame such a debate.

5.1 A background to Frome

This section is a summary of a secondary review of documentation indicated in Table 4-7. The development challenges facing Frome are typical of many towns and cities across England, such as providing a sufficient number of affordable houses and retaining and encouraging local businesses

¹³⁵ However, data to corroborate the existence of party political representation at town and parish councils was not obtained. The Local Government Association was contacted to obtain this data, but this was only available at district level and above.

¹³⁶ See section 1.3.1 for a definition of relocalisation and section 5.3 for Frome's organisations seeking to realise these changes.

in the area. However, Frome's historic role as a market town and its historic built environment are key defining features of the town.

5.1.1 Geography and demographics



Figure 5-4. The five Somerset districts (Into Somerset, 2019)¹³⁷

Frome lies within the Mendip district in eastern Somerset, South West England (see Figure 5-4.) which also includes the world-famous music festival location Glastonbury and one of the smallest cities in the UK, Wells. Frome has a long history as a market town; its settlement dates back to 685 and its market is referred to in the Domesday book (1086) (MDCa, 2008). The word Frome is derived from the Welsh ffraw, meaning running water, a reference to the River Frome on which the town stands.

Historically, Frome was the largest town in Somerset in 1801 (population 8,500) and was once bigger than Bath. The town experienced an upsurge in its population after the Second World War and in the 1970s (population c.20,000), partly as an effect of strategic planning to protect the green belt in nearby Bath and Bristol (MDC, 2008a). The 2011 census calculated 26,203 residents - comprised of 11,198 households - making Frome the fourth largest town in Somerset

¹³⁷ <http://www.intosomerset.co.uk/about-somerset/mendip-district-council-area>, last accessed 11.1.19. Reproduced with kind permission from Somerset County Council.

with the highest population density in the county¹³⁸ (ONS, 2011; SCC, 2016). Frome has a relatively young population, attracting more people in their 30s than in any other area within Mendip (SCC, 2016).

Frome is a predominantly White British town, with only 6.3% describing themselves as non-White British in the 2011 census¹³⁹, with notable exceptions a Polish community (who account for 1% for the county of Somerset) and a small traveller community¹⁴⁰. The town has also increased in popularity with people moving from London to Frome, also known locally as “New Frome” or “Refugees from the South East”.¹⁴¹



Figure 5-5. Key locations in Frome. Source: Frome Town Design Statement (WYG, 2015, p.10)¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Frome has a population density (per hectare) of 41.3, compared to 1.5 in Somerset county and 4.1 in England (SCC, 2016).

¹³⁹ The UK national average is 19.5% non-White British (ONS, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ More information on ethnicity from the 2011 census can be found at <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Frome-Facts-population-data.pdf> last accessed 11.1.19.

¹⁴¹ This is a common belief in Frome but was not corroborated by data other than the interviews in the empirical chapters 6-11. See Figure 8-5 depicting the projected rate of net migration (based on 2010 ONS projected figures).

¹⁴² Reproduced with kind permission from WYG.

Frome town is divided into six wards¹⁴³:

1. Frome College Ward;
2. Frome Berkley Down Ward;
3. Frome Market Ward;
4. Frome Oakfield Ward,
5. Frome Park Ward
6. Frome Keyford Ward

One Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)¹⁴⁴ covering the areas Frome Trinity – Cork Street and Nunney Road is of the most deprived in Frome (which includes the site of a settled traveller community) and is one of the most deprived in Somerset (Somerset Intelligence, 2018).¹⁴⁵ The town has a relatively high incidence of antisocial behaviour, which accounts the 20% of all reported crimes (SCC, 2016).

5.1.2 Historic character



Figure 5-6. Catherine Hill (source, author)

Frome has a rich historic character with 373 listed buildings, the highest concentration in any town in Somerset and its unique spatial features include the cobbled street of Catherine Hill and a water course running through (medieval) Cheap Street - one of the central pedestrian corridors in the town centre. Frome's historic value was recognised through the designation of a conservation area in 1973¹⁴⁶ which indicated 10 character areas that needed to be protected (MDCb, 2008). Many of the buildings are constructed with durable Forest Marble which is one reason so many historic buildings survive today (MDCb, 2008).

¹⁴³ For more information see <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/where-is-your-ward/> last accessed 11.1.19.

¹⁴⁴ LSOA's are geographic areas used to collect and analysis local statistics in the UK.

¹⁴⁵ See <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/imd/> (last accessed 1.6.19).

¹⁴⁶ The conservation area boundaries were reviewed in 1976, 1986 and 2004.

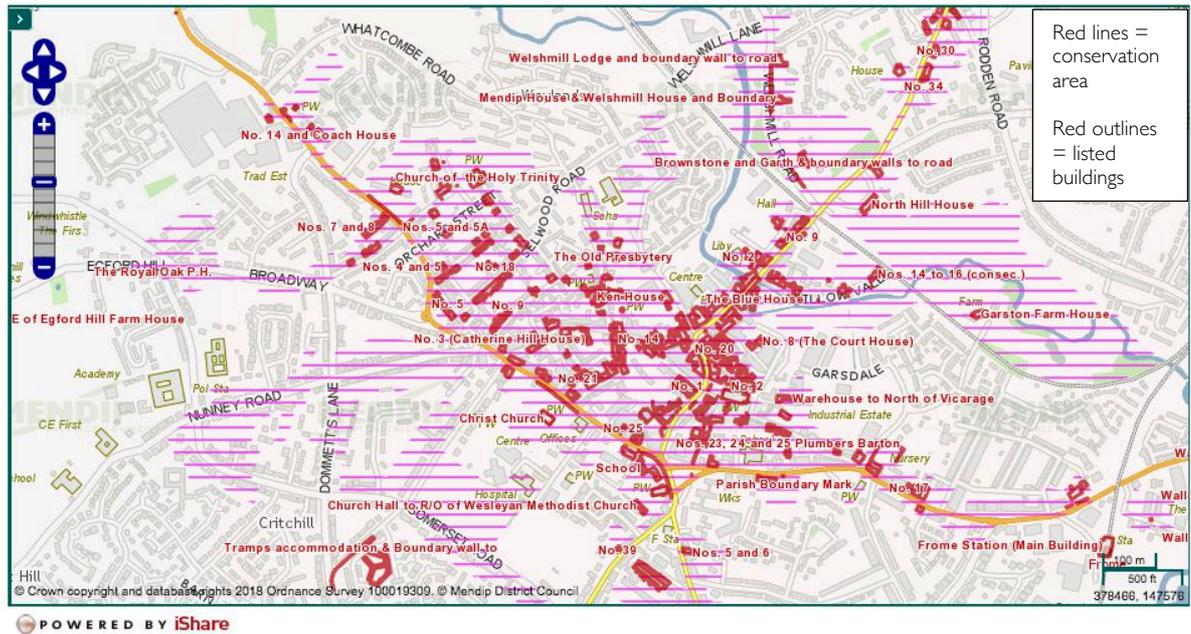


Figure 5-7. The conservation area and the concentration of listed buildings in Frome (My Mendip, MDC, 2018)¹⁴⁷

In 2012, FTC produced a Town Design Statement (TDS) which outlined important historic features of Frome and includes a number of guidelines relating to design (WYG, 2015). The TDS extended the 10 character areas identified by the Conservation Area Appraisal to 27 character areas which were deemed to have distinctive qualities which extend out from the conservation area.¹⁴⁸ It was adopted by MDC as supplementary planning guidance in 2015. The TDS was a key part of Frome's NDP evidence base.

5.1.3 Employment

Frome has a history as a vibrant market town and its economy traditionally centred around textile and wool manufacturing, later diversifying into metal work and printing; until recently the town hosted notable light industrial commerce, including the former printing press Butler Tanner and Dennis. Frome's traditional manufacturing sector has been affected by "significant structural economic changes", leading to a loss of 1,110 jobs between 1998 and 2004 (MDC, 2008). Frome's TDS states that "Employment in Frome itself is in a state of transition. Traditional

¹⁴⁷ <https://maps.mendip.gov.uk/mycouncil.aspx> (last accessed 10.1.19). Reproduced with kind permission from MDC.

¹⁴⁸ A comparison of these areas the purposes of the two documents is outlined in Appendix I – Frome character areas.

manufacturing industry has been in decline for some time and is being gradually replaced by more service-based industries, particularly retailing and business services.” (WYG, 2015, emphasis added). A study on Frome’s employment sites showed that a number of sites had already been lost to housing, with a further 19 out of 25 sites at risk of future loss (Brunsdon and PJK, 2012).

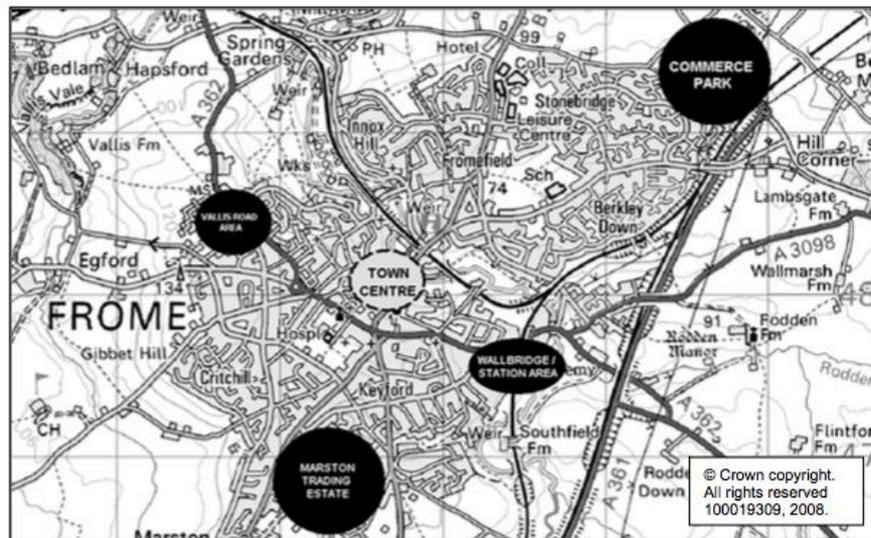


Figure 5-8. Concentrations of business and industrial land in Frome (MDC, 2008a, p.27)¹⁴⁹

One respondent cited local research that found Frome had one of the highest densities of supermarkets per square metre of any other town although a data source was not obtained to corroborate this. Nevertheless, the local economy as of 2016 was strong, with only 12 vacant shops out of a 188 (6.3% compared to the national average of 11.7%, SCC, 2016). More recently, the town has seen a rise in the number of coffee shops – reflected across many UK high streets - which currently stands at 11 (as of Jan 2019).¹⁵⁰

The town also has a low unemployment rate at 1% (SCC, 2016) and the highest concentration of jobs within Mendip, although its ratio of jobs to population is lower than other towns in the district (MDC, 2008a). Evidence suggests that the town performs a dormitory role, where a significant number of residents live in Frome but work elsewhere. In 2011, 3,714 more people commuted out of the town than commuted into the town for work (SCC, 2016), absorbed by

¹⁴⁹ Reproduced with kind permission from MDC.

¹⁵⁰ See <https://fromeshops.wordpress.com/> for analysis of a survey on the high street retail profile in 2013 (last accessed 24.1.19).

neighbouring Warminster and Trowbridge in Wiltshire and the cities of Bath and Bristol, due to the close proximity to the A350 and the A36, as set out in the table below¹⁵¹:

	Mendip	Frome	G'bury/Street	Shepton	Wells
West Wiltshire	1350	1245	42	29	35
B&NES	2104	1660	107	258	80
Bristol	1185	325	131	279	450
N Somerset	282	59	48	68	106
S Gloucestershire	399	189	68	57	87
Somerset & Other South West	-62	527	-350	-126	-112
Other Areas	-95	375	-492	144	-122
TOTAL	5163	4380	-448	709	524

Figure 5-9. Net Community flows/to from adjacent areas (MDC, 2014, p.14).¹⁵²

5.1.4 Transport

Despite a strong 'green' identity increasingly associated with Frome, the use of the car as the main method of transport for commuters is high at 71.9%, compared to a 62.7% national average (SCC, 2016). Frome has a train station which has a direct route to London Waterloo (as of 2015). Public transport use is significantly lower than the national average (3.8% compared to 12.5%), those who travel to work by bicycle or on foot are more likely to live and work in Frome than those who out-commute (SCC, 2016).

5.1.5 Culture and green spaces

Frome has an active network of community groups with a strong cultural attraction, including the annual Frome Festival, an independent cinema, two theatres and the international music venue The Cheese and Grain¹⁵³.

¹⁵¹ An A road, public highway.

¹⁵² Data based on 2011 census data and 2009 West of England Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (SHMAA). Reproduced with kind permission from MDC.

¹⁵³ A former grain warehouse in the centre of Frome which has recently hosted international bands including the Foo Fighters. A recent Locality programme Power to Change briefing documented the refurbishment and the Cheese and Grain's success as a community enterprise <https://www.powertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Cheese-and-Grain-Case-Study.pdf> (last accessed 11.1.19).

Frome has several significant natural assets including the open space adjacent to the centre of the town Rodden Meadow, the River Frome which cuts through the town and a number of parks and open spaces managed by FTC.¹⁵⁴

The next section explores how narratives of relocalisation and independent politics are influencing Frome's placemaking and its reputation.

5.2 Frome's relocalised politics: rebuffing neo-liberalism and the mainstream

5.2.1 Frome's changing reputation

In 2010, John Harris (a journalist for the Guardian newspaper and a Frome resident) produced a short film "Will Neo-liberalism Eat My Town?" (Harris, 2010)¹⁵⁵ Times of austerity and a battle over whether to have, or reject, a supermarket on a central and mainly redundant 4.76ha site in the town (Saxonvale) made this seem a possibility.

Now, Frome is becoming increasingly renowned for its thriving independent identity, politically and economically. Frome boasts one of the largest independent markets in South West England and has seen a surge in the creative industries, such as marketing, design and small-scale start-ups, that have replaced (in part) the fall in traditional manufacturing jobs. A co-working enterprise hub was established in 2007 by an entrepreneur who moved to the town, which aims to be a hotdesking facility for "Independent and Creative Thinkers" in the centre of Frome¹⁵⁶ and is part of their vision to establish Frome as a "21st Century Market Town".

In 2016, Frome won the Great Town Award¹⁵⁷ – an accolade which mirrors its increasing standing and popularity at a national level. Frome was also named as the sixth coolest places to live by the Times newspaper in 2014. In 2018, The Sunday Times listed Frome as the best place

¹⁵⁴ Until initiatives by FTC and partnership with Sustrans, there were fragmented access issues to experiencing the river corridor. Some green spaces were under-utilised and subject to littering and anti-social behaviour.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VozcSgDiS0s> (last accessed 21.7.17).

¹⁵⁶ Latterly expanding to nearby towns and cities. Forward Space and MDC have shown signs of exploring flexible work units across Frome.

¹⁵⁷ See <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/frome-wins-national-great-town-award/> (last accessed 7.1.19).

to live in the South West and in 2018 and 2019 Frome was named as one of the best places to live in the UK – where its historic character now reflects ‘trendy’ credentials from a previously ‘down-at-heel town’ (see Figure 5-10).

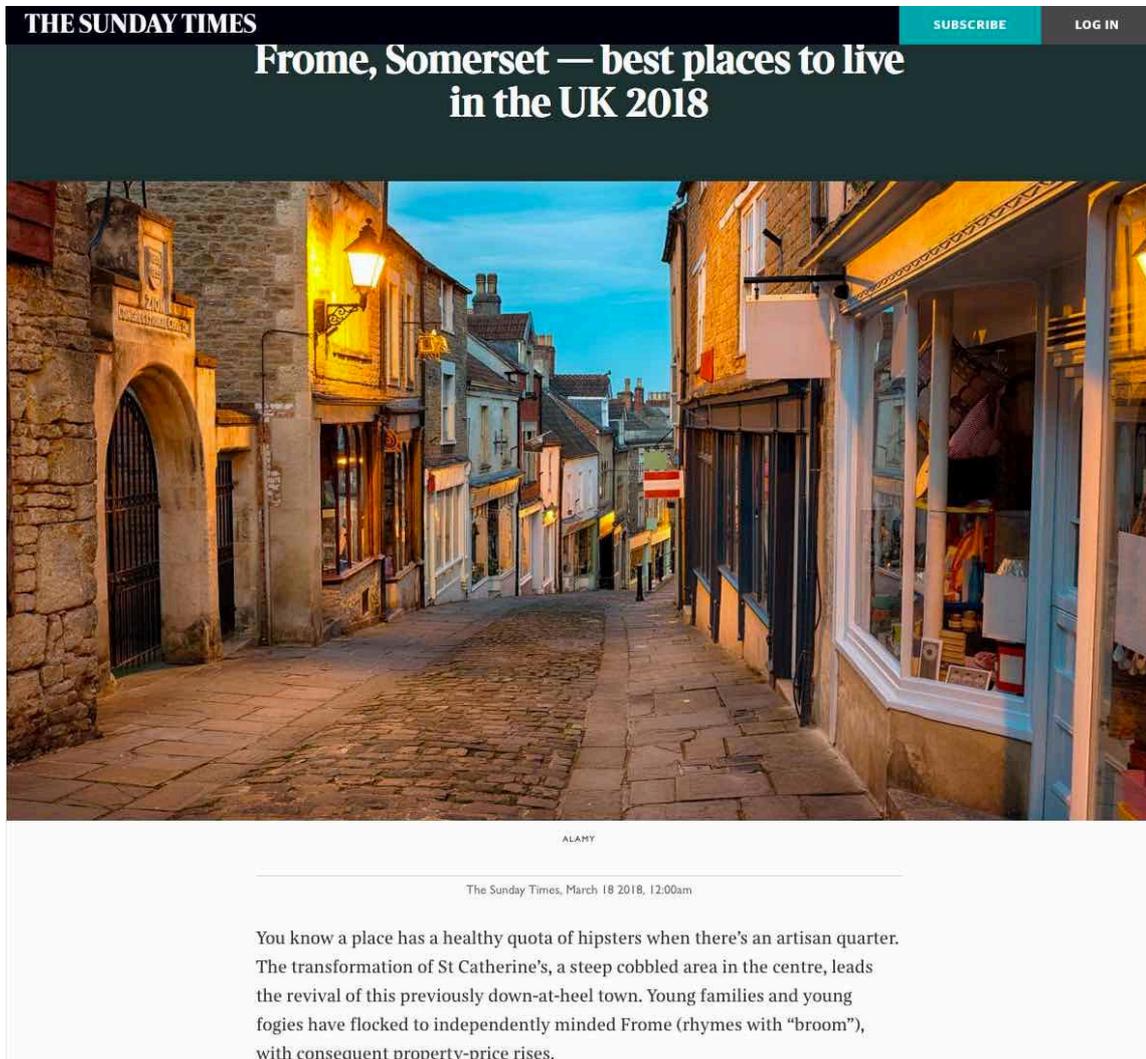


Figure 5-10. The Sunday Times depiction of why Frome was the best place to live in the South West (The Sunday Times, 2018)

The town has also caught the attention of the national media elsewhere¹⁵⁸, notably for its ambitious independent (and green) town council, which has been referred to as a “woke town” – a term that has African American origins referring to perceived awareness of social justice.¹⁵⁹ No wonder Frome Independent market’s slogan is daring enough to claim: “In the Middle of

¹⁵⁸ See <https://www.discoverfrome.co.uk/frome/frome-in-the-press/> (last accessed 11.1.19).

¹⁵⁹ The term ‘woke’ is a relatively fashionable term to describe people and places that are attuned to issues such as social injustice and discrimination, i.e. ‘awoken’ – implying a transcendental awakening to societal issues. See Britten 2018 for a Visual Depiction of the “Woke” town of Frome by the illustrator Jordan Andrew Carter.

Nowhere, Centre of Everything” to indicate the high levels of activity in the town in its predominantly rural setting. However, this popularity comes with a price - reflected in the sharp 14.5% annual rise in house prices between Dec 2015-Dec 2016.¹⁶⁰

5.2.2 Challenging party politics

The parliamentary constituency of Somerton and Frome was held by the Liberal Democrats between 1997 to 2015, and prior to that the seat was held by the Conservatives between 1983 to 1997¹⁶¹.

Party political affiliations were shaken up when a group of independent candidates, Independents for Frome (IfF), won 10 out of 17 seats in the town council¹⁶² in 2011 (with a 45% vote share) and won all 17 seats in the 2015 election and repeated this feat in the 2019 local elections.¹⁶³ IfF is registered as a ‘minor political party’ by the UK electoral commission so it can include the name IfF on the ballot paper, yet they purposely reject party politics as a “poison” that “infects” the capacity of party-political representatives to make fair decisions (Macfadyen, 2014).¹⁶⁴

Frome’s experience is helping to cultivate an independent political movement that eschews party politics and the mainstream with its own highly ambitious green policy and practice.¹⁶⁵ FTC’s current areas of focus (objectives) highlight the scope of its intent:

- Building a sustainable economy for the town
- Building a vibrant community that is able to participate in local community life and decision making about public services

¹⁶⁰ Compared to a rise of 8.5% in Mendip district, 6.0% in Somerset and 7.0% in the UK over the same period.

¹⁶¹ In 2015, the Conservative MP won with 53% of the vote; the loss of the Lib Dem share of the vote was mirrored nationally and this election also saw a rise in both the Green Party (9%) and UKIP’s share of the vote (10.7%). This swing between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats was also apparent within town council elections. For an historical account of the vote share in Mendip district 2003-present see <https://www.andrewteale.me.uk/leap/results/2007/318/> (last accessed 7.1.19).

¹⁶² For a summary of the responsibilities and objectives of FTC see <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/council/frome-town-council/> (last accessed 11.1.19).

¹⁶³ See <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/elections-2015/> for a breakdown of the 2015 election results (last accessed 11.1.19).

¹⁶⁴ A list of the current IfF councillors and their motivations for being a councillor can be found at <http://iffrome.org.uk/meet-the-candidates> (last accessed 11.1.19). Motivations of IfF candidates in the 2011 election can be found in Macfadyen, 2014.

¹⁶⁵ See www.indietown.org for the latest information on the spread of the movement. (last accessed 13.3.18).

- Creating a thriving town centre
- The delivery of efficient and effective public services
- An innovative and supportive Town Council

(FTC website, 2018¹⁶⁶).

There is evidence that IfF have contributed to an increase in political engagement, with 75% more people casting their votes in 2011 elections than in 2007 (Macfadyen, 2014). In 2015, 50 candidates stood at the FTC elections.¹⁶⁷ IfF also has a Youth Mayor and a Deputy Mayor who seek to engage younger people in the town's politics and placemaking initiatives. IfF has increasingly sought community participation within its own governance.¹⁶⁸

5.2.3 Cultivating relocalised initiatives in and around planning

FTC (under IfF) has achieved numerous commons-inspired policies and relocalised initiatives both inside and outside the remit of spatial planning. FTC has supported a number of events supporting relocalisation such as Democracy Day, Independence Day¹⁶⁹ and One Planet Sunday – shared objectives which are central to IfF's (non-)party political and green agenda. In 2014, FTC supported a crowdfunding initiative to successfully save a local field from development, it supported the first Share shop in the UK in 2015 (where people borrow otherwise unused goods for a small fee)¹⁷⁰, and it has facilitated the creation of a local solidarity fridge in 2016 which has the support of local businesses to promote a circular economy to prevent food waste¹⁷¹. FTC is

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/council/frome-town-council/> (last accessed 11.1.19).

¹⁶⁷ See <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/council-elections-whos-who/> (last accessed 6.6.19) and <http://www.frometimes.co.uk/2015/04/21/frome-town-council-election-guide/> which includes a summary of town council candidate motivations and goals within office in 200 words.

¹⁶⁸ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRiWMuB0b3U> as an example of an FTC meeting in action. Others are available at the FTC YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXUizztGFe9zjenOqxe_ABg/videos (last accessed 6.6.19), including its more recent experimentation with participatory budgeting.

¹⁶⁹ See section 6.2.

¹⁷⁰ <https://sharefrome.org> (last accessed 4/8/17).

¹⁷¹ An innovation that has gained traction elsewhere and draws on international best practice. Both the Share Shop and the Community Fridge were initiatives of Edventure, which aims to be a "school for community enterprise" and provides courses to support young people in positive livelihoods and support community by creating enterprises that promote a sustainable economy. Edventure and IfF have close ties towards the New Economy, however Edventure were not actively involved in the NDP and were not interviewed for this research. Two Edventure coaches were interviewed for this research. For more information see <https://edventurefrome.org/> (last accessed 4.6.19).

working with the Sustainable Frome to create a by-law to endow the River Frome, which cuts across the centre of the town, with nature rights.¹⁷²

Frome has also sought to use the planning system creatively for positive development, through its NDP (made October 2016) and exploring other rights made ‘available’ under localism including a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) and a CRtBO. Frome’s NDP was initiated in 2012 as a response to a call for Frontrunners under the Government’s localism agenda¹⁷³ to be one of the first communities to develop an NDP which had a strongly relocalised emphasis to the plan.



Figure 5-11. Key images of Frome’s relocalised identity (multiple sources)¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² In 2016, Sustainable Frome approached FTC, seeking to replicate innovation elsewhere in the world and responding to concerns over Brexit’s potential effect on environmental resources, to grant the River Frome with legal rights conferred to it in the same way as an individual or registered organisation. FTC has worked with the organisation Nature Rights to draw up a draft bye-law which has been submitted to MHCLG for consideration (see FTC, 2015a) <http://www.natures-rights.org/> (last accessed 6.6.19). For more information on creating a bye-law see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-government-legislation-byelaws> (last accessed 6.6.19).

¹⁷³ Frome was one of 20 Frontrunners supported by the government to pioneer NDPs.

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix J – Relocalised image library summary for a description of these figures and why they are considered relocalised entities.

The next section explores the organisations involved in cultivating these initiatives.

5.3 Introducing Frome's relocalised entities and transition arenas

Frome has a number of well-established groups with strong environmental and social objectives, with Sustainable Frome being the most notable organisation applying relocalised placemaking principles. The images in Figure 5-11 reveal the influence of *Transition* on Frome's politics and the organisations clustering around ideas of relocalisation and the New Economy.

Whilst there are a number of other important actors and organisations in Frome, the main focus of the findings is on the intersection of governance and practices between FTC/lff, MDC and Sustainable Frome to achieve relocalised placemaking transitions. As such, the relocalised network and its interaction with politics and planning is explored in the rest of this thesis.

As discussed in section 4.2.3 and section 4.3, a snowball approach and a mapping of different individuals and organisations involved in advancing – or supressing - relocalisation in Frome were documented; those with a direct or indirect influence on Frome's NDP are listed below.¹⁷⁵ Key entities have played a significant role in the contestation of Frome's approach to placemaking in and around Frome's NDP¹⁷⁶, including: Saxonvale (a central mainly derelict brownfield site in the centre of Frome), Sustainable Frome, lff, and Frome's Community Plan and the NDP. These are discussed in more detail below; if these are classified as having 'roots in transition' then more than one member of Sustainable Frome was involved in its establishment and/or implementation; their relationships are visually depicted in Figures 5-20 – 5-22 over the period 2016 – 2016.

¹⁷⁵ See Figure 4-1 for how the literature reviews informed the types of entities under investigation.

¹⁷⁶ I.e. organisations, individuals and material phenomena which link phenomena that relate as part of a greater whole to Frome's relocalised placemaking (as per Edwards et al., 2014).

5.3.1 Sustainable Frome (est. 2006)

Roots in transition? Yes (registered TI)

Sustainable Frome is a registered Community Interest Company (CIC)¹⁷⁷ and is part of the wider *Transition* movement in virtue of being a registered TI.¹⁷⁸ Over time, Sustainable Frome has seen a number of sub-groups exist – some of which have “spun off” to become entities in their own right.¹⁷⁹ Sustainable Frome has met monthly since its inception and about 30-40 members regularly attend these meetings, although *active* membership has dropped off since many key actors became more actively involved in IfF. There are approximately c.400 members on its newsletter distribution list. Many spin off groups listed below have invoked (governance) technologies of *Transition* and the New Economy. Crucially, for this study the cofounder of IfF, Peter Macfadyen and author of *Flatpack Democracy* (Macfadyen, 2014), established Sustainable Frome in 2006 and it became part of Transition Network in 2008, broadly following the necessary steps to *Transition*; some IfF councillors and FTC staff were or remain members of Sustainable Frome. Sustainable Frome members also played a key coordinating role between different levels of government, including the local MP, Somerset County Council (SCC), MDC and FTC as well as with the broader *Transition* movement.

5.3.2 Economic relocalisation: Catherine Hill, Forward Space and the Frome Independent

Roots in transition? No (private enterprise, sometimes in collaboration with FTC)

IfF's emergence coincided with the rise of relocalised economic enterprises in the town when an entrepreneur purchased most of the buildings on Catherine Hill, which are let out only to the most “quirky” independent retailers in order to contribute to the independent economic character of Frome. This entrepreneur also instigated the Frome Independent which initially started off on a smaller-scale and has now become one of the busiest markets in the South West and once a month the town centre's roads and carparks are closed off to host 10,000+ visitors. The same individual was also responsible for establishing Forward Space, the co-working space for creative start-ups.

¹⁷⁷ CICs have an asset lock on the reinvestment of profit so that any profit is a community asset in perpetuity.

¹⁷⁸ For a summary of Sustainable organisational purpose 'The Objects' see Appendix K – Sustainable Frome Objects.

¹⁷⁹ See for a list of current Sustainable Frome and related spin off projects <http://transitionfrome.org.uk/projects-and-groups/> (last accessed 14.1.19).

5.3.3 Frome's Community Plan (2006 – 2008)

Roots in transition? Yes (multiple membership and significant consultation inputs)

The Community Plan (Vision4Frome, V4F - 2008-2028) was carried out between 2006 - 2008 and was overseen by a management group with representation by individuals who were also actively engaged in Frome's broader placemaking networks, either politically or within its community groups, including Macfadyen and Mel Usher¹⁸⁰ as Chairs, among others at different points in time. The plan was initiated by the Frome-based former MDC Regeneration Manager, Katy Duke, who accessed funding from the Somerset Market Town Forum to develop the plan. The plan had over 3,000 consultation responses from local people on a number of placemaking topics. There were an extensive number of initiatives in the plan aimed at promoting sustainability, resulting from a strong presence from Sustainable Frome during focus groups and the coordinating committee who contributed several environmental and sustainable urban design inputs.¹⁸¹ The Community Plan also featured within Sustainable Frome's broader Energy Descent Action Plan as one of many strategies to reduce carbon emissions in the town.

As a parish plan, it was not able to influence planning decisions and was not adopted as supplementary planning guidance although due to shared governance arrangements with MDC at the time, mutual consultation channels fed into the Local Plan and the Community Plan influencing its content. Frome's Community Plan was presented to FTC in 2009 but was not well-received and the council showed little interest in adopting it. The plan was later to become a de facto manifesto for lff upon their election in 2011. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the management group and FTC exists, with the latter acting as a custodian of Community Plan, and the management group is dormant.

5.3.4 Independents for Frome (2011 - present)

Roots in transition? Yes (both administrations include members of Sustainable Frome)

Several of the town councillors who took power in 2011 from the perceived ineffective, incumbent town council were members of Sustainable Frome, including the 'chief theorist' of Flatpack Democracy¹⁸², Macfadyen (Harris, 2015). lff councillors are a non-party political group with a spectrum of party political views which have been 'put aside' to act in the interests of

¹⁸⁰ Usher was also key to co-instigating lff in 2010. See section 7.1.

¹⁸¹ See Appendix L – Thematic Aims of Frome's Community Plan (V4F) for the thematic aims of the plan.

¹⁸² <http://www.flatpackdemocracy.co.uk> (last accessed 22.9.16).

Frome through the group's Ways of Working (WoW), which it uses to cultivate Frome-focused decision-making.¹⁸³ Some councillors also had (significant) experience of working within different tiers of government. The table below indicates the number of lff councillors with links to *Transition* and their previous role occupation within local government (either parish, town, district or county level):

Table 5-1 Previous experience of lff councillors (both 2011 and 2015 administrations) as either having links to Sustainable Frome or experience of working in government as either a councillor or in a professional capacity.

Election	Male	Female	TOTAL
2011 – elected (previous or existing members of Sustainable Frome)	2	1	3
2011 – elected (former government experience – as either a councillor or as staff)	4	1	5
2015 – elected (previous or existing members of Sustainable Frome)	1	2	3
2015 – elected (former government experience – as either a councillor or as staff)	3	2	5

The following table sets out a comparative analysis of Hopkins' (2010) assessment between localism and relocalisation, with the additive feature of lff's non-party-political agenda, which extends from Hildreth's community localism in Figure 3-2 to explore the distinction between discourses and governance arrangements within these three types of approaches.

Table 5-2 A comparison between localism, relocalisation and lff's approach (Adapted from Hopkins, 2010 and Felicetti, 2013, with additive feature of lff by author).

Aspect	Localism	Relocalisation	lff
Governance	Formal procedural mechanisms e.g. LPA and Examiner Invites consultants as advisors	Follows Transition Network's 12 steps	Deliberative governance with the community Stronger and more accountable local government

¹⁸³ See Appendix M - The Independents for Frome Ways of Working.

	Reducing central government influence in local matters	Stronger and more accountable government – all tiers	
Economy	No decoupling from globalised economy No shift in role of consumer and producer	Local infrastructure tied to local provision and consumption Decoupling from globalised economy	Local infrastructure tied to local provision and consumption
Development	Industry-dominated; Some policies in favour of self-build (and growing move towards community development)	The commons (shared assets); relocalisation; co-housing, self-build	The commons (shared assets); relocalisation; co-housing, self-build
Community	Importance of community ownership – transfer of assets from state to community	Importance of community control +/- or ownership Communities act to develop activities beyond state	Importance of community control +/- or ownership Communities act to develop activities beyond state and with(in) government (Local) government as an enabler
Power/political	Local people should have more control over decision-making and services Lack of feedback mechanisms	Local people should have more control over decision-making and services Apolitical Parallel infrastructure beyond the state Emerging endorsement of Transitioners into politics	Radical, parallel infrastructure within and beyond the state Invites diversity in party political views Integration of transition values into political approach
Climate Change	Lack of robust policy framework Lack of strong ethics on sustainability	Strong ethical and organisational identity tied to addressing climate change in positive and intentional ways	Strong ethical and organisational identity tied to addressing climate change in positive and intentional ways

			One Planet Living; Zero Carbon 2030 target ¹⁸⁴
Networks	Local levels of governance	Part of <i>Transition</i> and New Economy movement	Indirect strong links to <i>Transition</i> through some of its members; organisation within the New Economy movement

5.3.5 Frome's Neighbourhood Development Plan (2012-2016)

Roots in transition? Yes (participation of Sustainable Frome members or spin off groups, but not in a formal organisational capacity)



Figure 5-12. Frome's NDP front cover

¹⁸⁴ FTC had initially committed to becoming fossil fuel free by 2046 after the Paris Conference of the Parties (CoP) on climate change in December 2015. In December 2018, this became superseded with a commitment to become fossil fuel free by 2030, in solidarity with, at the time a handful of other local authorities who declared a 'Climate Emergency'; at the same meeting, FTC also signed up to the Covenant of Mayors. See <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/climate-emergency/> (last accessed 6.6.19) and <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/> (last accessed 6.6.19).

5.3.5.1 NDP aims and objectives

Frome’s NDP is rooted in relocalisation which aims:

*“To build a community that is resilient in its capacity to support the needs of residents in the face of global shocks such as economic downturns, rising energy prices and climate change”
(Made Frome NDP. FTC, 2016, p.3).*

The plan had several objectives to promote (relocalised) sustainable development, which are summarised in Table 5-3 below¹⁸⁵.

Table 5-3 Frome’s NDP objectives and related policies

Objective	Related policies and/or sustainability objective
Encouraging small businesses to start and grow	BE1 – Protection of Employment Land
Enabling people to build their own homes, live more affordably in a more energy efficient way and play a more active part in the community.	H1 – Building a Balanced Community H3 – Self Build and Community Housing Business and Employment Sustainable Objective 5 Business and Employment ‘Achieved by’ Community Energy
Making it easier for people to get around the town on foot and by bicycle.	T1 – Integrated Transport Strategy
Regenerating the town centre so that it functions better as a place to live, work, meet, shop and visit.	TC1 – Town Centre Remodelling TC2 – Westway Centre TC3 – The Cattle Market Car Park

¹⁸⁵ More information on these policies and overarching ‘golden threads’ can be found at Appendix N - Frome ‘made’ NDP Policies and policies amended or cut compared to Reg 14 version. Note the discursive reframing of ‘golden threads’ to be orientated towards sustainability, community and participation compared to the NPPF (2012) ‘golden thread’ of a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para, 14).

Making the most of the River Frome corridor as an environmental and recreational asset.	<i>POS1 – The River Corridor</i>
Ensuring future development does not damage Frome's unique character	<i>H2 – Building by Design</i> <i>D1 – Design in Urban Landscapes</i> <i>D2 – Gateway Site Improvements</i> <i>D3 – Visual Impact on Skyline</i>

The NDP includes strongly relocalised ideas and practices on community housing (community-led development), self-build (building one's own house, not developer-driven), and shared space schemes (re-prioritising pedestrian access over cars). The plan had also sought to include a general policy to apply One Planet Living principles (OPL, i.e. living within the resources of one planet) to local planning decisions, which subsequently became an aspiration - or non-plan making approaches (CSE, 2015).¹⁸⁶ The plan also sought to protect existing employment sites, central as they are to the relocalised agenda. It is noted that a policy of substituting employment sites lost to residential development was not included in the final version due to advice from the LPA.

¹⁸⁶ For other cities formally adopting the OPL framework see <https://www.oneplanetbristol.com/one-planet-cities.html> (last accessed 8.6.19). These include Bristol, London, Brighton, Middlesbrough, Cardiff and Peterborough.

	Health and happiness	Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing
	Equity and local economy	Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade
	Culture and community	Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living
	Land and nature	Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife
	Sustainable water	Using water efficiently, protecting local water resources and reducing flooding and drought
	Local and sustainable food	Promoting sustainable humane farming and healthy diets high in local, seasonal organic food and vegetable protein
	Travel and transport	Reducing the need to travel, encouraging walking, cycling and low carbon transport
	Materials and products	Using materials from sustainable sources and promoting products which help people reduce consumption.
	Zero waste	Reducing consumption, re-using and recycling to achieve zero waste and zero pollution
	Zero carbon energy	Making buildings and manufacturing energy efficient and supplying all energy with renewables

Figure 5-13. One Planet Living Principles (Bioregional, n.d)¹⁸⁷

The NDP itself had several components, including the steering group (to manage the process, reporting to FTC), the Citizens Panels (to invite broader community engagement in the process and to discuss whether the Community Plan objectives and initiatives were still relevant), collation of an evidence base¹⁸⁸, and the enrolment of experts (consultants) to advise on the policy parameters of the plan, to support plan-writing and community engagement.

5.3.5.2 NDP evidence base

NDPs must demonstrate general conformity with the LPA's Local Plan.¹⁸⁹ Part I of the Local Plan 2006-2029 was adopted in December 2014 which set out the strategic planning policies for the

¹⁸⁷ Reproduced with kind permission of Bioregional.

¹⁸⁸ Frome's NDP and its evidence base can be found at <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/planning-for-frome/planning-for-fromes-future/draft-neighbourhood-plan-submitted/> (last accessed 13.3.18).

¹⁸⁹ See section 3.2.

district. The issue of employment, out-commuting, low-carbon development on Saxonvale and other issues are reflected in the Frome Vision 2029 in the Part I of the Local Plan (MDC, 2014, p.54).¹⁹⁰ Part II of the Local Plan (Site Allocations) was not in place Frome's NDP was in process and is still in development at the time of writing (June 2019)¹⁹¹. It is noted that Part I of the Local Plan was subject to an unsuccessful legal challenge by the developer Gladman in 2015 who questioned the methodology used to calculate housing need. Salient policies in the Local Plan identified Frome as a growth town in virtue of being a market town¹⁹² and the need to accommodate 2,700 number of housing over the Local Plan period (2006-2029). This was increased in to be a *minimum* delivery target due to a recommendation of the Examiners' report of the Local Plan Part I (see Yuille, 2014). The Local Plan set out that Frome must provide 20ha of additional employment land over the plan period (and compensate for 5ha lost employment land).¹⁹³

Frome's NDP sought to utilise existing consultation in the community, including the Community Plan (Vision4Frome, V4F)¹⁹⁴ and documents that informed the preparation of the LDF, including Portrait for Frome¹⁹⁵. Frome's TDS was carried out in tandem to the NDP (many of whom also became involved in the plan) and was used to inform NDP design policies. The MDC-commissioned masterplan, the Saxonvale Planning Brief (MDC, 2005c; 2005d), was used by FTC as the basis of a policy on Saxonvale; however, this policy was later removed by the Examiner because the masterplan was considered "out of date" (Cheesley, 2016).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ Examples of the contributions from the Frome Community Plan.

¹⁹¹ For more information see <http://www.mendip.gov.uk/localplanpart2> (last accessed 11.1.19).

¹⁹² See Local Plan Core Policy 6. Specifically, the Local Plan justifies this in the following statement: "The level of new housing development to be directed to Frome is around 2,300 homes. If projected job growth is secured, this level of development will make inroads into the identified workforce imbalance. Restricting housing supply further, as proposed under alternative options, was considered to have a short term negative impact by creating more pressure on the local housing market. This may still be an outcome, which in turn could affect the ability to stimulate economic activity. Hence, to address this contingency land is identified and able to be released if needed." (MDC, 2014, p.52). The plan identifies several brownfield sites earmarked for large-scale housing developments in the town.

¹⁹³ By 2014, 1300 of the 2030 homes have already got planning permission.

¹⁹⁴ Using the plan to identify a 'wish list' of community initiatives to be taken forward by the plan or initiatives that were not deemed as having a land-use remit.

¹⁹⁵ This document was part of joint 'Time to Plan' consultation and Community Plan campaigns supported by Mendip District Council and the Mendip Strategic Partnership during March, April and May 2008.

¹⁹⁶ For a list of the evidence base that informed the NDP <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/planning-for-frome/fromes-neighbourhood-plan/> (last accessed 28.1.19).

5.3.5.3 NDP governance

Frome's NDP steering group was comprised of six members, which included three IFF councillors, two party-political councillors (under the 2011 administration), the Chair of the local Civic Society and was supported by two FTC staff members – the Planning Administrator and the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager, who joined nine months into the process in June 2012 (and who previously performed senior roles in LPAs). The Link Officer¹⁹⁷ was the MDC Policy Officer who played an advisory role, acting as an interface between the steering group and MDC.

The group had a good mix of planning, development and design skills including architecture and building, and knowledge of different phases of the planning process. It is noted that the Chair of the NDP steering group was also a former member of the Sustainable Frome Greener Buildings sub-group. The Planning Administrator was a key mediator between FTC and MDC who attended some meetings with MDC planning policy officers and had themselves worked within the MDC planning team prior to joining FTC.

Early in the process there was also representation from neighbouring parish council Selwood (which borders Frome with a doughnut town boundary that encompasses Selwood to an extent).¹⁹⁸ However, this was a relatively short-lived link of six months, which one respondent attributed to the challenge of maintaining enthusiasm in a voluntary role.¹⁹⁹

FTC also enrolled a number of consultants to support the process. Some consultants engaged more with FTC's Economic Development and Regeneration Manager, whilst others engaged more with the Planning Administrator. A number of actors in Frome's placemaking networks were consulted either through participation in the Citizens Panels or by direct engagement with FTC on core issues, for instance employment.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ See footnote 83.

¹⁹⁸ See Sheet 2, map2c <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Somerset-County-Council-Ward-Map.pdf> (last accessed 6.6.19).

¹⁹⁹ See section 9.1.1.

²⁰⁰ See FTC (2014).

5.3.5.4 Consultation in Frome's NDP

The Citizens Panels were held between May and July 2012, for a total of four meetings with approximately 50 unique attendees. The panels were widely advertised throughout the town via printed and social media and the FTC website. The steering group also used random post codes in the town in targeted priority areas in an attempt to seek representative engagement of different people in the town. Attendees were also incentivised to attend the meetings with a £10 reimbursement for their time and/or expenses, though not everyone used this incentive.

Despite the targeted engagement approach to bring attention to the consultation process, there were approximately 20-25 attendees on average for each individual Citizens Panel²⁰¹. The initiative attracted four individuals who were also active members of Sustainable Frome (i.e. those who regularly attended meetings). The process included some Planning For Real exercises²⁰² and an open space discussion – a governance technology used by *Transition* - and used the same organisation that had supported the Community Plan consultation.²⁰³

Table 5-4 Sustainable Frome members participating in the NDP Citizen Panels

	Male	Female	TOTAL
Sustainable Frome members represented on the NDP Citizens Panels	2	2	4

The plan linked with the TV architect Kevin McCloud to garner support for self-build at an event at Rook Lane Chapel in September 2014.²⁰⁴ The steering group also visited the nearby ecotown of Bicester and the Stroud Cohousing scheme as exemplar communities to stimulate knowledge transfer on development alternatives.

Frome's NDP held its pre-submission draft consultation (Reg 14) 28th October to 31st December 2013 which resulted in 50 comments²⁰⁵. The plan was amended to address these comments and

²⁰¹ Figures recalled by one respondent.

²⁰² Planning for Real is a nationally recognised community planning process based on a 3D model, developed originally by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation. The process allows residents to register their views on a range of issues, to work together to identify priorities, and in partnership with local agencies go on to develop an action plan for change (<http://www.planningforreal.org.uk/what-is-pfr/> (last accessed 8.5.19)).

²⁰³ A detailed account of the process and citizen priorities can be found in Bourne, 2012.

²⁰⁴ <http://frome.fm/2013/10/kevin-mccloud-talks-to-fromefm/> (last accessed 27.1.18).

²⁰⁵ See FTC Consultation Statement (FTC, 2015).

the Submission draft was received by MDC in mid-2014 for the Submission consultation (Reg 16). It is noted that some contentious issues of the plan had not yet been reconciled between FTC and MDC, which led to a (unusual) request by MDC for the plan to be revised further before Reg 16 could take place.²⁰⁶ The Examiner of Frome's NDP acknowledged this "modified" plan but only reviewed the Submission version for their report (Frome's NDP Examination Report, 2016). FTC addressed the concerns of the Examiner and a final version of the plan was submitted to MDC in October 2013. The plan was made (adopted) in October 2016 after a local referendum with 17.9% turnout, supported by a majority 82% of the vote (3,631).²⁰⁷

5.3.6 Saxonvale, Keep Frome Local and experimentation with other localism rights (2012-) *Roots in transition? Yes (Keep Frome Local, Sustainable Frome spin off group)*

Saxonvale is a mainly derelict site in the middle of Frome (4.76ha)²⁰⁸ which has become a battleground over what constitutes the "right" kind of development in the town between two camps: Keep Frome Local (pro locally-led development that protects independent, local traders) and Frome for All (pro-supermarket). In 2008, an MDC-commissioned development brief on the site was published which set out a masterplan for two elements of the site – Garsdale and Saxonvale (MDC, 2005c and MDC, 2005d). However, this masterplan had not had any material influence on the development at the time of the empirical research.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ The Reg 16 consultation was held between 10th November and 23rd December 2014.

²⁰⁷ 3,112 voted in favour and 509 against.

²⁰⁸ Local photographer Tim Gander has captured the changing face of Saxonvale of the online portfolio entitled "What Happened Here", available at <https://www.timgander.co.uk/portfolio/saxonvale-what-happened-here/> (last accessed 8.6.19).

²⁰⁹ See earlier comment about the deletion of the reference to the Saxonvale development brief by the Examiner.

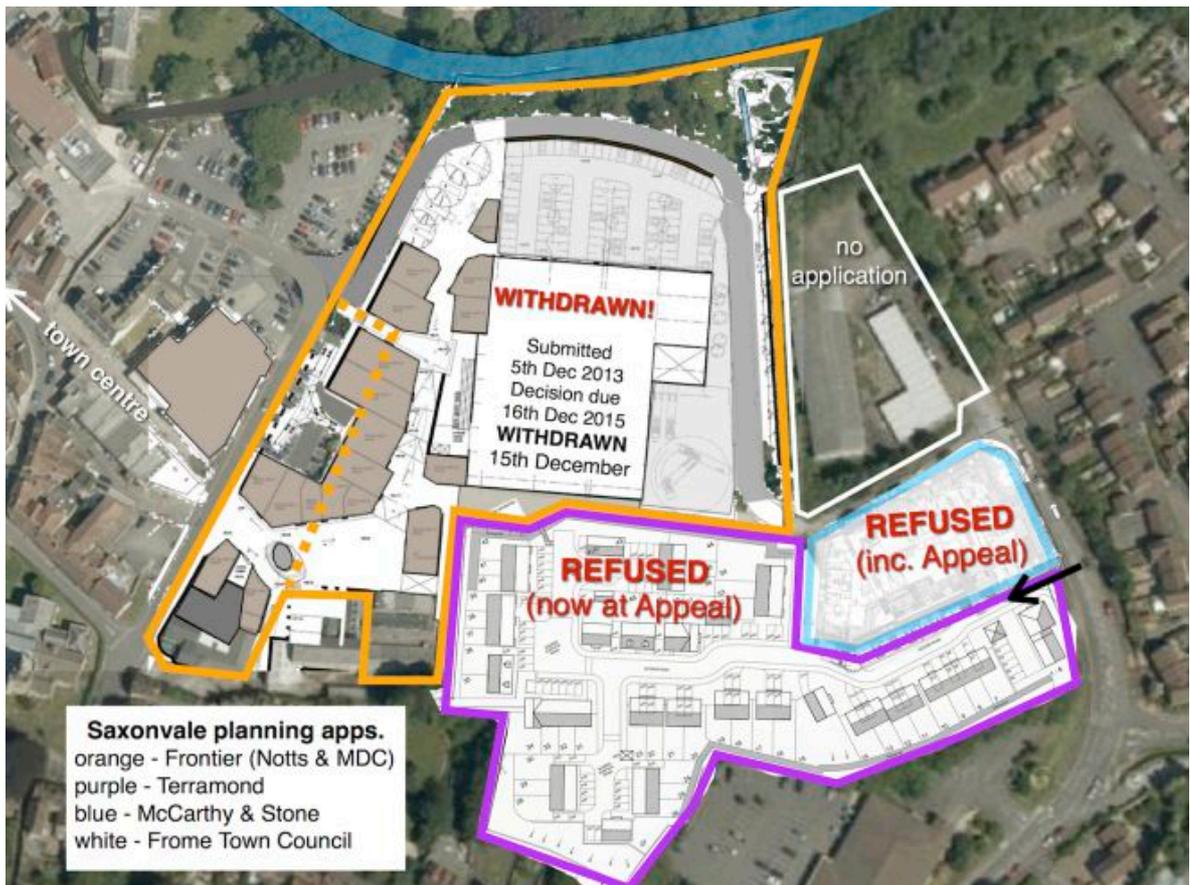


Figure 5-14. Landholdings on Saxonvale (as of November 2018) (Duke, 2018)²¹⁰

In an effort to influence perceived poor-quality planning applications (notably for a supermarket), FTC purchased a parcel of land on the site to protect the Somerset Skills and Learning centre, to have a seat at the table for any negotiations on the site's future and to earn an income. FTC also commissioned a consultant to develop an Implementation Prospectus to find a way forward to resolve key issues in landownership and barriers to community-led development of the site. This included exploring the use of other community rights under the Localism Act including the CRtBO and NDOs, which ran in parallel to the NDP itself. The experience of exploring or using these rights is discussed in chapter 8.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Retrieved from <https://saxonvalesite.wordpress.com/> (last retrieved 26.11.18).

²¹¹ A lot of detailed information can be found at <https://saxonvalesite.wordpress.com/> written by Frome resident and former MDC Regeneration Officer, Katy Duke, who also was a member of Keep Frome Local.

It is important to note that in 2018 the context of the Saxonvale issue changed significantly when the landowner, Knotts Pensions, went into administration and MDC purchased the land from the remaining landowners; FTC's parcel of land sold for £985,000²¹².

5.3.7 Frome Cohousing

Roots in transition? Yes (Keep Frome Local, Sustainable Frome spin off group)

Frome Cohousing was initiated in 2009 and became a CIC in 2010 and is a registered CLT. Frome Cohousing aims to promote community living in Frome, identify and procure suitable sites for community housing projects for Frome residents, and support the process of defining and formulating the management and policy structures any individual projects. It has around 220 on its mailing list and around 50 formal members (potential households). Frome Cohousing was involved in the NDP consultation and influenced policy ideas about co-housing in the plan (see section 10.1.2).

5.3.8 Mendip District Council

Roots in transition? No (although some previous district councillors and staff members had links to Sustainable Frome)

MDC is a district level local authority serving the Mendip district of Somerset. As the LPA, MDC formalises the local strategic planning policy framework.

²¹² It is noted that not all of this is a profit to the town council, some of the sales will be used to repay a loan to purchase the site.

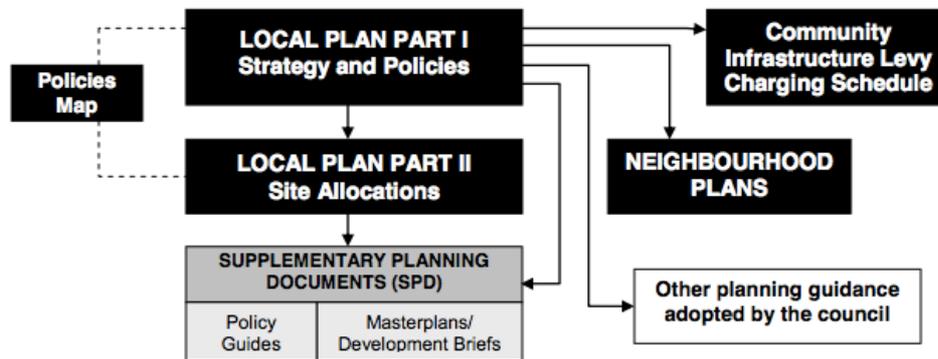


Figure 5-15. MDC Local Plan Part I and II in relation to other elements of the Local Development Framework (MDC, 2014, p.2).²¹³

MDC had previously been supportive of a number of placemaking initiatives in the 1990s – 2000s, including promoting town centre regeneration²¹⁴. The former MDC Regeneration Manager was also involved in supporting various resilience initiatives through their multiple role in Sustainable Frome and MDC.²¹⁵ However, in recent years there was a souring of relationships and a number of political tensions between FTC and MDC, which are explored in more detail in chapter 9.

5.4 Mapping relational ties between entities

To understand a phenomenon, it is important that the different configurations that influence events are presented both at a particular moment, but also how these change over time (Bygstad et al., 2016). The evolution of the ties between Sustainable Frome, FTC and other entities listed in section 5.3 can depict how ideas and practices of relocalisation are diffused, ousted or consolidated as they move through or beyond institutional spaces. For instance, exploring

²¹³ The Local Plan also sets out a useful figure to depict the relationships between organisations and policy documents within the LDF (see MDC, 2014, para 1.14).

²¹⁴ See <https://fromeshops.wordpress.com/2015/07/27/regeneration-of-frome/> (last accessed 24.1.19).

²¹⁵ Indeed, pre-lfF and in the early days of the *Transition* movement a commitment by SCC sought to be the first Transition Local Authority, aims which subsequently were weakened with a change of political leadership. See <https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/somerset-transition-reversal-raises-questions-over-localism-agenda/> (last accessed 1.6.19).

whether roles shifted and transmuted as transition processes evolved and relocalised actors increasingly became part of (town council) government.

The following figures illustrate the changing relationships between entities from the period 2006 – 2016 and the nature of their relationships as either: i) independent – both entities can exist without the other, or ii) dependent – one or more entity needs the other to exist. The date at which they were enrolled into Frome’s relocalised network is also indicated.

5.4.1 2006: Sustainable Frome established

At this point in time, relocalised initiatives were not formalised until Peter Macfadyen initiated Sustainable Frome (which was created in tandem with the *Transition* movement in 2006). There were no links between *Transition* and FTC. However, there were some connections to promote sustainability in the town being orchestrated by Duke within her role as MDC Regeneration Officer; notably, invoking Sustainable Frome (amongst other community groups) to become involved Community Plan pending a successful funding bid.²¹⁶

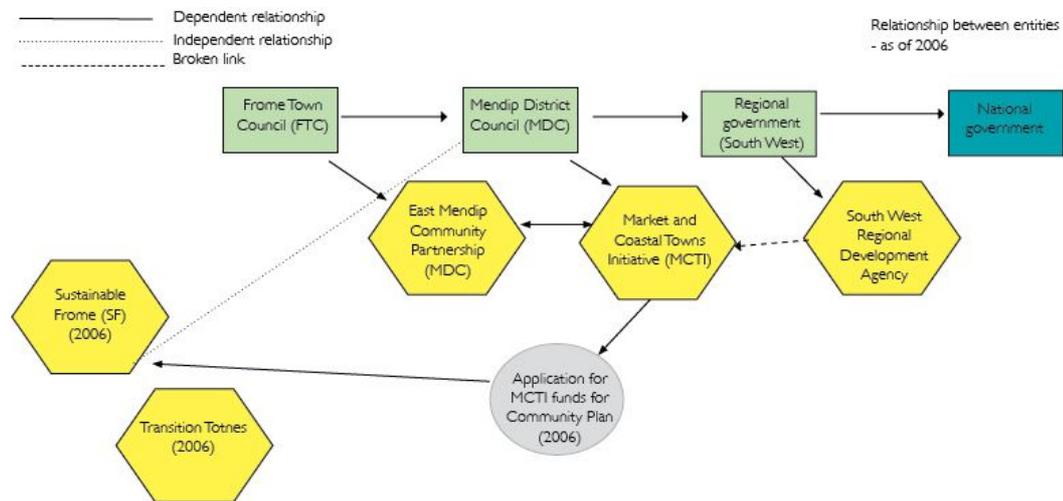


Figure 5-16. Relational ties in 2006 when Sustainable Frome was established

²¹⁶ A funding application from the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI) was pursued after an unsuccessful application to the South West Regional Development Agency.

5.4.2 2011: IfF win 10 seats in FTC

At this time, Sustainable Frome had formally become part of TN and a number of sub-groups existed, including the Greener Buildings group – a member of which was the architect for the refurbishment of the Cheese and Grain. Some groups had already begun to splinter off from Sustainable Frome, including Frome Cohousing (in 2009) and IfF itself, where three members of Sustainable Frome became town councillors in 2011 (see Table 5-1). V4F had been approved in 2008 but the plan had not been formally adopted by the incumbent FTC.

Broader (economic) localisation initiatives such as Forward Space co-working had been established, with dependent links to the purchase of retail units on Catherine Hill, which subsequently became a hub for independent trade (both initiated by the same individual). Keep Frome Local used the MDC-commissioned Saxonvale masterplan to justify their campaign; it had strong links to Sustainable Frome with similar members, but it also included members of the wider community.

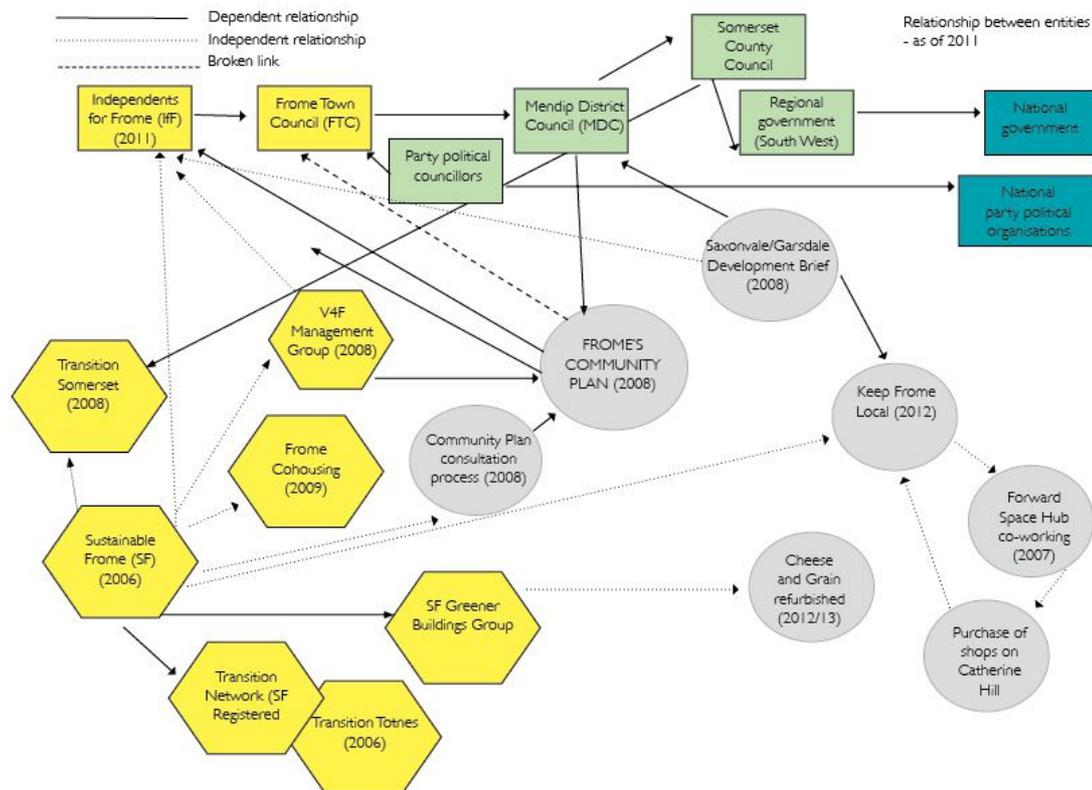


Figure 5-17. Relational ties in 2011 when IfF won 10 seats in FTC

5.4.3 2016: Frome's NDP 'made'

By 2016, the increasingly complex relations between entities listed in indicates the extent to which lff, relocalisation and localism had penetrated initiatives within the town. The global momentum for addressing climate change was reflected in the Paris Agreement, which FTC responded to through its commitment to become a fossil fuel free town by 2046²¹⁷.

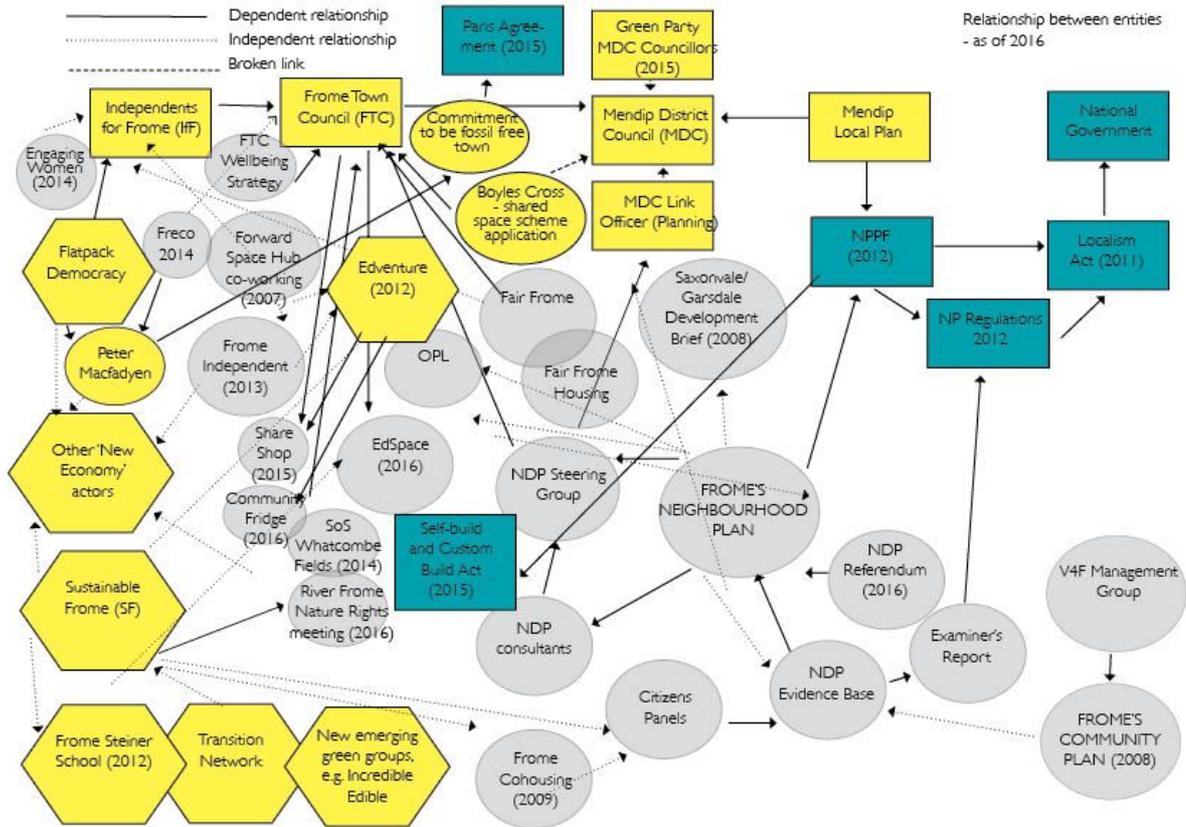


Figure 5-18. Relational ties in 2016 when Frome's NDP was adopted

²¹⁷ As stated earlier, this later came to be superseded in December 2018 by a commitment to become fossil fuel free by 2030.

5.5 Introducing chapters 6-11 (empirical findings)

This chapter has introduced the key entities involved in advancing and contesting relocalised development in Frome and summarised some of the relational ties between them. In an interview with former MP David Heath, the Guardian journalist John Harris suggested that: “Free market capitalism tends to squash places like this... This place has actually kept its identity” (Harris, 2010).

The following chapters explore the reasons why neo-liberalism has seemingly *not* eaten the town, how Frome acquired such agency to advance a relocalised agenda and the role of the NDP process as a potential mechanism (transition arena) to promote relocalised sustainability transitions. The extent the NDP process affected the conditions within which state and community actors coalesced and fed into the planning ‘regime’ can indicate the degree of political contestation between actors in planning arenas seeking alternative development models. Moreover, these ties can shed light on the location of agency and resources, how personal and organisational relationships evolved as they intersect with broader phenomena such as policy agendas, a changing socio-economic context, and a changing demographic profile of people moving to the town. In addition, whether Frome’s spatial qualities can withstand, shape or be reconfigured by changing patterns of migration.

Chapters 6-11 are structured according to the themes listed in Figure 5-19 which outlines how each chapter relates to the research questions set out in Table 1-1 (and summarised again in Table 4-2).²¹⁸ This thesis has more findings chapters than a typical PhD dissertation, namely because of the richness of Frome as a case study and to unpack the different layers within and between two specific tribes of the New Economy – i) *Transition* and relocalisation and ii) government and politics, exploring Frome’s relocalised entities’ interaction with planning and NDPs in particular.

Direct quotes from respondents are indicated with their organisation. **Bold** is used to indicate particularly salient text and underline is used to indicate key concepts that are discussed more fully chapter 12; here, a theoretical explanation of the how these themes point to core concepts

²¹⁸ For more information on the analytical process to arrive at these themes chapter 4 Methodology.

as driving forces for placemaking transitions in Frome and their implications for planning's contribution to sustainability transitions is discussed.

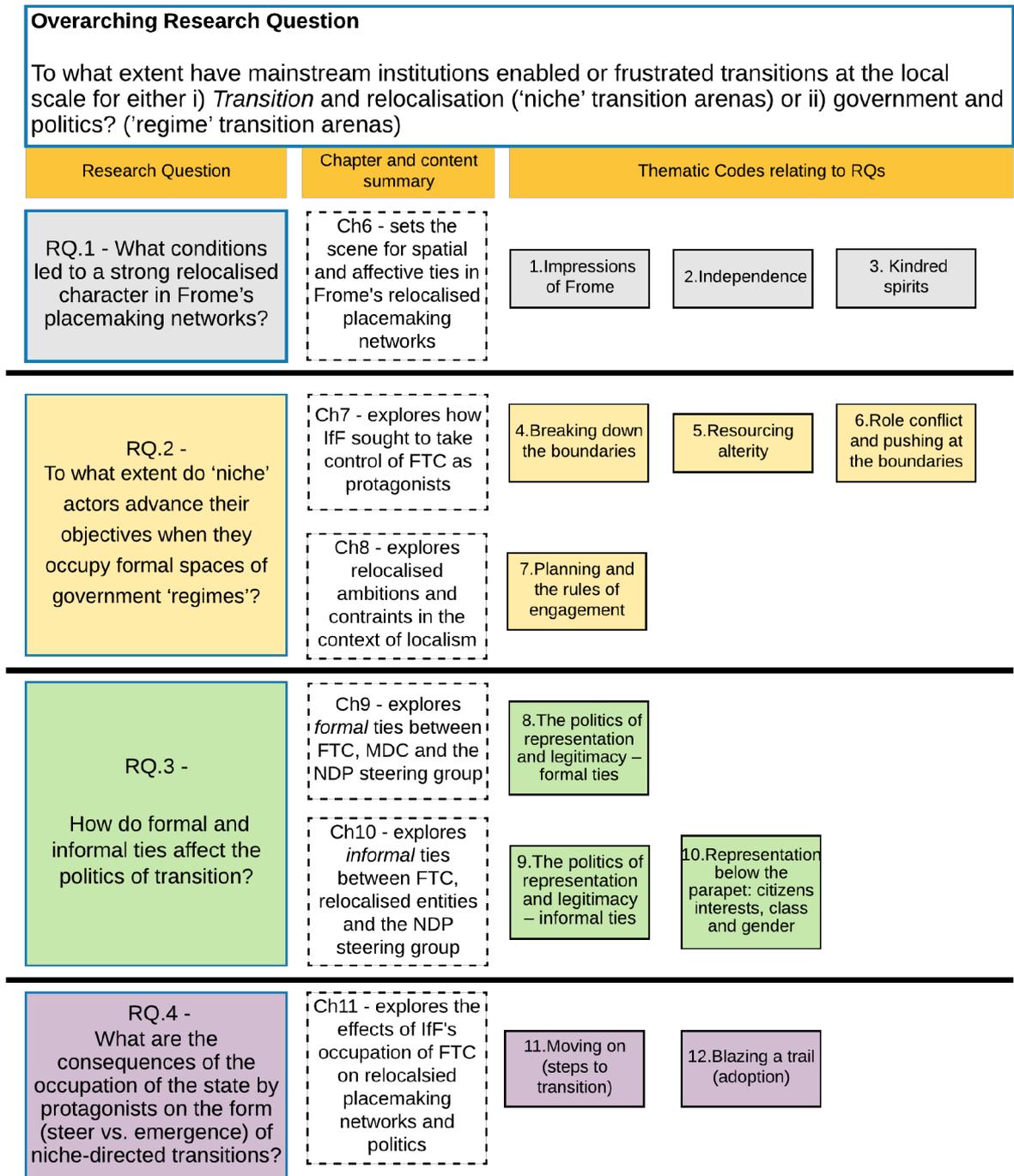


Figure 5-19. Research Questions, related chapters and themes (thematic codes)

“People come to Transition not so much for issues related to ego and their desire to earn money and so on, but for a more genuine, deep felt concern for the planet and so on. And so that's part of what's interesting, whether there can be a cross over into politics with that more deeply felt, or deeply embedded reason for getting involved.” (IfF councillor).

6 Frome’s placemaking dynamics: spatial and affective markers of Frome's relocalised identity

Having introduced the entities involved in relocalisation in Frome in chapter 5, this chapter relates to the first research question: *What conditions led to a strong relocalised character in Frome’s placemaking networks?*

In the words of one respondent, Frome benefits from a “burgeoning environmental cluster” (IfF councillor). How this cluster came together and what binds it can help explain the configuration of relocalised initiatives and their relation to the spatial setting of Frome. Using respondents’ own perspectives (i.e. those who met the criteria set out in section 4.2.3) this chapter details and why they were attracted to Frome and its placemaking entities, or how those outside of the town perceive it, in order to understand the spatial and social aspects of the formation of relocalised practices. It is important to note that respondents’ length of time as a resident in Frome varied, but some had been living in the town for over 20 years whilst others were relatively recent incomers, or locally referred to as “New Frome”. How these networks influenced the NDP is discussed in chapter 10.

This chapter is structured around three themes (1-3):

Research Question (RQs)	Themes relating to RQs	Theme description
RQ.1 - What conditions led to a strong relocalised character in Frome’s placemaking networks?	1. Impressions of Frome	Perceived spatial and affective markers of Frome's identity
	2. Independence	Personality and culture of independence in the town and key actors involved in relocalised placemaking in Frome
	3. Kindred spirits	Organisational or personal affinity ties/matching between actors and material entities in Frome's relocalised networks

Figure 6-1. Chapter 6: thematic codes and description

6.1 Theme 1 – Impressions of Frome

This theme clustered all instances of Frome’s characteristics identified by respondents: its spatial attributes or affective markers, such as the types of actors associated with Frome and how these manifest in its broader placemaking dynamics. It emphasises the importance of size, scale and

infrastructure as key drivers of a strong social networks as well as the effect of culture on shaping spatial energies and identity configurations.

In particular, Frome was considered to have a distinct DNA - an underlying nature to the town, a “buzz” arising from positivity from its active placemaking groups, and a rich cultural and historic environment. Being green was considered to be a core part of the town's DNA to which development ought to be aligned. The town was considered distinct: a unique phenomenon to be understood and known deeply. The town's distinctiveness was felt to render Frome both “exciting” and incomparable.

“[Saxonvale] needs to be developed in the DNA of Frome if you like, what's unique about our place” (Iff councillor).

“[A] kind of sense in Frome that it is distinctive, it is quite a creative place. I don't know how many times you've been there and kind of getting into the skin of it. There is something there isn't there?” (Local authority representative).

The town's underlying “nature” was perceived as a reason why people are drawn to live there (Local group representative), notably more ‘green’, bohemian and ‘alternative’ individuals.²¹⁹ Respondents highlighted their associations of Frome having “attitude” or as Macfadyen describes the town in Flatpack Democracy “Frome has a history of both neglect and slightly bolshy [sic] independence” (Macfadyen, 2014, p.19).

*“Erm, so I was really interested in this town... - I mean I love Frome. But it's **a place with, with attitude** a bit like **Bristol...Frome, Totnes, Brighton** - they, I think, have a special **significance in terms of you know, pushing boundaries.**” (Consultant).*

When responding to charges that by encouraging a London-based PR company to market Frome to ‘outsiders’ this would start to “attract the wrong sort of people” one respondent recounted the consultant's view that Frome possessed its own (identity profiling) “sorting” agency:

*“No, um, trust that Frome will select out the right kind of people’, um, and I think it does. **It's a, sort of, sorting hat**, and partly it's also because there are other options which are just as*

²¹⁹ During one interview in a café, one lady dressed in a flamboyant 1950s outfit with bright red lipstick walked in, to which the respondent commented “This lady is lovely. Very Frome”.

*easy... if it gets you, it gets you; if it doesn't, then you'll come, and you'll think it's **a slightly odd place**, um, and **it doesn't really suit me**." (Local group representative).*

Frome was characterised as having a can-do attitude, stimulated by its placemaking networks who readily engage with initiatives highlighted in section 5.2²²⁰. The high degrees of civic activity helped to maintain both social networks and a strong cultural offer which helped to cultivate a sense of positivity within the town, which lff had helped to amplify (see section 6.2). Meanwhile, the dynamic energy of the town and its active placemaking networks meant it was hard to define how the boundaries of one initiative were distinct from another (Sustainable Frome spin off group; Sustainable Frome member).

"Frome has a wonderful buzz to it, there's all sorts of goings on here." (Sustainable Frome member).

*"[T]here's so much going on in Frome, it is, **it is a fantastic place to be...**" (Sustainable Frome spin off group).*

*"I mean, one-one of the things that people notice about Frome is, **it's a very, sort of, can-do place**. You know, if you want to do something, you would just get up and do it, and organise it, and lots of people will join in. It's not like people are not joining in sort of people. They-they...people will really turn up to, um, exciting stuff, you know, and-and-and green stuff." (Local group representative).*

*"[Civic engagement is] part of the character of the town...which the lffies²²¹ [lff] have, um, turned up a level...Um compared with other neighbouring towns, **there's always been more civic activity**. Um, and **there's also been a lot of positivity**, um, which is why Frome supports so many voluntary groups, and manages to support two theatres, etc, um, and two film clubs as well as a-a cinema." (Local group representative).*

As a town of c.27,000 residents (as of 2011 census), Frome was also considered to be an appropriate scale for active placemaking; its size was considered an important factor for cultivating community with a diverse offer of social activity and clusters of different interests. Frome's size

²²⁰ Several broader social groups are listed on the Frome Directory on FTC's website <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/frome-directory/community-groups-clubs-and-hobby-groups/> (last accessed 21.1.19).

²²¹ While it would seem the term 'lff-y' is a term of endearment one lff councillor suggested it could also indicate a suspicion and distrust, i.e. when something is 'iffy' in colloquial terms.

was also used to frame a radical vision of the town as a “21st Century Market Town” by one economic relocalisation actor²²²:

*“I think it still **retains a sense of community** in a way that a lot of towns don't, and I'm not quite sure why that is, but it's an extremely **positive factor**, and it's what people like about the town. I think it's fortunate that it's about the right size to support pretty much anything that somebody wants to do, but it's not so big that it breaks up into smaller suburbs.”* (Local group representative).

“[Y]ou know, because you don't have that, the serviced anonymity of a city, you have to be engaged to make [short pause] anything happen.” (IfF councillor)

*“[Frome's a] town that [is] big enough to have people on my wavelength but also big enough to be a **real place not a ghetto of any particular group** [cough].”* (Sustainable Frome member).

*“[One Frome-based individual] has a theory that **the city is dead**, and it will be towns that are the future because you can build communities in towns in a way that's much more difficult in cities.”* (Local group representative).

The spatial qualities of Frome's historic character, as mainly not being altered or modernised in and around the town centre, was felt to emphasise a longstanding creative scene which harboured “a lot of nice people” in the town and a “wide circle of artistic people” (Local group representative); this cultural hub was inextricably tied to the identity of Frome and was perceived as “one of our great strengths” (FTC representative). Many creative industries are often integrated into the pockets of Frome's (historic) built environment in the town centre, and adjacent residential areas, where artisan enterprises co-exist with everyday town centre activities (FTC representative). Frome's cultural offer was considered to a key attraction, which was a reason for some respondents for moving to the town (Local group representative) and was considered “remarkable” for a town of its size (Local group representative).²²³

Recent trends were seen to have enriched a more “culturally diverse” offer in the town as incomers moved to Frome. In contrast to narratives of a (relatively static) DNA of Frome, the

²²² See http://somersetwainsforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/a_21st_century_market_town_sm.pdf (last accessed 9/5/19).

²²³ Indeed, IfF emerged in part because the incumbent FTC was perceived as no longer fit for purpose because of its perceived incompetence to run the Cheese and Grain as a music venue, which became a catalyst for challenging FTC's poor performance at the time (IfF councillor), see section 7.1.

town was felt to have changed markedly in recent years, where previously it was deemed derelict and run down in recessionary times in the 1990s, to becoming more “cool” and “trendy” as the class profile shifted in the town; though one actor indicated that “pockets of shabbiness remain” (IfF councillor).²²⁴

“Frome was very much the sort of poor cousin within the district and the county; [Frome’s] got much less money and generally it’s where you went for a fight on a Saturday evening.” (IfF councillor).

*“[Frome has] transformed markedly over the last 10 years or so... it’s becoming more middle-class I suppose and **more culturally diverse from what was a pretty home-grown town.**” (Local authority representative)*

“Erm, so Frome is like a really cool place to live, it’s really happening, it’s really green, we’ve got these wonderful markets on a Sunday, it’s attracting middle-class people to live here.” (Sustainable Frome member).

*“[Before Catherine Hill was redeveloped and the enterprise hub Forward Space opened **Frome] was really kind of on its uppers**, you know, 10 years ago - was not in a good place. It was [short pause] effectively, you know, it was pretty much a, **a boarded-up town.** You know a lot of Catherine Hill were just empty shops. And the High Street was pretty dismal. And there just wasn’t a lot going on.” (Local group representative).*

The town’s extant levels of activity and range of (notably green) interests helped to attract people that would reproduce its character – particularly a younger demographic seeking family-orientated lifestyles that fit with the nature of a small town, assisted through technological advances that support these working practices (IfF councillor). Frome’s relatively well-connected infrastructure and being “very well situated” to nearby cities and airports (Local group representative; IfF councillor) created a sense of Frome being a gateway for people leaving London.

One respondent suggested the attraction of the connected infrastructure, the nature of the town and a shared newness encouraged people to reproduce innovative placemaking. Frome had become a “a real, erm, draw for ex-London people”, particularly those seeking a more relative affordable place to live compared to neighbouring cities Bath and Bristol; these drivers were seen

²²⁴ See section 5.1 relating to deprivation in pockets of the town and high levels of anti-social behaviour.

to influence a younger socio-economic demographic of people who are “gravitating” to Frome to have a more balanced life yet benefit from the job opportunities in nearby cities (Local group representative). Those considered New Frome were also considered to be “refugees from the South East”, with many moving to Frome from London.

*“Frome has a **huge London refugee population**...So Somerset's typically a place people come to die [laughs], and so it, it's quite unusual in that it's got a very young population.” (Local group representative).*

*“I suppose, from a personal point of view, um, as **somebody who's always walked to work, and when I had small children, um, came home, had supper with them, read stories to them, put them to bed, and then went...walked back to the office** [laughter], um, and knowing an awful lot of people who work from home, and who've come to Frome because they can do that – in other words, they're in footloose type of, um, employment, or self-employment, or alternatively, they work in the kind of business where you don't need much more than a laptop and a space to work, and a good, um, internet connection, and do it because they want the kind of quality of life and balance of life that you can get in a small town, but which you can't get in a city.” (Local group representative).*

*“[Frome's] been fortunate in that it - **it's something of a gateway for people who are leaving London, um, or the southeast**, because they perceive it as not being that far away, and not into the wilds of Somerset, um, and come here, many of them, many of the businesses that've come here, um, they move because **they like the nature of the town**. They can see that **there're other people like them who are already here, um, so it's not that frightening**; they know it's got a train service to London... so they have fond ideas that they'll... they might keep a little place in London and work in London two or three days a week, um, which they usually stop doing after about six to 12 months. Um, and it's **because a lot of people are fairly new, um, it's...there isn't a-a barrier to new people arriving and doing things.**” (Local group representative).*

6.2 Theme 2 – Independence

This theme was evident from the strong motivations of actors engaged in Frome's placemaking that relate to freedom, autonomy and self-sufficiency, of being able to stand on its own two feet and go it alone. A clear narrative of independence was considered to have been curated by IfF - with the support of other actors. As well as IfF's independent politics, Keep Frome Local held an "Independence Day" at the Wesley Methodist Church in November 2012, which challenged the application for a supermarket on Saxonvale and aimed to mobilise local and national actors to critically assess the default use of potential regeneration sites for supermarkets in town centres.²²⁵ The Steiner academy – an alternative pedagogy – is also a draw for a number of young, 'alternative' families who have moved to the town.²²⁶



Figure 6-2. Frome Independence Day Organisers (Tim Gander, 2012)²²⁷

IfF's independent political identity and the initiatives by Sustainable Frome spin off groups were in tandem to the economic localisation initiatives by the entrepreneur who established the Frome

²²⁵ This included co-founder of the Transition Network, Rob Hopkins who spoke at the event. This led to a significant number of mainly handwritten consultation responses to MDC challenging the application.

²²⁶ However, an Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) inspection of the Steiner academy in November 2018 ruled it "inadequate" in every area and had serious concerns in leadership, teaching and learning, and safeguarding; a decision which leaves its future uncertain.

²²⁷ Reproduced with kind permission of Tim Gander.

Independent and established Catherine Hill as setting for independent (boutique) retail. The search for autonomy that permeate these recent initiatives in the town is reflected in the Frome Independent market's aims to "reclaim the High Street":

**RECLAIM
THE HIGH STREET
WITH US**

Figure 6-3. One of several slogans for the Frome Independent

The role of IFF in weaving these strands of independence into a unified political identity is depicted in the quote below:

*"[Of] all the things that erm, that have happened for the town I think [the cultivation of an independent identity] has been the single most important, in, in terms of getting stuff done. And really getting its act together. And and, and, and kind of curating a sort of single vision for what the town is. Erm, I think that's what's really helped is that Frome seems to have acquired this identity, I think for a lot of market towns they don't know really know what they are. They don't really know they stand for. They don't have this cohesive identity. And so what the town council's really good at doing is kind of cementing together all of the little bits into what I think is a very, very strong identity around kind of independence – [tuts] [short pause] not just retail but kind of business, and, erm, you know, environmental – and like really being prepared to, to stick its neck out and say this is, this is really important to us and we're going to do something about it. And that, that kind of independent spirit, that, that I think has created a very, very powerful identity for the town. And I think one that's, that actually other towns are really envious of – because it really feels that the town has kind of got its act together, erm, and that's all happened really quite quickly, you know, in the last five years. I know that [other towns] look at Frome and they wonder why we've managed to, really get together when seemingly they can't, they just can't make it happen. So, it's interesting, erm, **and a little bit magic dust or something** [says mysteriously]. But it has been good, it's been really good for the town." (Local group representative).*

Meanwhile, many initiatives that seek to cultivate a strongly local identity for local resilience projects tend to use the town logo to foster a collective identity through local initiatives, indicated in Figure 6-4²²⁸.

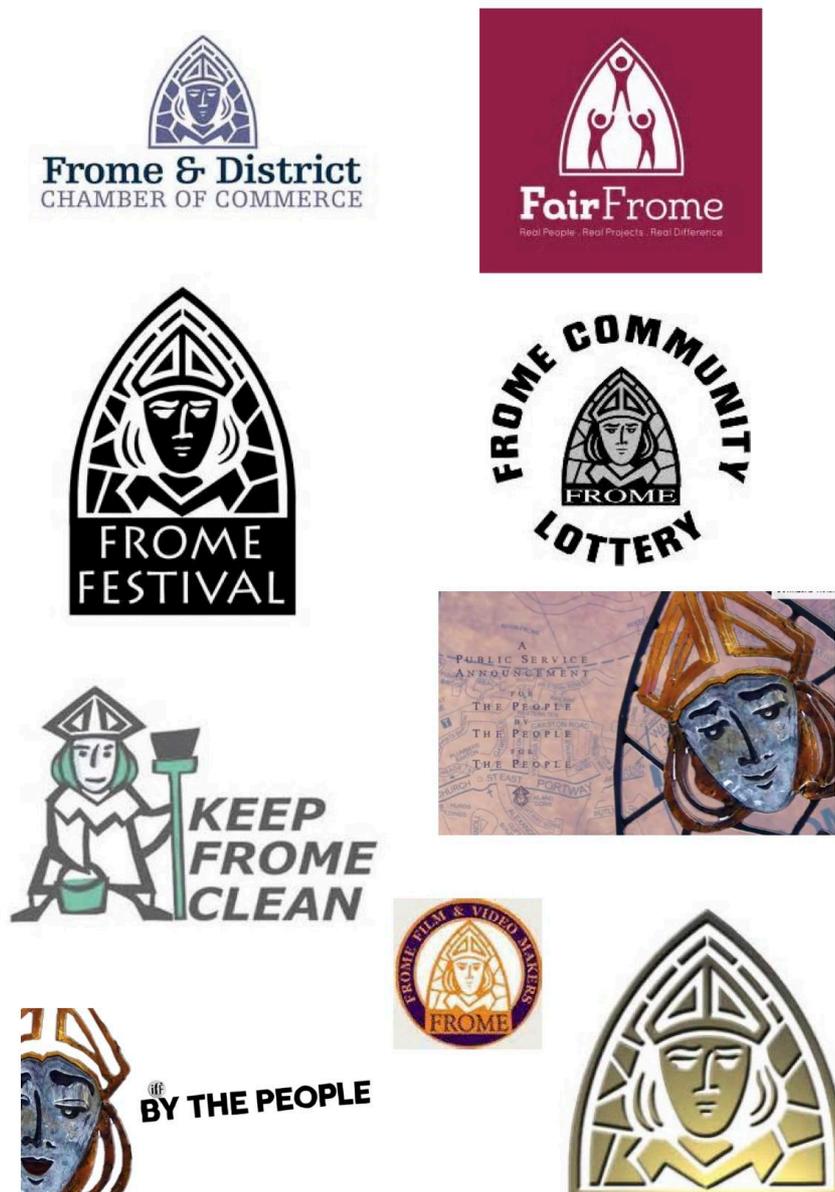


Figure 6-4. Frome community initiatives that use the town emblem for their own organisational identity²²⁹

²²⁸ See Appendix J – Relocalised image library summary for a description of these images. NB: FTC has since altered the Keep Frome Clean logo to no longer reflect the male emblem of Frome.

²²⁹ As of 2015, FTC have since changed their logo (see Figure 5-2).

The reasons for such shared identities is discussed in chapter 10.

In particular, a favourable local press has helped to cultivate and disseminate a strongly independent identity as a “Peoples’ Republic”, as indicated in the caption below. – a local newspaper, *The Frome Times*, also classifies itself as “the independent newspaper of Frome”²³⁰.

‘Welcome to the People’s Republic of Frome!’ – Independents take full house at election

THE Independents for Frome have won a landslide victory in the town council elections, winning all 17 seats.

In an almost unprecedented result, Frome did not elect any councillors from the main political parties with the sitting Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors all losing their seats.



The victorious IFF councillors

Figure 6-5. “Welcome to the People’s Republic of Frome!” following Iff’s full house in the 2015 election (*Frome Times*, 2015; image, Iff, 2015)

Many respondents indicated their role, and the role of the town council, to “push the boundaries”. Indeed, a sense of independence has run like a current through FTC-MDC relationships, which was seen as a tension but also reflecting a “healthy” degree of autonomy - “they want to do they own thing” (Local authority representative). As one respondent suggested:

“As Frome is, as you know, a large kind of town council, it employs [pause], you know a surprising number of staff. And I think there is that tension about, you know, we’d like to be independent of Mendip kind of thing. Which is underscoring everything that happens, whether it’s planning or anything else.” (Local authority representative).

²³⁰ <http://www.frometimes.co.uk/> (last accessed 6.6.19).

However, independence was considered rooted in the town's history and as well as the personal identities of some of the people involved in independent initiatives in the town (i.e. relocalisation). Respondents suggested that the reasons for IFF's success were that they tapped into and reflected the historical creative energy that already existed in the town and its broader community placemaking networks. Moreover, IFF were felt to be resourcing these extant networks to cultivate a shared identity for the town which created a "virtuous cycle" and augmented further the solid foundations of Frome's placemaking networks:

*"I'm one of those people who think Frome hasn't changed as much as-as-as its PR would say. Um, Frome has always, and historically, been a very independent-minded town, um, going back to the 16th century, um, and it tends to attract people who are, a) independent-minded, but also active... Um, and I think **the-the IFFies and the-the incomers, if I can put-put it like that, are people who've ... been able to do what they've done because that's...that has always been the character of Frome....Frome has a background in [innovation], both in business terms, and as a community, so the-the-the aims of the town council in doing that are in keeping with existing trends and-and support within the town...** I think it's become more noticeable. Um, and to that extent, it's probably also attracted businesses who are engaged in that, or helped their profile, um, and it probably means that more people have thought about it, but I don't think it's a fundamental change." (Local group representative).*

*"[W]hy the town is becoming so popular now is **the coming together of feelings and aspirations and threads that have always been there ever since we were here.** We struggled obviously to get through recessionary times and things like that, work and jobs are always important - and money wasn't there - but **the independents have, you know, got money together to do things.**" (Local group representative).*

*"[T]his was the dichotomy before [IFF came to power] – in [that] the town [taps table 3 times] has always been engaged and lively [taps table] and er [tuts] **made things happen in a kind of cultural way [taps table twice] ...** And [hesitates] what the council was like before is that they were just like a town council, [short pause] anywhere else. **They weren't, it didn't reflect the kind of energy that was in the town. And now it does.**" (IFF councillor).*

Financial and personal resources were also powerful drivers of independence and relocalisation. A strong economic relocalisation agenda has been largely due to a local entrepreneur who pioneered a number of relocalised employment initiatives such as Forward Space, the Frome Independent and the purchase of retail units on Frome's iconic Catherine Hill (see Figure 6-6). It

is important to note that their own financial resources were a critical factor in establishing these initiatives.



Figure 6-6. The Frome Independent on Catherine Hill (The Frome Independent, 2018)²³¹

Moreover, one active changemaker said they were an optimist on the power to change and as an individual they possessed an independent “tenacious” spirit which led to a more autonomous disposition when faced with challenges:

*“I always think that everything can be done. You know, **I don't believe in no, really...** you always find lots of naysayers, and that, I just that as **a challenge**... I just think, [hesitates] I've always just thought - I'm very independent...I'm very bad at relying on other people...so I just do stuff. I just get on and get done. And, erm, [tuts] and I think that encourages other people to do stuff too...” (Local group representative).*

Sustainable Frome’s early independence from Transition Network and its rooting in strong local networks also influenced the strength of ties to the wider movement. Early on in Sustainable Frome’s journey (approx. 6 months in) one of the “main stars” in the Transition movement came to Frome to give a talk on the potential for Sustainable Frome to fold into the movement;

²³¹ <https://thefromeindependent.org.uk/> (last accessed 12.1.19).

Sustainable Frome was accepted by Transition Network to become a Transition Initiative, despite having carried out the 'Steps to Transition' independently and in a different order²³². The sense of independence from Transition Network was a core driver of retaining Sustainable Frome's own sense of autonomy as being a part of Transition but not *needing* it; Frome-based actors already felt a sense of being "rooted" in their own green placemaking networks, which influenced the affective ties of members to the wider network. There were no strong regional connections through *Transition*, despite Glastonbury being only 22 miles away.

*"[W]e were set up before Transition started...when they brought out their first book, and you know, the sort of stages of development that they were suggesting, we were, sort of, you know, we said, 'Well, excuse me, we've been doing this for ages already', um, so we-we didn't step into that particular way of doing things. So, we called ourselves Sustainable Frome, a Town in Transition, to be *connected to them in terms of ideology, but not necessarily, um, following their, um, you know, their suggested way of-of, um, organising a transition town.*" (Sustainable Frome member).*

"Sustainable Frome has its own history...It didn't start as a Transition Initiative, it started as Sustainable Frome with its own way of being... they were already grounded - they already had their own roots, it wasn't like they wanted to reach out to other Transition Initiatives to strengthen their existence or whatever, so that's perhaps one of the reasons why the links aren't as strong as they might be...So there's a certain amount of toing and froing with other Transition Initiatives. It's not as - the sort of regional network isn't as strong as it might be... individuals might [connect with Transition Network or attend trainings], but not as, - not as an organisation... we keep in touch, but ... it's not a really, um, strong connection, it's a sort of collaborative connection, I would say." (Sustainable Frome member).

²³² See Appendix C – The 12 steps (ingredients) to Transition.

6.3 Theme 3 - Kindred spirits

The theme *Kindred Spirits* explains respondents' accounts of why actors involved in Frome's relocalised placemaking network came together to advance green initiatives in the town through Sustainable Frome. Friendship ties, family connections and spaces where people could be on the same "wavelength" were essential to the attraction to the move to the town and become active in its social networks. Some of these ties were formed in more transcendental spaces, such as self-development camps or through parties, which were then corralled into Sustainable Frome as a network to share, belong and innovate like-minded people. A physical space occupied by similar organisations and businesses was considered a draw for like-minded people; place identity signifiers with other places with strong transition or sustainability networks were invoked by several respondents. In Sustainable Frome, the practice of sharing food to cultivate social bonds or to create a safe space to vocalise experimental ideas cultivated confidence to act. These ties – which were within a relatively flat organisational structure and strong socio-cultural practices – also had a strong effect on the form of informal and formal ties to IfF and FTC (see chapter 10).

Many of those interviewed in Frome's relocalised network had a multifaceted experience of working in placemaking through roles in government, community empowerment, campaigning and communications on environmental issues nationally and internationally, legal services, architecture, building, social justice and overseas development.²³³ One respondent also described a previous role of working as a pressure group within an LPA to direct their use of resources for sustainability initiatives. These experiences created a sense of shared (green and community-minded) history. One consultant who was later enrolled into the NDP described moving into relocalisation from "the other side" of the corporate world and international experiences of "the energy around people living in a more connected environment" "plunged" them from one organisational paradigm to another which "sort of blew my mind really, blew all my fuses" (Consultant).

Like many "New Frome" the attraction of Frome as a place that supports more family-orientated lifestyles was a key attraction for these actors, as well as its strong creative scene. Others cited moving to Frome to be near family and friends (Sustainable Frome member; Local group

²³³ Coincidentally, several respondents also indicated they had studied at the University of Reading (UoR); due partly due to the relative proximity of Frome and Reading.

representative), being from the South West, or having a previous family connection as a driver for moving to the town (IfF councillor). In similarity to an early quote, Frome was felt a place to 'be', suggesting a sense of becoming or feeling at one with the town:

*"[Friends I already knew in Frome were] [v]ery go-getting. They set up a Steiner school in Bradford-on-Avon. They set up a, a food cooperative. They are vegetarians. I used to come and visit them... quite a lot... **I thought I'll come and be here.**" (Sustainable Frome member).*

Respondents suggested that those who became part of Sustainable Frome in its early phases were brought together initially through "fantastic parties" which enrolled actors into (alternative) friendship networks in the town:

"[A local couple] had a big, um, birthday party that was, sort of, massive, all over town... So, um, I went to their birthday party, hardly knowing them at all." (Sustainable Frome member).

*"[Through the parties] I got to know the landscape and the area around here and they used to invite me to parties, and I'd get to know people. And this was all like 25 years ago... I started to go to these camps, and they were **very much about self-development and quite pagan, it was about living on the land. They take ceremonies from different places in the world...** **The whole experience really blew me away the first couple of camps I went to.**" (Sustainable Frome member).*

Asked whether the parties played a role in a shared journey of these actors moving through various organisational groups - Sustainable Frome and then into IfF - one responded: "Yeah, I suppose, in a way, yes" (Sustainable Frome member). Indeed, existing ties to *Transition* and "counter-cultural" movements (Harris, 2015) possibly helped some actors to shape the meaning of "party" politics, echoed in *Transition's* narrative on "more a party than a protest" and reflected in the title of a working paper "21st Century politics – is the party over or has it just begun?" (Adnan, 2016).

In the late 1990s, one respondent described how there was a sense that being sustainable was akin to a sort of loneliness, where relocalised-minded people were disconnected and "ploughing their lone furrow in a green sense" through *individual* engagement with specific issues of sustainability. These individuals became increasingly connected through informal social ties (IfF councillor), e.g. through allotment sharing or introductions with other like-minded people, which were corralled into Sustainable Frome when it was established in 2006. Initially meeting in a pub, like IfF's inception meeting, Sustainable Frome brought together a 'plethora [40] of interested

people” harnessing a wealth of expertise that had previously been disconnected²³⁴ and corralled energy and enthusiasm on green issues:

*“[As a] sort of loose network of people and groups who are **strongly motivated, passionate about what they do.**” (Sustainable Frome member).*

One *Transition* actor referred to herself as “fertile territory for Transition” (Sustainable Frome member), given their pre-existing involvement in civic life and having an interest in environmental issues; indeed, their relatively recent move to Frome was conditional on the existence of an active TI which meant there was a group on “the same wavelength”. Sustainable Frome was considered to harbour “real thinkers” around green and resilience issues who had a capacity for systematic “joined up thinking” (Iff councillor). Encouraging people to stand up among like-minded people helped to generate both “confidence” and “loyalty” to support emergent new economy ideas, acting as a conduit for development alternatives and reinforcing new relocalised initiatives (such as the Vallis Veg box scheme, among many) with Sustainable Frome acting as a forum:

“[A]s a way of bringing people together...to test ideas... and then spin off into groups that actually did stuff.” (Iff councillor).

Sustainable Frome was initially spearheaded by Peter Macfadyen as the “figurehead”, or “guiding light” in its inception phase who was considered to act as a “benevolent dictator” to direct the organisational purpose and agenda “with a core group” around him (Sustainable Frome member; Iff councillor).²³⁵ Early core group meetings would often be at Macfadyen’s house and he was seen as a “pull” that corralled the energy and personal ties into Sustainable Frome:

*“And a lot of people were coming along because they were supporting Peter, right. But also, **he was pulling.** So, it was people were kind of personally supporting it but also supporting it in principle.” (Sustainable Frome member).*

Core to Sustainable Frome’s governance is to enact the practice of sharing food before the monthly meetings to help cultivate social bonds and reciprocity (a practice that has been carried

²³⁴ On that night it was agreed that the group would meet on the first Thursday of every month (apart from August) – a date that Sustainable Frome has kept since its inception and “never missed a beat” (Sustainable Frome member).

²³⁵ For instance, Duke also played a key role in supporting Sustainable Frome’s governance as well as seeking resources to support various local resilience initiatives, see section 5.3. Sustainable Frome’s governance was also clearly delineated to reflect a number of linkages into the community and local government to influence sustainable placemaking with some individuals playing more than one role within Sustainable Frome.

forward in part to IFF and the sharing of “homemade biscuits” see Macfadyen, 2014). There was also a sense of autonomy and flexibility endowed with the lack of formal structure around Sustainable Frome as a network (Sustainable Frome member).

However, there was also a sense that Sustainable Frome’s own looseness meant that there was a sense of being unsure about its organisational purpose at times, as one respondent suggested: “it’s not really sure what it is” (Sustainable Frome member). There were tensions regarding the Sustainable Frome’s governance and its apolitical disengagement with formal party politics. Being an “information exchange” was important to foster informal bonds, yet there was a frustration with the slowness of some meetings which was perceived as initially too broad; yet nonetheless bringing together a spectrum of those who felt part of the “sustainability” movement, albeit some were deemed to be “on the fringes of sustainability, depending on how you define [it]” (Sustainable Frome member). Sustainable Frome was not for everyone who supported relocalisation in principle: there was a widespread feeling, even among members of Sustainable Frome, that it was known as a “talking shop” and some respondents who self-associated as a “doer” felt that it was an inappropriate space to involve themselves in (IFF councillor).

There was also a tension between Sustainable Frome’s more spiritual side (such as Heart and Soul groups who “prayed” for the success of the organisation (Sustainable Frome member)²³⁶ and those who sought practical projects, which often became spin off groups, such as Frome Renewable Energy Cooperative (FRECo) or Frome Cohousing (issues that are discussed further in section 11.1.2). When some earlier members of Sustainable Frome began to engage more in local politics and became IFF councillors one respondent raised the question of a transference of deeply felt concern into ‘political’ spaces, which is explored in the rest of the findings chapters.

However, the Transition movement remained an important influence where one non-Transitioner²³⁷ suggested that Totnes (the town that pioneered the Transition movement) “shares our general philosophy on, on the way that town should develop in the future” (FTC representative). When asked why Sustainable Frome looked to Transition Network and whether it was because it was like the “Jerusalem” for Transition Initiatives, one Sustainable Frome director responded that Totnes was the go-to place for guidance as a member of Transition and also due to its relative proximity to Frome in the South West of England:

²³⁶ Although one respondent queried whether the Heart and Soul group would have used this discourse, given that Sustainable Frome tends to attract alternative non-denominational spiritual practices rather than formal religious denominations (although the two are of course not mutually exclusive),

²³⁷ I.e. someone who is not part of the *Transition* movement.

“And from time to time if we want, if people in Frome want **any sort of guidance** or they're interested in how other people do this, **Totnes is the place that they would go to**. Erm, partly because **it is like Jerusalem** and partly because **it's not that far away either.**” (Sustainable Frome member).

6.4 Chapter conclusion

This chapter explored how the socio-cultural context of Frome influenced the form and character of its placemaking networks. It has outlined how the core concepts of independence, spatial setting and affective ties within Frome's alternative, relocalised placemaking networks created a strong environmental nucleus in the town – consolidated by the framing and action of specific individuals supporting a relocalised agenda. Notably, Frome's identity was considered to filter the type of person attracted to the town and was thus attributed with a form of spatial agency with an inherent “DNA”, as perceived by some relocalised respondents. The identity of *independence* was a strong meta-identity for a number of individuals, the town's own identity and its historical – and future – role as a self-sufficient market town, and the relative independence of Sustainable Frome from Transition Network. IfF were perceived to reflect – and cultivate – such an identity that was not previously reflected by political actors and FTC. Sustainable Frome was highlighted as a vital organisation that corralled relocalised ideas, actors, interests and friendships in a safe space that also encouraged role transitions – to varying degrees – for those who engaged with it from more ‘mainstream’ arenas. However, its relative openness, shaped by a broad definition of ‘sustainability’ and its role of a talking shop was also seen as a weakness. The next chapter explores which strategies and forms of power relocalised actors advanced and utilised – or not – when IfF won power in 2011 to consolidate a non-party political approach into the administrative functions of the town council.

7 Navigating the politics of subversive localism, a): transitioning from placemaking into the spheres of local government

This chapter relates to the second research question: *RQ.2 To what extent do 'niche' actors advance their objectives when they occupy formal spaces of government 'regimes'?*

This chapter is structured around three themes (4-6):

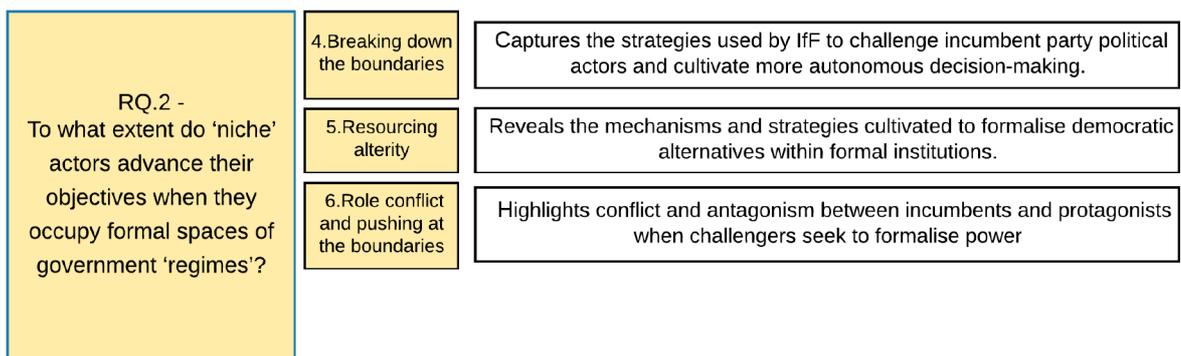


Figure 7-1. Chapter 7: thematic codes and description

The chapter starts with charts the rise of lff as a non-[party] political entity and the governance of its underlying approach to the occupation of power in an attempt to reconfigure FTC's governance to challenge incumbents and seek to create more autonomous decision-making. In particular, Frome's Community Plan and Sustainable Frome shaped the pathways for lff actors to capitalise on extant community preferences for localised initiatives. The combination of regime insights (i.e. how to navigate formal institutions), a politically diverse and locally-focused decision-making and the newness of the councillors help to shape an ambitious political agenda that sought to rid the administrative functions of negativity and facilitate changemakers in the community to play a greater role in placemaking. However, lff's approach was not without conflict once it came to power, particularly with party political actors.

There were several instances of internal role conflict when lff took power and in the performance of roles in the town council. In particular, FTC staff (as civil servants) felt compromised in their ability to publicly support lff while some town councillors felt conflicted owing to multiple commitments. Most significantly, lff experienced party-political differences that affected degrees of cooperation with established political groups, which eventually caused a disparity between them which could not be bridged (with minor exceptions). Moreover, an historical conflict between FTC and MDC and the difference in the perceptions of lff (as skilled protagonists) and the district council (as party-political 'dinosaurs') caused a high degree of othering which affected the potential for the two tiers of government to work within a shared agenda for Frome.

7.1 Theme 4 - Breaking down the boundaries

Crucially, the role of Transition Network's steps to transition in forging a link to the town council was one of the key bridges from working within *Transition* to occupying government spaces, as one of the steps they had not completed (c.2010) was making a link to the local council²³⁸:

"[S]o, through Transition ... we were talking about those steps and one of them was about forming a link, having a link with the council. And we didn't have one particularly, so I said I would take that on... And it was written, within their strategy was sustainability and maintain the parks kind of thing ... I was a bit more ambitious than that." (lff councillor).

Frome's diverse array of local groups was felt by one respondent to be challenging for both the coordination and delivery of the Community Plan, which contrasted with smaller towns so that the size of Frome and the diffused nature of its placemaking networks affected the delivery mechanism of the plan; there was no overall control, exacerbated by the lack of ownership by FTC. This meant that lff could capitalise on the plan for its own political ends (Local group representative). When the Community Plan was taken to the incumbent FTC there was "zero response" and a lack of thanks to those who developed it; a representative from the plan's

²³⁸ See Appendix C – The 12 steps (ingredients) to Transition.

Management Group was shunned when they presented it – partly due to a lack of (party political) ownership as it was perceived as someone's "pet project":

"And [they] were really shocked by that... [key people were] kind of disgusted by the whole, by the sort of like whoa this is just ridiculous." (lff councillor).

Another incident of chaotic and un-inclusive local politics was at a meeting to discuss the proposed FTC takeover of the Cheese and Grain in 2010. At this meeting, the public were deemed to be actively disqualified and excluded from voicing their concerns and it was perceived to descend into chaos. This activated an interest in some of those present to get more actively engaged to challenge the town council's approach.

*"The main thing was **they handled it incredibly badly**, so they handled **in true traditional style**... And **people, the public were sort of saying 'hang on, hang on, hang on, you've got no experience of running a major music event' or whatever it was. And the Chair told people to shut up and sit down. And it sort of broke up in chaos. But there were suddenly a lot of people who had never been to a council meeting or anything to do with it, who suddenly thought **shit, that's dysfunctional**. And were then - and were also **genuinely worried about what might happen to the Cheese and Grain**, but more were thinking whoa, what a mess...** And so, you know, it was just that feeling of 'well, **we could do better**'." (lff councillor).*

In tandem, FTC's governance was deemed as "murky" - the allocation of grant monies was considered subjective and there were a lack of checks and balances in FTC's governance (including requiring only two participants to be quorate). Some FTC councillors were witnessed to be asleep on the job:

"There was one guy who went to sleep at meetings and didn't help at all." (lff councillor).

One lff protagonist, Mel Usher, had worked at a strategic level within local government and had key skills and insights of the forthcoming localism agenda.²³⁹ This was seized on as a means to provoke subversive politics and challenge the incumbent (dysfunctional) party-political politics within FTC – indicating a cross-over between lff's protagonist agenda and Usher's 'regime' knowledge (i.e. formal institutional knowledge within a Local Authority as well as other national level policy circles). Moreover, a sense of optimism and change was encouraged by a sense of

²³⁹ Usher had also been involved in V4F as Chair. See section 5.3.3.

goodwill among Frome's placemaking networks that contrasted to "disenchantment" with other tiers of government.

"And [Usher] also had good contacts in government and so knew that localism was about to happen. At that point, the Big Society and localism looked really exciting. It looked like there was going to be masses of stuff - because there wasn't any meat on the bones in the sense of it was just the principle of, erm, devolving lots of power to local level. To the lowest level. So, he sort of felt there's masses of potential, there's a really dysfunctional council, why don't we really see if we can stir this up? There's an election in a few months, and erm, and see what we could do... we were offering something that was different, trying to appeal to the, a feeling that party politics doesn't work and so on..." (IfF councillor).

"I also think that, um, the...the town council came with an awful lot of goodwill, because they were all people who lived in the town, and so many people did know of them, um, because many people in Frome had become very disenchanted with the district council – whether that's justified or not, that's the view that people took...Um, so they-they-they came in with a lot of goodwill, um, and I don't think they've lost that goodwill." (Local group representative).

This meeting about the Cheese and Grain led to the two co-initiators of IfF – Macfadyen and Usher - with others who attended, to meet informally at a pub²⁴⁰ after the event to explore what they could do to challenge FTC, which was the initiating point for IfF. The informal space of a pub also helped to stimulate more adventurous placemaking and to address a perceived lack of representation of the voice of Frome in FTC:

"[Immediately after the FTC meeting] by then there was a bigger group of people, who met - there were 5 or 6 I suppose - who had come together in a pub. And had basically drunk too much and said let's, let's, let's look at whether we could get far more people voting because there were loads of wards in Frome where people hadn't voted for years. So, there weren't enough councillors." (IfF councillor).

²⁴⁰ As already mentioned in section 6.3, this was the same pub Sustainable Frome was conceived in.

Figure 7-2. *I'm For Frome* slogan used by IfF in the 2015 election campaign (IfF, 2015).

IfF offered a highly localised political approach – as indicated in the slogan *I'm For Frome* in the 2015 election - where “what we said is that if you lived in a ward you stood in that ward” (IfF councillor). The decision to hold a meeting to discuss a new breed of (non-partisan) town council candidates standing in the next election was popular, attracting 80 people who “couldn't fit in the room” (IfF councillor). In contrast to FTC, the creation of IfF was rooted in an emergent process that challenged its own processes, with a selection committee that formed on the night of IfF's candidate selection process. This included perceiving gender inequalities from the outset and encouraging women to “step up to the plate” (IfF councillor) and being responsive to the task in hand where roles were spontaneously allocated for those who wanted to stand or who preferred a support function (IfF councillor).²⁴¹

As an independent group, IfF's non-party-political approach aimed to encourage representation across the political spectrum, united by a commitment to making Frome as good as it could be. IfF's councillors, despite many having ties to Sustainable Frome (see Table 5-1) had a mix of party-political views “across the political spectrum and there was and still is that complete range” (IfF councillor). Such diversity was considered by IfF respondents to help create a richer and more balanced approach to local politics. A range of different role boundaries and political views was highlighted, including a “bar room politician”, a local builder who was considered to bring an “earthliness” to the role of local government (IfF councillor), as well as those who represented green and relocalised views, those who could fulfil strategic and 'political' roles, or who challenged the “gloss” of IfF's politics (Local group representative). This diversity and the personalities of those involved was felt to encourage innovation, which IfF were keen to formalise in the management of role transitions:

²⁴¹ See Macfadyen (2014) for expectations of 2011 IfF councillors and their anticipated contribution to placemaking. In 2015, IfF attracted a number of interested candidates to stand, indicating how their politics had encouraged people to take a more active approach to political placemaking in Frome since they took office. IfF were hopeful to diversity of the candidates to include more women and younger representatives as “not middle class me.” (IfF councillor).

“Obviously, what makes it different is that we are a group of extremely...*a-a really varied group* who, you know, the-the political, sort of, persuasions of us all are-are very different. You know, we...you know, from-from Tory way through to radical left, I suspect. And, um, but that *we’ve come together with a very clear purpose, which is to make Frome the very best place it can be*. So, you know, it’s-that’s-that’s a big difference, and that’s very clear in-in the way they set it up four years ago.” (IfF councillor).

“Because different people will bring different ideas and I think it’s healthy really, as that will lead to something really innovative...I think that the personalities that make up that party [sic] are what’s really interesting as well. It is that *they are really progressive and listening and interested people, that’s why [IfF] will work*.” (Consultant).

“Because [new candidates are] gonna bring a whole *breath of fresh air to everything*, because *they’ve got different skills* that we maybe we didn’t have... I don’t think any of us will stand more than two terms, [intake of breath] because *we want to keep freshness of bringing new people in - and having, having that transition of some [taps table once] people who’ve done it once with some people who a totally new*. Because I think that all - that will keep it fresh. And it will *stop any kind of egomaniacs taking over*, which you see happening in other parties [laughs]. They just kind of assume a role and that’s their role, and they feel that that it should not be *challenged*, so. We don’t become like that.” (IfF councillor).



Figure 7-3. Image of 2015 councillors election campaign video (IfF, 2015)²⁴²

²⁴² All of these candidates were elected in a full house win. Reproduced with the kind permission of IfF.

One respondent suggested lff awoke a sense of civic duty that could only be applied in Frome with a particular group of people:

"I don't want to be a [short pause] councillor anywhere else. You know, I just want to be a councillor here, doing stuff with [short pause] a really interesting group of people [short pause] for a great town." (lff councillor).

Since many lff councillors had not previously occupied roles with local government, or within FTC at least, this newness to the role of town councillor enabled a more open approach to how lff councillors would approach town council politics. If they had worked within local government these new councillors were using lff to push the envelope on what the town council could achieve. lff used the relatively recently completed Community Plan as a fortuitous "de facto" manifesto which highlighted lff's priorities should they win power, and which later informed FTC's Strategy for Success 2011-2014, in part because of the personal energy that Macfadyen and others in Sustainable Frome had contributed to the plan.

"[A]s a group of independents who haven't seen what's there and haven't seen the staff, we felt - and don't know what the issues are - we felt we couldn't say what we were going to do. If you see what I mean, because - how can you?... But you don't get to see what's going on until you're in power. So anyway, so we didn't - we couldn't have a manifesto really... And so, we did approach this differently by really saying, well what we offer you is change and activity - rather than saying 'we will do this.'" (lff councillor).

The characteristics of lff councillors were considered unusual, who didn't confirm with a "typical" town councillor role in a party-political sense" (lff councillor). Indeed, one national level actor indicated there is a certain "type" of person who is attracted to independent politics:

"People kind of have [hesitates] just a slight reaction, you know, negative reaction because we've all got a little bit of the contrarian about us [smiles]." (lff councillor).

"I have to admit there is bit of a character, and it's not usually hard to spot, which party a councillor is in. Erm yeah, that's right, there is a bit of a character." (National independent political actor).

Upon taking office in 2011, one lff councillor suggested that, at first, FTC roles were enforced on people based on their previous experience and individuals were often pigeon-holed without

consent or knowledge of what these roles entail. lff's newness gave it an entry point into role transitions and a crucial part of their *modus operandus* is the breaking down of (political and administrative) role assumptions. FTC, under lff, was considered to enable greater participation and ownership of local politics and to create a culture of empowerment within government.²⁴³ lff transferred open and reciprocal qualities - like Sustainable Frome's governance - into its own procedures when it took office.

*"[T]hey have tried very hard to engage people and consult people about things... **contrasting with decisions being made in smoke-filled rooms, or through no identifiable processes**, which meant **that even if people have not got their own way**, they can see that they've been...**their- their views have been considered**, and in most cases **there's a reason why things have been done.**" (Local group representative).*

With the lack of any formal political ideology apart from a strongly Frome-orientated approach, lff used the Ways of Working to cultivate less adversarial governance within FTC and to enable greater autonomy for lff councillors to act in the interests of Frome in their decision-making. The WoW²⁴⁴ became rules - a foundation for positive relationships - in place of a party whip without the party political "mould" (National independent political actor)²⁴⁵, rules that encouraged formalised alterity within the state. These rules were described as a deep moment of coming together, akin to brethren with deep connective roots that respect one another's difference.

*"[We sought to to] Introduce some of the ways of behaving which we feel are so important, which are essentially around erm, kind of a way **a well-functioning family** would." (lff councillor).*

*"I don't know how that - I mean it just shows how, how corrosive that corrosive that kind of stuff is, because actually what **you want is debate that [pause] erm [tuts] enlightens you**, you know that you, it brings out different ideas - you don't want everyone to agree, I mean, within lff we don't all agree, but we, **we're respectful of each other's opinions**. And so that leads to really interesting outcomes, 'coz you can let go of something you've really held onto, and think*

²⁴³ For instance, lff removed formalities at FTC meetings to open the floor to the participants (within reason and with "strict chaireing" (lff councillor), rather than being restricted to two-minute windows of contribution (sometimes pre-approved) - as is typical of many councils.

²⁴⁴ See Appendix M - The Independents for Frome Ways of Working.

²⁴⁵ The WoW also extends into informal spaces and personal relationships, who agree to move on if they lose a vote. The WoW later became formalised further in 2015 in the FTC standing orders - permanent written rules under which the town council regulates its proceedings.

actually that is, your idea is better. Yeah, I admit, I like my idea but yours is better. You know that, that's quite a liberating, erm, position to take actually. Very interesting. (lF councillor).

*"[After a controversial vote within FTC] ...we all went and had a drink and he sort of said, oh you bastards you all shafted me, who wants a drink? You know, it's kind of like so, and actually we will all go off for a final party conference erm in some place [e.g. a pub], which has been a really important part of staying together. ... I'm really surprised in some ways but that has stacked up. And who knows with another bunch of people, er whether it would have done? But it doesn't - I don't think it works without that. I mean **you have to have those rules**. And we never signed them or anything, we just kind of agreed. And we had some joke - and when we'd written them and agreed there was some sort of jokey moment of somebody said right, **this is where we all slit our wrists and then share blood**, which was kind of like a moment of erm, well we didn't do it, but we couldn't have done (laughs), if you see what I mean (laughs). Maybe not slit our wrists but you know, **pricked our finger**." (lF councillor).*

lF also actively sought to break down the perceived negative cycles in their administrative roles; encouraging people to instinctively respond positively (saying yes) to create a culture of spontaneous and positive action and to end the practice of distinct role boundaries and negative thinking to release energy out of administrative functions. This distinct working culture was also seen as a reason for being able to attract high calibre staff to work at a lower level of government than they would otherwise, owing to a high number of staff²⁴⁶ and councillor experience, often at senior levels. FTC was considered to have a degree of freedom to create roles because the powers of the town council were often not matched to formal statutory (regime) responsibilities, such as being the LPA.

*"They would never have come and worked for a council. Because **we give them far more, erm, responsibility**, I suppose. **And far more say in what they're doing**. And, but there's a sort of whole attempt to get people to say yes rather than no. Because councils, you know - it was a nightmare. Whatever you wanted the answer was no, it's not us, it's the district [council]. Well, can you tell me the number of the district? No sorry, you'll have to look it up on the website, or whatever. It was kind of, oh I don't know. **The whole thing was so kind of run down and negative and difficult and oh God, and so we've pushed and pushed and pushed to***

²⁴⁶ In 2015 there were 8 FTC staff members. The current figure is currently 25 (https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/officer_category/staff/, as of 6.6.19) – which respectfully includes two cleaners in the staff list.

have people's instinctive answer to be yes... I'll help you to do that. But it's been a bit of a struggle to do that." (IfF councillor).

Indeed, IfF's culture was deemed to be able to "seep into" FTC role holders, indicating the institutionalisation of group dynamics – which was a characteristic of the regime – although directed towards more "positive" ends. However, some respondents actively projected a community-orientated identity whilst other took a more guarded approach, establishing clear boundaries between formal and informal ties.

7.2 Theme 5 – Resourcing alterity

The resourcing of key strategic functions – a "supplementing" of FTC staff - meant they collectively reflected the different pillars of 'sustainability',²⁴⁷ with the additive feature of IfF's (non-party) political approach orchestrating them together to reinforce different skills sets towards a more holistic sustainable approach. This also meant that key more commercially-minded individuals could approach FTC with a shared understanding so that working towards relocalisation was symbiotic with a delineation of roles to achieve mutual outcomes within FTC and across broader placemaking networks:

*"I'd always, I'd always - known the town council, erm, but when [FTC] bought [the Employment and Regeneration Manager] in specifically to focus on economic regeneration that had being impact, because then **there was somebody - I had a kind of equal that I could talk to and everything I wanted to talk about he was interested in**. So, made it very easy, erm, that, that was **really enlightened**...they've sort of said **these are really strategically important, so we're going to dedicate resource to that**. That made my life an awful lot easier. It just meant that, you know, **whatever I was interested in talking about there was somebody who was gonna help with that**." (Local group representative).*

The common objectives to support relocalisation meant that there was a degree of openness and reciprocity to enable a rapid understanding and diffusion of shared and mutual agendas to push

²⁴⁷ For instance, the Economic and Development and Regeneration Manager and the Resilience Manager (formerly the Recycling and Waste Officer).

without resistance in some pockets of Frome's transition arenas (namely, up until the point any initiatives required being worked into planning).

Having a backstop was considered to ensure the continuation of activities through different roles or to give support to more junior staff in the face of pressures from others around process.²⁴⁸ A backstop on sustainability issues meant that a role for advancing green issues became distributed within FTC, lff and with shared links to Sustainable Frome, who were seen as a “sounding board” for green ideas, which encouraged momentum on bold placemaking issues, such the claim in 2016 to become a fossil fuel free town by 2046.

“[At least three people are necessary] to be able to do pincer movements or to be able to somehow work their way through a bureaucracy and through a system to put on pressure to get change within the system.” (Sustainable Frome member).

“[Having the Resilience Officer maintains] momentum [on green issues] ...it's not like everything just grinds to a halt.” (Sustainable Frome member).

lff saw its role to bring forth the latent skills that have been excluded by politics, planning and the state to create space for others to deliver (i.e. a conscious withdrawal);²⁴⁹ FTC's governance and culture was felt to cultivate a community-led enabling philosophy for FTC staff to demonstrating leadership in community initiatives and link actors with new ideas to government or securing materials and resources on behalf of local actors.²⁵⁰ FTC's governance and culture encourages previous (regime) professional skills and insights to be channelled within a community-led enabler philosophy for FTC role holders. (Although one respondent indicated that the decision to be step up FTC's participation agenda was taken by senior staff or councillors (FTC representative).

As a government entity, FTC considered itself to have regime-like qualities, or slow moving due to the administrative burdens of the state which placed restrictions on the fluidity of lff's governance. As such, FTC sought partnership with active champions/changemakers outside of formal institutions, working symbiotically, particularly where different forms of accountability can be strategically redirected for mutual outcomes. Alignment between public and private role boundaries was also considered to help generate momentum for relocalisation: by working with

²⁴⁸ Although the Energy and Waste (now Resilience) Officer was not directly involved in planning at the time of the interview.

²⁴⁹ And encourage other communities to self-replicate the Flatpack Democracy model, discussed more in section 11.2.2.1.

²⁵⁰ Including FTC's support for the Cheese and Grain or engaging with MDC in support of the Frome Independent.

the “doers” of the town in partnership this was felt to expedite change and build momentum for further change, because individuals and local government have different expectations of what “accountability” means. As a private individual, positioned outside of government, this gave them more leverage to push the boundaries and not comply as much to regime rules as FTC would have likely been more tied to.

*“I just think that, you know, **fresh blood with fresh ideas is a good thing.** And erm, **those people should be embraced.** There's lots of people who have really great ideas, **and they're really kind of pushing to get stuff done,** and I think they should be encouraged. And I **think the role of a town council, really, is sort of to do that; to latch onto the people - the doers, the people who've got the ideas and the energy, and the commitment, and kind of encourage them.** Because, with the best will in the world, **town councils are quite slow-moving... they're accountable in a different way to individual.** So [intake of breath] if you can help facilitate individuals to do more stuff, than actually get stuff done more quickly, I think, than if you go to the traditional council process... **we cut lots of corners...** which the town council would never have got away with... So, [swallows] **we just did it. And then, once you've got some momentum.... And then perhaps you get away with a little bit more.** Because I think I get away with stuff now that I couldn't imagine I would have got away with seven years ago. Erm, [slight pause] and so, **and I feel I have an obligation to use that [laughs] position to kind of push a little bit harder, all the time.**” (Local group representative).*

FTC's actions under lF were considered to be reconstituting the role of the town council in Frome and having a positive impact in the town by doing more of what people want (although this was often contested by party-political – notably Conservative – actors). lF's actions had also helped to appease some more critical voters and transcend party-political loyalties. Moreover, positive and concrete actions were deemed to elevate green issues as a win-win outcome, supported by government financial incentives like the Feed-in-Tariff (FiT)²⁵¹. These positive placemaking impacts were felt to reflect the spirit of the town and enlivened local politics:

*“I think that **people have just seen that stuff gets done, they just do things, which is just unheard of.** Most just think that town councils are responsible for dog poo and bus shelters. And, and beyond that, you know, they have no impact. And suddenly people have seen that **the town council has done really strategic things like buy strategic landholdings, well, who the***

²⁵¹ A government programme to encourage investment in renewable energy by offering a financial incentive for any energy exported to the national grid and payments for on-site usage. The scheme originally offered high rates of return on a sliding scale until its closure in March 2019 for new applications. For more information see <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/fit/fit-tariff-rates> (last accessed 10.6.19).

*hell knew that they could even do that? And so, I think people are really **genuinely impressed with what they've done**...I could count on one hand the things that been done in **the previous administration**...I just wouldn't know what they've done. I don't think there's any evidence, **there's no visibility**. But where, where there is this time." (Local group representative).*

*"Yeah. Yeah so. But Mendip is cutting all the time. Whereas **Frome Town Council is expanding**...Well because **it's very local**." (Sustainable Frome member).*

*"And it's been very, the effects have been really positive for Frome. So, so **what's not to like?**" (lff councillor).*

*"But there's nothing which we've done that's 'green' in inverted commas that you wouldn't vote for actually... if you looked at the figures [investment] was going to be paid off in five years. And twenty years of pure profit. So, it's kind of like, **you can be as much of a climate denier as you like but you'd still do it**." (lff councillor).*

There was a sense that lff's newness within the structures of the state gave them confidence to take bold action, such as borrowing money or raising the precept, and to fund strategic initiatives such as investing in solar panels (encouraged by the FiT) on the Cheese and Grain, purchasing land on Saxonvale and the new council offices.²⁵² Having confidence was also felt to be essential to perform a role above the parapet, particularly for women, or for being able to "speak the same language" to incite more strategic political or placemaking decision-making:

*"[P]art of my role is actually having that dialogue with landowners. Being able, if you like, **being able to speak the same language** because I understand the way that they think and the way, and that the way that they act. Erm, and, er, I think that kind of background... and the **confidence** to be able to go and speak to a landowner or developer or a, or a business about what might happen is, erm, **half the battle** really isn't it?" (FTC representative).*

However, some lff initiatives, at times, were carried out in a surreptitious way highlighting how FTC supplements its own governance by formalising informal channels or by not being explicit about some actions. For instance, FTC had resourced other channels to engage everyday citizens (including younger people) through the sub-entity of FTC Participate Frome, which has its own

²⁵² See <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-business/frome-town-hall/> (last accessed 6.6.19).

Facebook group and is used for wider participation on key issues so as to not overtly be perceived as the council.

*"Participate Frome is really good because by giving it its own brand, people felt more able to engage because **they didn't feel like it was the town council** [whispers]." (IfF councillor).*

"[I]t's good that people will happily pay the extra precept, you know they're not complaining about it. But it's also not brought to their attention either. So, some people just pay it and don't look at the breakdown." (Sustainable Frome member).

As well as 'newness', FTC was also able to latch onto extant agendas in Frome's placemaking networks, where in some cases the principles of action had already debated and agreed.²⁵³ Meanwhile, the longevity of ideas and the presence of Sustainable Frome over time was deemed to help fuse Frome's green, independent alterity to Transition's. IfF's use of the Community Plan to inform the Strategy of Success, and the follow through of engagement processes, was deemed to be partly down to "luck", which then gave FTC organisational and public buy-in for the resourcing of strategic functions within FTC to deliver on greener, more participatory and localised objectives. Crucially, the Community Plan was a key bedrock to inform NDP objectives and policies.

*"[I]t was only - it was only when it sort of came out in IfF's policy I thought oh blimey this is all really green and the kind of things I would agree with. And then I sort of thought, hang on a minute they came from Vision4Frome, oh wait a minute that all came from Sustainable Frome. So, it's kind of, there was a kind of, that wasn't a deliberate Machiavellian plot... **Because a lot of what's now in Frome has effectively come from all that stuff**... There's a degree of luck in that..." (IfF councillor).*

*"I think [transition and planning are] linked. And we've very overtly linked them in the NDP. So, there's lots of bits in there that link across, because **there have been a number of people who have been involved in both**... But I think all these things will link up in the end. And it could be incredibly important. It has had lots of connection into the thinking of Transition, even if people don't realise that. I don't mean that in a subterfuge way, it's just that*

²⁵³ For instance, one respondent said they found a plan dated back to 1980 where Somerset County Council committed to the pedestrian prioritisation in the marketplace (a policy in the NDP) (Local group representative), indicating the longevity of the idea.

Sustainable Frome has been around in Frome for 8-10 years, so that thinking meetings around those kinds of issues - they've been around in the air for a long time.” (IfF councillor).

“You know, we were able to justify a lot more of the green stuff, sort of employing the Energy and Waste Officer [now Resilience Officer] er, and a lot of those kind of things because you know that's what the people want. Or said they wanted [in the Community Plan].” (IfF councillor).

*“[They're] not new ideas, but they're ideas which the town council is, um, showing some real prospect of happening, um, and therefore, **people who've been through the process of thinking about, are they a good idea or not, they've been identified and thought about before;** they've been put forward in the-in the Vision4Frome consultation, and therefore, **the-the principle of doing them is already established.**” (Local group representative).*

The next section and the following chapter explore in more detail the political fallout of IfF's approach on the incumbent FTC and MDC in the 2011-2015 administration.

7.3 Theme 6 – Role conflict and pushing at the boundaries

IfF councillors experienced role conflict relating to the newness in their roles as challengers to incumbents, i.e. the local political regime - with other party political town councillors, the planning regime (the LPA) and MDC as a higher tier of government.²⁵⁴ Moreover, the Community Plan was considered to be endowed with “quite a lot of antagonism right from the start” due to political differences within the Management Group, which meant two members “reached a point where neither of them could speak to each other” (IfF councillor).²⁵⁵

Upon winning power in 2011, a new and progressive philosophy led to role conflict between incumbent FTC staff and IfF; indeed, one senior FTC member of staff was recounted as seeking to

²⁵⁴ The term 'regime' is used throughout the findings chapters as per the definition of the regime set out in section 2.1. However, it is recognised the term is open to re-interpretation in the discussion chapter.

²⁵⁵ However, upon respondent review of this section one interviewee was keen to qualify that those initiating the early phases of the Community Plan process were keen for it to be as community-driven, rather than party-politically driven and it was only later into the process that party-political representatives became involved in the plan's development.

“protect” Frome from IFF. Some staff left the council after a year, prompted partly through strategic governance decisions.

There was a level of political complexity in how non-partisan FTC officers communicated IFF's philosophy within a formal civil service role; similarly, another previous formal senior regime role occupant described how they were “politically restricted” in an LPA. An FTC officer suggested that under IFF, FTC were using business principles towards realising new forms of socio-economic and political innovation which helped to frame IFF's politics in non-partisan terms:

*“We’ve got to be very careful as officers to erm, [pause] to **be non-political**. so, it’s demonstrating what has actually happened on the ground as a way of getting the message across that this is, this is the approach people should take... it is also about **applying basic business principles, erm, playing to your strengths**.” (FTC representative).*

No IFF councillors were retired, and many continued to work alongside their town council duties. However, there were concerns of some potential ‘working-class’ candidates about childcare costs and becoming a town councillor (IFF councillor). Some others felt the pressures of working whilst self-employed were too much on top of their existing commitments. Indeed, one respondent said that their experience of being self-employed was “isolating” and they were personally unable to engage in cross-fertilisation of knowledge, such as conferences that others with more time and resources could engage with and they had to leave paid staff to carry out tasks they would like to be involved with themselves. This withdrawal contributed to a feeling that more influential councillors took a more active role in steering key decisions so that within IFF there were pockets of power that were not always transparent.

IFF's approach to cultivating political diversity and seeking a more informal and fun approach to governing was in marked contrast to party politics, which IFF perceived as being highly politicised and corrosive.²⁵⁶ The structures of party politics were considered to be replicated by the adversarial Westminster political model that filtered down to the local level and obfuscated a more collaborative approach to local politics. For instance, IFF experienced a wariness of progressive and green views, which some (mainly Conservative) actors suggested undermined the interests of the “silent majority” of working-class members of society (Local group representative). The party-political dimension was considered to affect relationships within

²⁵⁶ It is important to note that no 2011 FTC party-political councillors that were on Frome's NDP steering group responded positively to a request for interview; as such their views are not represented here about the corrosive nature of party politics.

government by creating an “inward energy” rather than a more outward and locally-focused shared placemaking agenda, where party politics takes priority over action or the “facts of the matter” (National independent political actor).

“[I]t was, we felt quite euphoric about [working with party political councillors in 2011], [intake of breath] but what, I, I guess what we weren't expecting was that you have to come, overcome a big hump of people's loyalties to major parties... things are very [pause] party-political for some people. And it's the whole thing we faced when we got elected, I thought 'hey we are all elected, you know, you Conservatives, you Lib Dems, us, we've all been elected - great. Let's work together.' And they didn't, **they see themselves as the opposition, they modelled themselves on Westminster. Really tiresome.** I mean it's calmed down in the last couple of years... I mean I always think that politics should work like this: so like, right get, get the person from no matter what party they are who knows a lot about sport to look at leisure facilities, you know. Get the person [taps the table four times] who knows a lot about planning to, [hesitates] oversee planning... But they don't work like that - **they form a little cabinet and then divvy up the jobs for the [short pause] people in their party.**” (IfF councillor).

“At the moment [party-political town councillors], or one in particular, still behave as if it's parliamentary question time. **She would cast it as her role to sort of bring up things.**... And er, it's so silly because we're all volunteers. **That then makes a different atmosphere on things, makes them confrontational.** You know, when **actually it could be quite fun.**” (IfF councillor).

“[W]hat I find is that with so many places there is a party-political dimension to local politics. That just **focuses a lot of energy inwardly rather than kind of outward.**” (Consultant).

The political regime was constrained in its “infection” of personal autonomy with party-political positions, which was considered a key constraint in cultivating a more emergent politics by conditioning relationships with others:

“[But] we hadn't calculated on the erm, the extent to which the **party politics appears to be like a virus, so once you're infected with it you can't get rid of it**” (IfF councillor).

“And I just thought how, what an awful position to put someone in. It shouldn't, it shouldn't be like that, you know, **you should be absolutely allowed to express your genuine opinion.** [Pause] I don't think [national level politics] will change anytime soon.” (IfF councillor).

“...On the one hand he's having to say you've done everything that I wanted and on the other hand I don't like you because you're not Tory [laughs]. You know, because his ideology is very important to him...For me, **it's completely tainted by, by being infected with Torian**²⁵⁷. I mean, he just can't let that go.” (IfF councillor).

Meanwhile, despite multiple membership being perceived as a positive orchestration of transition governance by respondents (see section 10), this was not always perceived to play a positive role when employed by party-political role occupiers, who were considered to be motivated by perverse financial incentives to attend MDC meetings rather than FTC meetings, particularly when a controversial decision was taking place. IfF actors felt that perverse financial incentives affected representation of councillors who had a dual role in FTC and MDC and distorted the priorities of party-political actors to support the interests of Frome. Moreover, despite appealing to a number of political ideologies, the strong sense of othering and role boundaries affected degrees of support and collaboration between IfF and party-political councillors:

“Erm, and there's a lot of kind of **show voting** from some other Lib Dem councillors who sit on both levels. But they don't actually, they don't, they don't bring any value to that dual role. In fact, I think a lot of the time they use it as an excuse to not attend town council meetings, where they'd be very much in the public eye [intake of breath] when something controversial has to be voted on. They'll just say, 'Oh, I was at a licensing meeting in Mendip'. So, what? You know, that's not very relevant for what's happening in Frome. They are **completely [pause] unhelpful**... they kind of go on and on about how they wear two hats and isn't it great. But **they don't do anything**.” (IfF councillor).

“There's almost nothing that we've done that I can see, over the last four years, at all really to **piss people off**. I mean because it's all basically Cons[ervative]- and of course often we've done, because we don't have that ideology, we've done things which are Tory if you like. We've done things which are Labour. So Fair Frome is sort of **classically socialist**. Erm, borrowing money, or sorting out the Cheese and Grain and turning it into a viable er, business is **classically Tory**. And we've put in place **a whole load of stuff which is really localism**. I mean, it's absolutely Tory policy. Erm, but that - they don't seem able to see that. **The point is we're not them**. And that is one of the things that's absolutely surprised me most is **being not them is more important**... - **we will get labelled as loony left because of our, because of doing things like Fair Frome**.” (IfF councillor).

²⁵⁷ The respondent's phrase for someone who has wholeheartedly embodied a Conservative (Tory) philosophy and party political line.

There was an assumption that party politics itself infects government with the “machinations” of politics (implying conspiracies and strategies of control and domination). ‘Political’ differences among town councillors meant that party-political actors disengaged from lff initiatives within FTC. Some political actors were felt to not turn up to NDP steering meetings (although this was also the case for some lff councillors) which affected the structures of the NDP process and FTC governance in general which perpetuated divisions in the town:

“[I]t's the non-lffers don't turn up [to NDP steering group meetings].” (lff councillor).

“[We've] suffered from having seven councillors who have effectively done nothing for the last four years.” (lff councillor).

*“Well they just don't come to anything, they don't come to meetings, they don't engage. If they do come **they just sort of sit there looking grumpy**. That's just a waste of time, it's a waste of their time. I don't understand why we did - we did try really, really hard - inviting them to meetings, inviting them to social meetings, you know. We went to great lengths, but as I say, it felt like they were so shocked and pissed off and they didn't expect this to happen. It couldn't, do that. **And after a while we got bored of asking them. And so, so it just hasn't happened...** I think it's still absolutely clear that **they would rather have power than product**, if you see what I mean. So, they continue niggling away [drawn out away].” (lff councillor).*

7.4 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored lff's route to power and the skills and experiences of those involved in a journey to take administrative control reconfigure the governance of the town council, as well as the key party-political challenges in doing. The chapter has explored the extent lff were able to re-fashion the governance of FTC towards more progressive and emergent governance processes. lff invoked administrative dysfunctionality to imagine (better) alternatives to local democracy and “stir things up” as a strategy for niche resistance. The national (landscape) sentiment that party politics didn't work was a more-than-local issue that could be invoked together with a very pro-Frome, local identity agenda towards a niche-orientated challenge, which enabled new constellations of local political actors to cluster and challenge incumbent power. By

challenging the role assumptions of town councillors and FTC staff and enrolling a group of people with radical intentions, emphasising diversity and respect, the antagonistic framework of party politics was broken down. There was a sense that lff's newness within the structures of the state gave them confidence to take bold action, thus emphasising individuals' capacity to be confident arising from previous experience, which helped to advance FTC's position in "battles" with vested interests. Moreover, by strategically resourcing key functions within the town council this influenced the discursive parameters of lff's ambitions and the local rules of engagement for relocalised actors to dream new alternatives. However, this also created significant role conflict with incumbents, notably with MDC. The relationship between lff (FTC) and the *planning* regime and other tiers of government is more fully explored in the following chapters, which assesses the politics of using the NDP as a transition arena to address Frome's perceived development constraints by lff and other relocalised actors.

8 Navigating the politics of subversive localism b): ambition vs. rules in localism transition arenas

8.1 Theme 7 - Planning and the rules of engagement

This chapter is structured around one theme (7):

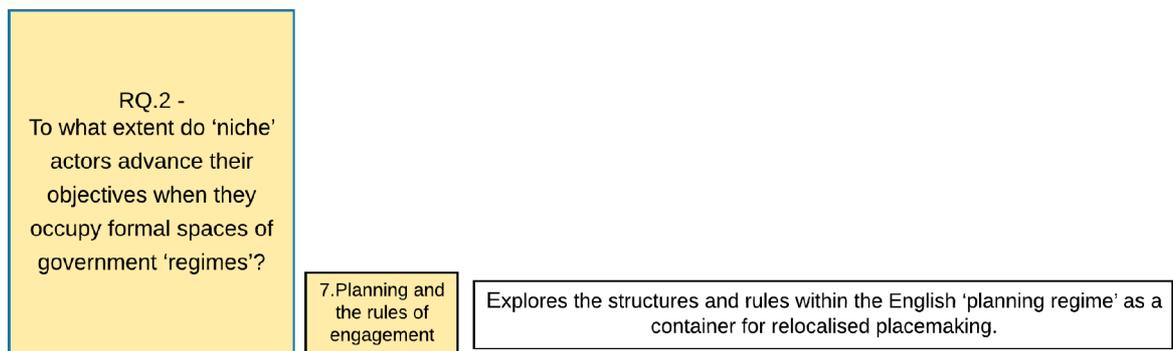


Figure 8-1. Chapter 8: thematic code and description

This chapter outlines Frome's development challenges and the relationship with relocalisation, planning and the development industry as well as Frome's potential response to these challenges, including a vision for Frome as a '21st Century Market Town' and the anticipated benefits of the localism agenda to deliver locally-led solutions. It explores the extent the rules of engagement within the English planning 'regime' affected the use of localism rights - including the NDP and exploring an NDO – and resisted, reconfigured or constrained relocalised ideas whereby the LPA and more 'grassroots', 'niche' elements interacted in these spaces. The findings highlight the role of planning in pushing out potential town centre employment sites and the protracted nature of planning decisions, compounded by the 'rules of the game' of the development industry and the formulaic approach to investment in sites. Notably, the role of the planning system was not felt to protect the perceived DNA of Frome.

8.1.1 Planning and the relocalised agenda

Planning was deemed a subjective arena which encouraged people to sit on different sides of the fence, creating both “winners and losers” (Local authority representative), or as one FTC respondent suggested “I think it depends on where you sit in the process as to how you plan really” (FTC representative). Planning was felt to elicit a personalised value conflict about how placemaking should reflect individual preferences on how they live their lives in the built environment, particularly on Saxonvale where there were tensions between the pro-supermarket group Frome for All and the relocalised group Keep Frome Local:

“So, you get this differing view about what people see as important in their lives. And you know, there is a bit of friction because of that.” (Local group representative).

There was a recurrent feeling by relocalised actors to create more “positive development” that demonstrated new development models that mirrored Frome’s green “DNA” (Consultant) and a perceived broad support and interest in development alternatives, such as co-housing and self-build (Sustainable Frome spin off group; Local group representative). Cohousing was felt to be a mechanism to deliver a more communitarian and purposeful liveability through shared spaces that cultivated a sense of community and reduced environmental impacts which helps to approach design issues “in a very different way” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

“[T]here's a very strong interest within people that either live in Frome or are interested in Frome. And the idea of co-housing here.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

A local entrepreneur had a positive vision for redefining the role of market towns for the 21st century, drawing on their historic roots to reverse patterns of out-commuting and encourage local economic multiplier effects. This was shared by FTC who wanted to future-proof the local economy and enable creative industries to thrive in the town:

*“[M]y model is very specifically about being town centred... Because it's not just about [short pause] the businesses in the building, but it's about economic regeneration of the town centre... I think that, **planning policy has actually gone completely against that**, over, you know, the last few decades. And we've got to really work on **how we re-work the economic model of market towns**. And I think the first bit of that it is **you've got to bring everything right back into the town centre** and reinvigorate the town centre.” (Local group representative).*

*“What we really want is somewhere inside near town that is, that actually provides **for start-up, new media, communications, businesses because that's what this place is all about**. And we can **get a spill over from Bath** then, people who can't afford the rents or don't want to live there or whatever because it's expensive. **That's the future.**” (IfF councillor).*

Moreover, for many respondents Saxonvale represented an opportunity to create a positive relocalised vision for the town and to question the assumption that a supermarket is a default preferred regeneration option. Saxonvale was perceived as a beacon of hope for relocalised development outcomes:

*“[W]hat we want is that site developed so that it actually benefits the town, not benefits some, um, developer to just make a load of money off, um, off having a-a big supermarket that pays people low wages and zero-hour contracts, and um, you know, [and then]... **fall apart in terms of the independent traders.**” (Sustainable Frome member).*

*“And we're saying nobody wants a superstore here. It's against everything we **stand for**... there's quite a lot of interesting people who've moved into this town... Small businesses that want to do things around sustainable energy. That's what we should be using them for.” (IfF councillor).*

*“[W]hat we need to do in Frome is **approach it in a different way**... I'd love to see this development funded by local people [laughs]... And could then **share in the profits of that development all the income that derives from that development over time**. **Why do we need financiers and developers to do that sort of thing?**”...by ex, **excluding the key landownerships of the big owners but the difficult owners we start to change the economics of the site.**” (Consultant).*

“[I]f we can't save Saxonvale then I fear for us, because that is such a wonderful opportunity to do something very different.” (Consultant).

The critical role of planning and the acquisition of a site to support development alternatives was suggested by a number of New Economy actors. One external respondent suggested that ownership was increasingly fundamental to realising *Transition* (relocalisation)²⁵⁸, which FTC was keen to facilitate:

²⁵⁸ In Frome, land ownership of a parcel of land along the river led to a partnership between Edventure and another local organisation to reskill unemployed people by building a shelter and improving a footpath, which could also be used

“Particularly in terms of communities owning assets. That, that is really emerging as a very strong aspect of Transition, that actually if you really want to do Transition with the scale of ambition that it deserves then er, then looking as a community to group to own assets is going to be a really important part of that, so planning will always have a role to play in that.”
 (External New Economy actor).

8.1.2 Experiences of the planning regime and its effects

Meanwhile, despite these ambitions for alternative development models, one IfF councillor suggested Frome was considered as a “growth town” by MDC in the Local Plan and there was significant contention around the level of development the town was expected to absorb (see Figure 8-2). As one respondent suggested:

“Well we've got more development in Frome than we can keep an eye on. I mean, we're full really (laughs).” (IfF councillor).

	Settlement	New homes 2006-2029	Annual target provision	% of the district requirement
Towns	Frome	2,300	105	25%
	Glastonbury	1,000	45	11%
	Shepton Mallet	1,300	60	14%
	Street	1,300	60	14%
	Wells	1,450	65	16%
Villages	16 Primary Villages, 13 Secondary and other Villages	1,780	80	20%
District	Additional requirement 2011 to 2029 as per 4.21 of the supporting text	505		
Total	Mendip District	9,635	420	100%

Figure 8-2. Housing supply trajectory targets up to 2029 as % of Mendip district requirement (MDC, 2014, p.40)

by a care home and local people. Thus providing community-led approach which enhanced well-being benefits for multiple local stakeholders (Local group representative).

There were clear tensions between a relocalised vision for development and the “sterile” structure of the mainstream development industry (which delivers most housing in the UK)²⁵⁹, who were seen to have no long-term investment in a place, which “alienates people” (Consultant). Typical housing delivery models were perceived not to question tenure and liveability, leading to a monoculture that was based on a “certain perceived market” that grips the housing industry, leading to issues of developers “doing it” to a place rather than development emerging *from* a place (Sustainable Frome spin off group). Frome was felt to be swamped by poorly designed, non-discrete and bland development of high density; whereby the speed of volume housing “deludes” the historic, medieval character of Frome (Consultant).

As a result of planning and the spatial configuration of “dormitory estates” in the north-east of the town, designed to support commuters to neighbouring Bath and Bristol in the 1970s, Frome was broadly referred to by many as a “dormitory town”, where Bath, Bristol and neighbouring Warminster were felt to have a “pull” on local employment patterns (Consultant).²⁶⁰ These patterns were felt to contradict Frome’s core historic relocalised identity where people traditionally came *into* the town to trade (Local group representative).

The design, type (i.e. use class) and siting of employment spaces by the LPA were felt to contradict relocalised economies, which became harder to achieve as more employment units were pushed out of the centre of the town, which Frome respondents felt invariably overlooks the needs of the artisan economy so central to Frome’s identity. The Local Plan was felt to be “incoherent” and contradictory about simultaneous employment and housing provision (Local group representative), and the protracted nature of the planning process was felt to have frustrated and hampered Frome’s ability to meet the demand for relocalised businesses in the town. Despite Forward Space²⁶¹ proving a success as a space to corral creative enterprises which “came out of the woodwork” when it was set up, town-centre based economies were compromised by the planning process, unable to grow to meet demand which “bleeds out” to nearby towns and cities (Local group representative):

*“And so, you, what you've done, effectively **through planning policy, you've just pushed everything out of the town centre**. . . . We've got wrinkly tin sheds on industrial estates, we have very little office, almost none.” (Local group representative).*

²⁵⁹ Archer and Cole (2016) estimate the top 10 housebuilders were accountable for 47% of completed residential development, compared to only 8-9% in the 1960s (Wellings, 2006 in Archer and Cole, 2016).

²⁶⁰ See Figure 8-2 and SCC, 2016.

²⁶¹ See section 5.3.2.

There was a sense that engagement with planning policy was a “battle” and something to be “fought”, which caused one respondent to almost give up on their relocalised objectives due to disaffection with the planning system; in this case residential complaints making relocalised employment schemes less viable as additional conditions were imposed on a protracted planning application process. Experiences of a reactive and protracted planning system led to intense frustration with the LPA.

One respondent indicated their experiences of planning elsewhere hampered the potential to “capture and store” creative (transformative) energies from purposeful events, e.g. festivals - an “incredible dynamic, the sense of possibility and co-creativity” that was felt to be transformative for forging new bonds and a sense of purpose. Planning was felt to hamper both the demonstration – and realisation - of OPL principles, e.g. using sustainable materials in a temporary, experimental capacity. These experiences by relocalised actors contrasted with the view that point of planning was to “get in the way” by a national-level respondent:

*“And, and actually it took us something like five years to, to buy the site behind. And, and **at one point I was totally, I just was totally done with it** And we **fought, really, really fought for planning** on the building behind... And it's like well, do you want us, or don't you want us? And, at some, at one point I really felt like everything was sort of stacked against us... it is tiring, it's really **tiring**. I couldn't work in local government. Oh my god it would drive me insane. It's, erm, it's just **so frustrating**. You know, **the hurdles are so high**, and, erm, you know, the **bureaucracy** is so [short pause] ridiculous.” (Local group representative).*

*“**[Planning is] squeezed and, and it's, it's just reactive, it's just reactive. And it shouldn't be.**” (IfF councillor).*

*“And **the restrictions on planning are just, you know they're just pervasive - they're everywhere!** [laughs] So we, you know, **we couldn't do things that we wanted to do. ... we just wanted to create space for people to imagine something else, something different**. To, to kind of **innovate, erm in a temporary space, with, with different rules**... Yeah, I mean depending on - it depends on the, the, the **permanence, ultimately**... we couldn't build infrastructure that we could come back to in five- or ten-years' time. [Which indicates] how impossible [laughs] **how impossible, how intractable the erm the planning system is**..... [OPL in Frome is] nice idea but you can't really demonstrate [OPL] principles in practice.... It's a full-on town it has a whole load of [new] economy...but there is nothing approaching sustainable material use in Frome. There might be tiny little bits of it but nothing like holistic approach.” (External New Economy actor).”*

*“And they say that...planners get in the way, er, has to be done away with, you know, as if it was wrong that the planners should be getting in the way. You know, **sometimes the planners should be getting in the way, that is the point of planning.**” (National Independent political actor).*

There was a sense of the LPA being “old fashioned” in their approach to employment and not being able to understand more innovative approaches to placemaking or for planners to be more strategic in their determination of applications (Local group representative). The threat of legal challenge by developers against Local Plans in an age of austerity and a scarcity of resources was considered to favour “better resourced” developers who can afford to use this mechanism to influence planning in their own interests (Local authority representative), which influenced a more cautious approach to determining applications:

“[D]evelopment management planners determine the application that's in front of them, rather than being a bit more strategic and thinking well, what else.” (Consultant).

“[T]he policy doesn't match up with development control. It's just, it's a horrible mess, to be honest.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

There was a sense that planners didn't care about Frome's placemaking concerns. Moreover, there was a sense that the LPA was complicit in siding with developers rather than the community on development applications and that Highways were unsupportive in recognising community challenges to inappropriate development:

“[]ust [pause] disinterest and ignoring us from the people who are supposed to looking after our interests.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

*“Because it's quite depressing to sit on a planning subcommittee and see the quality of applications you get, you know, it's like **they don't really give a stuff.**” (IfF councillor).*

There was also a sense that MDC were paying “lip service” to low-carbon development and seeking to maximise the level development so as to “prop up” their budgets from gain arising from the New Homes Bonus (IfF councillor).²⁶²

²⁶² See Footnote 287.

Planning issues were compounded by the development industry's "game" of artificially high land values (hope value) which 'proves' a lack of demand for current employment sites (i.e. so these can be converted to residential uses) and encourage land banking, as with the case of Saxonvale. The profit bias of the development industry was felt to be compounded higher up the development investment funding hierarchy.²⁶³ Moreover, the "drive to build more houses" was considered to be politically motivated, backed by developers who donate to the Conservative party (National independent political actor). The development industry was considered to be based on assumptions that were "too formulaic", ignoring nuanced well-being metrics or not considering broader ownership and occupation issues:

"[T]he way the development industry approaches [investment in sites] is just too formulaic."
(Consultant).

*"The problem of the planning system is ... it relies far too much on individual vested interests of developers. And it doesn't allow enough for strategic vision and, and those kind of slightly more nuanced, non-financially measurable metrics like, you know, erm, you know, contentment, or, er, the happiness of the population, satisfaction with where they live or erm, aesthetic of the kind of general built environment. And those kinds of things actually have a huge impact on the population and the economic viability of the town, and the desirability of the town. But those are not things that, that an individual developer cares a shit about. They really don't. ... **that's not something that we measure.** And I think, I think that **it's wrong that the planning process doesn't make allowances for those kind of metrics.**"* (Local group representative).

However, some developers with a more aggressive approach built into their business model had (in similarity to IfF) a reputation for "pushing the boundaries", which was felt to result in alienation caused by constant challenge and was in the long run "counterproductive" (Local authority representative). At the same time, developers' inherent *reactivity* to planning policy was also felt to be an opportunity for more significant policy change to render developers more malleable to changes in policy context (Local authority representative).

On Saxonvale, multiple landownership was considered to impede changes to existing development practice whereby planning applications were not considered holistically due to

²⁶³ For instance, that EU development funds can crowd out creative, New Economy development alternatives, with investment typically given to corporate development actors who lack a spatial connection to where they build (Consultant).

differences in landowner interests (profit-driven vs. Frome-focused) that blocked mutual agreement, rather than any concrete issues with the site itself. One respondent suggested that MDC were being “weak” with regards to Saxonvale and influenced by developer’s viability arguments and had absolved responsibility to action the masterplan for the site. The LPA was perceived to have powers they were not invoking to prevent the granting of planning permission for a supermarket, either by using compulsory purchase on other parcels of land, local development orders or by not selling their land to enable a supermarket (LFF councillor; Local group representative):

*“[Despite] a fantastic masterplan [for Saxonvale] ... **that seems to have no weight, at all, and the planning process seems to have no weight.**... [MDC could] force it [positive development to] happen in this way by doing certain things, that means that that is the only alternative. But for as long as that they don't do that then, then developers will hold out for the optimum return... **And there doesn't seem to be any way to kind of force that to happen...** And that's how we've ended up in this kind of, this **Groundhog Day**”. (Local group representative).*

However, some respondents also felt strongly that the supermarket model was “finished” where new proposals for supermarkets were being mothballed and land values for these sites had gone down, putting a question mark over the rules of the game perceived to be played by developers to maximise profit (Local group representative; Sustainable Frome member; LFF councillor).

Site ownership for New Economy ideas was seen as obstructed by one respondent due to the preferential access of large developers to sites, “until we have a site, we can't really do all that much” (Sustainable Frome spin off group). The lack of a site was compounded by (public) landowners not engaging with the community when selling their land to facilitate community-led development, instead “doing a deal” with volume housebuilders and renegeing on a broader public duty to support positive placemaking (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

*“[W]e can't compete with erm, multi-national housing developers on a site. They have instant access to wads of cash basically. [Tuts] ... **they have their own people looking for sites...** **They've pretty much have got it sewn up.** We don't really stand a chance ... we don't have access to that kind of funding - for starters - so we can't just say [slams hand on table once] 'Okay we will buy it.' [Intake of breath] ... Erm, so, so **it's the time it would take for us to put together a bid.**” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).*

Recycling of old materials was deemed crucial to help retain the town’s historic character (FTC representative), yet there was also a perceived trade-off with historic buildings leading to lower

low-carbon build outputs than new builds (Sustainable Frome spin off group). At the same time, Frome's historic character was felt to impede sustainable transport objectives, indicating at times a spatial character mismatch with relocalised objectives (FTC representative).

8.1.3 The Promise of localism as transition arenas for subversive politics

IfF sought to use rights available under localism - the NDP, an NDO and a CRtBO - to address key development challenges they believed were threatening the town's character and to fulfil a more "positive" development model for the town, which one respondent described as "as a lever" for relocalised intentions (External New Economy actor). IfF's was considered to be in a good position to capture the more "radical" aspects of the potential of NDPs and the localism agenda:

*"I love the **way the stage is now set in Frome** [to deliver on localism]." (External New Economy actor).*

*"I think the **whole Localism Act provisions are just massively radical**. And **hugely under the radar**...I think if, **if the governance conditions are right, as they are in Frome**, it becomes even much more than a development plan document. And sort of **embraces that whole, addresses that whole issue of democracy and governance and local action**... [W]e hear a lot about city devolution and growth hubs and all that sort of thing, but actually **I think the more radical devolution is through the Localism Act** and you know, I think if people really fundamentally understood...we've all heard the story - so we've got to do more for less. Well, **if you've got a local community standing up and saying we'll we'd quite like to do it for ourselves, wouldn't you bite their hand off?** Wouldn't you say - please do?! Take it off my hands! So, I think if [district and county governments] can really get the importance of this and how it could be used then **I think it starts to solve not only physical planning development challenges, but also community development challenges as well. And environmental challenges faced by communities; communities can become more resilient and come up with very bespoke solutions**, which I think has to be the way forward." (Consultant).*

*"I think [the government] just thought [that CRtBOs were] a way to bring more land forward for development. It's just another route. Actually ...**it is a really radical tool for er, reimagining development**. And its potential to erm, support communities to reimagine their economies in a*

completely different way. If you get it right. So erm, I think those powers are there. **I think what we need to be doing is to be using their language and their tools [laughs] against them, I suppose. Although I wouldn't like to use like, [the] adversarial thing. But I think you know, there's a huge amount that, if we can get this right, **we can bring together people across the political spectrum to reimagine their local economies and use those tools to do something really astonishing, I think.**" (External New Economy actor).**

In particular, the general power of competence was seen as a mechanism to transform the remit of town council autonomy to take a more strategic approach to FTC's placemaking which helped to cultivate a more optimistic culture within the town:

"Now it means we can form partnerships, big deals, buy land, get involved in economic development.... **Think Big. So, we reversed.** So now the only people who think strategically about the town is the town council... But [localism is] going to be the future. Because **counties and districts are so stuffed in terms their finances that actually everything is going to have to come back to a local level...** they're going to have to have more say in their own destiny than they've had in the past. And **those places that can get to grips with that will be those towns that will then find investment flowing in and more confidence** but one thing that we - I think what we produced here is **people are more optimistic about their town.**" (lff councillor).

Using localism was seen as a "step up" for transition actors to agitate role conflict and transitions, and work with wider stakeholders where developers buy-in to more sustainable and radical placemaking opportunities; for instance, if they need to prove they are partnering with the community in order to obtain planning permission, countering *Transition's* generally negative (reactive) response to planning. This requires *Transition* groups to get to a "certain level" of organisational maturity to be able to take on planning (External New Economy Actor).

The NDP in particular was seen as a mechanism to "stimulate" transition and take a pro-active approach to the quality and design of development and complement the town's historic character (lff councillor; FTC representative), despite an initial reluctance by some lff councillors to engage in neighbourhood planning. The plan was anticipated to provide "greater legitimacy" through the NDP referendum and be a "natural progressive opportunity" leading on from the TDS (FTC representative). NDPs were also considered a strategic mechanism to enable progressive development approaches, even if lff was no longer in power:

*“With planning, my kind of fundamental belief is that **actually if you are arguing about whether an extension should be built, you know the horse has already bolted. It's getting the rules and the policies right in the plans and the strategic documents that are important.** And that's where the effort should be made. And that's why I've been keen that we **can bleed as much goodness out of the neighbourhood plan as possible, and the [town] design statement.**” (FTC representative)*

*“I would like to think [the NDP is the] **first thing that people look at** when they have development in mind. Erm, so we are **actually stimulating activity rather than, than erm, somehow holding it back.**” (FTC representative).*

*“[I]t will actually erm, **give the local community much greater power...and Mendip will have to take it into account** when they take decisions on planning applications.” (FTC representative).*

*“[A]nd there might just suddenly something might just happen and then the whole thing [IfF] gets toppled. If we can get [the NDP] through and **then if [IfF] get toppled, then it goes on, strategically.**” (Sustainable Frome member).*

One local authority respondent suggested that NDPs helped to deliver a nuanced perspective that a district-level Local Plan simply cannot achieve.

*“[Frome's NDP] has generally, or genuinely been borne out of a [desire to] bottle.... Frome's creative identity...and put it in the neighbourhood plan, **this powerful new tool which the government has given us, and erm, deploy that in a way which is really locally distinctive.... We can't get down into the nitty gritty of small area...you know throughout all the hundred or so villages and five towns that there are in Mendip. So, having some powers that people can seize for themselves at their own discretion is something that's to be really warmly welcomed I think**” (Local authority representative).*

The term “low-carbon” was not explicitly used to frame the plan's policies and green issues were “mostly...encapsulated in other words” (Local group representative) - notably in the framing of development alternatives such as OPL, co-housing and self-build. Using OPL as a framework was considered to give “coherence” to sustainable intentions “in true terms”, which would then underpin the workplan of the FTC Resilience Officer:

*"[The NDP included] a sustainable objective...we were looking for a framework really that we could attach to policy in a more coherent way...that Frome would become or aspire to be a One Planet Town. And I think the advantage of using the label is, at a high level, it's quite easy to understand - we want to create a population that is living within the means of the planet. So, be it a town or a city, it's consumption and emissions we are trying to get to a level that is, erm, that is **sustainable in true terms.**" (Consultant).*

*"The NPPF refers to sustainable development, but what is sustainable development? What's the definition of sustainability? **We wanted to put some guiding principles in place.**" (FTC representative).*

The type of policies and objectives underlying Frome's NDP were seen to be pioneering and nothing "remotely" similar emerging from other MDC-supported plans, introducing some ideas that were not previously "on the radar" of standard planning approaches such as self-build (Local authority representative). The NDP (v2) included the concept of exception sites to create a mechanism to provide an entry point for cohousing to acquire a site (FTC, 2014).²⁶⁴ The NDP was recognised as not being able to take forward an agreement on the site's future and "provide a solution" to the Saxonvale question, but it could spell out development preferences for the site (IfF councillor). However, despite the promise of influence Frome's experience of using localism rights was very different - as illustrated in the rest of this chapter and chapter 9.

8.1.4 The thin corridor of innovation and the mangle of local authorities

Local authority respondents spoke very highly of Frome in many regards, including its "incredible" capacity to deliver community initiatives, how FTC made the NDP "fairly high profile" and were "commended" for their community engagement efforts (Local authority representative). These respondents also indicated they sympathised or supported the "intentions" of the NDP. Despite being an active point of contention between FTC and MDC, FTC's persistence to pursue a lost employment land substitution policy was actually welcomed by one local authority respondent who suggested "all power to their elbow" as an endorsement of resistance and encouraging

²⁶⁴ NDP Version 2, September 2014 - Policy H6.

success in their endeavours. However, the experience of respondents involved in Frome's NDP was that the more "radical" ideas had been removed (IfF councillor).

Respondents generally felt that the NDP's promise to deliver community-led development had been "watered down", both by central and district tiers of government (FTC representative). Frome-based respondents lamented that the plan was not strong enough in challenging MDC on its stance on low-carbon standards, that design was not pushed enough, and the loss of OPL as a policy made it more an "aside" than a policy (IfF councillor).

*"Yeah, having an environmental golden thread running through everything we do - fantastic. I don't see that in the neighbourhood plan. I see sort of oh, **have some co-housing as there's a few people in Frome. Great, absolutely fine. But it's not going to save the world.** When you've got policies in there that **allow development at the minimum building regulations to go ahead you're not going to save the world** [laughs]. And if we want this low-carbon economy and low-carbon living in this town we've got to deliver on this kind of thing...individual [green] houses are being built - **there is a lot of faith being put into small developers who want to create eco-housing**... it's [pause] is it something like **fiddling while Rome burns?** From an environmental perspective." (FTC representative).*

The plan was deemed to lack any mechanism to deliver on Saxonvale (Consultant). The plan did not allocate any sites for housing but instead echoed the Local Plan policy. However, one respondent suggested that the steering group were advised not to include sites because the Local Plan Part 2 (Allocations) was being developed at the time of the NDP²⁶⁵.

Whilst the plan indicated key employment sites to protect, it did not achieve the intention to include a substitution element for lost employment sites. Moreover, the principles of co-housing were compromised by the fusion of self-build, co-housing and CLTs on exception sites. The plan's contribution to enhance Frome's open spaces was also deemed lacking (IfF councillor). An idea for an eco-town early on in the plan was considered a way to cultivate more radical development approaches, including how communities could be designed with "new rules" built into the liveability of a new community and replicate best practice from other countries; this idea was considered by one IfF councillor to have gone "out of the window" and disappeared into the ether (in part due to advice from the contracted planning consultants that the idea "wasn't feasible").

²⁶⁵ At the time of writing, Part II of the Local Plan had still not yet been adopted. See <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/7732/Local-Plan-Part-II-Sites-and-Policies> (last accessed 3.6.19).

The principal tension between MDC and FTC in the NDP process was in the contestation between having strong relocalised objectives that mirrored both the “DNA of Frome” and FTC’s own placemaking objectives set out in its Strategy for Success (2011-2014) and the need for policies to inform planning decisions and provide clear guidance to developers. The plan was felt to lack a “story” behind how different elements of the plan related (backed by evidence), such as defining “strong communities” and why a provision for 5% of the self-build policy was included in the plan.

MDC had concerns about the plan not meeting the basic conditions; in particular, MDC argued OPL was not substantive enough to be a standalone policy because planning officers argued these principles could not translate into development control measures (MDC, 2015). Importantly, the “realities” of development control were not perceived to be aligned to the “we are Frome” mentality and FTC’s broader agenda for wider “cuddly” (“genuine”) placemaking endeavours (Local authority representative).

A number of policies were altered, or removed, by MDC (MDC, 2015) and the Examiner (Cheesley, 2016). These changes were perceived as necessary to make the more “starry eyed” and “woolly” policies, which indicated a “naiveté” of the steering group, to fit into the logics of development management (to instruct them to determine planning applications - “a pretty boring thing - but a pretty important thing” or the “acid test” for any policy document” (Local authority representative)). One FTC respondent indicated these two approaches were playing “a different ball game” and recognised it would be “impossible” to implement an OPL policy (FTC representative).

“One Planet Living is frankly meaningless [in development management terms]. It makes no difference whatsoever to how they’re going to go about and assess the application... I think the realities of planning and life... are, unfortunately slightly different [from initial ambitions of using NDPs]... And, when you strip them back, what they’re about is refusing or granting planning permission, for particular things on particular parcels of land... Erm, and so it does start to feel, I’m afraid - a bit like a legalistic process... And once you start going down that route, then very quickly you find you have to whittle away a lot of the laudable aspirations and the kind of touchy-feely cuddly stuff, I’m afraid a lot of that gets squeezed out because, because it doesn’t stand up to scrutiny. In a, you know, objectively as meaning something that you should, or you shouldn’t do that” (Local authority representative).”

Views on the scale of re-scripting²⁶⁶ and the underlying reasons for it varied. Some suggested the squeezing of grassroots innovative policy ideas was due to the “mangle of local government” which “smoothed” more ambitious ideas (IfF councillor),²⁶⁷ The steering group produced an “altered” version of OPL to be more relevant to planning, which one respondent suggested meant it had less “rigour” (Sustainable Frome member).



Figure 8-3. OPL changes in the NDP v2 (FTC, 2014, p.12)²⁶⁸

“Get out clauses” within policies were felt to enable more alternative ideas to be included in policies, such as “in exceptional circumstances” (Policy BE1²⁶⁹; FTC, 2016b). However, these were also seen to undermine radical intentions and the strength of directing alternative development practices (FTC representative). One consultant indicated that innovation in NDP policy areas have varied degrees of manoeuvre, but often through a “thin corridor of innovation”.

²⁶⁶ A term borrowed from Parker et al., 2015.

²⁶⁷ See Appendix N - Frome 'made' NDP Policies and policies amended or cut compared to Reg 14 version.

²⁶⁸ Compare to Bioregional definitions in Figure 5-13 . One Planet Living Principles (Bioregional, n.d).

²⁶⁹ See Appendix N - Frome 'made' NDP Policies and policies amended or cut compared to Reg 14 version.

At the same time there was a sense that the clash of culture between MDC and FTC influenced the tone and scope of the plan, in favour of MDC's more risk-averse approach, primarily due to the fear of appeal, which ended up being reflected in the scope of the NDP (FTC representative). At the same time, some respondents believed that the steering group had been "weak" in standing up to the LPA (FTC representative). NDPs were only entitled or "allowed to get involved in" limited policy arenas, such as design and self-build (Consultant):

*"I have to say that it, in, in the early days, it, it felt very innovative but as it's sort of **gone through the mangle of local authority** kind of regulation and scrutiny it's become, in my view, a lot less innovative than we expected... But, but it's been very hard to, to come up with a document that stands any chance of countering what regular developers wanna do, I'm afraid... And then, you know, **the government has basically been drawing its teeth**, you know, ever since. So, it's got weaker, it's got less clear that it's worth it. And it cost much more than we thought, and it's taken three times longer than we expected... Events overtake you when you take so long." (IfF councillor).*

*"Neighbourhood plans can be quite innovative... [but compliance to extant policies] can **stifle innovation** [laughs] a little bit... you can still innovate but **you have to innovate** [laughs] with, **between quite a thin corridor.**" (Consultant).*

*"I think **there's levels of innovation**, you know. That's the thing. There are some things where you can innovate more and be more forceful and new; and design is one of those... **Neighbourhood plans have got great leeway in design** because the national strategy and the core strategy, at, er, **strategic level, are all, you know they're all quite, quite open...** What you can and can't do with affordable is much more restrictive and what you can and can't do with low-carbon has got very [laughs] restrictive, because of what the government's done. It's almost, **it's almost degrees of, degrees of room for manoeuvre** [laughs], yeah." (Consultant).*

However, when asked the extent to which the NDP was watered down one consultant suggested:

"[Intake of breath] I wouldn't say a great deal at all, I wouldn't say a great deal at all. 10%, 15% I'd put on it" (Consultant).

It was noted that during an international exchange between four of Frome's twin towns in 2016²⁷⁰, there was no mention of Frome's NDP as a mechanism to advance low-carbon development.

8.1.5 Systematic blockages (misunderstanding the parameters of influence)

In contrast to more subversive ends for localism to be used “not quite as they intended” (Macfadyen, 2014), one local authority respondent indicated a frustration that NDPs were being used in a way not originally intended by government; many communities were deemed to perceive NDPs as a mechanism to “take back control” in ways that went beyond the original scope of NDPs set by government. Yet there was confusion of NDP groups about what is/isn't a planning issue and misusing the NDP as a mechanism to deliver on wider placemaking objectives (Local authority representative). However, the understanding of the promise of localism in section 8.1.3 indicates that it was not immediately clear where these thresholds lie.

For FTC and lFf respondents there was a clear disconnect between expectations and output and there was confusion about degrees of shared understanding on where different actors stood in the process:

*“[W]hat we were led to believe was that the neighbourhood planning was **an opportunity for us to kind of guide development as a community, and to sort of steer it front on.**” (lFf councillor).*

*“I think there was a lack of understanding at the beginning about what a neighbourhood plan was when it was first pitched to us. **I think some of our members thought they could change the world and put everything in it. But actually, it's a policy-based plan and that actually makes it quite dull.**” (FTC representative).*

*“I am certainly not blaming them as individuals. **I think there's something wrong with this process. It isn't quite giving people what they want at the end of it.** Maybe it was sold*

²⁷⁰ See <https://www.discoverfrome.co.uk/international-renewable-energy-conference-in-frome/> (last accessed 6.6.19).

incorrectly or maybe we read too much into it at the beginning, I don't know [intake of breath].” (IfF councillor).

NDP groups were perceived by local authority respondents to misunderstand what "general conformity" means by repeating the Local Plan, having too high-level policies, thinking they could "stop" development, not taking opportunities to "change the thresholds" where permitted, or trying to change planning procedures where they were not "entitled" to. It was clear that powers endowed to NDP groups didn't extend to changing the rules of the planning regime's internal control mechanisms:

*"I think quite often **they're not really used for [hesitates] what they're really intended to.** A lot of them just seem to **repeat erm a lot of policies** and contain aspirations and I think some of them are sort of **missing an opportunity to make a real, erm, difference...** they seem to want to create a sort of mini Local Plan. It's got to be in conformity therefore we've just got to repeat it, [a] missed an opportunity really, you know, to change the thresholds... they can be such a, they could be such a powerful tool... [but] a lot of the villages feel they've had too much development or too many larger houses and **they want, sort of, to take back a bit of control.** [NDP groups want] developers to do x,y,z, and you know, **trying to sort of change our validation procedures... well it's, you're not going to be able to, to do that.** And it's like, what? [laughs]... I feel like I'm **banging my head against a brick wall** sometimes²⁷¹." (Local authority representative).*

The nuances in the planning process – more 'regime'-like town and country planning²⁷² compared to more flexible community planning - were seen as distant to the interests of 'ordinary' people; the government's "blunt" politicisation of localism was seen to create confusion about the parameters and devolution of powers through the NDP process. Similarly, one IfF councillor suggested that localism had not been delivered in such a way to genuinely enrich democracy and has failed, more broadly, to enable that because the localism agenda was seeking to "appease two very different kind of Tories, kind of big business versus shire Tories". The mismatch between ambition and practicalities led one local authority respondent to suggest that some NDP groups may be pursuing the wrong mechanism due to a lack of information on the purpose of NDPs.²⁷³

²⁷¹ The experience of "brick walls" was also documented in the following online IfF article of working with party political councillors and MDC in the early days of IfF <http://iffrome.org.uk/2011to2014/2012/10/18/party-politics-and-brick-walls/> (last accessed 10.6.19).

²⁷² As set out in HMG, 2008.

²⁷³ For instance, NDOs and CRtBOs were perceived to be more suited for larger major regeneration schemes, not rural villages (Local authority representative). Which they sought to rectify with guidance on exploring land use vs. community planning objectives at the outset which has/not now been published.

“Town and country planning is, you know, very clearly defined in legislation... Whereas Community Planning can be about anything... [the] Neighbourhood Planning regime... came without any context... You know, they're very closely related things but they're not the same thing... I know the difference in my mind, quite clearly... But you know, people out there don't really care what the difference is, and nor should they care.” (Local authority representative).

“[The] Conservative [party] particularly was vote for us, we'll scrap those top down remote regional plans that are forcing development on you... what we'll do is invent neighbourhood plans and you're in charge. Not them at the regional level, or even them at Mendip District Council anymore. You're in charge of it. So that sent out a very kind of blunt and not very sophisticated message I don't think... introducing a whole new, kind of revolution I suppose of plan-making by local people in their own communities is always going to be a fraught process, isn't it? But I think it could have been introduced in a more kind of mature way, really... [The] Neighbourhood Planning regime... came without any context.” (Local authority representative).

“And so, and as it's taken longer - we've reached a point of realising that actually it hasn't got the power we thought it would anyway. And half of Frome's been built all over since it started, so there's been a real, for me, a real significant disappointment. Localism didn't give the neighbourhood plan the power that it ought to [and failed to deliver on green issues] ... So, in terms of localism, we were [h]'ad. Well it hasn't happened, because the Tories - it was, it was a sort of political manoeuvre at the beginning to give power to the people. The reality of which hasn't happened.” (IfF councillor).

The relative newness of the new localism policy space also contributed to a sense of learning on the job for some of those involved, including consultants. For instance, in the Citizens Panels there was a lack of clear “parameters...within which they were supposed to be participating...and therefore, it was less effective” in the Citizens Panels (Local group representative). Moreover, relative newness to the policy context also affected the confidence one consultant had to direct the NDP and led to a degree of contestation in the balance of power between role expectations within the governance of Frome's NDP, they suggested “[with hindsight] I think we could have started from a different point and done it differently” (Consultant).

There was a sense that the government was using localism and planning for their own subversive ends to achieve housebuilding to stimulate the economy (IfF councillor). Moreover, there was a

tension between the government priority of growth and “delivering neighbourhood aspirations”, which were not perceived as compatible (IfF councillor). One local authority respondent indicated that any challenge to the underlying growth-centred discourse that underpinned localism and the planning regime was not welcome because growth discourse was the “only game in town”:

*“Now, if they're - **if they set out their stall** and they, you know, we don't think there should be any more development at all because we've only got one planet, and erm, you know there's too much population in the world already and **you kind of take an entrenched view, then I'm afraid that's not really going to, you know, influence what the plan's going to end up saying. Because whether or not you agree with whether year on year economic growth is a good thing, that's the only game in town, isn't it? That's the agenda we're all ultimately working to.**” (Local authority representative).*

Moreover, there was an inherent bias towards viability (and therefore developers' profits) within the planning system.

*“[W]e have to explain [to NDP groups] that, erm, that **their agenda does have to be deliverable, we can't put handcuffs on developers.**...and they will challenge it, and it will go to the Secretary of State, and you know, it will get through.” (Consultant).*

There was a sense of deflecting blame from developers for taking a more assertive stance in the planning process because of their need to protect their own vested interests. One local authority respondent suggested that housing delivery targets needed to increase because of a lack of supply in recent years. Meanwhile, government policy was not allowing a “free hand” for community-led development and changes resulting from the Deregulation Act were a “wake up call” that indicated a more restrictive and heavy-handed approach to low-carbon development whilst favouring developers' capacity to build a way out of a recession (Local authority representative).

Moreover, capacity issues of local communities were called into question due to their skills and abilities to actually deliver on localism indicating broader structural broken links in terms of the diffusion of the potential for (progressive) localist outcomes:

*“I mean the whole localism thing was about, about giving power to the local levels [awkward laugh] and of course **we think we are good at it** [laughs]. But when you look around at some of the local authorities there, they've got the same members, the same, you know, **moribund councils, who only want to stop things happening you think, God help us really.** And I am sure*

the government has noticed that, that giving power down to some of these people is not the right people who have the influence. Because it just doesn't go anywhere basically, it just stops. (IfF councillor).

*“But erm, there's nothing to stop them [local NDP groups] hearing someone say oh, Totnes did something interesting and then you know, phoning them up and going to see them. Or plugging into some of the more regional events that are happening anyway. **But at the moment, it wouldn't occur to [some of them] to go to a regional event...**, because it's just too, too kind of big. So, I, to me it's *maybe baby steps is, is a good idea. A bit of a safe environment where they feel like a big fish perhaps along with the other people they might know by name as the kind of nucleus of it, and encourage people to kind of branch out from there.*” (Local authority representative).*

8.1.6 Policy alignment: moving ground from under your feet

There were also alignment challenges between the national, district and NDP groups due to government policy changes, notably on sustainability criteria within planning policies. One respondent referred to different historical “phases” within the planning regime that influenced approaches to planning (IfF councillor).

The simplification of the planning system with the introduction of the NPPF was perceived as not adding anything to principles of the planning regime; there were no fundamental changes and its supplementation with planning guidance had taken planning “back”, albeit with greater ambiguity. Meanwhile, the changes in localism’s policy direction was also giving rise to a sense of uncertainty and a lack of transparency for some actors amid the “revolving door” of planning ministers (Local authority representative). Planning practice more broadly was deemed to operate on a reactive, unstable basis because of ill thought-out policies which often need correcting:

*“I **don't see any great difference really with the NPPF as a, as a principle being introduced as, er, as to how the system worked before...** We thought we were getting localism. **It's been really centralising. Whilst proclaiming the opposite...** It's certainly got more difficult to keep*

tabs on what is now policy... OK, I'll wait for that and then it never materialises... And you try and track it down and it's very difficult" (Local authority representative).

"[There has been] an enormous tendency in planning to, um, say one thing, do one thing, and then undermine the thing that they've done by doing something else they haven't properly thought through, which-which makes the rhetoric in one area ineffective, and-and certainly, localism has-has bounced from one, um, limit to the other, um, in the planning process..." (Local group representative).

One respondent suggested that things going "up the food chain", with processes becoming more top-down, prescriptive such as the number of decisions taken to the Secretary of State and the increase in recruitment at the Planning Inspectorate (IfF councillor); they lamented that the government had given powers they've since retracted because it got "cold feet":

*"[T]here's no doubt in my mind that **the government's enthusiasm has diminished** greatly since they came up with this and they have **rolled back on it quite fast**. The whole localism agenda has been kind of, you know, has been, has been, erm, **they are retreating from it, and we are feeling that retreat**. We don't feel that kind of **urgency and support anymore**. I think the priorities in the government have changed." (IfF councillor).*

*"It's all going **up the food chain, not down**...But it's, it's so annoying, because [pause] we have really aimed to use them creatively as a town council. [With the general power of competence] you could really push the boundaries of things, erm. But they've, they've kind of got cold feet" (IfF councillor).*

There was a sense among different types of respondents that national government policy discourse was to be "taken with a pinch of salt", where policies can be vague, changeable, lacking in guidance or by appealing to too many interests to be effective (Local authority representative; IfF councillor). One local authority representative referred to information currently produced by various planning advisory bodies as "stuff" i.e. not that useful and preferred more troubleshooting advice to support more complex issues to support procedural matters.

FTC, consultants and local authority respondents spoke of their mutual frustration both with the NDP process and the broader shifting government policy landscape, or the "moving ground from under your feet"; notably low-carbon design as a policy area that was "superseded" by national policy (Consultant) through the removal of the CfSH and the move towards Building Regulations

to accommodate a blanket standard for low-carbon design under the Deregulation Act (see chapter 3 for the wider policy context):

*“Yeah, the central government and, and to some extent the core strategy can, can **cut the ground from under your feet** really... every neighbourhood plan, it's got **moving ground under its feet**...I wouldn't say **steal your thunder**, but, but, they've, they've, they **formalised [low-carbon policy] all at the national level** [sighs].” (Consultant).*

*“The other thing that's **frustrated them, and us**, is that... [government policy change on low-carbon standards] is all in the mixer at the moment, It's **made it hard for Frome to write anything with confidence** [on sustainability].” (Local authority representative).*

*“I note what you're trying to do in your policy - which is to, to **hardwire into a policy a higher standard of, of, of environmental sustainability** than erm, [than] would otherwise be required. But I fear that when the **government** finally decides on its **policy**, you know that's going to **drive the coach and horse through what you're trying to do anyway**... That really **pulls the rug** from any parish or other neighbourhood forum who wants to introduce something which is more draconian [intake of breath]. They **just simply wouldn't be entitled to do it**. And **the examiner will be bound to just put a red line through it**, if it ended up in the plan. Which is a bit **depressing**, really.” (Local authority representative).*

*“No, I think we established [the government don't care about low-carbon issues] a while ago...The bit about we're going to be [zero carbon] by 2016 and then they go **ah no, you're alright, we're only messing!** It's like **for God's sake!**” (External New Economy actor).*

At the same time there was some glimmer of bottom up influence on degrees of niche:regime alignment. The LPA was perceived as the level that was not delivering on national priorities for self-build, which NDPs could circumvent with localised policies for delivery (Consultant), although this is of course couched in central government policy being the key driver of self-build policies in the first instance. A local authority respondent indicated that more novel ideas would result in the LPA considering them, such as self-build and community housing in the future - suggesting the content of bottom-up NDPs were influencing adjustments to the Local Plan (Local authority representative). Though when probed the influence of the NDP on the Local Plan was less about the values implicit in the policy than the pressure from national government to think of alternative ways to deliver more housing.

2012 MDC figures projected growth rates across the district, based on ONS projections, Frome was set to grow by 22.3% as depicted by Figure 8.4.

Area		2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	% Growth 2006-2031
Frome	All Persons	25,480	26,760	27,870	29,080	30,210	31,150	22.3
Glastonbury	All Persons	8,820	8,990	9,160	9,480	9,810	9,980	13.2
Shepton Mallet	All Persons	9,680	10,230	10,600	11,000	11,370	11,720	21.1
Street	All Persons	11,480	11,810	12,190	12,640	13,050	13,390	16.6
Wells	All Persons	12,990	12,980	12,820	12,750	12,720	12,690	-2.3
Rural Area	All Persons	38,840	39,440	39,140	39,150	39,430	39,670	2.1

Figure 8-4. MDC sub-district population projections up to 2031- inc. net migration (MDC, 2012)²⁷⁴

A document one year later projected a total of 30,365 by 2029.²⁷⁵ This housing projection was changed to be a *minimum* target which some felt was irrelevant to discourage more housebuilding or act as a control mechanism.²⁷⁶

	Frome	G'bury	Street	Shepton Mallet	Wells	Rural Area	Total
2011 Population	26,223	8,943	11,820	10,374	10,556	41,489	109,406
2011 Households	11,205	4,040	4,771	4,378	4,917	16,900	46,212
2011 Economically Active	14,088	4,616	5,730	5,926	4,981	21,551	56,893
2029 Projected Population	30,365	9,819	12,938	12,276	10,542	44,474	120,414
2029 Projected Households	13,582	4,644	5,716	5,496	5,095	18,988	53,520
2029 Economically Active	15,768	4,794	6,283	6,633	4,873	21,791	60,141

Figure 8-5. MDC sub-district populations projections up to 2029 (JG Consulting, 2013)

The alignment to the Local Plan in determining degrees of alignment between Local Plan and NDPs was seen as important for one consultant but less important for a local authority representative – who placed the onus of responsibility for any misalignment onto FTC:

²⁷⁴ Based on 2010-ONS BASED projections (inclusive of net migration).

²⁷⁵ I.e. 785 less people than the 31,150 projected up to 2031 by the 2012 data. Figure 8-4 used 2010 ONS projections data, while Figure 8-5 used 2011 actual ONS census data. The Examiner report of the Local Plan Part I suggested the plan period should run to 2029 (see Yuille, 2014).

²⁷⁶ As stated in section 5.3.5.2, this was increased in to be a *minimum* delivery target due to a recommendation of the Examiners' report of the Local Plan Part I (see Yuille, 2014). 25% of this target had been achieved by 2015.

*“The **timing of when the Neighbourhood Plan is coming forward is important**. Because when Frome started this process there was no core strategy... **this thing about moving ground underneath your feet, you’re having to comply with the document that, there hasn’t even been adopted yet.**” (Local authority representative).*

This was in marked contrast to the experience of the Community Plan, which was much more synchronised due to shared governance between MDC where “their Regeneration Officer was part and parcel of the [Community Plan] Executive team” (Local group representative); shared consultation exercises fed both the early phases of the Local Plan and the LDF and the community plan. MDC also contributed £25k in addition to other grant funds (bringing the total to £50k).

In parallel to the NDP process, a Frome-based group previously established to act as an intermediary to explore development opportunities on Saxonvale sought to use a CRtBO; the HCA had committed £100,000 “to deliver an alternative approach” (Consultant) with a £10,000 match funding contribution from FTC. However, not only was the CRtBO process seen as a box-ticking exercise, which made it difficult to release funding, DCLG²⁷⁷ intervened to prevent the HCA releasing the funds as Saxonvale was considered too large a site for a CRtBO, and effectively “pulled the plug on the funding” (Consultant).

8.2 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored key developmental challenges in Frome, as understood by respondents, and how Frome’s NDP sought to respond to them to advance relocalised development alternatives, encouraged by the promise (tools) of localism. However, previous engagement with planning actors and processes within the planning regime illustrate the challenges of influencing its rules of engagement. and the challenges and opportunities in doing so. The NDP process was perceived as an unsuccessful mechanism (as a tool or arena) to promote niche resistance which squeezed out relocalised ambition. Vested political and developer interests were favoured within

²⁷⁷ Now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

an institutional arrangement that had a number of structural gaps and disconnected links between the local level and higher up the planning and political regimes, including a withdrawal of power to influence low-carbon policies within Frome's NDP. The following chapter continues to explore the NDP process in more detail, exploring how formal ties within Frome's NDP governance contributed or lessened an overall sense of disempowerment outlined in this chapter.

9 Navigating the politics of subversive localism c): relational ties in the planning and political regime

9.1 Theme 8 – The politics of representation – legitimacy and formal ties (Frome’s NDP and the structures of the state)

This chapter is structured around one theme (8):

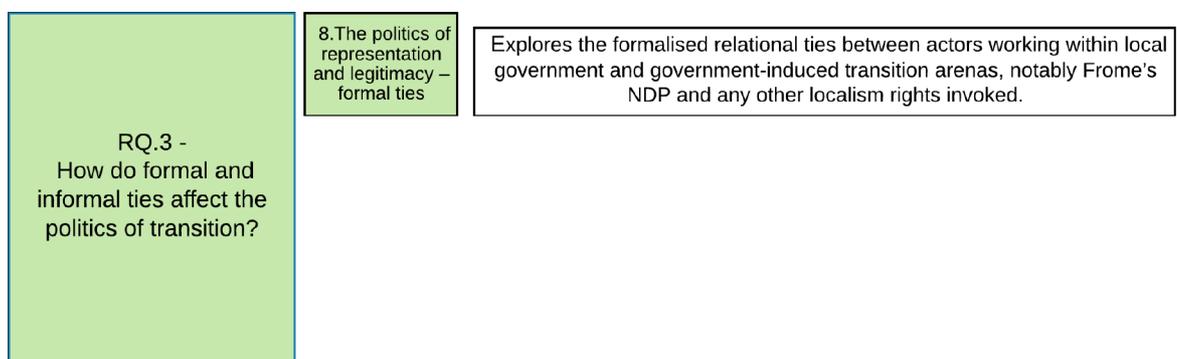


Figure 9-1. Chapter 9: thematic code and description

This chapter responds to RQ.3 *How do formal and informal ties affect the politics of transition?* Here, the relation ties between and within formal state entities – FTC, MDC, the formal governance arrangements within Frome’s NDP and the inter-organisational ties of those working within ‘regime’ (i.e. government) arenas. By exploring these ties in detail an assessment can be made as to the form, function and quality of relational ties of those working in government and their effect on the politics of relocalised ambitions in Frome. Thus revealing how these ties contribute, or circumvent, to some of the issues raised in chapters 7 and 8.

9.1.1 The NDP steering group: disenrollment and depression from a protracted process

The NDP steering group was “smallish by design” (IfF councillor) with the intention to expedite the process; many of the group were also involved in the NDP, the TDS and the town centre improvement initiative. One local authority respondent suggested there were “power struggles” within the steering group and FTC over “who was in charge”.

Despite anticipating a relatively rapid process, building on previous community engagement, the reality was the NDP was a lengthy process and became – in the words of one respondent - a “fairly tortuous process” that “has crawled along” (Local group representative), “dragged on for so long” (IfF councillor), was “just far too difficult far, far, far, too difficult” (Local group representative) which was “going around in circles” (IfF councillor). The plan took over three years, which respondents reported made it hard to keep up steam and the process “totally lost momentum... it **sort of disappeared off into the ether**” (Local group representative), compounded by also being involved in other projects such as the TDS (FTC representative). Its lack of actual power led to a “depression” among steering members and IfF colleagues (IfF councillor).

Engagement in the steering group was sporadic at times, in part due to other commitments (Local group representative) with “usually more apologies than attendees” by the end of the process (IfF councillor). One steering group member said that the dry, protracted nature of the NDP process meant they disenrolled due to their “boredom threshold” and partly because they had faith in other steering group members (IfF councillor). The NDP process did not sufficiently engage everyday interests, which was seen to contrast with IfF’s preferred governance process which ran to a tighter deadline or operated within a more engaging or consensual process (such as the WoW). This led to “stronger” people in the steering group walking away from the process. The voluntary nature of placemaking actors, including parish and town councillors affected levels of engagement, which can be at odds with protracted and complex planning processes:

*“It was okay, but **it didn't feel like it was a very thrilling process**, but perhaps not all processes can be thrilling!” (IfF councillor).*

*“I think a lot of the **stronger people** on the town council kind of after two years [nervous laugh] could see where it was going and **kind of gave up a bit... it's a much weaker document because we didn't have a strong steering group really pushing this forward...**” (FTC representative).*

*“When you consider what volunteers and councillors are like, **unless they are incredibly motivated...they run out of steam. It's the length of time, you really have to keep the pressure on, you have to keep the interest, it has to be erm, you know, exciting. Er, and you just can't keep that going over a long period.”*** (IfF councillor).

9.1.2 Consultants in the NDP process

As an NDP Frontrunner, FTC was awarded £20k to support the costs of the NDP, although the actual costs were over £60k, supplemented by FTC's own resources.²⁷⁸ Notably, these costs were used to enlist the technical and professional assistance of several consultants in the NDP process. This was deemed to help advance their objectives to unlock complex development issues and represent their views, for instance in policy writing which the group at the time did not have “confidence” in and helping FTC to “stand firm” on their principles (FTC representative). Writing the plan meant “assembling” many “pieces” which “all said we want Frome to be more sustainable. More resilient.” (Consultant).

Most of the consultants contracted to support the NDP engaged directly with either the Planning Administrator or the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager. The planning consultants engaged directly with both FTC and MDC at joint meetings and on particular issues which arose from time to time.

There were some productive relationships between those involved in developing the plan when describing relations with different colleagues. Some described more “jokey” relationships with some steering group members whilst others were described as “a relaxed relationship” with one respondent concluding that “it was all good fun, frankly.” (Consultant).

“Never had a cross word. It was great. Very professional. Productive. Always friendly and cheerful. Never anything else.” (IfF councillor).

²⁷⁸ NDP groups can access grant funding and technical support packages to support their plans from the government-supported Locality programme. Again, compare this to the experience of Frome's Community Plan in section 5.3.3 and 8.1.6 where there was synchronised and shared financial and governance arrangements between MDC and the Community Plan to support a co-dependence to feed into both the Local Plan and the Community Plan.

"[I]ncredibly helpful, very [slight pause] intuitive, extremely easy to work with, and very, very supportive." (Consultant).

Some relationships, however, were clearly of a professional nature and remained so (Consultant). Others had strategies to not involve themselves personally in professional matters (FTC representative). One respondent who was involved to a lesser degree described relations with MDC planners as "good" (FTC representative). There were also experiences of friendships breaking down, due to a perceived disloyalty within the performance of their role or seeking to add too much personal agenda into the process (IfF councillor).

However, the governance arrangements with consultants was at times considered to engender broken links in the governance and overall process of the plan. One consultant felt their task-specific Terms of Reference (ToR) didn't bring out the most effective contribution from their own experience and capacity and felt pigeon-holed in their role (Consultant).

*"But first nor last I **never actually met the town council**. I met A16²⁷⁹, and I had a feedback session once, maybe twice, with the steering group" (Consultant).*

*"[M]y connection is mainly through A16, that is really the person that I speak to most often and deal with. Occasionally I've been asked to come along to [steering group] meetings... **Who they are I don't even remember the names...** I really had very little contact with those councillors, er, very little at all... When I come to a meeting occasionally these other people will, will, will come back to me and asked me questions. **But it's A16, A16, A16, A16, A16 all the way with me.**" (Consultant).*

Some consultants did not appear to be natural supporters of relocation, with one consultant not recognising the word "cohousing" after being asked several times about their thoughts on cohousing during consultation (Consultant), while another referred to OPL in dismissive terms as "at this one world, erm, or concept or whatever you call it, concept, plan, way to live" (Consultant). Moreover, another consultancy firm was felt to not represent Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the town who had "business heads on" and focused instead on "the big boys" of employment, and overlooked the needs of SMEs in Frome and issues such as quality of space and location for different employment types, notably the "small, homespun industries" (IfF councillor). Some consultants spoke about how the "shoe was on the other foot" where they

²⁷⁹ A[number] are anonymised ids allocated to respondents mentioned in this chapter and subsequent chapters.

may have different types of client experiencing planning on “the other side,” i.e. seeking ways to attain large-scale development gains for volume housebuilders, which these respondents perceived to assist knowledge transfer between roles.

However, there were some experiences of unidirectional and uncooperative relationships. There was even an underlying expectation that housekeeping/domestic duties were reserved for females:

*“[The steering group were] helpful to a point, erm, but [sighs] when I asked for help... **they didn't really do anything.** You know even as simple as something like make tea or coffee [laughs]... I did periodically feel that, erm, **I wasn't given as much kudos in terms of what I actually did for work, as perhaps a male counterpart might have been.** But there was very much a, oh well [the women] will **make the tea and coffee and put the chairs out and sort out the room and everything like that**” (Consultant).*

One individual was felt to have overstepped the mark of an advisory role where personal agendas compromised FTC’s ownership of the plan as a result of their contributions:

*“[They did] what we asked [them] to, but [they] did a bit too much more than that as well... it was the way [they] kind of railroaded stuff through and put stuff in when it wasn't being noticed... **Some things were shoehomed in there** that made the thing not work as a structure anymore and we had to change it.” (lff councillor).*

In part, there was a perception that consultants had encouraged unrealistic policies to be put forward. Indeed, paid consultants endorsed some more contentious ideas and gave FTC the confidence to supersede MDC advice and “push forward” and ignore the discourse of “impractical” policies e.g. employment, OPL and low-carbon policies (FTC representative). Remaining disagreements between FTC and MDC were steered towards the examination as a space for mediation of contested claims in the NDP between the two organisations (as well as planning advisors) (FTC representative). As a result, one respondent suggested that the LPA was on the backfoot in terms of the extent their advice was taken up because NDPs are *locally*-driven.

9.1.3 Alignment and broken links: FTC-MDC engagement in the NDP steering group

MDC planners had regular email and face-to-face contact with the Planning Administrator. Face-to-face connections between the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager and MDC were made late into the NDP process. The MDC Link Officer²⁸⁰ was also heavily involved in the creation of the Mendip Local Plan (and its subsequent challenge by Gladman) which was deemed to affect the extent they could get involved with Frome's NDP. A more constrained experience in austere times meant that there was a discrepancy between the amount of time MDC officers would have liked to input into the process and the actual amount of time they could input:

*"And you know, and again, we've got limited resources... I'd love to spend. I'd love to spend all day, you know, and all week - and everybody else - on, on neighbourhood plans, convening with forums, providing kind of materials and templates... We have to cut our cloth, unfortunately... I have to say that my contact with them has been relatively infrequent really. [Hesitates] I haven't been speaking weekly to the, town council people. It's been **at key stages** where it's been important to." (Local authority representative).*

MDC were perceived to be "unhelpful" in the NDP process and were seen to be picking faults rather than being supportive, or wilfully obstructive, over and above the recognised constraints on resources:

*"I can say Mendip are being tougher and more [pause, sighs], more contrary than I expected them to be. I expected them to be more helpful and erm, they seem to be picking faults, for reasons I can never really work out... And erm, I've experienced ones which much friendlier than, than, than Frome - I've even experienced ones which are much more difficult... their motives were in the right place, they're trying to [sigh] they are **trying to help**, but, but they could try in doing it in a more engaging, constructive way than they've done." (Consultant).*

*"There was always an antagonism between Mendip District Council and Frome Town Council before we were elected. And I know that from being a Mendip councillor. But that antagonism, no perhaps antagonism is the wrong word? It's been a very difficult relationship. **It's been very difficult**. I tried to be understanding. They are understaffed, they are under-*

²⁸⁰ See section 5.3.5.3.

resourced, all the rest of it. And sometimes you can say well yes, that's because they are under-staffed or under-resourced. **Sometimes it's really felt like they are wilfully obstructing our efforts.**" (lF councillor).

There was a clear intention by MDC of a regret that it could not assist FTC at an early stage to resolve some more contentious policies, to help safeguard the plan from challenges by developers and enable the policies to be more "implementable". Yet there was also a conflict in the enthusiasm of NDP groups to act with outside assistance (i.e. consultants), which was seen to disrupt potential linkages with MDC. A local authority representative suggested they could help to ensure early compliance with the process on procedural issues but there was a tension between "getting on with things" and "getting things right"²⁸¹:

*"[A] lot of the time, sort of, communities **are going ahead and getting on with things** - which is, which is you know, which is great [taps table twice] ... [but] I think there's perhaps a lot of **enthusiasm, but people kind of bypassing [short pause] the [available] help and advice...** I think we're wanting to be a lot clearer, that you know, **engage with us before you go out to consultation on, on policies, because we can help you** with that policy writing...It's not that we know better, it's not trying to influence the content, and a lot of it is just the **actual mechanics of it...** - put in that story, as it were, **about the origins and justification of the policy...so it actually does what you want it to do.**" (Local authority representative).*

These missing links may have been mediated with more regular face-to-face contact between the LPA and the NDP group, or having a third party to review contentious issues between FTC and MDC by having a health check prior to submission:

*"[I]t's been allowed to get to quite a late stage... people having concerns but those concerns either not sort of being [short pause] listened to or taken seriously...But, you know, **there's nothing to stop those wheels turning in the process, and it's got to go to examination...** So, I think, there's something **slightly wrong in the system in terms of the checks and, checks and balances there...**" (Local authority representative).*

MDC Legal Services stated that it was not possible for Frome's NDP to be held at the same time as the elections as it was already a triple election (local, district and national) and the NDP vote

²⁸¹ At the time of the interview, MDC was producing a support package to guide NDP groups to ensure links between the LPA and NDP groups are made earlier in the process to ensure they get the right support/advice from others to craft more robust objectives and help decide on whether an NDP is right for their community (e.g. whether a parish plan or village design statement may be sufficient in villages, or if an NDO may be more appropriate).

might get “lost” in wider political issues (Local authority representative). Indeed, the effect of having triple elections on local issues was corroborated by another national-level respondent who suggested that independent local candidates lost seats overall for the first time in five years in the 2015 elections (National independent political actor).

9.1.4 FTC and MDC ties (day-to-day politics of engagement)

Party-political divides, cultural differences and historical tensions were felt to be acute points of contention between FTC-MDC relationships. IfF councillors felt a sense of duty as a protagonist to continually push the boundaries of the role of a town council and challenge its relationship to MDC. This sentiment was repeated by a number of IfF respondents, who considered themselves as persistent, challenging, creative, imaginative, more “progressive” and able to enrol expertise.

There were clear boundaries on salience of public roles for Frome-based actors, particularly in planning or the district council more generally. For instance, “I, I don't want to work in local authority planning, coz I think I would probably die of boredom” (IfF councillor) and “I could never work in a local authority” (Local group representative). The mantra of “still only a town council” was repeated several times by respondents, indicating FTC's lack in formal powers:

*“[W]e're not the planning authority [so] there is still that [pause] problem. But I think...what we've got to continue to do is kind of **push the boundaries of what the town council does. And push Mendip**... I do think we've enlivened [elongates word] local politics... I think **to make interesting, you've gotta keep pushing**. Because [sighs, laughs] sounds really big headed, but we have much better councillors than they do at district level. Much more creative, I mean partly because it's Frome-based, erm, better informed, better, er, more imaginative about – and not just going through the motions of the status quo, which is so turgid and erm, kind of reactionary in every sense. In that, well, reactive you know, it doesn't [intake of breath] - they don't really drive things I feel, at, at Mendip District Council.” (IfF councillor).*

MDC were often described in negative terms, considered to be one of many “dinosaur district councils” or “dysfunctional” and councillors were deemed “nasty”, “not nice people” and “aggressive” who were no longer equipped to respond to a changing community-driven planning context. Terms such as “God help us” and referring to the relationship between MDC and FTC

as “a can of worms” (Sustainable Frome spin off group), indicated a lack of faith, distrust and a perception of poor delivery by the district council. MDC governance was also felt to be highly guarded and restrictive.²⁸² Some respondents described MDC governance entities as “incompetent”, “dysfunctional”, “incredibly slow”, “of no use whatsoever”, “shady” and “not transparent”, reflecting the distrust and cultural differences between these groups.

Historical tensions and perceived cultural differences between FTC and MDC extenuated antagonism and role conflict, who were perceived to be disinterested and ignored²⁸³ or were actively opposed to Frome’s interests.

*“You’re probably well aware of the perception of Mendip District Council by a lot of people in Frome, and probably the perception of people in Frome by Mendip District Council, which is that **we’re a bloody nuisance.**” (Local group representative).*

*“**There’s a history of them not getting on**, and that’s partly because - and this is a personal opinion – **Frome Town Council are much more progressive** [small laugh] **and they don’t know how to cope with it** [snigger].” (Consultant).*

*“It’s been really, really difficult, actually. Because I think **they’re so kind of culturally different from us**, erm, I mean even other Tories in the region don’t really like [short pause] the Mendip leadership [intake of breath] **they’re extremely aggressive, they’re all men in grey suits - so they’re not very much like us.** Erm, they are [pause to thinks], **they’re really the opposite to us.** It’s so hard, I’ve never come across a more [short pause] **difficult group of men to deal with actually.**” (IfF councillor).*

*“Mendip are sadly **one of the worst authorities, local planning authorities in the country in terms of performance.** Erm, they are shocking... And their seeming er, **opposition to, disinterest in, er, in Frome is awful...** **the representation from Frome on, within the cabinet, within any of the committees - particularly the planning committee - is [pause] either zero or... utterly ineffective.** [MDC] regard **Frome as a problem.** And they er [pause], the, the town council and the district council find themselves for whatever reason [pause], er, **enemies,** and so the sense in Frome amongst community groups in Frome is that **Mendip are not***

²⁸² One respondent cited an example of when MDC attended a meeting at the Cheese and Grain and only pre-agreed questions could be asked; they also bought a security guard with to the event. This was not corroborated.

²⁸³ For instance, by not acknowledging comments on planning applications or changing the parameters of engagement midway through a process (FTC representative).

interested, don't listen to what we want, erm, planning is haphazard.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

One respondent suggested Frome’s geographical setting “tucked away” in the north east of Mendip district exacerbated a sense of disconnection (IfF councillor). The complexity of local politics was considered to be compounded by the three layers of local government and the party-political differences between them (Local group representative).

9.1.5 Relational ties within MDC

There appeared to be some effective conduits between the LPA and the rest of MDC as well as some blockages. The submitted NDP was disseminated to various relevant MDC departments (Strategic Assets, Conservation and Tree Officers, Development Management) to explore the practical application of Frome’s NDP policies.²⁸⁴ The NDP process didn’t encourage lines of interaction between FTC and more senior positions with MDC as these relationships were managed through the Link Officer. Involvement of MDC elected members was considered to be “light touch”. The planning policy team had delegated powers to engage with FTC to make decisions on behalf of MDC to expedite the process rather than being committee driven, which was considered to be a politicised arena.

When asked about ties within MDC there were positive relationships amongst different planning teams with notable feelings of friendship amongst many of the people in these departments for one respondent. There were no friendship ties found between MDC and FTC, although one particular relationship was described as “getting on very well” on a personal level, with occasional conversations about “weekends and holidays” but this was the exception. One local authority representative described how they used their own personal network of professional ties to provide peer support and exchange of information to Frome’s NDP process.

More broadly there was an everyday disconnection between the LPA and wider environmental groups – one officer had no contact with environmental groups since starting their role and

²⁸⁴ One group within MDC was also reported to have missed their own deadline for responding to the Reg 16 draft of the plan, even though they had requested more time to consider the impact of the plan on MDC’s assets and land, which was felt to cause undue delays to the timeframe to hold a referendum.

another suggested that such engagement was channelled at the time of the Local Plan. The *Transition* movement was not apparent to one officer who saw transition as belonging the realm of development management. There was also doubt and hesitation about the roles to deliver sustainability objectives within government e.g. green infrastructure (Local authority representative; FTC representative).

9.1.6 Firefighting, reactivity and institutionalisation

Working within an institution, such as an LPA, was perceived by many as being conditioned by an institutional regime. Planners were considered to have a disconnect between the aesthetic quality of the built environment and a very “process-driven approach”, which became more entrenched as people move “higher up the food chain” in an LPA (IfF councillor). Some respondents had “almost exclusively” a planning background. Indeed, “conditioning” of previous roles within government or the development industry were considered hard to break down, even for actors that had themselves transitioned into New Economy arenas (IfF councillor; External New Economy actor).²⁸⁵ For instance, conditioned perspectives of “viability” for actors who had worked in the development industry conflicted with the views of those without planning experience who wanted to continually push the boundaries; those with experience were considered to be “entrenched” in regime thinking and unable to “cede control” (External New Economy actor).

There was a sense that the longer actors stay in regimes the harder it is to break out of institutionalised thinking. Being conditioned by a regime was felt to tame people’s capacity to be a “self-starter” and encourage people to follow directions (IfF councillor). One respondent blamed a lack of creativity on self-interest by managers in organisations who put personal ambitions before community interests (Consultant). Another described how the “machinery of government” was hard to shift:

“You know, [the steering group] got sucked into a sort of council state ... And I would say that's partly [some peoples'] background. But the whole thing did become a bit ordinary. Or more ordinary than it might have done.” (IfF councillor)

²⁸⁵ A lack of conditioning for relocalised ideas and culture was perceived as a block for Sustainable Frome engagement in the NDP process, see section 10.1.3.

"I find elsewhere, that institutional environments don't, aren't forming ground for creative ideas and innovation... [they see new ideas as] a threat to their authority, or they see it as a threat to their control. Or they see it as a threat to their ambitions... a lot of the people who are now sitting in management positions in these institutions have been there all their life. So, they have become institutionalised in a sense - that's my view. Erm, and it's quite difficult to break through that... they are ingrained or locked in the process." (Consultant).

Indeed, one respondent suggested that the interview²⁸⁶ had enabled time for reflection which they didn't normally get in their role due to "firefighting" and "hassles" dealt with on a daily basis which constrained their ability to be more proactive.

"[P]lanning is a mandatory function, but it is operating at such a shoestring that there is no way that they could do anything else other than simply firefight at the moment. Now, coupled with a culture that is risk-averse and obsessed with keeping taxes down as low as possible - that's really hard for, for the planning authority to do anything different to what it's doing at the moment." (FTC representative).

"I don't think it's the people themselves. I think it's the structure they find themselves in. Mendip as an organisation in itself would need to change quite dramatically... they're not able to be flexible. In terms of the communication, I think a lot of that is down to the fact that they are so busy. They don't have enough – I am sure they would like to speak to us more, they don't have the time to do it. And there's always the political side of things as well. Councillors, here and in other parish councils – people don't always get on. I suppose it's the nature of politics as well." (FTC representative).

One respondent with a varied skill set from a career in government suggested there were variations between which aspect of the planning "regime" one works within and their degree of flexibility; for instance, development and control planning was deemed restrictive and not proactive, compared to planning briefs which can encourage a more pro-active approach (Consultant).

²⁸⁶ Carried out for the empirical research for the case study.

The effect of changes in national policy was felt to put some advisory roles in an uncomfortable position, where role boundaries and ambitions were being reigned in; these actors were forced to take a more prescriptive stance towards more ambitious NDP policies due to government policy:

"[MDC] said what you can't do. As opposed to what I can help you with and what we could do. But I wouldn't want to, I wouldn't want to point blame at that [on] planner[s]." (FTC representative).

*"Mr. Pickles decided no more Code for Sustainable Homes... I've got to go back to [the NDP group and report that] their aspirations in relation to low-carbon...it is being called in and reined in by, by national policy... And I'm the one who's gonna tell them that, that, that is **part of my job to say you're being restricted** by what you can and can't put in a development plan document... that must be a real disappointment." (Consultant).*

*"They understood [OPL] but there were, well, **they saw their role** - and maybe because it was their role - er to, to, advise us on practicalities. To **'bring us down to earth', 'to keep us grounded'**. To tell us **'what would go through'** erm, and we employed them, we paid them. So, we, we're as much to blame. We could have said no, go away and we'll get somebody else. But I think by that time we were beginning to think Oh God we've got to get this [done]." (IfF councillor).*

One IfF respondent suggested if they had changed consultants this negative stance might have been remedied, but they were too far into the process to do so.

However, even within FTC there was a sense that some role occupiers were being constrained by the regime-like qualities of IfF, including overriding some individuals' own capacities to exercise autonomy in their roles. One consultant described how one role was particularly challenging because they had to act like "piggy in the middle" between FTC and the steering group and MDC through the NDP process, which some respondents felt unrecognised skills and expertise went underutilised. There was also an underlying sense of clarifying seniority and how some more junior staff were "managed" by others and keen to clarify the lines of authority within FTC:

"[I]t is a difficult thing, to sit in the middle of all these competing demands and aspirations... And, er, to be able to deal with that is, is quite challenging and I think [they're] making an excellent job of it, yeah." (Consultant).

*"[Their] **hands are tied**, and [they're being] [short pause] pressured from several angles... [FTC were] under such great pressure to, to meet their deadlines and submit that I think that [they are], you know, **possibly not allowed to actually use [their] expertise [laughs] as much as [they] [intake of breath] possibly could.**" (Local authority representative).*

Meanwhile, landowners, developers and MDC were seen as less supportive of the plan (FTC representative). For instance:

*"Developers, any **developers** who've got any, any thoughts of putting a planning application in the life of this **have been resisting this at all turns [laughs]"** (IfF councillor).*

9.1.7 The machinations of politics and discord between levels of government

The differences in political approaches between governments and the constraints of other tiers of authority were felt to circumvent the intentions of the NDP and IfF more broadly in achieving purposeful, communitarian and relocalised development. There was a feeling that English localism didn't go far enough to realign local interests and powers to effect decisions that respond to local need, citing European devolved models as best practice. National government policy was seen to prop up district councils without sufficient financial mechanisms to distribute benefits from housebuilding in situ, which was suggested a reason why NDPs are "not going to work", such as the allocation of funds from the New Homes Bonus which "comes in [to MDC] and then it stops"²⁸⁷ - a conflict FTC had "**hit**" with MDC which was a "major bone of contention" (IfF councillor).²⁸⁸ Moreover, LPAs were considered to use a "tick box" approach to engagement with lower tiers of government:

²⁸⁷ The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. It is based on the amount of extra council tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use. FTC were contending that MDC would receive £10m up to 2026 and that Frome should receive its share of funds arising from new development through the New Homes Bonus (demanding £2.5m for 2,500 houses between 2010 – 2026, not just a £50k legacy fund for Frome). A petition to this effect was signed by Frome residents and addressed to the Chair of MDC and can be found at <http://m.mendip.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2880&p=0> (last accessed 16/1/19).

²⁸⁸ See other references to "brick walls" noted in footnote number 288.

*"We realised that despite all the rhetoric about [the] Big Society and empowering neighbourhoods, about them controlling their own development areas. Were **hugely constrained by other tiers of authority**... So actually, what we can do is quite limited by that. **And the politics between Frome and the District, who are the plan - housing authority - are very different.**" (Consultant).*

*"It's so maddening. ... There's no doubt that local authorities are needed. It's a necessary way of getting some things done. **But it's a really hard way to get things done at all. It's more often used as a way of stopping things happening than making things happen.** That's what we have tried to change with our group. And we have had a lot of success. But it's been uphill." (IfF councillor).*

*"[L]ocal democracy doesn't work, across the country, the layers above can't work because **there's no way that they can** - where do they get their information? Because if you've lost touch with people's views and needs and all the rest - then as you work your way up, **how can they possibly function? Because they've got no way of knowing what's happening, even between district and town - I don't think. Unless you've got a vibrant, thriving engagement at a local level.**" (IfF councillor)*

"When they get back to their desk, as I say they've got their little tick boxes and the tick boxes can't cover the district as a whole as every place is an individual." (FTC representative).

The scale of Frome as a town and the configuration of political arrangements was also a factor in degrees of autonomy relative to the city and the town scale:

*"[We've been] working with Bristol council who've just been amazing. I mean, we thought Frome were great - Bristol City Council, because they've got the Mayor, and **the Mayor seems to have a lot of power, erm, just making stuff happen – you know, they have so much more autonomy** - which obviously they do because they're a City Council and **they don't have this three-tier system.**" (Local group representative).*

Politics more generally was felt to be disconnected between local and other levels of government, which IfF was seeking to address through a search for a more devolved polity and resisting attempts by higher tiers of government to "brow beat" them. Only a sea change in government – staff and elected members - was perceived to facilitate an improvement in FTC-MDC relations by two Frome-based respondents.

*"I think there's a level of exhaustion erm, with the reluctance to work with [MDC] - because of being pushed back so many times, of working with the local planning authority because it's not progressive itself. We may be radical, but actually we ought to be normal. . . unless there's a completely different council at the district council we will never be seen as normal. . . Erm, so I think there's a, there's a need for a kind of a, no a need for a radical shake up in principle authorities. Certainly, in Somerset. . . . If we can't rely on the principal authorities to protect the environment the only way we can do it is through our own policies and our own plans . . . **We can't rely on anyone else to do that**. . . [any flavour of party-political national government has an] obsession with money and economics - economic growth is the only thing that matters [pause]. Similarly, at a principal authority level. **So, the only opportunity we've got is to try and change the way things happen in this town**. . . We really want to challenge this sort of acceptance of, of, of poor design, poor development - erm, in our town, then we can do that. You know, that's possible. **And won't tolerate and be brow-beaten by er a principal authority that's [sic] only objective is to reduce taxes.**" (FTC representative).*

9.1.8 Mediators and intermediaries - "Getting Frome" as a conduit for positive relationships

The extent to which individuals were able to *understand* Frome played a vital role as a conduit for positive relationships in the NDP – and beyond. A former MDC Planning Policy Officer was considered to have a positive connection with FTC, partly because he was based in and grew up in Frome and "got" and "understood" what the town was about.²⁸⁹ This was deemed a quality relationship whereby people could "pick up the phone" to contact MDC. There was a perceived rupture in these relationships where turnaround in staff affected relational ties when they left nine months into the NDP process, which was considered to be a loss among Frome-based respondents (although the degree of substitution of support by their successor was not universal):

"[T]o begin with [relationships with MDC were] really, really good. . . and they really wanted us to succeed." (lff councillor).

²⁸⁹ This individual also played a key role in the Saxonvale masterplan and was involved in other initiatives that cultivated strong, shared ties between MDC and FTC and the Frome community, including the Community Plan (Vision4Frome).

*"[They] were interested and cared and attended our meetings. I don't think anybody ever turned up after [they] left... **we were very much on our own**...none of the meetings that I went to there was anybody from Mendip...at the beginning there was, there was quite a lot of interest but once that individual left that was it." (lff councillor).²⁹⁰*

*"And they appointed someone to take his place who wasn't [pause] familiar with Mendip and kind of **had to start from scratch**. And didn't have that in-depth knowledge of the policies already in the Local Plan. And **at that point we lost a level of support**, I don't want to say enthusiasm" (FTC representative).*

"[They were] very supportive, and I think the current [person] is also equally supportive." (Local group representative).

Crucially, there was also a sense that facilitation of key processes ought to have been carried out by a Frome-based individual; one facilitator's lack of prior connection to Frome was seen as a constraint, emphasising how a more procedural, formal approach didn't resonate with Frome:

*"I think it was because [they were] a **going through a formalised way of doing things which meant the connectivity with people in Frome was not particularly significant**. [They] didn't know much about Frome, if anything...I don't think we were short of [Frome-based] people who could do it either." (Local group representative).*

Connections to Frome were also felt to affect levels of support to the town's green and progressive agenda. Being Frome-based was considered to help with bridging the broader political divisions between the town and other levels of government, for instance the MP David Warburton (a prospective candidate at the time of the interview) was described as "very Frome minded" (Sustainable Frome spin off group). People outside of Frome were perceived as more resistant to placemaking initiatives, such the proposed Boyles Cross shared space scheme. Indeed, a national level actor working with independent councillors suggested local roots is a factor for the longevity of independent councillors, who tend to "hold their own" and good independents are hard to "dislodge" (National independent political actor).

²⁹⁰ This wasn't necessarily the case but could have been a perception due to not being attending meetings at the same time, although there were conflicts between the NDP process and the Local Plan.

FTC's enrolment into the CRtBO process led them to follow up on an idea by a member of a local group to explore the idea of an Implementation Prospectus as a roadmap for development on Saxonvale and to research aspirations of landowners and stakeholders on the conditions they had for development and the delivery mechanisms to achieve them (the prospectus was formally approved in March 2015 by FTC). A Frome-based contracted consultant had senior planning and regeneration experience working with LPAs; they explored an NDO as a mechanism to navigate multiple landownership and include broader FTC placemaking objectives to facilitate the "intentions" of the policies set out in Frome's NDP.²⁹¹ One actor also suggested to split the site and move away from comprehensive development to fracture commercial (profit-driven) vested interests and encourage alignment of local interests and traders, circumventing commercial landowners over local or MDC-owned land²⁹².

Commissioning the prospectus was felt to "shake things up a little bit" and "change the view" (FTC representative) on existing development models. Enrolling the support of MDC was considered a means to help invoke statutory powers to change balance of power between landowners e.g. Article 4 directions²⁹³ and Section 215²⁹⁴ and to partner with different levels of government.²⁹⁵ Having an experienced mediator was felt to be able to unlock historical political tensions between the two levels of government and to focus on concrete actions to help "drive" FTC goals for Saxonvale with a "little bit of a push", and in partnership with number of actors, working "under the wire" to develop an alternative approach. Whilst an NDO was not pursued – mainly due to the process having a similar level of complexity to the NDP process – conversations with MDC arising as a result of this work helped to progress discussions on the way forward on Saxonvale to help find a "complementary not a competitive role":

²⁹¹ For instance, by extending out to the town centre (e.g. public realm objectives in the conservation area, such as changing signage or using the frontages more for social activity).

²⁹² In particular, the consultant proposed that government loan funding (Local Enterprise Partnership and HCA) could be used for decontamination, decommissioning, servicing and infrastructure and pay back money when the development makes a profit, to enable development without a high expectation of immediate profits (as shareholder model often dictates). In conjunction with other mechanisms, a brownfield tax could be imposed on land to encourage developers to bring it forward or to take an annuity rather than a capital sum on profits arising from development to reverse the practice of landbanking to achieve higher future returns for shareholders. Indeed, they suggested that any profits could be ringfenced for the community this could help to formalise relocalisation. However, the contractual obligations of pension scheme to maximise profit makes it hard to engage in discussion of alternatives with pension funds (landowner on Saxonvale).

²⁹³ Article 4 directions are made by the LPA which remove or restrict the use of otherwise permitted development rights.

²⁹⁴ A Section 215 can be issued to a landowner to force remediation of a site on or adjacent to land owned by the council.

²⁹⁵ For instance, to seek funds to unlock develop such as the Local Economic Partnership and the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

*"[B]oth organisations have got ambitions, the way forward here is **finding a complementary not a competitive role**. And what we need to do in respect to Saxonvale is collaborate, **properly collaborate...** **trying to move both parties on** to say 'look, whatever's happened in the past we are where we are now, **what do you want to happen next?** Erm, what we need to do is **focus on what we can do and pursue those actions as quickly and as strongly as we possibly can...** the Implementation Prospectus...now **shows that there is another way**. And **the burden doesn't just fall on [MDC]**. The Town Council is prepared to put some resources and some time into it as well and so are some of the landowners.... I think if, if, this NDO doesn't happen for whatever reason then **it's obviously moved on the debate** anyway so that **the context is different** going forward. Decisions might not be the same as they might have been a year ago." (Consultant).*

Indeed, the presence of a supportive Conservative MP (on green and Frome-based issues) had partly mediated the relationship between FTC and MDP to reshuffle the historical impasse of MDC (as not supportive of FTC) and to voice new policy ideas to bolster relocalised localism at national level, which in part may be due to the gains made by the Green party – and IfF – in the 2015 election:

*"I mean one of our asks of [Warburton], is can you **get the Conservative group on Mendip to be a bit more proactive** and yesterday's meeting would suggest maybe [that's helped], **or whether it's our nagging, or our diplomacy** or quite what but **things do seem to be moving** which is good..." (Consultant).*

9.2 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of formal ties between FTC, MDC and the NDP steering group within the administrative arrangements of the state and its related formalised entities. The findings reveal that the NDP process led to actors to become disaffected with the protracted process and "stronger" members of the group to walk away. Meanwhile, while consultants were enrolled as a strategy to influence relocalised objectives these actors did not always resonate with these goals, the agency of these actors to support these objectives was compromised by policy conditions or the governance of these ties was centralised. Ties between the FTC and MDC were not enhanced by the NDP process, but were seen to be disrupted due to a perceived lack of shared knowledge and appreciation of Frome or through the enrolment of consultants in the process; this countered the LPA's influence over the content of the plan, rendering the process

lacking in synchronism as a potential conduit to improved niche-regime relations. Indeed, very strong negative terms were used to describe MDC (the LPA), including a perceived institutionalisation and conditioning of regime role holders, indicating a lack of trust, oppositional (party-political) identities and cultural frameworks between government entities. Meanwhile, the administrative arrangements between tiers of government was perceived to obfuscate information flows and alignment of capacity and energy for relocalised placemaking. However, there was evidence that influence by Frome-based intermediaries was moving on historical tensions from a competitive to a collaborative way of working. The next chapter continues to explore the RQ.3, focusing on the *informal* (i.e. Frome-based) relational ties within Frome's placemaking networks, the NDP process and citizen engagement with planning and placemaking.

10 Navigating the politics of subversive localism d): relational ties in and around Frome’s placemaking networks

This chapter is structured around two themes (9 and 10):

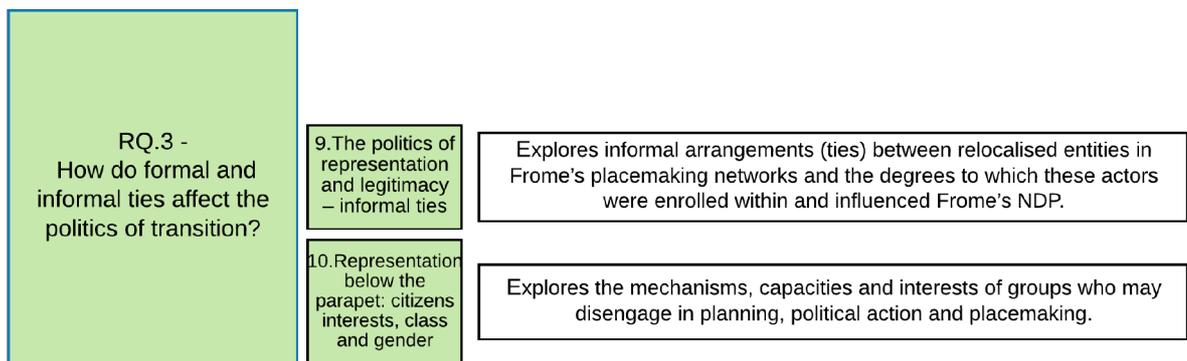


Figure 10-1. Chapter 10: thematic code and description

This chapter responds to RQ.3 *How do formal and informal ties affect the politics of transition?* and explores the types of relationship that are embedded within Frome’s relocalised placemaking networks (i.e. outside government spaces) and how these more *informal* ties moved within the NDP process as an instance of niche-regime interaction. In doing so, it reveals the strategies of relocalised entities to influence the plan. The chapter also includes respondent views on the challenge to engage more ‘ordinary’ citizens who likely do not self-identify as being interested in planning and political action and how this affects the legitimacy of relocalised action.

10.1 Theme 9. The politics of representation and legitimacy - informal ties (Frome's placemaking networks and engagement with the NDP)

The theme of representation was reflected in several specific domains – placemaking networks, (party-) political representation (see section 7.3), representation in the NDP (detailed in chapter 9 and this section) and non-representation in public and political life (see section 10.2).

Representation in placemaking networks was characterised by a limited group of people who referred to themselves as those with their “head above the parapet” who had strong affective ties in virtue of their love for Frome and were considered to expedite placemaking outcomes in the town (see also chapter 6).

Many of the respondents with their head above the parapet indicated that they wore at least “two hats” owing to the multiple membership of different groups in the town (Sustainable Frome spin off group) and referred to themselves as the “usual suspects” a well-known term in planning parlance.

“We haven't formally got a brief, but it just happens that we are spread around different activities around the town.” (Sustainable Frome member).

Moreover, being involved in multiple local resilience initiatives was felt a way of actualising interlocking green, social justice and civic engagement interests (Sustainable Frome member), reflected by the range of organisations in the town. This was seen as not a purposeful endeavour but borne out of being community-minded which helped to constitute these people as “part of the group...we are community-driven” (Local group representative). Moreover, having a clear and strong view about issues of importance was also felt to increase social bonds between them:

“[I am] part of the people who are here that have got personality to stand up and speak clearly [in the town]” (Local group representative).

Such engagement also provided a sense of purpose, as being “very nurturing and fulfilling” (Sustainable Frome spin off group). Some respondents used phrases such as “sold my soul”²⁹⁶ and giving one’s “heart and soul” to indicate a sense of offering part of one’s self to the

²⁹⁶ Normally implying reprehensible behaviour, but used here to suggest they had taken sides with FTC over any other interests through their contractual obligations.

community cause, while one respondent cited Foucault's article "Foucault on the political function of the intellectual" in a 'Radical Philosophy' series (Foucault, 1977) whereby intellectuals have a duty to support their community (Local group representative). Respondents also indicated how it was hard to say no to new initiatives or to disengage with them once they have become enrolled (Sustainable Frome spin off group; IfF councillor).

These people were also deemed to be well-connected and able to leverage necessary resources with high levels of both social and human capital²⁹⁷ – including time, skills and experience - for positive placemaking (External New Economy actor; IfF councillor; Sustainable Frome spin off group; Sustainable Frome member; IfF councillor; Local group representative). Meanwhile, the extent to which some of these actors were successful at publicising their actions in the local media and Frome's placemaking networks were considered "very good at appearing in the newspaper" (Sustainable Frome member), which was also deemed a reason for elevating the prominence of some green initiatives.

However, the number of people who are prepared to participate in civic life to this extent was deemed to be from a "limited pool":

*"I think, you know, it's not that big a town. The kind of [short pause] people who are quite green and want to get involved in town council politics, were us [laughs]... Because you know you're giving a lot of your time, at the town council you're not at all paid. Erm, [pause, tuts] you know **there's gonna be a limited pool people, who are good enough, want to put themselves forward, and have the time to do so.**" (IfF councillor).*

Indeed, a small nucleus of active people was considered by one respondent to expedite positive impacts, without being drawn into the "machinations of local government and politics":

*"I think in any town there, there are always, there's a limited group of people who want to kind of **stick their heads above the parapet**. And the thing is if you're with one of those your head above the parapet you see all the other people with the head above the parapet. So you just see those people and it's the same faces that crop up all the time... you know, the things that I'm interested in and that make the town Frome and make it a really interesting place... ..[in most towns] you find it's a relatively small group of people who are really making it happen... - it's almost better when it works like that because otherwise it just gets caught up*

²⁹⁷ See Putnam (1993) and Flora et al (1996).

in these machinations of, as I say, local government and politics, and that seems to bog everything down and nothing really happens. (Local group representative).

The multiple membership of these actors in the town and the intersection between informal and formal ties helped to create overlapping networks, which also helped to build the foundations of direct access to and shared understanding between placemaking networks and government when IfF took control of the town council. As one respondent suggests:

“A key factor in the way Frome has become more active in the areas you are interested in, and the areas that are strongly written into the neighbourhood plan, is because the group – a substantial number of the group [Sustainable Frome] – that were involved in environmental issues decided the town council were not taking Frome in the way that they wanted.” (Local group representative).

The Community Plan became a conduit for green issues that were corralled by Sustainable Frome throughout the process; i) contributions from Sustainable Frome actively fed into the plan at the initial phases of the process when the plan was instigated by Katy Duke, ii) when a Sustainable Frome member became chair and iii) when Macfadyen latterly became part of Frome's Community Plan Management Group and latterly as chair.²⁹⁸ The strength and activity of members to vocalise green issues lead to a skewed green tint which later set the tone for the conditions for the emergence of IfF (discussed in section 7.1):

“[The Community Plan was] heavily skewed in a green direction. Because, because Sustainable Frome was so well organised, basically - there were lots of members, meeting regularly, so when the Vision4Frome consultation came up, Sustainable Frome took a much bigger role in that than is really representative within the population.” (IfF councillor).

“[All the green issues were] picked up and pushed forward by Sustainable Frome and more importantly, the people involved in Sustainable Frome. So a lot of what is in the Community Plan, in that section of land use, waste, energy and food was in there because of the consultation responses from this large group involved in environmental issues...3,000 of them – we got 3,000 comments...But the fact of life is the majority of the environmental stuff in there came from a relatively small group of people, but who were very, very active...we are only where we are because of a number of people, because of the demography that has

²⁹⁸ See section 5.3.3.

grown up in Frome over the last decade or two, where people have come in with environmental interests and the most obvious one is Peter Macfadyen. Because he started Sustainable Frome and it struck a chord with most of the New Frome.” (Local group representative).

When a number of Sustainable Frome members became IfF councillors, this was deemed to help forge close ties to FTC. One respondent described the bonds between actors as “incestuous” due to intersecting, multiple linkages – both between individuals, and partners, who shared a “love” of Frome and a common vision of how they sought reinforced positive placemaking in Frome (Sustainable Frome spin off group). For instance, when Macfadyen disenrolled from Sustainable Frome, his wife took over the role of coordinating it. Friendship was a key factor within Frome’s relocalised placemaking network, describing other individuals in the network as “extremely good friends” (Sustainable Frome member) or “good friends” – friendships which cut across Sustainable Frome, FTC and other environmental groups.²⁹⁹ Some partners (couples) were found in a number of instances to share complementary professions, e.g. planner/builder, architect/architect, green pioneer/creative with one respondent describing one particular couple as a “powerhouse couple” (Sustainable Frome member). Two relocalised actors also lived next door to one another.

“[T]here will always be a connection between Sustainable Frome and the town council, I think.” (Sustainable Frome member).

“[Intake of breath] [S]o it's all terribly incestuous, isn't it? (laughs). Er, we're all, you know, we're all good buddies, you know! And the thing is, that's what Frome is like. And that we all love, absolutely love Frome - are passionate about Frome 'cause it's a fantastic place. And so, we've all got very much the same idea about what will be good for Frome. So, we work together in all sorts of different ways. That's what I meant about the networks that exist. Both personally and organisationally, to, er, help all that. You know, and I love this place. So, why wouldn't I do anything that I can... And that's what, that's what's actually wonderful about Frome is that there are all these networks - both you know, individual friendships and then organisational ones - or semi-organisational. Er, that have this whole, this whole sort of area of interest of [intake of breath], of kind of local community actions and organisations and, on at every, on about every area that you can think of.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

²⁹⁹ One respondent who reviewed this chapter was keen to point out that whilst lasting friendships were built through Sustainable Frome, they questioned whether such enduring ties would be the result of engagement with all fellow IfF councillors. Moreover, that these friendships were built *through* Sustainable Frome, and did not precede it.

These personal ties between “good friends” who work within different local groups were summarised as “people links, not structural links” (Sustainable Frome member), which helped to engender reciprocity. There was a sense of loyalty and support from these groups:

“[I]f we needed them, they’d be there.” (Sustainable Frome member).

“We are supported and supportive of what [FTC does] and they of us.” (Local group representative).

For actors that didn’t go so far as calling each other friends, there was a degree of felt appreciation between them (Local group representative). Although interestingly some positive associations were not always reciprocated.

One respondent described these ties as “multifaceted” - a combination of longer-term relationships, pre-dating professional involvement with FTC but also strengthened through a continuation of these relationships (friendships) in a formal context. Importantly, some individuals were friends before any professional involvement. Familiarity helped to strengthen the ties between placemaking groups and actors to navigate the state (the town council) when IFF occupied power as these community-government links were channelled through existing personal ties and a shared visions of Frome’s development trajectory. One respondent with pre-existing ties in virtue of previous placemaking talked of their relief when IFF came to power and a shared frustration with formal processes to effect change. Although having direct access to FTC led to one respondent feeling they had to keep a “low-profile” as opposed to having their head above the parapet (Local group representative).

*“I was just very relieved when they arrived, and, and the independents, er, were **a bunch of people that many of whom I already knew, and I knew they were kind of the movers and shakers in the town anyway.**” (Local group representative)*

*“I have a professional relationship with - so I have done work for the council as well. So, erm, it’s, it’s one of those strange relationships. **It’s kind of multifaceted really.** But erm, I’ve been... **I’ve known them both for quite a long time, erm, personally before any professional involvement.** So erm, yeah, I would call them friends, yeah.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).*

*“You know, we are good friends. **They are people that you can work with, that you talk about and joke and laugh about and so what would be the best thing to do, how can we work this***

out ... if I wanted to know how best to approach the council or who to go to discuss certain aspects, you know he is a friend, a personal friend. So, **I could ask him and say, 'Who is best to talk to?' or that kind of thing, or 'What should we do?'** He said, 'Oh you should come and do a ten-minute presentation to the council just to say what your interests are.' You know? **So, in that sense it helped work with the inevitable structures of local governments.**" (Local group representative).

"I mean I have a good sort of working relationships with all those people [in FTC]. Erm, so that **if I want to I can pick up to the phone and speak to them.** You know, we know each other sufficiently well through all the things we have done to, be, you know, **we don't have to explain very much** - we just - so that's all [pause] good." (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

"And I think the thing that I found quite refreshing about Frome, erm has been that the town council - because **it's independent and it's quite progressive, they've been quite open to [shared ideas].** And then me as an individual – **I think because I've been able to sort of push things through, just making things happen without having to, [slight pause] having, having to argue about it with 2000 people, whatever - just do it.** ... I think it was just a meeting of minds... And, and yet and yet [lff] just **had a similar mindset**, so it wasn't something that we ever sat down and really discussed, I think they were **as frustrated as I was by the [pause] pace of change, and, and they had great ideas,** and we were all really in a way **working towards the same goal.** And they, and they have been brilliant from, in that perspective... And then, and people do complain - I mean you do **have to develop a bit of a thick skin.** And I've **had to develop quite low-profile** - I keep quite a low-profile in town, which is odd." (Local group representative).

A respondent described the interaction between relocalised networks as "waves" that intersect through one another or that might go around one another.

"[Relocalised entities] create sort of **waves that might go round these and might go through them, but might go through there or might go round them.**... It's actually quite hard [pause] in a way [pause]; various things that are happening in Frome are obviously not happening independently but the ways in which they are interacting with one another aren't clear either... It's, it's almost, it's, **it's got to the stage where [long pause] rather than being a sort of concentrated minority of things, it's exploded and it's everywhere and it's therefore less tangible, somehow...** and it's wonderfully exciting and it throws up issues all at once." (Sustainable Frome member).

10.1.1 Community engagement in Frome's NDP

The NDP intended to build on the significant engagement that had been carried out for Frome's Community Plan and other MDC-led consultation exercises which were considered to "short circuit" the consultation process (Sustainable Frome member). Notably, the Community Plan was believed to be a "solid foundation" upon which to base Frome's NDP particularly because the former was seen as a broad and inclusive "open-ended" community engagement exercise which "intended to encapsulate as many of the community – including Old Frome – and New Frome and any other Frome wished to say. And wished to import." (Local group representative).

The experience of community participation in the NDP process varied for respondents, with some feeling that they were actively excluded from formally participating, or on the other hand, gaining frictionless access to the NDP. Some community groups with previous experience and interest in planning were enrolled to the NDP in a public-facing capacity, with more informal discussions for those who wanted to keep a lower profile in the town (Local group representative).

However, the decision to keep the governance restricted led some to question the transparency and openness of the steering group, with some respondents lamenting their lack of active involvement in the process:

"Then the town council had no interest to me being party to [the NDP]. Which seemed a bit odd... 'We've got to keep the group small and effective, so we don't want lots of other people. So, you can have your chance in the Citizens Panels'... it had nothing to do with [party] politics. I think it was they had a particular idea of what was in it ... I just think they wanted to do their own thing. Because Org J, the person or the people involved, were very much, involved in setting up IfF as well. So, it was a little bit incestuous. They presumably wanted to put their character on what was going on." (Local group representative).

There was also a sense that consultation of the usual suspects ratified the personal agendas of IfF councillors without a broader endorsement of the community.

"Erm, it was at a time when I was too busy to be involved, though I would have liked to. And I think I asked at a later stage, can I come along to a Citizens Panel and I was told, 'oh they've

*done everything now - that's all been done'.... it's quite **officer-led, officer and councillor-led...** the council [is] **being self-referential**...Not engaging sufficiently, I don't think" (Sustainable Frome member).*

These two respondents were either purposely directed to input through the Citizens Panels or were unable to attend them due to conflicting priorities, despite feeling that they had valuable skills and relevant experience that they could contribute to the plan. They respondents reported feeling "outside" or excluded from the process at both an organisational and a personal level (Sustainable Frome member). The overwhelming representation of FTC members or IfF councillors on the steering group (all members except the Chair of the local Civic Society) led to a perception of secrecy, of (again) "incestuous" formal ties (Local group representative), unidirectional engagement and a lack of ownership of the community around the process (Consultant).

Despite being heralded as a success by both the Examiner's report and MDC respondents, the Citizens Panels averaged about 30 attendees per five panels and were seen to be unrepresentative of wider social groups in the town owing to relatively low turnout (Consultant; IfF councillor), despite using methods such as randomised leaflet drops in key areas. One respondent who attended the Citizens Panels referred to them as "jolly" and "fun evenings sticking bits of paper everywhere."

Another respondent suggested the "usual suspects" accounted for 90% of those who attended the Citizens Panels, despite their intention of being open to the wider community (Local group representative), whilst one estimated a figure between 20-40% who were not "part of the group" (Local group representative), which was felt to be disappointing.³⁰⁰ Here, the usual suspects were felt to be actors that were strongly motivated and passionate about planning and placemaking or as part of a formal group that encouraged their representation (FTC representative), contrasting with people who tended to be disengaged in planning consultations. In recounting a debrief on the Citizens Panels with another attendee, one respondent said:

*"[W]e probably said similar things and afterwards I might have said 'Well I'm not sure that went totally well because **all the usual suspects were there.**' And he said 'Yes, **but that's the way life goes in Frome.**'" (Local group representative).*

³⁰⁰ This high proportion of the usual suspects was countered by the NDP chair, however. A discrepancy that could have been due to these respondents attending different Citizens Panels or knowing different types of people.

*“But actually, the reason those people are in the Org J³⁰¹ and erm, the Org AA and things like that [pause] is **because they really care. So, they will come to meetings** and if you try and get people who don't normally engage in that kind of thing to come along it's really difficult.” (IfF councillor).*

The influence of FTC (under IfF) on the engagement of the usual suspects was deemed minimal since even if IfF had not taken forward NDP, these people would have been involved in the process, such is their commitment (FTC representative). One respondent relayed an account that indicated the usual suspects might have gate crashed the Citizens Panels and sought to control aspects of the process, which unsettled some (novice) participants (IfF councillor). Although one consultant said they didn't recall that environmental groups were “over-represented” nor that they were given a steer to focus on environmental issues in their role in the process.

*“I think they could have still said whatever they wanted to say, but **in any group dynamic you get the stronger characters who have a particular agenda... And often that agenda is taken up and pressed during group situations**. ... one or two other people had a very specific concern and felt that their specific concern wasn't necessarily given very much weight [whilst sustainability concerns were] often pressed to the point where some of the other concerns didn't register quite so significantly.” (Local group representative).*

*“I'm aware that quite often you do get your usual suspects coming along to meetings and sometimes they can be a nuisance and sometimes they can, they can ratify everything that you want to do. And in this case, it just so works out that because **there's lots of trendy, interesting people living here that are, er, as part of the Sustainable Frome network or Transition Network, that they are, they are applauding what, what the er, erm, what the council is doing** which is great but I'm just a bit concerned about, as I keep saying, about them taking everybody else with them... to me **the way you do something is almost equally important as the end result**, if you see what I'm saying.” (Sustainable Frome member).*

Moreover, the Citizens Panels were felt to be too prescriptive (exploring the relevance of the Community Plan's priorities)³⁰² and not bottom-up, while others felt that the process was very open indicating a different experience of participation. One respondent felt that the Citizen

³⁰¹ Org A and Org J are anonymised ids given to two particular Frome-based groups (see section 4.2.3).

³⁰² Which was the consultant's brief.

Panels were too premature and lacked a vision, objectives and draft policies to allow for a richer debate (Sustainable Frome member).

*"I think it was er, you know, fairly, er, intensive and fairly thorough but I was never entirely comfortable with the um, with the way **that the emphasis was, was narrowed down** to er the Citizens' Panel having to [breath] look at spec - you know, **half a dozen specific issues...**[breath] I'd have much preferred a um, **a free ranger approach with ideas coming from**, with [breath] issues coming from the Citizens' Panel rather than, um, perhaps being the Citizens' Panel being given certain issues to look at..." (Local group representative).*

*"[I]t was a real blank canvas... We could make our own stuff to put on the plan to say, 'This area would be good for this'. There was myself and other people saying 'Yeah, let's make the whole of the river a water park.' Well you know **just like literally kind of free fall**... But I think as in any workshop with members of the public they worked to try and ensure everybody had a voice and were heard. Yeah, I don't think there was anybody that really screwed the tenor of it or the way it went." (Citizens Panel attendee).*

One respondent painted a picture of transience and impermanence relating to the Citizens Panels which were "were flash bang gone" (Local group representative) while another FTC respondent indicated they could be returned to at a later date (FTC representative). There was a mismatch between the extent to which the NDP process reflected the more progressive approach of FTC under IfF, with one respondent suggesting that the process became "too ordinary", "lacklustre" or "a very standard way" (IfF councillor; FTC representative; Sustainable Frome member), despite World Café (a governance technology of *Transition*) being used in the Citizens Panels.

Any engagement with or through MDC was deemed as "dead boring" and not reaching beyond "anyone other than who you'd expect them to engage with" (IfF councillor).

10.1.2 The flow of relocalised ideas in Frome's NDP: Self-build, cohousing and One Planet Living (OPL)

Frome's NDP sought to use rural exception sites as a mechanism to lock-in affordability in perpetuity, in the words of one consultant, creating "collective structures for living...to be a

robust, defence policy at one level, against the marauding housebuilders” (Consultant).³⁰³ Indeed, government policy on self-build and community housing at the time was becoming more favourable towards such schemes.³⁰⁴

Within the NDP consultation channels, a sense of (informal) understanding cultivated within Frome’s placemaking networks flowed into the (formal) structures of the NDP to influence both self-build and cohousing in the plan. There was a lack of tension and seamless connections between New Economy actors which was considered to feel like working in a town council “without opposition” given the extent to which some actors “chimed” or were “very much aligned in our thinking” on shared development philosophies to include in the plan (Consultant) and beyond. One consultant indicated that their own personal ties to Sustainable Frome led to an introduction to FTC and their contracted role since there was mutual alignment to use the NDP to instigate development alternatives. Moreover, an FTC staff member was also an active member of Sustainable Frome and had previous experience of working on OPL, which later became a framework through which to explore shared Sustainable Frome- FTC objectives.

“Everybody I think had a meeting of minds [on cohousing and self-build] ... [Steering group members] were all singing from the same hymn sheet. Erm, so it was very much a, you know, it was like working with a town without an opposition. ... I think everybody was so aligned in what we were trying to do for the plan [it wasn’t an issue that some people in IfF were less engaged than others].” (Consultant).

*“[The steering group] were very much, er, prepared to listen to and incorporate what we wanted to say within their, you know their wider picture of neighbourhood planning. So, **there wasn’t any tension... It was more that they wanted to understand exactly what co-housing was and to hear it from us then to include it.**” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).*

Notably, pre-existing ties between some steering group members and the cohousing group led to greater levels of “receptivity” to include cohousing in the plan. Pre-existing ties between FTC and IfF councillors and another group consulted in the plan also helped to create an “open

³⁰³ However, the Examiner did not consider the stipulation of all develops should have at least 5% self-build as viable or justified by the evidence presented (see Cheesley, 2016, paras 77-93).

³⁰⁴ Though self-build and community housing were not mention in the 2012 NPFF, but it was included in the government’s 2011 Housing Strategy. Planning Practice Guidance states: “the Government is keen to support and encourage individuals and communities who want to build their own homes, and is taking proactive steps to stimulate the growth of the self build market” (cited in Cheesley, 2016, para 77). Several measures were introduced including a self and custom build register and latterly the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. For more information see: <https://nacsba.org.uk/> (last accessed 4.6.19).

connection” which led to mutual support and resources to fund a study that was used as part of the evidence base in the plan.

“...[B]ut [the plan] has a very strong commitment to community housing and cohousing within that. So, our consultation's you know, successful to that extent. But then **it was bound to be** because the people that are, like A204, erm, and others, other councillors and officers **are sympathetic** and indeed, you know, **would like to live in co-housing themselves**. So, erm, it wasn't a difficult thing to get past them... But [pause], but, before the neighbourhood planning consultation got under way [pause] we had - the cohousing group - had already talked to individual members. In fact, [a member of the steering group is], a close personal friend of myself and the other people involved in cohousing, knew plenty about cohousing and came to talk to our meetings... So, there was a good deal of knowledge and, er, you know, receptivity already there.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

“I had made contact with A152 on the [town] council and I knew **a few other people who had become councillors who were friends of mine** which was a nice friendly relationship... we approached the independents **who were already open to a connection.**” (Local group representative).

However, one consultant practically dismissed the idea of self-build as not being a practical option nor deemed as something that came out strongly within the consultation.

“In the focus groups **[self-build] was mentioned, but only in passing really**. Erm, I think people, I think people **don't really see it as a realistic option**. I think they like the idea of it, but when it comes to reality I think they think oh, that **can never work.**” (Consultant).

Regarding cohousing:

“Erm, again no, I think again, nothing specific. I, I think [the Citizen Panels] were sort of talking more in general terms when it came to housing, erm, more about [hesitates] I think for people we were identifying potential demographic groups that required housing, rather than the types of housing that would be put in.” (Consultant).

However, one respondent felt that self-build was being “pushed” onto the plan and through the Citizens Panel they attended, and indeed one consultant indicated they themselves were also “pushing” self-build onto NDP clients due to its increasing prominence. An event on self-build and community-led housing at Rook Lane Chapel in September 2013 featured Kevin McCloud to

corral enthusiasm on self-build, and was linked to a strong pre-existing commitment to include self-build in the plan:

*"[Self-build has] always been something that has been very, er, much um, I think **very, very close to the heart of the town council** ... And um, to others [involved in Frome's placemaking networks] ... We always knew what we wanted to achieve. What we needed was the evidence, to support the fact that it's not just something I think's a good idea, but we had a survey of people interested in self-build and we got 100 people who signed up within a day to say yes, we'd love to get involved in self-build and community housing." (FTC representative).³⁰⁵*

*"The emphasis was **being pushed towards self-build, because it was a narrow group and was being pushed towards the lff agenda. Which was very strongly environmental.**" (Citizens Panel Attendee).*

However, there were concerns that tying CLTs to cohousing this might possibly "kill" any meaningful cohousing scheme as it would compromise the viability of the scheme (Sustainable Frome spin off group). Meanwhile self-build was only focused on individual dwellings rather than broader issues of landscape and the "fabric of the community" inherent to cohousing (Sustainable Frome spin off group). The Examiner removed any reference of cohousing in their report to be "community housing" instead³⁰⁶, thus reducing the scope of cohousing even further within the plan's policies. Meanwhile, the issues raised in section 8.1.1. hampered the actualisation of any cohousing scheme in the town.

The economic constraints in obtaining a site were compounded due to a lack of ties with the LPA. One respondent suggested that no ties had been forged between the cohousing group and the LPA as they didn't understand one another, and no effort was made to reach out by MDC despite cohousing coming onto the radar via the NDP. Innovative ideas were felt to not easily sit within local plans; whilst the cohousing group inputted into the Local Plan there was a disconnect in understanding (and therefore enacting) development alternatives. A common misunderstanding on what cohousing is and an association with "hippy communes in the 1960s" was deemed to prevent cohousing schemes taking root. Such lack of awareness of the LPA

³⁰⁵ The plan also had an accompanying "A Case for Self-Build" as an appendix up to version 3 of the plan, which the Examiner did not consider credible evidence of need nor that FTC was a 'relevant authority' to gather personal data of those seeking self-build plots – this was a responsibility for the LPA within the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016 made under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

³⁰⁶ In part because both cohousing and community housing were used in the plan, community housing being more broadly supported at the time by government policy. See Cheesley, 2016, para 93.

prevented conversations and connections to be instigated and Frome Cohousing didn't find the LPA's policy team approachable on innovative issues; although engagement with the MDC housing policy department was being explored as an alternative entry point into the district council and working with social landlords who may be able to leverage resources.

"Yeah. So, your question about how our planning authority looks upon co-housing is that they've got no idea. Erm, that we haven't actually got to a stage where we've felt that it was, it could be in the least bit productive to go to them and say this is what we want, this is what it is. They will now, of course, be aware to the extent that some of them at least, one hopes, would have actually read the Frome Neighbourhood Plan in which co-housing is part of the suggested framework. So, er, but they haven't made any attempt to inform themselves through any contact with us." (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

"We haven't really tried to engage Mendip I think... I wouldn't actually know who to even speak to about this really... [T]hey are not yet aware of what we are talking about... and to be honest it's a fairly widespread amongst the planning community because it's not really on their radar. They're assuming the housing will be delivered by big housing developers and a few smaller ones. They're not looking at any other method or mechanism... [cohousing] is one of those things that doesn't fit happily within, erm, local plans very easily because [tuts] erm, I think it's again, it's, it's a bit too innovative" (Sustainable Frome spin off).

There was also a perceived capacity gap to create "more relationship-setting" developments, such as cohousing schemes (Consultant). Navigating people's interests within a cohousing scheme was deemed a challenge to reconcile people's differing preferences as an individual and community affairs, which made them a time-consuming initiative (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

"Everybody has got a different view in some way. So yes, there were different views in terms of what some people [would want in a cohousing scheme] ...the kind of line they wouldn't cross in a sense." (Local group representative).

Although not explicitly linked to the NDP, FTC organised a One Planet Sunday in November 2014 to sensitise people about the concept of OPL, in part as a strategy to help garner support for the idea and to introduce an alternative framing of living sustainably. There was a sense of "going off 'green' terminology" because of a negative framing of *giving up* rather than the wider benefits of living within planetary limits, which OPL is perceived to do (IFF councillor). One FTC respondent indicated how the Resilience Officer planned to create a directory of OPL resources

and services to help formalise how OPL could be achieved in Frome for local people or “somebody whose come down from London or whatever” (FTC representative).³⁰⁷

10.1.3 Sustainable Frome contributions to Frome's NDP

In the earlier stages of Frome's NDP's development, in an effort to drum up support within Sustainable Frome to engage in the plan as an organisation (in a similar way it had done with the Local Plan), a director requested a representative from FTC to speak at a Sustainable Frome meeting. However, rather than making a formal connection between Sustainable Frome and the NDP, this meeting failed to engage members; it was perceived to be dry and lacking connection to the organisational objectives of Sustainable Frome – on this occasion Sustainable Frome and FTC were *not* on the same wavelength:

*“[I]t was really **abstract**. And I think that to really engage people you need to give them concrete examples... Well, for **Sustainable Frome how you could input into that** would be to look at improving bus services, walking experiences, pedestrian routes, em, cycle lanes where there are dangerous corners for cyclists... [they] just talked in a really abstract way about it... And I just think, I mean, I was, **I was really turned off by the whole thing, frankly.**” (Sustainable Frome member).*

This may have been due to a misalignment between the messenger and the receiver where the new role occupier was not felt to have the organisational objectives of LFF being sufficiently “seeped into” them (Sustainable Frome member). Here, there was a sense that FTC-Sustainable Frome interaction was more of a box-ticking exercise, rather than genuine alignment to garner Sustainable Frome's support in the plan (Sustainable Frome member). This disconnection led to a unidirectional engagement approach with individual members submitting their own personal comments as part of the formal Reg 14 process or through participation in the Citizens Panels:

³⁰⁷ On following up on this idea at the end of 2017 this had not yet been carried out. A Green Directory was released on FTC's website in 2019, however. See <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/green-directory.pdf> (last accessed 6.6.19).

“The, the plan was out for consultation, I got hold of the plan, I went through it... made comments, [pause] generously [laughs]. Erm [pause] and those comments would be added to others. But I didn't, I didn't test my comments against other members of Sustainable Frome. [They were] my comments.” (Sustainable Frome member).

Yet despite not formally engaging in the NDP process as an organisation and their input not being “formalised” (Sustainable Frome member), the name of Sustainable Frome appears on the front cover of the plan.



Figure 10-2. NDP front cover with V4F added (FTC, 2014, p.1)

This was considered to give false impressions of Sustainable Frome playing a specific role in the plan and was felt to question degrees of consent and legitimacy through the prominent use of its name. In addition, the transparency of the process overall and the legitimacy of an organisation speaking on behalf of its members without full endorsement (Sustainable Frome member):

“So, what it feels like to me is... a personal vision of the councillors and officers involved, right. So, I am dead chuffed with this, I think it's a marvellous document. But in terms of the process, erm I'm not clear about the process, and that's my problem with it. So, so actually I think, I think overall it's, it's a great document and it's absolutely taking things in the right direction. Erm, and, but my issue is around how you take the community with you...in terms of liaison, I was a bit concerned about how Sustainable Frome's name, not just appeared on here but appeared on other things, about how that is...And I think sometimes it's taking

liberties...Thinking, oh well Sustainable Frome in principle would support this...[and] just pull Sustainable Frome out of a hat sometimes.” (Sustainable Frome member)³⁰⁸.

The figure below, which sets out the plan’s relocalised vision, is layered over a photo of the folk band The Frome Street Bandits (an expression of Frome’s creative identity) – some of whom are actively involved in Frome’s relocalised network.



Figure 10-3. NDP vision and core objectives (FTC, 2016, p.9)

It is noted that there was a complaint that Vision4Frome (the Community Plan) had been absent from a list of consultees in previous versions of the plan and there was a request to include it, which was added with track changes in the September 2014 version of the plan (V2, see Figure 10-2).

³⁰⁸ In response to this point when sharing the thesis for comment, one individual close to the process suggested that it was partly because there were so many people involved in the plan’s development akin to “writing a novel by committee” and some unapproved content found its way into the plan, as discussed in section 9.1.2.

10.2 Representation below the parapet: citizens interests, class and gender

Despite making inroads in stirring interest in Frome's political approach there was a very real challenge in the extent the broader community were willing to involve themselves in NDP consultations, including the Citizen Panels. The FTC-led Reg 14 (Pre-Submission) consultation received 50 responses while the MDC-led Reg 16 (Submission) consultation received 16. Despite originally being concerned about whether or not consultation had been carried out sufficiently, one FTC respondent was satisfied it meant "there's not masses and masses of objections" (FTC representative). However, one steering group member suggested that the actual scope of Frome's NDP could have been a reason for the lack of interest by many people in the town as the plan was not fine-grained enough to cover a town of its size, "for a lot of the people of the town, it's got no relevance whatsoever" but there was a trade-off between detail and strategy (IfF councillor).

At a more general level, this was considered to be rooted in a deeper disconnection with politics or misunderstanding about the function of different tiers of government, consultation fatigue or the failure of planning processes to continually engage people (IfF councillor). There was a clear trade-off between deep engagement to "agitate tensions" and build local capacity to meet development solutions themselves (External new economy actor; Consultant) and the speed with which to have anticipated development controls in place (FTC representative). There was a sense that an active, engaged and co-produced relationship with citizens was still far off:

*"[W]e've increased engagement at lots of levels, we've made it easy to come to meetings, all that kind of stuff. But, you know but maybe there were 12 people engaged now instead of 8. You know, **we're still a million miles away from the majority of people in Frome feeling, well knowing what the hell's going on. Or erm, or really caring.**" (IfF councillor).*

*"I think a lot of **people can see the changes that need to be made, and then they get frustrated with the process, whatever that process may be...** I think the biggest thing is that **people just get disillusioned, and they give up.** No one believes that Saxonvale will be delivered in their lifetime, no one believes it. And that's really, that's really depressing...**and they've been consulted ad nauseam...** And it's like well we told you a hundred times, **don't ask us anymore, because we know that is pointless anyway.** We will tell you what we want, and it still won't come. So, don't ask us so, so **you end up with this very disengaged community,** erm, which is I think is really sad, really, really sad... [The NDP] process has taken 18 months, or*

something? And I think **people lose the will to live**. I just think that in that period people think nothing's happening. And, and they just think okay we've been here before, **we've been through this all before we don't really believe it anymore...** [they become] despondent and ... disillusioned." (Local group representative).

"[A] lot of **consultation is tick-boxing**. You know we box people and we ask them these closed question and they tick yes not no, and are you satisfied with that. And they don't really, **we don't actually engage them**. **We don't do things with them, we do things for them**. **We just check now and then they don't object too much...**" (Sustainable Frome member).

The rise of social media giant Facebook was generally felt to have a much more active reach than the town council could have through their own media and communications. Attention to an abandoned campervan attracted greater interest on Facebook than the NDP³⁰⁹. There was a sense that everyday citizens interests are generally quite "trivial" and "insular", where people were wrapped up in their own "little lives", and generally didn't question why things take place or make connections, which hampers a broader collective understanding of engagement in the world:

"And we're like, **so neighbourhood planning like the next 20 years of how the future of Frome will develop, not interested**. Somebody's abandoned their campervan, 15,000 people have read it... They're not living in it, it's broken down, so you know, that's why they can't move it. But it's just why people have clung onto that story?" (FTC representative).

"Providing their own little lives and where they live aren't massively impacted in what they picture to be an adverse way then I think they are relatively happy to let life take it [where it wants to go]." (Local group representative).

"I suppose they kind of know stuff's going on in Frome, but [hesitates] the thing I find so odd is that people don't join things up. So, they'll come to the market and go whoa this is fantastic, 1000s of people in Frome, it's brilliant sort of thing. 'So, [has FTC] had anything to do with this?' 'Yeah, it wouldn't have happened except for us'. 'Really? God, that's amazing'. But they haven't thought that through before. **There's not those connections made. I think [people] genuinely haven't thought how these things might have happened or why they might have happened**. Or, things like that." (IfF councillor).

³⁰⁹ 50 formal comments at Reg 14 compared to 15,000 people following this issue on Facebook which attracted hundreds of comments in 2015.

*"I feel that [Saxonvale] would be better framed as part of we're not anti-development - because that polarises some people, some people in Frome actually want more shops, simple as that. And, erm, they don't care about the nuances of you know, whether it's a supermarket or you know, whatever. **They don't really think about it; they think oh, we just want some more shops.**" (Consultant).*

As well as only those with a strongest interest in planning responding to consultations, some respondents pointed to a capacity-action gap or that the perceived influence of developers' ability to challenge planning decisions renders community aspirations meaningless in a David and Goliath scenario (FTC representative). Planning was also deemed not "exciting" enough for the young or schools, despite FTC having a Youth Mayor and Deputy Mayor (FTC representative); although this disinterest was felt to extend into ethnic minority groups such as the Polish community and the traveller community - where it can be challenging to win their trust due to their frequent mobility (IfF councillor) - and citizens in the town more generally. For instance, an open source planning event at Rook Lane also didn't get a large turnout, but a committed number of people attended, which one respondent suggested was "because **planning is quite niche**" (IfF councillor). A young planning apprentice that did show an interest in planning had personal ties to the NDP steering group chair.

*"People don't, unless they have cause to get involved in it, on a day-to-day basis. So your neighbour wants to build an extension, or they want to build three new houses behind you, I just don't think, **why would people have it on the radar?** Why would there even be interest about it? **It's not until it affects you personally,** or you're a member of say like the Org J³¹⁰, or that's what you do for your job, that really you would have any [short pause] interest in it." (FTC representative).*

*"People who are interested in development and construction in various forms, people with the strongest interest in energy erm, [pause] would probably do it [hesitates]. **But there are a number who would think other people would do it better than they would.**" (Sustainable Frome member).*

"[Planning's] not an exciting topic... a lot of people - I don't think they look to the future and realise that the policies that are put down now in 20 years will be affecting how the town grows... [the young] just don't seem to look that far ahead. Or appreciate that the planning

³¹⁰ An anonymised organisational name. See section 4.2.3.

process can have an influence on how their town might develop in the future.” (FTC representative)

“I think it would be wrong to consider young people as a separate group. I think it reflects the community as a whole in the moment... Erm, what [the youth mayor and deputy mayor are] not doing [pause] is saying the environment is very important to the community. Or anything else in that kind of area.” (FTC representative).

Given this lack of interest and an attempt to reach out to different groups in the NDP process, one respondent concluded, rather despondently, that:

“And you know, after you try and try to engage people in this process and to invite them and even offer them 10 quid, some part of you ends up thinking, ‘well if these other people care so much, then why shouldn’t we listen to them? If people who don’t show up don’t care, does it matter?’ You know, it’s a cynical view but what else do you do? What other conclusions can you make?” (IfF councillor).

There was also a sense that asking people what they want gives impractical suggestions or prevents good ideas from gaining traction.³¹¹ Talking about a failed experience to innovate by a council in a neighbouring county, one respondent said:

“So, I suspect the [county] council's just gonna go, ‘well, kind of bugger you then, if you can't be bothered then neither can we’. But, but that - my frustration there, is a little bit around - democracy is great and engagement is great as long as people are properly informed, and they properly understand the consequences of er, voting against something and they understand that erm, that you don't end up in a situation where you just kind of descend to the lowest common denominator, that actually people are prepared to listen to you... particularly at the town council level - is that there's quite poor information that councils often quite bad at communicating with people... and then you get this kind of Chinese whispers thing... And then, you know, you start - there's this whole kind of, is a wave of no, erm, you know that resistance to change, and [intake of breath], and, and yeah the consequence being that it doesn't happen at all.” (Local group representative).

³¹¹ One respondent cited the challenges of initiating a shared space scheme in nearby Bradford on Avon, which sought to replicate the innovation in Europe and its benefits in road safety. Here, the democratic process was considered to empower those who didn't understand it (Local group representative) and the scheme got voted down, despite investment by the LPA to understand how it could work in the town.

For deeper community engagement one respondent suggested that people need to be informed and educated to participate fully, which requires commitment to participatory democracy both at citizen and local government level (Sustainable Frome member). Indeed, the use of World Café governance technology in the Citizen Panels was cited as one of the reasons that discussions weren't more targeted and more realistic and attracted more "quirky" ideas than practical solutions (FTC representative).

*"Yeah, I mean, this, if you do one of the exercises where you say to people how do you want Frome to develop in the next 20 years, you get animal parks, you get bowling alleys, ice-skating rinks, things that are completely actually impractical. Where they can go? Who's going to pay for them? And it's great that you want to see those things, that, **that's the problem with asking people ideally what they'd like to see as opposed to what realistically can happen.**" (FTC representative).*

While the continual activity of the usual suspects sustained a momentum and connection to placemaking issues, as such, they were felt to have a disproportionate influence on Frome's placemaking trajectories. For others, there was a sense that without necessary conduits to respond to consultations, such as NDP and Local Plan consultations, this discourages people to engage in more formal channels, or if people are not continually engaged and their interest wanes.

*"But most... **most people don't have that sort of conduit. They could have if they wish to, but most are sitting at home, you know. They said their piece in the Citizens Panel and that's it and now they will watch telly [TV]... if people are sitting at home and don't engage, notwithstanding being invited, one has to be a bit less sympathetic that they start winging later and say, 'Oh I think that's awful.' Well why didn't you contribute?"** (Local group representative).*

*"The normal suspects are normal suspects [sic] because they are active and contribute in volume... **their characters are active in their groups, then therefore active in the Citizen's Panel, and therefore if there is a subsequent consultation they will continue to contribute through the inputs in their particular groups.** The usual suspects, they are the people who do a lot for the town. I am not being in any way critical about the usual suspects because I am one. But they represent the 200-300 maybe people who are really active out of a population, adult population of say 20,000. **So, they have a disproportionate impact on what happens in the town.**" (Local group representative).*

Moreover, simplifying the options for people to respond was seen to increase engagement and responses to placemaking decisions (i.e. yes/no); interest in what should happen to Saxonvale

engendered a broad engagement for and against a supermarket because it had a clear focus for people.

*“Erm, it, I, I don't know, I don't know how you can [pause] make it exciting, I really don't. **It's a battle...** But their interests beyond [specific engagement processes], and [pause] how they, [hesitates] to keep them engaged is, is quite difficult... Yeah. [Naming the new town hall] - hundreds of responses to that. Hundreds. Because **it's simple [taps table once], people understand it. They see a building and it needs a name, here's three choices. Oh, we'll pick that one. And it's, it's very clear-cut.** Or at least that's how I see it. Yeah we've had a lot more responses to that than we did the Neighbourhood Plan.” (FTC representative).*

One FTC respondent suggested social media is generating more “superficial communities” (FTC representative); however, there was a recognition that intergenerational disparities (i.e. as an older person) may affect their perception of the role of social media on building social networks. Whilst technology can enable self-employed people to work flexibly in continuous globalised connections, one respondent suggested that technology and modern life was a cause of information overload, which discouraged people from engaging with planning:

*“We are all busy, we all have massive pulls on our time and thousands of people trying to **grab our attention all day every day.** Advertising or whatever it might be. **We blank it out, we blank out everything that doesn't really concern us.** And we just look at what is on our menu for today. I do anyway. **And people have got other concerns and they think, what's the point?”** (IfF councillor).*

These factors were considered reasons that “Old Frome” lies dormant, and occasionally “wakes up” when they see physical changes in the town as a result of placemaking by the very active. There was a sense that, for some respondents, Frome was serving the interests of the middle-classes well, but there was a social divide between incomers “New Frome” and born and bred Frome “Old Frome”. One respondent implied that helping the working-classes was dependent upon the middle-classes supporting them (Sustainable Frome member), suggestive that placemaking is a classist arena requiring education, skills and time/resources, which many people don't have:

*“And at the moment there seems to be an attitude in the, with the new IfFie councillors who - everybody thinks they're marvellous - **all the middle-class intelligentsia think they're marvellous, right...** **it's attracting middle class people to live here...** the IfFies have identified there is a poverty issue in Frome. Erm, what they don't ever talk about is class. Nobody likes to talk*

about class anymore. But, erm, I, I actually think there is a bit of, it is a division along class lines, frankly.” (Sustainable Frome member).

*“Erm, there are quite a lot of people who can live quite well in Frome and enjoy themselves. But there are a number of people in Frome with a lot fewer options and they, **it doesn't always seem that the different parts of the community mix very well.**”* (Sustainable Frome member).

Another dismissed the notion of such a distinction - “there is no such thing [as Old and New Frome] as far as I'm concerned”, indicating that this term was a socially constructed divide (Local group representative).

The state was also considered to stymie society's collective potential (and mirroring the discourse at the time of the Cameron Conservative government) where the nanny state makes people lazy and unambitious (Local group representative). The drive for affordable housing under the Local Plan was seen as a disruptor to the broader trend of New Frome moving to the town as they will be for “lower middle-class people” (Sustainable Frome member).

*“I think society has gone a bit wrong in that we have this kind of, **we've become very expectant. . . we [short pause] have lost that kind of ability to help ourselves.** We kind of now, we sort of expect things to be done for us like the council will take care of things or, you know, the NHS will take care of things. Or, there is **a sort of expectation stuff will be done for us.**”* (Local group representative).

There were no perceived active mechanisms for working-class people to be meaningfully engaged in placemaking or planning. However, one respondent believed that with appropriate role models, a more active engagement in placemaking could be learnt to help others experiment with new ideas where they live. Another respondent expressed a need for people to take greater responsibility for their actions and enact a duty to become more engaged in placemaking (Local group representative).

*“It's the way life goes, the people who get involved shout the loudest and have a major say in the way things go. . . **But that fact of life was it was the keen, eager, mostly relative newcomers who engaged. . . And every now and again Old Frome wakes up to say 'Oh What's going on? Why are we restricting the town? We want those car parks in the marketplace still retained', and things like that”*** (Local group representative).

*"I wish there were more people [involved]. But a lot of that is that those **people don't feel they have the power to get stuff done...** And I would really like there to be better mechanisms for [working-class] people to feel like they're heard. Or to make stuff happen. And if they don't care then that's fine. You know, **I'm not saying everybody has to be engaged. But if they want to be engaged, that there should be a mechanism for them to feel like they're empowered...** in a town in this kind of size there are lots of people who would like to do stuff, but **they're scared**, or they just think that they can't do it, **it's not people like them who get things done...** maybe I'm lucky because it is inherent to me... [I hope people can look at me] and think okay, he's managed to do that, I've, I've got really good ideas too, I can do something. And they, yeah, they could, **they could learn it.**" (Local group representative).*

Women were also considered to be put off from engaging in politics because of the influence of Westminster on the nature of political life akin to a "very male-dominated... stuffy, public school debating society", even at a local level, because women sometimes fear being "judged" if they put themselves forward (IfF councillor). This dynamic was felt to hamper diversity and creativity in society more generally as it becomes a "self-perpetuating problem, and that's bad for democracy", which could be addressed through more female support networks to encourage other women to "step up to the plate" (IfF councillor).

Some women were motivated to get involved in local politics to be a role model to their daughters and challenge sexism. Interestingly, one respondent suggested she was unable to perceive gender dynamics for young girls because she didn't have daughters of her own. Moreover, one respondent accounted an experience in a European country, where respect for a profession helps to protect women from gendered inequalities. There was a personal account of misogyny as a barrier to entry to engage in placemaking in one female respondent's own community; despite having skills and experience, gendered views were preventing some women from being seen by some male parish councillors. While another respondent assumed that the Examiner was male.

One respondent indicated that there was a natural process of being in a minority whenever a dominant group are prevalent within a group dynamic, suggesting that antagonism and conflict is an unconscious phenomenon:

"I think there's a kind of [short pause], a degree of [short pause] sexism that just springs from having mainly men. And, and we, I challenge them about it. [Intake of breath] And what's really nice is now we've got all these new candidates, erm, now we're as a group we're 50-50... it just, it just feels different, the dynamic is really different. And, and, so they're not out

and out sexist people at all, erm, [pause] erm, [short pause, tuts] but it's just that unintentional, you know, that kind of, the thing of if you're just in a minority, to start to get side-lined a bit." (IfF councillor).

10.3 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored how informal ties within Frome's placemaking networks influences the politics of engagement in transition arenas, or a disconnection with them. The chapter explored how the affective ties discussed in chapter 6 cultivated an interdependent and reciprocal multiple membership (arenas) for relocalised entities in the town, and there were instances where partners were co-dependent animators of transition. The role of friendship and pre-existing ties was a key mechanism that created short-cuts into local government under IfF and were sometimes used as an active strategy to consolidate shared agendas for relocalised transitions. Indeed, a nucleus of these ties was perceived as either unconscious or active mechanisms of exclusion in the NDP process, where governance arrangements or the (over) representation of the usual suspects lacked legitimacy and a bottom-up (i.e. citizen) influence over the content of the plan. There were a number of niche-regime broken links, notably on the idea of cohousing indicating that whilst these ties at the local level were strong and influential, this did not permeate into the LPA 'regime'. There were also niche-FTC links where role holders did not stabilise links between Sustainable Frome and FTC in the NDP process, causing unidirectional engagement with the plan. Challenges in bridging niche-citizen interests (arenas) were identified, due to a lack of conduits to engagement outside of active placemaking networks, technological change, a gap between consultation and action, and a lack of information to assume responsibility for changemaking. Notably, class and gender were key issues identified in this chapter where potential class divisions; disenrollment in politics and placemaking were encouraged by state administrative arrangements and culture. The need for appropriate mechanisms for different classes and female support networks were also highlighted. The final empirical chapter explores concepts of transition within the case study of Frome and emerging outcomes of the NDP and IfF's occupation of the town council in Frome and beyond to explore the strategic and emergent form of transitions.

11 The effects of IfF on the form of transition in Frome's placemaking networks

This chapter responds to RQ.4 *What are the consequences of the occupation of the state by protagonists on the form (steer vs. emergence) of niche-directed transitions?* Here, the intended and unintended effects of IfF's occupation of FTC on local placemaking dynamics (notably Sustainable Frome) are explored as well as any changes on relationships between tiers of government and broader (non-party) political agendas.

To interrogate the form of transitions in Frome, this chapter responds to two themes which elucidate the difference between steps to transitions and driving forces (pathways) towards change:

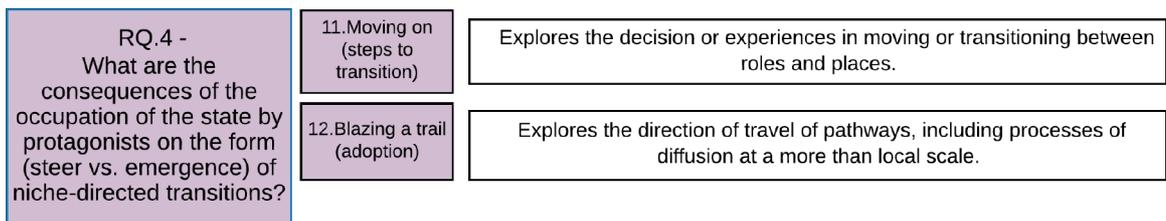


Figure 11-1. Chapter 11: thematic code and description

These themes highlight the importance of the concept of old and new, demographic change and intergenerational concerns which might affect individual and organisational stages – themselves transitional processes that can influence multiple transition arenas. The notion of serendipity as an assistor to the alignment of transition actors is also explored. Suggestions by respondents to catalyse relocalised placemaking at different scales are also highlighted.

Interviews for this research were carried up to 2015³¹²; a longitudinal reflection on the changing political landscape at a national level and in Frome is offered in the concluding chapter, Conclusion.

³¹² See Table 4-2.

11.1 Theme 11 - Moving on

Decisions and experiences of role transition in FTC and placemaking networks to examine the emergent and strategic qualities of transition are outlined in the following sections.

11.1.1 Transitioning towards more responsive government to facilitate relocalised placemaking

Themes 4-6 (in chapter 7) explored how IfF took control of FTC in 2011. Respondent interviews also explored the potential, and some of the effects, of IfF's occupation of the town council on politics and placemaking, notably its steer on decision-making, which was expedited due to a lack of opposition:

*"I think the governance one is really crucial, and I think the fact that they have control of the town council is great, that's inevitably going to allow them to **make some decisions and see those decisions through without opposition.**" (Consultant).*

*"Although it would be really fascinating - if we won 17 seats [in 2015] then what would happen? **With no opposition at all? Well, except there isn't really one now.**" (IfF councillor).*

Having won all 17 seats in the 2015 council, IfF sought to extend the WoWs to become the *modus operandus* for FTC by including them within the standing orders and institutionalise these informal rules of engagement further (IfF councillor).

In order to challenge planning decisions further, IfF's second administration sought to reconstitute the role and governance of the FTC planning board given its advisory, unidirectional role to report the town council's view on planning applications (IfF councillor); thus, extant governance arrangements within FTC were not a real mechanism for any influence on the planning regime. Given the strong skills and capacities of IfF councillors and FTC, this was felt to be at odds with *potential* influencing capacity of an FTC planning board which was reconfigured to become more pro-active:

“Whereas, whereas before we sent back the standard planning responses based on policy, like you’re supposed to, you know, they want to, they wanna do more than that now. We, we, we want to shout about good development, but also, you know, we, we really want everybody to know about bad development, and why it’s bad. But not, not just to shout about it, erm, also to engage with the developers as well. To try and get them to do something better, or even to go out and find the right developer, as opposed to just sitting and waiting for them to come to us.” (FTC representative).³¹³

FTC had sought to actualise the objectives in the NDP through several initiatives, which in part built upon existing ones (such as pedestrianising Boyles Cross³¹⁴ - a combination of both steer and path dependent agendas). Taking an active, leadership role in securing financial mechanisms and control over physical assets in the town was a key part of this strategy to deliver on the objectives stemming from the Community Plan. Such a strategy also had the support of the business community who, according to one respondent, recognised the value of “old” and “new” businesses to mutually support one another (both steer and a mutual alignment on economic reconfiguration)³¹⁵:

“Erm [sniffs] our involvement isn’t simply putting in a planning application. We have also set aside financial resources to be able to deliver on the [Boyles Cross] scheme, and we intend to take on the long leasehold interest in the area so that ultimately we will be responsible for managing that area as well as developing it because we recognise that [short pause] leadership is necessary to, to deliver on the concepts that the, the community was quite passionate about.” (FTC representative).

“I’m not aware of there being significant tension between the new style businesses and the old ones [in their attitude to the market place redevelopment], because the old ones recognise that the new ones are bringing people and money into the town centre.” (Local group representative).

Referring to the regeneration of the Cattle Market³¹⁶, the fact that MDC was a landowner within the area earmarked for development meant there were opportunities for “bringing them into” achieving the objectives of the NDP (FTC representative). As well as pursuing the

³¹³ The effectiveness of this change would need corroborating.

³¹⁴ See <https://www.discoverfrome.co.uk/the-boyle-cross/> for historical photos of Boyles Cross (last accessed 26.1.19).

³¹⁵ However, individual local businesses were not interviewed to test this claim.

³¹⁶ NDP policy TC3. See Appendix N - Frome ‘made’ NDP Policies and policies amended or cut compared to Reg 14 version.

Implementation Prospectus on Saxonvale (see section 9.1.8), FTC bought a piece of land on Saxonvale (see Figure 5-14) in November 2014, which gave FTC a stake in the negotiations around the site:

*“We bought another huge bit of land on Wednesday - **Guy Fawkes Day** - very appropriately... the district failed to let us use [it] ...they were leasing it and we managed to persuade the people who own it to sell it to us as a town. **So, we by-passed the district and now we own it. Which is brilliant**” (IfF councillor).*

Key to moving on debates and ideas was the notion of *momentum* to create an appetite for change, which was mentioned by a number of respondents, which if carried out on an incremental basis can help people transition from fear to acceptance:

“Once they could see [the Frome Independent] happening, then it became a lot easier to, to grow from, from that.” (Local group representative).

Moreover, the initiatives of FRECo to install solar panels on the roof of Frome Football Club was seen as a means to bring sustainable energy into the fold of Frome’s spatial setting (and proactively using government FiT incentives):

*[A]n amazing cross-cross, uh, you know, sort of, **cross-integrative thing**, you know, I mean, sport, you wouldn’t necessarily put that down as a Transition thing, but it’s-it’s, um, it’s connected up with - with the green thing, so people who are not going to come to a Sustainable Frome meeting...Um, you know, the whole thing, **it just puts it in the-in the arena of people who wouldn’t...who would, sort of, label you as, sort of, you know, tofu eating sandal wearers rather than, um, somebody who likes to go to the football.**” (Sustainable Frome member).*

11.1.2 Transition and the phases of organisational development

The role of *Transition* on relocalised placemaking has been the core to this research. This section explores the effect of IfF on Sustainable Frome and its phases of organisational change to reveal the dynamics within and between relocalised entities in Frome and the wider movement, with significant emergent re-alignment through phases of transition and the dynamic of old and new.

Sustainable Frome was characterised as a parent organisation, helping to spawn and incubate nascent ideas, which then move on and transition into entities of their own right, stemming from the Sustainable Frome “umbrella”. Sustainable Frome experienced an existential reflection when key nodes drew on shared organisational identities, which affected degrees of intra-group solidarity, reciprocity and cohesion as these new groups sought to differentiate themselves as autonomous entities in their own right. The environmental movement itself was seen a process of transition, so that what started as a more contained (niche) environmental remit moved increasingly into planning and more formalised roles.

One respondent suggested that Sustainable Frome had gone through four key “stages”, with several key actors weaving in and out as active members (Sustainable Frome member), with varying degrees to which the organisation was being “held” together – “the boring bit” - and aligned to its organisational purpose (IfF councillor). In these phases, the organisation was seen to spin off in “a different direction” (Sustainable Frome member). Notably, when some members left to become “more politically engaged” and started to concentrate their activities for green and relocalised objectives from within the town council, rather than Sustainable Frome.

Table 11-1 The four phases of Sustainable Frome

Stage/date	Summary
Stage 1 (2006-2009)	Macfadyen establishes Sustainable Frome independently of Transition Network with a core group to shape meeting agendas and organisational direction.
Stage 2 (2009- 2011)	Key figures in Sustainable Frome were elected as IfF councillors; energy on green development channelled to FTC, the NDP and Frome Cohousing.
Stage 3 (2011-2012)	No one “holding it” and apparent split between spiritual and practical-oriented people. Tensions arising from those who wanted to have a “presence” in Sustainable Frome; increased spiritual meetings e.g. constellations and mindfulness.
Stage 4 (2013 – 2016)	More established members of Sustainable Frome seek to re-orientate organisational purpose to be more aligned within the environmental movement and latterly <i>Transition</i> . Experimentation with governance technologies, such as Holocracy to support more autonomous decision-making. Some established members drop out and a new tension arises with some emerging radical elements e.g. campaigning against fracking. Many offshoots such as FRECo and Frome Cohousing

no longer associate with Sustainable Frome. Emergence of non-Sustainable Frome environmental initiatives.

Stage 1

See section 5.3.1 and 6.3 for an account of Stage 1.

Stage 2

The rise of lff was seen to reduce active membership of Sustainable Frome and shift the loci of environmental action in the town:

“Well, it’s - it’s a lot smaller. I mean, I think there’s a lot of supporters, and if we had a really big project, then, um, then, um, people would be right behind it. But, you know, the town council is doing a lot of stuff now, and has, um, you know, employed a-a sustainability and regeneration officer. So, you know, a lot-a lot of the, sort of, um, I... stuff that might take place out of Sustainable Frome is happening at the town council level, so um, people get behind that, quite rightly, and so do we.” (Sustainable Frome member).

There was a sense that Sustainable Frome had nothing to push against, in terms of lff and the wider trend for some MDC-supported renewable energy initiatives at the time of the interview. In part due to the social capital and ties of action when the “movers and the shakers” started to work within state structures, local groups initially “took their foot off the pedals” (lff councillors) and there was a “big vacuum” that was left within Sustainable Frome (Sustainable Frome member), which affected energy flows and momentum to “keep up steam” (Sustainable Frome member). This had a number of internal consequences, including a sense of questioning Sustainable Frome’s overall purpose as it struggled with its own role transition. lff was seen to have “muddied the waters” of responsibility on delivering on the community priorities for the Community Plan and the green agenda:

“The town council has a Sustainable Frome vision, erm, the green agenda is high on its agenda. So, it’s, it’s muddied the waters. What is the town council’s responsibility, what these different pressure groups are actually pressuring for and against which is harder to define. And it actually makes, erm [pause] it makes it harder to get a head of steam up [laughs], sometimes [smiles]. Erm, sort of a victim of our own success. Sometimes it’s easier to push

against a barrier than just to move forwards because it's been taken away... (Sustainable Frome member).

*"I assumed that Sustainable Frome and the other groups ... environmental groups would come to the council and say this is what we want to do, can you give us money? **And I think what they thought - seeing ... all [the] sort of main people within Sustainable Frome [had transitioned into FTC] was that we'd be doing everything. So actually, they took their foot off the pedals and Sustainable Frome did too, and as I dropped out completely from Sustainable Frome it went into hiatus a bit to be honest...** It's got potential but it's a bit, they're kind of working it out. It's definitely a bit flaccid³¹⁷... The monthly meetings happen. So, all that's happening. And there would have been 20-30 people there last, last night. So, you know in one sense it continues."* (IfF councillor).

*"So, if we've now got a council that's [spending money on green issues], what is now the role of Sustainable Frome? **If you're not a pressure group, sort of like writing to the local council and to Mendip council. If you're not a focus group, if you're not a consultee, what are you other than some kind of social network?** And what's happened is a lot of those people who came along originally to support Peter and support the launch of Sustainable Frome, once we had the councillors in place they kind of feel 'oh well, **it's not so urgent anymore. We've got the council getting on with it now. So, there is, so we've been looking at our navel quite a lot saying what is our role now?...** all it's doing is acting as a network at the moment. I don't think it's actually doing anything else at all. I think it's got potential to do loads."* (Sustainable Frome member).

Indeed, the challenge of role transition was apparent not just for Sustainable Frome but for some other placemaking entities in the town who withdrew a more oppositional or campaigning stance due to a relative "satisfaction" with FTC. Moreover, ties between remaining Sustainable Frome members and FTC were more emotive - "feeling at one" with FTC in their shared inter-organisational objectives – rather than going to FTC meetings. Self-interest was again attributed as a reason why people came to meetings or not³¹⁸:

"Vision4Frome has it's AGM tonight. [The Chair] is concerned that there won't be that many people there. Because the town council is – it's not done everything that's in the plan - but it's

³¹⁷ This term was used in response to a question on whether the organisation had become more "flaccid" and is not the respondent's own phrasing and as such has not been highlighted.

³¹⁸ Self-interest was also raised as a reason for people's engagement or disenrollment with the NDP and planning in section 10.2.

pursuing the plan. Erm, what is there to get excited about, why would people bother to turn up? Erm, and it's not that people are de-motivated. And it's not that people are complacent or apathetic. But there's a degree of satisfaction, let's call it, with the way the town council is doing things." (Sustainable Frome member).

"[O]f the people that I see at a Sustainable Frome meeting on a regular basis there are probably only 1 or 2 who you might also see going along to Town Council meetings. So, for quite a few people involved in Sustainable Frome being engaged with the Town Council, or feeling at one with the Town Council, doesn't consist of going along and engaging with them at meetings...Not everybody wants to go to meetings. **Not everybody likes talking shops**. Erm, you need a particular bent mindset to actually find those, that particular style of interaction between people interesting" (Sustainable Frome member).

"[T]hey're interested if it affects them. But they don't really want to come to a meeting." (Sustainable Frome member).

Stage 3

While *Transition* has strongly prefigurative and relocalised objectives, its degree of philosophical openness and respect for difference without a political or campaigning approach was considered a risk to stabilise its own organisational identity. There was also a trade-off between influence and values in an organisation that appeals to both spiritual and more practical interests. In Stage 3, the "more spiritual people" had sought to give a greater profile to issues important to them, including one respondent's suggestion that a particular religious denomination had sought to influence Sustainable Frome, citing email correspondence that suggested they wanted to have a "presence" in the group. There was a subsequent split between spiritual and campaigning elements within the organisation and tensions between being appealing to the local business community and other facets of Sustainable Frome's more spiritual identity.

Speaking in 2015, the "spiritual people" who attended "hippy camps" and became close friends through *Transition* were considered to have mainly disengaged from Sustainable Frome (Sustainable Frome member), some of whom actively withdrew to become more political and at the same time to try and enable new growth in the organisation. There was a sense of previous networks fragmenting with old friends too busy to see each other or individuals evaluating their own commitment to the organisation owing to not being appreciated for their work and

sufficiently thanked for volunteered work, undermining reciprocal ties in the organisation (Sustainable Frome member).

Stage 4

One challenge for Sustainable Frome was to fill various roles, particularly when some members left to become IFF councillors. The organisation used holocracy to help “break [Sustainable Frome] open” owing to a suggestion from Transition Network and known experimentation with the process in Glastonbury. Holocracy is a process of “formalised anarchy...a *structured* process for making decisions in an organisation that hardly, hardly merits the term organisation” which gives guidelines to actors to help them perform their roles with high degrees of autonomy (Sustainable Frome member). Using holocracy aims to integrate an empowering philosophy to call out tensions in the organisation to help get people “unstuck”, such as by bringing particular concerns to meetings to resolve particular issues with an agenda that is set by those present:

*“Not sort the whole thing out but...[to] simply to shift it a little bit so you're not stuck anymore. And if that raises tensions for somebody else then they can put that on the agenda. But it's just freeing things up that little bit and **by tackling things a little bit at a time, just keep things moving. And that just keeps the whole, the whole network doing what seems constructive, in theory.**”* (Sustainable Frome member).

However, the experience of using holocracy was perceived to have a number of steps that needed to be learnt, which some respondents suggested were too technical and took the fun out of meetings. Meanwhile, setting the agenda at the meeting could be exclusionary for those who couldn't attend. Holocracy was seen as unable to fulfil roles, only identify a need for them. Thus indicating a tension between steering more emergent qualities. Moreover, the loose nature of Sustainable Frome called into question the qualifications for participating (i.e. member, director, monthly meeting attendee).

“[T]he fact that it's open doesn't mean people are actually feeling able to participate in it. So, it's a bit sticky, it's not necessarily working well yet.” (Sustainable Frome member)³¹⁹.

³¹⁹ It is noted here that in a meeting I attended in 2018, some members of Sustainable Frome were reluctant to continue holocracy after a key pioneer of its use left Frome.

The dynamics of the tensions between spin off groups no longer associating with Sustainable Frome are discussed below in sections 11.1.3 - 11.1.3.2.

11.1.3 Dynamics of the parent and child in Sustainable Frome's phases of transition

Several spin off groups that have emerged from Sustainable Frome are meant to use its name in the marketing material of these new groups to recognise their roots in transition, but this rarely is done in practice.³²⁰ Moreover, the lines of communication between spin off groups and Sustainable Frome are not always reciprocal, with one respondent citing how one spin off group didn't inform them that they had also voted to use holocracy in their meetings (Sustainable Frome member). One respondent described this as a parent and child relationship, where the young struggle to break free from the family nest and find their own autonomy, indicating strongly emergent qualities:

"I see Sustainable Frome also as being a bit like a parent - a parent organisation that gives birth to these children... And if they want to, they can leave the nest ... And there are other groups who have not just fled the nest but that have always been closely associated with us." (Sustainable Frome member).

"[Spin off groups] have sort of outgrown [Sustainable Frome], that sort of being under an umbrella type thing and stand alone³²¹...any sort of link to Sustainable Frome is more like, more like a family tree type link rather than a formal partnership or anything else... it's more organic than highly structured in a way." (Sustainable Frome member).

Moreover, attention to governance and holocracy meant one member felt they had taken their eye of the purpose of the organisation, encouraging other action-orientated groups to establish - almost as counter groups for "people who find Sustainable Frome a bit boring" (Sustainable Frome member). There was a sense of fragmentation over the fracturing of different clusters of

³²⁰ Refer also to Appendix H – Consolidating the relocalised agenda in Frome (2019) (Figure 14-3), which indicates how recent changes to the environmental movement point to a visual organisational identity alignment to FTC, rather than Sustainable Frome, despite many members of Sustainable Frome being involved in the new entity.

³²¹ For instance, Sustainable Frome holds money on behalf of some local (relocalised) initiatives.

initiatives in Sustainable Frome, where the differences between members “are more apparent than the things we have in common - that's just a phase we're going through.” (Sustainable Frome member).

However, its remit as a space of learning and sharing “the importance of social gluing people together”³²² (Sustainable Frome member) helped to sustain Sustainable Frome through its own transitional period from IfF to considering its future, again indicating how informal bonds act as a conduit for broader networks. Indeed, the close personal ties that were important to Sustainable Frome’s inception had also travelled into the spaces of government in the 2015 election, with two IfF councillors former or current members, with one acting as an informal liaison between Sustainable Frome (as a current director), and in FTC the Resilience Officer³²³ was also a member and director which meant FTC had “been really helpful in-in, um, supporting us” (Sustainable Frome member).

11.1.3.1 Latency

Moreover, not all of spin off groups had success at the time of the interviews. The research revealed the presence of latent initiatives, where organisations wound down momentum in order to play a dormant role, should they need to be resuscitated. Indeed, the lack of progress in acquiring a site³²⁴ led Frome Cohousing to wind down its activities due to not being able to progress potential sites, because they were “stuck in planning” or hampered by conflicting priorities of landowners who showed interest in partnering to promote cohousing schemes in Frome.

Nevertheless, the strongly interlinked environmental organisations in the town – notably Sustainable Frome - were considered to be a mechanism to ensure the longevity of pushing for development alternatives and planning for transitions, even if a future FTC administration made (relocalised) posts redundant. Another respondent spoke about their underlying anarchist spirit which could be activated if the far right emerged as a political force:

³²² See section 6.3.

³²³ Formally the Energy and Recycling Officer.

³²⁴ See section 8.1.1.

“So, it's actually quite *a long time to have been in existence without having got anywhere, essentially*. And we've rec - had a meeting just recently to say *well actually we no longer have sufficient time and energy to do anything other than keep our eye on what might happen with the various sites*.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

“[Vision4Frome are] *carrying out a holding operation...given that the flavour of the Town Council can change between one election to the next election, we couldn't necessarily disband simply because this Town Council has adopted the Plan...We're there, we're there making sure that it is kept in view*. And that it will be kept in view, whatever happens.” (Sustainable Frome member).

“*But I mean the organisations - Sustainable Frome, FRECo - all that exists. So, it wouldn't have the support of the council I suppose [if conservative forces³²⁵ took control of FTC]*.” (IfF councillor).

“*[if things start shifting on Saxonvale, [Keep Frome Local will] pop up again, yeah*.” (Sustainable Frome member).

“*I'll be out on the streets with my pitch fork, anarchist's headband [on, laughs] [if the far right got into power]*.” (Sustainable Frome spin off group).

11.1.3.2 Bends, splinters and fractures in the green movement

A respondent who left Sustainable Frome to become an IfF councillor in 2011 suggested their overall impact was much greater in FTC than acting within *Transition* alone, indicating these actors could achieve more *within* government than outside - either by setting up initiatives in FTC or securing financial assets or other resources for local groups. Thus, indicating how relocalisation reached a degree of *maturity* and power within a different organisational setting (the state). Indeed, one respondent questioned whether IfF's occupation of power and success was indicative of *Transition's* purposeful demise when relocalised ideas become mainstream (i.e. steering for emergence) – or indeed the maturity of those involved in it. Another view was that this journey

³²⁵ I.e. Not 'progressive' (i.e. typically associated with Conservative party) councillors who tend to have a reputation to cut public expenditure and lower taxes compared to other political approaches.

was just a “bend” in Sustainable Frome’s history and the shared goals of relocalisation in the town, indicating the intersecting qualities of steer and emergence in a complex network of relocalised initiatives:

*“So, there’s masses of things going on. **Which is way, way greener than anything we ever did in concrete terms in Sustainable Frome.**... [initiatives which have] blossomed.” (IfF councillor).*

*“I suppose if you were, if you were on a journey, a sort of life journey or a change in the town’s fortunes or whatever, **it is highly unlikely that this would be a straight path.** You’re going to go up and down and wave around and sometimes go round the corner or not know quite where you’re going and so on.... I don’t think the bend has been away from the goal at all [taps table repeatedly], it’s just, it’s just a bend [taps table three times]. It’s all, it’s all constructive.” (Sustainable Frome member).*

*“I still think that there’s still an issue with what is our role is if the town council is so successful in what it’s doing. These groups have gone off and been successful...And erm, **are we just a husk, an old parent growing old, in an old house.**...And it may be that in the Transition model, they do talk about planning your own demise. They actually write - in one of the first books - they say - but they were thinking more in the group - and it may be we have to be philosophical and say our work is done. Because I sometimes feel about how old I am and my age and wanting to start a new career. Sometimes I have to say...**I’ll pass this onto younger people.** I’m pleased you’ve taken the time to be interested in what I have to offer [intake of breath]. **I’m going to let you go off and do that now and I’m going to go off and look after myself.**... And it may be that, that is, that is all we’re left with is a group that meets occasionally to share food and share ideas. And we’ve got a newsletter - that we’re an information exchange more than anything.” (Sustainable Frome member).*

However, despite its deep networks in the town, there was a sense that *Transition* alone wasn’t sufficient to bring the transformative change it sought. Some initiatives supported by Sustainable Frome were recognised as not being able “to change the world...[but] it sort of raises the possibility” (Sustainable Frome member). One respondent suggest that *Transition* was like the “canary in the miner’s cage” on environmental issues or that their “impact” in the town was not visible to them (FTC representative). Some respondents questioned the nature and scale of the change *Transition* promotes, especially if it takes a less political role (IfF councillor) where the movement lacked the tools to steer effectively. Another suggestion was that environmental action would be only be scaled up with radical policy solutions, particularly to break the cycle of

prioritising economic over environmental issues or only caring about the environment during cycles of economic productivity (FTC representative).

"[T]his difficulty of not having the right opportunity or model isn't going to be sorted by people getting together in rooms and drinking parsnip soup or watching films or doing, you know having Transition talk. You know, we need to really get out there and show we can do that. And we need an organisation mind you, that has the capacity to go out and buy sites and start bringing on new development, ideas." (Consultant).

At a movement level, there were signs of fracture. Indeed, there was a sense that *Transition* had repackaged existing ideas and made claims to them³²⁶. Jumping on the "*Transition* bandwagon" was not deemed to be a seamless process; there was a feeling that lines are drawn between personal values and organisational or social movement values with resulting tensions:

"I'll happily jump on the Transition bandwagon, if it's something that works. As long as it's not compromising my principles too much, more than 5%. I'll compromise a bit, you know, but not too much.... So, there's a whole spectrum of, of, but they haven't fallen into camps but they're starting to form into camps. And the Transition movement is, at the moment, still trying to be all things to all people... We've also tried to do that at Sustainable Frome, be all things to all people. And erm, there have been phases where that's worked. But sometimes people have drifted away." (Sustainable Frome member).

11.1.3.3 Intergenerational concerns and interaction

There were clear influences of intergenerational concerns as a factor for influencing people's understanding of their engagement in transition arenas and as drivers for acting in a certain role or being attracted to live in Frome. For instance, the influence of parents' professions steering one's own professional choices or having children as a reason why people were prepared – or not prepared – to put their head above the parapet. Being from the region or a partner being from the area or moving to be near family were also drivers for settling in a particular area (IfF

³²⁶ Such as the practice of visioning and ideas of sustainable development stemming from the 1970s.

councillor). The presence of the Steiner school was reported by one respondent to be a key conduit for new members to Sustainable Frome.³²⁷

"I had quite a lot of responsibilities, caring wise, with the early generation of my family and so on. And as that started to be less of a demand I started to fill the spare time in the local community." (Sustainable Frome member).

Respondents differed in their approach to ageing in a more mature phase of life; retirement was either found to either free up time for people to engage in placemaking as they could be more committed than others who were working (Local group representative). Some didn't take on any new roles due to a desire to wind down to seek "quality of life" and to "create space" for personal pursuits and actively disengaged in multiple placemaking roles, sometimes due to illness (Local group representative).

Age and intergenerational interests were found to be of particular import to framing new development models to give hope and meaning for the next generation, indicating a generational disparity to respond to environmental or development issues. Age disparities were also a reason for older people not being able to grasp the progressive agenda, either within the incumbent³²⁸ (party-political) FTC administration or more "Conservative" wards on the "dormitory estates", implying that being older brings with it a more conservative mindset or being less able to take on new ideas. One younger radical protagonist who sought to "agitate" changes in the development process suggested that age disparities prevented them accessing and influencing Frome's relocalised identity network, even if they shared similar values (External New Economy actor).

"[A]s you get older you change to a different phase of life." (IfF councillor).

"[T]hey're Conservative - coz their older and retired. So, they are really hard to crack." (IfF councillor).

"I think there's a difference - there's a sort of generational, potentially there's a generational [pause] there's some disparity in the - [pause] just in terms of being able to, to respond to change, to change in the environment" (External new economy actor).

³²⁷ Indeed, at the One Planet Sunday event in September 2014, there was a Steiner teacher on the door to welcome people and many attendees were families attending the school – indicating shared values and affective ties towards the relocalised agenda.

³²⁸ i.e. pre-IfF (2011).

11.1.3.4 Demographic transitions

In Frome, there is evidence on the links between the town's increased popularity and changes to the physical and demographic landscapes in the town, sparked in part from the strategic positioning of relocalised entities such as Forward Space, the Frome Independent and Catherine Hill³²⁹. The consolidation of a "green and trendy" demographic was perceived as a "rolling stone" of New Frome who were attracted to Frome's green reputation, rather than necessarily bringing that experience with them to craft its cultural identity. Changing consumption habits and affordability issues were having an effect on the types of people attracted to the town.

Homophily was linked to this rise in the town as an emergent quality becoming more "trendy" but that the draw of the durable character of the town was still present³³⁰:

*"[20 years ago] if you were a young professional, you could buy a run-down historic house, you know, small terraced house and-and gradually do it up – nowadays, you'd have to be earning quite a lot more than we were [then] to do that, um, because **there aren't many houses left to be done up.**" (Local group representative).*

*"[When I first began to come to Frome] it was a real mix of people. But then I started to realise there was a pattern. A lot of them came from round here and from Bristol and er... And other people had made that same decision like me. **There'd been a small nucleus of people coming here that were kind of go-getting alternative, living kind of people. Bit of the outwash effect from Glastonbury.** Erm, and it's about **that critical mass thing.** And it, and it's, **what's happened is it's escalated, and escalated and escalated now.** And it's like a **rolling stone**, you know. Or whatever... But in terms of Frome being a 'happening' place [intake of breath], **people like me didn't move here because of sust - sustainability and a green agenda. But we already had one, we already had that history... they brought that when they moved to Frome.** And Peter basically corralled it into a group, and it was a very successful group. Then*

³²⁹ Physical urban landscape changes include a former discount store at the bottom of Catherine Hill has had a change of use as a restaurant and the town council offices have upgraded from Palmer Street to the former Frome Rural District Council building on Christchurch Road, which has enabled FTC to expand its staff significantly as well as offer space to several community groups to use facilities and office space, including the local radio station Frome FM.

³³⁰ Homophily was also a key driver for the coming together of Kindred Spirits in section 6.3.

those people also wanted to do other things with their lives. **And now some people have actually moved here because it's a green town...**" (Sustainable Frome member).

"I think...again, **I think it has shifted more towards this greater sense of left, trendy, artistic, green interest definitely...** There would always be a significant minority whereas now it's probably generally left leaning, **maybe over 50% in the town...** Yeah....There are people from London downsizing and also young people who want to sort of live in an interesting, lively county, more rural place like a small town...it has become a kind of trendy place really. So, **if we move for that, it is like-minded people...** I mean you just... **it's the way history works, isn't it, and the change. You know, when we moved here we were incomers. The real locals would probably see us as being foreign,** and the incomers from the last twenty years are people we have appreciated and have benefited from the way the town is. And now more people are coming in and 'Oh blimey, they've got their own ways' and you've got all these interior design shops. But that's how it goes really. **Yes, it does change views but hopefully there is still the support for the thing... you know, they come because of the stuff that's here."** (Local group representative).

"And, erm, there's no question that **[Forward Space co-working space] has had a huge impact on the type of people moving to the town. Now, a lot more independent kind of freelance workers who gravitate towards [it] because they know there's a building full of 118, 119 other people that are like them.** And that is a really important draw for them. Erm, so that had a really big impact [big intake of breath]." (Local group representative).

One respondent pointed out a tension in the relocalisation agenda, that behind the creative industries are people with money who can afford to buy non-essential items - essentially that Frome needs well-off residents and visitors to prop up its cultural networks:

"We are big into the arts in Frome – who buys pictures? People who have got money! So that's a real conflict for those who are in the artisans up Catherine Hill, independent shops. They are selling things that are not essential for life but are nice to have that people with money will go and buy and give someone a living." (Local group representative).

Though one respondent claimed that Frome was not gentrifying (IfF councillor), there were suggestions that Frome was divided along class lines which were being overlooked in the town and implicit assumptions that working-classes lay dormant - as discussed in section 10.2 - indicating latent (emergent) developmental socio-demographic phenomena. Indeed, the high levels of anti-social behaviour in the town indicate this may be a fault line that may fracture the

current trajectory of transitions in Frome, where there are frequent incidences of domestic violence, theft and arson reported in the local media.

11.2 Theme 12 - Blazing a Trail

The remainder of this chapter explores the driving forces for change in Frome and their direction of travel, including processes of diffusion at a more-than-local scale.

11.2.1 The Zeitgeist and fertile soil

One IfF councillor suggested the attempt to capture local political institutions and advance relocalised politics was considered to be in tandem with a window of opportunity. Driving forces had begun to change the economic nature of the town due to the actions of established local actors as well as the move of more “young and zappy” New Frome voters “who were more likely” to vote IfF (IfF councillor). Thus, suggesting that IfF took advantage of a “moment of collapse” and that the “Zeitgeist was already there” (IfF councillor). Serendipity, luck or a more “universal” driver of fate and circumstances in Frome was also seen as a reason for why events took place and played a role in enrolling “a reasonable thread of professional connoisseurs” to help advance organisational objectives for environmental groups (Local group representative). Thus indicating how strategic relocalised initiatives at the local scale tapped into salient, emergent features of the New Economy:

“The Zeitgeist was already there...I think there was something happening anyway. We took advantage of a moment really. A moment of collapse, of the current council. Or a real recognition of how crap they were... I think there was a movement, and also Frome had changed a bit.” (IfF councillor).

“And, and I think that this [enterprise hub], maybe they're not the changes in themselves but they're a kind of catalyst to change.” (Local group representative).

At the same time, *Transition* actors suggested that Frome had more “fertile soil” or it was “a really fertile space” for achieving the conditions for (relocalised) transitions (Sustainable Frome member; External New Economy actor).

*“You can throw **soil onto fertile land** or unfertile land sort of thing.” (Sustainable Frome member).*

However, despite Frome’s New Economy enterprises reaching a social “tipping point... they can sort of work off each other” in relocalised economic transition arenas (Iff councillor) - as discussed in section 8.1 - planning policy and land availability was seen as the principal constraint for their growth. Moreover, the administrative configuration of planning and politics circumvented the potential to replicate transition processes from other countries, notably Europe.³³¹

11.2.2 Transitioning relationships between government

There was a clear sense that relational blockages needed to be moved on between government. There was a desire to seek a more collaborative relationship between with MDC, or ideally greater devolution of powers to town and parish councils. Frome actors were also inciting “revolutions” in other towns and cities in the UK and abroad. Building from chapter 8 and chapter 9, this section explores how both the gaps between local and higher tiers of government could be bridged.

³³¹ One respondent was keen to replicate an architectural style common to some European countries to build more narrow houses with basements to address land use pressures; however, the topography of Frome (as relatively undulating) was seen as a factor as well as the planning policy context for why this model couldn’t be replicated.

11.2.2.1 Blazing a trail: inciting a Flatpack revolution

FTC and IfF were deemed to be "blazing a trail" (FTC representative) in terms of their approach and encouraging others to self-replicate 'indy'-led councils³³², with targeted support given to mentor people to become elected councillors by key FTC and IfF actors, or create connections with others seeking change within local government. Frome's Flatpack approach was acting as a magnet for organisations "on the [same] radar" (External new economy actor) which sets out IfF's steps to power. One national independent political actor suggested they were buying in bulk copies of Flatpack Democracy and "distributing them as fast as we could" to those who could be interested in replicating independent politics across the country in the 2015 local elections. Indeed, other towns in the South West were cited as areas that are "*definitely* going for revolutions", encouraged by Flatpack Democracy as an artefact used to share Frome's model of independent politics. An idea to hold a "regional conference of revolutionaries" was being explored (IfF councillor).

IfF's independent political approach was also endorsed by one *Transition* actor as "the only way" for the movement to become more politically engaged (External New Economy actor). Although one respondent was wary of the way in which these groups would seek to replicate the experiences of Frome in different contexts, in a similar way Transition Initiatives might follow the "steps to transition" verbatim (IfF councillor).

Indeed, one national level respondent suggested that most Independents suffered losses in the 2015 election due to the affiliations to party-political candidates on the ballot paper³³³; Frome's gains gained bucked this trend which was perceived as significant national actor (National independent political actor).

³³² Independent councillors and councils, inspired by Flatpack Democracy. See IndieTown <http://www.indie-town.uk/> for more information on the spread of the Flatpack Democracy movement (which is updated by a Frome-based individual, in collaboration with Macfadyen; last accessed 26.1.19).

³³³ For many, the 2015 elections were three tier – national, county/district or unitary and town/council elections.

11.2.2.2 FTC: MDC

FTC and IfF respondents were clear on MDC needing to transition from decisions being made on political grounds, to be more objective and to establish ways to garner more respect and understanding - away from a position of conflict and campaigning "which starts with a lot of very raw creative energy. And from a fight position it's very difficult to change anything [particularly with landowners]" (Consultant). A greater level of leadership by FTC and more understanding and active engagement of the citizens of Frome by MDC were also suggested as potential ways forward:

*"I think the big one is to try and get the relationship with Mendip to improve, so that they don't just, um, **block things because of a political** reason, they block it because of a-a reason that it doesn't work very well, or you know, something more sensible. But, at the moment, there's an impression that they just say, 'Oh, Frome, bunch of, you know, **irritating people** up there', um, and you know, that's-that's...that can't...that shouldn't carry on. It's ridiculous, you know, it...we-we are democratically elected, and we're the biggest town in Mendip by far, so you know, that... We-we should have an, um, a-a respect from the district council." (FTC representative)*

"Well, we've several times said to Mendip er, return³³⁴ the decision-making power to us as a town council on planning matters. And they've just refused. Because that's - until we get to make some of the decisions that emerge from [the Neighbourhood] Plan, then what's it worth?...Well, actually to make the planning decisions. Because I think a town of 25,000 [sic] is, should be responsible for most of the local decisions. And that's what you would find [pause] elsewhere in the world. Not a fairly distant district council. Erm, so unless the decisions that emerge from [the NDP] emerge here then there's always going to be a dichotomy between what's in the plan and what comes out the other end." (IfF councillor).

"[I]t would help if the officers that are dealing with [planning] applications ... were here more often and spoke to not just us but more of the local people, they would get more of an understanding of why people are concerned about things that are happening... [I would like to] to delegate the planning process locally as a whole, so that the people who live and work

³³⁴ The notion of "return" here is interesting since FTC has, as a town council, not historically been the planning authority.

in the towns are actually making the decisions in the town.... We've always felt that [the county council] don't fully understand.... We would like the people who are really close to it to actually be able to make the decisions.... I think if decisions were made more locally, like they are in a lot of European countries. Where the Mayor makes the decisions... maybe everybody have their own [devolved powers]." (FTC representative).

In the 2015 election there was a (tacit) agreement between IfF and the Green Party that the Greens would not stand at the town council level and IfF would not seek to stand at the district level, indicating a steer on shared political strategies. An IfF councillor was keen to express it wasn't a deliberate strategy, but it was acknowledged that this called into question notions of independence and value alignment within political arenas. At the 'Do Democracy Day – taking back power and politics' event I attended in September 2015, one participant strongly questioned the rationale for this approach, a response which was shelved for outside of the event (which was being recorded by the social movement Unlock Democracy).³³⁵ Moreover, one respondent was surprised when I pointed out that not all IfF voters might vote Green, indicating an implicit value alignment that may not always be more widely shared amongst voters:

"No, [that decision was] not at all [planned]. We just kind of wanted that to happen, if it happened. But we didn't, we never [short pause] kind of [pause] had negotiations - I just think that would just make you want to stand. I think, I think it was kind of rational decision-making from both groups. And, and we don't want to stand at Mendip, so you know, that would kind of dilute our, erm, attention." (IfF councillor).

*"They ought to put up candidates, that would be a real problem for us. We really don't want that. Because actually what they haven't kind of noticed is that a lot of our seats we won by a dozen votes. And essentially a lot of people who would vote Green voted for us. So, if we, if they pinched a dozen of votes - basically let the Tories in. They wouldn't win. **Coming from nowhere, but they could pinch enough votes off us to do real damage.** Which would be absolutely bonkers given how green this council has been. So, you know, the Green Party managed to shaft Frome's greenness would be, would be insane.... **And I've got to work out a way of supporting the Greens without erm, confusing too many people about my own independence [laughs]."** (IfF councillor).*

³³⁵ A 'short version' of the day is found at <https://vimeo.com/140496051> (last accessed 17.1.19).

The Green Party successfully won three seats at the MDC elections for the first time in 2015³³⁶. Working with the new district councillors created an anticipation of improved relations between FTC and MDC because of shared core green values, including an active member of Sustainable Frome:

"[T]here are people in that group that, um, we can - we can relate to, we can talk to. I'm sure there must be, and so, um, you know, working with... working alongside them would be, I think, really important." (Sustainable Frome member).

However, it was recognised there is a clear tension between value alignment on one's personal preferences and when this might be construed as political strategy by an opponent, highlighting the politics of steering for transitions:

*"Because I approve of [strongly green politics], it's quite difficult. The reality is that in Vision4Frome and the Neighbourhood Plan **there's been more people who think like I do going to these meetings in order to influence things**. And if they were all right-wing fascists I'd be saying the whole system is a complete debacle. **But because you end up with what I want I'm going to say it's a good thing [laughs]...**"* (IfF councillor).

11.2.3 FTC and higher tiers of government

There were several instances of a mutual reinforcement of IfF's approach with other tiers of government. IfF's environmental action was perceived to be improving linkages with county level government who were "absolutely delighted" by FTC's proactive green initiatives, e.g. recycling, since it helped the county council to meet *their* statutory duty to deliver on environmental issues under austerity localism (IfF councillor).

³³⁶ It is pertinent to note here that in the 2019 local elections the Greens increased their representation at MDC to 10 seats (4 from Frome wards). See <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/makeup> (last accessed, 7.6.19). There are also two councillors at Somerset County level – see <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/frome-home-first-green-party-46515> (last accessed 7.6.19).

The timing of the general election coincided with a pre-election visit to Frome by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government,³³⁷ Eric Pickles, in May 2015 owing to the fact that Frome and Somerton was a marginal Conservative seat, which gave FTC an opportunity to engage national level actors and share ideas for alternative delivery mechanisms on Saxonvale. At this meeting, Pickles declared Frome as the “home of localism” (Harris, 2015). Pickles subsequently encouraged FTC to apply for central government funding which has “given [FTC] the confidence to sort of push on” (Consultant) and gave encouraging signs that the government intends to make localism “stronger” (FTC representative). However, *coalitional* governments were considered necessary to promote more considered policy making whereby “we won’t get so many useless laws, and we might actually allow some of them to operate and see if they work or not.” (Local group representative), indicating government’s steer at the extent of allowing a reflexive response to policy measures.

However, while the emergent methods of *Transition*, such as Open Space and World Café, were deemed replicable to incite new approaches in placemaking networks, the extent to which lff’s model could be replicated higher up the political value chain was questioned. The lack of networks from the local level up was perceived as a blockage for independent councillors to incite scale-shift; although one national level actor suggested that independent councillors could form a party *and* retain their autonomy:

“I think what’s happening in Frome can definitely be replicated easily at a town level. But that’s what I’m beginning to think more and more. That what we’ve done actually doesn’t work, or the methodology of what we’ve done would be unlikely to work higher up.” (lff councillor).³³⁸

“And this is where not being a party [short pause] means that you don’t have the networks. Because there’s no point us being elected as like, [short pause] you know having five district independent councillors at Mendip because we wouldn’t be able to do anything.” (lff councillor).

“[O]ne of the biggest reasons Independents won’t join a party is because they’re afraid that people will say, oh you’re just like everybody else now... But once you have a party whip it

³³⁷ The title has since changed to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government following the change of name to MHCLG in January 2018.

³³⁸ It is pertinent to note here that the 2019 local elections saw a significant rise in independent and ‘indy’ i.e. Flatpack-inspired councils. See <https://www.thealternative.org.uk/dailyalternative/2019/5/5/leaves-fluttering-everywhere-flatpack-elections?rq=leaves> (last accessed 7.1.19).

*means you're focusing on the national party agenda. [pause]...But **if you've got a national network, then you've got a leader, then you can have a voice.*** (National independent political actor).

Ironically, the potential for more disruptive change through another referendum was not anticipated; the loss of the Scottish referendum was considered to mean the boat had been missed for wider political and constitutional reform on how the UK's administrative functions operate and relate to one another:

*"At least, and now [the opportunity for Scottish independence has] gone **we'll never have anything else, will we?** I can't see how that's not going to be the case really."* (External New Economy actor).

Little did they know the Brexit referendum was just around the corner in June 2016...

11.2.4 Transitioning relationships within the development regime

Building from chapter 8 and chapter 9, this section explores how both the gaps between relocalised initiatives with wider planning practice and policy regimes could be bridged.

11.2.5 The planning regime: structural controls on capitalism and collective responsibility

The role of the public sector to take additional risks to enable comprehensive development and to build-in more empowering development approaches were cited as potential policy directions (steer). For instance, the current notion of Garden Cities³³⁹ needed to shift away from being

³³⁹ Garden Cities is an approach to urban planning where contained communities are built with equal areas of residential, industrial and agricultural land surrounded by greenbelt. In principle, Garden Cities seek more integrated and sustainable communities by containing action and enterprise within a moderate size town and to reduce urban sprawl within existing settlement areas. Often these would be built on publicly owned land and incorporate cooperative management principles. Two notable Garden Cities in the UK were built in Letchworth, early 20th century and

privately-delivered to a more concerted effort over time between government administrations that override party-political policy differences:

"[T]he whole housing problem has got to be viewed as a long-term, er, problem which needs long-term solutions, really. And that means lots of money and commitment spanned across several parliaments of whatever colour government happens to be in, to be in control at the time...But it might be the whole Garden Cities movement, it might be the public sector taking the brunt of the risk for 15, 20, 25-year periods in acquiring land and providing upfront the infrastructure that's going to be needed - the rail links, and the, you know, and the roads and the, and the utilities and so on. And then producing developments that perhaps have some [pause] local governance arrangements built in so the people living there have a stake in them as well in the ownership of the wider development rather than just their individual plot...what it requires in the end is the government of the day sponsoring something and as I say, being in it for the long term, so, so things can start working." (Local authority representative).

More localised energy systems were also felt to be needed to be required through integrated low-carbon technologies (Sustainable Frome member).

Steering the parameters of the path of least resistance was felt to be the only way to challenge people's every day behaviours to become more sustainable, which requires policy and structural changes to influence the profits of developers, and within capitalism more generally, to encourage a systemic form of restraint:

"[I]t's a bit like, erm, [pause] kind of, path of least resistance, isn't it?...So, erm, that's just, you know that's human nature. And that's, you know, and that's capitalism... If you make it harder, it doesn't mean it doesn't happen. It just means that they have to, that they have to maybe go a different road, route to it. You know, everyone gravitates - sometimes you've got to change their minds through erm, adversity. You can't always, sometimes you need a bit of stick as well as carrot... So, what you've got to do is just put in place proper constraints to make development happen in the way that you want it to." (Local group representative).

Welwyn in the 1920s. Gordon Brown's Labour government also sought to pilot Eco-towns which echoed the Garden City movement with a more explicit focus on low-carbon (indeed net zero carbon) and an emphasis on affordable housing. However, these were met with resistance by communities. The current Conservative administration plans to build 23 new cities by 2050, aiming to deliver 20,000 homes. It is noted that reference to the Garden Cities was removed in the revised 2018 NPPF. (See MHCLG, 2018b).

A renewed global social capital for collective responsibility was felt needing to be unearthed which required a catalyst and appropriate arenas to move debates and action forward, based on trust and reciprocity to challenge self-interest and short-termism in the use of resources (i.e. steering for collectivism):

*"[F]or me... we've reached a point of where the eco debate has kind of settled down and we've, we've got kind of eco-fatigue in a way. Erm, in that we changed our energy lights, or we don't, you know we, we turned our standby off. And maybe now we're leaving it on again because we frankly don't feel that we made much of a difference or we can't, or there is that sense of disempowerment. Or you know, OK so what have we achieved, what can we achieve? And **whilst there are lovely sparks which are people doing amazing things. They're not connected. And if we could connect them and have a collective purpose then we could have a strengthened thing called community...**we can't move much further until we recognise that we have to have erm, a collective response and that is ultimately a global collective. So, this is the gift, if you can put it that way, of global warming is that we have to have a little active discussion about how we manage to live within the resources of the planet." (Consultant).*

*"I don't see how [the challenges of this century] can be [resolved] without a basic, right, **let's be nice to each other and, and reciprocate and think about our interests - but in the context of the shared interest, the common interest**." (External New Economy actor).*

11.3 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored what has transitioned - which may be stepping up, walking away or coming to a crossroads within one's roles at an individual or an organisational level, (or failed to yet shift towards relocalised outcomes) - and whether these possess strategic or emergent qualities or relate to other driving forces. FTC were perceived to have steered the mechanisms for relocalised placemaking by securing financial stakes to influence relationships with developers and MDC and to shift the parameters of engagement by bring these actors *into* FTC's relocalised placemaking agenda. A momentum for change was crafted by relocalised entities to broaden the appeal of the green agenda, although this was at the expense of the energy within Sustainable Frome, which experienced an existential reflection when key local innovators moved into IFF and a resistance for green protagonists was lost. The chapter highlights the dynamics and tension between old and new, including the parent and child relationship between Sustainable Frome and

its associated spin off groups, the perceived disparities in mindset by the younger and older generations, and the draw of family influences as important drivers of role transitions as development transition arenas. A splintering of local relocalised networks and fractures within the wider green movement were seen as landscape forces influencing the trajectory of *Transition*, particularly if the movement was perceived to play a marginal role in influencing policy solutions or seeking too broad an appeal.

Meanwhile, the elevated appeal of the town to New Frome was linked to homophily but also a change in the way Frome's cultural identity was reproduced as different economic drivers influenced the socio-economic profile of those moving to the town, raising tensions about class and gentrification in transitions processes. IfF were cultivating 'indy'-led 'revolutions' in a broader momentum for change at the more-than-local level and forming tacit alliances to influence representation amongst Green representatives to enhance the conduits of green outcomes at the district level; although the ability for the indy movement to operate at the more-than-local scale was questioned. A policy mechanism as a tool to restrict human desire for growth was felt necessary within a context of promoting reciprocity and collectivism to address behavioural defects within the socio-technical system. The following chapter evaluates the empirical findings against the research questions and outlines new directions for research on social movements and government to promote relocalised transitions.

I2 Discussion - evaluating Frome's contribution to the study of planning for transitions at the niche:regime interface

This study has responded to a gap in two branches of theory: i) the role of placemaking and planning in the politics of transitions research, and ii) planning research's tendency to prioritise institutional actors and developers or be less explicit about power and relational ties within planning arenas. This thesis set out to investigate the scope for implementing New Economy transitions through mainstream institutions or initiatives at the local scale through a multi-level account of transition dynamics.

Specifically, two 'tribes' of the New Economy i) *Transition* and relocalisation and ii) government and politics have been probed as potential transition arenas to understand their degrees of intersection as conditions for (relocalised) sustainability transitions. This research was based on an identified need to further explore what happens when *Transition* engages with institutional actors or willingly co-opts itself within the systems they seek to change; for instance, whether 'niche' protagonists possess and retain such an identity if they occupy formal spaces of power and what role the 'regime' has on cultivating and contesting development alternatives. It also responds to a call for research on whether green policies and initiatives might be more readily accepted under the guise of independent politics. This chapter discusses the contributions of this study (in *italics*) to sustainability transitions research and planning theory for each of the research questions before moving onto reflect on the overarching research question. A theoretical framework to advance Frome's experiences within a body of planning transitions research is then offered. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the limitations - and strengths - of the study and suggests potential areas of future research.

12.1 Summarising the research agenda and key findings

The research has provided an in-depth account of placemaking networks on local politics in the innovative case study of Frome which has had several successes in advancing relocalised initiatives in the town. The study has explored the relationship between placemaking networks, politics and planning in enabling (or frustrating) more radical (subversive) forms of sustainable placemaking. Specifically, it has mapped key entities of relocalisation, including Sustainable Frome and its related spin-off groups, and how they relate to mainstream development structures, notably the NDP process and the town council, indicated in Table 12-1, below:

Table 12-1 Reminder of entities and phenomena under study within their respective 'tribe'

Tribe of the New Economy under study	Realm (as per Figure 1-1)	Principally explored through ³⁴⁰
<i>Transition</i> and relocalisation	Initiatives for local self-reliance, appropriate culture, community resilience, drawing on the common bonds of place	Sustainable Frome, wider placemaking dynamics, lff, economic relocalisation, Frome's spatial identity
Government and politics	Institutions and actors in the realm of public services, oversight, policy and regulatory frameworks	Local government structures, party political entities, NDP process, lff, relational ties with MDC and other government entities

Frome's case has revealed important insights on the locally situated degrees of broader social movement ties - to *Transition* and the New Economy and the non-party political 'indy' movement – within Frome's placemaking networks and how broader trajectories (notably localism) may influence these dynamics. Meanwhile, exploring the duality of the 'niche' and the 'regime' within placemaking networks and both formalised and informal structures provides an extended view on the remit of planning on placemaking to solicit conditions for (relocalised) sustainable development. In particular, this study has illustrated how transition arenas contain power relations

³⁴⁰ Salient entities and issues identified from the literature review and initial coding is identified in Figure 4-1 which led to 12 thematic codes (set out in Figure 5-19).

(i.e. actors enrolled or excluded from such processes), the influence of social and affective ties on the governance of these arenas and their intersection, the relationship between procedure, culture, personality alignment and autonomy, and the temporality of tools and strategies to provoke transitions.

In summary, *autonomy* and independence were crucial frames used to justify *an orchestration of transition governance*, where multi-faceted relocalised placemaking networks operated on both a personal and (semi-) organisational level to reproduce a cultural product of Frome's alterity through wider placemaking initiatives. Moreover, Frome's experiences indicate the clear role of personal ties and friendships as a form of *institutionalised (informal) social capital* that germinated the transfer of radical new ideas between organisations. *Spatial scale, historical identities and geographical setting* were influential conditions in crafting an historical and future-orientated autonomous identity and highlight an important role for market towns to incite sustainability transitions. This research found that *temporality and the re-appropriation of past identities* and ideas onto a future desired state were invoked to justify specific actions.

The research indicates that there were many similarities with the definition of a 'niche' and a 'regime' suggested by sustainability transition scholars in chapter 3, notably that the NDP's immediate potential for niche-directed influence was limited due to heavy institutionalised stabilised planning 'regime' constraints on role boundaries and local ambitions. Moreover, there were clear similarities with existing scholarship on the framing of stages of niche challenge and regime influence as to how different actors resisted, reconfigured or were constrained by their context. However, there were instances of *a politics of niche and regime framing* which indicates a variation – or relativity - to whom or what niche and regime concepts mean. For instance, definitions of the niche and regime were used to frame planning as 'niche' for wider interests and it was also not only the 'regime' that led to constraints in role enactment. By taking a closer look at the intersection and power dynamics between local entities, the research found that the 'niche' and 'regime' do not necessarily have rigid boundaries but reflect an *intersection of transition regimes* with both emergent and strategic foundations. The findings also reveal *the role of culture as a condition to encourage a dreaming process on alternatives to local democracy* and "stir things up" as a strategy for niche resistance. *Diversity – and the finding of a common framework that cut across political identities* – was a key strategy to mobilise different approaches to reconfigure local action on civic issues. However, there were *fractures along class lines* (though not always fully recognised)³⁴¹ and *unconscious gender dynamics* also affected the autonomy of women in the

³⁴¹ Partly indicated through higher than average anti-social behaviour in the town.

enactment of their roles. The next section starts with a review of each research question - as they relate to the overarching research question - which discusses the importance of the key findings in relation to existing sustainability transitions and planning scholarship.

12.2 *Transition* and relocalisation. RQ.1 - What conditions led to a strong relocalised character in Frome's relocalised placemaking networks?

This question sought to understand the reasons why actors come together in placemaking arenas to unpack shared motivations and affective ties to Frome and local groups.³⁴²

To date, the spatial influence on transition has been highlighted by several authors (see Ehnert et al, 2018, Wolfram, 2015 and Smith, 2012). This research shows a strong correlation between *the size of Frome (scale)*³⁴³, *historical place identities and its geographical setting* - perceived as tucked away from the rest of the administrative arrangements in the district council – which gave Frome a relative degree of autonomy and independence that became part of the town's perceived character. Frome's size, deemed important to contain strong placemaking networks, simultaneously posed a challenge for coordinating the Community Plan, opening opportunities to manoeuvre the plan's goals for relocalised, independent political actors when IfF took power of FTC.

Frome's past economic history influenced the terrain of transition in the town through a path dependent and future re-crafting of historical identities - perceived as something that actors could bring back *into* modern day high street economics. Frome's past relative scale as being bigger than Bath also shaped an historical confidence and othering (sometimes with a degree of arrogance) with other places, which differentiated Frome as a relocalised protagonist. Heritage and agency were orchestrated around an identity of independence, i.e. to "reclaim" power or the high street, where shared organisational values - emphasising relocalisation - enabled the basis of *an orchestration of transition governance*. It is also important to highlight that these spatial phenomena were amplified through the personal investment of one local businessman in particular (facilitated through previous experience within the financial sector); without such

³⁴² See chapter 6.

³⁴³ As stated in section 5.1, according to the 2011 census, Frome has a population of 26,203 residents - comprised of 11,198 households (ONS, 2011).

investment Frome's fiercely independent economic reputation would most likely not have been as consolidated nor as prominent.

Frome's experience suggests a renewed role of place in crafting sustainability transitions. Place identities were invoked to enrol actors in relocalised placemaking networks, establish protagonist challenge to incumbent power and stabilise strategies that sought to solidify such identities within formalised tools and arenas (i.e. the NDP and TDS). Frome itself was attributed with a degree of *sorting agency*, or identity profiling, akin to a magnet, which was perceived to enable homophily by ensuring that like-minded people were attracted to the town. Meanwhile, affective ties were reflected in the array of reinforcing organisations' different interests. These findings reflect the concept of Low and Pesche's discursive fields, where groupings of actors intersect within identity networks (Low, 2005, Pesche, 2015) and echo Laclau and Mouffe's concept of "chains of equivalence" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p.) for how ideas diffuse across organisations. However, the findings extend this concept role to incorporate spatial affiliation as pull and push factors within transition dynamics; this ought to be more readily considered by transition scholars to explore the relative influence of socio-spatial identities to advance development alternatives. This finding also responds to Mazon and Perkins' call of the potential reciprocal relationship between place, planning and social action (Mazon and Perkins, 2006) by addressing a lack of attention to place attachment within planning theory (see Bradley, 2017 and Padget and Powell, 2012).

The findings also indicate the role of identity for strong bonding capital between groups. Frome was perceived as a space for belonging and becoming. A relative shared *newness* was perceived to inject a reproduced energy into maintaining Frome's (relocalised) identity; thus creating synergies and reciprocity for shared identities of relocalisation and civic action. Indeed, Sustainable Frome became a *conduit for development alternatives* and reinforced new relocalised initiatives which encouraged "spin-off groups", or concrete initiatives. Yet to be able to participate in these alternative practices, there was a sense of one's *mainstream identity had to be broken down* through more spiritual practices, to "break fuses" wired into non-compatible identities in mainstream paradigms; to engage in Transition required a receptivity towards alternative practices and to be "fertile territory" to engage with it, often requiring systemic thinking to challenge climate inaction. Thus indicating that transitions research ought to pay attention to processes of appropriating new identities to enact (relocalised) roles and how these are situated within the demographic identity transitions and historical spatial identities.

However, there are tensions between a possible role of *place as agent* - where spatial character and form are attributed with agency - and how this agency is dependent upon specific networks aligning to - or re-crafting - a perceived underlying "DNA". Particularly since there was also a

simultaneous relative exclusion, or *othering*, in knowing Frome and being accepted as a certain type - to be able to get under the “skin” of it, generally those who reflect a bold and alternative attitude that can push boundaries with “footloose” alternative identity profiles. There were also *fractures along class lines* (though not always fully recognised); middle-class “New Frome” was credited as natural IfF supporters or those attracted to local politics and relocalised ideas. Yet there were no perceived active mechanisms for working-class people to be meaningfully engaged in placemaking or planning (either due to due lack of time, skills and interest).³⁴⁴ However, the nature of affective ties for different actor groups outside the relocalised network under study – i.e. those who may be deemed as “Old Frome” was not explored. The relationship of appropriated (shared) identities (i.e. spatial, organisational etc.) for different groups in the town would well illuminate other important insights on the role of autonomy and belonging in Frome’s placemaking networks to further break down the duality of the niche and regime in the politics of transition.

Meanwhile, there was a tension between capitalism and the wealthy propping up its cultural networks, indicating the role of cultural capital in gentrification. Local culture is a core facet of relocalisation (see Post Carbon Institute, 2017). The role of culture in establishing and enacting regimes is recognised by transition scholars (Berget et al, 2015; Geels, 2002) yet to date, culture has been a relatively neglected area of sustainability transitions research (see Neal, 2013). The appropriation of cultural capital and its links to artisans has been demonstrated in existing transitions research on eco-gentrification (e.g. Neal, 2013 and Håkansson, 2018), where cultural benefits have been noted to be capitalised by real estate interests and those seeking to a more ‘edgy’ experience which can lead to gentrification (North and Longhurst, 2013) – highlighting the role of wider socio-technical regimes (i.e. real estate) on socio-demographic spatial enrolment. These phenomena may also challenge the possibility of ‘degrowth’ narratives unless other forms of social and material value could become more widespread.

Cultural differences were a key factor in setting the parameters of engagement in both placemaking networks and within political and planning regimes. Frome’s artistic culture, its value to its relocalised actors and the travel of shared organisational cultures from the ‘niche’ (i.e. Sustainable Frome) to the ‘regime’ (to FTC via IfF) highlights the role of culture as a transformative ingredient to influence group dynamics into the structures to plan for transitions and facilitate new administrative orderings. For Frome-based actors, engagement on issues was perceived to need to reflect the governance and culture of place. ‘Knowing’ the town’s purpose,

³⁴⁴ As demonstrated by its website (see footnote 388, IfF has sought to enhance participation and well-being as core initiatives of its administrations. However, the findings point to socio-cultural phenomena that were present at the time of this research. To qualify this statement, further research on these issues is necessary.

and the governance to enable this, was a key platform to create a broader movement for change; this was inextricably tied to a strong sense of individual autonomy by key changemakers in the town. However, despite these insights culture is often not aligned within broader conceptions of the politics of transition which ought to be addressed, given its central role in corralling shared personal and organisational identities in Frome. This research suggests the need for more research on class and placemaking, which echoes the notion of just transitions (see Zadek, 2019), and the impacts of gentrification in transition processes (see Håkansson, 2018). In so doing, this could further explore the politics of representation and the degrees to which social identity, income and culture affect degrees of enrolment to in/formal transition arenas.

12.3 Government and politics: RQ.2 - To what extent do 'niche' actors advance their objectives when they occupy formal spaces of government 'regimes'?

This facet of the New Economy was explored by examining the infiltration of local government through a) the political regime and FTC and b) the NDP process and the planning regime. In doing so, this research responds to Carroli's call to explore the fuzziness between boundary extensions and their configuration at the niche:regime interface (Carroli, 2018).

Chapter 2 presented the notion of the regime as institutions, rules, norms and core organisational fields aligned to particular discourses and institutionalised logics (see Berkhout et al, 2003 and Berget et al, 2015). In similarity to many transitions scholars, this study found that those within regimes experienced lock-in which prevented individuals from asserting their agency. In particular, the restraint of the regime on individuals was exacerbated through the context of austerity localism (see Lowndes and Pratchett, 2011).

The "battle" between relocalised intentions and the planning and political regime was often described as a "push" and a "pull" whereby some actors had the upper hand, or power over a process, whilst others had a *power without*. Frome's NDP showed high resonance to the regime concepts above. However, there were different levels of manoeuvre of new political interests, or 'niche', against vanguard 'regime' interests. The findings show that knowledge of the regime was fundamental to breaking down the boundaries as well as combining it with niche alterity. Multiple instances of the praxis of the niche and planning and party-political 'regimes' were invoked regarding strategies, values, relationships and approaches, rendering the terms more fluid than is

typically understood³⁴⁵; echoing transition scholars who have noted a mixed positionality within networks (e.g. Lovell, 2009, Bryson et al, 2006) where one's relative proximity to issues influences one's degrees of alignment.

12.3.1.1 The political regime and FTC

Transition scholarship suggests that regime shift occurs when social and technical elements reinforce mutual goal-directed pursuits (Schot and Geels, 2008) and increasingly scholars note these changes occur on a coevolutionary basis (Loorbach et al, 2017). In Frome, there were several instances of such reinforcing pursuits and high degrees of synchronism within its placemaking networks, social movement trajectories and policy agendas which were carried *into* local government.

The findings reveal lff's route to power was laid in part by *Transition's* own rules to seek to formally engage the local council, which became a wider movement strategy (i.e. counter movement trend, see Avelino, 2017) to influence political actors. At the same time, the *Transition* movement's broader (early) rejection of party politics and formal institutions led, indirectly, to lff's break into political representation. The philosophical ties between lff and Sustainable Frome were carried into the spaces of government through the actors involved; actor identities and practices blended with new formal and informal arrangements, which is suggested here as an *informal institutional capital*. This also indicates how formalised approaches within alternative, niche networks were directed towards formal institutions and, at the same time, hyper-informal practices softened the governance arrangements within the state.³⁴⁶

Moreover, there was a *discursive reordering* of localism in the context of Frome. The localism policy agenda – a regime-directed initiative - was critical to framing control at the local level and helped to recast the imagination of the role of the town council as a more autonomous entity with a strategic remit to “think big”. Thus indicating that these policy conditions created a

³⁴⁵ See Appendix O - Descriptors of the niche and the regime across entities in Frome's NDP and placemaking networks for a summary of how respondents purported discourses of the niche and regime across different potential transition arenas.

³⁴⁶ Imagination for cultivating innovation was heightened using informal spaces, such as a pub, and practices of social drinking – highlighting the role of pubs to lubricate ambitious (local) action.

favourable 'landscape'³⁴⁷. *Confidence* of experienced protagonists to act was tied to perceived positive financial flows arising from localism.³⁴⁸ Localism also was considered a means to "step up" *Transition's* engagement to stimulate relocalised placemaking – and politics – (i.e. into the 'regime'), providing they were sufficiently organised to respond to this opportunity. Thus both 'regime' and 'niche' elements were synchronised to cultivate localised reorientations to politics and placemaking.

Invoking the promise of localism and locally-rooted "goodwill" within its placemaking networks, lff used administrative dysfunctionality within the incumbent FTC as a space to imagine (better) alternatives to local democracy and "stir things up" as a strategy for niche resistance which helped to garner *momentum* for a broader change programme. *Diversity – and the finding of a common framework that cut across political identities* – was a key strategy to mobilise different approaches to reconfigure local action on civic issues, the pursuit of greater control over local issues and to engender a more creative approach to placemaking.

To achieve this, role boundaries under lff were broken down and refashioned – in similarity to those being meaningfully enrolled into *Transition*. lff effectively changed the rules of social engagement within government to manage differences within lff, cultivate respect and liberate an internal transition on the legitimacy of one's own beliefs, rather than an adversarial, conflict-driven approach.³⁴⁹ By breaking this link a new approach was able to be crafted through formal political representative roles which generated associational space to encourage collaborative agency and relationships (Behabib, 1996) and reflexive processes (Hendricks and Grin, 2007). FTC's role under lff was a *conscious withdrawal* and a facilitator, echoing Lowndes and Sullivan's neighbourhood empowerment type of neighbourhood governance (see Figure 3-1). With freedom from party political manifesto constraints, lff could use *local* artefacts and a promise of change to frame their approach and shift (local) political identities and administrative arrangements – with a large degree of political craft and opportunism.³⁵⁰

The concept of *reciprocity* was key to this re-alignment through an *orchestration of transition governance*; reciprocal and mutually enforcing governance arrangements opened up resources and impetus to further environmental and economic relocalised interests by the "doers" –

³⁴⁷ A term used by some transition scholars to refer to exogenous broader trends, such as policy change and climate change.

³⁴⁸ I.e. future relocalised transitions were perceived in line with wider economic pressures that were forcing responsibility and ownership *down* the formal administrative chain.

³⁴⁹ However, the extent to which this was experienced by all lff councillors was not corroborated.

³⁵⁰ i.e. Usher's regime insights and Macfadyen's counter-cultural insights and building on initiatives kickstarted by Duke within MDC or other Frome-based roles. See section 5.3 and 7.1.

unrestricted by the same formal, regime rules as a government entity – to push the [regime] boundaries from multiple angles. Thus reflecting Geels and Schot's transition pathway of 'de-alignment and re-alignment' where localism caused changes in 'deep structures' which was followed by the emergence of multiple novelties (Geels and Schot, 2007, p.414). The findings also suggest another categorisation of power within Avelino's typology of power relations (Avelino, 2011)³⁵¹; *power without*. *Power with* (i.e. formal representative political roles) effectively became a *power without* for incumbent party political actors (and FTC role holders) who lost discursive power to demonstrate (sustainability) action, indicating antagonism within new vs. incumbent reconfigurations (see Avelino, 2017 and Moufee, 1997), or re-alignment (Geels and Schot, 2007).

Avelino's term *radical niche-regime* transition is helpful here to indicate a correlation of innovative (dreaming) and transformative (new structures) processes that forge radical niche-directed changes in line with counter-macro trends (see Avelino, 2017). The ability to keep *pushing* was perceived as a mechanism for strategic influence over momentum for change. Using Avelino's terminology, both innovative and transformative forms of power were invoked to destabilise the political regime (see Avelino, 2017). The resourcing of alterity had a more *transformative* component to Frome's story of relocalised transitions where new structures were created within and between FTC and its placemaking dynamics (see Avelino, 2017) also formalised in the *management of role transitions*. Moreover, the practice giving closure to tensions – whether consciously or because of the positive social relations within the group, was perceived to encourage bonding – or as this research suggests, reworking IfF's organisational identity through *inter-personal institutionalism* instead of a formal (party) political identities. There was thus a fusion between government-directed transformative powers and social movement transformative powers (in this case the New Economy) where counter-cultural ideas were ignited through regime-directed ideas and structures. Thus departing from Figure 2-4 since radical niche-regimes appropriated macro-trends for their own subversive ends.

For instance, by embedding emergent, spontaneous practices within the town council, reinforcing different skills sets towards a more holistic sustainable approach, or ensuring a backstop with ties to Sustainable Frome to synchronise relocalised efforts by FTC. These joint initiatives enabled "pincer movements" which – combined with a broader strategy for change within a New Economy framework. The alignment of governance and actors towards a particular identity network echoes Swilling's et al's socio-political regime conceptualisation (see Swilling et al, 2016)

³⁵¹ See Figure 2-3.

– whereby actors subscribe to particular beliefs and alliances towards the system. As a corollary of Rydin's networks of restricted access (see Rydin, 2012) there were evidently pockets of *networks on unrestricted access* where individuals were “singing from the same hymn sheet” at the planning and political niche-regime interface - pushing without “resistance” at the expense of other interests, such as party political identities. These conduits favoured direct access into government for relocalised actors to “just do it”. Thus expediting niche-directed regime change and agenda-setting but also calling into question the *legitimacy* of some processes, indicating a degree of favouritism or in-group ties to advance the ideas of relocalised politics. Moreover, those with more time and political experience (who also happened to be men) had more influence within IfF.

Party political identities were key containers for role boundaries and role conflict, or antagonism.³⁵² IfF's ambitions were contained by a more risk-averse political regime at both town council and principally at the district level within a “dinosaur” socio-political landscape, affecting the parameters for ambition. Role boundaries within the political regime were perceived as negative and obstructive or were “politically restricted” by regime institutions. A lack of trust and legitimacy were key concepts that were used to describe power relations between local government. Again invoking natural phenomena, the political regime was deemed to “infect” personal autonomy with divisive party-political values, a virus which attacks *the political and personal identity immune system*.³⁵³ Whilst there was a tendency to avoid identifying with adversarial (identity) politics there were nonetheless several instances where this was suggested. *Identity profiling* – described above for those attracted to the town and Sustainable Frome - was also displayed by those with (non) party political affiliations towards party political (or planning) role holders, indicating a strong presence of ‘othering’ to establish protagonist action.

Oppositional and mutually exclusive identities between Conservative MDC leadership and IfF were seen as unreconcilable; again this can be explained as technological substitution where newcomers compete with regime technologies (Geels and Schot, 2007). An inherent antagonism and inward energy of (most) party political actors was believed to filter relations from the fabric of the *national* party political system. A residual antagonism between FTC and MDC was a *localised cultural-historical legacy*, emphasising the need for historic institutional accounts of how power and politics have influenced relations over time, which this thesis has done. Despite

³⁵² Which was present in both the Community Plan, within FTC and the NDP.

³⁵³ Loyal party political actors were perceived as incurable, compounded by perverse financial incentives or sustaining a reputation (political capital, “power not product”) which re-directed them from meaningful local issues which were believed to be a key constraint in cultivating a more emergent politics by conditioning relationships with others. See section 7.3.

challenging party political actors when embroiled in the machinations of politics, IFF's sometimes surreptitious approach to governance, acting through other organisations' identities, was a form of subversion (although not always purposeful) and equally a political strategy. Thus seeking control and domination expressed through the discourses and practices of a particular relocalised identity and governance, even if towards neighbourhood empowerment outcomes.

This inherent antagonism and tussle between strategies for control, even while seeking to move towards agonism (see Mouffe, 2007), indicates that antagonism is a natural phenomenon which helps to create pathways for particular in-groups; exclusion is an inevitable by-product of a move towards agonism. This may be explained by the sense that role boundaries were sometimes hard to break down, even for actors that had themselves transitioned into New Economy arenas. Residual regime role boundaries for some role holders³⁵⁴ indicates Edelenbos et al's research on the different types of knowledge that can sometimes operate in silos, or indeed in conflict. The conditions for relief from these constraints requires further research across multiple roles one might hold – extending Avelino and Wittmayer's Multi-actor Perspective (MAP) by exploring the effect of personality, knowledge and previous experience in igniting strategic or latent qualities within specific transition arenas.

However, the mantra "it's still only a town council" indicates a recurrent lack in formal powers arising from localism. Moreover, some of the structures created within FTC are at the mercy of future councillors to change the administrative arrangements should IFF lose power.³⁵⁵ Other (landscape) forces to oust incumbents was seen as the only way to expedite change and a "radical shakeup" within and between local government. Thus indicating that further structural and resource re-alignment are required to enable effective community powers.

³⁵⁴ For instance, where one actor was described as not having the governance seeped into them or regime knowledge was seen to preclude meaningful engagement with experience from the other side. Moreover, FTC's own officers had to subvert their own non-partisan duties by reframing IFF's successes as common sense.

³⁵⁵ For instance, revoking any changes by IFF to FTC's standing orders.

12.3.1.2 The NDP process and the planning regime

Experiences of planning and the NDP showed much greater regime tendencies than the political regime, which IFF were able to reconstruct at a local level.³⁵⁶ The findings echo much research on the restrictive role of planning and a disconnect between the regime and potential coevolutionary approaches between niche and regime to craft systemic transitions (see Carroli, 2018) or challenge elite capture of planning instruments (see Purcell 2009).

While the planning regime was framed as working within different *phases of transition* (i.e. *episodes of institutional and ideational orderings*) a perceived lack of political maturity in the rollout of the new NDP regime indicates a discord with its resultant procedures. Despite possessing a potential power over directing development, the LPA's mechanisms to leverage planning were perceived as incoherent which led to contradictions in the deliverability of development which had "high hurdles" for relocalised actors to jump through.³⁵⁷ There was a tension between "getting on with things" and "getting things right" meaning the ambitions raised by localism had to be grounded when they bypassed established planning procedures. Ambitions were "reigned in", "dampened" or "grounded" by the NDP policy framework while planning was seen as an obstructive domain. Role agency and autonomy was perceived as "tied hands" within the system through the power of planning policy, weakened LPA resources, and a risk-averse (political) culture – constraining the application of latent skills (particularly for women respondents) within the NDP process.

Even the planning regime was perceived to have a *power without* as their advice was circumvented (partly due to the entry point of consultants) where the wheels of the system turned without enforceable controls, thus partially weakening the planning regime but also channelling power to other intermediaries (i.e. the Examiner or the Secretary of State). The introduction of the Examiner was perceived as a key intermediary to negotiate contestation between FTC and MDC. Thus *policy changes resulted in a loss of agency at multiple levels*. However, a *mutual frustration* with the NDP process by local and LPA actors was not perceived by niche protagonists.

³⁵⁶ See Appendix O - Descriptors of the niche and the regime across entities in Frome's NDP and placemaking networks.

³⁵⁷ E.g. conditions, protracted processes and "pervasive" restrictions.

There is clear resonance with extant accounts of the NDP process as containing more radical intent, outlined by planning theorists (e.g. Parker and Street, 2015; Parker et al, 2017). IFF had hoped to use the NDP to establish their own planning rules (i.e. Avelino's concept of radical niche-regimes) or forming new radical assemblages (Forester, 1989) to contribute to relocalisation and force developers and the LPA to re-prioritise local interests in development decision-making. However, as a mechanism for influence, the NDP was perceived to lack system change powers and proved an intractable route to changing the rules of engagement with the planning regime. Frome's NDP process was challenged on the highly procedural form of 'softer' placemaking objectives and the 'mangle' that "re-scripted" and 'squeezed' intent (see also Parker et al., 2017 and Parker and Street, 2015) as they confronted the 'stripped back' 'realities' of planning regime. Thus indicating the *reinforce* powers of the planning regime (see Avelino, 2017).³⁵⁸ The process did not lead to any immediate changes to LPA-FTC relations nor did it have the capacity to influence the wider development sector that hampered relocalised placemaking. Notably while the rationale to scrap the CfSH was to reduce 'box-ticking' the LPA was also perceived to take such an approach to planning decisions (and indeed some participatory approaches more generally).

The NDP partially institutionalised refashioned traditional sustainability discourse through OPL and relocalised development options; local identities were clearly "bottled" in the document itself. Within the NDP consultation channels, a sense of (informal) understanding cultivated within Frome's placemaking networks flowed into the (formal) structures of the NDP to influence both self-build and cohousing in the plan. Yet this did not necessarily result in a *translation* of strategies of influence to (formalised radical placemaking) power. That the steering group got "sucked into" a *council state* indicates that Frome's NDP was not an arena for an *immediate* transition on the niche's terms. FTC and MDC were perceived as playing "a different ball game" which caused structural holes, broken links between niche (relocalised) entities³⁵⁹ and the LPA (i.e. formal knowledge, systems and culture), and "brick walls" in the synchronic potential for alignment on issues, compounded by party political antagonisms. While placemaking through Sustainable Frome members and FTC (often the same people) cultivated an *ecology of localised potential development alternatives* (tied to the wider New Economy movement) the NDP did not provide an 'engaged interdependency' (Zhang and Roo, 2016, p.2) of these niches:regime linkages; nor did the process engender a reformist agenda for more radical (just) planning (i.e. Miraftebab,

³⁵⁸ For instance, by encouraging too small-scale action on low-carbon issues (a similar charge made to *Transition's* (Chatterton and Cutler, 2008).

³⁵⁹ The NDP process actually broke some ties between Sustainable Frome and FTC either by turning off a "connection" – through different people-links – or being a dry process presented as divorced as a meaningful vehicle for action.

2009; Beard, 2003), partly due to the failure of the process to enrol 'ordinary' citizens and transcend perceived gender or class-based divisions.

Most niche actors lacked a grasp on the *mechanics* of the planning regime (echoing Gallent and Robinson, 2013), thus rendering the NDP as a mechanism for niche-directed action limited. The NDP process gave FTC greater confidence to enlist those who could defend their relocalised intentions within the planning regime. However, the decisions within the influence of FTC (i.e. governance and contracting of consultants) either concentrated unidirectional engagement processes or caused disruption to relocalised ambitions through role boundaries overstepping their mark (i.e. seeking to use the NDP as a container for personal values). Indeed, FTC's experience indicates the role of the NDP process in de-radicalising relocalised intent (see Doherty, 2007) which caused some "stronger" members of lff to disengage (see Ibarra, 2003).³⁶⁰ *Momentum* – which was key for building up lff and other relocalised initiatives - was lost in the NDP arena and affected the attitudes of those involved akin to depression, indicating the role of engagement in planning on mental health and wellbeing as a fruitful study.³⁶¹

Meanwhile, as other planning scholars have suggested, the NDP closed down contributions of some actors resulting in exclusive governance to achieve relocalised objectives through the plan (see Parker and Street, 2015; Hillier, 2002). In contrast to associational space within lff's internal governance, *the NDP was a container of both associational and agnostic space* at the niche:regime interface. Responding to Watson, 2014 this research has demonstrated the micro-conditions of power within the spaces of planning through group capture in some arenas where niche-directed "self-referential" restricted access in the NDP process, causing tension between process, legitimacy of representation, consent and output. It was certainly not only the 'regime' that led to constraints in role enactment (i.e. some consultants felt pigeon-holed). Moreover, the technologies of transition had an alignment to the individual facilitating them. Responsibility for misalignment was put *onto* FTC, thus illustrating the facets of power, responsibility, preferential access and agency within the system.

Planning was perceived as "niche" to wider interests, indicating a variation – or relativity - to whom or what niche and regime concepts mean and suggesting closer attention to the politics of the framing of the niche or regime. The conflation of political and vested interests (i.e. developers) in planning policy was seen to undermine an alignment for a more progressive

³⁶⁰ At the same time, lambasting party political actors for similar behaviours.

³⁶¹ Meanwhile, the extent the NDP process relies on volunteers and the financial and wellbeing cost to those involved questions the legitimacy and fairness of NDPs.

localism that empowered local actors (see Flyberg, 1998; Cowell, 2013) and questions the role of NDPs and the planning regime as a mechanism for transition. Frome's experience with the NDP clearly reveals a political and value conflict in the growth-centred discourse of localism (e.g. Featherstone et al., 2011).³⁶² The role of planning in constraining development was undermined by the financial resources of (volume) developer influence. The embeddedness of the political regime and the planning regime – i.e. donor funding by developers – was perceived to stifle the ability for niche directed influence; individual, profit-orientated efforts were seen to hamper a collective approach to development.

At the same time, the planning regime had *power over* the extent relocalised actors could contain latent energies, including the town's capacity to put OPL ideas into practice in a meaningful, transformative way, or enabling more adaptive or temporal use of spaces which hampered the potential to "capture and store" creative (transformative) energies; thus reducing the social capacity for transition through planning rules which prevented new rules from being cultivated through the planning system as a potential niche-directed entry point. A mismatch with planning policy or procedural issues turned off effective engagement to transmute energy and action up the political and planning regime food chain.

However, looking at the NDP in isolation is not sufficient to understand wider transition dynamics. An adversarial approach was invoked by FTC as a strategy to claim the discursive space occupied by volume housebuilders and the planning regime, seeking to infiltrate ideas into the spaces of planning to embody new approaches within the system. Indeed, due to the changing policy context, FTC's planning board responded by branching out from unidirectional governance. FTC's acquisition of landholdings highlights the role of an *appropriation of strategic assets as a strategy for regime resistance* and mutual coevolution of transition arenas³⁶³ and bringing the regime *into* Frome's placemaking or bypassing damaged links; which to date has been overlooked by transitions research as a strategy for niche-directed influence on the planning regime.

The relative degree of flexibility, curtailment and entitlement to participate or influence processes within the NDP process echoes Berget et al's conception of weak, medium and high ties

³⁶² For instance, "Entrenched [green] views" were perceived as an unwelcome challenge to growth-orientated discourses as "the only game in town". Like Iff, developers were perceived to be "pushing at the boundaries" facilitated by planning's *reactive* form. However, developers also couldn't be "handcuffed" by the planning regime and community groups could not be given a "free hand" thus indicating highly institutionalised preferences on the formalised roles of agency within the planning regime, while central government was "heavy-handed" (see chapter 8 and Appendix O - Descriptors of the niche and the regime across entities in Frome's NDP and placemaking networks).

³⁶³ I.e. forcing FTC to be consulted as a landowner, not only a stakeholder, only Saxonvale.

structural couplings with differing degrees of resonation or structured practices and arrangements (see Berget et al, 2015). For FTC, the NDP process was generally *asynchronous* in its degrees of alignment³⁶⁴. Moreover, the differing degrees of flexibility within different facets of 'regimes', with clusters of stronger or weaker conditions within similar processes (i.e. design vs. low-carbon). Thus suggesting an *intersecting transitions regime* framework that moves beyond dualistic conceptions of the niche and regime to recognise the broader role of socio-cultural factors highlighted in this chapter within the nexus between placemaking, politics and institutions.

12.3.2 An intersection of Transition and Government: RQ.3 - How do formal and informal ties affect the politics of transition?

This research question was in response to the charge that the relationships between power dynamics across different roles are often underdeveloped in transitions research (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015) and that network form can affect degrees of alignment (Davies and Featherstone, 2013), notably by exploring the role of informal networks (Dempwolf and Lyles, 2015). This research agrees with Avelino and Wittmayer (2015)'s conception of the Multi-Actor Partnership (MAP) that role enactment and power dynamics are key to understanding transition dynamics. This research has shown that the governance of these relationships significantly impacts how these relationships manifest and the enactment of roles. In particular, this research has elucidated why actors came together to enact relocalised role identities and the role of affective commitments in aligning group interests.

For instance, the combination of high civic energy, social capital and autonomous and ambitious individuals helped to ensure mutual clusters of different interests, or "incestuous", ties in a physical setting that harboured the energy of the town in ways that encouraged relocalisation. This was mirrored by lff and placemaking networks that reinforced this identity. As noted in chapter 2, who performs roles and their situated knowledge affects the enactment of roles. Frome's placemaking networks were perceived as highly concentrated networks from a limited pool of those with the necessary resources (i.e. capitals) to meaningfully contribute to placemaking and "stick their head above the parapet". Thus echoing Rauschmayer et al's introduction of the

³⁶⁴ I.e. not simultaneous or concurrent.

individual level to Geel's 2002 conceptual framework of Multi-Level Perspective (Rauschmayer et al, 2015).³⁶⁵

Pre-existing ties and reciprocity helped to express and advance relocalised place-based artefacts using the structures of the state to weave in institutionalised forms of alternative governance to support local placemaking initiatives (and beyond). Familiarity strengthened ties between placemaking groups and actors to navigate the state (the town council) when IFF occupied power, reflecting Will's insight that pre-existing ties facilitate connections (Wills, 2016a).

The role of strong affective bonds and ties with local government has been clearly highlighted through Frome's experiences and their internalisation in the self. Love and passion and a stewardship (caring) for particular issues and Frome were particular phenomena that amplified bonding and bridging social capital (also reflecting Berget et al's notion of degrees of resonance within networks, see Berget et al, 2015). However, the fact Sustainable Frome's membership reach had a relative broadness, the energy of action ejecting out of the organisation when IFF took power suggests personal affective bonds were more susceptible to disruption causing organisational re-alignment of the 'niche' to one of its niche:regime spin-off entities; as section 11.1.2 indicates, emotive ties do not necessarily translate to formal links.

There were several references to the body, soul, heart and DNA when describing the respondent's affinity to Frome's placemaking action, *suggesting a body corpus of spatial identity and affective ties*. That it was necessary to develop a "thick skin" when acting under the radar suggests how the 'DNA' of the socio-political corpus mutated as power relations shifted when IFF took, and consolidated power. Moreover, that multiple membership was "incestuous" at times indicates that this DNA of Frome was re-crafted through a particular group which was nonetheless attracted to recreating a perceived pre-existing character in the town. Thus echoing notions of 'default' actors empowered through community planning processes (see Featherstone et al, 2011). Those with an agenda were seen as 'stronger characters', or perhaps could more forcefully present them. Meanwhile, *organisations helped to maintain active characters with purposeful agendas as containers for relocalised activity* suggesting greater attention is required on the role of organisations in stabilising or fuelling motivation and confidence to further explore the niche:regime nexus. For others, a disaffection between the promise of localism and the perceived reality led to a value-action gap (see Passy, 2003). The research found that *personal motivation* (self-interest) – rather than community-driven values – was often the only reason why

³⁶⁵ See Figure 2-1.

people engaged in planning, indicating a wheel of value-motivations towards planning which should be probed further.

The findings also reveal the need to extend an assessment of role boundaries beyond the confines of transition arenas to domestic and personal realms; for instance, *the role of partners as co-dependent animators of transition* invites sustainability research into the very personal realms of identities and becoming through friendship and relationships that reinforce transition dynamics. The research also illustrates a gendered engagement with political structures and effects on women's agency, notably the lack of kudos, an (unconscious) expectation of women's domestic roles, even in public life and unconscious bias towards male majorities. However, the extent of this institutionalisation suggests this is tied to the personality of a given role occupier, thus emphasising how organisational and personal identities filter one another; an area that merits further research.³⁶⁶

Indeed, the political economy of welfare provision and the government-citizen contract was perceived to dull a sense of autonomy (or absolution of their agency) with regards to peoples' responsibility within society (which could be partly challenged by the New Economy framework). A need to bridge a planning information-action gap was perceived as necessary, as was a respect for views within formal spaces to understand roles and responsibility of in/action. Engagement in the world and *becoming* resonates with more existential concepts towards an intentional application of personal agency in the world, causing a think on the philosophy of planning at a practical and a theoretical level. A comparison between the success of the recent child-led movement inspired by Greta Thunberg and an extant disconnect with planning amongst young people would be fruitful to understand how the younger generation could become more connected to planning, particularly if it was linked to climate change.

³⁶⁶ Indeed, neither Avelino and Wittmayer (2015) nor a related paper Wittmayer et al (2017) mention personality and the latter only refers to identity issues in passing although it does recognise that "Identities, as well as roles, are considered more or less temporary stabilisations in an ongoing process of identity work" (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015, p.50).

12.3.3 The effects of the New Economy: RQ.4 - What are the consequences of protagonist occupation of local government on the form and character of transitions?

By taking a longitudinal account of transition dynamics in Frome, this research has accounted for wider phenomena that lead to transitions, including the concepts of moving on or processes of adoption and diffusion at the more-than local scale. Importantly, this research found that *cycles of transition* and the *intergenerational phases* were key drivers in transition processes - at an organisational and individual level - which have been so far overlooked in sustainability transitions research.

Cycles of de-alignment, alignment and re-alignment are common features to transition accounts of pathways (see Geels and Schot, 2007). This research uncovered that *dynamics of the old and new* – akin to incumbent and protagonist in sustainability transitions research - ignited role tensions. This is beyond role transitions and actor strategies (see Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015), however, and cultivated within cycles of emergence and re-emergence. This research found that temporality and the re-appropriation of past identities and ideas onto a future desired state were invoked to justify specific actions. Chapter 11 highlights how role transitions, intergenerational change, demographic transitions and the rotation of 'incomer' identities reflect cycles within transition. For instance, Sustainable Frome - as a *parent organisation* - helped to spawn and incubate nascent ideas, which then moved on and transitioned into autonomous entities. Thus indicating new entrant competition for resources, attention and legitimacy (Geels and Schot, 2007, p.414) even within the niche itself, not just in relation to regime phenomena. For instance, the environmental movement itself was seen in a process of transition, so that what started as a more contained (niche) environmental remit moved increasingly into planning and more formalised roles (see also Barnes, 2015).

These ongoing cycles of assimilation challenge Rotmans et al's definition of transition as a gradual and continuous process (Rotmans et al, 2001) and Holz et al's as a 'long-term' trajectory (Holz et al, 2008, p.623). Enrolment to networks was influenced by intergenerational considerations - akin to forces of attraction - such as family and childhood, either returning to one's childhood roots or a partner's roots, and retirement suggests a more circular account of role transition over time than may have been considered so far. Moreover, the role of gender and domestic drivers in the adoption, or rejection, of roles and any disparity for different socio-economic profiles are avenues

for future research to probe the interaction of the transition of role identities within lifecycles and individual journeys towards autonomy.

The form of transitions were not exclusively shocks, as suggested by Loorbach et al (2007), although the *Zeitgeist*, or catalyst for change, is an appropriate identified term to frame a move from one state to another. Alignment towards relocalisation was partly perceived as luck, or “magic dust” as a driver (force) of aligning ideas and interests towards a particular type of transition. This could lead transition scholars to trace the more intuitive, possibly even spiritual, dynamics of opportunities to account for steer and emergence and the force of serendipity in influencing de- and re-alignment within transitions processes.

The findings suggest that to achieve transitions towards the New Economy a transcendence, or transition in identities, is required to move between intersecting regimes of transition, either at the party political or to enable participation with the cognition of alternative governance. At the same time, human nature was considered in need of being tamed by policy reform.

12.4 Placemaking Transitions: A future research framework for intersecting regimes of transition

The remainder of this chapter explores the key theoretical contributions of this study and reflects on further research in the spirit of cultivating a body of planning transitions theory as well as the limitations - and benefits - of this study.

This thesis puts forward the notion of *placemaking transitions* – the locally situated dynamics of place and politics in networked transition arenas - to capture how the politics of place influences sustainability transition arenas. Such a definition can help to explore the role of placemaking and transitions as mutually reinforcing bodies of research and build an evidence base for what works, or doesn't work, to realise more sustainable communities. Planning transitions theory could be a branch of both planning scholarship and sustainability transitions studies which work simultaneously to fully explore politics, autonomy, culture, identity, place and processes to plan for transitions.

Meanwhile, the disparity of being able to control and “change the world” with a relatively “dull” process indicates the need for planning practice to bridge this gap to mitigate disaffection and to heighten the ability for planning to act as a tool for transition.

This study found that (relocalised) placemaking transitions in Frome were centred on a strong narrative of independence and role conflict which was rooted in the exercise of autonomy – personal, organisational and spatial – which was reflected within related governance practices and relocalised placemaking networks. Culture was tied to spatial character as well as the affective ties of belonging, friendship and identity which were carried by both the governance of Sustainable Frome and IfF as actors transitioned into new roles carrying with them shared practices and ideas. FTC’s planning instruments³⁶⁷ sought to root Frome’s historic identity as a form of spatial and organisational assimilation, which was then consolidated through resourcing and strategic assets and alterity through various roles within FTC.

In Frome, the regime – once actors were able to break free from roles within ‘higher level’ institutions, e.g. the LPA – injected expertise, knowledge and ideas into FTC’s own administrative framework and forced new parameters for a local civic-political contract and to craft new organisational cultures. Government and policy constrained development ambitions but the more strategic actions were *enabled* by localism which meant that IfF and FTC could consolidate a *community regime of practices and governance* so if conditions changed at MDC there could be greater alignment and synchronism between them³⁶⁸.

While community planning literature has explored the role of community localism (e.g. Hildreth, 2011) it requires these assets to be delineated further in terms of whether these are strategies or actual mechanisms of niche resistance or consolidation. This research suggests Frome’s experience can be visually depicted as a *community regime* (see Figure 12-1) – a fusion between niche and regime set within the context of a relocalised framework. Within which the institutionalisation and entrenchment of informal ties produced an orchestration of transition governance to support the values of relocalisation and the New Economy.

³⁶⁷ I.e. the Neighbourhood Plan and the Town Design Statement.

³⁶⁸ Refer to Appendix H – Consolidating the relocalised agenda in Frome (2019) which sets out recent events beyond the timeframe of this empirical study that allude to a consolidation of relocalisation and New Economy ideas in Frome.

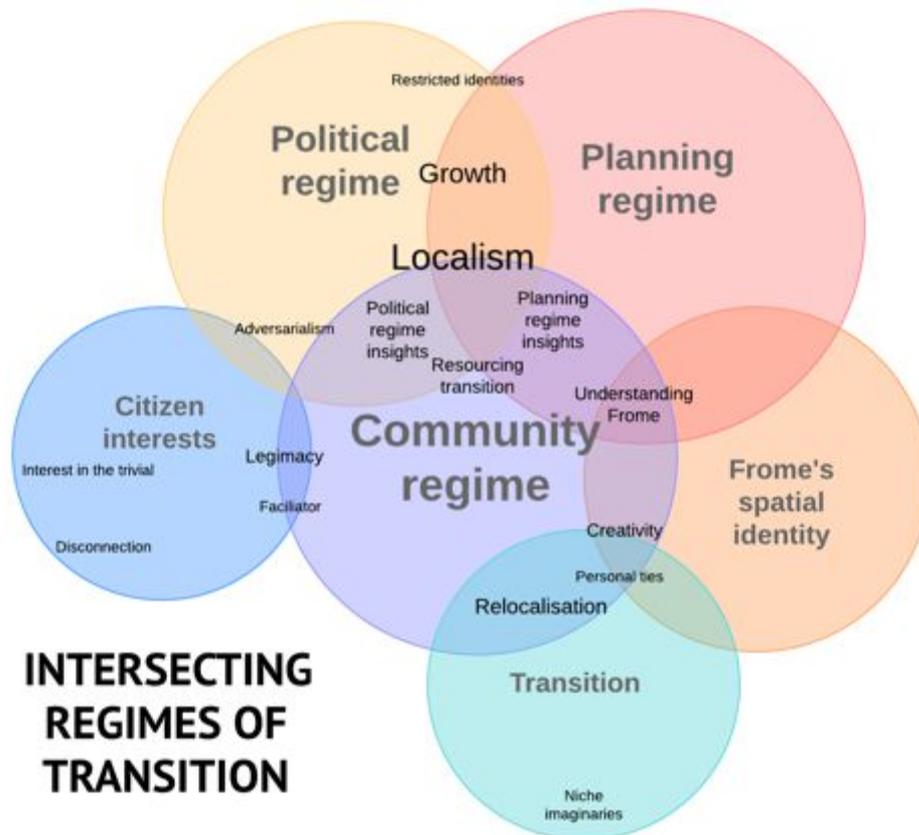


Figure 12-1 Intersecting regimes of Transition in Frome’s relocalised politics

Within a transition regimes framework, the relationship to ‘landscape’ forces, such as policy or climate change, become more relative and subtle than early conceptions of transition dynamics, since one experiences these as differing positions within (identity) networks. Each entity, organisation or individual may experience these pressures differently depending on position vis-à-vis different phenomena. Thus indicating how concepts of the niche and regime can be fluid depending on one’s positionality to policies, plans, neighbourhoods and networks (i.e. class, gender, place, organisations, professional experience, age and friendships etc.). For instance, one may be a member of several – and competing - networks at one time. Moreover, the ability to break down or transform these role boundaries indicates *thresholds of resistance*³⁶⁹ to transition across different identities and affective ties, which requires further research. Meanwhile, the experiential qualities of spatial identity - as something that is appropriated - may be conferred a sense of agency upon which to frame local action, depending on the extent other regimes uphold perceived ‘DNA’. For personalities that do not seek to challenge or appropriate resources and

³⁶⁹ A term used in the natural sciences to indicate resilience within ecosystems, applied here within a social science context.

strategic assets through placemaking action, a realignment of positionality may be driven by other factors which spark a reassessment of belonging to placemaking, friendships and other (organisational) identity networks.

Elo et al's., QCA checklist asked whether the reporting of results enables a transferability of findings (Elo et al., 2014). It is important to caveat that this study is limited to a single in-depth case study which has been based on my personal circumstances and relationship to the case study over time – allowing a longitudinal account – and not something always available to PhD researchers. A perceived incomparability and distinctiveness suggests Frome may have different conditions to many UK towns. Those interviewed often had high levels of social, political and economic capital to seize opportunities for localism. Key phenomena and their degrees of relative 'proximity' to one another may differ in other cases including those with different socio-cultural dynamics and relative socio-economic profiles. Frome's spatial remit as a container for practices and the effective circulation of key ideas suggest additional research into the absorption of New Economy ideas in different spatial settings. Moreover, whether similar organisations (such as those emulating Frome's Flatpack model) respond differently to similar change pressures, i.e. to measure degrees of reactivity (as late laggards or adopters) or proactive (innovators) (see Rogers, 1962).

It is important to note that this study focused explicitly on the influence of *Transition* on relocalised placemaking networks and their influence on the structures of the state; it did not interview those outside of this network (other than the LPA as an instance of possible 'regime' resistance), such as those who may be classified by some as "Old Frome" to substantiate claims of the effects of possible gentrification and political identities. Nor did it interview developers to explore the extent to which these entities supported or resisted relocalised placemaking. The study – though attempting to engage them – did not corroborate the findings with party political actors. These limitations would provide fruitful future research to substantiate the findings of this particular project and to explore whether the proposed intersecting regimes of transition is relevant to these actors in similar ways to those interviewed in Frome, or not.

While role conditioning was seen to be the result of institutionalisation, the extent to which personalities influence which roles people assumed was only alluded to within the research, for instance with self-identification as "contrarian" and "progressive". Further research on the influence of personality on role assumption, adoption and transition would be required. A comparison with an NDP with relocalised policies and those with no previous regime experience may test whether regime constraints in the NDP process was due to personality, role institutionalisation or the planning regime. The relationship between the length of time in a

regime and personality on degrees of capacity for innovation would also be a fruitful study in breaking across 'regimes' in different sectors (e.g. planning, policy, public sector, corporations). Moreover, more interviews within the LPA and developers would provide a range of perspectives on capacities for innovation, not just relocalised placemaking, within planning.

Moreover, a study with more LfF councillors exploring their experience of working within LfF and FTC would corroborate the extent to which these related, but differentiated, governance arrangements contribute to degrees of autonomy or localised political restriction within different LfF administrations. An assessment of whether a move towards unitary councils affects the politics of interaction between independent councils - within either a three-tier or a two-tier administrative arrangement - would be fruitful. For instance, to understand whether alignment and misalignment across political identities are similar or different to Frome's experience and its effect on agency and entry points to niche-regime interaction.

The potential for cultivating friendship between local and LPA, or on what basis these friendships are formed, could illuminate conditions for positive bridging ties at the niche:regime divide. That some individuals were friends *before* any professional involvement requires further research on the length of time one has been within friendships on the capacity for innovation.

Indeed, planning was seen as a disruptive force against potential gentrification patterns; the outcomes of which would necessitate further research with inhabitants of social (affordable) housing and their engagement with the town's placemaking networks. This would require a more in-depth study on the voting preferences of LfF voters for each ward and the reasons why they voted for these candidates. Moreover, the socio-economic profile of membership to other local groups would also reveal if there were specific class divisions and if these were being accelerated or reconfigured through LfF's politics. Moreover, the representation of class and gender amidst growing independent political councillors would illuminate whether there were gaps or bridges in class, gender and representation in new political spaces.

The role of gendered female support networks to encourage other women to "step up to the plate", how transition arenas could be feminised and what this would entail is one future research pursuit. How different sectors may cultivate greater respect within professions could help provide insights into correcting gender bias in politics and placemaking. If antagonism and conflict are unconscious phenomena then the move towards equality and egalitarianism is called into question, especially since the politics of transition in this research suggests that group capture of processes, exclusion and gender bias are often inherent issues even within relocalised, New Economy arenas.

The effect of the closure of pubs and the exponential rise in technology and apps to coordinate civic and political action could be a future study to explore whether the form of democratic action is changing as a result of these trends. Moreover, the form of people's work – as either self-employed or employed – may also influence how people engage in transition processes; a move towards technology-assisted working practices may influence these dynamics further. It also suggests that the impact of socio-technical innovation on people's capacity for engagement should be explored in more depth, including its effect on breaking open planning and politics or fragmenting energies and momentum for change as people "blank out" competing priorities in an ever-distracted (online) world.

13 Conclusion

This study has been a rich empirical investigation into the intersection between place, power and politics and the relationship planning has to broader sustainable development pathways. The thesis explored the role of social movements (*Transition*) in clustering, transmuting and channelling networks of alternative socio-political pathways and the extent different 'tribes' of the New Economy might be coming together – for this study i) relocalisation and *Transition* and ii) government and politics³⁷⁰ - and what this means for a more coherent approach to planning for transitions.

This has been an unusual study, focusing on the simultaneous interaction between planning and political 'regimes' and the conditions for successful 'niche' experimentation and its potential mainstreaming within formal spaces and the appropriateness of these terms in the case of Frome. Frome's NDP process was used as an entry point to chart (any) transitions in collective and organisational values, the socio-cultural relations between social actors and their embeddedness in particular networks, and how their participation may have resulted in changes in network characteristics and flows for how broader agendas intersect. Notably, whether the NDP was a potential mechanism (transition arena) to promote relocalised sustainability transitions to penetrate planning and its related socio-technical system, the development sector.

This research took a multi-level approach – appropriately for the study of transitions research – to understand the interaction between spatial characteristics, organisations, individuals, policy agendas and arenas and the structuring and fragmentation of change processes. The study had four research objectives derived from two literature reviews on sustainability transitions (chapter 2) and (low-carbon) localism and planning (chapter 3). This review informed an overarching objective to understand the scope for implementing New Economy transitions through mainstream institutions or initiatives at the local scale.

The research is based on 32 interviews with 27 respondents over the period of September 2014 – July 2015 as well as secondary data collection, which has been presented in this thesis to

³⁷⁰ See Figure I-1.

support the empirical findings. A total of 12 themes were identified using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)³⁷¹ which were explored across four secondary research questions and 6 empirical chapters (6-11).³⁷² A visual and descriptive introduction to Frome's relocalised entities, key actors and spatial character, was presented in chapter 5 which also mapped relational ties amongst relocalised entities. Since this was a study on Frome's relocalised placemaking network and its engagement with the NDP, some actors were excluded from this study - although interviews with political representatives on Frome's NDP steering group were attempted to balance these perspectives. Notwithstanding this and other groups that influenced or were affected by relocalised initiatives in Frome, the findings reveal several important insights that contribute to debates on sustainability transitions research, planning theory and lead to a number of recommendations to enhance locally-led decision-making on sustainability.

Exploring the duality of the 'niche' and the 'regime' within placemaking networks and both formalised and informal structures provides an extended view on the remit of planning on placemaking. Crucially, the findings indicate an *intersecting transitions regime* framework. A synthesis of the key findings against each of these research objectives is set out below, before outlining future research and recommendations arising from this study.

Objective 1. *To understand the role of placemaking networks in shaping the form of Frome's transition arenas*

Frome's experience echoes transition scholar's work to date on the mutual coming together, or an alignment of interests, policy change, path dependent ideas and artefacts and actors to cultivate a new framing of sustainability issues, in this case towards relocalisation and independent politics. In addition, this research has demonstrated the core concepts of independence, spatial setting and affective ties within Frome's alternative, relocalised placemaking networks created a strong environmental nucleus in the town – consolidated by the framing and action of specific individuals supporting a relocalised agenda. Notably, Frome's identity was considered to filter the type of person attracted to the town and was thus attributed with a form of spatial agency with an inherent "DNA", as perceived by some relocalised respondents. The identity of independence was a strong meta-identity for a number of individuals, the town's own identity, its historical – and future – role as a self-sufficient market town, and the relative independence of Sustainable Frome

³⁷¹ See chapter 4 - Methodology

³⁷² See Figure 5-19.

from Transition Network. IfF were perceived to reflect and cultivate such an identity that was not previously reflected by political actors and organisations. Sustainable Frome was highlighted as a vital organisation that corralled relocalised ideas, actors, interests and friendships in a safe space that also encouraged role transitions – to varying degrees – for those who engaged with it from more ‘mainstream’ arenas.

***Objective 2.** To interrogate the assumption of the ‘niche’ and the ‘regime’ and the applicability of these terms when protagonists occupy the structures of the state*

This research has highlighted the multi-faceted character of politics in both planning and the political regimes. The experiences in Frome suggest the UK planning system is far removed from the goals of *Open Source Planning* to give communities power over planning, prioritise sustainable development and reduce bureaucracy. However, the rights bestowed to local authorities under the localism policy agenda offered several mechanisms to lock-in relocalised identities in Frome within mainstream development processes, notably the ability for the town council to become more strategic in pursuing resources for locally-led placemaking agendas. This agenda was critical in framing a demand for greater influence in Frome and consolidating confidence and momentum for such action, giving rise to new forms of local political action and placemaking.

In summary, ‘niche’ protagonists retained an identity when they occupied formal spaces of power (the state). IfF invoked administrative dysfunctionality to imagine (better) alternatives to local democracy and “stir things up” as a strategy for niche resistance. The national (landscape) sentiment that party politics didn’t work was a more-than-local issue that could be invoked together with a very pro-Frome, local identity agenda towards a niche-orientated challenge, which enabled new constellations of local political actors to cluster and challenge incumbent power. By challenging the role assumptions of town councillors and FTC staff and enrolling a group of people with radical intentions, emphasising diversity and respect, the antagonistic framework of party politics was broken down. While the Community (parish) Plan was not able to influence planning decisions, the path dependent nature of the contributions fixed the concept of relocalisation firmly to an emerging community regime on relocalisation – as a political strategy to gain power in the town council and the resourcing to promote it.

However, power and links between governments were seen as broken, hampered by a lack of political stability for policy directives and an effective decentralised system to enable a shift in power from national to local government was not in place, particular at the community level.

Vested political and developer interests were favoured within an institutional arrangement that had a number of structural gaps and disconnected links between the local level and higher up the planning and political regimes, including a withdrawal of power to influence low-carbon policies within Frome's NDP. This caused a lack of entitlement to push at the boundaries and bound actors towards government agendas, which withdrew their agency or governance of these ties were centralised within different arenas. NDPs were seemingly mis-sold as an appropriate mechanism for (local) change for Frome, despite several relocalised entities successfully influencing the content of the plan.

The NDP process was perceived as an unsuccessful mechanism to promote niche resistance which squeezed out relocalised ambition. Here, there is clear resonance with planning theory's account of the NDP process as a restrictive and prescriptive policy space. Ties between the FTC and MDC were not enhanced by the NDP process, but were seen to be disrupted due to a perceived lack of shared knowledge and appreciation of Frome or through the enrolment of consultants in the process which countered the LPA's influence over the content of the plan, rendering the process lacking in synchronism as a potential conduit to improved niche-regime relations. The NDP has the potential to raise awareness of relocalised development concepts as a projected niche-directed infiltration of (local) planning discourse and its co-option into the LDF – although perhaps with delayed consequences. The role of the NDP on LPA decision-making on Frome, any increase in awareness for other stakeholders, and the extent the plan weaves into FTC's evolving transition governance³⁷³ would require further research.

These intersections between informal and formal ties as they engaged with strategic roles within FTC were perceived to circumvent formal processes and government whereby direct access – and common understanding – expedited relocalised transition processes. The role of friendship and pre-existing ties were key mechanisms that created short-cuts into local government under lff and were sometimes used as an active strategy to consolidate shared agendas for relocalised transitions. However, these ties were perceived as either unconscious or active mechanisms of exclusion in the NDP process, where governance arrangements or the (over) representation of the usual suspects lacked legitimacy and a bottom-up (i.e. citizen) influence over the content of the plan. Notably, class and gender were key issues identified which suggest further research on the role of these dynamics in transition arenas. Importantly, there were instances of a politics of niche and regime framing which indicates a variation – or relativity - to whom or what niche and regime concepts mean.

³⁷³ I.e. the Planning Advisory Board.

Objective 3. *To understand the form of transitions in Frome and their reach*

Understanding Frome's placemaking networks and efforts to foster change within the system has enabled planning and the NDP process to be considered within a broader package of relocalisation and transition. Frome's experiences clearly demonstrate both strategic (steer) and emergent qualities that interface with wider phenomena. Narratives of relocalisation and independent politics are clearly influencing Frome's placemaking and its reputation as it becomes increasingly renowned for its thriving independent identity, politically and economically which has helped to orchestrate multiple identities and their changing alignments to echo a broader movement for a New Economy. Relocalisation reached a degree of maturity and power in new administrative arrangements (i.e. branching from community-based organisations into the state), fuelled by the Localism Act, to enable the conditions for successful placemaking (and governance arrangements) to take off in a subversive way. More recent events suggest that due to this groundwork in other aspects of Frome's placemaking, the LPA has begun to take a more proactive approach towards local interests and development priorities. Relocalised energies did not dissipate and circulated at a local level (primarily within FTC and latterly Extinction Rebellion, EX) to create an energy and momentum for change³⁷⁴.

The findings highlight a need for greater attention to the cultural qualities of placemaking as a basis for social ties that support inclusive and emergent governance. However, Frome's cultural identity was reproduced differently as economic drivers influenced the socio-economic profile of those moving to the town, raising tensions about class and gentrification in transitions processes. The dynamics and tension between old and new instigated role change and organisational evolution (not just incumbent and protagonist), including the parent-child relationship between Sustainable Frome and its associated spin off groups. Other examples include perceived disparities in the mindset of the younger and older generations, and the draw of family influences.

This thesis puts forward the notion of *placemaking transitions* – the locally situated dynamics of place and politics in networked transition arenas - to capture how the politics of place influences sustainability transitions. Such a definition can help to explore the role of placemaking and

³⁷⁴ See Appendix H – Consolidating the relocalised agenda in Frome (2019).

transitions as mutually reinforcing bodies of research and build an evidence base for what works, or doesn't work, to realise more sustainable communities.

Considering Frome's experience within *intersecting regimes of transition* – rather than exclusively the niche, regime, landscape or transition arenas - can also enhance the study of sustainability transitions by conceptualising ideas as being re-created, stabilised or rejected through time as cycles of different identity networks (i.e. personal, inter-personal or outer group) seek to capture or reject ideas, enacted by suitable governance technologies. Temporality (often assumed in a linear fashion in much sustainability transitions research) becomes fuzzier as past ideas and identities weaved in and out of future-orientated visions.

Overarching objective. *To investigate the scope for implementing (New Economy) transitions through mainstream institutions or initiatives at the local scale*

Responding to Wills' surmise³⁷⁵, Localism has indeed enabled a new mode of statecraft in Frome, orientated towards the values of the New Economy. However, English localism didn't go far enough to realign powers to decisions that respond to local needs becoming more fully expressed and representative. Meanwhile, the NDP turnout of 18% with an 82% vote share indicates low levels of interest (legitimacy) as a democratic process. Financial incentives and flows have not yet aligned to the promise to devolve power. NDPs were clearly not mechanisms to "take back control" although it is indicative of a general feeling of a desire for communities to become more autonomous – either through planning, localism or political change through Brexit. There are also parallels to how the localism agenda appealed to different sets of political interests and did not sufficiently cover all of them, in the same way, Brexit has failed to unite different factions of interests within parties. IfF's success at cultivating diversity and welcoming of different perspectives for an affective organisational and spatial identity, i.e. I'm for Frome, could be well placed to be replicated at the national level.

The growing rejection of party politics indicates fissures in the institutional arrangements of party politics as a possible de-alignment. The 2019 May local elections saw an unprecedented rise in the

³⁷⁵ See section 3.5.

number of independent political councillors elected at town and district level.³⁷⁶ The conditions for their rise and potential success and challenges in influencing government and other entities is another vital area of research. How the 'indy' movement evolves to influence the national level is probably one of the most fruitful areas of research on British politics today, particularly given the fact that the Brexit Party is also challenging the perceived constraints of the first-past-the-post system. Indeed, whether changes to LFF's "people links" which engendered reciprocity, can be sustained in the new LFF administration without influential individuals from the 2011-2019 administrations remains to be seen, or whether or not constant "pushing" will, like the mentioned developers in section 8.1.2, result in alienation.

Writing in 2019, there would appear to be more and more communities taking a proactive approach to low-carbon placemaking. For instance, the sharp rise in endorsement by LPAs, town councils – including Frome – and even national government to become carbon neutral by 2030³⁷⁷. Also, the rise in Extinction Rebellion (XR)³⁷⁸ and the mass (peaceful) protests of mass disruption in Spring 2019 (of which two Frome XR members were arrested) and the movement's embrace of greater direct democracy in the form of Citizens Assemblies makes the catalyst for these changes an imperative area of future research. In particular, how affective ties to *Transition* may have been broken, mutated or evolved due to such changes. Meanwhile, research to compare the affective qualities within and between tribes of the New Economy (i.e. LFF or other 'indy' councils emulating it) could test the flow of these ideas through different administrative structures and controlling for other phenomena noted in this study – such as culture, personality, place identity and gender, age.

In conclusion, this thesis recommends several measures for planning policy and practice to enable more reflexive and adaptive community-led planning to support placemaking transitions at a local level, as well as measures that could reconfigure the governance and political approaches across different scales to coordinate transitions. Mechanisms to encourage longer-term policy stability on a cross-party basis should be explored to remedy divisions and enable a collaborative approach to policy within government. The findings also clearly indicate the need for a definition

³⁷⁶ Meanwhile, in Frome not only did the pro-EU Liberal Democrats make significant gains (controlling the council with 22 seats), the Green Party saw record levels of support which now has 10 MDC councillors (the same as the Conservative party) - the Conservative leader lost their seat; 5 Independent councillors were elected to MDC. See <https://www.thealternative.org.uk/dailyalternative/2019/5/5/leaves-fluttering-everywhere-flatpack-elections?rq=leaves> for instances of 'indy' gains in the May 2019 English local elections and <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/local-elections-results-2019-mendip-2831123> for the Mendip district results (both last accessed 10.6.19).

³⁷⁷ Indeed, the failure to create sufficient inter-governmental mechanisms on climate change may be one contributing factor towards the declaration of climate emergencies, often with a commitment to become carbon-neutral by 2030 (see <https://climateemergency.uk/> last accessed 30/4/19). MPs are also calling that international development aid is linked to climate action with a clear move away from fossil fuels (see McVeigh, 2019).

³⁷⁸ <https://rebellion.earth/> (last accessed 1/6/19).

of sustainability to move beyond the 'three-legged stool' (as set out in the NPPF)³⁷⁹ and recognise political sustainability as an enabler or disruptor of which discourse of sustainability is pursued.

Greater devolution to reconfigure and distribute responsibilities and action between local and higher levels of government should be explored, particularly through a set of linked mechanisms that allow local taxation, green incentives and distributed decision-making. Moreover, the focus on 'competition' within the definition of sustainable development should be removed to emphasise circular economies ensuring stewardship of land and appropriate financial incentives to cultivate measurable contributions towards sustainable development. Meanwhile, a formulaic approach to development outcomes needs to be revisited to recognise and contribute to wellbeing metrics, such as the happiness of the population arising from development and design and end-user satisfaction with where people live. A policy mechanism to restrict human desire for growth was felt necessary within a context of promoting reciprocity and collectivism to address behavioural defects within the socio-technical system. More widespread changes in the incentives of development and profit arising from development should be linked to environmental and social impacts and give local government greater powers to change ownership conditions to inhibit landbanking and introduce a systemic form of restraint on private profits within the development sector (and indeed the wider economy).

To encourage intergenerational perspectives on planning, there should be a greater focus on finding appropriate tools for younger generations to influence planning and environmental resilience. Planning procedures should be de-technicised for fruitful engagement and horizons for more adaptive plans explored.

³⁷⁹ Para 6 of the 2012 NPPF, see also Figure 3-6.

14 APPENDICES

14.1 Appendix A - Interview Schedule and Consent Form

Interview schedule

Interviewee no.

Date

Location

Purpose of the interview

The purpose of my research is to establish the extent to which Neighbourhood Plans enable communities to influence the low-carbon development in their area.

The interview will last about 1 hr and I will ask you about what you wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to achieve and the extent to which it achieved these objectives, and the key challenges you encountered. I will also ask you about your suggestions to improve low-carbon neighbourhood planning, about the key people you worked with in the Neighbourhood Planning processes and the nature of these relationships. I am hoping that your responses will contribute to understanding how the ambitions of communities travel through the planning process and put forward recommendations about enhancing community influence in Neighbourhood Planning.

Interview schedule

For NP working group members, consultees:

1. Do you have any previous experience in planning?

For NP working group members, FTC, consultees:

2. Which key policies in the Neighbourhood Plan did you support most?
3. Did you have any specific objectives you wanted to achieve through Neighbourhood Plan? i.e. outcomes, policies

4. What were the origins of these ambitions? i.e. personal, organisational, timeliness etc.
5. What key factors influenced your negotiation of these ambitions for the plan?, inc. personal experience, policies, advice, resources, other constraints, tactics, non-involvement
6. To what extent do you feel the Neighbourhood Plan advanced these goals? i.e. simple translation (stable), new idea (change), radical (innovation) – if not Neighbourhood Plan where else applied?
7. With benefit of hindsight, how could the Neighbourhood Plan process be improved to promote low-carbon development? - recommendations for planning

NP working group members, LPA, FTC. consultees, consultants:

8. SNA – Which actors did you engage with most during the Neighbourhood Development Plan? – general or specific objective/policy? developers? Intermediaries? Other environmental groups?
Organisation
Name
Frequency of contact
Strength of tie on a score of 1-5
When was this relationship initiated?
Do you consider them a friend?
Have there been any changes to this relationship as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan or any other reason?
9. Are you a member of any professional bodies or do you have any particular personal interests?

Additional questions for local authority representatives:

1. How long have you worked in planning and where else?
2. What are your reflections on Frome's Neighbourhood Plan, in general?
3. Do you have any reflections on the governance of the Steering Group?
4. What key contributions did you and your team made to the Neighbourhood Plan?
5. What are your reflections on the types of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan?
6. What are your reflections on community participation?
7. Are there any notable differences between Frome's Neighbourhood Plan and other plans being developed within the district?
8. Does Mendip have any specific efforts on low-carbon policies/planning and challenges?

Questions for Citizen Panels attendees:

1. What brought you to Frome?
2. Which organisations are you affiliated to in Frome?
3. Why and how did you become involved in these groups?
4. What are your reflections on the Citizens Panels selection process?
5. Were you engaged in planning before?
6. Have you worked with anyone else in Citizens Panel before?
7. Which policies of the Neighbourhood Plan did you prefer – in order of preference, if aware?
8. What key contributions did you make to the Citizens Panel or plan?
9. Are you satisfied with the process?
10. Do you have any comments to improve the Neighbourhood Plan process?
11. Has your involvement resulted in any new partnerships?
12. Have you Incorporated new ideas into your own work?

Questions for Sustainable Frome:

1. What brought you to Frome?
2. Is your interest in planning mirrored within the organisation?
3. Why and how did you become involved in these groups?
4. How has your relationship changed with members since lff came to power?

Questions for consultants:

1. How did you become involved with Frome's Neighbourhood Plan?
2. What is your experience of working in planning?
3. Have you worked with any Transition groups?
4. Do you have any reflections on the governance of the Steering Group?
5. What key contributions did you and your team made to the Neighbourhood Plan?
6. What are your reflections on the types of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan?
7. What are your reflections on community participation?
8. Are there any notable differences between Frome's Neighbourhood Plan and other plans being developed to advance low-carbon development?
9. Did you experience any challenges in your role? Were these addressed or resolved?

Questions for external actors:

1. How did you become aware of Frome?
2. What is your experience of working in planning?
3. How does Frome compare to other towns?
4. What have you done to support independent politics/relocalisation/low-carbon development?
5. Challenges in achieving your goals through planning?
6. Suggestions to improve low-carbon planning?

Information Sheet relating to Ph.D. research conducted by Amy Burnett on Neighbourhood Planning and low-carbon development

1. What is the purpose of this research?

The research is seeking to understand the extent to which Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) can be used to promote innovative low-carbon development (transition pathways).

This will be analysed according to the following objectives:

- To assess the extent to which NP can be used to promote innovative low-carbon development
- To assess the key factors leading to low-carbon development
- Assess the extent to which the NP has altered network composition and dynamics

2. Who is conducting the research?

Amy Burnett is currently a second year Ph.D. student in the Real Estate and Planning Department at the University of Reading. Amy has had previous research experience on community development, governance and participation within the UK, Brazil and Africa. Her research has also followed closely the evolution and impact of the Transition Movement.

3. What area is covered by this research?

Frome, Somerset will be the principle case study in this research. Frome has recently completed its draft Neighbourhood Plan that includes several innovative low-carbon policies that also address residential and employment land use issues.

4. Who will be interviewed?

- Those involved in drafting the NP (within Frome, Mendip and other stakeholders)
- Selected individuals consulted during the NP process
- Selected wider stakeholders outside of Frome/Mendip

5. What questions will be asked?

Those involved in the NP process will be asked:

- What did you hope to achieve in the NP?
- What key factors influenced your involvement in the NP process?
- Outcomes of the NP process

A Social Network Analysis will be carried out in the interview to determine the key individuals and organisations interviewees work most closely with.

* Please note that all interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recording and transcribing the interviews greatly improves the accuracy of the research findings. If you are not comfortable with interviews being recorded please let the researcher know. All interviews will be treated in the strictest of confidence (see point 14 below).

6. How long will each interview take?

Each interview will last approximately one hour. The first part of the interview will explore the questions listed in point five, which will take approximately 40-45 minutes. The remainder of the interview will undertake a preliminary Social Network Analysis, which is expected to take around 15-20 minutes.

7. Where will interviews take place?

Interviews will take place at a mutually (and relatively quiet) convenient place in Frome. Due to limited funding no expenses will be paid but any travel costs will be kept to a minimum by attending events where groups are already planning to meet, conducting phone conversations or the researcher travelling at her own expense.

8. How will the interviewees be selected?

An initial list of potential interviewees will be compiled by the researcher in conjunction with the Mayor, Peter Macfadyen and the Chair of the NP Committee, Graham Burgess. Further potential interviewees will be noted as the research progresses. This may be through conversations with interviewees or using publicly available data online.

9. Is there anything I need to do to prepare for the interview?

There is no preparation necessary, although it would be of great assistance if those interviewed could provide a CV and/or LinkedIn profile link in order for the researcher to better understand the background of those selected for interview.

10. How long will the research take place?

The researcher is expecting the data collection phase of the research will take place between the end of September 2014 – early May 2015. The researcher will then seek to analyse the data from the fieldwork and complete the research by September 2016.

11. Who is funding the research?

The researcher is in receipt of a Real Estate and Planning Departmental Scholarship from the University of Reading. The research is of an entirely independent nature and is not subject to any influences from a particular organisation or set of interests.

12. Has this research project been approved by Reading University?

This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

13. Is the information treated confidentially?

All data collected will be treated with the strictest confidence and it will not be possible to trace the source of any information presented as part of this research in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

14. What will happen to the information collected in this study?

Data will be encrypted electronically on the University of Reading's server during her Ph.D. Any Data that reveals personal identity will be destroyed by the researcher within three years from the completion of her research and stored on an encrypted secure storage area accessible only by the researcher until that point.

It is expected that the researcher will publish journal articles using the data collected and will not be used for any other purpose. All individuals and groups will be made anonymous to ensure their perspectives are not made publicly available. In the unlikely event of the researcher intending to use any sensitive data, the explicit permission of those affected will be sought. Any person interviewed as part of this research will be given access to any publications arising from the research.³⁸⁰

15. Will I get to input into the research before it is finalised?

The researcher will hold a workshop with those who participated in the research to discuss the initial key findings (around late 2015) and to provide an opportunity for interviewees to clarify any potential anomalies.³⁸¹ This will also be an opportunity for collective discussion on promoting low-carbon development in the context of Neighbourhood Planning and identifying the key blockages within the planning system and within the area.

16. What will I get out of participating from this research?

³⁸⁰ See also section 4.2.

³⁸¹ This workshop didn't take place due to my maternity leave, however all respondents were contacted to give them the opportunity to quality any potential anomalies with the data and confirm they were satisfied the thesis could be released in the public domain.

The research is expected to support the existing work to promote low-carbon development in Frome. In particular, it can assist stakeholders in understanding the socio-political barriers in using the NP to promote low-carbon policies and further potential partnerships to effect lasting change.

17. What if I decide I don't want to continue my participation in this research?

Participation is of a voluntary nature expressed through the Project Consent Form, a copy of which will be available to each participant. Anyone who agrees to participate in the research can withdraw at any time by informing the researcher (by email, phone or face-to-face).

18. Is there someone I can speak to regarding this research?

Further information relating to the research can be obtained by contacting the researcher, Amy Burnett directly either by email a.burnett@pgr.reading.ac.uk or by phone: 07715 640316.

Interviewees can also contact the Ph.D. researchers Supervisor, Richard Nunes at the above address or by email: r.j.nunes@reading.ac.uk; or phone 0118 378 6229

Research Ethics Committee



Consent Form

1. I have read and had explained to me by Amy Burnett the accompanying Information Sheet relating to the project on:

Neighbourhood Planning and low-carbon development

2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions I have had have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

3. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, and that this will be without detriment.

4. This application has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

5. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Date of birth:

Signed:

Date:

For further information on the research please contact Amy Burnett a.burnett@pgr.reading.ac.uk / 07715 640316 or 's Ph.D. Supervisor, Richard Nunes: Henley Business School, Whiteknights Campus, Reading RG6 6UD r.j.nunes@reading.ac.uk/ 0118 378 6229.

14.2 Appendix B - Glossary of terms used in the thesis

Table 14-1 Glossary of terms used in the thesis

Term	Definition
<i>Community Planning</i>	Plans that communities can create to represent their vision for local development priorities, but these may not become statutory planning documents, unless adopted by the LPA as supplementary planning guidance.
<i>Independent Politics</i>	Elected officials or candidates who reject party politics and seek more freedom to represent of their personal or community views.
<i>Neighbourhood Planning</i>	One of the rights bestowed under the UK government Localism Act (relating onto the England) which gives local groups powers to create a local development plan which, if adopted following a referendum, becomes part of the Local Development Framework.
<i>New Economy</i>	A global meta-narrative for a number of initiatives or 'tribes' that aim to promote a circular economy and experiment with development and governance alternatives to engender the commons.
<i>Relocalisation</i>	Initiatives to promote local multiplier effects and feedback loops within the local community and economy so that more activity takes place at the local level, therefore increasing resilience.
<i>Spatial planning</i>	Spatial planning is the policy configuration to determine planning in a given area.
<i>Sustainability transitions</i>	A normative branch of scholarship that explores how different sectors can transition towards a more sustainable and low-carbon society.
<i>The Commons</i>	Community and natural assets managed/owned for the benefit of all and nature.
<i>Transition Arenas</i>	A term used by sustainability transitions scholars, notably those exploring Transition Management, to describe the purposeful governance arrangements to solicit 'transitions'. It is recognised here that these may not always be purposeful, and some arenas may be subject to group capture for subversive (i.e. niche-directed) transitions.
<i>Transition (town) movement - Transition</i>	A global network of grassroots community projects that aim to increase self-sufficiency to reduce the potential effects of peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability.

Urban Planning

The decision-making processes related to the components between different land uses (e.g., residential dwellings, employment and industry, leisure and tourism and services more broadly).

14.3 Appendix C – The 12 steps (ingredients) to Transition

1. Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset
2. Raise Awareness
3. Lay the foundations
4. Organize a Great Unleashing
5. Form working groups
6. Use Open Space
7. Develop visible practical manifestations of the project
8. Facilitate the Great Reskilling
9. Build a Bridge to Local Government
10. Honor the elders
11. Let it go where it wants to go...
12. Create an Energy Descent Plan

Accessed from <http://www.transitionus.org/initiatives/12-steps> (last accessed 26/1/19).

Steps 1 and 12 are additional steps from an earlier version of the 10 steps produced by Hopkins in 2007 <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2007-01-31/10-first-steps-transition-town-initiative/> (last accessed 26.1.19).

14.4 Appendix D – Policy parameters for low-carbon development (as of 2016)

Table 14-2 Policy parameters for low-carbon development (Burnett and Stone, 2016)

Area	Coalition Government Policy	Current Government Policy	Current scope for low-carbon NP policy
Energy	Community Energy Strategy	Withdrawal of tax incentives for investors	Indicate support for community energy or intention to create a group
	Shared ownership (e.g. community and commercial) up to 5MW	Cut of FiT makes new projects unviable	Identify potential renewable energy resources / sites
		Sites for onshore wind developments must be identified in Neighbourhood Plans or Local Plans and have community support	Onsite generation of renewables
			District heating schemes
			Include community support for wind through NP
			Renewables could also be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy

Residential development – new	<p>Code for Sustainable Homes</p> <p>Target of zero-carbon homes by 2016 (Zero Carbon Homes Policy, Allowable Solutions to offset homes that do not meet zero-carbon standard</p>	<p>Code for Sustainable Homes cancelled</p> <p>Withdrawal of Zero-Carbon Homes and Allowable Solutions</p> <p>Cannot stipulate standards higher than current building regulations (equivalent to Code for Sustainable Homes, level 4)</p>	<p>General policy re: sustainable design / construction (if gaps in Council policy)</p> <p>Individuals developers could still use other frameworks e.g. BREEAM Communities</p> <p>Potentially, more stringent low-carbon requirements for additional housing allocated in NP (beyond the Council's 5-year housing supply)</p>
Residential development – existing	<p>Support in NPPF for retrofitting (paragraph 17, 28)</p>	<p>No change in government policy.</p> <p>Historic England supportive of sensitive retrofitting.</p>	<p>Policies to support retrofitting, including responsible retrofitting of historic / traditional buildings.</p>
Commercial development	<p>Zero Carbon non-residential (e.g. commercial) by 2019 BREEAM standard 'good' and 'excellent' can be applied for commercial development (NB: not</p>	<p>BREEAM standard for non-residential development not affected by policy changes as not adopted formally by the government</p>	<p>Commercial buildings should adhere to BREEAM Very Good/Excellent</p>

	a government-owned standard)		
Sustainable Transport	Support in NPPF (paragraphs 29-41)	No real change	<p>Setting cycle pathways</p> <p>Development to be in walking distance of town centre</p> <p>Encourage cycle pathways, funded from Community Infrastructure Levy/ Section. 106 contributions</p>
Water	<p>Support in NPPF</p> <p>Sustainable Urban Drainage systems to be used on all major developments unless demonstrated to be inappropriate.</p>	<p>Water use now covered in Building Regs - standard maximum use of 125 litres per person per day, plus new optional higher standard of 110 litres per person per day, where justified by LPA.</p>	<p>Encourage sustainable urban drainage</p> <p>Greywater recycling</p> <p>Encourage the use of natural Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems incorporated into landscaping with biodiversity benefits</p> <p>Opportunity for Neighbourhood Plans to identify self-build plots.</p>
Self-build	No real policies under Coalition Government	<p>Self-build positioned as more sustainable development option</p> <p>Allocating 'plot ready' sites and register for self-builders by Local Planning Authority</p>	

	Support in NPPF (paragraphs 109-125)		Opportunity for highly sustainable, affordable housing to meet local needs and local action. Identification and protection of wildlife corridors, assets and weak links.
Biodiversity	Providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity	Discussion of Biodiversity offsetting, and erosion of protection	Integrate new cycle / walkways with Green Infrastructure links
Local Employment	NPPF supportive of commercial development (see paragraphs 18-28)	Introduction of permitted development rights to convert offices to residential use without consent	Provision of start-up office facilities / micro-business hubs in rural settlements, localising working.

14.5 Appendix E - Thematic codes - coding phase I

	Blazing a trail			Successful pathways forged
	Moving On (Transition)			Process of assimilation of what is shifting/changing
	Contradictions			Key structural blockages through which transition processes interact
	Dissemination strategies			Key mechanisms to direct and communicate change processes
Navigating the politics of subversive Localism				Politics is the messy bit where alternative approaches are contested: current, historical, future, actual, perceived
	Conditions for success in government	Conditions for successful placemaking		Conditions that can improve the likelihood of a (relocalised) transition process being successful
	Kindred spirits			Processes of magnetism to enrol and attract actors with shared ideas and practices towards particular campaigns of transition
	When the personal becomes political	Impressions of Frome		Personal historical drivers of agent-structure relations conditioned at the level of the individual Historical and current spatial mix of the built environment as a context in which (transition) actors operate and are influenced by

14.6 Appendix F – Codes exported through MindMeister (stage 2 coding)

I. The Culture of Transition

Independent	Shared spatial identities
Historic	Totnes; Bristol; Brighton
Personal	Alterity
Economic	Green DNA of Frome
SMEs	Seeking spatial connection with the land
Town centre-based employment	Sustainable Frome
Sustainable transport	Informality
Vitality	Pubs
Political	Parties
From MDC (greater powers)	Was down at heel; rebirth
Progress without politics	Pockets of shabbiness
Transition	Clear identity
From developers	What Frome is
Self-build; cohousing	The Future
Autonomy	What Frome is not
A place with attitude	Dinosaur district councils
Bolshy	
Arrogance "Frome is better"	
Creative	
Reflected by IfF	
Seeking to bottle creative identity in the NDP	
Fun	
Active	
Go-getting	
Reciprocal	
Sharing	
(Self-build); Co-housing	
Experiences	
Loyalty, support	
On the same wavelength	
Inclusive	
Feminist	
Pioneering	
NDP Front runner	
Experimentation	
Spontaneous	
Popular	
	2. Representation
	Size of Frome
	Scope of NDP
	Existing ties
	Friendship
	Incestuous
	Sides of the fence
	Above the parapet; on the radar
	Active
	Usual suspects
	Gatecrashing
	Validating agendas
	The echo chamber
	Shouting the loudest
	Movers and shakers
	Self-publicity
	Guiding light
	Confidence
	Resources
	Former experience/capacity
	Leadership

Meeting of minds
 Discrepancy between internal and
 projected identity
 Rabidly environmental
 Exclusion (from V4F)
 Multiple membership
 Parallel processes
 Walking a fine line
 Orchestration of governance
 Below the parapet; not on the radar;
 under the wire
 Lack of transparency around process
 Exclusion
 Gender
 Ousting adversaries
 Insular concerns
 Interest in the trivial
 Quiet
 Old Frome dormant
 Left behind
 Being ignored
 Voice of Frome absent at MDC
 Apathy
 Consultation fatigue
 Distrust
 Experts
 Relating to climate discourse
 Disinformation
 Lack of respect
 Hidden talents
 Environment acknowledged when
 economy good
 Transition: the canary in the coalmine
 Keeping a low profile
 Enrolling outsiders
 Citizens Panels; Employment
 consultants; planning consultants
 New Frome vs. Old Frome
 Incomer identity
 Sustainable Frome
 More likely to vote IFF

Divisions along class lines
 Opening the floor
 Open house
 Sharing food
 Participate Frome
 Citizens Panels
 FTC formal meetings
 Removing formal procedures
 Across the political spectrum (IFF)
 Personal agendas
 Adding when no one's looking
 Mis-sold/packaged
 Built environment
 Implicit consent
 SF name pulled out of a hat
 FTC well-resourced
 Backstop (green issues)

3. Forces and resistance in transition

arenas

Push
 Assets and ownership
 Securing strategic assets
 FiT
 Personalities
 Tenacious
 Can-do
 Role models
 Mentoring
 Revolutionaries
 'Party' politics
 Progress without politics
 Positive impact
 Achieving more within government
 than outside
 Securing financial resources
 Precept
 Newness
 Pull; reactive/firefighting
 Leakage and disconnection

Pulling the plug
 Disappeared into the ether
 Removal of policies
 Overtaken by events
 Missing links
 Lack of synchronicity between NDP
 and Local Plan
 Participate Frome
 Disconnected individual initiatives
 (systemic)
 Role attrition
 Lack of handover
 Transience
 Irregularity
 Not 'getting' Frome
 Corrosive party politics
 Moving because Frome's a green town
 Policy drive to build
 Frome a 'growth town'
 Preferential access of volume
 housebuilders to sites
 Lack of amenity space
 Rabbit hutch design
 Using appeal process
 Austerity Localism
 Loss of employment
 Loss of creative industries
 Insufficient space to expand
 Can't blame developers, fulfilling
 national need
 Profit bias of development industry
 Undermining well-being
 Lack of restraint
 Aggressive business models
 Alienation from constant
 challenge
 Growth only game in town
 Being grounded
 Being pushed back
 Brow beaten
 Saying what you can't do

Slow-moving; protracted
 Fiddling while Rome burns
 Nothing to push against
 Exit of doers from SF
 Fulfilling mandate of sustainability
 Satisfaction
 Welfare state saps people's social
 /creative energies
 Transitional phases of policy
 Ambiguity
 Piggy in the middle
 NDP vs. Local Plan
 Unable to replicate planning innovations
 European models
 Protracted nature of planning
 Lack of momentum
 Complexity of planning
 Tortuous
 Dry
 Tied hands
 The path of least resistance (required policy
 change)

4. Cycles/phases of transition

Climate
 A gift to reconnect
 Organisational
 Maturity (parent/child)
 Incubation
 Spin-off groups
 Splintering of groups
 Recovery
 Reconfiguration
 Holding funds
 Life phases
 Inter-generational: young families; older
 people
 Memory
 Steps to Transition
 Politically restricted

The genesis	Autonomy
Blown away, broken fuses	Moving away/travelling
Shared (green) histories	Voted out
Striking a chord	Taking a step back (reflection)
Stepping up	Taken out of comfort zone
Learning the ropes	Policy
Newness (fresh perspective)	Revolving door
Self-interest	The fag end of government
Pissed off	Vicious cycle
Unable to say no	Planning
Time, capacity and resources	Legacy projects
Depressed	OPL in NDP
Old paradigm development	Discourse
model (extractive)	Transition = re-package of extant
A moment of collapse	discourses
Being ignored	International development: South to
Challenging poor quality;	North
governance/spatial identity mismatch	Cultural
Going with the flow	Indigenous practices
Directed	Transition
Cross roads	Spatial
Winding down	Moving because a green town
Unable to walk away	New Frome v.2
Practical reasons	Renewed role of market towns (21st
No way back	Century)
Conflicting priorities	Political
Walking away	Voting transitions
Broken	New vs. old guard
Financially	Economic
Emotionally	End of supermarket era
Thankless task	Networks
Lack of recognition	Maturity 'grown up'
Conscious withdrawal	

14.7 Appendix G – Themes and sub-themes depicted through Lucid Chart (stage 3 coding)

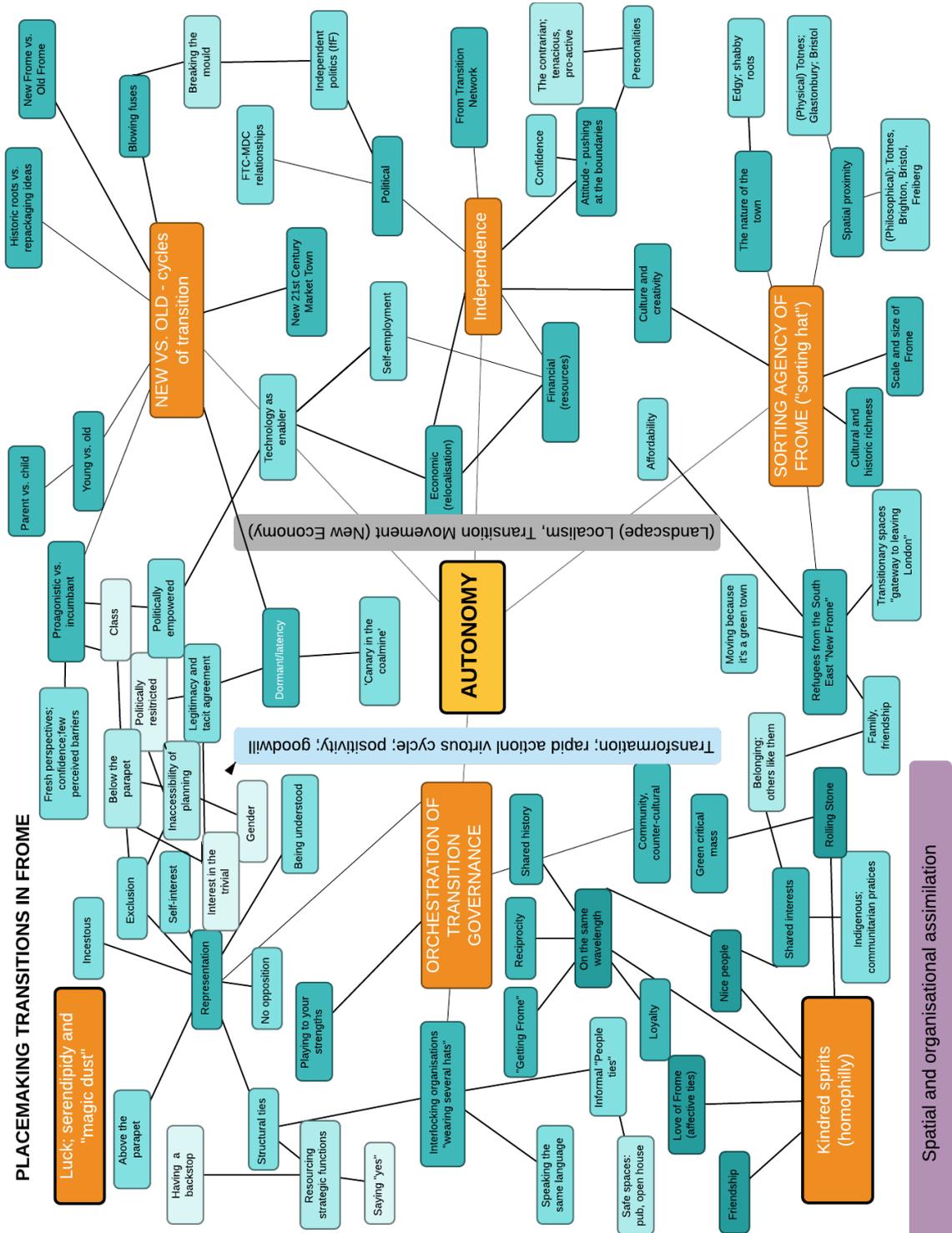


Figure 14-1 Placemaking transitions in Frome conceptual diagram (coding phase 3)

14.8 Appendix H – Consolidating the relocalised agenda in Frome (2019)

This appendix gives a snapshot of recent events that indicate changes to Frome's relocalised initiatives and their influence on either i) transition and relocalisation or ii) government and politics (including planning). An account of how these events either confirm or deviate from the findings of this thesis would require future research.

i) Transition and relocalisation

Sustainable Frome has sustainable future

THE future of Sustainable Frome, which hung in the balance after a shortage of volunteers, now has a bright future.

After a meeting to discuss the future of the group – following a call for volunteers – several people have come forward to save the group.

At the meeting, many people voiced their support for the group, valuing its voice in raising and discussing issues that affect the town and paying tribute to the history of initiatives that have come from Sustainable Frome.

“The next step is for this ‘committee’ to meet on 23rd August to plan the next few months,” said the group. “We envisage a similar set up with newsletter and shared food on the first Thursday monthly, but perhaps with a refocus. Could we galvanise support for a few key projects in Frome? Or will there be new exciting initiatives? Let’s see!”

A public meeting will be held on Thursday 6th September at the Good Heart Cafe, 7 Palmer Street. 7-9pm. The subject will be, “What if – a space to generate some crazy fun doable ideas”.

“Let your imagination run wild,” says the group. “Bring that idea you have been mulling over for a while. See what fires you up into action.

For more information about the group, or for contact details about how you can get involved, visit [http:// transitionfrome .org.uk/](http://transitionfrome.org.uk/) or email info@sustainablefrome.org.uk

Figure 14-2 Sustainable Frome has a sustainable future (Frome Times, August 2018)³⁸²



Figure 14-3. Formalised visual identity twinning of XR and FTC logo (XR, 2019).

³⁸² Accessed from <http://www.frometimes.co.uk/2018/08/02/sustainable-frome-has-sustainable-future/> (11.1.19).



Figure 14-4. Visual identity fusion of independent and flatpack identities in Frome (EdSpace – Edventure, 2016)³⁸³



Figure 14-5. "Get in before they lose their edge"; headline claiming Frome as one of the coolest places to live in the UK (The Sunday Times, 2019)

³⁸³ EdSpace is an initiative of Edventure involving the former NDP Chair (who was also a member of the Sustainable Frome Green Buildings group, pre-IfF).



Figure 14-6. Frome hosting a “Playground for the New Economy” (STIR, 2019)³⁸⁴

ii) Government and politics - FTC

Frome Town Council and Mendip District Council are working together at Saxonvale

Mendip District Council and Frome Town Council are working together with the aim of facilitating the regeneration of Saxonvale.

The two local authorities have been in very positive discussions in relation to the disposal of Frome Town Council’s land to incorporate in the Saxonvale development, so as to enable a more comprehensive scheme to be brought forward.

Figure 14-7 Improved relational ties – FTC and MDC working together at Saxonvale (Frome Times, January 2019)³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Frome is hosting the New Economy Stir to Action 2019 festival coined as a “playground for the New Economy”, indicating how Frome is attracting ideas and entities to the town. Accessed from STIR to action newsletter, May 2019.

³⁸⁵ Accessed from <http://www.frometimes.co.uk/2019/01/03/frome-town-council-and-mendip-district-council-are-working-together-at-saxonvale/> (last accessed 11.1.19). See <https://saxonvaleredevlopment.org/> for a site outline of the proposals for Saxonvale (last accessed 11.1.19).

Breaking the Mould

HOME PROGRAMME ▾ PANEL NOTES ▾ THOUGHTS ▾ VIDEOS CONTACT

Infusing Sustainability Throughout

Figure 14-8 Infusing sustainability throughout, Breaking the Mould FTC conference April 2018 (FTC, 2018)³⁸⁶



Figure 14-9 Words of success: IfF word cloud, Breaking the Mould FTC conference April 2018 (FTC, 2018)³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ Accessed from <https://madedifferently.wordpress.com/panels/infusing-sustainability-throughout/> (last accessed 11.1.19).

³⁸⁷ From <https://madedifferently.wordpress.com/> (last accessed 11.1.19).

Frome Town Council has declared a climate emergency and have pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030. They have been working behind the scenes to make sure the **Saxonvale** development is as green as possible and it should be at least carbon neutral or may even generate more power than it uses. All 3 tiers locally have declared a climate emergency - Somerset, Mendip and Frome. Bruton has too.

Figure 14-10. FTC declaration of a climate emergency with the other tiers of government in Somerset, (Sustainable Frome Newsletter, 10th April 2019)

Resilience



Figure 14-11. A celebration of FTC many environmental initiatives (FTC, 2019)³⁸⁸

Planning for Frome

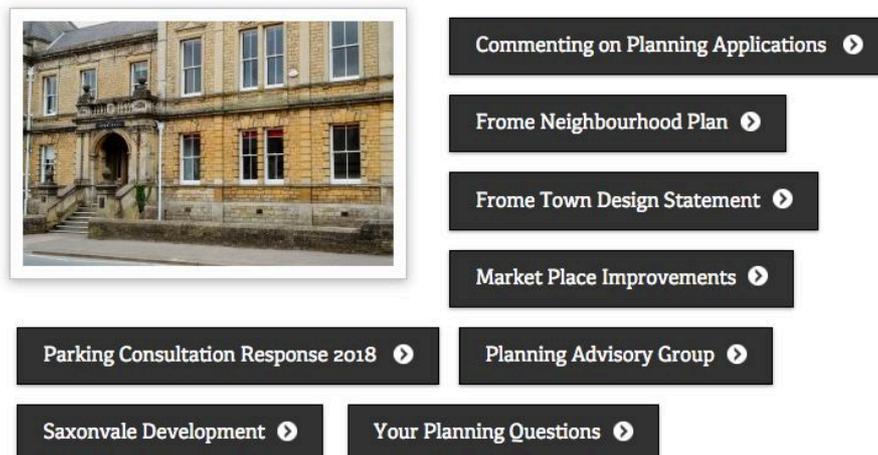


Figure 14-12. A celebration of FTC many planning initiatives (FTC, 2019)³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Accessed from <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/> (last accessed 10.1.19). This webpage has many other thematic lists of initiatives under the headings parks and open spaces, community projects, Keep Frome Clean and health and wellbeing. Note the words 'green' have been avoided, see section 10.1.2.

³⁸⁹ Accessed from <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/> (last accessed 10.1.19).

Frome Town Council

Ward Name	Elected Councillor	Party
Berkley Down	Ali Barclay	Independents for Frome
Berkley Down	Anita Collier	Independents for Frome
Berkley Down	Andy Palmer	Independents for Frome
Frome College	Lizzie Boyle	Independents for Frome
Frome College	Rob Collett	Independents for Frome
Frome College	Sheila Gore	Independents for Frome
Frome Highpoint	Scott Ward	Independents for Frome
Frome Innox	Steve Tanner	Independents for Frome
Frome Keyford	Rich Ackroyd	Independents for Frome
Frome Keyford	Sara Butler	Independents for Frome
Frome Keyford	Anne Hills	Independents for Frome
Frome Market	Mark Dorrington	Independents for Frome
Frome Market	Nick Dove	Independents for Frome
Frome Oakfield	Maxine Crawley	Independents for Frome
Frome Oakfield	Paul Horton	Independents for Frome
Frome Park	John Nelson	Independents for Frome
Frome Park	Andy Wrintmore	Independents for Frome

Figure 14-13. Another full house win, May 2019 local elections (FTC, 2019).³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰ <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/election-results-2019/> (last accessed 10.6.19).

ii) Government and politics – FTC: MDC

Green councillors present their vision of a 'Connected Frome'

27 February 2018

Frome's Green councillors discussed getting a fair deal for Frome, 'connecting up' the levels of local government and campaigning on green issues at last Thursday's public meeting, 'Connected Frome', held at the Youth & Community centre, and chaired by Mayor of Frome Sheila Gore.



The purpose of the meeting was to feedback on councillor activity since last year's county council elections saw John Clarke and Martin Dimery elected as Somerset's first county councillors, and to get local people's views on the most important issues for them.

Figure 14-14. Increasing ties between lF and Green Party MDC councillors (Mendip East Green Party, February 2018)³⁹¹

 A screenshot of the Mendip District Council website. At the top left is the Mendip District Council logo. To the right are navigation buttons: 'Basket', 'My Account', 'Register', and 'Login'. Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: 'Mendip District Council > Council Services and Information > Electoral Services > Elections 2019 > Election Results 2019'. The main heading is 'Election Results: Political Make Up'. Below this, a notice states: 'As the election results are announced we will be updating the political make up of Mendip District Council.' The results are listed as follows:

- Conservative: 10 seats
- Green: 10 seats
- Independent: 3 seats
- Liberal Democrats: 22 seats
- Other: 2 seats
- There are no seats left to declare.

Figure 14-15. The changing political makeup of MDC (MDC, 2019)

³⁹¹ <https://eastmendip.greenparty.org.uk/news/2018/02/27/green-councillors-present-their-vision-of-a-connected-frome/> (last accessed 24.1.19).

The need for change in Somerset Local Government

9 May 2018

Joint Statement of the Leaders of Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council:



On Wednesday 2 May 2018, Somerset County Council announced that it intends to start a conversation with the district councils and other partners to explore whether a unitary model of local government could be a better way to deliver public services in Somerset.

All the district councils in Somerset recognise the need for change in local government in Somerset. A growth in the demand for Adult Social Care is a national challenge and its financial impact on Somerset County Council, together with the lack of progress in transforming the way it does business, means that the County Council is not financially sustainable in the near future. Somerset's district councils cannot stand by given the risk this poses to services and the communities we are here to serve.

The assertion that district councils in Somerset are in financial difficulty is inaccurate. All the district councils in Somerset have taken tough decisions and actions to secure their finances and protect services. It is because of this that they will be financially sound in the future, and the claim that a unitary authority is needed to protect district council services is misplaced and just plain wrong.

The district councils are committed to implementing further change in the future to continue to increase our efficiency, effectiveness, improve our services and ensure we deliver for our communities. At this stage, given the progress we have made, the district councils believe the projected savings from establishing a unitary council suggested by Somerset County Council are unrealistic and not based on a sound analysis of our position.

Given its financially precarious position, the districts intend to work with Somerset County Council and other partners to examine all the options for reform in Somerset local government. This conversation could include unitary councils but all other options should be objectively assessed as well.

The district councils' central aim in participating in any discussions will be to ensure that the priority is not to protect any one or group of existing organisations but to arrive at the best proposals for the residents and businesses of Somerset, recognising that we need to meet the needs of our communities over a large geographical area. The Districts will ensure any change is the right change for the communities of Somerset.

Last modified: 09 May 2018

Figure 14-16. MDC reaction to the possibility of a unitary authority (MDC, May 2018).

ii) Government and politics – Independent politics

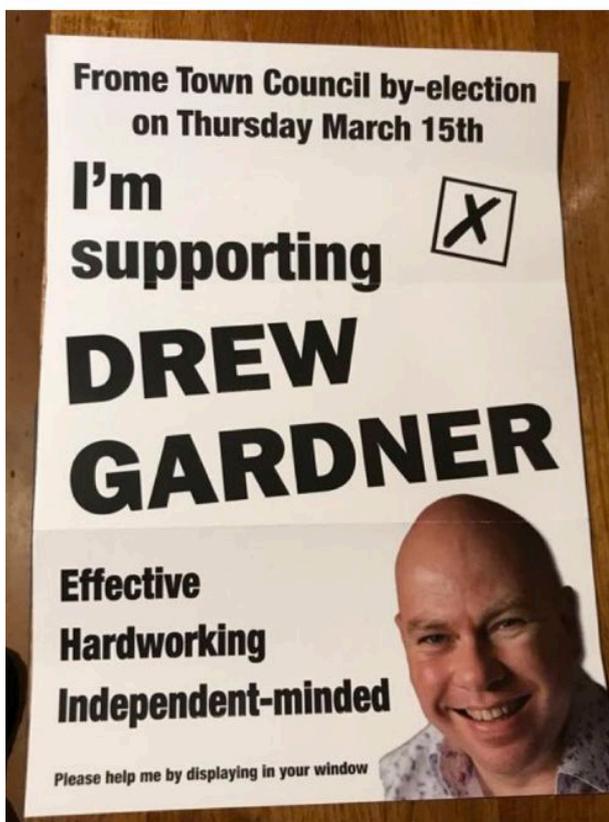
SomersetLive  

SHARE      

One candidate, however, has stirred up a little controversy with the presentation of his leaflet.

Drew Gardener has suddenly become the subject of a considerable amount of attention.

Some are saying that the Liberal Democrat has made his poster look like it is an Independents for Frome campaign poster.



Drew Gardner, as he appears on his election leaflet

Martin Early, a resident of Market Ward in which Mr Gardner is running, told Somerset Live: "When is an Independent Candidate not an Independent. When he is actually a Lib Dem."

Figure 14-17. Lib Dem masquerading in independent political identity 2019 by-election (Somerset Live, 2019)³⁹²

³⁹² <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/frome-town-council-election-candidate-1257331> (last accessed 10.1.19).



Figure 14-18. The Rights of Spring – fluttering of ‘indy’ councils, May 2019 (Mcfadyen, 2019)³⁹³

³⁹³ <https://www.thealternative.org.uk/dailyalternative/2019/5/5/leaves-fluttering-everywhere-flatpack-elections> (last accessed 10.6.19). Reproduced with the kind permission of Peter Macfadyen.

14.9 Appendix I – Frome character areas

Table 14-3 Character Areas in the conservation area (MDCb, 2008)

Conservation Area Character Zone	Name
Character Area 1:	Town centre and an adjacent area to the north west including West End
Character Area 2:	Trinity, Sheppard's Barton and Vallis Way including Horton Street and Button Street – primarily residential area of housing with 18 th - century origins
Character Area 3:	Badcox, Christchurch Street West, Christchurch Street East, Portway and Wallbridge Mill – mixed development along an east-west route south of the original town centre
Character Area 4:	Vallis Road, Nunney Road and Broadway – residential areas west of the town centre
Character Area 5	Willow Vale and the River Frome Valley
Character Area 6:	Frome Bridge, North Parade and the environs of North Hill House
Character Area 7:	Welshmill Road and Innox Hill
Character Area 8:	Fromefield
Character Area 9:	Weymouth Road, Somerset Road and Victoria Park
Character Area 10:	Keyford

Purpose of the TDS

The aim of the Frome Town Design Statement is to give a detailed guide to the character of the town, identify the specific nature of the buildings and landscape that make Frome distinctive and set out recommendations on how to encourage new development of high-quality design that enhances and complements what already exists.

It complements policies within the Adopted Mendip Local Plan Part I (2006 - 2029), specifically providing a more detailed framework to guide development in Frome, encouraging regeneration and enhancement as outlined in Core Policy 6: Frome Town Strategy. Additionally, it seeks to provide further guidance on design in the Frome area, providing additional local guidance in line with Core Policy DP7: Design and Amenity of New Development.

What does the Frome Town Design Statement Include?

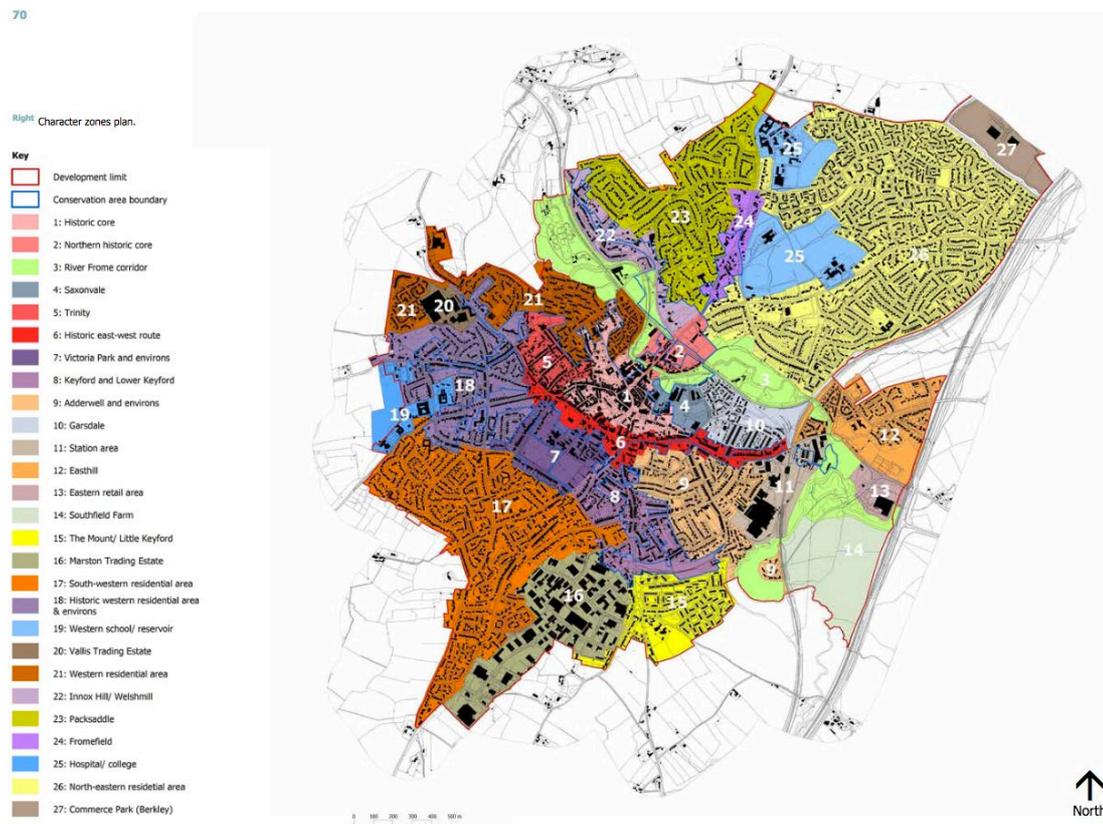
It includes general design guidelines (in Section 5) which it states should be considered for any new development within the town, whether it is a repair, refurbishment, regeneration or a development project. The purpose of the guidelines is to safeguard local character and to encourage sensitive, high quality design and manage change to encourage regeneration and enhancement, and not to prevent it. The guidelines include recommendations on the following issues:

- Quality of the Environment - visibility, scale, roofscapes, infill, density, parking.
- Landscape (soft and hard) - settlement edges, river corridor, green spaces, trees, boundaries, gardens, landscape schemes, lighting, signage, public art, open space.
- Building Design - lines, frontages, roves, materials, shop fronts.
- Conservation Area - Frome Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals, Listed buildings.
- Sustainability - land use, siting of development, design, amenity spaces, flexibility, resource use, sustainable drainage.
- Movement and Transport - legibility and signage, pedestrian crossings, town centre 'shared space', accessibility, parking, traffic effects of development, pedestrian and cycle routes, Railway station gateway, public transport hub, gateways.
- Large Scale Development - development briefs, variety of house types, grouping of houses.
- General Development - local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, Design and Access Statement, building styles, innovative design, appropriate uses, demonstrating design quality, community involvement.

Text from MDC webpage on the TDS <http://www.mendip.gov.uk/frometds> (last accessed 11/1/19).

Character Zones (as designated in the TDS)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Historic core | 16. Marston Trading Estate |
| 2. Northern historic core | 17. South-western residential area |
| 3. River Frome corridor | 18. Historic western residential area and environs |
| 4. Saxonvale | 19. Western school/ reservoir |
| 5. Trinity | 20. Vallis Trading Estate |
| 6. Historic east-west route | 21. Western residential area |
| 7. Victoria Park and environs | 22. Innox Hill/ Welshmill |
| 8. Keyford and Lower Keyford | 23. Packsaddle |
| 9. Adderwell and environs | 24. Fromefield |
| 10. Garsdale | 25. Hospital/ college |
| 11. Station area | 26. North-eastern residential area |
| 12. Easthill | 27. Commerce Park (Berkley) |
| 13. Eastern retail area | |
| 14. Southfield Farm | |
| 15. The Mount/ Little Keyford | |



Frome, Somerset TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT

Figure 14-19- 27 character areas in Frome. (WYG, 2015, p.70)



Figure 14-20 - Site outline of character areas in relation to wider area (WYG, 2015, p.22)

14.10 Appendix J – Relocalised image library summary

Image Number	Visual identity of	Summary
1	Flatpack Democracy	A handbook of do-it-yourself politics based on Frome's experience written by the co-founder of IFF (Macfadyen, 2014).
2	Independents for Frome	A group of independent (town) councillors who have been in power since they were elected in 2011.
3	Frome Town logo	The Frome town emblem used in a number of community logos.
4	The bearded man	A recent parody of the type of 'trendy' 'New Frome' – incomers - who are attracted to the town.
5	Creative activities – Frome Street Bandits	A group of Frome-based musicians, one of many artistic and musical groups in the town. See http://www.fromestreetbandits.co.uk/
6	Caption from IFF 2015 election campaign video: 'For the People, by the People'	IFF marketing co-opting the Frome emblem.
7	News article on launch of ambition to become UK's first fossil fuel free town	Intention launched by FTC for the town to become the fossil fuel free by 2046; subsequently superseded to 2030 (Frome Times, 2016).
8	Re – love – ution	Used on the Flatpack Democracy blog https://www.flatpackdemocracy.co.uk/
9	Frome Community Fridge	Established in 2016 with support from FTC to reduce food waste by encouraging donations from local food retailers. As of October 2017, 6,000 items a month are donated to the fridge (PM personal communication).
10	Frome Independent	Established in 2013, the biggest independent market in South West England. It aims to be 'more than a market' and offers monthly themed markets (exc. winter months). On Frome Independent market days, the high street is closed to traffic and

		has over 10,000 visitors ³⁹⁴ . It is a core part of the creative cultural capital of the town; it seeks to be 'more than a market' and to enable other cultural and social forms of interaction to arise. For instance, partnership with the private sector, culture, art, as a social experience (to be shared with friends and family) and celebrating independence itself.
		The market, like Frome's politics is bold and ambitious – for instance, creating Frome-on-Sea for one of the themed Frome Independents.
11	Mayoral chains	An array of alternative Mayoral chains commissioned by Peter Macfadyen during his time as Mayor of Frome. These were symbolic of related social and environmental initiatives. ³⁹⁵
12	The Share Shop	Established in 2015 as a joint initiative between FTC and Sustainable Frome to encourage re-use and mending of household items to promote a circular economy (Share Shop, 2017).
13	Fair Frome Housing	Established in 2016 to explore alternative ways to support affordable housing, such as community housing and linked apprenticeships for youth unemployed, and house sharing. Members include lff councillors.
14	Sustainable Frome	Frome's TI, established in 2006 to support local environmental initiatives; formally became part of TN in 2008.
15	Keep Frome Local	A campaign, with roots in SF, to prevent a supermarket being built at the redundant Saxonvale site. Rob Hopkins, co-founder of TN, spoke at one of its principal events, 'Independence

³⁹⁴ <http://www.thefromeindependent.org.uk/about/> last accessed 25.9.17.

³⁹⁵ <http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/the-mayors-chain-exhibition/> last accessed 25.9.17.

		Day' in 2012, held at the Wesley Methodist Church ³⁹⁶ .
16	Keep Frome Clean	An FTC open panel initiative for community input.
17	Caption from IfF 2015 election campaign video: Whatcombe fields	An initiative launched in 2015 by Save Open Spaces (SoS) Frome – a consortium of representatives of local environmental groups - as a successful crowdfunding campaign that enabled the community purchase of a local field to save it from development. A total of £300,00 was raised, which included a £35,000 contribution from FTC.
18	Caption from IfF 2015 election campaign video: co-wheels outside the Cheese and Grain	An initiative by FTC to bring electric car sharing to the town. Now also served by E-car club due to greener credentials.
19	Catherine Hill, Frome	A quintessential Somerset street in a market town, now host to an array of independent retail which was rehabilitated since it had been run down in the 1990s and early 2000s.
20	Edventure	'A school for Community Enterprise' supporting youth and other community initiatives. ³⁹⁷
21	Saxonvale	A mostly derelict 4.76ha site in a central location in the town. A source of contention over whether a supermarket should be built on the site. Depicted here with Guardian newspaper journalist, John Harris (Harris, 2010).
22	One Planet Living (OPL)	An initiative developed by Bioregional and WWF to set out the conditions necessary to live within the planetary boundaries of one world. ³⁹⁸
23	In the Middle of Nowhere, Centre of Everything (logo)	A phrase used by the Frome Independent to indicate the high levels of activity in the town in its rural setting.
24	Frome Cohousing	Established in 2009 to seek sites for a cohousing community.

³⁹⁶ <http://www.frometimes.co.uk/2012/09/12/keep-frome-local-launches-independence-day/> last accessed 25.9.17. This in contrast to a group set up 'Frome for All' to advocate for a supermarket on the site.

³⁹⁷ <https://edventurefrome.org/> (last accessed 11.1.18)

³⁹⁸ <http://www.bioregional.co.uk/oneplanetliving/> (last accessed 25.9.17)

25	The Cheese and Grain	A restored building in central Frome that is host to a number of live music and community events. ³⁹⁹
26	Forward Space/The Old Church School	A co-working, hotdesking facility for 'Independent and Creative Thinkers' in the centre of Frome. And latterly expanded to nearby towns and cities and now includes collaboration between Forward Space and MDC to explore flexible work units across Frome.
27	Image of the front cover of Frome's NDP	Frome's NDP was initiated in 2012 as a response to a call for Frontrunners under the Government's localism agenda.

³⁹⁹ <http://www.cheeseandgrain.com/> (last accessed 11.1.18). More recently attracting well-known international bands such as the Foo Fighters.

14.11 Appendix K – Sustainable Frome Objects

The Sustainable Frome objects, as set out in a meeting of the 'core group' in 2010.

Sustainable Frome CIC will work with individuals, groups, organisations and businesses, primarily in Frome and surrounding areas, to enable current and future citizens to live lives that are pleasurable, healthy, purposeful and just, without overspending on the environmental budget. The organisation aims to increase the overall resilience of the people of Frome to future environmental, economic and social shocks and challenges.

Specific objects are to support, develop, initiate and manage community projects and interactions that will:

1. Regenerate biodiverse, resilient and vibrant local economies, food systems and land use
2. Seek local and sustainable economic and energy solutions that enable local people to commit to low carbon lifestyles and energy efficiency;
3. Lead to transport initiatives and opportunities that bring practical solutions to reduce environmental pollution, improve public health and counteract the impact of increasing fuel costs;
4. Reduce current levels of finite resource use, and minimise the production of waste;
5. Reduce excessive global trade and consumption to “live simply so that others may simply live”;
6. Enable alliances to other sustainable communities, networks and movements which recognise the links between sustainability and social justice, and to encourage engagement with relevant national and international campaigns and movements;
7. Lead to creative and artistic outputs, emphasising the importance of their work in community strengthening, education and campaigning;
8. Promote and encourage the acquisition of new skills in activities that enhance sustainability and strengthen community.
9. Recognise links between health and sustainable communities, forming practical alliances with complementary, alternative and conventional health practitioners;

10. Develop recognition that financial wealth does not directly equate to happiness and ensure maximum opportunities for personal growth and expression to play a central role in sustainable community development;
11. Encourage full engagement with younger people on issues of sustainability.

<http://transitionfrome.org.uk/about-us/the-objects/> (last accessed 11.1.19).

14.12 Appendix L – Thematic Aims of Frome's Community Plan (V4F)

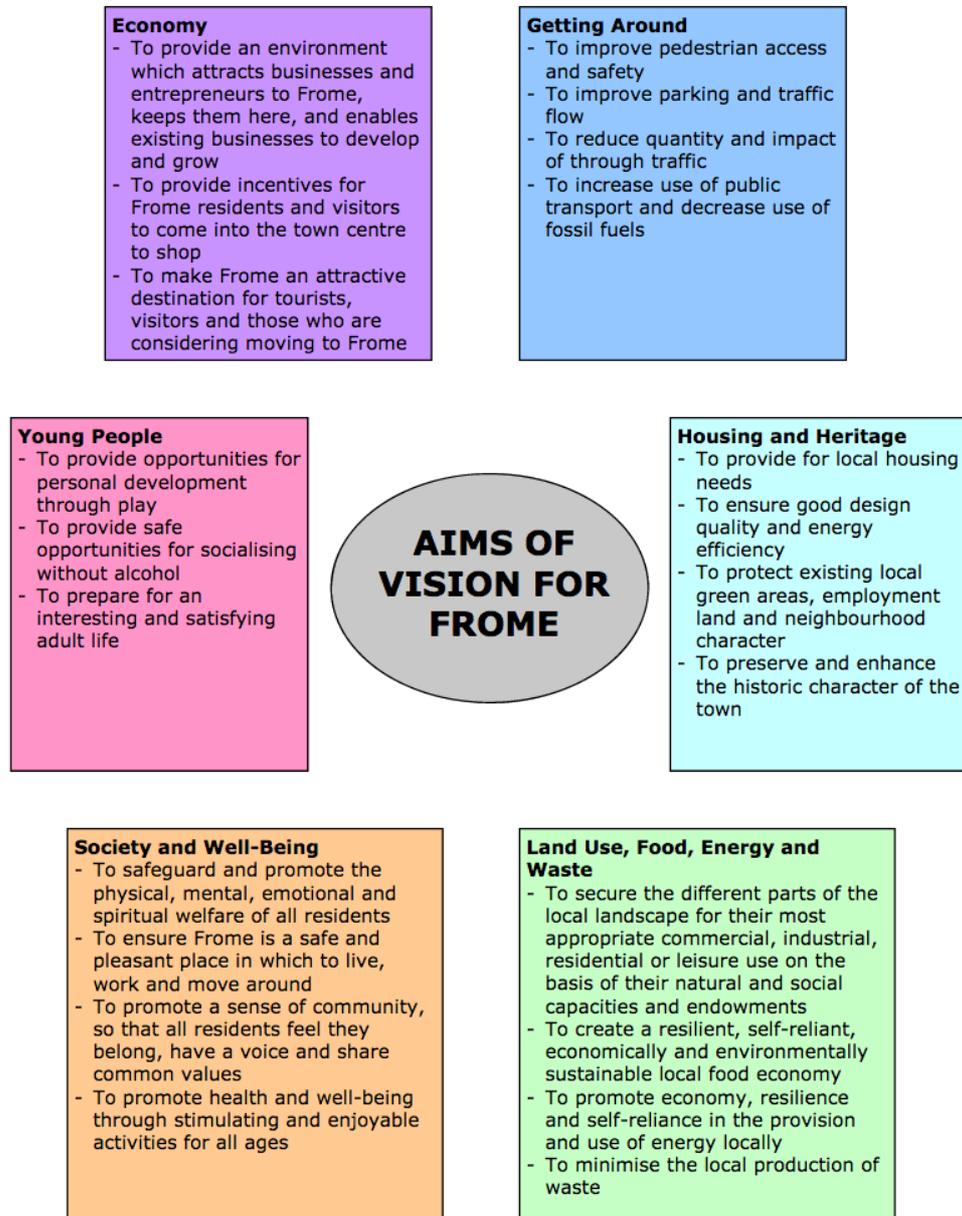


Figure 14-21 Thematic Aims of Frome's Community Plan (Vision4Frome, 2008)

For a list of V4F proposed community projects that informed FTC's Strategy for Success 2011-2015 see <http://www.vision4frome.org.uk/> (last accessed 24.1.19).

14.13 Appendix M - The Independents for Frome Ways of Working

"The noble art of losing face will one day save the human race".

Piet Hein

These Values and Guidelines have been drafted by the group of 17 independent individuals elected to Frome Town Council in May 2015. They are based on the original Ways of Working adopted in 2011.

Five Core Values

Independence. We will each make up our own mind about each decision without reference to a shared dogma or ideology.

Integrity. Decisions will be made in an open and understandable manner. Information will be made available even when we make mistakes, and everyone will have the opportunity to influence decisions.

Positivity. We will look for solutions, involving others in the discussions, not just describe problems.

Creativity. Use new, or borrowed, ideas from within the group and the wider community to refresh what we do and how we do it.

Respect. Understand that everyone has an equal voice and is worth listening to.

We will adhere to these values by challenging ourselves and each other to:

- Avoid identifying ourselves so personally with a particular position that this in itself excludes constructive debate.
- Being prepared to be swayed by the arguments of others and admitting mistakes.
- Be willing and able to participate in rational debate leading to a conclusion.
- Understand the value of constructive debate.

- Accept that you win some, you lose some; it's usually nothing personal and there's really no point in taking defeats to heart.
- Maintain confidentiality where requested and agree when it will be expected.
- Share leadership and responsibility and take time to communicate the intention of, and the approach to, the work we undertake.
- Have confidence in, and adhere to, the mechanisms and processes of decision-making that we establish, accepting that the decisions of the majority are paramount.
- Sustain an intention to involve each other and others rather than working in isolation.
- Trust and have confidence and optimism in other people's expertise, knowledge and intentions. Talk to each other not about each other.

<http://iffrome.org.uk/our-successes/ways-of-working> (last accessed 11.1.19).

14.14 Appendix N - Frome 'made' NDP Policies and policies amended or cut compared to Reg 14 version

NDP			
No.	policy no	Policy Name	Policy – deviations from previous version in <i>italics</i>
			<p>Made plan VCO 1 – Vitality VCO 2 – Participation VCO 3 – Sustainability</p> <p>Submission version VCO 1 – vitality VCO 2 – sustainability VCO 3 – participation</p>
	N/A	Golden Threads	<p>It is recognised that the term sustainability extends well beyond the energy efficiency of buildings. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future sets out five features of sustainable development: living within the earth’s environmental limits, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy, promoting good governance, and using sound science responsibly.</p> <p>In order to provide clarity and policy guidance on future development, the Council is proposing to adopt an overarching sustainable development objective based on One Planet Living as defined by Bioregional and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).</p> <p>One Planet Living (OPL) is a simple concept. We have only one planet and collectively we have a responsibility to live within its capacity. At present, within the UK we are consuming natural resources at a rate that would require the equivalent of three planets if everyone shared our lifestyle.</p> <p>Ten clear principles have been developed to promote happy, healthy and sustainable communities, and these have been translated into a management model:</p>
	N/A	OPL	

All new residential development should maintain, provide or contribute to a mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to help support the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities in the Frome Neighbourhood Plan area. Planning applications for residential development should address affordable housing need and housing demand in line with Mendip District Local Plan 2006-2028 Policy DPI 1: Affordable Housing.

1	H1	BUILDING A BALANCED COMMUNITY	<p><i>** Reg 14 version had sought affordable housing for applications for 10 or more and contribute to housing diversity, design solutions for strong neighbourhoods and adequate space.</i></p>
2	H2	BUILDING BY DESIGN	<p>Quality of design is a key consideration for residential development. Proposals which fail to take the opportunities available to enhance the local character and quality of the area and the way it functions or fail to have regard to guidance in the Frome Town Design Statement (October 2015) will be refused.</p> <p>As an exception to normal policy for the provision of housing set out in Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Mendip District Local Plan, Community Housing may be permitted adjoining the existing development limit (excluding the area that lies within the parish of Berkley) on sites where development would not otherwise be permitted providing:</p> <p>a) The development provides an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes reflecting identified local need and meets demand based on the current Local Housing Needs Assessment or evidence from local Community Housing Groups and the Town Council.</p> <p>b) The development will not have a significant adverse impact on the character of the area and local landscape setting.</p>
3	H3	SELF BUILD AND COMMUNITY HOUSING	<p>c) Such proposals should not have an adverse or harmful impact on statutorily protected species or habitats.</p> <p>d) The land is held in trust as a community asset in perpetuity.</p> <p>Footnote 1 Community Housing is defined as residential</p>

development by a group who build on land that is held in common ownership or trust for the benefit of the residents.

The following text was removed in the made plan:

For community housing outside of the existing development boundary providing there is collective land ownership, diversity of dwelling type and energy efficient. Residents can demonstrate professional and financial capacity, land is held as a community asset; discounted rent at 80% open market value

4	BEI	PROTECTION OF EMPLOYMENT LAND	<p>In addition to Local Plan Policy DP20, the redevelopment of 'Valuable Employment Sites' for non-employment uses will be resisted. Such development would only be granted in the exceptional circumstances where it can be clearly demonstrated that no demand exists within this area for B1, B2 or B8 uses. Remodelling the Town Centre should provide improvements to the public realm.</p>
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**** Reg 14 policy had sought the allocation of an additional 5ha of employment land.*

Remodelling of the Town Centre which accords with the following principles will be permitted:

- Improve the Town Centre environment for pedestrians.
- Reduce the impact of traffic movement from vehicles and re-order the priorities between motorised vehicles, cycles and pedestrians.
- Enhance the character and appearance of the Town Centre, taking into account guidance in the Frome Town Design Statement (October 2015) relating to this area.
- Provide an improved setting and location for the markets.
- Demonstrate that it will cause no deterioration in air quality.

5	TCI	TOWN CENTRE REMODELLING	<p><i>*** Reg 14 version had sought to implement option 3 of town centre remodelling feasibility study, subject to significant community involvement.</i></p>
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			<p>Redevelopment or expansion of Westway shopping centre will be permitted subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public realm improvements including access to the Frome River and tree planting. • Sufficient car parking and space for buses being included within the redevelopment to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the vitality of the town centre. • The design takes into account guidance in the Frome Design Statement (October 2015) • There will be no harmful or adverse impact on the biodiversity or protected species.
6	TC2	WESTWAY CENTRE	
			<p>Landscape and infrastructure improvements to the Cattle Market Car Park that improve this arrival point and enable this area to develop as a cultural destination will be supported.</p>
7	TC3	THE CATTLE MARKET CAR PARK	<p>***Reg 14 had also sought to explore longer-term management options</p>
			<p>Otherwise acceptable planning applications that are closely related to the River Corridor environment and approaches to it will be supported where they take advantage of opportunities to improve the River Corridor environment, including access, subject to suitable ecological assessment.</p>
8	POSI	THE RIVER CORRIDOR	
			<p>The delivery of integrated sustainable transport options is a key aim of the Frome Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p> <p>The priorities for delivering these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing Frome's Missing Links in the National Cycle Network 24. Any detrimental impact through extension to Frome's 'Missing Links' in the National Cycle Network must be avoided or appropriately and entirely mitigated in order to protect the Mells Valley Ecological Zone of
9	TI	INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY	

			<p>Interest including foraging areas, commuting or migrating flight lines for bats. No development will be permitted where these conditions cannot be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to and along the River Corridor, in line with the Frome River Strategy. • Enhancing the environment around and access to Frome Railway Station. • Providing safe and accessible bus and coach stops <p>Identifying clear and safe routes for pedestrians and cycling as part of the remodelling of Frome Town Centre.</p>
10	D1	DESIGN IN URBAN LANDSCAPES	<p>Development that fails to take account of the design guidance in the Frome Town Design Statement (October 2015) or the Frome Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (18 June 2008) will be refused.</p>
11	D2	GATEWAY SITE IMPROVEMENTS	<p>Developments that enhances the built environment of the gateway spaces, taking account of guidance in the Frome Town Design Statement (October 2015), will be supported.</p>
12	D3	VISUAL IMPACT ON SKYLINE	<p>Applications for new buildings and highly visible extensions to existing properties in the skyline areas will be required to demonstrate that there will be no unacceptably detrimental impact on the skyline in these skyline areas.</p> <p><i>***Examiner report required a visual map of skyline areas.</i></p>

Policies cut from earlier versions of the plan

N	NDP		
o	policy		
	no	Policy Name	Policy (summarised)
	H4	<u>Delivering Major Projects: (up to v3)</u>	<p>Developments over 100 houses should set out a management plan for residents' interaction with wider Frome population; including meeting OPL, diverse housing mix and home-working, pedestrian and cycle links, 5% self-build allocation</p>

H5	<u>Energy Efficient Homes (up to v3)</u>	Encouraged to exceed Code 3 Sustainable Homes, consideration of reduction in CIL for energy efficient houses
H7	<u>Future Growth Area:</u>	Frome TC will ensure The Mount (as identified as a growth area in the Mendip Local Plan) will be bought in accordance with the NDP.
BE3	<u>Sustainable Development (v1)</u>	Development over 1000m2 of employment floorspace complies with OPL
TC2	<u>St Catherine's and Badcox: (up to v3) – a non-policy objective in the made plan</u>	No more than 4% of retail change of use in these areas.
TC5	<u>Saxonvale (up to v3) – a non-policy objective in the made plan</u>	Redevelopment of site based on 2005 Planning Brief; work with Mendip DC, landowners and community and update Brief to deliver: exemplar low-carbon living, 300+ energy efficient, diverse mix of homes, incubator space for SMEs, retail, hotel and leisure facilities, training facilities for Somerset Skills and Learning, artisan workshops and creative space, urban park alongside river, improved traffic management.
POs2	<u>Public open space (up to v3)</u>	Development of public open space will not be permitted unless it promotes access and use of public land and buildings, not cause the loss of such areas, developments over 100 homes/1000m2 commercial floorspace will detail protection of open space/wildlife around site area, introduction of supplementary planning document on green infrastructure to identify deficiencies in open space and leisure
D4	<u>Tree Protection (up to v3)</u>	Development should not contribute to loss or damage of woodland and have landscape and ecological value; 3 trees should be planted for each new dwelling or 1 tree for each car parking space or 1 tree per 50m2 of gross floorspace in non-residential either on-site or on another site subject to development.

T2	<u>Travel Plans: (up to v3)</u>	Residential schemes over 10 units, new employment and missed use over 1ha, schools and colleges, health and leisure centres and public buildings will produce a sustainable transport plan
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14.15 Appendix O - Descriptors of the niche and the regime across entities in Frome's NDP and placemaking networks

As of 2015	'Regime'				Niche/regime	Niche		Place
	Dimension of power	MDC	MDC (LPA)	Developers		NDP process	FTC	
Governance	Turgid, reactive, slow, changing the rules, hierarchical. "Machinations of local government"	Insufficient resources, uses 'tick box' approach to planning	"Sewn up" resource allocation	Centralised, slow/protracted, bureaucratic, ordinary Authority channelled to SoS and Examiner, reliant on volunteers, encourages 'piggy in the middle'	Orchestration of transition governance, standing orders, external and internal committees (tied to regulatory conditions), hierarchical, operates within three-tier administrative political system	Enrol expertise for relocalisation, diversity, brotherhood/clan, horizontal structures	Enables spin off groups, "Talking shop", Horizontal structures	Informal, multiple membership
Culture	Don't drive things, aggressive, inflexible, risk-averse, Conservative	Firefighting, dealing with "hassles", time constraints, unhelpful, not proactive, not progressive, encourages 'competitive' development (national policy)	Aggressive, encourages "battles", opportunistic	"Council state", depressing, unable to maintain momentum, leads to disappointment/depression	Encouraging pro-active behaviour, strategic, enabler, radical, seeking self-sufficiency/ to be relocalised. Organisational values seep into role holders (varying)	Progressive, persistent, experimental, diverse, respectful, radical	Purposeful, alternative spiritual practices, experimental, cultivates confidence, counter-cultural, radical	SMEs, DNA, attracts 'nice people', historic core, historic town centre and market town
Skills and interests e.g. human capital	Incompetent, only regime insights	Not consider aesthetics of development, lack of experience outside planning	Legal, planning, profit-driven	Technical, procedural, loss of local knowledge through role change	Highly skilled	Creative, counter cultural insights, regime insights. Unexciting.	Knowledgeable on climate and community-led issues	Creative, artistic, something to be 'understood', capable people

Networks e.g. social capital	Disconnected from Frome, lack of ties, formal ties with local levels, positive internal ties, low connection to environmental groups		Undercuts community-led development	Rupture in local-LPA ties. Lack of continuity. Children and minorities unengaged.	Locally-rooted ties, ties to high levels of government/policy spaces, building relations with "good" developers	Strong local networks, informality, ties to Sustainable Frome and Transition, multiple membership. Narrow conduits. "Pick up the phone" relationship with relocalised network.	Friendship, multiple membership. Relative independence to TN/wider movement.	Tucked away, drawn to action by a love of Frome. Identity re-created by the usual suspects
Agency	Institutionalised, "politically restricted", lock-in and curtailed autonomy, discourages self-starters	Directed to prevent, obstruct, pushing others back	High, can be reactive to policy changes, resisting and challenging NDP policies	Re-scripted intentions, role boundaries compromised "reigned in", "tied hands". Narrow, restricted.	Strong agency (esp. males), regime conditioning persists, not always cultivate latent (female) skills, power to challenge development concepts	Pushing the boundaries, hard to dislodge "hold their own". Free range.	Interspersed, transcendental. Energy reduced when key players left. Co-opted.	Sorting agency

14.16 Appendix P – Publications arising from this research

Extracts of this research on low-carbon neighbourhood plan policy featured in a chapter 'Neighbourhood Planning and the Spatial Practices of Localism' in the edited book 'Localism and Neighbourhood Planning: Power to the People?' (Brownhill and Bradley, 2017). I also sought to disseminate research findings to a non-academic audience. This included two articles on low-carbon neighbourhood planning on the Transition Network website (Burnett, 2014 and 2016, respectively)⁴⁰⁰ and in an activist magazine, Stir to Action (Burnett, 2015). I have attended a number of conferences to disseminate my work including the Interpretative Policy Analysis (IPA) conference and the Royal Geographic Society conference. I have a contract with a major publisher for a monograph on the topic of the thesis.

⁴⁰⁰ <https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/a-transition-guide-to-neighbourhood-plans/> and <https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/neighbourhood-planning-and-transition-initiatives-an-update/> [last accessed 28th April 2017].

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