bcn 347876

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATION:

A STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Vivien Lowndes

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Strathclyde, Department of Government

March 1994

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyrights Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.49. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change. It is based on a case study of decentralisation in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1986-1990). Drawing on 'new institutionalist' theory, the thesis develops a new approach to understanding local government decentralisation. It provides an alternative to accounts which concentrate on identifying the 'pros and cons' of decentralisation. It examines the capacity of decentralisation to secure change in the underlying institutional framework of local governance. The thesis develops a conceptual framework depicting four stages of an institutional lifecycle: creation, recognition, maintenance and collapse. The framework maps the interaction of formal and informal institutional rules, and the relative significance of strategic action and norm-governed behaviour in institutional change. The conceptual framework is used to analyse local government decentralisation in Tower Hamlets. The thesis shows that decentralisation arose out of the collapse of old institutional rules, under the influence of dominant informal institutions in the locality. It explores how, through strategic action and the 'embedding' of new norms of behaviour, a new institutional framework was established through decentralisation. It also considers the ambiguous and contested nature of institutional change; in maintaining an institutional framework over time, rules are reinterpreted and modified. The thesis makes a conceptual and empirical contribution to understanding institutional change in general, and local government decentralisation in particular.

CONTENTS

List of figures vii

List of tables viii

Acknowledgements x

1. **INTRODUCTION** 1

2. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATION: DEFINING THE OBJECT OF ANALYSIS**
Introduction 6
Defining local government decentralisation 6
The trend to local government decentralisation in the 1980s 18
Conclusion 31

3. **INTERPRETING THE TREND TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATION**
Introduction 33
'Political' accounts of local government decentralisation 34
'Total systems' accounts of local government decentralisation 57
Conclusion: the limitations of the literature 67

4. **UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONS AND INSTIUTIONAL CHANGE**
Introduction 73
Institutions and institutional analysis: an introduction 74
New institutionalist approaches: six theoretical vignettes 82
Key variables in institutional analysis 115
Conclusion 121

5. **A FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**
Introduction 123
A framework for analysing institutional change 123
Research methodology 134
An overview of the case study 144
Conclusion 153

6. **THE ROOTS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: CONTEXT AND COLLAPSE**
Introduction 154
The socio-economic context 155
The informal institutions of civil society 173
Institutional collapse in the local authority 188
Conclusion 203

7. **THE CREATION OF A NEW INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK THROUGH DECENTRALISATION**
Introduction 206
A vision for institutional change: the Liberals' 1986 manifesto 206
Strategic action to achieve institutional change: implementing decentralisation 215
Conclusion 229

8. **THE RECOGNITION OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL RULES**
Introduction 233
New rules and the service interface 234
New rules and management and working practices 241
New rules and decision-making 253
Conclusion 267

9. **THE MAINTENANCE OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL RULES**

Introduction 271

The Bancroft Community Team: taking new institutional rules to their logical conclusion 272

The Globe Centre: suspending new institutional rules 289

The NALGO strike: conflict between old and new rules 298

Conclusion 310

10. **CONCLUSION**

Introduction 313

The argument summarised 313

The contribution of the thesis 317

Developing the approach further 320

Postscript - Decentralisation in Tower Hamlets since 1990 324

Appendix A

Details of methodology and list of primary sources 327

Appendix B

Questionnaire for staff survey 340

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Advisory Committee survey 346

Bibliography 350

F I G U R E S

Figure 2.1
Local government decentralisation in relation to four key variables 19

Figure 5.1
An institutional lifecycle 124

Figure 5.2
The interaction of formal and informal rules in an institutional lifecycle 130

Figure 5.3
The significance of strategic action and norm-governed behaviour in an institutional lifecycle 133

Figure 5.4
Map of London Borough of Tower Hamlets showing the seven neighbourhoods 146

Figure 5.5
Globe Town Neighbourhood: main decision-making and service delivery structures, 1989-1990 151

Figure 5.6
Globe Town Neighbourhood: grouping of functions, 1989-1990 152

TABLES

Table 2.1
Decentralised service delivery in local government, 1980-1988 28

Table 2.2
Decentralised political structures in local government, 1980-1988 28

Table 4.1
Positive and negative values ascribable to bureaucrats 101

Table 6.1
Population in Tower Hamlets, 1901-1991 167

Table 6.2
Contrasts between white and Bangladeshi households in Tower Hamlets, 1991 170

Table 6.3
Social class in Tower Hamlets, 1991 170

Table 6.4
Deprivation and income distribution in most and least deprived London boroughs, 1984 171

Table 8.1
Residents' perceptions of neighbourhood offices in Tower Hamlets, 1990 237

Table 8.2
Staff perceptions of management style in Globe Town Neighbourhood, 1990 247

Table 8.3
Staff perceptions of inter-departmental and generic working in Globe Town Neighbourhood, 1990 248

Table 8.4
Voter turnout in London borough elections, 1982-1990 **262**

Table 8.5
Voter turnout in Globe Town Neighbourhood, 1982-1990 **262**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Gerry Stoker for his excellent supervision. Thanks are also due to my colleagues at the Institute of Local Government Studies for their encouragement. I would like to thank all those at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets who made the research possible, particularly Steve Charters. I would like to thank Stuart Douglas, Richard Lowndes and Claire Marris for their support and assistance.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change. Informed by 'new institutionalist' theory, it is based on a case study of decentralisation in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The thesis provides a detailed examination of decentralisation in Tower Hamlets from 1986 to 1990. Tower Hamlets' decentralisation initiative can claim with considerable justification to be unique: service delivery and decision-making have been decentralised to seven 'neighbourhoods' and traditional departmental and committee structures abolished. Tower Hamlets constitutes a 'limiting' case - the most extreme example of a widespread and diverse phenomenon, a case against which to explore the experience of local authority decentralisation in the 1980s. My aim is to use the case study not to test hypotheses but to reflect upon theoretical propositions. The intensive analysis of a single case generates a depth and quality of understanding that is harder to achieve in a more wide-ranging study.

By focusing on institutional change, I aim to develop a new approach to understanding local government decentralisation. I intend to provide an alternative to those accounts which concentrate on identifying the merits (and sometimes the demerits) of decentralisation. My concern is with the capacity of decentralisation to destabilise existing institutional rules - to undermine established 'ways of doing things'.

The significance of decentralisation may be less in the specific outputs with which it is associated, and more in its capacity to secure change in the underlying institutional framework of local governance.

In effect, the thesis has two objects of analysis: institutional change, and local government decentralisation. It aims to make a contribution to understanding processes of institutional change in general, and local government decentralisation in particular. I now indicate the structure of my argument, outlining the purpose of each chapter.

Chapter 2 begins by noting that 'decentralisation' refers to a great variety of political and organisational phenomena. I set out a framework for mapping different types of decentralisation in relation to key variables. This allows me to specify clearly my object of analysis: the area-based decentralisation of decision-making and service delivery within local authorities. The chapter goes on to provide evidence of a trend to area-based decentralisation in British local government in the 1980s.

Chapter 3 reviews interpretations of this trend to local government decentralisation. It focuses on two dominant approaches: 'political' accounts which relate decentralisation to developments in local politics, and 'total systems' approaches which relate decentralisation to broader changes in society, polity and economy. The literature is characterised by a concentration on 'grand theory', a normative focus, and a lack of sustained empirical analysis. I argue for the development of a middle-range theoretical approach to decentralisation, grounded in case study

analysis. Chapter 3 serves a 'ground-clearing' function - I develop my own approach, based on theories of institutional change, in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 explores approaches to understanding institutions and institutional change. Drawing on 'new institutionalist' perspectives, six theoretical 'vignettes' are presented, each illuminating a different aspect of institutional life. I identify the key variables that emerge from the literature review and put forward my own set of theoretical propositions about institutions and institutional change. These propositions serve to guide my analysis of decentralisation as a process of institutional change.

Chapter 5 sets out a conceptual framework and methodology for analysing decentralisation. The framework depicts four stages of an institutional 'lifecycle': creation, recognition, maintenance and collapse. It shows the interaction of formal and informal institutional rules, and the relative significance of strategic action and norm-governed behaviour in institutional change. The chapter goes on to outline my methodology, explaining the rationale behind my case study method and 'action research' approach.

The following four chapters investigate decentralisation in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, each chapter focusing on a different phase of the institutional lifecycle.

Chapter 6 analyses the collapse of the existing institutional framework in Tower Hamlets. I argue that this collapse was shaped both by contextual factors (social, economic and cultural) and strategic action on the part of key local interests. Both the 'new urban left' faction in the Labour Party and the opposition Liberal Party sought to change the 'rules' within which the local authority operated. The Liberals gained control of the council in 1986, committed to transforming the institutions of the local authority through decentralisation. I show how the Liberals tapped into dominant informal institutions (including traditions of neighbourliness and community) in developing their decentralisation vision.

Chapter 7 examines the creation of a new institutional framework through decentralisation. I argue that the Liberals' success in introducing institutional change related to the clarity and simplicity of their vision (set out in the 1986 manifesto) and to their strategic approach to implementation. The Liberals built support for decentralisation by working through key 'change agents' and exploiting dissatisfaction with the 'old ways'. At the same time, they neutralised potential resistance by coopting oppositional groups into the implementation process, and through offering staff incentives in the form of regradings.

Chapter 8 analyses the extent to which new institutional rules associated with decentralisation were recognised by staff, councillors and the public. Focusing on one of the new 'neighbourhoods' (Globe Town), the chapter identifies developments in the service interface, management and working practices, and decision-making. I argue that

considerable (if uneven) progress was made in 'embedding' new rules - on neighbourhood identification, ease of access for service users, flexible and generic working, and a more directive role for councillors.

Chapter 9 considers the challenge of sustaining new institutional rules over time - the maintenance stage of the institutional lifecycle. Three 'mini case studies' illustrate situations in which new rules were tested to their limits. Different actors interpreted new institutional rules in different ways, as they responded to new challenges and sought to pursue their own interests. The three cases reflect the ambiguous and contested nature of institutional change. I argue that institutional change is hard to control - in maintaining an institutional framework over time, rules will be changed, modified and reinterpreted.

Chapter 10 sets out my contribution to understanding institutional change in general, and local government decentralisation in particular. I consider the contribution of the thesis with regard to my methodology, my conceptual framework and my characterisation of decentralisation as a process of institutional change. I finish by considering the limitations of my approach and suggesting ways in which it could be developed and applied in the future.

CHAPTER 2 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATION: DEFINING THE OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define my object of analysis - local government decentralisation. In the first part of the chapter I discuss the variety of definitions and classifications of decentralisation. I develop my own framework for mapping forms of decentralisation. In the second part of the chapter I discuss the trend to local government decentralisation in the 1980s. I situate the developments of the 1980s in relation to earlier decentralisation initiatives, and provide empirical evidence of the emerging trend.

Part 1 - Defining local government decentralisation

My aim here is to investigate the different ways in which the term 'decentralisation' is used and to clarify its meaning and its applicability to local government. I consider the widespread confusion over the meaning of decentralisation and review attempts to classify forms of decentralisation. I go on to develop a framework for mapping different forms of decentralisation, which allows me to specify clearly my object of analysis.

1.1 The need for conceptual clarification

The term 'decentralisation' is used to refer to a variety of political and organisational phenomena. The loose way in which the term is used has led Hoggett (1987: 217) to comment that decentralisation is:

> an "empty term", referring to a political and organisational space which can be filled by a whole range of initiatives masquerading behind this bland heading.

While decentralisation may refer to many different types of initiative, what its various uses have in common is the implication that decentralisation is a 'good thing'. Smith (1985: 166) notes that decentralisation is a 'political hurrah word' and 'now has almost universal appeal'; Pollitt (1986) points out that it is regarded as 'virtuous, fashionable'. Decentralisation often seems to be the policy-maker's equivalent of 'motherhood and apple pie'. The confusion about what exactly decentralisation refers to, together with its powerful normative connotations, point to the need for conceptual clarification.

Academic commentators and policy analysts (notably in the United Nations, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the European Council) have developed elaborate classification exercises (Smith, 1985: 166). A whole host of 'D' words has been spawned in the pursuit of analytical clarity, with distinctions being made between - for instance - devolution, deconcentration, delegation and dispersal. In distinguishing between different forms of decentralisation, legal and technical definitions are generally used. As Conyers (1983: 102) notes:

> it has been usual to distinguish between two main types of decentralisation: *devolution* to legally established, locally elected political authorities and *deconcentration* of administrative authority to representatives of central government agencies.

In cases of **devolution**, both the 'central' and the 'local' level of government have clearly defined powers and responsibilities. The ideal-typical case of devolution is often given as that of British local authorities which have traditionally been semi-autonomous, legally constituted entities able to employ their own staff and control their own financial affairs, although they are subject to control and regulation by central government. The French system of local government is used to illustrate the alternative case, that of **deconcentration**. This is a much more limited form of decentralisation, in which effective control remains with the 'centre' (eg. over finance), while implementation decisions are decentralised to local bodies. Rondinelli (1983: 189) defines deconcentation thus:

> the transfer of functions within the central government hierarchy through the shifting of workload from central ministries to field officers, the creation of field agencies, or the shifting of responsibility to local administrative units that are part of the central government structure.

Two other 'D' words may be added to the classification of forms of decentralisation - delegation and dispersal. **Delegation** involves the transfer of responsibilities to arm's length bodies which have limited and precisely defined functions to carry out (perhaps existing on a temporary basis only), operating under the instruction and licence of central government, but with a significant degree of operational autonomy. Rondinelli (1983: 189) provides the following examples:

> delegation involves the transfer of functions to regional or functional development authorities, parastatal organisations, or special project implementation units that often operate free of central government regulations concerning personnel recruitment, contracting, budgeting, procurement and other matters, and that act as an agent for the state in performing prescribed functions with the ultimate responsibility for them remaining with the central government.

Dispersal refers to the posting of staff away from government centres, without there being any transfer of powers or functions (Conyers, 1986: 2). A central government department, for instance, may transfer its computing department to a low-rent site outside the capital but, apart from the new physical distance between the headquarters and the computing staff, authority relations remain unchanged. Private companies frequently decentralise production sites in this way to make cost savings (on labour, rents, materials) - multinational companies disperse production operations in order to benefit from different factor prices in different countries or from forms of transfer pricing.

Staying with the legal, technical method of distinguishing between different types of decentralisation, we can point to a fifth possibility which involves the transfer of functions out of the government machinery. As Rondinelli (1983: 189) notes, this refers to the transfer of 'responsibilities for activities from the public sector to private or quasi-public organisations that are not part of the government structure'. This might arise with the contracting out of service delivery to private companies, or with the transfer of welfare functions to self-help groups or charities, or through the establishment of some form of private/public partnership organisation.

Although legal questions are important, distinctions between devolution, deconcentration, delegation and dispersal are unable to capture the variety of different decentralisation initiatives which can be observed. For a start, many forms of decentralisation 'on the ground' involve mixes of the ideal types described above; they cannot easily be slotted into one or other of the 'D' boxes. In addition, the distinctions I have reviewed concentrate upon the classification of different organisational arrangements. They reveal little about the way in which decentralised units operate, or about the intentions behind decentralisation. They do not contribute to an understanding of the *politics* of decentralisation - the way in which different stakeholders (central politicians, local politicians, government staff and managers, community leaders and service users) press for, or stand to benefit from, different decentralised arrangements.

Decentralisation may involve a panoply of different organisational arrangements, but the design and implementation of decentralisation plans is far from being a purely technical, legalistic matter. Conyers (1983: 103) proposes an alternative approach to studying decentralisation:

> instead of trying to classify the new decentralisation programmes into broad categories such as devolution and deconcentration, it is necessary to ask more detailed questions about the degree and form of decentralisation in each programme in order to make useful generalisations and comparisons. It is, in particular, important to recognise that a number of different criteria can be used to measure the degree of decentralisation - including the number and significance of the powers or functions decentralised and the type of individual or organisation which exercises power at this level - and that a system which is 'more decentralised' according to one criteria may be 'less decentralised' according to another.

1.2 Common content and key variables: a framework for mapping decentralisation initiatives

This section addresses Conyers' challenge, attempting to ask 'more detailed questions' about the form and politics of decentralisation. It seems important to retain the term 'decentralisation' rather than replacing it with with a host of new words. It is precisely the popularity and widespread currency of 'decentralisation' that makes it an interesting area of study. My approach will be to establish both the common content and the key variables involved in decentralisation, as a basis for making generalisations about decentralisation and for characterising particular initiatives.

Rondinelli (1981: 137) offers a broad brush defintion of decentralisation, noting that the term can be used to refer to any transfer of the 'authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions'. Such a definition does not pre-judge the extent of the authority or the nature of the functions to be transferred. Neither does it pre-judge the type of organisational arrangement that will result. The definition is a useful starting point because it establishes that decentralisation is about 'the transfer of authority' and concerns 'public functions'. Such functions may, however, be transferred to agencies inside or outside the public realm. Rondinelli (1981: 188) notes the wide variety of organisational arrangements which may arise in the decentralisation of public functions:

> Decentralisation can be broadly defined as the transfer of planning, decision-making or management functions from the central government and its agencies to field organisations, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide

> or regional development organisations, specialised functional authorities or non-governmental organisations.

Rondinelli introduces the concept of 'levels' of government, noting that decentralisation is a tranfer of authority and functions from central government to subordinate units (whether public or private). Conyers extends the definition to include not only transfers between 'national' and 'sub-national' levels, but between 'sub-national' and 'lower' levels. She defines decentralisation as:

> any change in the organisation of government which involves the transfer of powers or functions from the national level to any sub-national level(s), or from the sub-national level to another, lower level. (Conyers, 1986: 2)

The idea of levels is more useful than a strictly geographical interpretation of decentralisation: Smith (1985: 1) defines decentralisation as 'the delegation of power to lower levels within a territorial hierarchy'. He does not allow for the possibility of decentralisation to agencies identified by functional rather than geographical responsibilities. Bureaucracies are typically sub-divided according to functional specialisms, with some degree of authority decentralised to specialist units linked in a vertical hierarchy (Pollitt, 1986: 159). A lower 'level' of government may be defined according to the particular functions it carries out, rather than by the geographical area it serves.

Smith (1985: 201-6) stresses the political character of decentralisation initiatives. Decentralisation is political because it involves the redistribution of authority and responsibility for public functions.

Decentralisation arises in response to pressures from different interest groups and affects different groups in different ways. The outcomes of decentralisation 'are the result of political forces in conflict' (Smith, 1985: 201). Thus Smith's understanding of 'political' is a wide one; it rests on the idea that a sharp distinction is impossible between the administrative and governance aspects of public organisations. Smith (1985: 9) notes that decentralisation may involve the transfer of either 'political' authority (in the sense of politicians' responsibilities) or 'bureaucratic' authority (in the sense of managers' responsibilities), but in either case decentralisation is a political phenomenon, affecting power relations between different sets of government actors.

On common content, then, I have established that decentralisation involves the transfer between organisational levels of authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions. Decentralisation, thus, has a purposive character; it is a concept of a different order than, say, 'fragmentation' which implies an *ad hoc* breakdown, the fracturing of a whole rather than its restructuring. I have also established that decentralisation has a political character in that it involves the redistribution of authority within or between organisations.

The definitions of decentralisation reviewed above have indicated not just common content, but key variables too. Decentralisation is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. It may occur at different levels of government and may take place within the public sector or between economic sectors. Decentralisation may involve the transfer of managerial and/or political authority and it may take place on the basis

of function and/or area. By identifying different dimensions of decentralisation it is possible to see how both centralisation and decentralisation may coexist. Decentralisation with respect to one variable may be accompanied by centralisation in respect of another. Managerial authority, for instance, may be decentralised while political authority is centralised; or decentralisation may occur at one level of government (eg. between local and sub-local government) while centralisation occurs at another (eg. between central and local government). Conyers (1983: 106) notes that:

> It is necessary to recognise the complexity of the motives behind... decentralisation programmes and, in particular, the fact that in many cases they are trying to achieve both 'centralisation' and 'decentralisation'.

On the basis of this analysis I propose a framework for mapping different decentralisation initiatives. Decentralisation initiatives can be characterised with reference to four key variables or dimensions of decentralisation:

(1) Decentralisation occurs within or between economic sectors (ie. public, private or voluntary agencies).

(2) Decentralisation occurs at different levels of government (ie. multi-national, national, local or sub-local).

(3) Decentralisation involves the transfer of political or managerial responsibility, although all decentralisation initiatives are 'political' in terms of their design and outcomes.

(4) Decentralisation involves territorial or functionally distinct divisions of government activity.

The value of this approach is that it allows for a specific form of decentralisation to be described in a relatively unambiguous way with reference to the four sets of variables. It is possible to map decentralisation on one dimension, and centralisation on another. The framework allows a particular form of decentralisation to be located within a much larger matrix of possibilities, and to capture the complex and contradictory character of different initiatives. Typologies of 'forms of decentralisation' fail to provide such a degree of specificity, bundling a large number of variables together into a few neat categories. Such 'boxes' also serve to depoliticise the process of decentralisation.

1.3 Mapping local government decentralisation

I turn now to locate local government decentralisation in relation to the key variables identified above, and to specify the type of decentralisation with which this thesis is concerned.

Decentralisation in what sector?

As indicated above, when discussing decentralisation it is necessary to specify whether one is referring to decentralisation within the public sector or between economic sectors. **In this thesis I am concerned with decentralisation within the public sector - ie. the transfer of authority and responsibilities from local to sub-local units, from town halls to 'neighbourhood' offices and committees.** I recognise, however, that other forms of local government decentralisation involve the transfer of

authority for service delivery (and even policy-making) out of government hands, through contracting to private or voluntary sector agencies, or through transfers to 'quasi government agencies' which involve inputs from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Decentralisation at what level?

When discussing decentralisation, it is also necessary to specify the level of government which is being decentralised. **In this thesis I am concerned with sub-local decentralisation - decentralisation from local to neighbourhood level.** However, local government is itself decentralised: it is 'local' rather than central. Central government decentralises functions to local authorities, which may then choose to decentralise responsibilities to a lower level. Central (national) government may also act as the decentralised arm of a supra-national 'government'. Decentralisation at one level occurs within a broader context of patterns of centralisation and decentralisation in governance. At least four levels of government are significant: the European Union, national government, local government and sub-local government (Lowndes, 1993: 132).

Decentralisation of what type of authority?

There is a need to establish what it is that is being decentralised. Decentralisation implies the transfer of authority away from the centre of an organisation. This may be managerial or political authority. **In this thesis I am concerned with the decentralisation of both managerial**

and political authority within local government. These do not necessarily go together - it is possible to have decentralised service delivery units without equivalent decentralised political structures, or (less commonly) to have sub-local decision-making forums without sub-local service units (Lowndes, 1994: 3). Considering the broader picture, a regional office of a central government department may enjoy decentralised managerial authority, while lacking any political authority.

Decentralisation on what basis?

There is a need to identify the organisational principle upon which decentralisation is based. Government machinery may be decentralised on the basis of function or area. **In this thesis I am concerned with area-based decentralisation within local authorities - the establishment of sub-local units for service delivery or decision-making.** The functional and area principles are not mutually exclusive: a territorially-defined unit of government may have internal functional divisions, whilst a functionally-defined unit may decentralise on the basis of areas. Local government represents the decentralisation of government on a geographical basis; while local authorities themselves typically decentralise their activities according to functional principles (to departments and committees dealing with particular services). At the same time, the Department of Environment constitutes a functional division of central government activity, but then decentralises some of its activities on a geographical basis - to regional offices.

In summary, my object of analysis may be specified thus (see Figure 2.1):

(1) Decentralisation within the public sector.

(2) Decentralisation from local government to a sub-local level.

(3) Decentralisation of both political and managerial authority.

(4) Decentralisation on the basis of geographical area ('neighbourhoods').

In organisational terms, such decentralisation produces some form of neighbourhood committee and/or neighbourhood office.

Part 2 - The trend to local government decentralisation in the 1980s

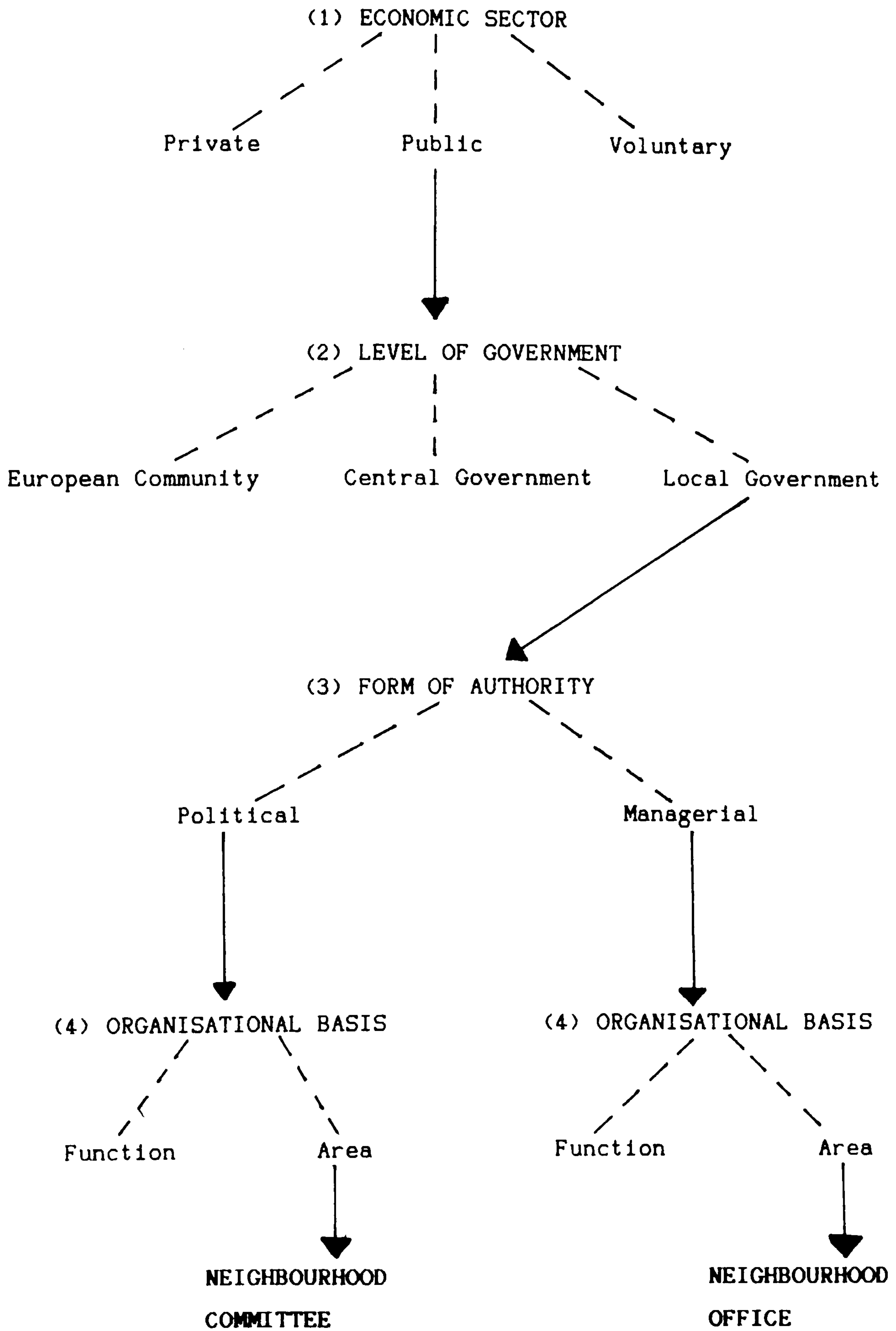
In this part of the chapter I outline the trend to decentralisation in local government in the 1980s, situating these initiatives in relation to earlier approaches. I go on to provide empirical evidence of the spread of decentralisation in the 1980s.

2.1 The development of a trend to decentralisation

Area management initiatives in the 1970s

In the 1970s area initiatives emerged in a number of different service areas, largely as a result of specific legislation - as in education priority areas, general improvement and housing action areas (Smith, 1985: 167; Stoker and Young, 1993: 98). Influenced by US experiments in 'neighbourhood government' (see Yates, 1973; Smith, 1985: 171), the emphasis was on targeting particular areas and applying a new form of flexible management to address serious urban problems. Developments in

Figure 2.1 - Local government decentralisation in relation to four key variables



professional thinking also influenced a trend to local working in particular services: for instance, after the 1968 Seebohm Report a strong emphasis on 'patch' working developed in social services. However, there was little opportunity to bring different services together in these early projects. As Stoker and Young (1993: 98) explain: 'The overall impression was of a patchy spread of initiatives in different policy sectors pursued in isolation from each other'. Efforts to integrate services within a neighbourhood approach did develop, as in the Community Development Projects, the Inner Area Studies and Comprehensive Community Programmes (Stoker and Young, 1993: 99). These programmes reflected developments in community work, influenced by the radical and participatory politics of the 1960s (Hain, 1980: 54-9). Increased public participation was also encouraged through legislation, for instance on planning (Gyford, 1986: 108).

The area initiatives of the 1970s were largely central government sponsored, although some - like the Department of Environment's 'area management trials' - drew on the experience of pioneering authorities like Stockport and Liverpool (Hambleton, 1978: 223-253; Webster, 1982: 167-198). The impact of area management initiatives was limited in the context of the 1974 reorganisation of local government which produced fewer, larger authorities and was associated with centralised management techniques. Young and Stoker (1993: 99) point to 'the irony of central government sponsoring area management trials shortly after overseeing a reorganisation leading to larger authorities'. (The current reorganisation of local government looks set to reproduce this pattern [Lowndes, forthcoming, a].)

Concluding on the experience of decentralisation initiatives in the '70s, Burns et al (forthcoming, Chapter 1) argue that:

> the lasting outcome was that the practice of local authority management remained substantially unchanged. This is mainly because the initiatives were seen as add-ons to the established, usually highly centralised, decision-making structures.

Decentralisation developments in the 1980s

Professional interest in area working continued in the 1980s, with decentralised arrangements fast becoming the norm in social services (Beresford, 1983; Means, 1984) and housing management (Hoggett and Hambleton, 1987: 3; Burns and Williams, 1989). By 1987 virtually all local authority housing departments with a stock of over 20,000 were engaged in some form of decentralisation (Hoggett and Hambleton, 1987: 3). At the same time, political interest in decentralisation grew from the early 1980s. While the area management initiatives of the 1970s had been driven by central government, *local* politicians now turned their attention to decentralisation (Stoker and Young, 1993: 99).

Walsall's decentralisation initiative was a pioneer 'political' project (Walsall Council, 1982; Seabrook, 1984). In 1981 the incoming Labour group made an explicit link between decentralised service delivery and the development of participatory democracy and 'socialist local government' (Hoggett and Hambleton, 1987: 235). Walsall's decentralisation scheme concentrated on housing, aiming to deliver a comprehensive housing service (housing management, rents and rates collection, repairs and maintenance and information) as well as home care

and meals-on-wheels, from 32 'neighbourhood offices' (Seabrook, 1984: 137). Walsall's neighbourhood offices also 'acted as a filter, passing on problems to other departments and offering advice on any query brought before them' (Seabrook, 1984: 137). The Walsall initiative can be considered 'political' in the sense that decentralisation proposals emanated from high-profile local politicians rather than from managers and officers. In contrast to previous 'area management' initiatives, Walsall 'couched its hopes for decentralisation in an explicitly political language' (Gyford, 1991a: 111). Labour-controlled Lambeth and Newham developed decentralised housing programmes in the Walsall mould from 1982. However, the initiatives themselves still concentrated on reforming aspects of service delivery rather than on setting up new decentralised political structures.

The early 1980s saw the emergence of the first multi-service decentralisation initiatives and the cementing of a link between decentralisation and 'new urban left' thinking (discussed further in Chapter 3). Both Hackney and Islington developed multi-service schemes from 1982, although Hackney's programme was abandoned in the context of industrial relations disputes (Hoggett, Lawrence and Fudge, 1984: 62-79). Islington established 24 neighbourhood offices, which were responsible for aspects of social services, housing services, environmental health, welfare benefits and planning (Heery, 1984: 45-61; Hodge, 1987: 26-36). Islington also linked its new form of service delivery to a new form of public participation, setting up 'neighbourhood forums' of community representatives to advise on local policies (Khan, 1989a and 1989b). Although Walsall had promised a new form of participatory democracy,

this was conceived in terms of improved access to existing democratic mechanisms rather than new forums for political participation.

Among other authorities which experimented with decentralisation in the early 1980s were Camden, Haringey, Basildon, Greenwich, Edinburgh, Norwich, Renfrew, Kirklees, Wigan, Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, Lewisham, Southampton and Bradford. From the mid-1980s a new wave of decentralisers appeared, including Ealing, Gloucester, Hammersmith and Fulham, Isle of Wight, Kingston and Waltham Forest.

The most radical decentralisation initiative of the mid-1980s was introduced by an incoming Liberal administration in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. As in Richmond, decentralisation in Tower Hamlets was linked not to new urban left ideas but to Liberal 'community politics' (discussed further in Chapter 3). Unlike Islington, Tower Hamlets did not 'bolt on' a set of decentralised structures but abolished traditional departmental and committee structures altogether, in favour of area units. It decentralised not just service delivery but political control. Seven 'standing neighbourhood committees' (made up of councillors elected in the relevant wards) became the main decision-making bodies for the borough. With the Tower Hamlets initiative, the logic of decentralisation has been taken to its furthest point (Morphet, 1987; Hughes, 1987: 29-36; Stoker and Lowndes, 1991; Lowndes and Stoker, 1992a and 1992b). This thesis explores decentralisation in Tower Hamlets as a case study. Tower Hamlets constitutes a 'limiting case' - the most extreme example of a widespread and diverse phenomenon, a case against

which to explore the experience of local authority decentralisation in the 1980s.

2.2 The trend to decentralisation: empirical evidence

In a collection of papers published in 1987, Hoggett and Hambleton confidently claim that: 'decentralisation should now be considered a trend rather than a fad' (1987: 3). They estimate that some 40 authorities were developing or implementing decentralisation plans, whether on a single-service or multi-service basis. Hoggett and Hambleton present details on 17 such decentralisation schemes and this information supports their claim that decentralisation is not the prerogative of a single political party nor a particular type of authority. They point out that not only have decentralisation schemes increased in extent, they have also increased in variety. Decentralisation may have become a trend, but 'its nature has become much more diffuse' (Hambleton and Hoggett, 1987: 3).

While referring to decentralisation as a trend, Hoggett and Hambleton provide data on less than 20 local authorities. Data from a 1988 survey of managerial innovation in local government (Stoker et al, 1988) provides a useful complement to Hoggett and Hambleton's case studies. As well as providing data on the extent of decentralisation, the survey provides information on the variety and diversity of decentralisation initiatives. It investigates the managerial and the political aspects of decentralisation (service delivery systems and decision-making structures); the types of local authority undertaking decentralisation

(and their political control); and the services subject to decentralisation. The survey findings back-up Hoggett and Hambleton's bold claim; in fact, they suggest that Hoggett and Hambleton signigificantly *underestimate* the extent of local government decentralisation.

The survey covered all authorities in England and Wales (448) and received responses from 225 authorities (a 50% response rate). Local authorities were asked to compare their situation in 1980 and 1988. In developing a picture of the extent and nature of decentralisation schemes, the survey distinguishes between decentralisation on the basis of different sized areas. Three possibilities are examined - decentralisation on the basis of 'neighbourhood' (covering a population of up to 10,000) or on the basis of 'area' (covering a population of between 10,000 and 30,000) and on the basis of 'district' (covering a population of more than 30,000). We shall use the terms large, medium and small in reporting the findings to avoid confusion, as different authorities use terms like neighbourhood and area to mean different things. (For instance, both Islington and Tower Hamlets use the word 'neighbourhood', even though their units are very different in size - Islington's units cover populations of around 7,000 while Tower Hamlets' units cover populations of approximately 20,000.)

The significance of the data is limited, however, by the following considerations:

(a) Definitions As I showed in Part 1, the term 'decentralisation' can mean many different things. Decentralised service delivery might refer to local information and advice points, or to local management and delivery of services. Decentralised political structures might be full committees of the council, sub-committees, or advisory forums; they might be made up of councillors (either following rules of proportionality or including only members elected in the relevant wards), community representatives, or both. Such points indicate once again the complexity of the decentralisation phenomenon; the survey groups together potentially quite different types of initiative.

(b) Degree of decentralisation The survey distinguishes between single- and multi-service decentralisation, but otherwise reveals nothing about the 'depth' of decentralisation, in terms of the authority, capacity or autonomy of decentralised units. (The survey did ask about the extent of 'devolved resource management', but this was not linked specifically to area-based working.)

(c) Changes over time Interpretations of data comparing decentralisation in 1980 and 1988 must be cautious. Respondents were asked to 'remember' what the situtation was in 1980 - the figures do not refer to a previous survey.

Overall, the data is best treated, as the report's authors themselves recommend, as a 'snapshot overview' (Stoker et al, 1988: 67). As such, the survey findings are useful in sketching the trend to decentralisation in local government in the 1980s. They are particularly

useful given the lack of alternative data sources on decentralisation in the 1980s. With these caveats, I now examine the survey findings.

Decentralised service delivery

The 1988 survey concludes that there has been a 'substantial shift towards decentralised service delivery' (Stoker et al, 1988: 4). The data shows: (a) that there has been an overall growth in decentralised service delivery - from 55% of authorities in 1980 to 61% in 1988; and (b) that growth has been greatest among decentralisation schemes using small and medium sized units (see Table 2.1). While the number of large decentralised units has remained static, the number of authorities in the sample with small decentralised units doubled between 1980 and 1988 (from 9% to 19%).

Decentralised political structures

Investigating the incidence of decentralised political structures (area committees), Stoker et al (1988: 40) note that: 'Our survey evidence suggests that initiatives in localising the political structures of authorities have been less numerous than those concerned with service delivery'. The data show: (a) that there has been slight growth in the number of authorities with decentralised political structures of some sort - from 23% of authorities in 1980 to 25% in 1988; and (b) that growth has been greatest in the case of decentralised political structures operating on the basis of small and medium sized areas (see Table 2.2). In 1980 12% of the sample had decentralised committees

Table 2.1: Decentralised service delivery in local government. 1980-1988

	1980	1988
Some form of decentralised service delivery system	54.7% (123)	60.9% (137)
Offices covering large areas* (more than 30,000 population)	28.0% (63)	28.0% (63)
Offices covering medium areas* (between 10,000 and 20,000 population)	28.0% (63)	31.5% (71)
Offices covering small areas* (less than 10,000 population)	9.3% (21)	18.7% (42)
Offices covering medium and/or small areas* (less than 30,000 population)	33.7% (76)	41.7% (94)

Table 2.2: Decentralised political structures in local government, 1980-1988

	1980	1988
Some form of decentralised committee	23.0% (52)	25.0% (57)
Committees covering large areas* (more than 30,000 population)	n/a	12.8% (29)
Committees covering medium areas* (between 10,000 and 20,000 population)	n/a	13.7% (31)
Committees covering small areas* (less than 10,000 population)	n/a	3.1% (7)
Committees covering medium and/or small areas* (less than 30,000 population)	11.5% (26)	15.0% (34)

NB: For both tables:
Numbers of responding local authorities given in brackets
* with or without other decentralised offices
Source: Table adapted from Stoker et al, 1988
(Responses from 225 authorities - 50% of all authorities in England and Wales)

covering medium or small areas, whereas in 1988 this had risen to 15% of the sample. However, it is still the case that the majority of decentralised service delivery and political structures operate for larger areas.

Decentralisation and type of authority

Some form of decentralised service delivery was found to be universal in county councils and metropolitan boroughs (100% of responding councils in both categories). Among London boroughs, 93% had some form of decentralised service delivery. The figure was much lower for districts (probably reflecting their smaller population size and/or geographical area), with 49% of responding districts having some form of decentralised services. County councils were most likely to have decentralised offices covering large areas, while metropolitan district councils led the way in terms of decentralised offices covering medium and small areas. Between 1980 and 1988 the percentage of metropolitan districts with decentralised offices covering small areas increased dramatically, from 18.7% to 75%. Among the small percentage of councils which had some form of decentralised political system, metropolitan and London boroughs dominated. The existence of parish and town councils in areas covered by many counties and districts might go some way to explaining a lower level of interest in decentralised political arrangements.

Decentralisation and political control

Although authorities of all political complexions have experimented with decentralisation, Labour-controlled authorities show the most interest: 82% of Labour-controlled authorities in the sample operated some form of decentralised service delivery (rising from 63% in 1980). Around half of Conservative, Alliance or 'hung' authorities had decentralised service delivery. Decentralisation to small areas, particularly, is concentrated among Labour authorities: in 1988, 50% of Labour controlled authorities had decentralised to the level of small areas, as against 3.7% of Conservative councils. Labour councils took the lead in decentralising political structures, with 28% having decentralised decision-making.

Services covered by decentralised arrangements

Decentralised offices typically work on a single-service basis, although there is a spread of multi-service initiatives, particularly in the case of offices serving medium sized areas. Housing is the service most frequently delivered from decentralised offices, particularly at the most local level. In offices covering large areas, a wide range of services may be found; in offices covering medium-sized areas, housing, environmental health, planning and social services were most common; in offices covering small areas, housing and social services were the services most likely to be decentralised. Where decentralised political structures were in place, they were most commonly concerned with planning, housing and social services. Where decentralised decision-

making was on the basis of small or medium areas, housing was the key service.

Summary

In summary, Stoker et al's 1988 survey shows that:

- decentralisation has increased and growth is greatest among decentralisation schemes covering smaller areas, ie. populations of less than 30,000;
- service delivery is more likely to be decentralised than political decision-making;
- decentralised units generally operate on a single service rather than a multi-service basis, and housing is the most common service to be decentralised;
- Labour-controlled authorities are most enthusiastic about decentralisation, particularly in the case of decentralised political structures;
- county councils and metropolitan districts are more likely to favour decentralisation than district councils.

Conclusion

In the first part of the chapter I sought to define my object of analysis. I noted that decentralisation is used to refer to a great variety of managerial and political initiatives. Having reviewed different attempts to classify types of decentralisation, I developed my own framework for mapping decentralisation initiatives. The framework

specified the common content of decentralisation programmes, and the key variables. It enabled me to define my object of analysis thus:

- decentralisation inside the public sector;
- decentralisation from local government to a sub-local level;
- decentralisation of both political and managerial authority;
- decentralisation on the basis of geographical area ('neighbourhoods').

In the second part of the chapter I showed that a trend to area-based decentralisation emerged in local government in the 1980s. I related the developments of the 1980s to earlier decentralisation initiatives, and provided empirical evidence of the emerging trend. I situated the case study for my thesis in relation to this trend, noting that Tower Hamlets took the logic of decentralisation to its furthest point - decentralising decision-making as well as service delivery, and abolishing most central structures.

In the next chapter I consider how the trend to local government decentralisation has been interpreted in the literature, identifying the limitations of existing perspectives and the scope for new approaches.

CHAPTER 3 - INTERPRETING THE TREND TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATON

Introduction

Having established empirically the existence of a trend to decentralisation in local government in the 1980s, I now consider interpretations of the trend. My literature review is not comprehensive; rather, it focuses on two dominant approaches. The first part of the chapter reviews 'political' accounts - literature which locates decentralisation in the context of developments in local politics in the 1980s. Such accounts concentrate upon the association with 'new urban left' politics, but also point to links with 'new right' and 'centre' political thinking. The second part of the chapter reviews 'total systems' accounts - literature which situates decentralisation in relation to broader changes in society, polity and economy. Such accounts see local government decentralisation as symptomatic of systemic changes, notably a peceived transition from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism'. The third part of the chapter notes the limitations of the existing literature and establishes an agenda for developing new approaches to local government decentralisation. This chapter serves a 'ground-clearing' function; I develop my own theoretical approach in Chapters 4 and 5.

Part 1 - 'Political' accounts of local government decentralisation

I start by reviewing arguments for decentralisation from the traditions of liberal political theory. Usually invoked in relation to decentralisation from central to local government, they form the basis of arguments for further decentralisation - from the local to the sub-local level. After reviewing these 'base-line' arguments, I go on to see how they have been developed in the context of the political debates surrounding local government decentralisation in the 1980s.

1.1 Traditional arguments for decentralisation

The classic case for decentralisation within the government system revolves around the following points (Sharpe, 1970; Miller, 1988: 225; Byrne, 1992: 5-8; Stoker, 1993; Lowndes, forthcoming, b):

(a) Efficiency and effectiveness Liberal political theory proposes that decentralised government is an efficient way of providing services - it has the ability to provide citizens with what they want because local policy-makers have an intimate knowledge of the area and are answerable to local interests. As Stoker (1993: 5) notes of local government: 'the scale of its operations make it sensitive to public opinion and capable of responding to new demands'. Multi-purpose local government has a depth of local knowledge that central government lacks, and a breadth of focus missing in single-purpose local agencies. Efficiency can be linked to capacity for responsiveness and innovation. Local government is aware of local needs and, as an elected body, has the motivation to

respond. Diversity within the government system encourages technical experiment and innovation, facilitating the development of local policies and programmes to meet different needs. From the point of view of the 'consumer', variety may also allow for choice. As the 'Tiebout hypothesis' states, citizens may choose between municipalities on the basis of the package of taxes and services on offer (Tiebout, 1956; John and Dowding, 1994: 10).

(b) Citizenship and participation Local government provides opportunities for political participation by electors, activists, lobby groups, party candidates and elected members. The Widdicombe Committee (1986: para. 3.13) argued that local government promotes political participation 'through the process of electing representatives as councillors and through consultation, cooption and local lobbying'. In corroboration of this claim, the British Political Participation Study shows that, while voter turn-out is lower at local than national level, other forms of participation are concentrated at the local level (Parry et al, 1992: 44; Lowndes, forthcoming, b). Participation may be facilitated at the local level because the town hall is physically more accessible than central institutions, or because it provides the basic services with which people are most concerned, or because it commands a greater sense of identification from the public. Local government allows for the practical expression of citizenship and is a source of 'political education' within the wider government system. The link between decentralisation and political education and training in political leadership dates from de Tocqueville: 'town meetings are to liberty what

primary schools are to science: they bring it within people's reach, they teach men how to use and enjoy it' (cited in Smith, 1985: 20).

(c) Community identity Local government provides a focus for community identity and for the resolution of conflict in the interests of the community as a whole. As Smith (1985: 24) puts it, local political institutions may be seen as a reflection, and continuation of, 'a prior and more natural form of democracy than national democracy'. Harking back to the ideal of the Athenian city state, Robert Dahl refers to the virtues of 'pure' municipal democracy, which he sees as fostering: 'the sense of unity, wholeness, belonging, of membership of an inclusive and solidary community which we sometimes want with such a desperate yearning' (cited in Smith, 1985: 24). Smith (1985: 64) puts the argument thus:

> It would seem self-evident that an area defined for the purpose of government should correspond to a territory recognised by its inhabitants as forming a natural socio-economic unit, one to which they feel some sense of attachment and identity. Only then will such government have the necessary legitimacy. Such an area would be defined by the behaviour and attitudes of the people who live and work in it.

(d) Liberty and pluralism The presence of local government helps prevent the concentration of political power at any one place within the government system, and may protect against an overbearing central government. The Widdicombe Committee (1986: para. 3.10) noted that: 'power should not be concentrated in one organ of state but should be dispersed, thereby providing checks and balances and a restraint on arbitrary government'. Liberal political theory links decentralisation to the promotion of political stability and political equality. The classic

pluralist idea is that the greater the volume and intensity of political participation, the greater the barriers to concentration of power. Decentralised political institutions are seen as providing opportunities for minorities to gain access to government. Mill writes that local forms of government provide chances of participation to the 'lower grades' of society (cited in Smith, 1985: 21). Pluralists are concerned with questions of *size*, arguing that the larger a political community the more difficult it is for citizens to participate directly in government (Dahl and Tufte, 1974).

If these four arguments are accepted, there remains great scope for debate over the specific size and boundaries of local units. (We saw in the last chapter how different parties favoured decentralised units of different sizes within local government.) Arguments typically revolve around a tension between criteria of participation and community identification on the one hand, and efficiency in the provision of services on the other. We saw above that local government may be seen to enhance 'allocative' efficiency - the deployment of resources to best match local people's preferences. However, smallness of scale may be associated with lower levels of 'x-efficiency' - the achievement of maximum output for the minimum of input (Stoker, 1993: 4). As Dahl and Tufte (1974: 20) note, a tension is perceived between demands of 'citizen effectiveness' (implying small, community-focused government) and 'system capacity' (implying larger units able to benefit from economies of scale). Newton (1982: 190) addresses the problem thus:

> on the one hand, large units of local government are necessary for the efficient and effective provision of public services; on the other, small units are more conducive to grass roots democracy, a sense of belonging, a high rate of individual participation, and

> close contact between political elites, leaders and ordinary citizens.

Newton (1982: 191), however, claims that the 'classic conundrum is a false one' and points to a lack of evidence that large authorities are more efficient, or that small units are more democratic. He notes that: 'the search for optimum size... has proved to be as successful as the search for the philosopher's stone' (Newton, 1982: 193). Optimality, claims Newton, depends upon the service, the type of authority, and our conception of political participation and 'democracy'. (As I note in Part 2 of the chapter, new technologies and managerial developments may also increase the efficiency of small-scale working.) For Newton (1982: 206), 'it is as silly to make a fetish of the big as the small... small is not as beautiful as commonly supposed, and big is not nearly so ugly'. This said, those charged with designing new decentralisation schemes continue to seek the elusive balance between 'size and democracy' (Dahl and Tufte, 1974).

I now go on to consider how the arguments reviewed have been deployed in making a case for sub-local authority decentralisation. During the 1980s British local government underwent a period of unparalleled politicisation (Gyford et al, 1989: 16-29; Hambleton and Hoggett, 1987: 11). Despite the polarisation of local politics in the '80s, local authorities of all political colours experimented with decentralisation - from Conservative-controlled East Sussex to Liberal Democrat Tower Hamlets and Labour authorities of both left and right persuasions (eg. Islington and Birmingham). Drawing on classic arguments from liberal

political theory, the 'new urban left', the 'new right' and the political centre developed their case for sub-local authority decentralisation. As we shall see below, there are surprising similarities in these rationales, but at the same time differences of emphasis.

1.2 Decentralisation and the 'new urban left'

Literature on local government decentralisation in the 1980s concentrates upon the link between decentralisation and the rise of the 'new urban left' (or 'municipal socialism'), reflecting the dominance of Labour councils in the decentralisation field. In the last chapter I noted that the London Boroughs of Islington, Hackney, Camden, Lambeth, Newham and Lewisham all pursued decentralisation to some extent, as did the 'parent' of municipal socialism, the Greater London Council (GLC). A number of non-London new urban left (NUL) councils - like Sheffield and Manchester - also developed decentralisation plans. Within NUL thinking there were two distinct arguments favouring decentralisation: first, decentralisation constituted a new way of organising service delivery; and second, it constituted a new form of local politics.

Decentralisation as a new way of organising service delivery

Many politicians and thinkers associated with the NUL argued that traditional local government practice and organisation privileged the interests of professionals (and to a lesser extent trade unionists) over service users (Hoggett, 1984: 29; Seabrook, 1984: 131). Hoggett's analysis shows how professionalism and bureaucracy together led to the

development of a paternalistic and inaccessible welfare apparatus. Local government was not user-friendly - emphasis was on the quantity of services delivered and not on their quality. Users' needs were defined by professionals and bureaucratic modes of operation led to individuals being cast as 'cases', to be treated in a standardised and anonymous manner (justified in terms of the pursuit of egalitarian objectives). In the 1980s many of the Labour left pointed to the fact that the support of 'the people' - or even 'the working class' - for state services could not be assumed. Local government and the welfare state was, in many quarters, unpopular and widely criticised.

Decentralisation was seen as a means by which the style and systems of local government service delivery could be reformed. Services would be delivered from accessible, attractive, 'close to home' offices, which would be staffed by a highly motivated, multi-skilled, single-status work-force. Decentralisation would undermine professionalism and bureaucracy; both public service work and the experience of service use would become less alienating. As the Labour Coordinating Committee explained in 1984, 'decentralisation promises to change the provider-consumer relationship between the council and the people' (cited in Lansley et al, 1989: 99). Decentralisation was seen as bringing benefits for both staff and users, and acting to stimulate enthusiasm in the community and the work-place for both the 'idea' of local government and for resistance against the specific threat of local government cuts (Hambleton, 1992: 13).

Decentralisation became part of the 'save jobs and services' platform. Implicit, and often explicit, in NUL statements on decentralisation was a commitment to building an alliance between the producers and the consumers of local government services. The Labour Coordinating Committee saw decentralisation as the 'fundamental response necessary to meet the devastating challenge from the Tories' (Lansley et al, 1989: 99). London Labour Briefing explained in 1982 that:

> One of our hopes for decentralisation of council services should be that it will help develop a political awareness among more people that the struggles of council workers and the 'community' over cuts in jobs and services are a common anti-capitalist struggle against economic oppression. (cited in Lansley et al, 1989: 99)

Decentralisation was seen as offering local authority staff better working conditions and more satisfying job opportunities (Hambleton, 1992: 13). As the Labour Coordinating Committee explained in a 1984 pamphlet, by 'enjoying the effectiveness of working directly with the public, (staff) could develop much more worker participation and other democratic management practices' (cited in Lansley et al, 1989: 99). In reality, NUL councils often ran into conflict with trades unions who suspected 'cuts in disguise' and fought hard to protect traditional terms and conditions (Graves and Pilkington, undated). In Hackney decentralisation was abandoned in the face of union resistance (Hoggett, Lawrence and Fudge, 1984); in Lambeth and Lewisham concessions to the unions 'delayed implementation, increased costs, and blunted the radical edge of decentralisation' (Lansley et al, 1989: 100).

Decentralisation as a new form of local politics

The NUL also argued that decentralisation was linked to a new form of local politics - a participatory politics based on direct citizen involvement in decision-making and a recognition (and celebration) of the plurality of social groups within urban communities. A 'rainbow alliance' strategy was seen as an alternative to traditional class-based politics and Labourism (Lansley et al, 1989: 9). The NUL saw decentralisation as providing a framework for the development of new, more 'socialist' or at least more 'democratic' forms of local government. In Islington, 'neighbourhood forums' were attached to local offices to provide a setting in which local people representing all social groups could have their say and hold the local authority to account (Heery, 1984: 56-58; Hodge, 1987: 33-34; Khan, 1989a and 1989b). A proportion of representatives was chosen through 'street elections', others were coopted from community groups, with 'reserved' places for black people, women, carers, disabled people, young people and the elderly (Khan, 1989a: 7). The NUL intended that decentralised political structures would facilitate the realisation of 'popular planning' and 'people's power'. According to the NUL decentralisation was about 'giving power away' (Lansley et al, 1989: 59; Mackintosh and Wainwright, 1987).

For the NUL, neighbourhood structures were seen as important within a strategy of developing left political enclaves where alternative and 'prefigurative' state forms could be developed in the context of hostile political forces at the national level. As David Blunkett, former Leader of Sheffield Council, put it, the NUL aimed to 'create an administration

which might prefigure a wider socialist society' (cited in Gyford, 1986: 117). As left politics were squeezed out of the central government arena - due to Conservative majorities and a swing to the right in the national Labour Party - emphasis moved to building support for alternatives at a local level. The left used its control of local councils to put 'new left' policies into practice. Gyford (1985: 18) claims that the most fundamental of the NUL's characteristics was: 'a commitment to notions of mass politics based upon strategies of decentralisation and/or political mobilisation at the local level'.

The NUL's interest in decentralisation was not just a matter of pragmatism or opportunism; it reflected a new type of left thinking related to the 'politics of 1968' and wider European developments (Gyford, 1985: 41). The commitment to decentralisation related to a critique of bureaucracy and centralisation *within* left movements, as well as in society in general (Beuret and Stoker, 1984; Wright et al, 1984). As Hain (1980: 203) notes: 'socialism has become too identified with top heavy decision-making, with bureaucracy and alienation. In short, socialism has become synonymous with statism'. The neighbourhood strategies of NUL councils in the 1980s were an expression of a wider commitment to decentralisation and participation within radical left thought. As Ken Livingstone, former Leader of the GLC, explained: 'there is no way you can impose socialism from above... it has to be built up from below if it is to last' (cited in Gyford, 1986: 117). From a NUL perspective, Hoggett (1984: 16) claims that:

> The theory and practice of decentralisation therefore has a double effect; it is both a demonstration of new possibilities and a critique of old certainties. Indeed it is a critique not just of

> the welfare state but of the brand of socialism which created the welfare state.

At the same time, there is the danger that an attack on centralisation runs the risk of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'. As Lansley et al (1989: 101) point out:

> Decentralisation poses a number of problems for the Left when it goes beyond the realms of administration and becomes an attempt to devolve political power. Most fundamentally, is the Left really prepared to allow local people to develop and impose policies which run counter to those of the council?... Other questions which remain unresolved include whether a move to decentralise decision making can lead to inequalities and differing standards within an authority...

1.3 <u>Decentralisation and the 'new right'</u>

The survey evidence presented in the previous chapter showed that Conservative authorities also experimented with decentralisation in the 1980s, albeit to a lesser extent than Labour councils. As Stoker notes (1987: 10), local Conservatives have shown interest in some forms of decentralisation, particularly in the fields of housing management, delegated finanical management and patch social services (as in East Sussex). But while decentralisation was a project of the *local* left, for the Conservatives decentralisation emerged as a policy theme at the *central* government level (Stoker, 1987: 10). The Conservatives' 1987 manifesto and subsequent legislation required the breaking up of local government bureaucracies: through opting-out (for schools) and local management boards (for schools and housing estates); through new forms of public-private partnership, often outside the control of elected local councils (as in urban development and training); and through compulsory

competitive tendering (CCT) involving the separation of client and contractor functions. For Conservatives, decentralisation is still very much a project in progress, in contrast to NUL initiatives which were firmly rooted in the political landscape of the 1980s.

Pollitt (1986: 158) notes that: 'Both the "new right" and the "new left" offer visions of new worlds in which the social space currently occupied by conventional bureaucracies will be radically reduced'. Drawing on the public choice approaches of theorists like Niskanen (1973) and Pirie (1988), Pollitt (1986: 158) explains the Conservatives' rationale for decentralisation thus:

> By privatising many public industries and services and reconstituting the remaining state bureaucracies on a fragmented, mutually competitive basis, new right theorists claim that it will be practicable greatly to relieve bureaucratic stagnation and increase both citizen control and citizen choice.

For the new right, decentralisation is part of a new model of local government. Decentralisation is linked to the introduction of market values and practices into local government, thus contrasting with the NUL defence of collectivist approaches at the local level. For the new right: 'the market is the ultimate form of decentralism' (Butcher et al, 1990: 145). It is claimed that the decentralism of the market facilitates greater producer efficiency and consumer choice. Where these benefits cannot be secured through privatisation proper, 'quasi-markets' should be introduced into the public sector (see Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993: 13-34). As Butcher et al (1990: 142) note:

> The project is not to reform or reconstruct decisional and administrative structures, but to reassert the supremacy of the individual as consumer and to find modern ways of utilising the

market as both arbiter of contending priorities and as guarantor of cost-effective production of services.

Decentralisation is linked, in new right terms, to policies of 'radical consumerism' and 'competitive pluralism' (Butcher et al, 1990: 146). Decentralisation *within* local government facilitates policies of radical consumerism; decentralisation to agencies *outside* local government embraces the potential of competitive pluralism.

Inside local authorities, decentralisation is seen as enhancing the accountability and efficiency of service delivery. Decentralisation is intended to put a check on 'budget maximising' (or 'empire building') behaviour among public servants by breaking up public service monopolies and restructuring bureaucrats' incentives (Stoker, 1991: 241; Dunleavy, 1991: 5). In accordance with this line of thinking, functions which stay inside the public sector are decentralised to 'fragmented, mutually competitive' sub-units (Pollitt, 1986: 158). These are usually functionally-defined cost centres, but may also be geographically-defined sub-units. Sub-units relate to one another (and to a 'strategic centre') on the basis of 'service level agreements' (quasi-contracts), with their performance monitored and publicised through 'league tables' based on 'performance indicators'. Performance-related pay can be introduced in an effort to restructure bureaucrats' incentives - away from budget maximisation and towards the achievement of specific performance targets. Such arrangements are linked both to local authorities' own initiatives, and to central government policy and legislation (on

financial management, CCT, league tables, and - more recently - Citizen's Charters).

From the consumer's viewpoint, the new right intends that smaller, more autonomous public sector units will both increase the overall efficiency of local government (reflected in lower taxes or better 'value for money'), and offer choice between alternative providers (eg. schools or leisure facilities). The intention is for service users to be able to compare alternative sources of provision within and between local authority areas, deciding upon the mix of tax and services which best suits their needs and preferences - even if this involves moving house (John and Dowding, 1994: 10; Tiebout, 1956). The 'Tiebout hypothesis' bolsters a new right argument for area-based decentralisation. As Stoker (1991: 241) explains:

> What is required is a large number of smaller local authorities so that the diverse preferences of many different citizens can be satisfactorily provided for. Smaller units may encapsulate more homogeneous social groups making it easier for citizen preferences to be met.

It is interesting to note that the new right links decentralisation to community homogeneity, in contrast to the NUL position which saw decentralisation as a response to the heterogeneity of inner city communities.

Alongside decentralisation within local authorities, new right policies support the devolution of service delivery to agencies outside the public sector (Stoker, 1991: 241). The existence of parallel service delivery systems in both the private and voluntary sectors is seen as providing opportunities for competition (leading to greater customer

responsiveness and increased efficiency) and consumer choice. The introduction of CCT and other reforms in housing, social services and education reflect a government desire to promote policies of radical consumerism and competitive pluralism. Taking housing as an example, the 1987 Local Government and Housing Act promotes competitive pluralism thus: 'Provision of housing by local authorities should gradually be diminished and alternative forms of tenure and tenant choice should be increased' (paragraph 1.16; cited in Butcher et al, 1990: 148). As a second-best, the Act notes the beneficial effects of radical consumerism on services which remain in the public sector: 'Exposing councils to healthy competition should also contribute to a better general standard of services even for tenants who do not transfer' (paragraph 5.10; cited in Butcher et al, 1990: 148).

Stoker (1987: 10) notes that:

> There is also a growing New Right critique of the operation of representative democracy, at least at the local level... An argument has been developed that what is required is the greater involvement of people with a direct *material* interest in the provision of services.

Radical consumerism is seen as an important complement, if not an alternative, to traditional electoral processes. By decentralising responsibilities to the local level - to the individual housing estate or school - it is possible to involve users of a service directly in its management. As Self (1993: 158) explains, 'devolution of public services to the control of local elected boards' is seen as a remedy for the dysfunctions of big bureaucracy and an unresponsive political system. Stoker (1987: 10) notes the views expressed by Conservative politicians like Nicholas Ridley during the 1987 election, along the lines that: 'many

parents know more about education than some local authorities' and 'tenants know how to run housing better than councils'.

Hence the new right supports decentralisation not just on the grounds of managerial efficiency but on the basis that such arrangements may be in some way more 'democratic' or 'accountable'. New forms of 'consumer control' (through individual choice and through local boards) are intended to discipline local politicians, who are criticised as being out of touch and unaccountable to service users (particularly in the context of low election turn-outs). As Stoker (1987: 10) notes, the new right argues that: 'what is required is the greater involvement of a larger number of people with a direct *material* interest in the provision of services'. While the NUL took a 'collectivist' view of decentralisation, seeing it a means of renewing a redistributive local state, the new right takes a 'consumerist' approach, seeing it as a means of creating market-like conditions inside the public sector (Hambleton and Hoggett, 1987: 14). In Britain, however, the new right case for decentralisation has been limited by the government's desire to maintain (and increase) central political control - a desire variously attributable to political partisanship, the need to 'steer' the restructuring of the public sector, and the 'inevitable' wish of one set of politicians to protect their power base (see Stoker, 1990a: 140-147).

1.4 Decentralisation and the 'centre'

Despite a strong link between Liberal politics and decentralist ideas, there is little literature in this area, perhaps reflecting the more

general marginalisation of Liberal politics within the two party system. It is possible, however, to consult the work of thinkers within the party on decentralisation.

Liberal support for decentralisation in the 1980s was (and continues to be) linked to a philosophy of 'community politics'. Originating out of the 'Red Guard' leadership of the Young Liberal Movement (which collapsed in the late 1960s), community politics entered into mainstream Liberal strategy in the 1970s (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 1). A resolution at the Liberals' Conference in 1970 outlined what became known as the 'dual approach' to politics, namely that Liberals would endeavour to work 'both inside and outside the institutions of the political establishment' (cited in Gyford, 1986: 115). Liberals would seek not just political power in the formal sense, but also the capacity to mobilise communities and facilitate their self-development. The 1970 Conference resolution urged members:

> to help people in communities to organise, to take and use power, to use our political skills to redress grievances and represent people at all levels of the political structure. (cited in Butcher et al, 1990: 145)

By the 1980s, the practice of community politics was proving a successful electoral strategy at the local elevel, with increasing numbers of local councils falling under Liberal or 'Alliance' control (see Webman, 1983; Rentoul and Wolmar, 1984; Stoker, 1985). Liberals sought to build political bases in neighbourhoods and housing estates through 'doorstep' campaigning on day-to-day issues (Rennard, 1988). Councillors and potential councillors prided themselves on 'getting things done' for

local people, and taking on the 'bureaucracy'. (Chapter 6 describes how Liberal electioneering strategies operated in Tower Hamlets.) The Association of Liberal Councillors (1985; 1982; undated, a, b, c) educated a whole generation of local politicians through its highly detailed 'activists' guides, covering systems for the production of broadsheets, leaflet delivery, managing ward records, and so on. Thinkers in the Liberal Party, however, expressed concern that:

> The acceptance of 'community politics' has been based more on the electoral success that has been seen to stem from it than on the winning of an intellectual debate. (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 1)

Community politics was intended to be more than an electoral strategy. Its advocates saw it as having profound implications for the practice of local decision-making and, specifically, for the way Liberals organised once in power. The approach implied not just a focus on local government, but a commitment to restructuring local government to better reflect the needs and interests of local communities. Greaves and Lishman (1980: 6) assert that: 'Community politics is quite incompatible with the centralisation of power at the level of the nation state'. Moreover, existing local government has been 'emasculated... by a reorganisation which has put the principle of common size and identical powers before the recognition of perceived local communities' (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 6). What is lacking is 'any structure of neighbourhood government'. Greaves and Lishman (1980: 6) make the Liberal case for decentralisation thus:

> neighbourhood government... is the level that most directly affects the everyday lives of everyone and it is the level of government in which everyone can take part directly. It is only in small,

> geographically coherent neighbourhoods that everyone can take an active part in the making of decisions and the exercise of power.

Community politics aims 'to reverse the trend toward centralisation and uniformity, and encourage decentralisation and variety' (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 5). Calling on classic liberal traditions, the individual is seen as the starting point. The community is seen as the setting in which each person develops their potential for self-direction and choice, whilst also recognising their interdependence and responsibility to others (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 3). The theorists of community politics stress that the *welfare* of communities is not their primary political goal. Rather, their concern is with the *experience* of community - with building 'techniques and habits of participation' among individuals, and with stimulating 'communities to take and use power'. Within official political institutions, they argue for a more informal approach, and for the primacy of the neighbourhood unit within a multi-layered, federal system: 'attitudes and priorities emerge from the full range of smaller communities to govern larger and larger communities' (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 5).

For Liberal-controlled local authorities facing the challenge of how to put 'community politics' into practice, neighbourhood based decentralisation offered a model. From 1983 Richmond introduced area consultation forums, area housing management committees and mobile council offices (Gyford, 1986: 118). When the Liberal Party gained control of Tower Hamlets in 1986 they put in place a radical form of decentralisation: decision-making structures were decentralised alongside

service outlets, and central departments and committees were for the most part abolished in favour of area working. In accordance with the 'dual approach', decentralisation was seen as making formal political institutions more democratic and accessible, whilst also supporting community self-organisation. The main gains were seen as coming from smallness of scale and localness of focus. Social Democrat Michael Young (1981) argued that, 'bigness is the enemy of humanity'. Decentralisation aims to break up big bureaucracies and to create a 'system which treats the individual with respect', and restores political control over professionalised bureaucrats (Stoker, 1987: 9). At the same time, neighbourhood based working recognises and harnesses community identity and commitment.

Liberal approaches to decentralisation share some of the 'anti-state' sentiment of the new right, seeing decentralisation as a stage towards a reduced role for the state. This contrasts with the new urban left vision of decentralisation which sees it as a means whereby the local state can be restructured and revitalised. However, while the new right aims to re-create the decentralism of the *market* inside the public sector, the Liberals' concern is with the decentralism of *self-government*. Both centre and new right approaches take the individual as their philosophical starting point, stressing the importance of personal development and choice - in contrast to the collectivist standpoint of the NUL. However, while the new right links decentralisation to the empowerment of self-interested consumers within market-style interactions, the centre links decentralisation to the renewal of ties of interdependence and shared responsibility among individuals, within the

setting of their immediate community. Liberals see decentralisation in the context of what Michael Meadowcroft refers to as: 'the task of raising the political consciousness of the people... It is only thus that the latent compassion and neighbourliness can be realised' (cited in Gyford, 1986: 116).

The link between decentralisation and *locality* is perhaps strongest in the Liberal vision. As we have seen, the new right conception of decentralisation stresses smallness of scale and market-style relationships, while the NUL links decentralisation to a capacity to respond to multiple social groups with different needs and interests. In contrast, the Liberal view of decentralisation is based on the political primacy of 'small, geographically coherent neighbourhoods' (Greaves and Lishman, 1980: 6). For Liberals, community is linked to a 'sense of place'. Within geographically defined communities, there is assumed to be a relative homogeneity of interest. As we shall see later in this thesis, the language of Liberal decentralisers is universalising, referring to 'the people', 'the community' or 'the tenants'. This is in contrast to new urban left concerns with the representation and access of different groups, whether they be distinguished (and disadvantaged) by income, ethnicity, gender, disability, and so on.

1.5 Summary

In this part of the chapter I have reviewed classic arguments for decentralisation from liberal political theory: arguments associated with efficiency, participation, community identity and pluralism. These

arguments have traditionally been deployed in debates about decentralisation from the national to the local level of government. I have considered how such arguments were drawn upon in building a case for sub-local authority decentralisation in the 1980s. I reviewed the rationales for decentralisation put forward by thinkers of the new urban left, the new right and the political centre. All three positions drew upon classic arguments from political theory, displaying both similarities and differences of emphasis:

(a) Efficiency All three positions prioritise efficiency considerations in their attacks on the wastefulness and lack of responsiveness of large bureaucracies. The new right gives particular attention to the benefits of consumer choice, the centre to gains from 'down-sizing', and the new urban left to the potential of generic working and alternatives to traditional professional models.

(b) Participation All three positions link decentralisation to gains in terms of participation. The new right prioritises the direct involvement of service users in the management of their services; the new urban left emphasises the value of consultation with a wide range of groups within the community; and the centre sees decentralisation as a stepping stone to self-help and self-organisation within communities.

(c) Community identity Arguments about community identity are interpreted in different ways. The new right and the centre both take the individual as their starting point. The new right argues for small units of government that can cater for relatively homogeneous groups of

individuals, in order to better match tax/service mixes to individuals' preferences. The centre sees the community in geographical terms, arguing that individuals have a greater sense of involvement in, and responsibility for, government at the neighbourhood level. The new urban left stresses the heterogeneous nature of community, and sees decentralisation as facilitating recognition of the needs of different groups and improving minorities' access to services and decision-making.

(d) **Pluralism** All three positions are influenced by classic pluralist arguments - that decentralisation prevents the concentration of political power and the growth of unaccountable bureaucracies. The centre takes these arguments to their logical conclusion, seeing the neighbourhood as the basic unit of government within a multi-layered, federal system. In contrast, the new urban left's concern with equality and redistribution tempers its support for decentralisation. The new right - at least in its practical manifestations - experiences a tension between values of strong central government and a theoretical support for choice and diversity at a local level.

In the next part of the chapter I look at a different approach to local government decentralisation: accounts which see decentralisation as symptomatic of broader changes in society, economy and polity. The emphasis here is not on the values and priorities of different political groupings, but on systemic changes which are reflected in local government as in other areas.

Part 2 - 'Total systems' accounts of local government decentralisation

The approaches to decentralisation reviewed in Part 1 of the chapter reflect the tendency noted by Cochrane (1993: 81) to: 'discuss changes in local government as if they were the product of more or less rational policy debate'. The danger of such approaches is that 'they tend to play down or ignore the wider context within which the moves are taking place' (Cochrane, 1993: 81). 'Total systems' accounts seek to remedy this deficiency, relating innovations in local government to broader changes in society, economy and polity. Such accounts see local government not as 'a free floating institution but part of the wider British polity, set within the framework of a changing political economy' (Cochrane, 1993: 92). Total systems accounts of local government decentralisation link the phenomenon to a broad shift towards *fragmentation and specialisation* in all areas of life. I start with a brief description of this shift in social, political and economic terms. I then go on to review accounts which have made an explicit link between local government decentralisation and systemic changes.

2.1 A shift towards fragmentation and specialisation

In **social** terms, Gyford (1986: 109) points to trends, from the 1960s onwards, leading away from 'a rather quiescent and largely homogeneous mass society towards one that is both more assertive and more diversified'. In his research for the Widdicombe Committee, Gyford (1986: 109) cites Young's characterisation of Britain as: 'a country of distinct publics and diverse opinions... a great diversity of sub-

cultures'. 'Mass society', where class is the main social cleavage, is seen as giving way to:

> a more heterogeneous and segmented social structure characterised by a wide range of cross-cutting interests and subcultural differences... Class loyalties are augmented by a diversity of interests and cultural identifications related to ethnicity, neighbourhood, religious belief, gender, as well as occupation and no occupation. (Butcher et al 1990: 144)

In **political** terms, such diversity is reflected in the rise of single-issue groups and direct-action campaigns and in a generally more assertive voicing of opinion. Calling into question the relevance of the traditional two party model, local politics increasingly becomes about 'brokering, facilitating, and arbitrating among contending interests and values rather than.. summoning up some universal "general will"' (Butcher et al 1990: 144). Gyford (1986: 107) notes that, from the mid-1960s:

> British political culture with its traditional assumptions of respect for, and trust in, public bodies and of deference towards established authority was showing signs of embracing much more questioning, sceptical and assertive attitudes. Consumers increasingly asserted their rights against providers of goods and services and new commissioners or 'ombudsmen' were set up to respond to public complaints over maladministration in local and central government and the health service.

More recently, the Audit Commission has drawn upon this view of systemic changes in political culture, arguing in 1988 that:

> Things have changed... councils' customers are more demanding and less grateful. They are also better informed, and better able to articulate their demands. People no longer accept that the council knows best. (cited in Stoker, 1989: 163)

In **economic** terms, total systems writers point to: 'moves towards fragmentation and flexibility in the labour process and away from models

based on mass production and mass consumption of relatively standardised products...' (Cochrane, 1993: 82). Le Grand and Bartlett (1993: 9) note that private companies 'that were previously vertically integrated and tightly controlled from the centre (are) now increasingly contracting out their operations and engaging in other forms of decentralisation'. The development of similar trends in the public sector denote a shift away from a post-war welfare state which:

> defined and provided for needs on a mass scale, and which led to vast, undifferentiated housing estates, big and anonymous hospitals, vast schools, a welfare production line paralleling the organisation of industry and its production of standardised products for a mass market. (Lansley et al, 1989: 57)

This brief review has indicated key themes in thinking about systemic change. Against this backcloth, there has emerged a literature linking innovations in local government to broader transformations. The 'motor' of such transformations is conceptualised differently by different writers. Broadly, accounts which stress the cultural dynamic behind the changes refer to a shift from 'modernity' to 'post-modernity' (Lash and Urry, 1987; Harvey, 1989a; Crook et al, 1992), while those which focus upon economic and technological forces refer to a transition from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism' (discussed further below). In all cases, however, the emphasis is on tracing inter-linked changes in different spheres of life. For students of local government, the impact of such approaches rests on their attempt to 'cut across customary disciplinary, theoretical and political allegiances' (Cochrane, 1993: 82). It is not appropriate here to debate the generalities of what are contested and complex positions. Rather, I review those accounts which have theorised

the specific link between decentralisation in local government and broader trends to fragmentation and specialisation.

2.2 Decentralisation and post-Fordist local government

Painter (1991), Geddes (1988), Murray (1988), Stoker (1989, 1990b) and Hoggett (1987) have all developed analyses of local government restructuring in the context of a transition to post-Fordism. Only Hoggett makes decentralisation his focus of analysis, although Stoker also offers clues as to its signficance. I will consider the work of both these authors below. First, however, it is necessary to provide a brief (and highly simplified) introduction to the concepts of Fordism and post-Fordism, while recognising that different authors interpret these key concepts in different ways (see Cochrane, 1993: 81-93).

Fordism and post-Fordism

Accounts are premised on the claim that, internationally, advanced capitalist societies are in a period of transition, passing from a period of Fordism to one of post-Fordism (see Aglietta, 1979; De Vroey, 1984; Lipietz, 1987). The Fordist 'regime of accumulation' characterised the post-war period up until the early 1970s. Fordism was characterised by assembly-line mass production (where economies of scale and standardisation of product are all important) and mass consumption. The conditions for successful capital accumulation were maintained through the operation of the Fordist 'mode of regulation', which was

characterised by the institutions of the universal welfare state and extensive private credit and insurance arrangements.

From the early '70s, Fordism began to 'run out of steam', largely due to its own internal contradictions - the tendency to overproduction (and falling rates of profit), alienation and productivity problems among unskilled workers, and limits to the extension of mass production techniques in the service sector. At the same time, a new regime of accumulation - post-Fordism or neo-Fordism - began to emerge. Post-Fordism is based on flexible production and segmented marketing. Price becomes less important as a competitive strategy, as quality and 'niching' grow in significance, and scope replaces scale as an organising principle in production. Mass consumption gives way to diverse consumption patterns based upon differentiated and increasingly polarised market segments. As the need to support mass consumption is reduced, the role and functioning of the welfare state changes - it becomes a last-resort option rather than a universal safety net.

The literature linking decentralisation to the emergence of a post-Fordist local government takes two directions. The first direction links decentralisation to the changing role of local government under post-Fordism. The second direction links decentralisation to the adoption of post-Fordist production methods within local government.

Decentralisation and the changing role of local government

Under Fordism, the local state played an important role in the establishment of mass consumption, via direct welfare provision and the regulation and planning of private capital's activities. As Stoker (1989: 150-1) notes, local authorities

> provided key services such as housing and education directly. They planned future provision and established future need. They regulated the activities of citizens and businesses through land-use and environmental legislation. As such, local authorities helped to ensure an educated, housed and healthy workforce. At the same time the social stability and security necessary to sustain the norm of mass consumption was fostered.

Local government also 'took on some of the trappings of Fordist organisational principles and culture' in its emphasis upon functionalism, uniformity and hierarchy, although the applicability of such methods to service provision was always limited by the varied and changing needs of citizens (Stoker, 1989: 151). Nevertheless, Stoker (1989: 152) claims that local authorities attempted to 'copy' the private sector commitment to 'scale, centralised planning, hierarchical control and the production of a standardised product'. As Fordism begain to run out of steam, 'local authorities were caught up in the Fordist crisis' (Stoker, 1989: 152). In the face of economic difficulties and a changing socio-cultural environment,

> Local authorities... began to face up to the challenges posed by... Fordist rigidities. The centralised, hierarchical organisation and the commitment to standard products... was criticised for its remoteness and lack of responsiveness through the rise of a whole range of community, user and single-issue pressure groups. (Stoker, 1989: 153-4)

In response to these challenges, new urban left authorities experimented with decentralised service delivery, aid to voluntary groups, and specialist women's and race units 'in an effort to provide a greater degree of flexibility and diversity in their response to customers and citizens' (Stoker, 1989: 154). New right authorities experimented with contracting-out and slimming down the size and responsibilities of the bureaucracy (through the vigorous sale of council homes, for example). However, the main push for restructuring came from central government's legislative programme. Stoker (1989: 158-9) sees these measures (particularly the post-1987 reform programme) as the Thatcher government's attempt to create a form of local government compatible with a post-Fordist future for Britain - a form of local government appropriate to flexible economic structures, a two-tier welfare system, and an 'enterprise culture'.

As I showed earlier in the chapter, legislation has sought to fragment local government and limit its responsibilities. In contrast to its role under Fordism, local government is less involved in direct service provision or in the regulation of private sector activity. New roles for private and voluntary sector providers have been opened up and the public sector itself is restructured along market lines. Decentralisation is pursued, as we saw earlier, in the name of policies of 'competitive pluralism' and 'radical consumerism' (Butcher et al, 1990: 146).

What is original about Stoker's analysis is that he links these developments to a fundamental change in the rationale for local

government - a change associated with the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism. There is no longer a 'need' for universal welfare provision to support the norm of mass consumption. Rather, the emphasis is upon opening up new opportunities for the private sector in local service delivery, while introducing choice and diversity within the public sector - at the expense of universal welfare provision. Stoker (1989: 164) argues that:

> The whole process provides a stepping-stone toward a dual welfare system in which those that can afford it or who have the necessary skills acquire good-quality services in the private sector or in the market place of the public sector. Those without the necessary funds or skills are forced to rely on a basic no-frills state system

Decentralisation and the changing internal organisation of local government

A strength of Stoker's (1989: 166) analysis is his insistence that the dominant form of local government restructuring is far from inevitable. He points to the obstacles that the changes face - crucially, local political resistance and organisational inertia. He also points to the existence of alternative strategies for restructuring local government that show a compatibility with the transition from Fordism (see Stewart and Stoker, 1988; Murray, 1987; Greater London Council, 1985). In contrast, Hoggett sees a much tighter link between the local government changes of the 1980s and the demands of post-Fordism. Specifically, he sees local government as being transformed by a new 'techno-managerial paradigm', of which decentralisation is a key part. While Stoker (1989: 159-60) refers to changes in the internal organisation of local

government, Hoggett develops a more detailed analysis of technological and managerial changes.

Hoggett (1987: 218) notes the significance of decentralisation in corporate restructuring from the 1970s (particularly in the USA, Japan and Italy) and asks whether decentralisation in local government reflects these developments. He poses the question thus:

> Is it possible that the waves now crashing around the once tranquil civic offices of Birmingham and Islington are in some way an expression of subterranean movements almost beyond the conscious comprehension of the actors and factions involved? (Hoggett, 1987: 218)

Hoggett (1987: 218) asserts that: 'decentralisation, rather than being a passing fad, actually corresponds to a fundamental change in the organisation of productive processes throughout all advanced capitalist economies'. He sees this change as characterised by a new 'technological style', combining new technology and new management approaches. The new style is marked out by the advanced use of micro-electronics; more flexibile, automated production; more delegation of inspection and quality; flatter hierarchies and more participative management styles. Hoggett (1987: 222) is quick to note that these developments facilitate 'new ways of controlling the labour process', noting that 'organisational decentralisation can actually facilitate the concentration of power'.

Hoggett (1987: 223) highlights the link between the traditional organisation and management of local government and Fordist approaches in the private sector:

> The welfare state has traditionally been concerned with the mass production of a few standardised products. Economies of scale have

> been constantly emphasised. Flexibility of production has been minimal. Production has in fact been organised on an 'assembly line principle', with professional and semi-professional 'people processors' replacing the material processing lines of meachanised factories.

Decentralisation strategies threaten the traditional model: they constitute an 'attack upon the massivity and remoteness, inflexibility, inefficiency and unresponsiveness of the welfare state' (Hoggett, 1987: 224). Moreover, they reflect the impact of the new techno-managerial paradigm on local government. Hoggett (1987: 225) points to the importance of new technology in facilitating decentralisation programmes (citing Walsall and Glasgow), and the adoption of the private sector management techniques promoted in texts like In Search of Excellence (Peters and Waterman, 1982). As in the private sector, such developments may be compatible with increased managerial control over front-line staff. In summary, Hoggett (1987: 255) argues that decentralisation in local government is leading to:

> new organisational and managerial forms strikingly reminiscent of the newer 'hi-tech' companies of the M4 corridor: leaner and flatter managerial structures, decentralised 'cost and innovation' centres (ie. district or neighbourhood offices with their own devolved budgets, powers over recruitment, performance indicators etc.), enlarged and more generic roles, team working, flexibility and informality, responsive back-line support to front-line staff, and so on.

Hoggett (1987: 218) sees decentralisation in local government as symptomatic of broader systemic changes. In short, he argues that decentralisation happens in local government because it is happening elsewhere:

> our own parochialism as observers of British local government blinds us to the fact that the decentralist tide we have seen

developing here over the past few years is no more than an echo of much wider and deeper social disturbances.

Part 3 - Conclusion: the limitations of the literature

The literature review presented in this chapter has not been comprehensive. Rather, it has focused on two dominant approaches to interpreting the trend to local government decentralisation: political accounts and 'total systems' approaches.

In the first part of the chapter I reviewed classic arguments for decentralisation from liberal political theory: arguments associated with efficiency, participation, community identity and pluralism. I considered how these arguments were drawn upon in building a case for sub-local authority decentralisation in the 1980s. I reviewed the rationales for decentralisation put forward by thinkers and practitioners of the new urban left, the new right and the political centre. I pointed to both similarities and differences in emphasis.

In the second part of the chapter I looked at attempts to link local government decentralisation to a broad shift towards fragmentation and specialisation in all areas of life: social, political and economic. Here the emphasis was not upon the programmes of particular political parties, but on the impact of much wider transformations. I reviewed Stoker's account of the changing role of local government under 'post Fordism', highlighting trends to fragmentation and specialisation. I examined Hoggett's account of the changing internal organisation of local

government, which focuses on decentralisation as a key element of a new 'techno-managerial paradigm'.

I have not provided a critique of the internal coherence of the arguments under review. Neither have I made a judgement as to how well they reflect 'real life' developments. My aim has been to map the conceptual landscape against which I will develop my own approach to understanding local government decentralisation. Rather than criticising the existing literature on its own terms, I am concerned to draw attention to the gaps it reveals in current understandings of local government decentralisation. In my view, the value of the literature is limited by its:

- lack of clarity;
- normative focus;
- restricted empirical analysis;
- lack of middle-range theorising.

I now consider each of these points in turn, aiming to establish an agenda for the development of new approaches to understanding decentralisation.

Lack of clarity

This problems relates to that highlighted in the last chapter - that is, the bundling together of different phenomena under the 'decentralisation' label. This is particularly evident in 'total systems' approaches. By relating local government decentralisation to a broad shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, there is a danger that: 'every piece of evidence for

fragmentation and decentralization... is accepted at face value because it fits into the model' (Cochrane, 1993: 91). There may, however, be very different motivations behind different types of decentralisation - area-based intiatives, market-based developments, managerial innovations, and so on. Each may have its origins in different ideas and circumstances, and each may have very different impacts on the stakeholders involved.

Taken together, 'political' accounts reveal similar problems, although expressed in a different way. Each of the political accounts I reviewed appropriates the term 'decentralisation' to refer to its own, quite different, innovations. Each invests decentralisation with its own values and preoccupations, not engaging with the contrasting interpretations of political rivals. For the new urban left, market-based reforms are 'not decentralisation', while for the new right they are its very essence.

My literature review thus points to the value of developing an approach which specifies clearly its object of analysis, while recognising the complexity and diversity of the decentralisation phenomenon.

A normative focus

Despite definitional ambiguities, what approaches to decentralisation have in common is the assertion that it is a 'good thing'. As I noted in the last chapter, decentralisation often appears to be the policy-maker's and political theorist's equivalent of 'motherhood and apple pie'. As Smith (1985: 24) notes: 'Decentralisation is too readily transformed into

a value in its own right by romantic idealism. It is made an absolute good'. This is a characteristic particularly of the 'political' accounts reviewed in Part 1. Total systems approaches are rarely agnostic on the normative implications of shifts to decentralisation, but divide more evenly into 'negative' and 'positive' camps. Political accounts of decentralisation focus on the potential gains of decentralisation; the benefits of decentralisation are frequently stated as a matter of ideology and are rarely based on any analysis of decentralisation in practice.

The literature review thus points to the value of developing an approach which avoids a normative focus, analysing decentralisation in terms of broader processes of institutional change in local government.

Limited empirical analysis

The literature is also characterised by limited empirical analysis of how decentralisation works in practice. Political accounts concentrate on the values and intentions behind decentralisation initiatives, while total systems accounts operate at a higher level of abstraction, reflecting their concern with broad transformations in economy, society and polity. The literature includes 'case study' accounts but these tend to be 'snapshots' of an initiative at a particular point in its development, or brief overviews of different schemes. Theorising about decentralisation tends not to be grounded in sustained empirical analysis. Stoker and Young (1993: 103) note that: 'much of the debate about area or decentralised approaches is conducted in the absence of systematic

evidence'. Gyford (1991a: 113) concludes that: 'the evidence so far is piecemeal or anecdotal'.

The lack of sustained empirical analysis means that many arguments about decentralisation remain at the level of either grand theory or conjecture. Such accounts leave unanalysed the day-to-day politics of decentralisation - the changing power relations and shifting perspectives of the different interests involved.

The literature review points to the value of developing an approach to decentralisation that is grounded in empirical analysis. Such an approach can go beyond describing intentions and examine the process of decentralisation and its impact over time.

Lack of middle-range theorising

My review of dominant approaches to understanding decentralisation reveals a bias towards macro-level theorising. Political accounts relate decentralisation to broad themes in normative theory, and total systems accounts link decentralisation to wider transformations in society and economy. While the former arguments tend towards idealism, the latter run the risk of determinism. Both political and total systems accounts have little to say about how broad ideas or trends are translated into action in local authorities. It remains unclear how decentralisation schemes originate or what drives their development over time. More 'journalistic' accounts of decentralisation discuss the particular strategies employed by different authorities, but rely heavily on

individualist, personality-based explanations (see Seabrook, 1984, for example).

My literature review thus reveals a lack of middle-level theorising on the origins and practice of local government decentralisation. It points to the value of developing an approach which looks at decentralisation as a process of institutional change, directed by individuals but not subject to their total control. Such an approach has the capacity to link the micro and macro levels and avoid excessive voluntarism or determinism.

In conclusion, the limitations of the existing literature point to the value of developing an approach which:

- specifies clearly its object of analysis, while recognising the complexity and diversity of the decentralisation phenomenon;
- avoids a normative focus, analysing decentralisation in terms of broader processes of institutional change in local government;
- links micro and macro levels of analysis, avoiding excessive voluntarism or determinism;
- grounds itself in an empirical analysis of decentralisation in practice.

Thus my literature review provides an agenda for the development of new approaches to local government decentralisation. In the chapters that follow I seek to develop an approach which meets these criteria.

CHAPTER 4 - UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Introduction

This thesis analyses decentralisation as a process of institutional change, shaped by contextual factors but actively constructed by the actors involved. By referring to *institutional* change, I am depicting decentralisation as something more than organisational restructuring. Changes in organisational form may occur within a given set of institutional rules or norms; as will become clear, institutional change implies a change in the norms themselves. The purpose of this chapter is to review approaches to understanding institutions and institutional change, and to develop a set of theoretical propositions to guide my analysis of decentralisation in practice.

In Part 1 I establish a baseline definition of 'institution'. I discuss the renewed interest in institutions within political science, organisation theory and economics, contrasting 'old' and 'new' approaches. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, I present six theoretical 'vignettes' in Part 2, each of which illuminates a different aspect of institutional life. In Part 3 I discuss the key variables that emerge from the literature review and put forward a set of propositions about institutions and institutional change.

Part 1 - Institutions and institutional analysis: an introduction

1.1 Defining institutions

The dictionary defines 'institution' as 'established law, custom or practice'. In his Keywords, Williams (1983) notes that 'institution' dates from the fourteenth century when it referred to an act of origin - something being instituted in the sense of being established, founded or appointed. From the mid sixteenth century, institution came to refer to practices established in certain ways, associated with 'manners, laws, customs, and the art of government' (Williams, 1983: 168). The word carried with it 'a stong sense of custom, as in... "one of the institutions of the place"' (Williams, 1983: 168). From the mid eighteenth century, 'institution' began to be used in the title of specific organisations or types of organisation - 'charitable institution', 'mechanics institute', 'Royal Institute of British Architects', and so on. 'Institute' has since been commonly used for professional, educational or research organisations; 'institution' for charitable and benevolent organisations. In the mid nineteenth century, 'the general sense of a form of social organisation, specific or abstract was confirmed' (Williams, 1983: 169). Williams (1983: 169) concludes his review of the development of the term by noting that in the twentieth century, institution 'has become the normal term for any organised element of a society'.

Williams' account alerts us to the slippery nature of the word 'institution', which can refer both to the abstract concept of customs

and to 'concrete' organisations. Williams' review provides the main elements of a baseline definition of institutions. These can be summarised as follows:

(a) Institution is a middle-level (or 'meso') concept Institutions are devised by individuals, but in turn constrain their action. They are part of the broad social fabric, but also the medium through which day-to-day decisions and actions are taken. Institutions shape human action, imposing constraints whilst also providing opportunities.

(b) Institutions have formal and informal aspects Institutions involve formal rules or laws, but also informal norms and customs. Unlike formal institutions, informal institutions are not consciously designed nor neatly specified, but form part of habitual action. Institutions may be expressed in organisational form, but also relate to processes - the way things are done.

(c) Institutions have a legitimacy and show stability over time Institutions have a legitimacy beyond the preferences of individual actors. They are valued in themselves and not simply for their immediate purposes and outputs. Institutions may gain their legitimacy because of their relative stablity over time, or because of their link with a 'sense of place'.

These aspects resonate with the 'common sense' use of the term, in which institution refers, for example, to marriage, trial by jury, the National Health Service, local democracy, the monarchy, rules of manners (like

handshaking or forms of address), and so on. Institutions exist at different levels of abstraction - from a legal contract or set of rules to a vast 'physical' bureaucracy. In all cases institutions are somehow 'more' than what they appear to be - they are 'special' procedures and practices. They are inscribed with a value beyond their immediate, practical purpose. Their value is embedded in the broader social context.

These baseline elements appear in social scientific uses of the term, although specific applications of the term stress different aspects. As will become clear, accounts vary in the extent to which institutions are seen as place-specific, historically-contingent, stable or ever-changing, formal or informal. I look now at the renewed interest in institutional analysis, drawing upon contributions from a range of disciplines.

1.2 Studying institutions: old and new approaches

DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 2) note that: 'The study of institutions is experiencing a renaissance throughout the social sciences'. They note, however, that: 'there are as many "new institutionalisms" as there are social science disciplines' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 1). This variety makes it hard to pinpoint what characterises the new concern with institutions. The new institutionalism is most often understood in relation to its differences from 'old' institutional traditions and from more recent behavioural (or non-institutional) approaches. As DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 1) note:

> Institutionalism purportedly represents a distinctive approach to the study of social, economic and political phenomena; yet it is

> often easier to gain agreement about what it is *not* than about what it is.

Below I provide a brief review of the emergence of a 'new institutionalism' in three disciplines: political science, economics and organisation theory. (I consider many of the key concepts in greater depth in Part 2.)

Political science

In political science, the 'new institutionalism' is understood as a reaction to the mid-twentieth century 'behavioural revolution'. Behaviouralists saw political outcomes as the simple aggregation of individual actions; institutions were viewed as 'epiphenomenal, merely the sum of individual properties' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1989: 2). For many behaviouralists, institutions were 'empty shells to be filled by individual roles, statuses and values' (Shepsle, 1989: 133). The turn away from insitutionalism in political science was emphasised further with the 'rational choice revolution' which began in the 1960s and '70s and continues today. Shepsle (1989: 133) notes that if behaviouralism constituted a 'triumph of sociology and psychology' in political science, rational choice represents the 'triumph of economics'. Rather than aggregating individual behaviours based on role, status and learned responses, it aggregates individual choices based on preferences or privately held values (making assumptions of maximising behaviour) (Shepsle, 1989: 134). Despite their differences, behaviouralism and rational choice both constitute 'under-socialised' accounts of human

action: 'There is no glue holding the atoms together; there is no society' (Shepsle, 1989: 134).

Such approaches emerged in contrast to earlier traditions within the discipline. Shepsle (1989:132) notes that, prior to the behavioural revolution, 'it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that the study of institutions (together with the history of political thought) *was* political science'. Of the 'new institutionalism', March and Olsen (1989: 20) note that: 'Cycles in ideas have brought us back to considerations that typified earlier forms of theory'. There are, however, differences between the old and the new. The 'old' institutionalism was largely a descriptive tradition 'focusing principally on cataloguing the minutiae of political institutions', and producing little in the way of cumulative theory (Shepsle, 1989: 133). March and Olsen (1989: 20) explain that the new institutionalism is best described as 'blending elements of an old institutionalism into the noninstitutionalist style of recent theories of politics'. The new institutionalism has emerged in reaction to atomistic conceptions of political behaviour and asocial accounts of the context in which behaviour occurs (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 5). Political scientists (including many rational choice scholars) have become interested in institutions as: 'part of what embeds people in social situations. They are the glue missing from the behaviouralist's more atomistic account' (Shepsle, 1989: 134).

The new institutionalism is interested less in describing formal structures and constitutions, and more in unearthing the deep structure and 'rules of the game' which influence political behaviour. On its

'sociological' wing, the new institutionalism in political science expresses a concern with the evolution of norm-governed behaviour in political institutions, pointing to the way institutional elements 'define and defend values, norms, interests, identities and beliefs' (March and Olsen, 1989: 17). On its 'public choice' wing, it expresses a concern with the way in which institutional factors influence actors' utilities and preferred solutions to collective action problems (Shepsle, 1989: 124).

Economics

In 1986 a President of the Royal Economic Society argued in his inaugural address that the study of institutions,

> has become one of the liveliest areas in our discipline... A body of thinking has developed based on two propositions: (i) institutions do matter, (ii) the determinants of institutions are susceptible to analysis by the tools of economic theory. (Matthews cited in Shepsle, 1989: 131)

The proposition that 'institutions matter' is a challenge to the neoclassical approach in economics which has traditionally taken the institutional context as given, fixed and exogenous (Shepsle, 1989: 131). This tradition had been challenged in the early decades of the twentieth century by the 'old' institutional economists. Scholars like Veblen, Myrdal, Commons and Coase criticised the neoclassical reliance on theoretical and mathematical models which over-simplify economic life and ignore the impact of the non-economic, institutional environment. The institutional economists argued that political and social structures could block and distort 'normal' economic processes. They proposed an

interdisciplinary approach to economic problems, drawing on insights from sociology, politics and law.

Interest in institutions reached a low point after the second world war, reviving only in the 1960s (with the work of business historians like Alfred Chandler) and 1970s (with the work of organisational economists like Williamson, and economic historians like North). The 'new' institutionalism shares with the 'old' the first of Matthews' propositions: that institutions matter. However, it departs from the old institutionalism on the basis of the second proposition. The old institutionalists (with the exception of Coase) saw institutional analysis as lying outside the mainstream equilibrium-oriented neoclassical approach In contrast, the 'new institutional economics' claims that 'the missing institutional analysis can be built directly on the basis of the principles of neoclassical economics' (Swedberg and Granovetter, 1992: 13-14). While seeking to develop a 'microanalytical approach to the study of economic organization', new institutional economists also seek 'to integrate earlier work' in law, organisation theory and economics (Williamson, 1985: 1). DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 3-4) provide a useful summary of the main argument:

> The new institutional economics adds a healthy dose of realism to the standard assumptions of microeconomic theory. Individuals attempt to maximise their behaviour over stable and consistent preference orderings, but they do so... in the face of cognitive limits, incomplete information, and difficulties in monitoring and enforcing agreements. Institutions arise and persist when they confer benefits greater than the transaction costs (that is, the costs of negotiation, execution and enforcement) incurred in creating them.

Organisation theory

The new institutionalism in organisation theory takes a rather different starting point. The new institutional economics sees institutions as 'the products of human design, the outcomes of purposive actions by instrumentally oriented individuals'; while organisation theorists argue that 'while institutions are certainly the result of human activity, they are not necessarily the products of conscious design' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 8). Such an approach is rooted in long traditions in organisation theory. Selznick (1957) proposed a distinction between 'administration' and 'institutionalization'. Whereas pure administration is rational, means-oriented and guided by concerns of efficiency, institutionalisation is value-laden, adaptive and responsive (Perrow, 1987: 167). Institutions are valued for their own sakes and are impregnated with the values of the community in which they exist. Institutions are distinct from 'ordinary' organisations. As Perrow (1987: 167) explains:

> The process of institutionalization is the process of organic growth, wherein the organization adapts to the strivings of internal groups and the values of external society.

The new institutionalism in organisation theory dates from the late 1970s, with the work of Meyer and Rowan, DiMaggio and Powell, Zucker and Scott. The old and new approaches have much in common. As DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 12) explain:

> Both old and new approaches share a skepticism towards rational actor models of organization... Both emphasise the relations between organizations and their environments, and both promise to reveal aspects of reality that are inconsistent with organizations'

formal accounts. Each approach stresses the role of culture in shaping organizational reality.

Both approaches are concerned with the way in which particular organisational forms become 'legitimated', inscribed with cultural value over and above an instrumental concern with efficiency or even material outcomes. They differ however in the locus of their attention. While the old approach studied the way in which individual organisations become 'institutionalised', the new approach locates the process of institutionalisation in the wider environment. While Selznick and his followers saw organisations as responding to the values and culture of their local communities and internal members, the new institutionalists argue that organisations adapt to 'institutional templates' or 'myths' present in the wider organisational field.

Part 2 - New institutionalist approaches: six theoretical vignettes

2.1 Introduction

DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 3) argue that the various 'new institutionalisms' are 'united by little more than a common skepticism toward atomistic accounts of social processes and a common conviction that institutional arrangements... matter'. So far we have set the scene for what Jordan (1990: 477) describes as the recent 'explosion in the use(s) of the term "institution"', situating this in the context of earlier 'cycles in ideas' (March and Olsen, 1989: 2). This chapter cannot provide a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of the new

institutionalism. Rather, drawing on contributions from different disciplines, I present a series of theoretical 'vignettes' from the new institutionalism. A vignette is an 'illustration not in definite border' a 'character sketch' or a 'short description' (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1982). The term captures my aim here: each short account exposes a particular aspect of institutional life; it is not a definitive statement but a snapshot; and the borders of one vignette blur with those of another. The vignettes pick up on the 'baseline' elements of a definition of institution (see 1.1), whilst also highlighting more contested variables. I conclude the chapter with a consideration of key variables. In Chapter 5 the vignettes will provide a 'tool box' of ideas and concepts from which to build a model of institutional change.

The six vignettes are:

- the 'mythic' institution;
- the 'efficient' institution;
- the 'stable' institution;
- the 'manipulated' institution;
- the 'disaggregated' institution;
- the 'appropriate' institution.

1.2 <u>The 'mythic' institution</u>

Institutionalisation has been seen as a process whereby 'mythic' or 'symbolic' elements of organisations' environment are incorporated into organisational structures, cultures and outputs (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 64). Such elements are seen as 'templates' which create 'lenses

through which actors viewed the world and the very categories of structure, action and thought' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 13). They derive from professions, accreditation bodies, training and education regimes, government programmes, legal frameworks, public opinion, and prevalent ideologies. DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 28) refer to: 'taken for granted beliefs and widely promulgated rules that serve as templates for organising'.

In contrast to the contingency theorists of the 1960s who focused upon the impact of technological developments and resource dependencies (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Woodward 1965; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967), new institutionalists highlight the importance of 'cultural frames... [which] establish approved means and define desired outcomes' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 28). According to Meyer and Rowan (1991: 41) the formal structures of many organisations 'dramatically reflect the myths of their institutional environments instead of the demands of their work activities'. Compliance with cultural prerogatives may be independent of 'the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures' (Meyer and Rowan, 1991: 41). In illustration of their claim, Meyer and Rowan (1991: 51) note that:

> modern accounting creates ceremonial production functions and maps them on to economic production functions: organizations assign externally defined worth to advertising departments, safety departments, managers, econometricians, and occasionally even sociologists, whether or not these units contribute measurably to the production of outputs.

The power of 'institutional environments' lies in their capacity to confer legitimacy, which is linked to organisations' survival prospects.

By adapting to cultural expectations, organisations are better able to recruit staff, gain funding from governments or credit from banks, build alliances with other organisations, and market their products to consumers. As Meyer and Rowan (1991: 51) explain: 'They demonstrate socially the fitness of the organization'. The power of 'institutional myths' is held to be such that, as they influence more and more organisations, increasing homogenisation (or 'isomorphism') is evident among populations of organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 66). Zucker (1991: 105) calls this the 'contagion of legitimacy'. (These approaches contrast with 'old' institutional perspectives which focused on organisational diversity rather than homogeneity [DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 14].) Drawing on Weber's seminal work on bureaucratisation, DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 63-4) claim that:

> Today... structural change seems less and less driven by competition or by the need for efficiency. Instead... bureaucratization and other forms of organizational change occur as the result of processes that make organizations more similar, without necessarily making them more efficient.

Structures and procedures deriving from dominant 'templates' within the environment are institutionalised to the extent that they acquire a rule-like or taken-for-granted status. They become naturalised and unquestioned. As Zucker (1991: 83) explains:

> For highly institutionalized activities, it is sufficient for one person simply to tell another that this is how things are done. Each individual is motivated to comply because otherwise his activities and those of others in the system cannot be understood... the fundamental process is one in which the moral becomes the factual.

Scott (1991: 181) underlines the contribution of models of the 'mythic institution' thus:

> institutional theorists have transformed our conceptions of the salient environments of organizations; in particular, they have emphasized the importance of symbolic - both cognitive and normative - systems and structural features of organizational environments.

The new institutionalists in organisation theory have, however, been criticised for an over-emphasis on processes of institutional reproduction. How can we account for the empirically-observed *diversity* of organisational form if processes of isomophism are so strong? How can we account for *change* in organisational structure and culture if environmental 'templates' are so influential? How can we account for the continued *efficiency* of much organisational activity if purposive activity is subordinated to ritual and myth? Organisation theorists themselves have sought to address these problems and many of the original 'new institutionalists' have revised their position in the light of such questions (see Powell and DiMaggio's [1991] edited collection). A useful contribution is that of Clegg (1990), who seeks to marry an 'institutional' and a 'power' analysis in order to grasp diversity and change within organisations. Clegg argues that organisational change and diversity arises out of two factors: the importance of specifically *local* factors in shaping institutional constraints, and the *contested* nature of institutions.

On the first point, Clegg draws a distinction between the society-wide regulative framework (deriving from legal, governmental and professional institutions) and specifically local institutional pressures. The latter

refers to the 'specificities of local practice' (Clegg, 1990: 163) or the 'locally available conceptions' (Clegg, 1990: 158) which provide the 'raw material' upon which organisations feed. Local practice also constitutes 'a reservoir of potential resistance to the contingent pressures' (Clegg, 1990: 163) of the overall regulative framework. Clegg explains that:

> 'local' in the context indexes not so much the small, inconsequential and the trivial as much as the close at hand, the available and the particular of the main localities and arenas within which action takes place. (Clegg, 1990: 14)
>
> Action is never unbounded. It is framed within more or less tacit understandings, as well as formal stipulations, which enable different agencies to do not only different things but also the same things differently in diverse contexts. (Clegg, 1990: 150-1)

Organisations vary because local contexts vary both in character and also in the weight they bring to bear vis-a-vis more generalised institutional constraints:

> In one place institutional pressure is closely subsumed to the local warp and weft of the cultural context; elsewhere it derives less from local cultural practices and more from the regulative aspects of the institutional framework as that is normally defined. In either case, the outcomes tend rather to organizational diversity than they do to a rationalized convergence on a collective fate inside a common iron cage. (Clegg, 1990: 163)

If local factors produce institutional diversity, so too do power relations. Clegg argues that there is not one common set of norms, culture and values within an organisation. Environment-wide institutional pressures will be interpreted in different ways, as will the local 'reservoir' of institutional resources. Not only are interpretations different, they are also struggled over. Organisations are arenas within which individuals or groups struggle for power and influence over others. The shaping - or control - of value systems,

rules and operating procedures is a vital resource within such struggles. Determining the 'mode of rationality' (Clegg, 1990: 7) within an organisation is at least as important as controlling material resources, such as budgets and buildings. In a similar vein, Knight (1992: 126) argues that:

> institutions are a by-product of strategic conflict over substantive social outcomes... actors produce social institutions in the process of seeking distributional advantage.

2.3 The 'efficient' institution

Clegg's approach stresses institutional diversity and the relativity of institutional norms. Institutions are located firmly in time and space. In contrast, the 'new institutional economics' explains institutional form with reference to a universal economic logic. Institutions are 'efficient' organisational frameworks, which arise to solve problems of complex economic exchange.

This approach to institutions can best be illustrated with reference to Williamson's (1975, 1985) work on 'markets and heirarchies'. Williamson asks under what conditions economic functions are performed within the boundaries of a firm, rather than through market processes which cross firm boundaries. Why is it that some functions are internalised within firms (eg. through vertical integration) while others take place via the 'spontaneous' coordination of the market? Williamson's (1985: 1) answer is relatively simple - the institutional form observed is that which deals most efficiently with the cost of economic transactions. Williamson (1985: 387-8) argues that:

> Transactions, which differ in their attributes, are assigned to governance structures, which differ in their organizational costs and competencies, so as to effect a discriminating (mainly transaction cost economizing) match.

In illustration of his argument, Williamson (1985: 86) proposes that transactions which are uncertain in outcome, recur frequently and require 'transaction specific investments' (ie. time, money or energy which cannot easily be transferred to other types of interaction) are more likely to take place *within firms*. Association between transacting agents is thus secured through hierarchical authority, rather than through exchange in the open market. Transactions which are straightforward, non-repetitive and require no transaction-specific investments (such as a one-off purchase of standard equipment) will remain outside the firm, taking place between different firms *across a market interface* (Williamson, 1985: 79).

The first category of transactions is more likely to be characterised by 'bounded rationality' in that it is difficult for actors to anticipate the complex chain of contingencies involved in exchange (which would have to be built into any contract). Opportunism is also more likely - the possibility that the 'other side' might pursue its interests by guile and/or deceit (Williamson, 1985: 32). By internalising this type of transaction, there is no need to anticipate and weight all contingencies, and the possibility of opportunism is reduced through authority relations and closer identification between (internal) transacting partners.

Williamson (1985: 1) explains that:

> Contrary to earlier conceptions - where the economic institutions of capitalism are explained with reference to class interests, technology, and/or monopoly power - the transaction cost approach maintains that these institutions have the main purpose and effect of economizing on transaction costs.

As Swedberg and Granovetter (1992: 14) note: 'the institution exists because it is efficient'. Institutions are the result of rational choices aimed at maximising utility. As Coase (1937: 404) put it much earlier: 'The question always is, will it pay to bring an... exchange transaction under the organising authority?'. Such approaches provide 'a theory of how transactions shift from market to hierarchical governance (or vice versa) based upon the underlying logic of the minimalization of managerial costs' (Butler, 1991: 31).

The new institutional economics has been criticised as ahistorical and over-abstract. Granovetter criticises Williamson's characterisation of both market and hierarchy, arguing that each is institutionally 'embedded' in prevailing social relations. First, he claims that 'the anonymous market of neoclassical models is virtually nonexistent in economic life and that transactions of all kinds are rife with social connections' (Granovetter, 1992: 65). Second, he argues that Williamson 'vastly overestimates the efficacy of hierarchical power within organisations' (Granovetter, 1992: 68-9). Drawing on Polanyi's (1957) contention that the economy is an 'instituted process', Granovetter (1992: 72) concludes that:

> even with complex transactions a high level of order can be found in the 'market' - that is, across firm boundaries - and a correspondingly high level of disorder within the firm. Whether these occur... depends on the nature of personal relations and

> networks of relations between and within firms. I claim that both order *and* disorder, honesty *and* malfeasance have more to do with structures of such relations than they do with organizational form.

Whitely (1992) argues that such relationships take distinct forms depending on their spatial and historical context. In his cross-national studies of business structure and practice, Whitely (1992: 124) observes the existence of 'particular "recipes" for business success which are effective in one context (but) are not necessarily valid across societies or over historical periods'. 'Business recipes' are 'particular arrangements of hierarchy-market relations which become institutionalised and relatively successful in particular contexts' (Whitely, 1992: 127). They determine the nature of firms, market organisation, and relationships of authority and coordination both within and between firms. Business recipes in Japan, the US and Britain, for example, differ because of the distinctiveness of their context - the nature of the state, the financial system, education and training, family life, and other broad social and cultural patterns. Whitely (1992: 120) contrasts his approach with the 'culture free' perspective of the new institutional economics, which 'hypostatize a universal economic logic which determines the choice of institutional systems'.

2.4 The 'stable' institution

North's (1990) analysis of institutions and institutional change contains elements of both an 'efficiency' and a 'mythic' (or culture-based) approach. He stresses *stability* rather than efficiency as the economic rationale for institutions, and defines institutions as a mix of formal

and informal constraints. North (1990: 3) adheres to neoclassical premises, however, in as much as he sees institutions as incentive structures impacting on individuals' utility-maximising behaviour:

> Institutions are the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic.

Like Williamson, North (1990: 25) sees institutions as arising to cope with the problems of bounded rationality:

> Institutions exist to reduce the uncertainties involved in human interaction. These uncertainties arise as a consequence of both the complexity of the problem to be solved and the problem solving software... possessed by the individual.

North (1990: 118) sees institutions as one determinant of transaction costs, thus influencing 'the profitability and feasibility of engaging in economic activity'. However, he does not assume that institutions will *minimise* such costs. North does not see institutions as guaranteeing (or even maximising) efficiency. Rather, they reduce uncertainty by providing 'stability' and 'a harmonious environment' for transactions:

> The major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable (but not necessarily efficient) structure to human interaction. (North, 1990: 5-6)

As North (1990: 83-4) explains, 'stability may be a necessary condition for complex human interaction, it is certainly not a sufficient condition for efficiency'. In fact, *inefficient* institutions persist because of their contribution to providing such harmony and because of their deep and tenacious roots in culture and tradition. North (1990: 36) sees institutions as comprising informal constraints as well as

formal rules:

> In our daily interaction with others, whether within the family, in exernal social relations, or in business activities, the governing structure is overwhelmingly defined by codes of conduct, norms of behaviour and conventions. Underlying these informal constraints are formal rules, but these are seldom the obvious and immediate source of choice in daily interactions.

Informal constraints derive from values, culture and tradition - they are 'rules that have never been consciously designed and that it is in everyone's interest to keep' (Sugden cited in North, 1990: 41). The institutionalisation of such 'subjective' elements allows actors to express their ideas and ideologies at little or no cost. Because they have become part of expected behaviour, these subjective variables do not jeopardise exchange relationships - despite their departure from 'rational' premises. The mix of formal and informal institutional rules determines the 'opportunity set' that actors face in making choices.

Informal constraints are more tenacious than formal rules and form the basis of enduring institutions. Because they are part of habitual action, such norms change slowly, even in the face of radical changes in formal rules. Legislation or institution-specific rules can be changed overnight, but it takes much longer to effect a change in norms. It is the relative stability of 'informal constraints' that makes institutions such an important factor in economic life. As North (1990: 83) notes:

> Change typically consists of marginal adjustments to the complex of rules, norms, and enforcement that constitute the institutional framework. The overall stability of an institutional framework makes complex exchange possible across both time and space.

Change in formal institutional rules occurs when 'it is in the interest of those with sufficient bargaining strength' to make adjustments (North, 1990: 68). North argues, however, that there is often a time lag between changes in formal rules and in informal norms; this leads to unresolved tension between formal and informal constraints, producing institutional instability. However, he does not explain how it is that norms change. Culture remains something of a 'wild card'. North (1990: 37) links informal constraints to 'our heritage', 'socially transmitted information', or 'culture transmitted between generations'. There is definitely something 'out there', impacting on institutions (and hence on economic life), but the cultural, normative dimension remains essentially an exogenous variable. This is in contrast to Clegg's (1990) approach which sees institutional norms as being constructed out of specifically local resources, and as the object of struggle between competing groups of actors. North (1990: 140) implicity recognises the weakness in his analysis, remarking that: 'we need to know more about culturally derived forms of behaviour and how they interact with formal rules'.

The strength of North's approach is his stress on the historical development of institutions. Unlike Williamson's account, institutions do not exist out of place and out of time:

> History matters. It matters not just because we can learn from the past, but because the present and the future are connected to the past by the continuity of a society's institutions. Today's and tomorrow's choices are shaped by the past. And the past can only be made intelligible as a story of institutional change. (North, 1990: vii)

> Institutions... connect the past with the present and the future so that history is largely an incremental story of institutional evolution. (North, 1990: 133)

North is critical of the approach of 'formal economics' to institutions, arguing that 'the traditional public choice literature is clearly not the whole story... Informal constraints matter'. In the meantime, North (1990: 133) concludes that the incorporation of institutional analysis into economic history 'allows us to tell a much better story that we otherwise could'.

2.5 The 'manipulated' institution

I turn now to the public choice accounts of political - as opposed to economic - institutions. Williamson and North see institutions developing in economic life to ease problems of exchange, through maximising efficiency and/or stability. Public choice analysis in political science, in contrast, tends to view institutions as an *obstacle* to effective political exchange. Political institutions are seen as manipulated by self-serving bureaucrats and politicians, as degenerate and hostile to the public interest.

Dunleavy (1991: 1) distinguishes between 'first principles' literature in public choice and 'institutional public choice'. The former focuses on mathematical models and game theory approaches to political behaviour, rather than on empirical applications. According to Dunleavy (1991: 1): 'The abstract conjunctures which are modelled are often so stripped down, so uncomplicated, that in many cases it is hard to think of analogous political examples'. Institutional public choice theory is more concerned with 'messy empirical applications'. Dunleavy (1991: 2) argues

that institutional public choice theory 'offers a coherent picture of almost all aspects of the political process and government institutions'.

Institutional public choice theorists attempt to build models which take into account the specific institutional constraints within political organisations - structural features (the division and specialisation of labour, leadership organisation, staffing arrangements, party groupings) and procedures (rules of debate and amendment) (Shepsle, 1989: 135). They endeavour to elaborate the specific details of the 'game form' within which individuals pursue maximising behaviour, taking into account the identity of players and alternative modes of deliberation (Shepsle, 1989: 135). Ostrom (1986: 7) argues that institutional rules do not 'produce behaviour' but directly affect 'the structure of a situation' in which actions are selected. Ostrom (1986: 5) highlights the importance of rules which:

- create positions (member, convenor, chair);
- state how participants enter or leave positions;
- state which actions members in different positions are required, permitted, or forbidden to take;
- state which outcome participants are required, permitted, or forbidden to affect.

There is a wide and complex range of theorising within the tradition of institutional public choice. Here I will contrast two approaches - budget-maximising and bureau-shaping - both of which emphasise the manipulated character of political institutions. Both approaches rest upon an analogy with market behaviour. Politics is conceived as

involving demand and supply side actors - voters, pressures groups, political parties, public officials - all of whom act 'rationally' in the pursuit of their own self-interest. (My focus here is on supply-side activities.) Self-interest rather than any conception of the 'public interest' guides political behaviour. Assumptions of utility-maximisation on the part of political parties and bureaucrats lead to public choice predictions of 'institutional entropy', which:

> denotes a permanent, in-built tendency for any organization to run down over time, degenerating from the pursuit of the individual, private interests by those holding official positions. (Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987: 112-3)

The budget-maximising approach, associated particularly with Niskanen (1971, 1973) argues that bureaucrats seek to maximise their status and material well-being through seeking to increase the budgets under their control (meanwhile politicians seek power and office through vote-maximising). The budget-maximisation assumption has a 'common sense' appeal; as Dunleavy comments (1991: 147): 'Many people experience bureaucracies as expansionist organisations, constantly seeking to increase their size, staffs, financing, or scope of operations'. Bureaucrats are well placed to maximise budgets as they are in a strong bargaining position vis-a-vis their 'paymaster' or 'sponsor organisation' because they may be a monopoly provider of state goods and services, and enjoy a monopoloy over information about these costs and functions. Bureaucrats stand to maximise their personal utilities to the extent that large budgets are associated with: higher salaries, fringe benefits and perks; improved promotion prospects; higher reputation and status;

greater opportunities for patronage and influence; and the existence of 'slush funds' with which to deal with risk and unforeseen demands.

Budget maximisation, it is argued, leads to waste and 'over-supply' of government goods and services. A 'self-fulfilling' policy cycle fuels budget expansion and, while new programmes are continually introduced, existing activities are rarely terminated. Budget increments rather than base budgets are reviewed. In the absence of a competitive market (and the presence of deficit funding), there is no mode of 'death' for government bureaucracies. The institutions of public bureaucracies distort 'producers'' incentives. According to prevailing 'rules' (in Ostrom's sense) it is in the interests of bureaucrats to maximise budgets rather than maximise outputs, effectiveness or efficiency.

The bureau-shaping approach does not demur from the assumption that bureaucrats are self-serving. It does, however, question the assumption that bureaucrats have only a single utility-maximising course of action open to them. Dunleavy criticises the traditional public choice position that people's preferences are fixed exogenously. He argues that preferences are, at least in part, 'formed *within* and conditioned by the choice process being analysed' (Dunleavy, 1991: 152). Dunleavy (1990: 256) points out that bureaucracies have complex internal structures and 'confront significant choices between alternative [maximising] strategies'. The different institutional constraints encountered by personnel at different levels and in different areas of work will impact upon their utility-maximising strategies. Their choice of strategy will, in turn, shape those constraints in different ways - it cannot be

assumed that all bureaucrats will budget maximise at all times, or that political institutions will necessarily grow ever-larger and ever more wasteful as some universal logic works itself out.

Dunleavy's critique is further bolstered by empirical observation. According to the budget-maximising account, state growth should involve increasing bureaucratic centralisation and a proliferation of large, line bureaucracies. However, Dunleavy (1991: 247) shows that:

> The more testable implications of the budget-maximizing accounts linking growth to increasing centralization of government run contrary to post-war trends. The institutional form of state growth has been a decentralized network of agencies, not the expansion of large, line bureaus...

Dunleavy argues senior bureaucrats are actually unlikely to chose budget-maximisation as a utility-seeking strategy. He argues that budget-maximising is unlikely to maximise utilities. He bases this proposal on the observation that budget increments are rarely accompanied by pecuniary benefits to officials. Restrictive and standardised salary structures mean that senior public service personnel are much less likely than their private sector counterparts to receive any personal reward for expanding the resource profile of their department (Dunleavy, 1991: 201). Dunleavy argues that utilities are more likely to be sought through 'bureau shaping'. Public sector bureaucrats have strong preferences about the kind of work they do and the kind of agency they work in, hence they are more likely to seek non-pecuniary gains through the restructuring of their agencies and their conditions of work than through budget-maximisation strategies. Bureaucrats seek a 'reorganisation increment' rather than a 'budget

increment'. Dunleavy claims that bureaucrats will seek to maximise positively valued aspects of their working conditions and to minimise those that are valued negatively (see Table 4.1).

Dunleavy argues that senior bureaucrats prefer to work in smaller, less 'hands-on' agencies even though these command smaller budgets; he claims that his prognosis fits well with current trends in institutional restructuring (eg. the setting up of 'Next Steps' agencies in the civil service). It is able to account for the cooperation of senior officials with reforms that reduce their management of large budgets (something that a budget-maximising account would find difficult to explain). Dunleavy (1991: 248) argues that senior bureaucrats 'will accept and promote these changes in order to facilitate reshaping of their bureaus in line with their preferences', whilst also noting that 'the transition costs involved are likely to be displaced onto rank-and-file public sector workers and onto clients and the broader community'.

The strengths of Dunleavy's account lie in its better fit with empirical reality, and also in its recognition that different actors will experience institutional constraints in different ways, standing to gain or lose from institutional reorganisation. Hence Dunleavy introduces power relations into his public choice analysis. He also situates his analysis in a temporal context. Bureaucrats face a *choice* of utility-maximising strategies and the outcome of these choices has to be empirically observed - neither budget maximisation nor bureau shaping is a universal law. In the *current period*, Dunleavy contends that bureau shaping is the dominant maximising strategy for senior officials.

Table 4.1 - Positive and negative values ascribable to bureaucrats

POSITIVELY VALUED	NEGATIVELY VALUED
Staff functions	*Line functions*
* individually innovative work	* routine work
* longer-time horizons	* short-time horizons
* broad scope of concerns	* narrow scope of concerns
* developmental rhythm	* repetitive rhythm
* high level of managerial discretion	* low level of managerial discretion
* low level of public visibility	* high level of public visibility
Collegial atmosphere	*Corporate atmosphere*
* small-sized work unit	* large-sized work unit
* restricted hierarchy and predominance of elite personnel	* extended hierarchy and pre-dominance of non-elite personnel
* cooperative work patterns	* work patterns characterised by coercion and resistance
* congenial personal relations	* conflictual personal relations
Central location	*Peripheral location*
* proximate to the political power centres	* remote from political contacts
* capital city location	* provincial location
* conferring high-status social contacts	* remote from high status contacts

Source: Dunleavy (1991: 202)

Dunleavy introduces specifically 'cultural' variables in his listing of 'positive' and 'negative' values ascribable to senior bureaucrats - issues of 'atmosphere', social relationships, esteem and status. The conceptual basis of the bureau shaping account rests upon these variables. If Dunleavy wishes to argue that institutional restructuring relates to bureaucrats' search to maximise these value-inscribed utilities, he must show that these values are indeed held by, and pursued by, bureaucrats. This is the weak point in Dunleavy's account. The only explanation that Dunleavy (1991: 201) provides of his list (see Table 4.1) is as 'the most common pro and anti values cited in the administrative sociology literature, and which can plausibly be ascribed to self-regarding bureacrats pursuing their own welfare'. (Remarkably, Dunleavy fails even to provide references to this literature.)

Like North, Dunleavy adds depth to his rational actor account through a recognition that institutional form is crucially influenced by cultural and value imperatives. Also like North, Dunleavy treats culture and values as an exogenous variable - they remain the wild card in the public choice analysis of institutions. If one is not prepared to accept Dunleavy's list as a 'given', any testing of the bureau shaping approach would have to be preceded by an investigation into the values of bureaucrats. Dunleavy may be correct to argue that bureaucrats maximise utilities through bureau shaping, but the nature of the 'shape' they seek is an open question deserving of research in its own right. It is not just the choice of utility maximising strategy that varies in different periods and contexts, it is also the values that underpin these

strategies. This recognition implies a far greater revision of 'rational actor' assumptions than Dunleavy intends.

2.6 The 'disaggregated' institution

The 'policy community' or 'policy network' approach is concerned with 'the institutionalization of relations between governmental and non-governmental actors' (Jordan, 1990: 470). Jordan (1990: 476) describes the approach as 'new institutionalization', denoting a concern with new arrangements for policy-making rather than a new look at old institutions (which Jordan refers to pejoratively as 'renewed institutionalism'). The concern is with actual institutional practices rather than with formal organisational arrangements; more specifically, institution is interpreted as 'an extra-constitutional policy-making arrangement between ministries and clientelistic groups' (Jordan, 1990: 470). Network analysis paints a picture of institutions which are informal, disaggregated, policy-specific and relatively stable over time.

Network theorists start from the empirical observation that 'policy-making very often took place in sectors and via negotiations between departments and interest groups' (Jordan, 1990: 471). This arises out of the structure of British government, in which central government departments are relatively autonomous and where local authorities and various quangos play important roles. It arises also out of the important role played by interest groups in the formation of policy. Interest groups are increasingly numerous due to the progressive fragmentation of society. The network approach contends that policy is

made not by a unified government machine, and that policy outcomes 'have little to do with formal political job descriptions and decisions by elected politicians' (Jordan, 1990: 476). Rather, policy is made by an assortment of actors (governmental and non-governmental) linked together in more or less formal and coherent networks. Such networks are seen as institutions in the sense that Huntington defined political institutions as: 'stable, valued and recurring patterns of behaviour' (cited in Jordan, 1990: 475). The network model attempts to grasp how, in an environment of atomisation and fragmentation, relatively stable institutional rules persist.

Networks are characterised by their specific policy orientation. Policy-making is segmented or sectorised: distinct networks cohere around policy-making in specific 'subject' areas - hence we can refer to an education policy network, or a housing network, or a nuclear power network. Policy networks are seen as a source of stability in policy-making: 'policy networks exist to routinise relationships; they promote continuity and stability' (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992a: 196). Not all policy areas are characterised by the presence of effective networks: a distinction is drawn between 'the turbulent, changing and unstable policy domain' and the institutionalised policy network (Jordan, 1990: 476).

Rhodes and Marsh (1992b: 23) note that networks have the following characteristics: 'a limited number of participants, frequent interaction, continuity, value consensus, resource dependence, positive-sum power games, and regulation of members'. Within these baseline characteristics, a great variety of relationships are possible within the

network framework. (Rhodes and Marsh [1992a; 1992b] review various approaches to classifying different types of policy network.) Pointing to its breadth of scope, Rhodes and Marsh (1992b: 2) distinguish the network approach from pluralist and corporatist models of interest group/government relations. These models claim to offer a general model of relationships - a claim which Rhodes and Marsh argue cannot be supported by empirical investigation. Only in very few areas do pluralist or corporatist relations exist in pure form. Due to its policy-specific stance, the network model can encompass this variety: it 'emphasizes the need to disaggregate policy analysis and stresses that relationships between groups and government vary between policy areas' (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992b: 4). Jordan (1990: 484) notes that the network approach should not be 'marketed' as 'an all-purpose model', but should aim to specify 'the conditions, where, when and how, such an institutionalization takes place'.

How are relationships within a policy network 'institutionalised'? Participants share common values (what Vickers [1968] calls an 'appreciative system') which are reinforced by frequent interaction and forms of regulation. Participants are dependent upon each other for resources (information, funding, access to formal decision-making mechanisms). In order to achieve their policy goals, participants need to exchange resources within the context of the network. Membership and direction may be regulated by a formal or informal leadership; this is accepted in return for influence over government policy. In general terms, competition is limited and interdependence within the network produces 'positive-sum power games' - all participants are net

beneficiaries. Networks are institutions 'devised for regulating and formalizing bargaining relationships between groups and government' (Jordan, 1990: 475).

Despite its focus on the disaggregated nature of governance and policy-making, the network approach retains a central/national government bias. Descriptions of networks generally assume that networks are somehow 'pivoted' centrally. Richardson and Jordan, for instance, describe the 'policy-making map' as 'a series of *vertical* compartments of segments - each segment inhabited by a different set of organised groups' (cited in Rhodes and Marsh, 1992a: 201; my emphasis). Are all networks 'vertical', or might some be better described as 'horizontal'? In stressing the *policy-specific* character of networks, the literature has less to say about their possible spatial specificity. Rhodes refers to 'territorial networks' concerned with policy for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, but there is less attention to networks that develop around policy for sub-national localities - a particular region, city, town or village. The 'urban regime' literature can make a useful contribution here, as it examines the 'interdependence of governmental and nongovernmental forces in meeting economic and social challenges' in a particular locality (Stoker, 1992: 4). Its focus on processes of cooperation and coordination between diverse local actors resonates with the network theory theme of the disaggregated policy-making institution.

The empirical bias of the literature means that it is little concerned with the normative implications of the network phenomenon. Rhodes and Marsh (1992a: 200), however, note that: 'normative questions do not

disappear just because the literature on policy networks ignores them'. They highlight questions of accountability and the relationship between parliamentary and functional representation in their paraphrasing of Lowi's celebrated critique of interest group politics:

> policy networks destroy political responsibility by shutting out the public; create privileged oligarchies; and are conservative in their impact because, for example, the rules of the game and access favour established interests. (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992a: 200)

Such normative questions are linked to the issue of institutional change. The stress on the stability of policy networks belies the pluralist vision of self-correcting group competition. But are policy networks as stable as the literature implies? The case studies reported in Marsh and Rhodes (1992b) highlight change within different networks. They reveal how economic or market changes can destabilise policy networks, as can technological developments, ideological shifts, and the outputs of other networks (including oppositional ones). Environmental changes are not the only source of instability, policy networks themselves are part of the process of change. As Rhodes and Marsh (1992a: 195) point out: 'Actors in the network shape and construct their "world", choosing whether or not, and how, to respond'. As Majone (1989: 96) notes:

> policy actors are not artificially separated from the process that sets constraints on their behavior. The same people pursue their goals within the given institutional framework and attempt to modify that framework in their favor.

Majone (1989: 97) argues that it may be 'rational' for policy actors to use indirect methods to influence policy outcomes:

> Instead of dispersing resources in trying to secure favorable results piecemeal... it is often more efficient and politically wiser

> to use those resources to influence the institutional mechanisms that will produce future streams of valued outcomes.

Rhodes and Marsh (1992a: 196) explain that: 'Consenus within networks is the product not of one-off negotiations but of a continuing process of re-negotiation which can be characterised as coalition building'. The theme of coalition building allows us to introduce power relationships more explicitly into network analysis and to build a clearer picture of how institutional change occurs. Sabatier (1988: 148) argues that 'advocacy coalitions' develop within 'policy subsystems' (networks), motivated by a desire to translate a common 'belief system' into policy outcomes. Several competing coalitions may exist within any policy network. Not all participants in a network belong to a a particular advocacy coalition; some actors play the role of 'policy brokers', attempting to reduce conflict and achieve 'reasonable' solutions (Sabatier, 1988: 133).

For Sabatier (1988: 133), a belief system refers to policy actors' value priorities and causal assumptions about how to realise them. 'Core' beliefs are quite resistant to change; 'secondary aspects', which refer to implementation strategies, are more susceptible. Policy actors may engage in a variety of institution-changing behaviours in pursuit of substantive policy goals. In the course of policy-making, relationships between network participants may be re-negotiated and institutional norms revised. The source of institutional change is to be found in the interaction between belief systems and environmental factors. Belief systems determine the direction in which an advocacy coalition seeks to

move policy, but its ability to achieve policy change is dependent upon the availability of resources (Sabatier, 1988: 143). External, systemic events affect the resources available to different coalitions (finance, personnel, legislation) and ultimately determine whether or not policy outcomes are realised.

Sabatier's contribution provides a useful complement to the networks approach. He explains how policy sub-systems or networks are internally differentiated, how goals and means are contested within networks, and how institutional change arises out of the strategic action of advocacy coalitions within a changing environment. Like Clegg, Sabatier (1988: 143) marries an institutional and a power approach:

> this framework acknowledges one of the central features of institutional models - namely, that rules create authority (power) - but views these rules as the product of competition among advocacy coalitions.

2.7 <u>The 'appropriate' institution</u>

March and Olsen (1989: 16) claim that institutional factors 'provide order and influence change in politics'. They explain that:

> Without denying the importance of both the social context of politics and the motives of individual actors, the new institutionalism insists upon a more autonomous role for political institutions. (March and Olsen, 1984: 738)

March and Olsen (1989: 16) argue for attention to be paid to the 'part played by political structures in creating and sustaining islands of imperfect and temporary organisation in potentially incohate political worlds'. The rules and procedures of institutional life 'increase

capability by reducing comprehensiveness' (March and Olsen, 1989: 17); they 'simplify' political life by ensuring that 'some things are taken as given in deciding other things'. Attention is focused on some things and taken away from others; some potential participants, issues, viewpoints, or values are ignored or suppressed while others occupy centre-stage. Institutions are like filter beds, allowing some things through but filtering others out. The filtering process occurs through the operation of 'rules' and the construction of 'meanings' within political institutions. March and Olsen (1989: 17) argue that procedures and structures 'defend values, norms, interests, identities, and beliefs'.

March and Olsen (1989: 159) argue that: 'political actors are driven by institutional duties and roles as well as, or instead of, by calculated self-interest'. They claim that 'political life is ordered by rules and organisational forms that transcend individuals and buffer or transform social forces' (March and Olsen, 1989: 160). Institutions are characterised as a 'logic of appropriateness'. March and Olsen (1989: 38) claim that 'a calculus of identity and appropriateness' is more important to actors than a 'calculus of political costs and benefits'. Rules are sustained by 'trust', which refers to 'a confidence that appropriate behaviour can be expected most of the time': both rules and trust are 'based on a conception of appropriateness more than a calculation of reciprocity' (March and Olsen, 1989: 38). Such a view can be contrasted with public choice approaches which emphasise a 'logic of consequentiality', whereby actors make anticipatory choices designed to maximise their values and interests. March and Olsen (1989: 24) claim that the logic of consequentiality is a culturally-determined

justification for action, rather than an effective reasoning strategy. The 'appropriate' institution presents a stark contrast to the 'manipulated' institution.

In referring to 'rules' March and Olsen are not implying that actors blindly and irrationally follow instructions. Rather they are referring to a process similar to legal reasoning whereby established rules or precedents are related to new situations through applying criteria of similarity or difference (see White, 1991: 138-140). Reasoning proceeds by analogy and metaphor, mediated by the language in which participants are able to talk about a situation. The anticipated consequences of courses of action are, of course, taken into account but situations are assigned to rules through a comparison of cases. Hence, consistency in action is maintained 'through a creation of typologies of similarity, rather than through a derivation of action from stable interests or wants' (March and Olsen, 1989: 26). March and Olsen (1984: 739) argue that:

> preferences and meanings develop in politics, as in the rest of life, through a combination of education, indoctrination, and experience. They are neither stable nor exogenous.

Rules produce variation and deviation as well as conformity and standardisation. This is because there are always areas of ambiguity in the interpretation and application of rules. Rules and routines are shaped by changing experience - 'routines come to encode the novelties they encounter into new routines' (March and Olsen, 1989: 34). Rules reflect and embody historical experience, making accessible the lessons of past experience to individuals who have not themselves lived through

that experience. At the same time, institutional rules are never fully 'closed' or complete; they are dynamic in the context of a changing environment.

At its most dramatic institutional change replaces 'one definition of appropriateness with another' (March and Olsen, 1989: 167). If one filter is replaced by another, attention becomes focused upon a new range of issues, actors and possibilities. As March and Olsen (1989: 51) put it: 'New institutional arrangements stimulate interest in new dimensions of description and redefine decision alternatives'. March and Olsen (1989: 59) argue that institutions generally change in an incremental way through responding to environmental signals. However, 'Major structural changes in institutions are made in hopes [sic] that such changes will destabilise political arrangements and force a permanent realignment of the existing system' (March and Olsen, 1989: 64).

March and Olsen (1989: 65-66) note that it is easier to produce such shocks than to control the combination of institutions and practices that emerge. Institutional change is difficult to implement and control; formal changes may be resisted or corrupted; goals may even change in the process of introducing deliberate innovations. March and Olsen (1989: 65) believe that: 'institutional change rarely satisfies the prior intentions of those who initiate it'. Once initiated, administrative reorganisations 'become an arena for debating a wide range of current concerns and ancient philosophies' (March and Olsen, 1989: 82). Applying the 'garbage can model' of decision-making, March and Olsen (1989: 82)

argue that a range of different 'problems' becomes linked to the 'solution' of institutional change:

> Since there are few established rules of relevance and access, reorganizations tend to become collections of solutions looking for problems, ideologies looking for soapboxes, and people looking for jobs, reputations or entertainment. The linkages among these concerns seem to be testimony more to their simultaneity than to their content, and administrative reform becomes associated with issues, symbols and projects that sometimes seem remote from the initial impetus behind the effort.

If intentional institutional change is such a hit and miss affair, what is the significance of attempts at deliberate institutional reform? Such reforms are important in their own right because 'the effectiveness of political systems depends to an substantial extent on the effectiveness of administrative institutions, and the design and control of bureaucratic structures is a central concern of any polity' (March and Olsen, 1989: 69). However, the overriding significance of institutional reform lies in the fact that it expresses social values (and reveals struggles over those values) that are generally hidden below the surface in political institutions. This argument operates at two levels. First, reorganisation is important in that it symbolises 'the possibility of meaningful action' in a general sense: this is achieved through 'statements of intent, an assurance of proper values, and a willingness to try' (March and Olsen, 1989: 90). Second, reorganisation is important in that it involves an opportunity for 'the discovery, clarification, and elaboration' of specific meanings or value systems. March and Olsen (1989: 91) readily embrace the normative dimension of institutional change - institutional reform is:

> part of the process by which a society develops an understanding of what constitutes a good society, without necessarily being able

> to achieve it, and how alternative institutions may be imagined to contribute to such a world.

Critics have found March and Olsen's approach to be overly abstract, even arcane. Jordan criticises the approach as 'ambiguous and preliminary' and questions whether it can be operationalised for empirical work. He implies that its conclusions are derivative and unhelpful: 'we have already had the good advice. The professional reaction in the past to advice on complexity and ambiguity was to welcome it and ignore it' (Jordan, 1990: 183-4). Another line of criticism concerns the lack of attention to power relationships and to conflict over institutional rules. There is an assumption that actors have equal power to influence rules and receive equal gains from institutional arrangements. The implicaton of consensus makes the motivation of those who seek institutional change hard to fathom. Knight (1992: 211) claims that:

> Norm-based explanations can show how social actors maintain social rules, but they cannot offer an adequate micro-level explanation of emergence and change. They generally fall back on functionalist reasoning, explaining the emergence of norms in terms of the inevitable evolution of necessary rules.

March and Olsen's approach can usefully be strengthened by reference to the work of authors like Clegg, Sabatier and Majone, all of whom emphasise the importance of norms of behaviour in understanding institutional continuity, while arguing that different groups of actors seek to generalise different sets of norms in pursuit of their own interests.

Part 3 - Key variables in institutional analysis

3.1 Introduction

In Part 1 of this chapter I presented a baseline definition of institutions. I proposed that institution is a meso-level concept; that institutions can be more or less formal; and that institutions are relatively stable over time. The six theoretical vignettes, drawn from a range of disciplines, developed these baseline elements in different ways. At the same time the six vignettes differed in their treatment of institutions in important respects. In concluding the chapter I focus upon three key variables:

- a concern with formal vis-a-vis informal institutions;
- a stress on stability vis-a-vis dynamism in institutions;
- a stress on the significance of strategic (or 'rational') action vis-a-vis norm-governed behaviour in understanding institutional development and change.

I now review each variable in turn with the aim of producing a series of propositions about institutions and institutional change.

3.2 Formal/informal

All the authors reviewed above have moved away from the 'old' institutional tradition that collapsed together the concepts of 'organisation' and 'institution'. The new institutionalists understand institutions as a set of rules rather than as bricks-and-mortar

organisations. As in a game of football, the effective 'rules of the game' are both formal (the number of players in a team, the way that goals are scored) and informal (the relationships, conduct and spirit of players, officials and fans). All actors involved are aware when either type of rule is breached, and can describe the way that rules have changed over time.

The six vignettes vary according to the stress they lay upon formal or informal institutions. Proponents of the 'efficient' and 'manipulated' institution tend to stress formal institutional arrangements (contracts, administrative hierarchies, legislative and decision-making procedures, budget mechanisms and bureau types). Proponents of the 'disaggregated' institution focus upon relationships rather than formal procedures, but note that these may be more or less formalised (from professional associations to personal communication channels). Proponents of the 'appropriate' institution focus on informal institutional rules - norms and duties - inside individual organisations. The 'mythic' institution draws attention to the role of institutional 'templates' in the wider environment - these embody informal, cultural elements as well as more formalised procedural elements. In theorising the 'stable' institution, North sets out to study the interaction between formal and informal institutional constraints. A concern with informal institutional rules is often associated with a stress upon the specificity of institutions in time and space (as in the work of Clegg and North). This concern with what Granovetter refers to as 'embeddedness' contrasts with the universalist claims of proponents of the 'efficient' institutions.

Knight (1992: 17) reminds us that institutional rules guide and constrain action by providing information on the probable future behaviour of others and on the nature of sanctions for non-compliance. Such rules may be formal of informal. Formal rules are consciously designed and clearly specified - as in the case of written constitutions, contractual agreements, property rights, the terms of reference and standing orders of committees, and so on. Informal rules are not consciously designed or specified in writing - they are the routines, customs, traditions and conventions that are part of habitual action (North, 1990: 83). Informal institutional rules are, however, distinct from 'rules of thumb' in that they are recognised and shared by members of a community or society - they are not simply personal habits or preferences.

I believe that the study of *both* formal and informal rules, and in particular their interaction, is essential to an understanding of institutions and institutional change. Thus my first proposition is that:

Institutions comprise a set of formal and informal rules which structure social action and are shared within a particular organisation or community.

3.3 Stable/dynamic

Stability is a defining feature of institutions. Huntington defined institutions as 'stable, valued and recurring patterns of behaviour' (cited in Jordan, 1990: 475). Institutions stabilise expectations and structure social, economic and political life. However, the six vignettes

give different emphasis to the relative stability of institutions; they also conceptualise in a variety of ways the nature and source of institutional change.

In his depiction of the 'stable' institution, North emphasises continuity, while seeing a potent source of change in the interplay of formal and informal rules. Proponents of the 'mythic' institution also focus on continuity, noting the tendency of dominant institutions to reproduce themselves through what Zucker calls the 'contagion of legitimacy'. Proponents of the 'efficient' and 'manipulated' institutions argue that existing institutional arrangements will persist only as long as they serve the interests of utility-seeking rational actors. In contrast, March and Olsen emphasise that 'appropriate' institutional arrangements are never 'closed' or 'complete', but always ambiguous and in flux. The stability of the 'disaggregated' institution is depicted as depending upon a continuing process of renegotiation and coalition building. As the interests of coalition partners change (in the context of a changing environment), relationships may become destabilised. Clegg and Sabatier pursue a similar theme in depicting the power of competing 'modes of rationality' or 'belief systems' to shape and re-shape institutional arrangements.

'New institutional' perspectives highlight that institutions are not *things* but *processes*. Institutional rules have to be sustained over time. An ongoing process of institutionalisation creates stability; what drives that process is a matter of debate. The vignettes variously attribute it to a search for legitimacy, a synergy between formal and

informal rules, a process of utility-maximisation, a sense of appropriateness, an interdependence between actors, and so on. Institutions change when such processes are either interrupted suddenly, or evolve to the extent that they produce quite different rules. Rules may be de-institutionalised because they no longer confer legitimacy, or cease to 'fit' with a changing environment. Alternatively, an institutional framework may collapse because rules no longer serve the interests of dominant actors - in the context of changing interests and/or shifting power relations between actors.

I believe that an institutional 'lifecycle' emerges whereby rules and norms develop, become recognised and adhered to, and then fall into disuse, to be replaced by new arrangements. This leads me to my second proposition, that:

Change and stability are stages in an institutional lifecycle.

3.4 Strategic action/norm-governed behaviour

Amongst the vignettes there is a contrast between perspectives on institutional life which emphasise strategic action, and those which stress norm-governed behaviour. The former position assumes that individuals act intentionally, with the aim of maximising their utilities. Institutions arise out of strategic action aimed at solving collective action problems (ie. maximising gains from cooperation). In economic life, it is assumed that the resultant institutions are 'efficient', securing benefits for all. In political life, the absence of a competitive market means that it is possible for institutions to be

'manipulated' by self-serving 'producers' (bureaucrats and politicians), while the interests of 'consumers' (the public) suffer. In both scenarios, changing external conditions, or the promise of new, more profitable institutional arrangements are likely to provoke change.

While rational choice theorists assume that individual interests are prior to institutions, other perspectives see interests as shaped by institutions (Lane, 1993: 189). The 'mythic' institution sees institutional templates within the wider environment as influencing actors' choices regarding organisational form and practice. In their scenario of the 'appropriate' institution, March and Olsen argue that individuals' action is norm-driven, following a 'logic of appropriateness' rather than a 'logic of consequentiality'. Action is influenced by a sense of duty and obligation, rather than by anticipation of the consequences of action. Institutional change involves the replacement of one logic of appropriateness with another - either through an incremental process or intentional 'reform' of dominant rules.

An emphasis on *norms and duties* implies consensus and continuity, and makes it hard to understand the sources of institutional change (Knight, 1992: 211). An emphasis on *rational action* implies a selfish free-for-all and makes it hard to understand institutional stability and 'robustness' (Shepsle, 1989: 134). My conclusion is that both rational action and norm-driven behaviour play important roles in the institutional lifecyle, and that both conflict and continuity are central to institutional life. Some of the authors reviewed in the last chapter develop approaches which recognise the significance of *both* strategic

action and norm-governed behaviour. Sabatier shows how opposing 'advocacy coalitions' take strategic action in the pursuit of different beliefs. Clegg shows how different groups compete to generalise their 'mode of rationality'. Majone explains that actors seek to modify institutional frameworks in their favour at the same time as pursing immediate goals within given sets of norms.

I believe that neither adherence to norms nor the pursuit of selfish ends can explain all the stages of the institutional lifecycle. This gives rise to my third proposition, that:
Strategic action plays an important role in driving institutional change, while norm-driven behaviour is a key force in sustaining institutional rules over time.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed arguments from within the panoply of 'new institutionalisms'. Taking an inter-disciplinary approach, the discussion was organised around six 'vignettes', each of which exposed a different aspect of institutional life. I identified three key variables in the treatment of institutions and institutional change: the signficance of formal vis-a-vis informal institutional rules; the significance of institutional stability vis-a-vis dynamism; and the significance of strategic action vis-a-vis norm-governed behaviour. From this discussion I put forward three propositions:
- Institutions comprise a set of formal and informal rules which structure social action and are shared within a particular organisation

or community.

- Change and stability are stages in an institutional lifecycle.
- Strategic action plays an important role in driving institutional change, while norm-driven behaviour is a key force in sustaining institutional rules over time.

In the next chapter I seek to operationalise these propositions by developing a framework with which to analyse institutional change in practice. The theoretical vignettes serve as a 'tool box' of concepts and ideas in building the model. Subsequent chapters will analyse local government decentralisation within this framework.

CHAPTER 5 - A FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Introduction

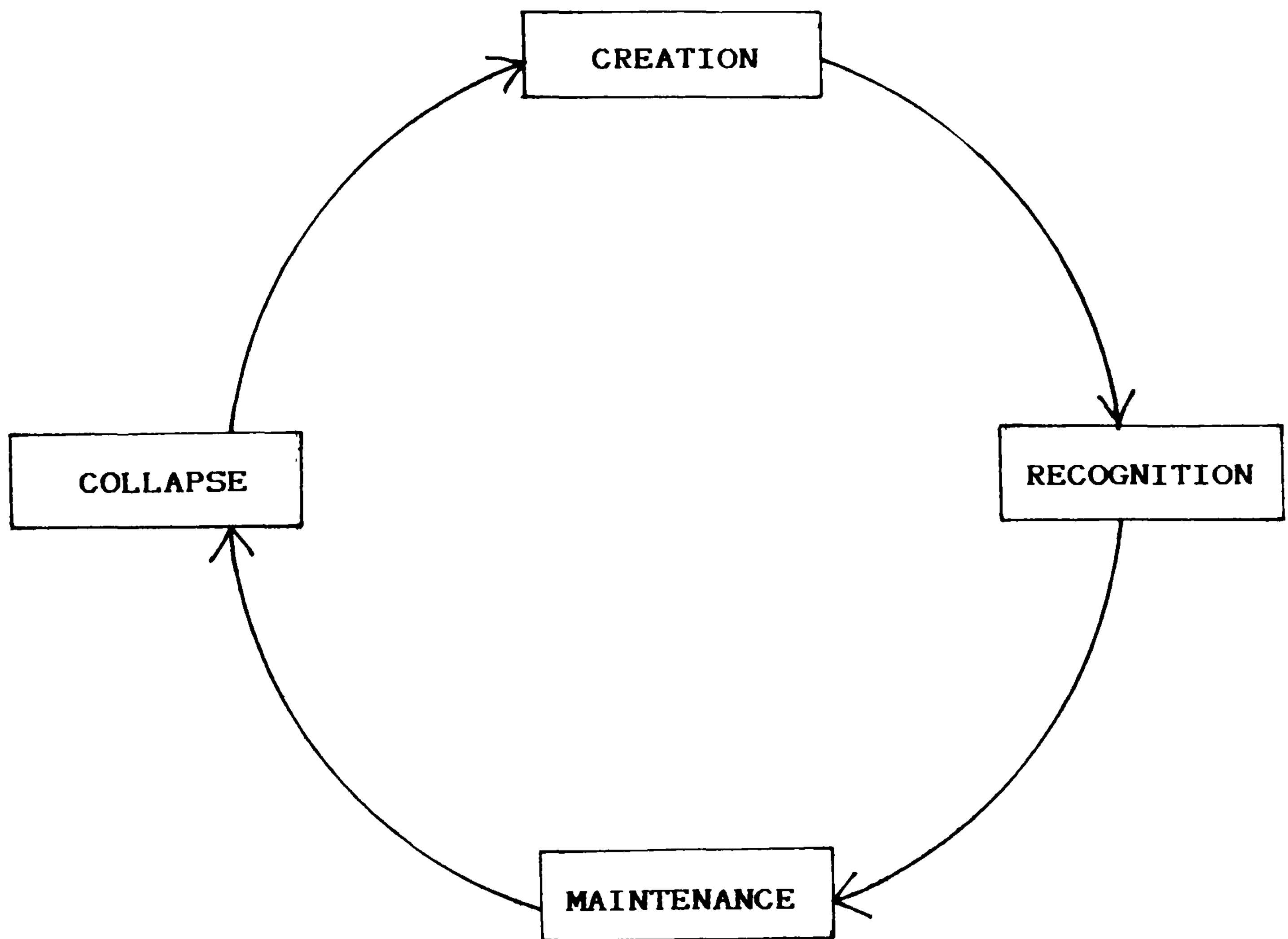
In this chapter I develop a framework and methodology for analysing local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change. In Part 1 I outline a conceptual framework based upon the propositions developed in the last chapter. I seek to operationalise key concepts drawn from the literature review in Chapter 4. In Part 2 I outline my 'action research' methodology. In Part 3 I introduce the case study of decentralisation in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Part 1 - A framework for analysing institutional change

1.1 An institutional lifecycle

My literature review led me to propose that change and stability are both part of institutional life. This proposition can be operationalised through a framework based on the idea of an institutional lifecycle. The framework identifies different stages in the development of institutions, and the forces which drive change. The institutional lifecycle is portrayed in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 - An institutional lifecycle



In practical terms, what is involved in the different stages of the lifecycle?

Creation refers to the conceptualisation or initiation of new institutional rules. The creation of new rules involves debate and deliberation, identifying and reflecting on existing practice, and investigating alternative ways of doing things (perhaps learning from other communities or organisations). New rules are likely to reflect the values, beliefs and preferences of those who design them. New rules may be championed by a coalition of actors, often in conflict with opposing coalitions. New rules may be encapsulated in some statement of intent or 'vision'. For political institutions, this might take the form of a constitution, a party manifesto, a government white paper, a 'mission statement', or a structure plan.

Recognition refers to the process by which knowledge of new rules becomes shared among members of a community or organisation. This involves informing people about new rules - 'selling' the underlying ideas to relevant actors and explaining what new rules involve, what they imply for action (what will be permissable, forbidden or possible under the new arrangements). It involves actors coming to understand what is to be expected of them and how new practice will differ from old. For political institutions, recognition might proceed through pilot or demonstration projects, 'task forces' to work up ideas for implementation, public hearings or consultations, workplace meetings, newsletters, campaigning and lobbying activities, or party political broadcasts.

Maintenance refers to processes whereby new rules are put in place and sustained over time. Incentive structures (eg. job gradings, bonuses, promotion routes) will need to be altered to ensure that compliance with new rules is rewarded. To be effective, institutional rules must provide reliable information on others' likely future behaviour and on likely sanctions for non-compliance. Rules need to be continually institutionalised, otherwise they may fall into disrespect and disuse. Rules are unlikely to provide a complete and unambiguous guide to action in all circumstances (particularly as environments change), so maintenance involves the renegotiation and adaption of rules over time. The maintenance of institutional rules involves periodic reviews of the 'way things are done', identifying and dealing with conflict or confusion in rule interpretation among actors, and analysing the 'fit' between rules and changing environments. For political institutions, maintenance might involve scrutiny and review activities, on-going training and culture-building, public opinion surveys, performance monitoring and appraisal, and environmental scanning. Institutional change is, however, hard to control: rules may evolve in unpredictable ways and actors may seek to adapt rules in favour of their own interests.

Collapse refers to the undermining and rejection of institutional rules. As institutional rules collapse, they fail to provide actors with reliable information on other actors' future behaviour. Alternative rules may begin to develop in parallel with 'official' rules. Perhaps new rules have failed to 'take root' and old rules are beginning to reassert themselves. Institutional rules may fall gradually into disuse, or evolve over time into some quite different set of constraints.

Alternatively, collapse may involve a concerted attempt by a group of actors to undermine rules, by non-compliance (even in the face of sanctions) or through argument and debate. In political institutions, existing rules may collapse because they no longer 'fit' with the demands placed upon actors, because of the perceived negative effects of rule-following, or because a new political or managerial regime sets out to create a new set of rules which reflects its values and beliefs. The collapse of institutional rules reflects changing power relations between different actors and may involve conflict between opposing 'coalitions'.

The model assumes some relationship between old and new rules in its linking of 'collapse' and 'creation' as stages in the cycle. It presents, however, a simplified picture of institutional change. In reality, old and new rules may coexist, even compete. The 'stages' identified in the model will not necessarily follow each other in smooth succession. New rules may be reluctantly accepted over time - they may exist for some time as 'paper' rules only. Rules may be accepted by some actors but not others - perhaps depending upon their distributional effects. The collapse of rules may not be a once-and-for-all occurrence - they may be gradually undermined, with change occuring in a stuttering process. Rules 'in danger' may be shored-up through exhortation or through additional sanctions for non-compliance.

In analysing local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change, the model can be used to identify the processes whereby one set of institutional rules collapses and a new set is created, recognised and maintained over time.

1.2 The interaction of formal and informal institutional rules

The evolution of formal institutional rules is affected by their interaction with informal rules. Our discussion above has concentrated upon formal rules. This reflects the way that political institutions are usually regarded. It is easy to see that family life, for instance, is governed by relatively *informal* institutional constraints - the expectation of monogamy, the sexual division of labour, the sharing of resources, loyalty and trust, authority relationships, and so on. (Formal institutions are of course significant too - marriage ceremonies, divorce laws, custody agreements, child protection arrangements.) Political institutions are generally recognised as the *formal framework* for collective decision-making and the coordination state activities - electoral arrangements, departmental and committee structures, decision-making procedures, legal liabilities, officials' terms and conditions of employment, accounting rules, requirements of information and access for the public and press, and so on.

However, one does not have to delve very deeply to see that informal conventions play an important role too. Indeed I proposed at the end of Chapter 4 that formal and informal rules are both integral to institutional life. In political settings, informal rules govern professional and political ethics, relationships between and within political parties (eg. leadership or coalition conventions), communication channels between politicians and officials, and the interface with interest groups and citizens (the degree of openness and responsiveness). Formal rules are more likely to be generalised (eg.

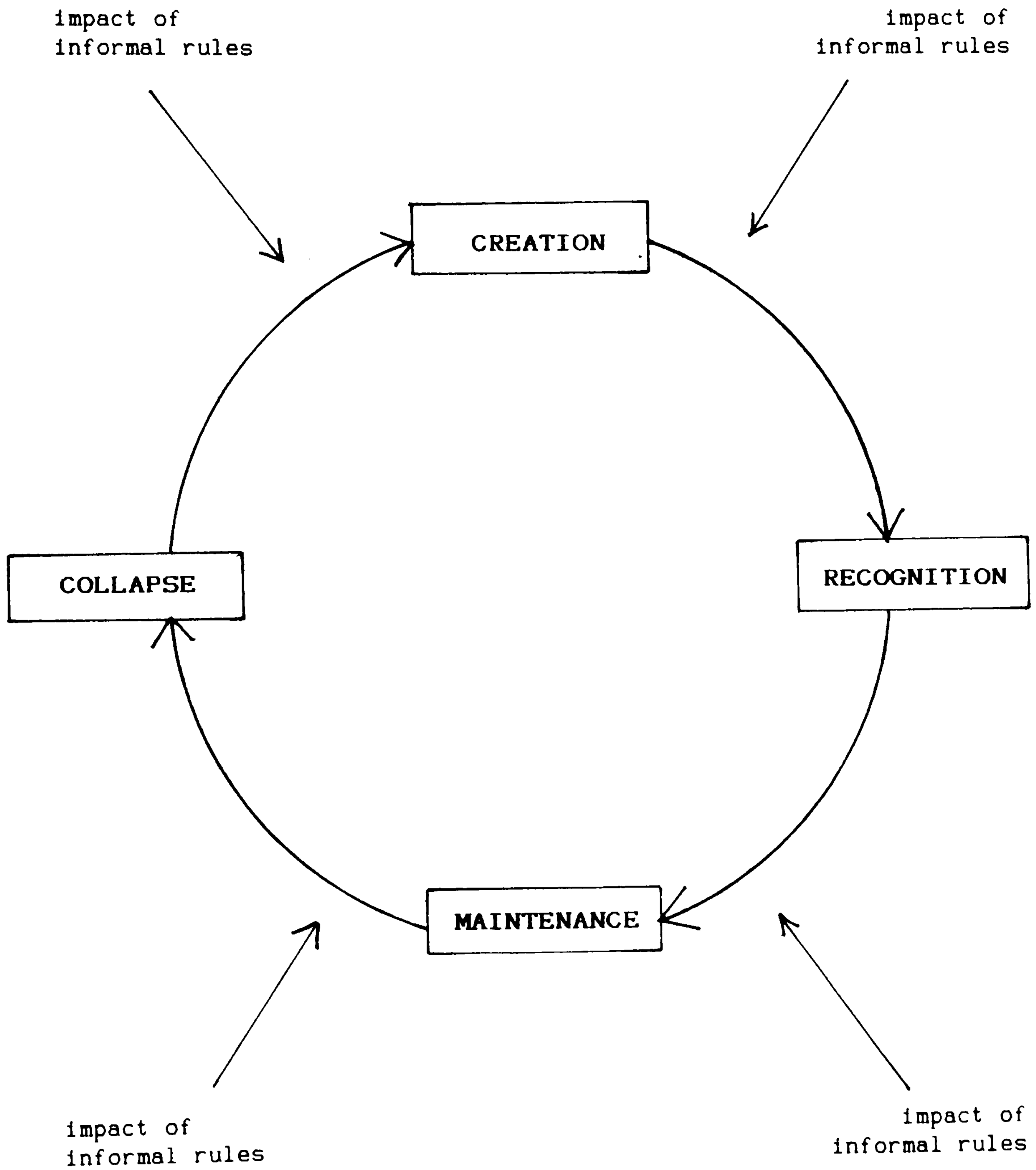
affecting all local authorities), whereas informal rules are more susceptible to variation, perhaps having roots in the traditions of a particular locality or organisation. While formal rules are relatively easily changed by administrative reform or legislation, informal rules are more tenacious and likely to change incrementally over time. It is harder to change the informal 'way things are done around here'.

What is the interaction between formal and informal elements in the lifecycle of institutional change? The model is designed to help analyse change in formal institutional rules, but we are concerned also with the impact of informal institutions upon this process. At each stage, the process and form taken by institutional change is affected by informal institutional constraints. The interaction between change in formal and informal institutions is represented in Figure 5.2.

Many of the authors reviewed in the last chapter commented on the interaction of formal and informal institutional rules - the way that formal rules are in effect 'embedded' in a complex network of informal constraints. Knight (1992: 172) provides a useful summary of the ways in which informal institutions may impact upon attempts at formal institutional change:

- informal rules may provide a foundation upon which formal rules are built (providing 'raw material' for institutional innovation);
- informal rules may limit the feasible alternatives for the design of formal institutions (some things 'aren't possible' due to the strength of enduring, informal expectations);
- informal rules may persist in the face of (and potentially in

Figure 5.2 - The interaction of formal and informal rules in an institutional lifecycle



contradiction with) new, formal rules;

- informal rules may affect the distribution of resources and power within an organisation or community, thus shaping the direction of formal institutional change.

In analysing local government decentralisation, it is necessary to identify the impact of informal institutional constraints upon attempts to create and maintain new formal institutional rules.

1.3 Strategic action and norm-governed behaviour

At the end of the last chapter I proposed that strategic action plays an important role in driving institutional change, while norm-governed behaviour is a key force in sustaining institutional rules over time. Hence, both strategic action and norm-governed behaviour are important in the cycle of institutional change. Strategic action is all-important in creating and securing the recognition of new institutional rules. Politicians or managers may set out to redesign institutional rules; pressure groups or trade unions may lobby for changes or defend existing rules. Strategic actors may find themselves in competition with others attempting to change institutional rules in different ways. Coalitions of actors may form with the purpose of replacing one set of rules with another. Conflict between different coalitions and changing power relations shape the process of change.

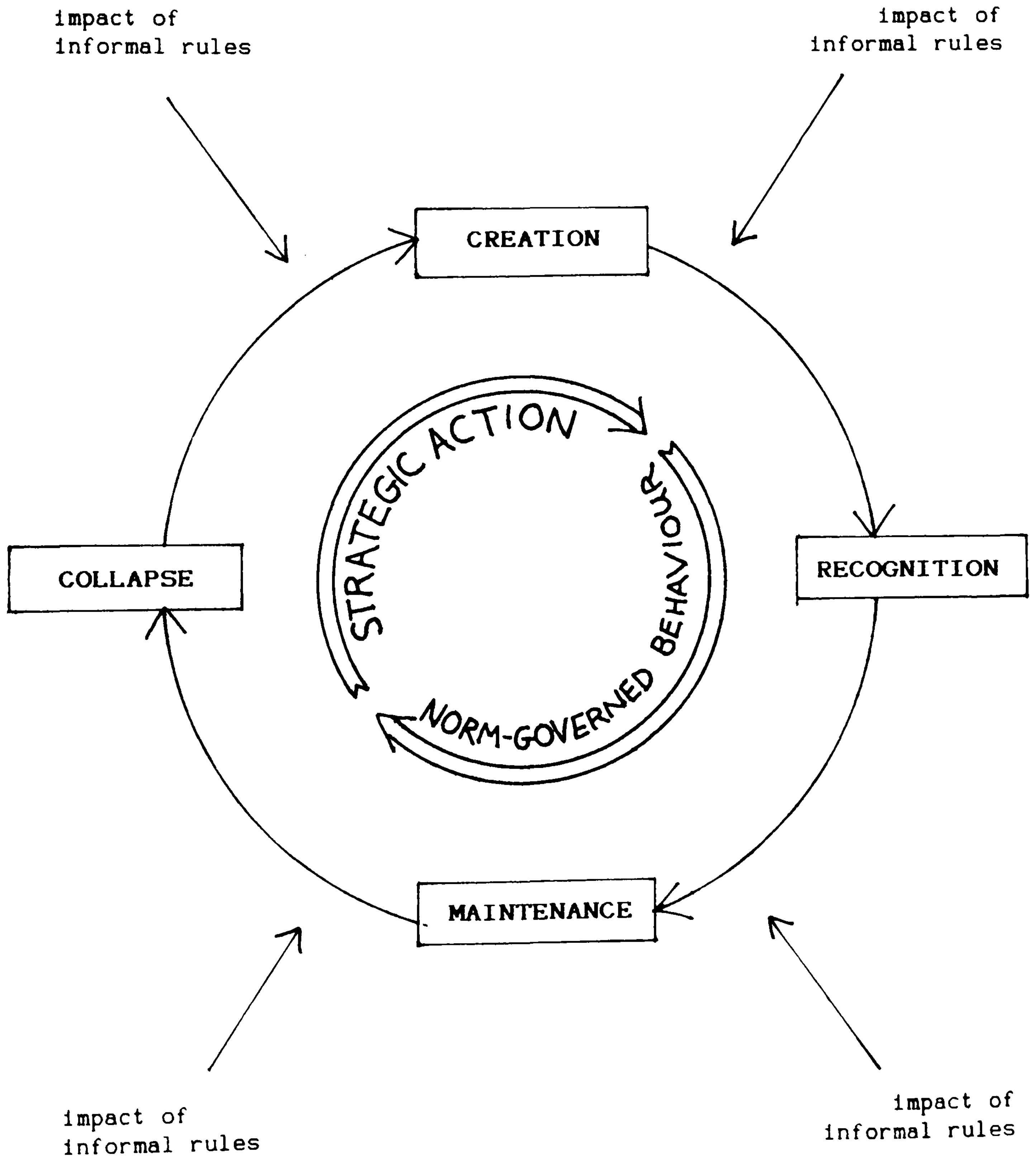
Institutional rules are most effective when they become embodied in a 'logic of appropriateness'. Institutional stability is maintained when

institutional rules acquire the status of norms. Line management and hierarchy, professional demarcations, and representation through election are all examples of rules which became norms within the traditional post-war welfare state. They established a relatively stable - though not necessarily efficient - structure to interaction among politicians, officers and the public. Rules 'provide us with the comfortable feeling of knowing what we are doing and where we are going' (North, 1990: 83); continual cost-benefit assessment of different courses of action becomes unnecessary.

Institutional rules begin to collapse when actors no longer accept existing constraints but undertake strategic action to change the framework of rules in line with their beliefs and preferences. At the present time, traditional rules based on bureaucracy, professionalism and representation are under challenge with the growth of commercialism, 'consumer' rights, and the appointment of non-elected boards. Whether such new rules are developing into a new 'logic of appropriateness' remains a topic for investigation. The interaction between these new formal rules and existing informal constraints will be one factor that affects this process.

In short, the relative significance of strategic action and norm-driven behaviour varies at different stages of the institutional lifecycle (represented in Figure 5.3). Strategic action is particularly important in destabilising old rules and creating new ones. The recognition and maintenance of institutional rules is, however, reflected in the emergence of new forms of norm-governed behaviour.

Figure 5.3 - The significance of strategic action and norm-governed behaviour in an institutional lifecycle



In summary, my framework for analysing institutional change depicts four stages of an institutional lifecycle: creation, recognition, maintenance and collapse. At each stage of the lifecycle, informal institutional constraints influence the development of formal institutional rules. The destruction of old rules and the creation of new rules is associated with forms of strategic action, while the recognition and maintenance of institutional rules over time is associated with forms of norm-governed behaviour.

In subsequent chapters I will use this framework to analyse local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change. I now go on to explain my research methodology and to introduce my case study.

Part 2 - Research methodology

2.1 Case study analysis: purpose and design

What is the purpose of case study research - how can it contribute to an understanding of local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change? Schramm notes that a case study 'tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result' (cited in Yin, 1984: 23). It has exploratory, descriptive and explanatory purposes (Yin, 1984: 16). It explores a phenomenon in a holistic sense; it describes a phenomenon in a 'real-life' context; it traces operational links over time. However, as Eckstein (1960: 15) points out:

> Case studies never 'prove' anything; their purpose is to illustrate generalizations which are established otherwise, or to direct attention towards such generalizations.

In a similar vein, Yin (1984: 21) points out that case studies, unlike statistical samples, are 'generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes'. Case studies are used to 'expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation)' (Yin, 1984: 21). In this thesis I have put forward a series of propositions about institutional change; the purpose of our case study is to 'direct attention' to 'generalisations' about decentralisation as a process of institutional change. My purpose is not to 'test' a set of hypotheses but to reflect upon theoretical propositions.

Case study investigations may follow a single-case or a multiple-case design. For this thesis I have selected a single case. Yin (1984: 42-3) reports that a single-case design is appropriate in the following conditions: when the case in question represents a 'critical case' in testing a well-formulated theory; when the case is a 'revelatory case' which allows a previously un-studied phenomenon to be investigated; or when the case is an 'extreme or unique case'. My choice of a single case is justified on the last of these three grounds. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is not a randomly selected case study; rather it constitutes a limiting case in the decentralisation field - the most extreme example of a widespread and diverse phenomenon. As subsequent chapters will show, the Tower Hamlets decentralisation initiative can claim with considerable justification to be 'unique' - the most radical

reform of its type in Britain. As such it provides an opportunity to examine in one place and at one time many different aspects of decentralisation, each taken to their extreme. Many local authorities have developed particular aspects of decentralisation, for example 'one stop shops', or local consultative forums. Tower Hamlets, on the other hand, has neighbourhood and sub-neighbourhood offices, neighbourhood committees, local advisory forums, and a residual centre; it has taken decentralisation to its logical conclusion. I am looking at a 'limiting' rather than a 'typical' case.

According to Yin (1984: 44), case study design may be 'holistic' (focused on a single unit of analysis) or 'embedded' (studying sub-units). My case study takes an embedded approach as it focuses upon a sub-unit of the whole case - one of the seven neighbourhoods created in Tower Hamlets by decentralisation, Globe Town. Such a focus is appropriate given the objective of decentralisation to establish relatively autonomous sub-units within the brorough. One of the features of decentralisation in Tower Hamlets is that each of the neighbourhoods has developed its own character and approach. My focus on Globe Town is not justified on the grounds of typicality; a focus on a different neighbourhood would have highlighted different factors. Rather it is the depth and quality of information that can be obtained from the intensive analysis of one sub-unit that has to be traded against the limitations of concentrating on one part of the whole. I have attempted to maintain elements of a holistic approach too. I consider the borough as a whole when discussing the collapse of the old institutional framework and the

creation of new institutional rules through decentralisation. I focus on Globe Town when exploring the 'bedding down' of new institutional rules.

Built into case study design should be a strategy for analysing evidence. Yin (1984: 103-114) reviews three dominant modes of analysis for case studies: pattern-matching; time-series; and explanation-building. A *pattern-matching* logic involves comparing an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (or several alternative predictions). A *time-series* logic involves pattern-matching but is specifically concerned with events over time, looking at the degree of match between a trend of data and theoretically significant trends. The goal of *explanation-building* is to analyse case study data by building an explanation about the case. As Strauss and Corbin (1990: 22) put it, data is interpreted according to key concepts and 'the concepts are related to form a theoretical rendition of reality'. The aim is not to test hypotheses but to generate them - to develop ideas for further study.

My case study analysis follows the explanation-building logic. Explaining a phenomenon involves stipulating a set of causal links about it (Yin, 1984: 107). Although explanation-building can proceed through a simple narrative, 'the better case studies are the ones in which the explanations have reflected some theoretically significant propositions' (Yin, 1984: 107). This thesis embraces the iterative nature of explanation-building. Unlike pattern-matching, the final explanation is not fully stipulated at the beginning of the investigation; rather, the final explanation is the result of a series of iterations (Yin, 1984: 108-109):

(a) an initial set of theoretical propositions is established - here concerning the nature of institutional change (see Chapter 4 and Part 1 of this chapter);

(b) the case study evidence is examined and compared against the initial propositions - here examining decentralisation as a process of institutional change (see Chapters 6-9);

(c) the initial propositions are re-examined in the light of the case study investigation - here serving to generate ideas for future theoretical and empirical work on local government decentralisation and institutional change more generally (see Chapter 10).

2.2 Methods of data collection

My research looks at the period 1986-1990 during which Tower Hamlets' decentralisation initiative was put into place, and focuses on developments within one of the decentralised neighbourhoods, Globe Town. Following the principle of 'methodological triangulation' (Walker, 1985: 15; Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 146), I drew on a variety of data sources to analyse the process of institutional change: participant observation, documentary analysis, interviewing and survey work.

Participant observation was carried out while I was employed as a Research and Policy Development Officer in Globe Town Neighbourhood (1989-1990). Having been employed to work on an evaluation of the decentralisation initiative, I took part on a regular basis in a wide range of activities including committee meetings, tenants' and residents' meetings, management team meetings and 'away weekends', and staff and

trade union meetings. Participant observation was invaluable in gaining an understanding of the informal as well as the formal aspects of institutional change - those rules and constraints which do not appear on an organisation chart or 'mission statement'. It also enabled me to investigate the experience of less 'visible' institutional actors (like junior staff and non-activist members of the public). Participant observation is particularly appropriate for the study of changing rules and norms and the belief systems and interpretative orders behind them. It allows the researcher to get behind 'official' accounts of the way an organisation works and to explore ambiguity and conflict in rule interpretation. Participant observation demands particular skills: theoretical and social sensitivity, astute powers of observation, and good interactional skills (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 18).

I conducted a large number of semi-structured interviews with senior managers, other neighbourhood staff (particularly front-line personnel), trade union representatives, tenants' activists and community leaders. I also interviewed key actors at the borough 'centre', including the Chief Executive and Borough Treasurer. I had full access to internal documents including committee papers, consultative papers, consultants' reports and staff and trade union newsletters. Particular attention was paid to documenting and reflecting upon what appeared to be 'key events' - those incidents or series of events which seem to provide 'a metaphor for a way of life' (Fetterman, 1989: 93). It was not uncommon for interviewees to ring up with new pieces of information or even to 'request' further sessions. Amidst the trauma of a period of major institutional change, offering a sympathetic ear to interviewees and

colleagues was viewed by many as a valuable service! Despite the tensions of being both insider and outsider, participant and observer, stranger and friend, research through participant observation involves forms of reciprocity that many other methods do not.

Qualitative and quantitative methods complemented each other in the research. As Walker (1985: 16) suggests, 'a survey provides a context for qualitative work which in turn provides a commentary on the findings of the survey'. I carried out two surveys: on the views of staff (February 1990) and community representatives (June 1990) regarding decentralisation (see Appendix A for further details on methodology). I had access to the findings of two public opinion surveys (covering ten per cent of households) commissioned by Globe Town Neighbourhood (Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, 1988 and 1989). I also drew on the findings of a borough-wide survey of residents' attitudes to local service delivery and the council in general (MORI, 1990). Although quantifiable data was used, the analysis itself remained qualitative. I pursued 'a nonmathematical analytical procedure that results in findings derived from data gathered by a variety of means' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 18).

2.3 The 'action research' approach

The research was designed as a piece of 'action research'. The action research approach contrasts with the 'professional expert model' in which the researcher stands aside from the process under investigation and simply reports findings to decision-makers (Whyte, 1991: 9). Instead, 'action and research are closely linked' (Whyte, 1991: 8). The roles of

the researcher and the researched become, to some extent, blurred. The researcher is also a member of the organisation, their action impacting upon the very process under investigation. Other members of the organisation are not passive subjects but active participants in the research process. As Whyte (1991: 9) explains, we can 'discuss with these individuals what we are trying to find out and also consult them about how to interpret what we study'. I was called upon by other members of the organisation to play 'useful' roles - facilitator, therapist, confidante, note-taker. As one of my key informants put it: 'It's very therapeutic to go through things like this - it helps you focus' (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990). The action research approach allows the researcher access to situations that would not be open to the 'professional expert' and to a greater depth of understanding. It also allows the researcher to contribute ideas and reflections back to the organisation in an on-going process.

The blurred roles inherent in action research can also cause confusion. As Whyte (1991: 241) explains: 'the researcher must be prepared to relinquish the unilateral control that the professional researcher has traditionally maintained over the research process'. The researcher has to decide on a case-by-case basis what roles they are willing to take on. It is one thing to be asked to facilitate a management team meeting as a quasi-outsider, but perhaps another to be asked to act as a 'spy' on a picket line. The boundaries become blurred between informant and colleague, between interview and conversation, and between observation and commitment to a particular course of action. This can lead to

dilemmas over confidentiality and ethics, and also over research strategy.

Wearing two hats simultaneously - of researcher and participant - can become uncomfortable. The researcher is called upon to make difficult choices, as 'insider' and 'outsider' roles come into conflict. An example from my research experience serves to illustrate the point. Shortly into the period of research I had to decide whether to join a month-long strike (the incident is reported in Chapter 9). To do so was to prioritise 'insider' loyalties, reflecting my employment situation as middle-level researcher/administrator and trade union member. To have avoided involvement in the strike would have been to assert my 'outsider' identity as an academic researcher linked to a university and neutral regarding internal conflicts. I decided to join the strike. I learnt much about perceptions of the shifting institutional framework from conversations on picket lines (with strikers, non-strikers and the public) and attendance at mass meetings. At the same time, the decision to strike affected my access to senior management and politicians - I had been seen to 'take sides', even to betray the trust of managers and councillors. This affected my access to certain perceptions of the strike incident, whilst also influencing future relationships.

An awareness of conflicts of identity and of the choices made within the research process can aid the researcher's understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The action researcher cannot seek comprehensiveness, neutrality or objectivity, but can gain an understanding of the diversity of experience, interests and viewpoints

within a research site. As Fetterman (1989: 31) notes, the development of an 'insider's' perspective 'compels the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities'.

2.4 Limitations of the approach

Three caveats about the scope of my analysis are needed:

First, I am concerned with studying the *process* of institutional change involved in decentralisation in the borough. I am less concerned with evaluating the outcomes of the changes (eg. the quality of decision-making or service provision). I do, however, examine the different ways in which the change process has impacted on, and involved, different stakeholders in the local authority and the community.

Second, I am concerned with institutional change in a *unique period* of the borough's history: 1986-90 was a period of radical and dramatic change producing far-reaching effects. I am not specifically concerned with the post-1990 process of institutional change and adaption. I do, however, recognise that 'new' institutional rules continue to adapt and evolve. I refer in passing to more recent developments in Tower Hamlets and provide a 'postscript' (see Chapter 10) on key issues arising since the end of the reseach period.

Third, I am concerned with the in-depth analysis of a *single local authority*. This ensures a depth of analysis and a recognition of institutional specificity that might be missed in a more wide-ranging

project. However, I will end the thesis with a consideration of the contribution my analytical framework may make to an understanding of wider institutional change in local governance.

Part 3 - An overview of the case study

In this part of the chapter I provide an overview of the case study as a prelude to more detailed discussion in subsequent chapters. Here basic data is provided on the origins of decentralisation, on the key events in the scheme's implementation, and on the borough-wide and neighbourhood structures that have resulted.

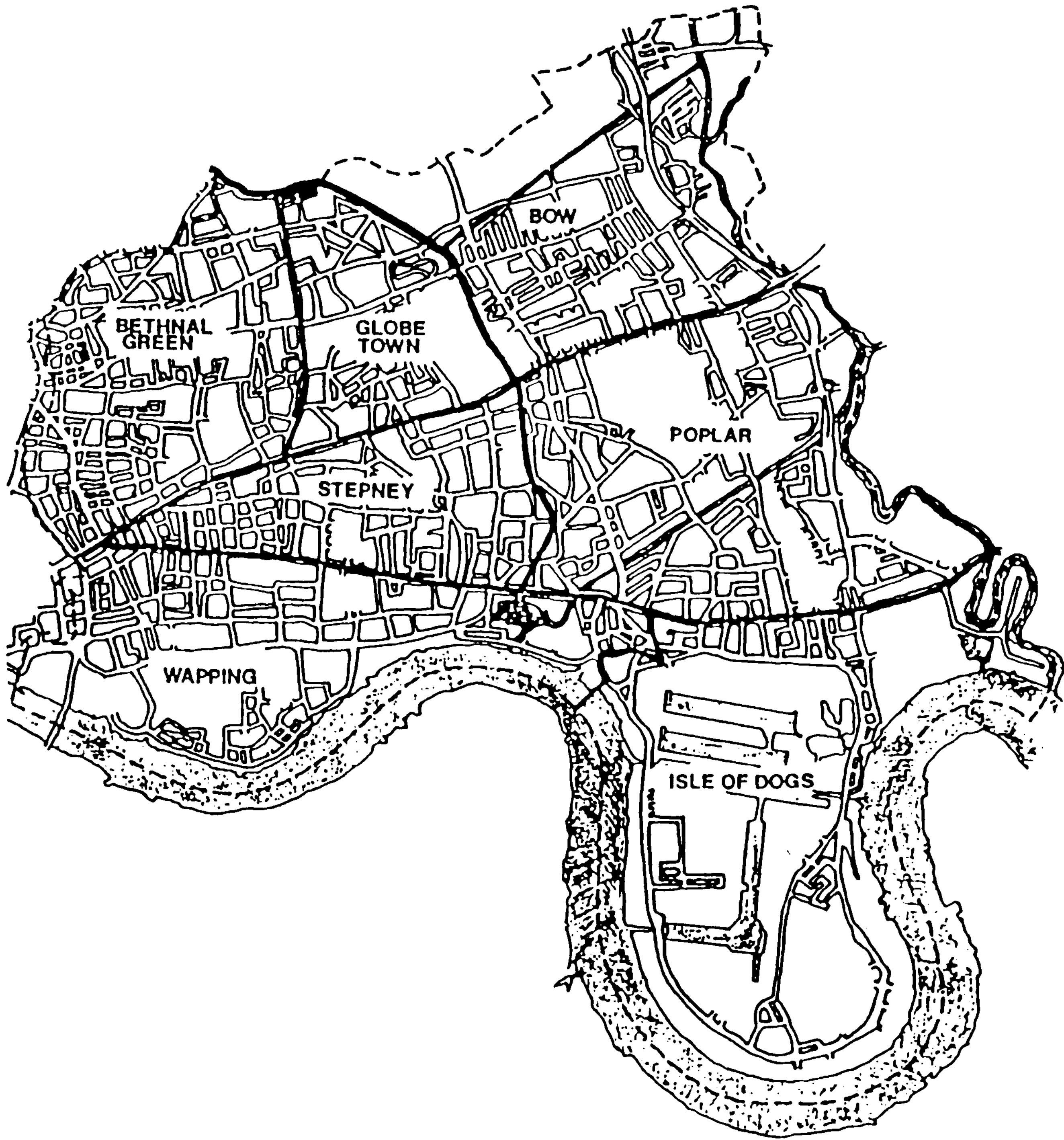
3.1 Decentralisation in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets serves a population of about 150,000 and is one of thirty two local councils in the Greater London area. It is responsible for the delivery of a comprehensive range of local services including housing, social services, environmental health and land use planning. Tower Hamlets, in the East End of London, is an area which has suffered de-industrialisation and rising unemployment for many years. The borough is characterised by a high incidence of poverty, severe social tensions (particularly around racism), a high proportion of public housing stock in poor condition, and many serious environmental problems. Tower Hamlets is a working class area with a large ethnic minority population. Gentrification is limited and focused on 'Docklands', where renewal has been overseen by the London Docklands Development Corporation.

In 1986 the Liberal Party took control of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. For over 50 years the Labour Party had been the dominant force in local politics and had controlled the affairs of the Borough since its establishment after the reorganisation of London government in 1965. The Liberal victory was a shock. The subsequent actions of the Liberals, having obtained power, also caused much consternation among Labour councillors and senior officers. The Liberals set about breaking up the existing political and administrative structures of the authority and establishing a unique and radical experiment in decentralisation. Most of the existing central committees and service departments were disbanded, and political and administrative control was passed to seven 'neighbourhoods'. The restructuring led to a radically different decision-making environment for councillors, a massive upheaval for staff and a new relationship between the authority and its public. In 1990 the Liberals were re-elected for another four-year term in Tower Hamlets, in a result which was against the run of national opinion polls and voting. The experiment in decentralisation appeared to have won approval in its first major electoral test.

When the Liberal Party gained control of Tower Hamlets in 1986, it was with a majority of just one seat. This did not stop the new administration implementing its radical manifesto proposal to 'hand power to the hamlets' through a programme of administrative and political decentralisation. The Liberals' aim was to dismantle the old bureaucracy and set up new units of neighbourhood-based local government. The Borough was split into seven neighbourhoods (see Figure 5.4), each covering two or more wards. Each neighbourhood has its own Standing

Figure 5.4 - Map of London Borough of Tower Hamlets showing the seven neighbourhoods



Neighbourhood Committee made up of councillors elected in the area and responsible for the delivery of all services in that area. The new committee structure meant that, immediately following decentralisation, three of the seven neighbourhoods fell under Labour control. Indeed, after losing a seat in a 1988 by-election, the Liberals retained overall control of the Borough on the casting vote of the mayor but four of the seven neighbourhoods became Labour-controlled (and remained so until the 1990 election which left Labour in control of just two neighbourhoods).

Despite the Liberals' goal of decentralised decision-making, decentralisation was pursued in a 'top-down' manner, coordinated by a special committee of councillors and a powerful group of officers (the 'D Team'). Some central service-based committees and departments (housing, development, amenities among others) were abolished overnight, but the process of reorganisation was taken further through two phases of decentralisation. The aim was for the new system to be in place by April 1988 - half-way through the period of office - so that the operational effects would be felt over the following two years, before elections in 1990. In fact decentralisation has never 'stopped' - pay-roll staff from the Borough Treasurers' department, for instance, were decentralised as late as April 1990.

Reorganisation in Tower Hamlets was based on the principle that *all* staff could be decentralised, not just those in direct service delivery departments (housing and so on). Phase 2 of the reorganisation saw the decentralisation of many of the functions of 'support' departments like personnel and management services, legal services, trading standards,

engineers, property and building services. Despite legal obstacles, social services were also decentralised and placed under the control of seven Neighbourhood Social Services Managers. Each neighbourhood appointed a Neighbourhood Chief Executive to oversee service delivery and staff management. At the same time, a central decision-making capacity has been retained. A Liberal-controlled Policy and Resources Committee (and associated sub-committees) exercise political influence at the Borough-level. The posts of Borough Chief Executive and Treasurer (along with supporting staff) have also remained. Against the wishes of the Liberals, but as a legal requirement, a Social Services Committee and Director of Social Services also remain at the centre. (It is difficult to represent Tower Hamlets' central structures in diagramatic form as they were constantly changing during the research period, as additional functions were decentralised.)

The system is, however, premised on neighbourhoods having considerable decision-making and administrative autonomy. The Liberal-controlled centre allocates each neighbourhood an annual budget. Once the budget is fixed, it is up to the neighbourhoods how that money is spent. No reference to a central committee is required to move money between budget heads. The fixing of establishments and the filling of vacancies are also matters for neighbourhood decision. Flexibility even extends to allowing a carry forward of under-spends from one year to the next; similarly, neighbourhoods are required to carry forward over-spends - the centre will not bail them out. In terms of capital spending, the neighbourhoods have the opportunity to sell assets and use the receipts to support building and renewal projects. In short, the system gives

considerable financial autonomy to neighbourhoods, limited by an initial central decision on budget allocations.

3.2 Globe Town Neighbourhood

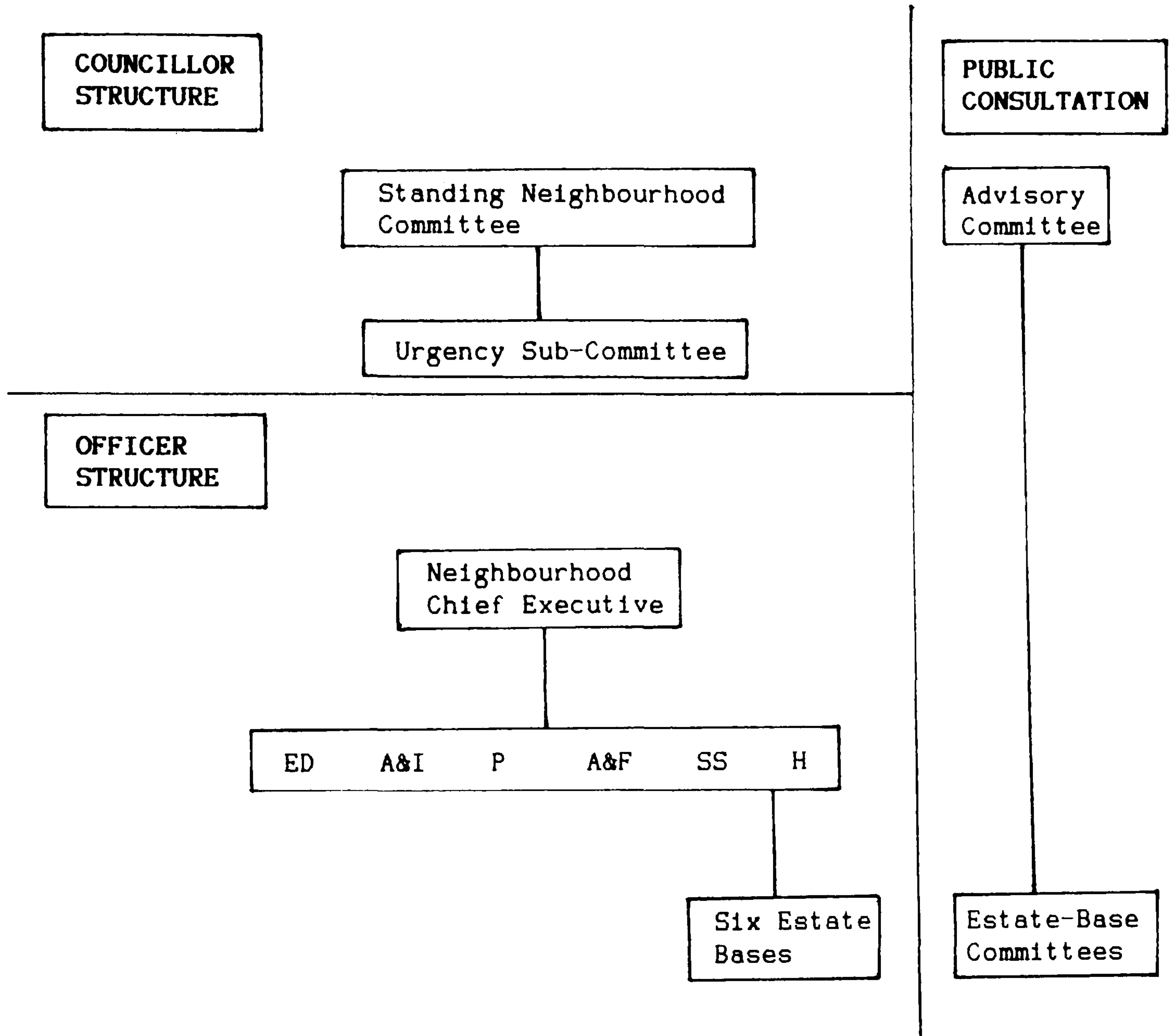
In the context of the Tower Hamlets decentralisation scheme, Globe Town Neighbourhood constitutes one of the smallest but most powerful units of local government in the UK. Its Standing Neighbourhood Committee is made up of five councillors elected in the two wards within its one and a half square kilometre area. From 1986 to 1990, four out of the five councillors were Liberal Democrats, with one Labour member (in 1990 the Liberals gained control of all five seats). Globe Town has its own Neighbourhood Chief Executive and employs approximately 300 white collar and 100 manual workers. Its revenue budget for 1989/90 was £10.5 million. In the same year, capital spending overseen by the neighbourhood stood at £22 million, representing an attempt to maximise the use of capital receipts (arising from an extensive programme of asset disposal) prior to the new financial arrangements governing local authority capital spending (from 1990/91).

Globe Town Neighbourhood is the smallest of the seven neighbourhoods, serving a population of 15,000 (the largest neighbourhood, Poplar, has a population of around 40,000). Located in the North of the Borough, the area is not the most disadvantaged in Tower Hamlets. Globe Town nevertheless has severe 'inner city' problems of economic decline, social deprivation and failing infrastructure. Around one in five of its population is over 65 years of age and around 20% of Globe Town's heads

of households are from minority ethnic groups. There is a high level of dependence on public services (and social security benefits), and at the time of the field-work (1989/90) around 70% of the population lived in housing rented from the local authority. (More detailed demographic and socioeconomic data are provided in Chapter 6.)

Figure 5.5 sets out the basic organisational structure of Globe Town Neighbourhood during the period of my research. There are three main organisational elements: a councillor structure, an officer structure and a structure for public consultation. The formal decision-making bodies for councillors are the Standing Neighbourhood Committee, which meets on a six-weekly basis, and the Urgency Sub-Committee, which meets as often a required (usually once a week). The officer structure is headed by the Neighbourhood Chief Executive and a team of six neighbourhood managers, each with responsibility for a particular group of functions (see Figure 5.6). Housing, which has a dominant role in the neighbourhood (given the size of the housing stock), operates through six 'estate bases'. Public consultation bodies exist in parallel to Globe Town's internal decision-making structures. A crucial role is played by the Advisory Committee - composed of representatives from tenants' and residents' groups - which considers and comments on the whole range of neighbourhood activities. A system of Estate Base Committees (made up of tenants and residents) operates alongside the estate-based officer teams. Various user panels and working parties also exist, but these are very much 'poor relations' to the main, tenant-based structures.

Figure 5.5 - Globe Town Neighbourhood: main decision-making and service delivery structures, 1989-1990



Note:
ED - Environmental Development Manager
A&I - Arts and Information Manager
P - Property Manager
A&F - Administration and Finance Manager
SS - Social Services Manager
H - Housing Manager

Figure 5.6 - Globe Town Neighbourhood: grouping of functions, 1989-1990

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Members' Support
Customer Liaison/One Stop Shop
Policy Development/Research
Community Development
Press and Publicity

HOUSING

Rents and Rent Arrears
Housing Benefits
Lettings
Repairs and Maintenance
Estate Management
Housing Development

ARTS AND INFORMATION

Libraries
Arts
Entertainment
Information
Advice Services

SOCIAL SERVICES

Field Social Work
Residential and Day Care
Fostering and Adoption
Home Care
Hospital Social Work
Emergency Duty Rota
Social Services Development

ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning
Highways
Economic Development
Sport
Open Spaces
Cleansing
Environmental Health
Trading Standards
Markets
Horticulture

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Finance (incomes/payments)
Administration
Secretariat
Personnel
Legal
Information Technology

PROPERTY

Surveying
Architecture
Landscape
Valuation
Right to Buy
Project Management
Property Management

Conclusion

In Part 1 of the chapter I developed a framework for analysing institutional change, based upon the theoretical propositions set out in Chapter 4. My framework depicts four stages of an institutional lifecycle: creation, recognition, maintenance and collapse. At each stage of the lifecycle, informal institutional constraints influence the development of formal institutional rules. The destruction of old rules and the creation of new rules are associated with forms of strategic action. The recognition and maintenance of institutional rules over time are associated with forms of norm-governed behaviour. In subsequent chapters I will use this framework to analyse decentralisation in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

In Part 2 of the chapter I discussed my methodology. I noted that while the 'action researcher' cannot seek comprehensiveness or neutrality, they are well placed to develop an in-depth understanding of the diversity of experience, interests and viewpoints within a research site. Such an approach is particularly appropriate to the study of institutional change, with its focus upon changing norms of behaviour, systems of meaning, relationships and identities.

In Part 3 I provided an overview of my case study, as a prelude to more detailed discussion. Tower Hamlets constitutes a 'limiting' case, providing an opportunity to examine local government decentralisation in a particularly extreme form. My aim is to use the case study to explore theoretical propositions about decentralisation and institutional change.

CHAPTER 6 - THE ROOTS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: CONTEXT AND COLLAPSE

Introduction

This is the first of four chapters investigating institutional change in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It serves two purposes. First, it analyses the *context* for institutional change in the local authority. This involves identifying 'locality effects' (Urry, 1987: 435) through an analysis of socioeconomic conditions and key informal institutions of civil society. Second, the chapter analyses the *collapse* of the local authority's formal institutional framework. This collapse had its roots in decades of 'municipal decline' (Loughlin et al, 1985) but culminated in Labour's 1986 defeat and the election of a Liberal (subsequently Liberal Democrat) administration committed to institutional change via decentralisation. The chapter aims to show how the collapse of the institutional framework for local governance was shaped both by contextual factors and by strategic action on the part of key local interests.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In Part 1 I look at the social and economic condition of Tower Hamlets. In Part 2 I examine the enduring informal institutions that characterise civil society in Tower Hamlets. In Part 3 I look at the collapse of the local authority's formal institutional framework.

Part 1 - The socio-economic context

1.1 The significance of locality for local governance

In analysing the context of local governance in Tower Hamlets, we are interested in more than a description of the area. I am interested in the impact of 'locality effects' (Urry, 1987: 435) upon the institutions of local governance. My aim is to trace the links between place, local politics and local political institutions.

Locality has become an increasingly popular idea in social science, yet its meaning is hard to pin down. Duncan has called it 'an infuriating idea', seeming to 'signify something important' and yet hard to define (cited in Gyford, 1991b: 1). Is not a locality simply a geographical entity - a place where people live, work or act politically? What locality theorists have in common is a judgement that 'place makes a difference', interacting with and influencing social, political and economic processes. It is proposed that a measure of local autonomy or discretion is involved in the way that general social and economic processes are experienced in particular places (Gyford, 1991b: 7).

What is the signficance of these insights for institutional change in local government? Local government is self-evidently local - it takes place within a locality. Local government is self-evidently diverse - the 513 different local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland differ in terms of political control, policy priorities and style or mode of operation. What locality theory has to offer is the contention that

diversity is not random but arises out of processes of uneven development. It contends that 'local' is not just a description of the arena in which local authorities operate; rather, there are specific connections between a locality, its local politics and its political institutions.

Diversity among local authorities arises out of:
- the challenge of responding to specific sets of material conditions (for instance, unemployment, industrial decline, immigration and environmental degradation);
- the impact of the local sensibilities and frames of meaning that characterise civil society and a locality's informal institutions.

Below I look at the first of these processes. I analyse socioeconomic conditions in Tower Hamlets, focusing on the economic structure and labour market, housing and the environment, demography and indicators of deprivation. In Part 2 of the chapter I look at the informal institutions of civil society. I focus on the area covered by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, while referring also to characteristics of the East End as a broader social, cultural and economic entity. While parts of the London boroughs of Hackney and Newham are within what is known as the 'East End', Tower Hamlets is generally acknowledged as its heart.

1.2 Economic stucture and labour market

Tomlinson (1989: 23) notes that: 'The economy and social structure of the East End have been determined by the river, the importance of the docks and the proximity of the City of London'. The veteran East End historian W.J. Fishman (1988: 2) has referred to the 'accident of location' that placed the area on the 'front line' of successive revolutions in communications, transport and trade. These factors have been shaping the East End since the thirteenth century when market stalls were established in Stepney (a rural area at that time) to sell produce to the City. At the same time, 'noxious trades' such as abattoirs, brewing and sewage-disposal came to be concentrated outside the City walls in the area that would become the East End (Hobbs, 1988: 90). Small shipyards developed in the area from the fourteenth century. By the end of the sixteenth century, international trade had stimulated the development of docks at Poplar and the growth of associated trades such as shipbuilding and repairing and the manufacture of glue, turpentine and varnish.

As the docks flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so too did the markets. The East End also developed as a centre for 'finishing' and consumer goods trades, benefiting from the availability of imported raw materials (which could be transported from the docks to small workshops nearby) and the growing consumer market in the City (Hobbs, 1988: 92; Cornwell, 1984: 57). Out of this combination of factors developed the clothing, silk and furniture trades with which the East End has become so closely associated. Immigrants from rural Britain,

Ireland, Europe and further afield arrived in the East End to find employment in the vibrant, yet precarious, local economy.

The economy of the East End began to decline from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Poverty, overcrowding, employment insecurity and low wages spread rapidly as more and more trades became casualised - victims of technological innovations (docks), free trade (silkweaving) and the spread of factory production (consumer goods). The 'pre-industrial' skills and culture of the East End were becoming anachronistic as the effects of industrial revolution spread. Just as the buoyancy of the East End economy had been related to its 'proximity to the epicentre of capitalism' (Hobbs, 1988: 117), so too was its decline.

The first part of the twentieth century, prior to the Second World War, saw a continuation of the East End's concentration upon the docks (and the distribution and transport trades) and small manufacturing (particularly boots and shoes, clothing, furniture, and food and drink). But by 1939 the boot and shoe industry had virtually collapsed in the face of competition from factory-based production and the local furniture industry was struggling. Whereas new electrical and light engineering industries were being developed in the North and West of London, they made little impact on the East End. The war accelerated the rate of industrial decline in the area and left industry even more concentrated and specialised (Cornwell, 1984: 57). In the 1960s the decline quickened as manufacturers moved out of inner-city premises that were too old and small to rationalise effectively. Remaining manufacturers attempted to compete through increased sweating of labour;

costs were kept low through reducing overheads and employing cheap female and immigrant labour. The sexual segregation of the East End's labour market left women occupying the least skilled, lowest paid and most insecure jobs, and often working in appalling conditions.

Male workers felt the pressures on the local economy too. The 1960s saw the 'slow death of the docks' (Goss, 1988: 116) with changes in transport and trade patterns and developments in dock technology. Containerisation reduced the need for manpower and moved what remained of the London dock industry down-river to Tilbury. Massive job losses resulted, not just in the docks themselves but in associated businesses like warehousing and lorry driving. The male unemployment rate for Tower Hamlets rose between 1961 and 1971 from 2.6% to 6.2% (Cornwell, 1984: 58). As we shall see below, the lack of employment opportunities coupled with housing shortages led large numbers of younger, skilled East Enders to leave the area during the 1960s for new towns and estates on the outskirts of London. For those who stayed, work was frequently intermittent and the best opportunities often lay with forms of self-employment and trading activity (Cornwell, 1984: 65; Hobbs, 1988: 117).

In the 1970s and 1980s Tower Hamlets had the highest unemployment rates in London - over 30% in some wards in the mid-1980s (Townsend, 1987: 20). Job losses in traditional East End industries have not been offset by new employment opportunities. The most spectacular local development activity has been in the old docks area but, despite the activity associated with the Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone and the London

Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), local unemployment continues to rise. Unemployment is actually higher in the Docklands area than when the LDDC was designated in 1981, reflecting the weakness of the LDDC's market-led approach. As the LDCC noted in 1982:

> Employment creation is a major aim of the strategy, but the rate at which jobs are attracted depends upon the market's response to the Corporation's initiatives. (cited in Brownhill, 1990: 89)

The market has not served local workers very well. As David Widgery (1991: 218), a local GP, reports: 'It is said of the red brick road along Marsh Wall that not a single brick was laid by a local'. He also notes that a newspaper poll of twenty local building firms found only one which had done any work at the massive Canary Wharf development. In 1989, twelve of the biggest office firms in the Isle of Dogs reported that only 3% of their workforce were resident in the area (Docklands Consultative Committee, 1992: 14). The major sources of employment growth have been in banking, finance and business services. The local labour force does not have appropriate skills for the new professional and office-based jobs; training agreements reached between the LDDC and Tower Hamlets have made little impact. Moreover, many firms have moved to Docklands with full establishments: between 1981 and 1987, 77% of incoming jobs (15,724) were transfers - only 4,593 new jobs were created (Brownhill, 1990: 95). Incoming firms are also using the move as an opportunity for rationalisation and the shedding of jobs (notably in printing).

At the same time there has been a continuing decline in the Docklands economy, with the loss of 11,145 jobs between 1981 and 1987. There was,

then, a net loss of 6,552 jobs in the period (Brownhill, 1990: 96). Development activities and land acquisition by the LDDC have actually led to the closure of existing firms, which employed a higher percentage of local residents than incoming businesses. The LDDC targeted for relocation firms which were 'ill sited', 'bad neighbours', 'underutilising space' or 'eyesores' (Brownhill, 1990: 96). Other local firms took advantage of rising land values to sell up at a profit and leave the area. The developers themselves have quickly fallen victim to the East End's historic vulnerability to wider economic pressures. Despite massive state subsidies (£700m spent by the LDDC alone) and freedom from regular planning constraints, the decline in the property and financial markets from the late 1980s means that doubt now hangs over the future of many of the developers' plans, most spectacularly Canary Wharf. Even in 1989 - before the worst of the recession and before the completion of Canary Wharf - 42% of office space remained unlet (Brownhill, 1990: 9).

The East End has been shaped by its proximity to the river and to the City of London. Following the pattern noted by Gyford (1991b: 12), 'new geographies of production' have been 'constantly overlaid onto earlier rounds of restructuring, creating further layers of development and decline'. The Docklands story is just the latest episode in a long-running saga:

> Docklands has not been 'regenerated' but 'restructured' to meet the spatial needs of the economy, developers and particular sections of the population at a particular time. (Brownhill, 1990: 173)

1.3 Housing and the environment

In the nineteenth century, housing in the East End was characterised by overcrowded and unsanitary 'rookeries' and 'turnings'; animals were stabled amongst cottages and tenements and craft workshops existed alongside dwellings. Even in the 1940s, 89% of housing in the Tower Hamlets area had no bathroom or indoor toilet and 78% had no running water (Cornwell, 1984: 29). Housing was either terraced cottages or flats in huge tenement blocks built by private companies or charitable trusts. Overcrowding was the norm and it was not unusual for families to occupy a single room. The East End was devastated by war-time bombing: Bethnal Green alone had 3,000 homes completely destroyed in the Blitz and not a single property in the area escaped some damage. Slum clearance followed: between 1945 and 1965, 500 units a year were demolished, rising to 1,000 units a year between 1965 and 1972 (Cornwell, 1984: 26).

Reconstruction outstripped the loss of homes and, by 1971, 30,000 new dwellings had been constructed. The new housing was constructed under local government auspices and, as a consequence, Tower Hamlets had one of the highest levels of council housing in the country, standing at 81% in 1983 (49,000 dwellings owned either by the GLC or the London Borough of Tower Hamlets). At this time only 4% of homes in Tower Hamlets were owner-occupied, with the remaining stock being in the private rented and housing association sector (Cornwell, 1984: 27). During the 1980s there has been a significant shift away from council tenure through the 'right to buy' provision for council tenants, housing association development,

and the construction of private housing in Docklands. The 1991 census shows that 58% of households rent from the local authority with a further 9% renting from a housing association. Owner occupation has increased sharply by local standards (to 23%), whilst remaining low by national standards. In summary, three-quarters of Tower Hamlets' residents do not own their own homes, and council housing continues to dominate the locality.

While the amenities and internal lay-outs of Tower Hamlets' new council homes were a great improvement on the old slums (bathrooms, toilets, running water, extra bedrooms, larger rooms and higher ceilings), the recent shifts in tenure relate, in part, to increasing dissatisfaction with the quality of council housing. As Goss (1988: 116) notes with reference to housing redevelopment in Southwark, 'in the short term, living conditions for many people were improved'; while in the longer term, dissatisfaction arose out of 'the process of upheaval, blight, reorganisation, the breakdown of communities and the widescale transformation of local areas'. Problems of poorly-designed public housing and urban blight are common to many inner-city areas, but are magnified in Tower Hamlets because of the extent of war-time damage and subsequent redevelopment. Getting out of the area is not easy for residents given the low level of car ownership: only 38% of Tower Hamlets households have a car (1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L20).

Tower Hamlets contains today 'some of the most dilapidated and overcrowded housing stock in the country' (Fekete, 1990: 71). The

borough has the highest level of overcrowding in the country (Morphet, 1987: 122). The 1991 census shows that 13% of Tower Hamlets residents live in households with more than 1.5 persons per room (1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L49). The same percentage of residents live in households with no central heating. The fear, violence and alienation of life on many Tower Hamlets estates is well-documented (Widgery, 1991; Wright, 1991; Fekete, 1990; Coleman, 1985; Cornwell, 1984). Homelessness is also a problem. On 1 April 1989 there were 1,098 families (6,000 people) in temporary accommodation and 250 people sleeping rough in the borough; as Widgery (1991: 139) points out: 'The East End is London's traditional Skid Row'.

Dissatisfaction with more recent housing projects may lead sometimes to nostalgia for the old back-to-back cottages, but it is striking that similar language was used to describe those earlier East End homes as is used about local housing today. Writing in the late 1970s, Fishman (1979: 10-11) bemoans the loss of 'the little streets and their ancient communities' in the face of 'the race for functional conformity' (Fishman, 1979: 10-11). Walter Besant (1903: 1), writing of the same cottages at the turn of the century condemns their 'meanness' and 'monotony', remarking on the 'rows and rows of identical houses'. Millicent Rose (1951: 262) describes the Peabody and Waterlow dwellings of the 1860s as 'the nadir of urban living'. Today the problems of the old tenement blocks exist alongside the new problems of fast-degenerating, post-war 'systems-build' housing. Colin Ward (1976: 45-6) has described the East End as 'a museum of housing', noting that: 'It is all here, every mean or

patronising assumption about the housing needs of the urban working class'.

1.4 Demography and deprivation

Ward (1976: 59) has described the East End as 'a place where new arrivals gained a foothold in the urban economy and learned urban ways'. The Huguenots, Protestant silk-weavers and craftspeople fleeing religious persecution, arrived from France in the fifteenth century. Africans, Chinese, Indians, Gibraltarians and Maltese all established small but distinct communities in the East End during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hogarth's paintings show black East Enders, and records from St Anne's in Limehouse show that the first men to be buried at the church in 1730 were an Asian seaman, two Africans and two Vietnamese (Widgery, 1991: 172).

Irish migrants had been coming to the East End for centuries, but large influxes accompanied the potato famine of the mid-nineteenth century. Developing a reputation for undercutting local workers, the Irish found employment in 'short spasms' in the markets, the docks, and street trading (Hobbs, 1988: 95). Jewish immigration to the East End also has a long history, but peaked in the 1880s at the time of anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia, Spain and Portugal. Between 1881 and 1905 one million Jews left Russia and 100,000 came to Britain, mostly settling in the East End (Widgery, 1991: 184). Jewish immigrants quickly found a niche as craft workers in the finishing trades of the East End. Widgery (1991: 31) notes that:

> A clear polarity emerged between the Anglo-Irish dockland and the immigrant manufacturing areas of Whitechapel and Stepney, an axis which still shapes the borough today.

In the post-war years, the Jewish community moved northwards out of Tower Hamlets to areas like Stamford Hill and Golders Green, but from the 1950s a new flow of immigrants started arriving from Bangladesh. Bangladeshis often stepped straight into the niche left by the Jews, taking over the same garment workshops and dwellings, even converting the Machzikei Hadath synogogue into the Jamme Masjid (Great Mosque) and Yiddish theatres into Bangladeshi cinemas. The Bangladeshis were 'accused of the same crimes as the Jews' - sweating, overcrowding, taking houses, clannishness, deliberate separatism, a lack of hygiene, and so on (Fishman, 1979: 95). By 1962 there were 5,000 Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets; today there are 37,000. People of Bangladeshi origin are now the largest minority ethnic group in Tower Hamlets, making up 23% of the Tower Hamlets' population (rising to 50% in some wards) and accounting for around one-fifth of Britain's total Bangladeshi population. In addition to the Bangladeshi community, there are a further 20,000 residents from non-white ethnic groups; white residents make up 64% of the Tower Hamlets population (1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L06). A House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (1986) reported that Tower Hamlets 'is absolutely unique in the scale of immigration to it'.

Despite the history of migration into the East End, the first eighty years of the twentieth century was a period of demographic decline in Tower Hamlets - a decline which reflected, but outstripped, trends in London as a whole. Out-migration has been related to job losses and to

overcrowding. High levels of migration from the East End occured during and immediately after the war due to the intense bombing and destruction of property in the area. Between 1931 and 1951 the population in the Tower Hamlets area was more than halved. Post-war slum clearance programmes stimulated further departures (Willmott and Young, 1960; Holme, 1985). Many 'escapees' (Hobbs, 1988: 169) left to buy their own homes, while for others migration was supervised by the local authority, which allocated council tenancies on new estates in outlying London boroughs. Cornwell (1984: 25) notes that it was the young, married, economically active skilled and semi-skilled individuals who left the East End, leaving behind a concentration of immigrants, lone parents, elderly, and unskilled people. Table 6.1 illustrates the declining population numbers between 1901 and 1981.

<u>Table 6.1 - Population in Tower Hamlets, 1901-1991</u>

Year	**Population**
1901	597,000
1911	570,000
1931	489,000
1951	231,000
1961	206,000
1671	166,000
1981	145,000
1991	161,000

Sources: Cornwell, 1984, Table 2.1, p. 26; 1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L02

Table 6.1 shows that demographic decline has now been halted in Tower Hamlets. The 1991 census shows the current population as 161,064 - almost a return to 1971 levels. This is due to slowing levels of out-migration, continued in-migration from Bangladesh (63% of Tower Hamlets Bangladeshis were born outside the UK), the arrival of refugees from Somalia and elsewhere in Africa, in-migration associated with business and housing developments in Docklands, and high birth rates, particularly among the Bangladeshi population. The 1991 census shows that although Bangladeshis only make up 23% of the total population, 45% of under 18s are of Bangladeshi origin. At the same time, the older generation is almost entirely white: 95% of the over 70s and 90% of the over 60s are white (1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L06). The make-up of the Tower Hamlets population seems likely to continue to change rapidly as young Bangladeshis start their own families and older white residents die. Tower Hamlets' growing population is putting pressure on local authority services, particularly housing and education; for example, in 1990, 500 children (95% of them Bangladeshi) were receiving no primary school education due to a shortage of school places (Fekete, 1990: 71-2).

Tower Hamlets is an area of great ethnic diversity, but is most easily recognised as a 'bi-racial' community (Burns et al, forthcoming, Chapter 5), dominated by a rapidly-growing, predominantly young Bangladeshi community and an ageing, white population with long histories of attachment to the area. The two communities are spatially and socially distinct. The Bangladeshi community is concentrated in the west of the borough in wards with the highest levels of deprivation. The socioeconomic situation of Bangladeshi residents is markedly different

from that of the white population, despite the generally working class character of the locality. The data presented in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show that Bangladeshis are more likely than white residents to be council tenants, to live in overcrowded accommodation, to lack access to a car, and to be engaged in less skilled occupations.

Thomas Fowell Buxton observed of the East End in 1816 that: 'The number of opulent individuals in this district is exceedingly small' (cited in Wright, 1991: 102). The statement remains true today, as evidenced by Tables 6.2 and 6.3. Table 6.4 compares Tower Hamlets with other localities in London, confirming that Tower Hamlets is an area of low incomes and high levels of deprivation. Tower Hamlets is second only to neighbouring Hackney in its borough-wide 'Z score' and its income distribution is even further skewed towards lower income households. Within the borough there are pockets of extreme deprivation. Tower Hamlets contains the most deprived wards in London: five of the ten most deprived wards in London (of a total of 755) are in Tower Hamlets, including the 'top' two wards - Spitalfields and St Mary's (Townsend, 1987: 40).

Tower Hamlets has the highest death rate and the lowest life expectancy for both men and women in London (Townsend, 1987: 35-6). The Royal College of Midwives reported in February 1990 that infant mortality was actually *increasing* within the borough (Widgery, 1991: 87). In addition, before the age of five, twice as many children in Tower Hamlets as in Bromley die in accidents and fires and from cancers and chest infections - Bromley lies just five miles away from Tower Hamlets on the other

Table 6.2 - Contrasts between white and Bangladeshi households in Tower Hamlets, 1991

Indicator	Percentage of households		
	All	**White**	**Bangladeshi**
Local authority tenants	58	55	77
Owner occupiers	23	26	7
Lack or share toilet/bathroom	1	1	2
Contain person(s) with limiting long-term illness	28	28	35
Overcrowding (over 1.5 persons per room)	5	1	35
No car	62	59	73

Source: 1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L49

Table 6.3 - Social class in Tower Hamlets, 1991

Social class based on occupation	Percentage of sample		
	All	**White**	**Bangladeshi**
I Professional etc. occupations	5.3	5.7	1.5
II Managerial and technical	26.3	27.7	14.5
III (N) Skilled occupations - non-manual	22.3	23.2	10.0
III (M) Skilled occupations - manual	17.3	17.3	21.7
IV Partly skilled occupations	18.3	16.0	43.1
V Unskilled occupations	8.3	8.5	4.2
Armed forces	0.1	0.2	0.0
Occupation inadequately described or not stated	2.1	1.4	5.1

Note: Based on a 10% sample of residents over 16 who are employed or self-employed (4,753 persons)
Source: 1991 Census, Local Base Statistics, Table L93

Table 6.4 - Deprivation and income distribution in most and least deprived London Boroughs, 1984

Borough	Z Score (7 variables)	Per cent of households with Less than £6,000 pa	Per cent of households with More than £15,000 pa
Most deprived			
Hackney	9.21	64.8	3.3
Tower Hamlets	8.55	69.6	3.3
Islington	7.04	57.4	10.4
Lambeth	6.87	52.9	9.3
Newham	6.75	55.6	5.0
Least deprived			
Harrow	-6.66	38.9	15.8
Sutton	-7.74	39.3	15.9
Bexley	-7.96	38.5	9.2
Bromley	-8.17	37.4	16.3
Havering	-8.30	43.7	8.6

Source: Townsend, 1987, Table 4.2, p. 32

Note: Z score based on following variables:
(a) per cent of economically active who are unemployed;
(b) per cent of economically active and retired who are semi-skilled or unskilled;
(c) per cent of households overcrowded;
(d) per cent of households lacking exclusive use of two basic amenities;
(e) per cent of households that were single parent households;
(f) per cent of households headed by someone born in New Commonwealth or Pakistan;
(g) pensioners in one person household.

side of the river (Widgery, 1991: 74). In 1990 the unemployment rate for Tower Hamlets stood at 11.9% (16% for men), second only in London to Hackney with a rate of 12.9%. At the same time, unemployment for the whole of London stood at 5.7% and at only 2.1% in the London Borough of Hillingdon (London Research Centre, 1990). Polarisation between the most and least deprived London boroughs is actually increasing. On a selection of deprivation variables, Tower Hamlets and Hackney did 'worse' than average in terms of changes recorded between 1971 and 1981, while Sutton and Bromley did 'better' (Townsend, 1987: 31). It seems, as Hobbs (1988: 217) notes, that:

> However dispassionately one tries to evaluate life in East London, whatever measure of urban blight is used, the area emerges as a poor, hard, mean place in which to survive.

1.5 Summary

I established at the beginning of the chapter that economic processes impact upon different localities in different ways through a process of 'uneven development'. Localities are differently situated within the 'spatial division of labour'. New 'geographies of production' are created out of the mobility of capital which 'makes and remakes places' in its search for improved returns on investment. As Gyford (1991b: 12) puts it: 'new geographies are constantly overlaid onto earlier rounds of restructuring, creating further layers of development and decline'. The character of a particular locality is influenced by the experience of successive rounds of economic restructuring.

I have shown how the economic and social structure of the East End has been determined by the river, the docks, and proximity to the City of London. The East End's place in the spatial division of labour has had profound economic, social and environmental effects:

- its economy has proved especially vulnerable to wider economic pressures: the changing fortunes of the City, transformations in transport and manufacturing technologies, and the changing international division of labour;
- its social make-up has been influenced by high levels of immigration, low wages and unemployment;
- its environment has been shaped by the legacy of the docks and the 'noxious trades', and by war-time devastation and subsequent redevelopment.

The East End's place in the spatial division of labour has created specific demands upon local politicians and political institutions - the demands of post-war redevelopment, and of governing and housing an ethnically diverse population against a back-drop of poverty and environmental decay. The role of the local authority has been shaped in response to these demands, witnessed in its widespread ownership of land and housing.

Part 2 - The informal institutions of civil society

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, I am concerned to analyse the impact of 'locality effects' on local politics and political institutions.

Having reviewed socioeconomic conditions in Tower Hamlets, I now look at the informal institutions associated with local civil society.

2.1 The impact of informal institutions

The distinctiveness of localities is not only an economic phenomenon. Gyford (1991b: 12) points to 'the impact of such uneven development on local social and political life'. Rose (1988: 151) writes that: 'local politics cannot be understood in isolation from the specific institutions, practices, and culture of the locality'. Efforts to capture this distinctiveness have employed the concept of 'civil society' - the institutions and practices of a locality that are outside the spheres of state or workplace. Rose (1988: 152) describes civil society as 'a geographically variable arena of social life', involving relations of class, kinship, neighbourhood, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, association and cooperation (in recreation, self-help, charity and community action). These practices are 'spatially patterned' (Urry, 1987: 436), appearing in different forms in different localities.

The institutions of civil society mediate 'between broad structural contexts and local contingency' (Warf, 1991: 566). They are affected by broad economic changes, but in turn influence forms of social and political action. Rose (1988: 152) notes that civil society constitutes a realm of activity outside formal politics which 'nevertheless shapes political expression in locally unique ways'. Following the anthropolgist Clifford Geertz, Rose (1988: 153) refers to the significance of 'local knowledge', 'communal sensibility', 'local frames of awareness'. In the

model of institutional change developed in Chapter 5 I used the language of 'informal institutions' - stable, valued, recurring patterns of behaviour that are 'embedded' in time and space. In 'common sense' terms I am referring to routines, conventions, traditions and customs - 'ways of doing things' which develop over time and are different in different places.

I argued in Chapter 5 that informal institutions affect the development of formal political institutions. They may provide the 'raw material' out of which formal institutions develop; they may limit the feasible alternatives or perceived 'repertoire' of possibilities for the design of formal institutions (Knight, 1992: 172). As Gyford (1991b: 23) explains, diversity in local government reflects 'the accumulated impact of the particular changes in economic fortune and in social relations which individual localities have experienced over years and decades'. Local factors shape political expression in unique ways, influencing both the substance of local policy and the structure and character of local political institutions. Gyford (1991b: 24) argues that:

> a logical conclusion of the concept of the uneven development of localities may well be not only that it mandates a diversity of local policies but that it may also mandate a diversity in the very structure of local government.
> This could apply both to the overall structure of types and functions of local authorities and to the internal organisational structures within which the staff and politicians of individual councils operate.

There is no simple one-to-one relationship, however, between informal institutions of a locality and the structure and style of local government. The informal institutions of civil society may be contested

and interpreted differently among different social interests. Different 'ways of doing things' coexist within a locality; there may be fierce competition to 'define' space and shape local institutions. Gottdiener and Lagopoulis (1986: 216) argue that 'the image of the city' is a 'banner in the fight between contending social interests'. Harvey (1989b: 266) argues that low income groups particularly develop 'intense attachment to place and "turf" and an exact sense of boundaries', because their lack of resources (housing, education, transport) leaves them 'trapped in space'. Middle class people too may be increasingly tied to their locality due to their spatially-specific financial and psychological investments (housing, schools for their children, leisure and recreation facilities, the valuing of a particular milieu). Attachment to locality has increased as labour mobility has reduced (in the face of unemployment, 'sticky' housing markets and the growth of two-career households) and as work-based identities have reduced in significance (Gyford, 1991b: 15-16).

Local authorities are subject to the influence of politicians, pressure groups and professionals all seeking to generalise their understanding of 'locality'. Local authorities are themselves actors in the process of shaping local identities and civil society. Their structures and policies may reinforce certain interpretations or create new understandings of place. Local authorities have a role in projecting an image of the locality to the 'outside world' - to central government, the European Community, private business and other local authorities. As the potential mobility of capital increases, it becomes all the more important for localities to make themselves distinct in order to attract

investment. Commentators have written variously about the 'marketing of place', 'civic boosterism', and the activities of 'spatial coalitions' or 'urban regimes' in attempting to 'sell' their locality within an international investment market (Cochrane, 1991: Stone, 1989; Logan and Molotch, 1987). Local authorities may seek to shape the character of a locality, as well as acting in response to local conditions and sensibilities.

Below I analyse aspects of civil society in the East End, seeking to identify dominant informal institutions. (In emphasising the continuity of certain traditions, I do not imply consensus but seek to show how they serve the interests of particular social groups.) My aim is to identify dominant assumptions about the 'way things are done' in the locality. This will provide tools with which to study the interaction between informal institutions and changes in the formal framework of local governance in Tower Hamlets. I consider five themes in local civil society:

- neighbourliness and community;
- inclusion and exclusion;
- individualism and entrepreneurialism;
- political radicalism; and
- Labourism.

2.2 **Neighbourliness and community**

Cornwell (1984: 23) notes that 'the East End of London has a mythological, as well as a practical, existence'. The East End has long

been seen as the embodiment of working class community. The myth has its origins in:

> the patriotic propaganda of the Home Front in the last war... images of everlasting cheerfulness and cooperation, and of people working together to cope with the devastation of their streets and homes by German bombs. (Cornwell, 1984: 23)

The association between the East End and the community ideal was reinforced through the work of the Institute of Community Studies set up in Bethnal Green in 1954 (see Young and Willmott, 1957; Wilmott and Young, 1960). The East End was seen as:

> the model of urban village life, a place of huge families centred around Mum, of cobbled streets and terraced cottages, open doors, children's street games, open-air markets, and always, and everlastingly, cups of tea and women gossiping on the doorstep. (Cornwell, 1984: 24)

What is the significance of the 'community' myth? To call it a myth is not to imply that its content is entirely fictional. Rather, certain aspects of East End life have assumed a special significance, serving to 'mark' the locality in contrast to other places. Such myths have an effect not only on 'outsiders', but on 'insiders' too. Indeed the myth has its origins in East End life and sentiment, and influences the behaviour and attitudes of those who live there. As Cornwell (1984: 24) notes, today the myth is part of what it is like to live in the East End:

> People who have been born and brought up in the East End almost inevitably enter into some kind of relationship with the myth - whether it is that they live it out in their own lives, that they laugh at it, reject it, feel insulted by it, take pleasure in it, or ignore it altogether.

Writing of Poplar (now part of Tower Hamlets) in the 1920s, Rose (1988: 157) comes to similar conclusions. The idea of community and neighbourliness had an effect on people's sense of what was appropriate for (and characteristic of) the East End, even if it came into conflict with aspects of everyday behaviour. Rose (1988: 157-8) undertook interviews with elderly people who remembered the '20s, all of whom remarked upon the 'goodness, kindness and friendliness of people' and of 'lending and borrowing and sharing among themselves'. However, they also told stories of family feuds, domestic violence and street fights. Rose (1988: 158) notes that:

> the *idea* of community, or cooperation and mutual aid, was a strongly held one in Poplar, one which is presented to outsiders not as a factual description of what went on (which is how these accounts were taken in the 'community studies' of the late 1950s and 1960s), but as an expression of what people wanted to believe went on, as an ideal.

This is revealed in the way in which the interviewees talked about community. As Rose (1988: 158) reports, they would often note that *'people said'* the East End was 'like a little village'. The significance is less in what actually took place and more in 'this self-image, this shared sensibility' as to what the area ought to be like (Rose, 1988: 158). Such sensibilities are influential as 'unwritten rules' or informal institutions, shaping social action and political life. In the 1920s such informal institutions shaped 'Poplarism': local Labour politicians felt that 'neighbourliness' required that those in need received adequate levels of relief, and 'community' demanded that families should not be split up and sent to workhouses. As Rose (1988: 158) notes:

> the major political consequence of Poplar's neighbourhoods was not

> the reality of their social structure; rather it was the morality which underpinned the practices of the neighbourhood.

I have dwelt on Rose's historical account as it is illustrative of the type of approach I wish to develop - an approach which links the informal institutions of a particular locality to the shape and style of local politics and political institutions.

2.3 Inclusion and exclusion

Linked to the theme of community is a second theme of exclusion and inclusion. A community is defined by boundaries - a sense of who belongs and who doesn't. The East End is defined in part by its separateness from the 'other', wealthy and fashionable London. Hobbs (1988: 108) argues that, from the nineteenth century, the East End became a 'metaphor' for the moral and physical degradation of working class urban life (Jack London titled his 1903 book about East London, The People of the Abyss). Hobbs (1988: 105-6) shows how the image of the East End as deviant, destitute and depraved was bolstered by social investigators like Chadwick and Booth, and also by the 'moral panics' generated by the press and popular speculation. The 'threat from the East' was reinforced by fears of 'King Mob' and Jack the Ripper, and more recently sustained by living legends like the Kray twins.

The East End is also bounded by its own sense of who belongs. While Tower Hamlets is an administrative entity, the East End is a larger, culturally-defined locality. Hobbs (1988: 87) writes that:

> the East End has evolved as an exclusively working-class society

> inhabited by over half a million people. Not a street, borough, or town, East London is a disparate community bonded by a culture rather than by any single institution or government agency. This one-class society locates its own boundaries in terms of subjective class defintion, and east of the City of London you are either an East Ender, a middle class interloper, or you can afford to move sufficiently far east to join the middle classes of suburban Essex.

What does it mean to be a 'working class society'? Writing of riverside boroughs on the other side of the Thames, Goss (1988: 109) notes that 'working classness' relates not only to the economic status of an area's inhabitants, but also to its social and cultural ways of life. She argues that the idea of class has constituted an 'organisational glue', which has produced a sense of solidarity within inner-city communities, expressed in the traditions and institutions of local culture and politics. Inclusiveness and a sense of belonging have also fostered suspicion of outsiders and the victimisation of 'deviants'. Cohen remarks that the 'strengths of an East Ender could also be weaknesses' and points to 'an insularity, a narrow sectarian loyalty, which precluded any wider solidarity' (cited in Goss, 1988: 115). Goss (1988: 115) notes that:

> the special circumstances of the dock communities, where solidarity and discipline had to be carved out of a work environment of extreme deprivation, underemployment, insecurity and desperate competition for work, generated tightly-knit communities and powerful loyalties.

Local working class communities have been 'constructed against outsiders' (Goss, 1988: 127). Outsiders have been seen as enemies - the landlords, the bosses, the rich, the government; so too were deviants - vagrants, women living outside traditional family structures, immigrants and particularly black people (Goss, 1988: 114-5). Cornwell (1984: 46) notes

that the idea of 'community' in the East End is based upon the idea of the 'sameness' and 'shared experience' of local people - difference is regarded negatively. She notes that:

> a hostility towards anything that is new or different, has underpinned the growth of support for parties of the far right whose chief political platform is racism... There is a strong sense of community in Bethnal Green, but it should be noted that where there is belonging, there is also not belonging, and where there is inclusion, there is exclusion. In East London, the dark side of community is apparent in a dislike of what is different, which finds its clearest (but by no means its sole) outlet in racial prejudice. (Cornwell, 1984: 53)

Goss (1988: 115) points to a subjective and partisan understanding of 'working classness':

> The importance of class identity and shared meanings was precisely that they enabled sections of the population to be excluded without any consciousness of being divided against other sections of the working class. The belief that blacks should be kept out, or that women should stay at home and leave more jobs for the menfolk, or that vagrants sould be kicked out of the borough, was held with no consciousness of contradiction, alongside beliefs in the need for local people to stick together, and for the community to look after its own.

Civil society in the East End is predicated upon a powerful sense of belonging and not-belonging, of inclusion and exclusion. The East End defines itself in opposition to the 'other' London, and in support of the myth of its own homogeneity.

2.4 Individualism and entrepreneurialism

The East End is, culturally, a particular type of working class society - it is characterised by an 'an entrepreneurial style that is rooted in pre-industrial forms of bargaining and exchange' (Hobbs, 1988: 101).

This style has developed in the context of the evolution of the East End labour market, with its stress on casual work, informal trading and employment networks, small-scale manufacturing and services and self-employment. Individualism and intra-class competition have flourished, in contrast to the factory and trade-union based 'proletarian hierarchies' of many working class communities (eg. Northern industrial towns). The pre-industrial skills and ethos of successive waves of immigrants strengthened the individualistic and competitive culture of the East End. The Hugenots and the Jews brought with them their trading and craft inheritance, while rural Irish immigrants were untainted by factory discipline (Hobbs, 1988: 97).

Hobbs (1988: 118) points to the importance of the 'ambiguity of the area's economic heritage' in shaping its culture - a culture based both upon class identification and a strong sense of individualism:

> Trading and dealing are an integral feature... stereotyped working class solidarity is tempered with a powerful independence forged by centuries of individualistic endeavour, both in and out of work.

As Hobbs notes, the black economy flourishes in the East End, sustained by 'ducking and diving or wheeling and dealing' (Hobbs, 1988: 3). From the sweat shops to the street markets, entrepreneurialism may be valued above the law. Pilfering from the docks, or passing on what 'fell off the back of the lorry' has sustained the street markets and supplemented low and irregular earnings for decades - summed up in East End argot as 'doing the business' (Hobbs, 1988: 117). Individualism has been coupled with traditions of flamboyance and melodrama (Rose, 1988: 159),

witnessed in the music hall, the patter of street traders and the political oratory of the East End.

2.5 Political radicalism

The East End was, in the nineteenth century, at the heart of what E.P. Thompson (1980) calls 'Radical London'. Anarchist and anti-parliamentary politics gained ground in the area, in the form of support for William Morris' Socialist League, Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of Suffragettes (which split from the official movement over support for the first world war), and for 'no rent' agitation in slum areas. Trade union activity flourished (the 1989 dock strike extended to become a virtual general strike in the East End), as did the local Labour Party and Communist Party, coming into conflict with central government most famously in the 'Poplar Revolt' of 1923 (Bassett, 1984: Branson, 1979). Radical politics arose out of the desperate poverty and chronic overcrowding of the East End, but this same environment nurtured 'conservatism and a fierce territorialism' (Tomlinson, 1989: 62).

The Great Depression of the 1930s was felt severely in the East End, especially in the casualised and small business sectors. As Tomlinson (1989: 65) points out:

> There was intense competition between artisans and local small traders, and immense pressure on accommodation. Widespread unemployment and poverty provided fertile ground for the... politics of fascism.

Between 1934 and 1937 Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) had its only working class base in the East End, with strongholds in Bow, Bethnal Green, Limehouse and Shoreditch. Local leaders emerged, particularly among artisans in the smaller, most insecure trades like furniture-making (Tomlinson, 1989: 65). In the municipal elections of 1937 the BUF gained an average of 18% of the vote; 23% in Bethnal Green. Mosley's message was anti-semitic but he also gained support, especially among casual workers and the unemployed, for his concern with issues of poor housing and poverty (Tomlinson, 1989: 66). BUF activities also met with stern local opposition, most famously in the Communist-inspired 'Battle of Cable Street' of 1937.

Far-right political activity has continued in the East End in the post-war period. The first British National Party (BNP) was inaugurated in 1960 in Bethnal Green and the BNP continues to put up candidates for local and national elections in the area (recently winning a council seat in a 1993 by-election in Isle of Dogs ward). Today the target is not Jews but the more recently arrived Bangladeshi population. Racial violence in Tower Hamlets has been well documented since the late 1970s (Fekete, 1990: 70). Despite the evidence (reviewed above in Part 1) that Bangladeshis are more likely to suffer social and economic deprivation than white residents, fascist activity in the East End is based upon the idea that immigrants receive special privileges at the expense of 'ordinary East Enders' who are the victims of 'reverse racism' (Fekete, 1990: 75). The BNP organises marches and meetings under the slogan 'Rights for Whites', continuing to exploit the dissatisfaction of 'disgruntled and often dispossessed whites' and the East End myths of

'community' and homogeneity, and traditional hostility towards 'outsiders'. Fekete (1990: 74-5) notes that 'the right to the East End, to define just who and who is not an East Ender, is what is at stake'.

2.6 Labourism

The institutions of civil society are contradictory. Just as 'community' and 'neighbourliness' have coexisted with hostility to 'outsiders', radical politics have coexisted with a deep conservatism. The dominant political tradition in the East End in the twentieth century has been that of Labourism. Rose (1988: 164) notes how, after the radical left-wing politics of the 1920s, the Labour Party:

> imposed its own frame of awareness on the local civil society, making voting Labour a more or less inevitable part of living in Poplar... voting Labour was one of Poplar's habits, and the Labour Party no longer had to work to gain the allegiance of the electorate.

The local authority and the Labour Party became increasingly autocratic and corrupt, but this 'never involved a cultural alienation' from the electorate (Rose, 1988: 164). Labourism was sustained through complementary East End traditions. Goss (1988: 129) describes Labourism as:

> a strong political culture... based upon an ethos of class solidarity which was also insular and narrow, and which excluded sections of the population which might be assumed to belong to an economically determined category of class.

Labourism 'absorbed and transmitted the insular nature of local political culture' and 'reflected the hostility to outsiders and the sense of

"looking after one's own"' (Goss, 1988: 145). Local Labour councillors based their representation of the local community on the ideal of working class 'sameness' - an idea which resonated with the East End myth of community based upon shared interests and experience. A councillor in Southwark, another riverside working class community, told Goss (1988: 151) that local people supported Labour 'on the basis of a rolled cigarette and a pint of beer'. Labour councillors

> saw themselves as representing their communities by a process of reflection; they were typical of them... They did not consult their constituents formally, because they saw it as their business to know what 'their' people thought... This sort of idea of representation assumes a homogeneous community. It can only be possible to represent a community by being broadly typical of it, if the needs and wants of the whole community are similar. (Goss, 1988: 151)

Again it can be seen that the institutions of civil society do not necessarily 'fit' with social reality; they do, however, exercise a powerful influence over local political and cultural life, shaping informal habits and conventions, and more formal institutional rules.

In summary, I have established that the specificity of localities lies in the (contested) informal institutions of civil society, as well as in particular social and economic conditions. I have identified dominant themes in the civil society of the East End: community and neighbourliness; inclusion and exclusion; individualism and entrepreneurialism; radical politics; and Labourism. I propose that such informal institutions impact upon local politics and the evolution of formal political institutions. Having set out the context for

institutional change, I now look at the collapse of formal institutional rules in the local authority.

Part 3 - Institutional collapse in the local authority

Here I examine different aspects of the collapse of institutional rules in the local authority: administrative collapse, political collapse (linking this to wider political trends), and the emergence of an agenda for institutional change. I draw attention to the ways in which the contextual factors outlined above influenced the collapse of the formal institutional framework.

3.1 Administrative collapse

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets was created in 1964 out of a merger of the three Metropolitan Boroughs of Bethnal Green, Stepney and Poplar. Unlike other new London Boroughs, Tower Hamlets did not establish a central location for all services in a new civic centre but retained the former town halls and offices scattered across the new borough. While the old units expressed strong local loyalties, representing the powerful sense of community within the East End, they were not in themselves strong or effective administrative bodies. As Morphet (1987: 121-122) notes:

> Although these three administrations had managed the area in name, the level of war time devastation and slum housing conditions in effect meant that much of the capital development within the constituent boroughs had been undertaken by the London County Council... All the borough's post-war experience had been of development on a grand scale, very little of which it handled itself.

Many of the local authority's functions continued to be carried out by the Greater London Council (GLC), including the management of 30,000 dwellings. Morphet (1987: 122) argues that the new borough was highly dependent upon the GLC, a situation which 'remained through to the abandonment of the GLC's housing functions, when Tower Hamlets was the last authority in London to take over GLC housing stock within its area'. The loss of planning powers to the LDCC in the Docklands area continued Tower Hamlets' tradition of dependency on other agencies. There developed the contradictory situation of a heavily municipalised locality (in terms of council ownership of housing, land and shops), but a weak and dependent local authority.

Tower Hamlets is small in relation to other London Boroughs: it has the fifth smallest area of any London Borough (1,973 hectares) and in the mid-'80s had the second smallest population of the inner London Boroughs (147,000). At the same time, CIPFA reported that Tower Hamlets had the lowest level of full-time staff per 1,000 population of any London Borough; the local NALGO branch claimed that the authority has a 20% vacancy rate in this small establishment (Tomlinson, 1989: 24). Tomlinson (1989: 24) notes: 'as an organisation, Tower Hamlets Council prior to 1986 was seriously under-developed'. The authority was highly centralised, concentrating power in the hands of a small group of Labour members and trusted senior officers; it was effectively insulated from change. The Labour Party had controlled local government in the area for an almost unbroken 50 years (it was not uncommon for council seats to be uncontested in the 1970s). Despite the creation of the new authority in 1964, there were powerful links with past traditions and

practices. There had been little turn-over among chief officers - when Tower Hamlets' Chief Executive retired in 1984 he had been employed within the borough for half a century! A NALGO official recalls that:

> The organisation was certainly very fuddy-duddy. There were octogenarians running the council. There had been very little change since it was set up in 1964... On the councillors' side, for instance, there was a Chair of Finance who was 85 - he had been on Poplar Council in the 1930s and did not retire until 1986. On the chief officers' side, they really were an eighth-rate collection of people. (interview with NALGO Service Conditions Secretary, March 1990)

A former Tower Hamlets Chief Executive notes that: 'Before 1986 the borough was a benevolent dictatorship, a feudal kingdom. People came and spent all their working lives here' (interview, March 1990). It was a frustrating situation nevertheless for many staff; my NALGO informant noted that 'a lot of staff would have welcomed positive change - it was hard to do your job, there was a lot of bureaucracy' (interview, March 1990).

In addition to the frustration which faced many Tower Hamlets employees, there was evidence that the authority was failing to discharge its responsibilities to the public. The authority developed a reputation for *underspending*; the authority's sclerotic organisational forms severely restricted its capacity to deliver basic levels of service. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report, Bangladeshis in Britain (1986), noted that Tower Hamlets Council had underspent its Housing Investment Programme (HIP) allocation by 44% in 1982-3 (improving to an underspend of 15% in 1984-5). The Committee reported that 7% of the borough's housing stock was empty in January 1986, and criticised the 'particularly

remote and ineffective management in Tower Hamlets' (cited in Tomlinson, 1989: 24). In social services, the situation was no better. At the end of the 1980s, Tower Hamlets' per capita spending on social services was ranked eleventh out of thirteen London boroughs. The Chief Executive cited above summed up the situation thus: 'There was a management problem. There was no analysis of needs in the borough. Tower Hamlets was the most unplanned, unresourced service provider in the country' (interview, March 1990). In 1984 Tower Hamlets faced 100 charges of maladministration (complaints to the local government ombudsman), and in 1985 a further 76. The 1984 figure was the highest for any local authority in the country; the 1985 figure was the second highest (interview with Globe Town Neighbourhood Chief Executive, June 1989).

By the mid 1980s some organisational innovations were underway in Tower Hamlets: social work services were delivered on a 'patch' basis and housing management was being localised to five district offices. Some support services were being decentralised to service departments, as in the case of Borough Treasurer functions (the preparation of revenue and capital estimates). However, as Tomlinson (1989: 25) notes: 'these changes were grafted onto the existing political and managerial structures, which remained remote from both local political control and from the community'.

3.2 Political collapse: the demise of Labourism

The general demise of local Labourism can be related to four points:

- the growing centralism of the Labour Party;

- dissatisfaction with Labour councils' record on service delivery;
- the rise of the 'new urban left'; and
- the election of a Conservative government in 1979.

I will review these points briefly before going on to consider their impact upon local politics in Tower Hamlets.

On the first point, from the 1960s the Labour Party increasingly saw the central state as the most effective agent of reform: emphasis was put on nationalisation rather than municipalisation, services were transferred from the local to the national level (eg. utilities), and standardisation was seen a means of combatting inequality (Goss, 1988: 147-8). Macroeconomic planning demanded a national focus and the emphasis on 'technological' solutions drew Labour away from what were increasingly seen as 'amateurish and parochial local authority concerns' (Goss, 1988: 149). The national Labour Party supported plans for the reorganisation of local government in London which produced larger, more remote units of government, with the emphasis firmly upon professionalisation and economies of scale. Goss (1988: 80) has written of the 1964 Labour government that:

> What took place was a shift in Labour's thinking at a national level, a belief that it was important to disentangle Labour from the parochial 'village' concerns of working class communities and to appeal to a wider cross-secton of the country on the basis of new efficient, scientific government.

On the second point, Goss (1988: 186) notes that Labour's historic appeal had been based on the ideal of 'social provision for social need'. As Goss (1988: 149) points out, 'changing perceptions of public provision were to crucially affect Labour locally'. She writes that:

> as people's experience of socially provided services began to be negative, this association which has formerly strengthened Labour's appeal, was to have a reverse effect. (Goss, 1988: 147)

Support for Labour's local 'project' peaked in the 1950s, after which local parties began to experience stagnation and a decline in membership. In many areas, the party found itself unable to adapt its project to new realities (including economic decline and changing class structures) and to public disaffection with the failings of local government. An identity of working classness and a faith in state provision could no longer provide the 'ideological glue' with which to bind the perceptions and demands of an increasingly fragmented community (Goss, 1988: 154). The communities represented by Labourist politicians had, of course, never been homogeneous but as the appeal of Labourism waned, its ideal of working class 'sameness' and representation-through-reflection started to appear less and less convincing. By the late 1960s, the diversity of inner-city communities had increased further and, moreover, 'those groups that went unrepresented were no longer silent' (Goss, 1988: 151). As Goss (1988: 102) puts it, 'differences became divisions'.

Moving to my third and fourth points, the growing fragmentation and dissatisfaction among sections of the Labour vote fuelled the rise of the 'new urban left' (Gyford, 1985; Boddy and Fudge, 1984). Many local Labour parties saw an influx of new members in the 1970s, often middle-class and professional and associated with the 'new social movements' that had gathered pace over the previous decade. The newcomers stressed the heterogeneity of local people and their interests and the need for community participation in the collective provision of services

(see Chapter 3). The new urban left gained a further impetus with the election of a Conservative government in 1979 and the right-ward drift of the national Labour Party. Within the GLC and other metropolitan authorities, local Labour parties sought to promote 'local socialism' (focusing on themes like equal opportunties, economic development and decentralisation) as an opposing political force to Thatcherite central government. In the 1980s Labourism was undermined on the one hand by the Conservatives' ideological agenda, and on the other hand by the new energy of the 'municipal socialists' at the local level. I look now at the crisis of Labourism in Tower Hamlets.

3.3 Political collapse: crisis in the Tower Hamlets Labour Party

The Labour Party had controlled local government in the East End for half a century prior to the Liberals taking control of Tower Hamlets in 1986. It was not just the length of Labour control that was unusual, but also the continuity of leadership style. Tower Hamlets was one of Labour's 'rotten boroughs which had been taken for granted by their representatives' (Wainwright, 1987: 8). Labourism persisted unchallenged in Tower Hamlets for longer than in many other London boroughs. As Morphet (1987: 122) notes:

> Unlike the majority of Labour held boroughs, the administration held on to power in 1968 when the Conservatives gained power in almost all London boroughs. Thus there was no natural break for older traditional members to retire and to be replaced by incoming gentrifiers.

With the entrenchment of Labourism, the authority had become politically inert. As a former Tower Hamlets Chief Executive put it:

> Tower Hamlets was behind in developments in local government, especially politicisation. It just sailed along. Labour controlled the borough but that meant nothing. There were no politics here. Policy? Good God, not here! (interview, March 1990)

The new urban left (NUL) penetrated Tower Hamlets politics from the early 1980s, with its first supporters gaining seats in 1982. The very low number of middle-class professionals in Tower Hamlets compared with other London boroughs limited the strength of the NUL, which tended to draw councillors from a community activist and/or professional background. The NUL's emphasis upon the heterogeneity of the local community and the special needs of disadvantaged groups ran up against dominant cultural traditions, based upon an ideal of working class 'sameness' and a hostitlity to 'outsiders'. At the same time, the NUL had limited success in mobilising new constituencies of support in Tower Hamlets. After their 'virtual exclusion' (Eade, 1989: 172) from local politics in the 1970s, by the early 1980s:

> Bangladeshis, like most of their white neighbours, had become council tenants and their community leaders came to appreciate the significance of the political and administrative control of the local authority. (Eade, 1989: 28)

In his study of the ward Labour Party in Spitalfields (part of Tower Hamlets), Eade (1989: 173) notes that 'white party leaders knew little about these new recruits and feared the influence of "non-political" community loyalties among them'. The NUL strategy of linking local issues to global concerns left many Bangladeshis feeling that the party was failing to address their immediate concerns:

> Residents were exhorted by numerous leaflets to join campaigns over local national Front activity, office development, National Health Service cuts and the miners' strike of 1984-5, for examples. The issue of racism and the particular interests of Bangladeshi

> residents were subsumed within a general appeal to local people... The complexity and specific character of local social differentiation and associated interests were not encompassed in ward party statements which tried to link socialism, multi-culturalism and related local issues to more global levels of struggle. (Eade, 1989: 173-4)

The biggest problem for the NUL in Tower Hamlets, however, was the tenacity with which the Labour 'old guard' hung on to the council leadership. Conflict between old and new factions of the Labour Party had deepened by the mid-1980s. As the new faction began to dominate the party, a group of 'old guarders' (having failed to be reselected as Labour candidates) broke away to stand as candidates against the official party in the 1986 election. The offical party campaigned on the basis of a NUL manifesto which called for a campaign by Labour councils, trade unions and local community groups to defend local services against central government 'cuts' and policies. Not only was there dissension among Labour supporters, but an alliance to carry out such a policy did not exist:

> NALGO immediately made clear that it would not follow such a "suicidal" strategy... NALGO pointed instead to the Council's record of underspend and its reluctance to claim all funds available from central government, leading to chronic understaffing, low morale and poor service. (Tomlinson, 1989: 26)

The left failed to grasp the importance of addressing the issue of poor services. As I showed above, criticism of local services was central to waning public support for 'old guard' Labourism. In Tower Hamlets, where such a high proportion of the population was dependent on such poor services, the issue was of paramount importance and could not be sidelined by other NUL concerns. A 'defence' of local services was not

appropriate - both service-users and service-providers wanted a radical re-think.

In summary, Labourism exerted a stranglehold over local politics in Tower Hamlets for half a century. In addition to its dominance nationally, Labourism had a certain 'fit' with the informal institutions of East End civil society, which saw 'community' as based upon shared experience and hostility to outsiders. As Rose (1988: 164) puts it, voting Labour had become an East End 'habit'. Fishman (1979: 129) writes that: 'It is now parochially ingrained as holy writ, that, whatever its shortcomings, it was Labour who helped succour the East End poor in an uncaring society'. Bush (1984: xviii) questions Labour's future in the area: 'How important is history for younger voters? Does this important historical continuity explain the Labour Party's preeminence? Does it guarantee Labour's future?' By 1986 it had become clear that depending on 'holy writ' and 'habit' was bad politics!

3.4 Institutional collapse: the Liberal Party's election victory

Against a backdrop of Labour inertia followed by conflict and confusion the Liberal Party, under the name of 'Focus', started to gain power in the area. Morphet (1987: 122) describes the process thus:

> the Liberal Focus team had... started to form a small base, building on a Liberal vote established some 50 years before. The Liberals developed a strong community base leaving the Left to defend a right-wing Labour majority which did not have any interest or pretensions to community based politics.

From the mid-1970s the local Liberal Party began to distribute its 'Focus' newsletter in parts of the borough; Focus publicised residents' complaints and Liberals' successes in lobbying the council. Liberal representatives visited council tenants in their homes and followed up complaints to the council on their behalf. They mobilised tenants in campaigns on housing rights' issues and gained a strong local presence through the use of 'surgeries' and advice centres. Behind the scenes, strategic alliances were forged with community groups (especially tenants' associations) and sympathetic council officers. The Liberals gained a reputation as advocates for the 'ordinary' tenant and for 'getting things done'. They benefited from the low opinion held locally of Labour councillors who had relied upon people's support in the absence of any serious opposition, whilst failing to ensure the council met basic needs. The NUL Leader of the Labour Party after the 1986 election acknowledged that: 'the working class was totally disgusted with Labour locally' (cited in Platt, 1987: 10). In the absence of either a Conservative opposition or an effective NUL within the local Labour Party, the Liberals capitalised on growing dissatisfaction with the style and achievements of Labourism.

The Liberals won seven out of a possible 50 seats in 1978, and 19 in 1982. Given Labour's disarray during the 1982-86 administration, the Liberals might have been able to take effective control of the council through making alliances with the left or right on particular issues. However, as Morphet (1987: 122) notes, 'all through this period the Liberal Group remained aloof. The Liberal Focus team maintained that it was planning to come to power in 1986.' In the local elections of May

1986 the Liberals won control of the council, with a majority of just one seat, benefiting from the split Labour vote in wards where 'independent' Labour candidates had stood. (After a subsequent by-election in which the Liberals lost a seat, they maintained control through the casting-vote of the mayor.) The Liberals came to power promising not just a change in policies, but a radical change in the 'rules of the game'. They proposed to transform the institutional framework of the local authority through a programme of neigbourhood-based decentralisation.

Explanations for the Liberals' 1986 electoral success centre on four points: the Liberals themselves emphasise the first and second points; their opponents the third and fourth:

- the success of their 'doorstep politics' strategy in building a firm support base;
- the appeal of their detailed manifesto promising radical decentralisation;
- their good fortune that the local Labour Party was split; and
- their use of the 'racist card'.

On the issue of 'doorstep politics', the Liberals' approach was a tried and tested one, initially developed in Liverpool and subsequently pursued in cities like Manchester, Birmingham and Leicester (Webman, 1983; Rentoul and Wolmar, 1984; Stoker, 1985). From the early '80s the Association of Liberal Councillors (ALC) (1985; 1982; undated, a, b, c) promoted this style of campaigning through its highly detailed 'activists' guides' which covered matters like 'knocking on doors', leaflet

delivery, keeping ward records, producing Focus, organising for polling day, and so on. The approach seeks to disprove the 'myth that community campaigning and organisation don't go together' (Association of Liberal Councillors, 1982: 1). The advice is to: 'be ruthless in applying the acid test: will an activity get Liberals more votes - and will those votes help to get more seats?' (Association of Liberal Councillors, 1982: 2). 'Winnable' wards are targeted and, through a concentration on 'case work' and lobbying, the aim is 'to get something done and to show that you would be/are a good councillor' (Rennard, 1988: 24). In contrast, '"campaigning" is nothing to do with stating your policies and expecting people to vote for them' (Rennard, 1988: 4). In his ALC publication, Rennard (1988: 3) explains that: 'Tory or Labour councillors may get elected like this - especially if they are never really challenged - but we never will, nor should we!'. The emphasis is on housing repairs, blocked drains, traffic or pavements *as they affect the individual resident*.

A leading Tower Hamlets Liberal councillor argues that:

> We operated community politics better than Liberals in other boroughs, so we were able to exploit the enormous dissatisfaction with the council, especially over housing. (cited in Platt, 1987: 10)

Tomlinson (1989: 26) notes the contrast with Labour's local profile: 'This deliberate strategy of building support among council tenants on "doorstep" issues proved effective given the Labour Party's lack of local political work'. Labour was, as we have seen, identified with the failure of local service delivery. The Liberals, on the other hand, were able to present themselves as the 'new broom' - the service user's advocate, aloof from the conspiracy of long-serving, self-interested councillors,

bureaucrats and trade unionists. They were able to tap into East End traditions of working class individualism, never acknowledged by the local Labour Party.

As for the promise of decentralistion, a leading Liberal points out that the 1966 reorganisation of Stepney, Bow and Poplar councils into the new organisation of Tower Hamlets 'made no sense to local people... Most people who lived in the area at the time still consider themselves as part of the borough that was, rather than Tower Hamlets as it is now' (Hughes, 1987: 29). The Liberal Party organised itself not on a borough-basis, but on sub-groups of wards. Its decentralisation plan, which had been under discussion for nine years, was designed to tap into that feeling and redesign the formal institutions of the council in a way that would reflect local sentiment as well as modernise the organisation. The neighbourhood concept drew upon, and reinforced, the informal institutions of 'community' and 'neighbourliness'. Others argue, however, that the manifesto was not well publicised or well understood locally. A former Tower Hamlets Chief Executive claims that: 'There was no local or popular consciousness of the plans for decentralisation. People didn't know what the Liberals stood for, even though decentralisation was explained in the manifesto'. This informant claims that: 'The Liberals won because of the split in the Labour Party... without the split they would not have won' (interview, March 1990).

Rather less pragmatically, the first Leader of the Labour Party after the 1986 election, accuses the Liberals of 'playing the racist card', for instance in their restrictive approach to homelessness policy (the vast

majority of homeless families in the borough are of Bangladeshi origin) and to voluntary sector funding (opposing support to 'specialist' groups including many serving the needs of minority ethnic groups) (Platt, 1987: 9). The Liberals built up their support base among white council tenants, unafraid to express the feeling held by many white working class residents that they had been ignored by the local authority. Platt (1987: 10) reports that 'the Liberals are strongest where the NF used to do best' and notes that in the 1987 general election, 'some senior NF officials even advocated voting for the alliance in Tower Hamlets'. Fekete (1990: 70) claims that the Liberal Party 'cynically manipulated racism and prejudice' and 'built up its base amongst some of the most racist and bigoted elements in the East End'. Whether deliberately or not, it seems that the Liberals benefited from the tradition of racism (related to the propensity for 'radical politics') that exists among certain sections of the East End population. Fekete (1990: 71) notes similarities between the Liberals' strategy and that of the overtly racist British National Party, whose stated aim is 'to help recapture the East End for the real East Enders, the beleaguered white community'. (Such claims have received further attention since the 1993 election of a BNP councillor in the borough [see Arnold-Foster, 1993: 7].)

The Liberals were unafraid to 'play upon local prejudices' (Platt, 1987: 8), particularly the antipathy to 'outsiders' expressed in conventions of 'inclusion and exclusion'. The Liberals' message was proudly parochial, whether expressed in terms of veiled racism or more harmless gibes against gentrifiers and 'yuppies'. Commenting on the Liberals' controversial position on arts funding, the first Liberal Leader of the

council stated: 'I'd rather spend money on repairs to a leaking roof than on an exhibition that will only ever be seen by a handful of visitors from Islington' (Platt, 1987: 8). (Such sentiments have most recently been expressed with reference to the award-winning sculpture 'House' which was located in a Tower Hamlets' park, to the chagrin of Liberal Democrat councillors [Lennon, 1993: 27]). The outspoken, colourful style of local Liberals picked up on other informal institutions in the area, including the images of the charismatic individual and the artful entrepreneur. Platt (1987: 8) likens the 'flamboyant' stance of leading Liberals to that of an East End 'music hall team'. A Liberal MP observed that: 'I don't think tact enters into their political vocabulary... But they've got just the kind of tough approach that's appreciated in that area' (cited in Platt, 1987: 8).

Conclusion

My model of the 'institutional lifecycle' (see Chapter 5) has provided conceptual tools for analysing the roots of institutional change in Tower Hamlets. I have shown how the collapse of the local authority's institutional framework was shaped both by contextual factors and by strategic action on the part of key local interests.

I argued that local factors shape political expression in unique ways, influencing both the substance of local politics and the structure and character of local political institutions. I showed how the East End's place in the spatial division of labour created specific demands upon local politicians and political institutions - the demands of post-war

redevelopment, and of governing and housing an ethnically diverse population against a back-drop of poverty and environmental decay. The role of the local authority was shaped in response to these demands, witnessed in its widespread ownership of land and housing and its centrality in the lives of local people.

Local politics and political institutions were also shaped by the informal institutions or 'unwritten rules' of civil society. As I argued in Chapter 5, informal institutions may provide the 'raw material' out of which formal institutions develop, structuring the 'repertoire' of possibilities for the design of formal institutions. I showed how the local authority was shaped by the dominant tradition of Labourism for half a century. Labourism had a certain 'fit' with the informal institutions of East End civil society, which saw 'working classness' and 'community' as based upon shared experience and hostility to outsiders.

I argued in Chapter 5 that institutional rules begin to collapse when actors no longer accept existing constraints but undertake strategic action to change the framework of rules in line with their beliefs and preferences. I showed how Tower Hamlets' final Labour administrations were particularly ineffective and inflexible, proving unable to modernise the local authority or to take on new political challenges. Both the 'new urban left' (NUL) faction within the Tower Hamlets Labour Party and the opposition Liberal Party (in alliance with organised interests in the community) sought to change the 'rules' within which the local authority operated.

The NUL gained control of the local Labour Party but, in the context of a split within the party, Labour lost the 1986 election to the Liberals. The weakness of the NUL in Tower Hamlets related to: the area's class composition; the strength and continuity of the Labour 'old guard'; the left's failure to grasp the service delivery issue; and the lack of any 'fit' between the NUL political project and dominant informal institutions. The new urban left challenged the myth of 'sameness' in its emphasis upon the heterogeneity of the community, whilst failing to articulate successfully residents' sense of alienation from and dissatisfaction with the local authority.

The Liberal Party, on the other hand, prioritised the service delivery issue (through their 'doorstep', estate-based politics), whilst re-articulating the 'community' tradition (through their neighbourhood focus), and tapping into East End conventions of individualism (through emphasising individual residents' needs) and flamboyance (through colourful 'personality politics'). Ironically, the Liberals promised to transform the institutions of the local authority through decentralisation - a policy more generally associated in the mid-1980s with the new urban left.

In the next chapter I examine in detail the Liberals' conceptualisation and initiation of a new institutional framework for local governance in Tower Hamlets.

CHAPTER 7 - THE CREATION OF A NEW INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK THROUGH DECENTRALISATION

Introduction

In the last chapter I examined the collapse of the local authority's institutional framework, showing how this was shaped both by contextual factors and by strategic action on the part of key local interests. I showed how Labour lost control of the council in 1986, defeated by a Liberal group committed to institutional change via decentralisation. In this chapter I look at the creation of a new institutional framework for the local authority.

In Chapter 5 I argued that the creation of new institutional rules requires both a clear vision and strategic action to put new rules in place. In Part 1 of this chapter I look at the Liberals' vision of institutional change, as expressed in their 1986 manifesto. In Part 2 I analyse the process of implementing decentralisation, showing how support for decentralisation was built within the authority, and potential resistance neutralised.

Part 1 - A vision for institutional change: the Liberals' 1986 manifesto

The Liberal manifesto claimed that decentralisation 'gives power back to the hamlets around the Tower; it turns local government upside down, abandons centralised bureaucracy, and returns to the old "parish"

concept' (Tower Hamlets Liberal Association, 1986: 3). Morphet (1987: 122) describes the Liberal manifesto as 'an essentially community-based document with commitments derived from local knowledge of priorities for change'. I now take a detailed look at the Liberals' 1986 manifesto, considering its analysis of the problems facing the borough, its objectives for change, its model of decentralisation and its plan for implemention. (All page references are to the manifesto [Tower Hamlets Liberal Association, 1986])

1.1 The problem and proposed solution

The Liberals' manifesto expressed the central problem facing the local authority thus:

> What is pre-eminently wrong with the policies and structure of Tower Hamlets Council is that they are and have been the government of the bureaucrats, by the bureaucrats, for the bureaucrats: Council priorities have been theirs, not the people's. Services have been fashioned more for the convenience of the administrators, rather than to provide the services people want, in the way they want. There is a rigid departmentalism, in which empire-building, bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake and centralisation all thrive, and which suffocates any corporate or political will. This is reflected, too, in a system of standing Committees which operate in a Borough-wide 'subject' basis, and which are supposed to govern the bureaucrats' Borough-wide departments. (5)
> Council services are highly centralised, remote, inaccessible, unaccountable, inefficient and reflect the wants of the bureaucrats, rather than the needs of the people of the Borough' (6).

The manifesto pin-pointed three aspects of the problem facing Tower Hamlets:

(a) Officers had power over councillors The manifesto argued that, because councillors sat on 'subject' committees they lacked knowledge of the specialist areas under discussion. Consequently they could make no contribution, or ill-informed, contribution to debates; decisions went through 'on the nod' following officers' recommendations 'simply because no one knows any better' (5). Power relations between councillors' committees and officers' departments had been inverted. The manifesto noted that: 'Over the years Council committees, and hence their policies, have become "clients" of their departments, whereas it should be the reverse' (5).

(b) Residents and service users were alienated The manifesto claimed that members of the public were confused as to who made decisions and were badly treated by officers. This situation was made worse by the fact that council policies encouraged people to become dependent on the local authority:

> They [the public] spend worrying, frustrating hours being fobbed off by one official after another. They are alienated from, and become hostile to, the system of government. Since high levels of expectation with regard to the local authority have been generated by decades of socialist 'cradle to grave' dogma, the despair and hostility are amplified. (5)

(c) Officers made the wrong decisions and were unaccountable The manifesto claimed that real power lay with appointed officers, but their remoteness from those they were supposed to serve meant they frequently made the 'wrong' decisions and provided the 'wrong' services (6). The Liberals made a distinction between senior, 'back-room' officers who held power but were out-of-touch and unaccountable, and more junior, 'front-

line' officers who came into contact with the public but had no power to steer policy in the 'right' direction:

> The bureaucrats who make the decisions are able to hide from the people whose lives they dominate by sitting at the centre of these massive and confusing 'webs', far from reality... Those officers the public do see are not those responsible for the policies they implement, and are often demoralised by their powerlessness and the remoteness of senior management. (5-6)

The Liberals saw the manifestations of the Tower Hamlets' problem as managerial and organisational but its origins as political. Despite the frequent 'bureaucrat bashing' in the manifesto, the Liberals were clear that responsibility for Tower Hamlets' problems lay ultimately with 'disinterested and uninformed Labour councillors' (6). The solution lay in a new breed of Liberal councillors:

> Tower Hamlets desperately needs councillors who will wrest control of the Council from the bureaucratic stranglehold, who know the problems, but yet have a vision of how things can be better and who will have the courage and the will to make it happen. (6)

The manifesto specified four objectives for the decentralisation initiative (6):

- 'To restore political control to the elected councillors';
- 'To enable decisions affecting each community to be taken by those who know best its needs and who are accountable to it';
- 'To make Council services as accessible, as open and as responsive to the needs of each area as possible'; and,
- 'To make Council services provide value for money'.

1.2 The decentralisation model

The manifesto argued that decentralisation 'is the crucial instrument for restoring control and accountability' (6). Both service-delivery and decision-making aspects of the traditional system would be overhauled:

> To achieve these objectives to the greatest possible extent Liberals propose to dismantle the current administrative system and its procedures for democratic control. They will be replaced by an administrative system and corresponding political procedures for the Council to be run on a Neighbourhood basis. (6)

On **service delivery**, departments offering specialist services would be replaced by offices providing 'a total area service' within each neighbourhood (7). The Liberals aimed for all local services to be delivered from a single neighbourhood office in each of seven areas. Each neighbourhood office would have its own management structure and chief officers, responsible for all services delivered from the local office. These would not be 'mini town halls' working along traditional lines but on a smaller scale. The Liberals promised that 'existing departmental boundaries will, to all intents and purposes, disappear in the local office' (7). Neighbourhood-based service delivery would allow for a reduction in 'bureaucracy and red tape' and for greater 'flexibility and efficiency' (7). Neighbourhood autonomy would flourish, allowing services to develop to suit particular communities: Tower Hamlets would 'develop Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood, community by community' (7).

On **decision-making**, each neighbourhood would have a Standing Neighbourhood Committee (SNC) composed of councillors elected in the wards making up the neighbourhood. Consequently, a neighbourhood could

be controlled by the party in opposition on the council as a whole. SNCs would not reflect the political balance of the full council; they would be made up of the councillors elected in that area. (This arrangement remained legally acceptable after the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as rules on 'proportionality' were waived for area committees.) The SNCs would be responsible for all services delivered locally and could undertake joint working with other neighbourhoods where coordinated action was required. They would be full committees of the council, and would replace 'subject' based committees. Neighbourhood autonomy was the goal, with the manifesto promising that each SNC 'subject to legal and policy constraints, will be free to operate whatever policies it wishes in the interests of the area' (7). Neighbourhoods would be expected to consult with residents and tenants through mechanisms such as open meetings, referenda and questionnaires, and advisory bodies made up of community representatives. The manifesto strongly encouraged participation, whilst leaving each neighbourhood to decide upon its own particular structures and procedures.

A central Policy and Resources Committee would make an annual financial allocation 'based on population and need' to each neighbourhood. Each SNC would then decide how resources should be allocated to different services. SNCs would also be free 'to augment their central allocation by such other means of raising their income as they wish' (8). SNCs would be responsible both for assets and liabilities attaching to the services they delivered.

Personnel matters and industrial relations would be devolved to the neighbourhood level. Members' role in routine appointments and the overseeing of overtime arrangements would be ended in order to increase efficiency and flexibility on staffing matters. As departmental barriers were broken down at the neighbourhood level, there would emerge 'a wider scope of career structure for Council officers' (10). The Liberals promised to 'strive to reverse the industrial relations chaos of the last twenty years'; they would 'endeavour to be good, conscientious employers' (11). However, the manifesto included a stern warning to senior officers:

> Blame for the Council's poor record must rest overwhelmingly on the councillors in control. However, heavy responsibilities are entrusted to senior officers and Liberals make no bones about being very dissatisfied with the performances of some of them. Incompetence will not be tolerated. (12)

Four advantages were claimed for decentralisation (7):

- 'Government will be moved nearer to those governed';

- 'The civil servants [sic] will be accessible to the people they serve and will operate within the area they serve, thus becoming fully familiar to both';

- 'The people will have only one office - which will be within the area - to go for assistance relating to the area';

- 'The councillors will be making all the major decisions affecting the people who elected them, and about the areas they know best, and so will have greater awareness of events and needs'.

1.3 **The plan for implementation**

The manifesto noted that: 'Decentralisation cannot be fully implemented overnight... [but] much of the political framework can be started straightaway' (9). Rather than forming conventional committees, the new political structure would be put in place immediately. The manifesto promised that, on gaining office, the following committees would be disbanded immediately, with SNCs taking on their roles: Development, Ethnic Minorities, Finance, Health and Consumer Services, Police, Road Safety Advisory, Works and District Housing Committees (9-10). The Policy Committee would become a Policy and Resources Committee, charged with - among other things - the allocation of budgets to neighbourhoods. The Administration Committee would become the Decentralisation Committee, responsible for overseeing the decentralisation plans and to be disbanded on completion of its task. The Amenities and Housing Committee would be continued initially, whilst passing as many functions as possible to the SNCs.

While political structures were to be tackled immediately, the manifesto recognised that reorganising administrative and service-delivery would take longer as it involved the reallocation of staff, office space and budgets. However, the manifesto claimed that within six months the following services would be decentralised to neighbourhood level: electoral registration and part of the secretariat (from Chief Executives Office); health and consumer services (from Community Services); architecture and planning (from Development); district housing services (from Housing); social and community services (from Social Services); and

works, engineering and transport (from Technical Services) (10). The manifesto asserted that *all* services could be decentralised - support and professional functions as well as front-line service delivery. The manifesto stated that within two years of taking office, the following additional services would be decentralised: personnel and management services (from Chief Executives Office); recreation and libraries (from Community Services); Valuation (from Development); administration, surveying and management (from Housing); day care (from Social Services); and Research and Programming (from Technical Services) (10).

Central structures were dealt with only briefly in the manifesto. A strategic capacity would be retained centrally, alongside three central committees - Policy and Resources, Performance Review and Social Services:

> Several strategic planning and support services which exist at present within Directorates will continue as centralised services which will serve the Neighbourhood Committees on their instructions, and will also serve the remaining central Council Committees. (10)

The manifesto stressed that implementation would proceed according to a tight timetable and under the direction of the Liberal Group, making only modest concessions to the principle of consultation and negotiation:

> No doubt many staff will have reservations about these far-reaching changes, and will be anxious about their own futures. Liberals recognise this and will take steps to keep staff informed of events and plans, and where appropriate, to seek their views and listen to them. However, when all is said and done, it will be the elected councillors who will take the decisions; Liberals will expect staff to accept this. (11)

Part 2 - Strategic action to achieve institutional change: implementing decentralisation

Here I examine the Liberals' strategy for creating a new institutional framework in the local authority. I show how the Liberals worked through key change agents within the organisation, seeking to build a coalition of interests in support of decentralisation and to undermine potential resistance and the emergence of oppositional coalitions.

2.1 Agents of change

The Liberals had investigated the feasibility of decentralising service delivery prior to the 1986 election in discussions with chief officers. Tomlinson (1989: 30) reports that two key questions were asked of existing Directors: (a) how easy or difficult would it be to decentralise your directorate? (b) what do you feel about decentralisation in the borough in general? Tomlinson (1989: 30) notes that this was 'not just a useful fact-finding exercise but a tactical assessment of exactly where, and how much, resistance could be expected'. These investigations led the Liberals to conclude that they would face significant resistance from senior officers and would need to take a 'top-down', councillor-driven approach to institutional change.

The Liberals acted to anticipate and overcome chief officer resistance through the creation of specific vehicles and agents of change within the authority. The decentralisation of services, functions and staff was carried out by the Decentralisation or 'D' Team, under the management of

the Director of Development. This was a group of senior officers judged to be politically acceptable, enthusiastic about decentralisation, and tough managers. They had regular contact with the Liberal Group not just through the Decentralisation Committee but through the 'Decentralisation Coordinator' - a leading Liberal who had failed to retain his seat in the election but had been the chief architect of the decentralisation plans. The 'D' Team provided a strong internal focus for the implementation of the Liberals' manifesto promises. The high visibility of the Team, and its clear political backing, served to counterbalance (and override) the influence of less enthusiastic senior officers within the authority.

The 'D' Team constituted a 'very powerful counterpart to the existing Chief Executive's Management Team' (Tomlinson, 1989: 31). With the undermining of his position, the Chief Executive (plus four other chief officers) accepted early retirement. Senior officer resistance was further counterbalanced by the early recruitment of seven Neighbourhood Chief Executives (some from within existing chief officer ranks) who became key agents of change. Once in post, they had a keen 'personal interest in ensuring their neighbourhoods were operational as soon as possible' (Tomlinson, 1989: 31).

One of the new Neighbourhood Chief Executives commented that: 'There was a radical clear-out of top-level staff at the time of decentralisation' (interview with Globe Town Chief Executive, June 1989). Senior officers who resisted the changes, or who were seen as unsuited to the new system, were encouraged to leave. A NALGO official, seconded to work on

decentralisation, estimated that within the first two years around two-thirds of chief officers left the authority:

> The Liberals came in with a hit list - they identified certain senior managers who had to go. A lot of people took advantage of early retirement - a large proportion of staff over 50 went. Some did very well, taking good settlements from the council and quickly getting new jobs... We lost a hell of a lot of capable staff, though a lot of dross too. (interview with NALGO Service Conditions Secretary, March 1990)

The Liberals moved quickly to bring the trades unions into the process of planning and implementing decentralisation. Sixteen trades union officers (manual and white collar) were released from their normal duties to work full-time on decentralisation negotiations. A former member of the 'D' Team commented that:

> There was an excellent relationship with the trades unions. There was disagreement but also a good working relationship. In Tower Hamlets there was a culture of trade union involvement so managers were used to consulting. (interview, February 1990)

My NALGO informant corroborated this view, noting that: 'Meetings in the working parties and the "D" Team were largely amicable. There was a tradition in Tower Hamlets of joint working parties when reviewing sections'. She recognised the unions' incorporation into the change process, noting that: 'we decided it was better to be inside, fighting for our members'. She summarised the unions' approach:

> NALGO was not opposed to decentralisation, but from the beginning the Liberal manifesto implied that decentralisation would go too far too fast. They were concerned to carry out this 'decentralisation right, centralisation wrong' thing. The unions tried to get a sane timetable established. We accepted that elected members wanted decentralisation - they were elected on this manifesto. But we wanted to make sure that decentralisation would produce good services and not mess staff around too much. (interview, March 1990)

2.2 A phased approach

At the first council meeting following the election the Liberals voted in the changes to standing orders necessary to implement their manifesto promises, including the disbandment of existing committees and the establishment of new central committees and the seven SNCs. On the staff side, letters were sent by the Liberal Group to all staff at their home addresses during the first weekend of the new administration. These promised that there would be no compulsory redundancies and that decentralisation would deliver 'increased job satisfaction'.

Between June and September 1986 the 'D' Team consulted with all chief officers and produced its assessment of which services could be decentralised in 'Phase 1'. The plans were subsequently agreed by the Decentralisation Committee. The design and planning of Phase 1 was completed between October 1986 and March 1987; this remarkable timetable had actually been put back by two months under pressure from the trades unions (News from the 'D' Team, October 1986).

Services decentralised under Phase 1 were slightly different from those promised in the manifesto. Phase 1 turned out, in fact, to be an even more ambitious first stage. A decision was taken to decentralise first those services which most directly affected the public, in order to show rapid results: housing management; libraries and recreation; highways and works; planning (development control); a selection of environmental health functions; street markets; social services (fieldwork, residential and day care), and community relations. These services were supported

by a neighbourhood administration and finance structure. Working parties were created to consider implementation arrangements for each service area; membership consisted of representatives from service management, personnel, trade unions, and the 'D' Team. From April 1987 the 'D' Team commenced the task of allocating staff, resources and buildings to the new neighbourhoods.

A 'Staff Protection Package' was agreed with the trades unions, requiring that: there should be no enforced redundancies, that salaries and wages would be protected, and that a minimum of three weeks notice of staff relocation would be given (Decentralisation Team, October 1986). Job descriptions were established for all posts in the new Phase 1 structures and then compared with existing job descriptions. Details of the assimilation process appeared in issues of News from the 'D' Team (March 1987; June 1987; July 1987), a newsletter circulated to all Tower Hamlets staff.

The assimilation process had two main stages, referred to as '60%' and 'grade matching'. In the first stage (which applied to around 80% of staff), 'where an existing post can be seen to cover 60% or more of a new post then there is direct assimilation, regardless of grade'. If there were more claims than jobs, selection was on the basis of a 'limited assimilation interview'. In the second stage, staff who could not make 60% claims, or who were unsuccessful in initial assimilation interviews, were assimilated through 'grade matching'. Staff were circulated with a list of vacancies at their same grade and asked to express preference for up to three posts: 'Allocation will then take

place taking into account expressed preferences, training and experience'. As in the first stage, assimilation interviews would be used where there were more candidates than jobs. Any staff who remained unassimilated after both the 60% and grade matching stages could be allocated as supernumaries with full protection rights (News from the 'D' Team, March 1987).

The assimilation of staff under Phase 1 and the arrangement of accommodation took longer than initially envisaged. It was not until November 1987 that the next phase of decentralisation was embarked upon. However, Phase 2 was implemented on 1 April 1988 - exactly two years into the Liberals' term of office, as planned. Phase 2 concerned itself with the position of the remaining central departments: Chief Executive's; personnel and management; Borough Secretary's (including legal services and trading standards); Borough Engineer's; Building Services; Valuers; Social Services (News from the 'D' Team, December 1987). The Liberal Group believed, as the manifesto showed, that *all* services could be decentralised, not just 'front-line' functions. Only a function which fell under one of the following categories could be allowed to remain outside neighbourhood control: a function which was clearly corporate; a function of central strategic importance; a function where statutory requirements made neighbourhood control impossible; or a function which would incur a major financial disbenefit if decentralised (Tomlinson, 1989: 33-34). As my 'D' Team informant: 'Many functions would have been cheaper if done centrally, but service delivery, accountability and responsiveness were considered more important' (interview, Feburary 1990).

An even tighter timetable was set for Phase 2 and the leadership took a yet more interventionist role. The Liberals accepted that a further round of decentralisation was likely to prove even tougher than the first. Phase 2 would take on entrenched professional interests and flout conventional wisdom as to what could and could not be decentralised. In addition, those who had remained at the centre during Phase 1 had become defensive of their 'special' position, and had not experienced neighbourhood working in practice. As the former 'D' Team member recalled: 'Members got the bit between their teeth in Phase 2' (interview, February 1990). The leadership's attitude to the process is exemplified in this internal statement:

> No-one believes that implementation is an easy process. Chaos is bound to occur. However, the sooner this is done the better and it will have to be accepted that the process will leave a large number of problems for the centre. However, after the series of delays over the last few months, if staff have to be ruthlessly 'torn' from the Centre, then so be it! (cited in Tomlinson, 1989: 33)

Under Phase 2 neighbourhoods assumed the following additional functions: personnel and management services; trade union consultative machineries; trading standards; consumer advice; and some legal, valuation and finance services. With the completion of Phase 2, the neighbourhoods were up and running, delivering all main local authority services and acting as the focus of political decision-making. Decentralisation of the Direct Labour Organisation followed in January 1989 and further elements of financial management, including community charge collection, were subsequently decentralised. With the winding-up of the Inner London Education Authority, a variety of education services were also decentralised.

There was no real compromise with the 'big bang' approach to reorganisation detailed in the Liberals' manifesto. Despite limited amendments to the original timetable, under pressure from the unions, 'the pace of change was still incredibly swift for such a major restructuring of a local authority' (Tomlinson, 1989: 32). The Liberals succeeded in their ambition to decentralise the authority within two years of taking office. The importance of the pace of change lay in ensuring that the Liberal Group and the 'D' Team 'held the initiative from their opponents and thus avoided the consolidation of any concerted resistance' (Tomlinson, 1989: 32).

Phasing also served to undermine the potential for organised resistance to decentralisation. Because different groups of staff were affected by decentralisation at different times, it was less likely that resistance or an opposing 'advocacy coalition' would emerge. The former 'D' Team member noted that Phase 1 staff had often settled into their new roles by the time Phase 2 staff were faced with decentralisation:

> During Phase 1, people said they couldn't be decentralised - but they were. In Phase 2 we went back and talked to the same people - they now thought it was wonderful! They were promoting decentralisation - they had a different view of further decentralisation than people left at the centre did. (interview, February 1990)

Commenting on the difficulties in organising staff at the time of decentralisation, my NALGO informant noted that:

> We tried to get action in favour of a longer timetable but there was not sufficient interest among staff. The problem was that everyone perceived decentralisation in different ways. Many people were not affected by Phase 1, and some were not very much affected. People who saw themselved directly affected by decentralisation were always a minority at one time. Also there was not the same emotional involvement as if redundancies had been

> threatened. We had managed to secure a protection package for staff and this was applied quite rigorously. (interview, March 1990)

2.3 Building support among staff

The Liberals were able to build on the dissatisfaction of many officers with the old regime, and in some cases active support for the new approach. Below chief officer level, there was very little active support among staff and unions for the status quo. As I showed in the last chapter, staff and unions were far from receptive to the Labour Party's 1986 call to join with councillors to defend the local authority against central government policies. Many staff welcomed the prospect of change, describing the 'old' local authority as 'eighth rate', a 'feudal kingdom', 'a benevolent dictatorship', 'fuddy duddy' and 'bureaucratic' (see Chapter 6). In addition to dissatisfaction with the old system, there were pockets of active support for decentralisation as a goal in itself. Decentralisation was supported within some services, reflecting developments within specific professions, notably housing managment, social work and planning (see Chapter 2).

The Liberals built on pockets of support within the officer body, and minimised potential resistance among staff fearful of change, by allowing a degree of choice in the 'assimilation' process. At all stages of the assimilation process, staff could express a preference as to which of the seven neighbourhoods they wished to work in. A pattern developed whereby staff moved to neighbourhoods in groups, often following a popular manager or seeking to keep a group of like-minded

people together. An Estate Manager explained that housing staff in Globe Town Neighbourhood came chiefly from the old 'Housing District 2', where there were 'a lot of positively minded staff'. Referring to another neighbourhood (Poplar), he noted that: 'it is staffed by people who do not want to know about change - they want to stay in their old roles' (interview with Parkview/Cranbrook Estate Manager, January 1990). Traditions and cultures that attached to old departments or sections were transferred into the new neighbourhoods, shaping their emerging character. The pattern of assimilation enabled the new neighbourhoods to build distinctive 'ways of doing things' on the basis of existing identities and commitments. It also 'lubricated' the change process, reducing potential alienation and dislocation for staff (and hence potential resistance).

Once in post in the new neighbourhoods, many staff received regradings and salary increases - a process which helped to consolidate support for decentralisation. The Estate Manager cited above noted that: 'Incentives have been used to build staff commitment to decentralisation. Housing staff have done very well' (interview, January 1990). My NALGO informant confirmed that: 'grading systems got out of kilter' (interview, March 1990), while the former 'D' Team member argued that regradings were in recognition of new demands upon staff: 'The responsibility levels increased and there was more generic working. There were improvements in salary levels' (interview, February 1990). As a neighbourhood personnel officer explained:

> There were not many regradings as part of the assimilation process, but it soon became apparent that people were doing completely different jobs. It wasn't just a case of replicating jobs by seven - new responsibilities were involved. Over the next months a very

> large proportion of staff got regradings. Regradings have been used to make decentralisation work. The upward drift has been quite tremendous, and the councillors have been prepared to accept it. There has been a buy-off of staff. (interview with Globe Town Personnel Officer, April 1990)

2.4 Problems of staff morale

Problems of morale arose when practical difficulties were encountered in the process of allocating accommodation and staff within the new structures. On accommodation, my 'D' Team informant noted that: 'Accommodation problems were underestimated. It was a very slow process. People wanted to know where the hell they were going to work'. On assimilation, he pointed out that: 'Assimilation could be sorted out on paper, but practically there were big problems' (interview, February 1990). Even where staff were initially enthusiastic about change, the delays and stress of the assimilation process took a toll on staff morale. A housing officer suggested that resentment and even sabotage were common during the assimilation process:

> The background to decentralisation was antagonism and paranoia. There are serious technical problems now; you can't get plans to buildings before 1985 - they were destroyed! Decentralisation was accompanied by incompetence (files were lost) and reaction - material was destroyed because of the resentment of staff. (interview with Globe Town Housing Development Officer, June 1989)

My NALGO informant noted that 'general administration staff' did poorly out of the assimilation process. By the time they were assimilated at the end of Phase 1:

> There was a great deal of confusion. Selection was largely by word-of-mouth - 'who was good'. Staff did not get proper offers and the protection package was not always followed. (interview, March 1990)

Although there were advantages in allowing staff to transfer to the new neighbourhoods in existing work groups, the emphasis on existing relationships excluded some officers and undermined a 'rational' allocation of skills and experience. As a senior librarian observed:

> The staffing arrangements that accompanied decentralisation were idiosyncratic. In the assimilation process from Tower Hamlets' structures, staff tended to follow their bosses or people they knew they could work with. This led to some strange effects. For example, in Globe Town the administrative and finance staff came in a block from the old Technical Services Department. Now they have to deal with all aspects of admin. and finance without having any experience in some areas - like ordering library books... Staffing was very much linked to personalities because of this pattern, which provided little stability. (interview with Globe Town Arts and Information Manager, June 1989)

My NALGO informant confirmed that the 'idiosyncracies' of assimilation led some officers to find themselves in posts for which they were not qualified or suited:

> A lot of middle managers did do very well. With the bureaucracy being multiplied by seven there was a lot of new management jobs. Some people progressed very fast - you can see that now, people operating beyond their capability. (interview, March 1990)

In many cases staff who did not like the new system, or felt they had been unfairly treated, left the authority. As one of the new Neighbourhood Chief Executives put it: 'staff who didn't like the new system voted with their feet' (interview with Globe Town Chief Executive, June 1989). My 'D' Team informant explained that: 'Because of the problems of the assimilation process, people got pissed off - people left' (interview, February 1990). The departure of staff caused difficulties for those running services within the new structures. As the senior librarian quoted above put it:

> Some of those who left were dead necks who couldn't handle change, while others had good local knowledge and have been a great loss. There has been a real continuity problem because so many staff left at the time of decentralisation or shortly after, and files were dispersed. Officers still ring up people who are retired, because only they have crucial pieces of information about the area. (interview, June 1989)

Retaining staff became a problem in some areas, particularly during Phase 2 when many of the professional services were being decentralised. There were particular problems in areas like valuation, surveying and legal functions due to opportunities at that time for professionals to find work in the City and new Docklands developments. Those who left during Phase 2 expressed concerns about their promotion prospects and the variety of work in the new neighbourhood setting. My 'D' Team informant pointed to the contrasting response of staff at different levels in the organisation:

> Change was a motivator for some people - they were excited by the concept. Others were very protective of their professionalism. People were concerned where their career would go - for instance where a big department of 1,000 people was being broken into seven units. People felt that decentralisation was a great idea, but 'it couldn't work in my area, because of x'. At the lower level, some staff saw there were opportunities to develop in the more generic setting rather then that of narrow specialism - they could get a broader outlook. (interview, February 1990)

2.5 The response of the Labour Group

The Liberals' success in building support for decentralisation relates in part to the weakness, or total absence, of opposing strategic coalitions. I showed in the last chapter how the Liberals benefited in the 1986 election from the disarray and eventual split in the local Labour Party. After a very close election result and a subsequent by-election, the

Liberals controlled the council on the basis of the mayor's casting vote alone. Despite this, the Labour Party failed to mobilise an alternative advocacy coalition on institutional change. As my NALGO informant explained: 'When the Liberals were elected in 1986 there was really no alternative strategy for turning round the organisation' (interview, March 1990).

Moreover, the decentralisation model itself had the effect of neutralising Labour opposition. The new Standing Neighbourhood Committees (SNCs) were made up of ward councillors - of whichever party - elected in a particular neighbourhood. Liberal control of all SNCs was not, therefore, guaranteed. After the 1986 election, three out of the seven SNCs were controlled by Labour - after the by-election this rose to four. The Liberals had handed political control of half its new neighbourhoods to the opposition and thus effectively co-opted the Labour Party into the new system.

As a former Tower Hamlets Chief Executive explained:

> It's like a board game called 'Decentralisation' that the Liberals invented. There are seven chunks, the Labour Party sit shouting: 'we don't like the game, but where's the dice?'. The Labour Party has played the game. Three is political schizophrenia - it is in opposition and in power. The Liberal Party has co-opted the Labour Party into governing Tower Hamlets. (interview, March 1990)

A former Labour councillor in one of the Labour-controlled neighbourhoods described her experience of being 'in opposition and in power' thus:

> It was a contradiction to be involved in the detailed aspects of council service delivery and appointing staff, and yet not support decentralisation. We were critical of the system and its haste,

> lack of consultation, unrealistic timetables, and the creation of competitive spirit between neighbourhoods. Nevertheless not to participate would have been politically irresponsible. (Carlyle in Stoker [ed], 1991: 377)

The practical responsibility of the day-to-day running of Labour-controlled neighbourhoods, plus the debilitating effect of the 'political schizophrenia' induced by the system, made it ever more unlikely that Labour would mobilise an alternative advocacy coalition on institutional change in the borough.

Conclusion

In Chapter 5 I developed a model of the institutional lifecycle, arguing that new institutional rules are created by strategic action, influenced by the collapse of existing institutional frameworks and the impact of enduring informal institutions. I argued that the conceptualisation of new institutional rules involves debate and deliberation, identifying and reflecting upon existing practice, and investigating alternative ways of doing things. New rules reflect the values, beliefs and preferences of those who design them, whilst also being influenced by the dominant informal institutions within a locality or community. New rules may be expressed in a statement of intent, for instance a party manifesto.

In Part 1 of this chapter I examined the vision for institutional change set out in the Liberals' 1986 manifesto. The manifesto presented a clear diagnosis of the problems affecting the local authority: officers had power over councillors; residents and service users were alienated

and frustrated; officers made inappropriate decisions and were unaccountable. The Liberals were clear too about the objectives of institutional change: to restore political control; to provide a local focus for decision-making and service delivery; and to make services more accessible and responsive to the public. It is perhaps easy to set out grand statements of core values, but the Liberals' manifesto stands out for its attention to the detail of implementation. The manifesto stressed the right of councillors to direct institutional change, and explained that reorganisation would be on a 'big bang' basis - consultation would be limited and decentralised structures would be in place within two years of their election.

The Liberals have been seen as naive in their single-mindedness: a union official deprecated their 'decentralisation right, centralisation wrong' mentality, and Tomlinson (1989: 29) interprets their cohesion negatively as a 'lack of serious well-thought out differences'. Yet the simplicity of the decentralisation vision helped the Liberals to cut through doubts, obstacles and resistance from some in senior management, the trade unions and other sceptics. At the same time it provided the cement that kept the Liberal Group together and their slender majority intact. The Liberals' 'simple' vision was crucial in making change happen.

In my model of institutional change I emphasised the importance of strategic action in the creation of new institutional rules. Politicians or managers may set out to redesign institutional rules; pressure groups or trade unions may lobby for changes or campaign to defend existing rules. Strategic actors may find themselves in competition with others

attempting to change institutional rules in different ways. Coalitions of actors may form with the purpose of replacing one set of rules with another. Institutional change requires more than a vision; effective strategic action to replace one set of rules with another is also required.

In Part 2 of the chapter I examined the Liberals' strategy for creating a new institutional framework in the local authority. I showed how the Liberals worked through key change agents within the organisation, seeking to build a coalition of interests in support of decentralisation and to undermine potential resistance and the emergence of oppositional coalitions. The creation of change agents at a senior level (specifically the 'D' Team and the Neighbourhood Chief Executives) undermined potential resistance (or inertia) among chief officers. Among staff more generally, the cooption of the trades unions into the change process and the pace and phasing of implementation helped to neutralise resistance. In addition, many staff received financial incentives and were able to transfer to new neighbourhoods on the basis of existing work groups. Thus the Liberals succeeded in building support for, or at least acceptance of, the new arrangements among staff.

As my NALGO informant summarised: 'Overall, staff did not oppose decentralisation, although some people do not like change' (interview, March 1990). Where there was opposition among officers, this was restricted to occasional acts of protest or, more commonly, individual resignations. Problems did emerge in terms of maintaining continuity, stability and specialism within some services, but organised resistance

to decentralisation never 'took off'. The Labour Group failed to express an alternative vision for change within the authority, or to build support among trades unions and individual staff members. The party was in disarray after its split and surprise election defeat in 1986. Moreover, Labour councillors found themselves running three (and then four) of the seven new neighbourhoods - effectively coopted into the new institutional framework.

Having examined how a new institutional framework was created through decentralisation, subsequent chapters consider the extent to which new institutional rules have come to shape the behaviour of key interest groups both within and outside the local authority.

CHAPTER 8 - THE RECOGNITION OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL RULES

Introduction

I argued in Chapter 5 that institutions are defined by: (a) a set of rules that structure social interaction in particular ways, and (b) shared knowledge of these rules among members of a particular organisation or community. In my model of the 'institutional lifecycle', I distinguished between the 'creation' and 'recognition' of new institutional rules. 'Creation' is the process by which new rules are conceptualised and initiated. 'Recognition' is the process by which knowledge of new rules becomes shared among relevant actors and comes to shape their behaviour - a new 'logic of appropriateness' is established. In the last chapter I examined the creation of a new institutional framework for Tower Hamlets; in this chapter I analyse the recognition process.

Focusing on one of the new neighbourhoods - Globe Town - I consider the extent to which new institutional rules have become recognised by relevant actors since the decentralised system was established. (The basic structures and characteristics of Globe Town Neighbourhood are described in Chapter 5.) The chapter is divided into three parts. Part 1 looks at the service interface, focusing on public responses to the neighbourhood concept and the accessibility of services. Part 2 looks at management styles and working conditions. Part 3 looks at decision-making, discussing councillors' roles and public participation.

Throughout the chapter I am concerned with *process* issues - how new institutional rules are affecting attitudes and behaviour. I am less concerned here with evaluating the *outcomes* of new service delivery and decision-making structures (eg. the quality and impact of services and decisions) (see Lowndes and Stoker, 1992a and 1992b).

This chapter draws heavily on participant observation in Globe Town Neighbourhood - a research methodology particularly appropriate to the analysis of changing relationships and norms of behaviour (see Chapter 5). In addition, I draw on interviews with a wide range of actors, and on the findings of two surveys I carried out in Globe Town - on the views of staff (Staff Survey, February 1990) and community representatives (Advisory Committee Survey, June 1990). (See Appendices A and B for further details.) Data from public opinion surveys carried out by MORI (1990) and Safe Neighbourhoods Unit (1988, 1989) are also referred to.

Part 1 - New rules and the service interface

At the heart of Tower Hamlets' new institutional framework was the neighbourhood concept. The manifesto promised that neighbourhoods would offer a 'total area service', replacing fragmented, specialised departments and increasing the accessibility and responsiveness of services. Below I assess the extent to which the public recognised the neighbourhood concept and found services to be more accessible.

1.1 Public perceptions of the neighbourhood concept

Enormous emphasis was placed on establishing neighbourhood identities during the process of restructuring - neighbourhood names, colours, logos and newspapers. Ironically, neighbourhood identities were imposed in a 'top-down' manner. In July 1987, News from the 'D' Team announced that:

> Standards for the Neighbourhood Identities have been finalised. The New Corporate/Neighbourhood identities are designed to ensure that Neighbourhoods are instantly recognisable from each other whilst at the same time belonging to Tower Hamlets.... The logo's [sic] and colours will be used on all visual material produced.

All stationery, road signs, estate and office nameplates, and vehicles were to carry neighbourhood colours and logos. Telephones were to be answered with the neighbourhood name rather than 'Tower Hamlets' and job titles related to neighbourhood structures and not the wider borough organisation - each neighbourhood had its own 'Chief Executive', 'Head of Finance' and so on.

But to what extent did residents in the Globe Town area recognise the neighbourhood concept and orient their actions towards it? A survey of residents' attitudes carried for the borough by MORI showed that 70% of Globe Town residents could correctly identify their neighbourhood. In terms of recognition, Globe Town scored highest for any neighbourhood in the Borough, despite the fact that it is generally considered to be the least 'natural' of the seven neighbourhoods (in contrast to well-established localities like Bow, Bethnal Green of the Isle of Dogs) (MORI, 1990). Although appearing on nineteenth century maps of the area (and

still on the A-Z of London) the name had fallen into disuse before being resurrected with the decentralisation plan.

There is evidence that local businesses as well as individual members of the public picked up on the new neighbourhood focus. Globe Town's Neighbourhood Chief Executive reported proudly that a new off-licence had taken the name, 'Globe Town Wines' (interview, June 1989). In Bow Neighbourhood where image-making has been most intense - including the replacement of all lamp-posts with Victorian style lamps bearing the blue and gold neighbourhood colours - several local businesses, including a chain of estate agents, adopted the neighbourhood colours. The new neighbourhoods had considerable success in 'relabelling their areas' (Wright, 1991: 190).

1.2 <u>The accessibility of services</u>

The high level of neighbourhood recognition among Globe Town residents was accompanied by high levels of use of new neighbourhood facilities. This can be illustrated with reference to the 'One Stop Shop' set up in the Neighbourhood Centre through which residents could gain access to all council services. From its opening in May 1987 through to May 1990, the One Stop Shop handled over 50,000 enquiries - equivalent to more than three visits per head of the Globe Town population (Globe Town Finance and Performance Review Sub-committee, August 1990). A neighbourhood public opinion survey conducted in 1988 found that 43% of respondents had used the One Stop Shop; a second survey in 1989 found a similar figure of 45%. The surveys also revealed public satisfaction

with the way that enquiries were dealt with. In 1988, 65% of those using the service said their enquiry had been dealt with effectively and in 1989 this figure remained high with 58% expressing satisfaction (Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, 1988, 1989).

The 1990 MORI survey showed a strong performance by Globe Town Neighbourhood with respect to the accessibility of its officers and the treatment of service-users in terms of politeness, efficiency and responsiveness (MORI, 1990). Table 8.1 shows that 88% of Globe Town residents interviewed found it easy to get hold of the right officer in the neighbourhood office. In addition, 73% declared themselves satisfied with the treatment they received.

Table 8.1 - Residents' perceptions of neighbourhood offices in Tower Hamlets, 1990

How easy was it to get hold of the right officer in the neighbourhood office?

	easy	difficult	no opinion
Globe Town	82%	11%	7%
Tower Hamlets	55%	34%	11%

How satisfied were you with your treatment by the neighbourhood office?

	satisfied	dissatisfied	no opinion
Globe Town	73%	15%	12%
Tower Hamlets	57%	26%	17%

Note: Figures for Tower Hamlets include all neighbourhoods taken together (1424 people were interviewed)
Source: MORI, 1990

1.3 Explaining developments in the service interface

The MORI data shows that Globe Town performed better than Tower Hamlets as a whole (figures from all neighbourhoods combined), which suggests that other neighbourhoods had less success in embedding new rules about access and service delivery. While the neighbourhood structure could be created and put in place in a top-down manner, the 'bedding down' of new institutional rules progressed differently in different neighbourhoods. Globe Town used the opportunities presented by decentralisation - smallness of scale and localness of focus - to build new types of relationship with the public (interview with Globe Town Chief Executive, June 1989).

To take an example, while all neighbourhoods were required to establish a One Stop Shop, Globe Town extended the concept. As well as providing information and access to all services, One Stop Shop staff acted as the public's advocate, solving problems and progress-chasing. Relevant officers from 'upstairs' were required to leave their desk and, stepping across the counter into the public's 'territory', talk to individuals about their problems and concerns. This style of working overturned traditional approaches based upon appointment systems, standard letters, and 'phone calls at the public's expense. The One Stop Shop also administered a complaints system backed up by time limits for action, home visits, compensation arrangements, and appeal to the Chief Executive personally (interview with Senior Customer Liaison Officer, June 1989).

The success with which the neighbourhood concept became embedded may also relate to its dovetailing with East End traditions of small, inward-looking communities. As we discussed in Chapter 6, the Liberals' decentralisation plan resonated with key informal institutions of East End life. In addition, the neighbourhood concept expressed for many residents a sort of 'return to normality', as Tower Hamlets had largely failed to establish a local identity after its creation in 1964 from the three metropolitan boroughs of Stepney, Bethnal Green and Poplar. An estate manager observed the significance residents began to attach to the Globe Town identity:

> Decentralisation has been very popular because white East Enders have always identified closely with small localities - decentralisation has exaggerated and built upon this identification. People at first didn't like the Globe Town label - they felt they had lived in Bethnal Green all their lives. Now people are defending Globe Town as an identity. (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990)

However, as the officer quoted above implies, non-white East Enders did not necessarily respond so readily to the neighbourhood concept. It is significant that public opinion data shows lower levels of neighbourhood recognition among Globe Town residents of Bangladeshi origin: 66% could name their neighbourhood as against 81% of white residents (MORI, 1990). Bangladeshi residents were also less likely to be satisfied with their treatment by neighbourhood staff. The 1989 neighbourhood survey found that 32% of Asian residents felt their enquiries at the One Stop Shop had been dealt with effectively, as against 58% of the total sample (Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, 1989). Two factors are significant in explaining this difference in experience.

First, Globe Town's 'customer care' policies operated with an undifferentiated view of the consumer. Globe Town lacked interpretation and translation facilities. Few signs and little literature (rent arrears notices only!) were translated into other languages, and Globe Town had few staff of Asian origin (5% of respondents to my staff survey described themselves as Asian) (Staff Survey, February 1990). There was a feeling among Liberal councillors that the neighbourhood concept rendered 'equal opportunities' initiatives unnecessary, on the grounds that a locally-based office affords easy access to all residents. (When Liberal councillors won control of Stepney Neighbourhood from Labour in 1990, they actually removed all Bengali signs in neighbourhood estates, open spaces and buildings.) Globe Town's lack of provision for the particular needs of some residents meant that the benefits of improved access were not felt equally across the population. The Liberals' vision of community and neighbourhood was based upon an ideal of 'sameness'. Liberals were reluctant to recognise the heterogeneity of needs and interests within East End localities - a position which brought the authority into confrontation with the Commission for Racial Equality on issues of ethnic monitoring and housing allocations (Kossoff, 1994: 13).

Second, the neighbourhood concept itself may have less meaning and appeal to Bangladeshi residents. The Liberals' neighbourhood concept was based upon a geographic interpretation of community. However, people have multiple, overlapping community attachments, which may or may not have geographical boundaries. A sense of effective community may be based on ethnic or kinship ties, business associations, or shared concerns and interests. Even when geographical boundaries are

important, different boundaries may be significant for different groups (Lowndes, 1992: 56). Bangladeshi residents are concentrated in the west of the borough, in a 'band' running from north to south - an area which included parts of *four* different neighbourhoods. Interestingly, Bangladeshi community leaders and business people have discussed the idea of declaring a 'Banglatown' which would follow their own sense of their community's boundaries (Wright, 1991: 107).

Links between the new neighbourhoods and existing community identities may be relevant factors in explaining recognition of new institutional rules. However, material or instrumental factors were important too. As I showed in Chapter 6, Tower Hamlets is a highly 'municipalised' area, with the local authority being a key provider of services and benefits. The local authority is the area's main landlord and employer as well as owning commercial property (eg. shops) and letting major contracts for housing repairs, maintenance and other services. Members of the public and local businesses had very concrete reasons for wanting to identify as quickly as possible relevant service delivery and decision-making points within the authority.

Part 2 - New rules and management and working practices

Decentralisation has been linked in the literature to the introduction of new management and working practices in local government (see Chapter 3). The Liberal manifesto itself promised that neighbourhoods were not to be 'mini town halls' - specialist departments would disappear, 'bureaucracy and red tape' would be reduced, and new relationships with

the public would be built. I consider below officer responses to the neighbourhood concept and progress towards establishing new management and working practices.

2.1 Officer responses to the neighbourhood concept

My survey of staff attitudes (see Appendix A for methodological details) indicated that, after the upheaval of 'assimilation', the vast majority of Globe Town staff now identified with their neighbourhood rather than with the borough as a whole. The survey found that 71% of respondents felt that they worked for Globe Town Neighbourhood; 24% still felt they worked for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (5% did not reply). When asked about the future of the neighbourhood system, the majority of staff (67%) wished to see a period of consolidation, while 20% favoured some recentralisation, and 9% further decentralisation (7% did not reply).

While staff clearly recognised the centrality of the neighbourhood concept in the new Tower Hamlets, they expressed both positive and negative views about the way it was working in practice. On the positive side, the majority of staff not only recognised the neighbourhood concept but believed it was leading to a new relationship with the public and to improved services - precisely the gains anticipated by the Liberals. The survey showed that neighbourhood working had brought the vast majority of officers into contact with the public: 83% of staff described themselves as working closely with the public. The survey found that 53% of staff felt that services had

improved, as against 15% who felt they had deteriorated (18% felt there had been no change, while 14% did not express a view - in most cases because they had not worked for Tower Hamlets prior to decentralisation).

When asked in an 'open' survey question what they most like about working in Globe Town, nearly one-third of staff volunteered points relating to the opportunity to deliver better services through closer relationships with the public. In their written comments on the survey form, staff referred to the more intimate knowledge of the area that they had acquired through neighbourhood working. As one respondent put it: 'There is more local contact - an increased affinity with the community'. Another staff member said that: 'Decentralisation offers a direction towards a human-based relationship between the community and the local authority'. An estate manager estimated that he knew 50% of tenants on the estate (about 800 units) by face, and a further 30% by name. He commented on the new approach and changing relationship between officers and tenants thus:

> We all think more locally now - tenants and officers. Officers no longer assume that they know it all - there has been a break-down of professionalism. Tenants do know what's best for an area. (interview with Parkview/Cranbrook Estate Manager, January 1990)

However, some staff expressed unease about the neighbourhood concept in practice. In comments on their survey returns, some staff made clear they regretted the passing of the old borough-wide approach. One officer explained that: 'I don't like the idea of separate neighbourhoods - we all live or work in one borough and resources should be for all

residents'. A librarian quoted the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964, noting that: 'The Act says that "anyone who lives, works, studies in the borough can join or use any library". My usership are *not* just people from Globe Town'. Some staff argued that the neighbourhood concept was leading to a 'parochial', 'territorial', 'inward-looking', 'petty minded' and 'competitive' approach. Some officers felt that the new neighbourhood system was failing to consider the community as a whole; as a social services officer put it: 'there is a continued neglect of the needs of the local ethnic minority population'. Several were concerned about the cost of 'replicating everything seven times' and with the expense of 'public relations' activities, while others pointed to the need for borough-wide, or even London-wide, action in particular areas (eg. economic development).

2.2 Management style

The Liberal manifesto had little to say about the detail of new working practices to be developed in the neighbourhoods. Indeed, following the creation of the neighbourhood system, new attention was paid to management issues, in recognition of the danger of traditional approaches reasserting themselves within the decentralised structures. In April 1988, Decentralisation News (the successor to News from the 'D' Team) carried a piece signalling the need to 'deepen' the decentralisation process:

> Decentralisation in Tower Hamlets has never just been for decentralisation's sake, its intention has always been to improve services and consumer satisfaction by making services locally responsive... The question is being asked - 'Are traditional Local Government structures and attitudes appropriate to the unique concept of a Neighbourhood led authority?'. An exercise,

> overlapping with Phase 2, and scheduled for completion by July 1988, is underway to examine this question. The objectives are to devise... structures and organisations which will be more appropriate to the underlying philosophy of Decentralisation.

The initiative proposed by the 'Special Projects Team' (as the 'D' Team had become) was actually to have little bearing on the development of new management and working practices in the neighbourhoods. As the neighbourhood concept became entrenched, each neighbourhood began to develop its own culture and management approach. (The victims of their own success, the officers of the Special Projects Team were themselves decentralised at the beginning of 1990!) Globe Town saw itself as being in the vanguard of establishing new management and working practices. As the Neighbourhood Chief Executive wrote in the staff newsletter:

> I would like to say that I believe in a Japanese style of management, which is that managers are just the senior members of a team, and are very much part of the workforce... and if you like, lead by example rather than direction. (GTs, June/July 1989)

There is evidence that informality and openness replaced more standard bureaucratic codes of conduct in Globe Town. In response to the staff survey, many staff expressed enthusiasm for the new levels of autonomy and creativity in their work. When asked what they most liked about working in Globe Town, the most common responses referred to the 'friendly atmosphere' and 'informal style' of the neighbourhood. Globe Town's managers had 'open door' policies and, in response to the survey, 91% of staff said they have the opportunity to raise points (suggestions or criticisms) with their immediate supervisor. Because staff from all departments and professional backgrounds were located in the same, purpose-built accommodation, there were constant opportunities for the

exchange of information and ideas across traditional demarcations. Team groupings and seating plans were designed to facilitate this. Many policies and projects were worked on by multi-disciplinary teams - for instance, staff from highways, environmental health, planning, refuse and housing all worked together on 'green' policy (interview with Environmental Development Manager, June 1989).

The staff survey asked staff to indicate which of four sentences best described Globe Town's management style (see Table 8.2). It is a measure of Globe Town's success in implementing the Liberals' anti-bureaucratic vision that only 12% of staff chose statement D. The reality of innovation in management style is reflected in the fact that nearly half of all respondents chose statement B. However, the findings also show that informality and flexibility had downsides: 80% of respondents chose statements A or B, reflecting a perception of managerial confusion and instability.

Written responses to the staff survey referred to some of the perils of replacing bureaucratic methods with greater informality, referring to 'hidden policy-making amongst closed groups', 'the "if your face fits" approach', and 'management playing favourites'. At the same time, problems associated with 'traditional' local government functioning were not absent. Despite the commitment to inter-departmental working, it was still felt that the interests of certain departments dominated: more than 50% of staff felt that housing was the dominant service - an economic development officer complained that: 'they think the world

Table 8.2 - Staff perceptions of management style in Globe Town Neighbourhood, 1990

How would you describe the management style at Globe Town?

	Percentage of respondents choosing this statement
A. Crisis management in an environment of chaos	33
B. Boldly experimental management, but with a tendency not to consolidate good ideas	47
C. Creative and supportive management which gets the best out of staff	6
D. Bureaucratic management where red tape stifles good ideas	12
No response	2

Source: Staff Survey, February 1990

revolves around it'. Despite the bringing together of most staff within the neighbourhood centre, traditionally 'outposted' staff (eg. in libraries and nurseries) who were not located in the Neighbourhood Centre still felt isolated and and 'forgotten'.

2.3 Inter-departmental and generic working

The Liberal manifesto promised that departmental boundaries would disappear altogether in the new neighbourhood setting (see Chapter 7). While this goal had clearly yet to be realised, staff attitudes and behaviour suggested a growing recognition of new conventions around inter-departmental and generic working (see Table 8.3). In response to

Table 8.3 - Staff perceptions of inter-departmental and generic working in Globe Town Neighbourhood. 1990

	Percentage of respondents choosing this statement/answer
How would you describe your relationships with other departments?	
Cooperative and friendly	78
Formal and efficient	12
Hostile and unproductive	10
Does the neighbourhood system make working with other departments easier?	
Yes	62
No	5
Don't know	20
No answer	3
Would you describe your responsibilities as:	
Very broadly defined?	42
Broadly defined?	46
Tightly defined?	5
Very tightly defined?	5
No answer	2

Source: Staff Survey, February 1990

the survey, 98% of staff stated that their work involved dealing with other departments and 78% of respondents described their relationships with other departments as cooperative and friendly. Many staff referred in the survey to the benefits of having 'all departments under one roof'. As one clerical officer pointed out: 'There is more friendliness since you actually meet the departmental contact'. Another noted that: 'People are close at hand - they are not just names and telephone numbers'. Only 10% of staff thought their relationships with other departments were best described as 'hostile and unproductive'. In total, two-thirds of staff felt that decentralisation had made working with other departments easier. As for a move to generic working, 88% of staff responding to the survey described their responsibilities as broadly, or very broadly, defined. Only 10% of respondents said that their responsibilities were tightly, or very tightly, defined. Globe Town's former Neighbourhood Chief Executive summed up the changes thus: 'Rigid departmentalism decreased dramatically, and a new style evolved with the emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurial attitudes to problem-solving' (Du Sautoy in Stoker [ed], 1991: 381).

However, the *ad hoc* way in which generic working developed in Globe Town led to some problems. There is a difference between a planned approach to generic working (as in the case of the Bancroft Community Team described in Chapter 9) and an enforced 'genericism' which arose out of under-staffing and continual requests for small sections to take on extra responsibilities. Some staff welcomed the chance to cover for colleagues; as one person put it: 'there is the opportunity to learn new skills with the possibility of promotion'. Other staff suggested that

the diffuse nature of their responsibilities was leading not to multi-skilling but to *de-skilling*. Many people were concerned about their career development. One person referred to a 'stagnation of career opportunities'. Another noted that: 'In a professional capacity I feel isolated from other colleagues as decentralisation has fragmented our once small department, so there is little advice and help within my profession' (Staff Survey, February 1990). Indeed, a former Globe Town councillor openly acknowledges that: 'the system as we developed it was anti-professional' (Charters in Stoker [ed], 1991: 381).

Even where staff had more generic job descriptions and worked in conjunction with other departments, the way in which administrative work was carried out had changed very little. Staff commented that decentralisation had led to 'more paper and more meetings'. Although 'new management' ideas were embraced in Globe Town, in many areas staff were required to extend the *scope* of their work, while its *form* remained relatively unchanged. As one officer pointed out:

> Decentralisation has broken up the inaccessibility of centralised bureaucracy, but it hasn't thought of an adequate replacement to the bureaucratic communication and work practice system - we still shuffle through excessive paperwork to extract the odd nugget. (Staff Survey, February 1990)

2.4 Difficulties in developing new work practices: technology, training and stress

The tension between new responsibilities and old methods of work relates in part to the limited application of information technology to white-collar work in Tower Hamlets. Those who make a link between

decentralisation and new working practices emphasise the role of IT, noting that it enables the decentralised arms of an organisation to communicate instantaneously with each other (and with a centre) and allows for a reduction of routine administrative tasks, paving the way for generic work and 'self-servicing' (Hoggett, 1987: 222). However, as Tomlinson (1989: 49) points out:

> In the case of Tower Hamlets, at no point did new technology play an important part in the restructuring of the organisation. In fact, one could argue that in the short term at least, decentralisation retarded its introduction.

It was not until 1990 that the first stages of a borough-wide IT strategy began to be implemented, by which time most neighbourhoods had adopted a 'belt and braces' approach to IT. Without the aid of comprehensive IT facilities, broader responsibilities frequently made for ever-expanding workloads and the neglect of strategic work. As one estate manager noted:

> We get too bogged down - we can't do long-term work, like monitoring. The root of the problem is IT - why was it neglected? There is a tendency in Globe Town to disregard nuts and bolts. (interview with Rogers/Victoria Estate Manager, January 1990)

A second estate manager commented that:

> We don't use IT enough - we try and get away on the cheap, by using in-house expertise that doesn't exist. The poor use of IT has led to discontent amongst staff. (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990)

The difficulties involved in adapting to more generic roles were added to by a failure to undertake 'the heavy investment in training and staff development' that commentators agree should accompany decentralisation (Hambleton, 1988: 135). Tower Hamlets' training budget stood in 1990 at

just 0.8% of its overall staffing budget. Staff in Globe Town complained about a lack of training, but also commented on problems that arose when training was offered:

> It is *ad hoc* - someone gets a bee in their bonnet about something. Training should be programmed. We want good training or no training. There is no consultation about training. We should have a structured programme - ask people what they want. We must look in the long-term - how will jobs develop? (interview with Rogers/Victoria Estate Manager, January 1990)

> In my team, several staff have dropped out of college [day release] due in part at least to the pressure of work. People don't want to go to college - they feel they will get behind in their work and let the team down (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990).

New rules were introduced into the organisation of work within Globe Town, but the *ad hoc* manner in which this happened led to considerable stress among staff. Three-quarters of staff responding to my survey said that they suffered stress related to their work and two-thirds thought there was a wider problem of 'burn-out' in Globe Town. When asked to name the causes of stress, the most common response (from around half of all staff) attributed stress to the gap between the demands placed on them and the lack of resources and time to meet them. As one social services officer put it: 'More and more is expected of you, with less and less'. Although lack of resources would be a likely cause of stress in any inner-London local authority, the high proportion of workers experiencing stress of this sort suggests that decentralisation brought added pressures. The second major cause of stress referred to by staff was poor management, specifically a lack of support and supervision in the context of constant change and the absence of any sense of strategic direction. Staff referred to constant 'moving of the

goal-posts', the 'shifting sands', and 'fluid rule interpretation'. Being unsure of the rules during a period of transition seemed to cause as much stress as the introduction of new approaches.

Part 3 - New rules and decision-making

The Liberals' manifesto promised that the new Standing Neighbourhood Committees (SNCs) would ensure that decisions affecting each community were taken by those 'who know best its needs and are accountable to it'. The neighbourhood focus would allow councillors to better respond to the needs of their own ward electors, who would in turn hold them more closely to account. Through decentralisation councillors would redress 'inverted' power relations which allowed officers to dominate decision-making and bring the public into the policy-making process. Below I consider the extent to which new decision-making rules were recognised by Globe Town's five councillors (four Liberals and one Labour member) and their constituents.

3.1 Councillors' decision-making style and focus

In Globe Town, decentralisation gave councillors a sense of 'patch' and a sense of control. Councillors felt that the neighbourhood system built on and valued their ward-based knowledge, in contrast to the traditional committee system which prioritised expert, service-specific knowledge and took a borough-wide approach (discussion with Liberal councillors, February 1990). All the issues that came before the SNC affected *their* wards and they could deal with all services together. The former Chief

Executive of Stepney (a Labour-controlled neighbourhood until 1990) illustrates the advantages of the system with reference to planning applications:

> When these are dealt with at a borough level members often do not have intimate knowledge of many of the applications they deal with. In the neighbourhood system this does not apply - every address was known by the local ward councillors, as was its history, and this provided a good base for making decisions. (Baine in Stoker [ed], 1991: 375)

In Globe Town, Liberal councillors felt that the neighbourhood system increased their opportunity to direct policy and influence the bureaucracy (discussion with Liberal councillors, February 1990). The smaller scale of operations and councillors' knowledge of local services and conditions made it easier for them to assert their political priorities. As a former Globe Town councillor (and chair of the SNC) explains:

> Under a decentralised system... members often have sufficient knowledge to determine that more money needs to be spent on the elderly, but that the book vote is too high; or that opening hours of a leisure centre can be cut to facilitiate dealing with noise nuisance in an industrial part of the neighbourhood. It becomes harder for professionals to defend their empire, and easier for members to redetermine priorities, and reallocate funding accordingly. (Charters, 1994: 25)

Although the time spent by councillors in meetings increased, their lives were no longer dominated by the formal committee system. Formal committees were restricted to the six-weekly meetings of the Standing Neighbourhood Committee and weekly meetings of the Urgency Sub-Committee. The position of the Chair of the neighbourhood was rotated among the Liberal councillors. Beyond this, no councillor had a formal responsibility for a particular service or policy area. Each councillor

was expected to be involved in and responsible for decision-making across the whole range of neighbourhood affairs - through whatever unorthodox methods were deemed appropriate. A keystone of performance review, for example, was a regular councillor bicycle tour to inspect the neighbourhood; an officer followed behind with a dictating machine to note the points the councillor called out! Working parties involving members, officers and community representatives took forward particular policy initiatives - including 'green' policy and health promotion.

Policies were formed in exchanges between councillors and officers in a number of informal settings, as well as in the committee room. Members provided officers with advice and guidance on a day-to-day basis, and an 'interactive' policy-making process developed (Charters, 1994: 27). Most importantly, members sought to establish a 'politically dominant (as opposed to administratively dominant) culture' (Charters in Stoker [ed], 1991: 380). Liberal members claimed to have created a culture in which 'officers begin to develop an instinctive feel for the philosophy and strategy of the members' (Charters, 1994: 27). Recalling his four years as a Globe Town member, Charters states that: 'only once did I feel that my Neighbourhood Chief Executive had failed to anticipate my view on a policy issue' (Charters, 1994: 27). This informal approach to policy-making relied heavily on trust and 'like-mindedness' between members and key officers (not always in senior positions). Liberal members were in many ways highly directive but, at the same time, key officers gained significant autonomy and influence in policy design.

Councillors reoriented their decision-making around new institutional rules characterised by informality, localness of focus, and breadth of concern. The new approach threw up difficulties as well as gains, however. The decision-making process frequently appeared to be unstructured and, at times, haphazard and lacking in coherent direction. There was a 'tendency to do too much, in too many directions at once!' (Charters in Stoker [ed], 1991: 380). Moreover, the Liberals in Globe Town often worked less as a party group and more as individualistic policy entrepreneurs. The neighbourhood system reflected and reinforced the character of the local Liberal party - its unpredictable and maverick policy stances, its enormous diversity of political opinion, and its colourful (even charismatic) personalities. Without the discipline of service-based committees, there was tremendous opportunity within the neighbourhood system for members to pursue 'hobby horses' and 'pet projects'. With only five members (and a majority group of four) running the neighbourhood, individual councillors were able to shape the policy agenda according to their personal concerns and prejudices.

For the Liberals running Globe Town, decentralisation proved to be a rewarding but also a very demanding experience. Charters (in Stoker [ed], 1991: 380) reflects on his 1986-1990 period of office thus:

> It was exciting; the time cost was substantial, but the chance to shape, to be involved at all levels, to pursue interests, and to see them immediately implemented was totally absorbing.

In the council elections in May 1990, only one of the four Liberal Democrat councillors put up for re-election. The neighbourhood system required of *all* members a time commitment similar to that of a

conventional committee chair. It may be that the new rules of political life, embraced so enthusiastically by Globe Town's Liberal members, will prove to be incompatible with the unpaid, part-time status of the councillor.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the lone Labour councillor in Globe Town experienced the new institutional rules in different ways from his Liberal opponents. While access to to information, officers and support for case-work improved under the neighbourhood system, the Labour councillor still felt excluded from full participation in neighbourhood decision-making (interview with Labour councillor, February 1990). The informality of much decision-making and the close relationship between Liberal members and key officers served to exclude him in ways that might have been less significant in a conventional committee system. Labour councillors in *Labour-controlled* neighbourhoods found themselves both 'in power' and 'in opposition'. They recognised the opportunities that the new institutional framework presented - to develop their own policy and service initiatives at neighbourhood level. However, they worked within rules not of their own making, and were subject to unilateral changes in those rules (as when the borough 'centre' chose to remove particular strategic planning decisions from the control of Labour neighbourhoods) (see Carlisle in Stoker [ed], 1991).

3.2 Councillors' relationship with officers

Councillors in Globe Town had a considerable say in the appointment of senior officers and, crucially, the Neighbourhood Chief Executive; they

set great store by attracting 'like minded' individuals. As Charters (in Stoker [ed], 1991: 381) notes: 'the officers we attracted tended to be those who were most suspicious of traditional professional barriers and most committed to generic working'. Both councillors and senior managers remarked on the closeness of their working relationship. Globe Town's Arts and Information Manager noted that councillors were far more 'approachable' since decentralisation, commenting that she 'wouldn't have even known their 'phone numbers before' (interview, June 1989). Regular formal and informal contact and a series of 'away weekends' helped to establish and cement close working relationships. For councillors, this partnership with senior managers enhanced their sense of control over policy development and provided access to high quality information and independent advice. Senior officers, too, were positive about the tone of the relationship, stressing that councillors have resisted becoming bogged down in trivia or interfering too much in individual cases. As I noted above, councillors were concerned to 'set the culture' and provide political direction.

The neighbourhood system also enabled councillors to get to know and work with a wide range of more junior officers. In the staff survey, 16% of staff described themselves as working closely with councillors - a substantial proportion compared with traditionally-run local government. Almost all staff (94%) knew that Globe Town councillors were predominantly Liberals and half of all respondents claimed to be able to name all five of the neighbourhood's councillors (Staff Survey, February 1990). Charters (1994: 25-6) describes the frequent and informal nature of member/officer contacts thus:

> Councillors' regular attendance at the One Stop Shop enables the officers to talk with them often, whether it is to ask them for support for a new scheme the officer is dreaming up, or for an informal briefing on a pending planning issue, or to complain about the lack of money for a proposed day centre... It is as if an unspoken contract is negotiated with officers saying 'we will work to your revised structure and community-based goals, but in exchange you must give us your time to help us readjust our perspective, and support to attain those goals'.

Not all officers, however, felt positive about the terms of this 'unspoken contract'. Some of the comments made by staff as part of the survey indicated resentment at councillors' influence in neighbourhood affairs. One clerical worker commented that: 'Councillors give instructions without caring how they are carried out'. Other staff complained about the growing influence of 'political interference', 'political dogma' and 'political imperatives' (Staff Survey, February 1990). Plainly some staff found it hard to adjust to the interventionist stance of Globe Town's Liberal councillors. Decentralisation aimed to empower councillors vis-a-vis officers; perhaps the complaints voiced by staff were some indication that this was indeed happening. The naive indignation of a social services officer expressed the unease felt by many staff at councillors' new-found influence: 'I object to the seeming preference that management have for meeting councillors' needs rather than staff needs' (Staff Survey, February 1990). At the same time, however, the former chair of the Globe Town SNC recognises that: 'There are times when it is hard to know where the line is beyond which councillors should not be involved' (Charters, 1994: 27). Taking the example of housing allocations and transfers, Charters (1994: 27) acknowledges that such involvement 'is a recipe for chaos and corruption based on personal prejudice'.

3.4 Councillors' relationship with the public

The neighbourhood system increased the visibility and accessibility of members. In Globe Town, the Liberal councillors held their surgeries in the One Stop Shop and made frequent (often daily) visits to the Neighbourhood Centre. As Charters (1994: 25) puts it:

> The community rapidly learns that this is where power lies, and if officers are available here then members should be as well... Of course the conscientious councillor is always accessible to their constituents - but this system makes it less easy for the non-conscientious to hide.

Such visibility meant that councillors could be more readily held to account for their decisions. Members were under pressure to take ownership of all neighbourhood policies and actions - they could not hide behind the excuse that they are not 'on such and such a committee'. Even minority group members would have participated in all debates, even if in opposition to the final decision. As Charters (1994: 26) explains:

> you contribute directly to the policies of your neighbourhood, so that if a decision works to the disadvantage of a constituent you are partly responsible... The positive result of this is that councillors make very sure that the reasons for their decisions are clearly spelt out to the community; a much greater emphasis is placed on effective communication to your constituents when you are held directly responsible for the local authority's impact on them.

The 1990 MORI survey showed that none of the councillors was a household name: only 22% of people in Globe Town could name any one of their councillors, despite the fact that all of the councillors live in or on the edge of the neighbourhood (MORI, 1990). (Fewer residents of Bangladeshi origin could name a councillor.) At the same time, electoral

turnout has increased sharply in Tower Hamlets (and in Globe Town particularly) since the rise of Liberal 'community politics' and the establishment of the neighbourhood system (see Tables 8.4 and 8.5). The comparison with neighbouring boroughs like Hackney and Newham is interesting, given the similar demographic and socioeconomic character of these areas. Increased turnout suggests there may be a link between the neighbourhood system and increased political awareness.

However, Table 8.4 shows a *general* upward trend in turnout across London, suggesting that voting behaviour is influenced by a range of factors. Dramatic increases are certainly not confined to boroughs which had experimented with decentralisation. Sharp rises in turnout in boroughs like Hillingdon, Lewisham and Wandsworth suggest a relationship between turnout and high levels of political competition. While there may be a *correlation* between decentralisation and increased turn-out in Tower Hamlets, this need not imply a causal relationship (as implied by Burns et al [forthcoming, Chapter 8]).

3.5 Public participation in decision-making

Globe Town picked up enthusiastically on the Liberals' manifesto promise of increased public participation and consultation. Globe Town established an 'Advisory Committee' made up of the chairs of the neighbourhoods' 25 tenants' and residents' associations. The five Globe Town councillors sat as members of the Committee, but by convention rarely used their votes. Despite its tenant-orientation, the Advisory Committee dealt with *all* neighbourhood services, not just housing

Table 8.4 - Voter turnout in London borough elections, 1982-1990

Borough	Percentage voter turnout			
	1982	1986	1990	Change 1982-90
Barking & Dagenham	33.7	34.9	38.6	+4.9
Barnet	48.8	42.0	50.0	+1.2
Bromley	47.8	46.8	49.8	+2.0
Bexley	45.4	46.4	50.1	+4.7
Brent	43.3	44.1	42.9	-0.4
Camden	45.1	46.7	46.2	+1.1
Croydon	40.3	42.7	45.8	+5.5
Ealing	49.5	47.9	49.0	-0.5
Enfield	43.4	46.7	48.0	+4.6
Greenwich	45.5	47.8	51.1	+4.6
Hackney	34.2	36.1	36.1	+1.9
Hammersmith & Fulham	50.0	51.8	53.2	+3.2
Harringey	45.2	50.7	46.6	+1.4
Harrow	48.6	46.7	51.1	+2.5
Havering	44.4	43.3	49.1	+4.7
Hillingdon	42.4	48.1	52.9	+10.5
Hounslow	46.4	46.8	48.9	+2.5
Islington	40.1	47.1	46.2	+6.1
Kensington & Chelsea	38.7	39.4	42.2	+3.5
Kingston-on-Thames	46.5	51.3	56.4	+9.9
Lambeth	44.7	47.7	45.9	+1.2
Lewisham	41.5	45.6	45.2	+3.7
Merton	47.5	49.8	53.7	+6.2
Newham	31.4	34.9	36.5	+5.1
Redbridge	44.6	43.9	48.5	+3.9
Richmond-on-Thames	59.4	58.9	59.7	+0.3
Southwark	34.3	40.8	39.6	+5.3
Sutton	52.1	51.1	55.4	+2.3
Tower Hamlets	**31.1**	**38.9**	**46.1**	**+15.0**
Waltham Forest	42.8	44.9	50.8	+8.0
Wandsworth	48.7	51.4	56.5	+7.9
All London	43.8	45.4	48.2	+4.4

Source: Burns et al, forthcoming, Chapter 8

Table 8.5 - Voter turnout in Globe Town Neighbourhood, 1982-1990

Ward	Percentage voter turnout			
	1982	1986	1990	Change 1982-90
Holy Trinity	41.0	44.7	49.9	+8.9
St James	34.7	35.5	51.5	+16.8

Source: Burns et al, forthcoming, Chapter 8

matters. Chaired by a tenant representative, the Advisory Committee met on a six-weekly cycle, immediately prior to meetings of the Standing Neighbourhood Committee. Its agenda included a public question time, items raised by the tenants' associations and consideration of the agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the Standing Neighbourhood Committee. The Committee was well-attended, both by its own members and by the public, with between 50 and 200 people attending each meeting.

Globe Town divided itself into six Estate Areas, each covering around 1,000 households (two or three estates). Each Estate Area was to have an Estate Base Committee, meeting monthly to discuss estate management issues - repairs, capital works, environmental improvements and community development. However, it proved harder to secure participation at this level. During the period of the research, only three of the six planned Committees were functioning effectively - having meetings and undertaking projects. Other forums existed for public participation, some of which were service-specific (eg. the sports centre user group), while others concerned particular issues (eg. the Animal Fouling Working Party) or client groups (eg. the Youth Forum and Elderly Person's Forum). Attendance was low at these forums, which were consided very much poor relations to the main tenant-based participation structures.

Tenants' associations in Tower Hamlets had historically occupied a lobbying and pressure group function in relation to the council; now they were sitting down with councillors and officers to make

recommendations on highly technical matters - capital programme finances or community care provision, for example. I conducted a small survey to find out about Advisory Committee members' views on the new opportunities for participation in decision-making (see Appendix A for methodological details). I received ten responses from a total of 24 members - a response rate of 42%. Six out of ten respondents thought that the Advisory Committee worked 'well' or 'OK'. Two members thought it worked 'poorly'; no members thought it worked 'very well' (two people did not answer the question). The majority of respondents chose 'positive' descriptions of the way in which the Committee operated: informal rather than formal, friendly rather than hostile, productive rather than unproductive, and interesting rather than boring.

The majority of respondents felt that officers provided good quality information to the Committee and listened to Advisory Committee members. A majority were, however, dissatisfied with the level of attendance from staff. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the attendance of councillors and believed that they listened to the views of the Committee. Nine out of ten respondents thought that the Advisory Committee should have more of a say in how the Neighbourhood was run (the remaining person failed to answer the question). The survey findings suggest, then, that most members were broadly satisfied with the way in which the Advisory Committee operates, but wanted to see its influence over neighbourhood affairs increased.

My survey found that four out of ten respondents were satisfied that the Advisory Committee represented all sections of the community. Four

more respondents were not happy about its representativeness (two people did not answer the question): one person suggested there was a need for representation from the Bangladeshi community and two people felt that disabled people should be represented. Of those responding, seven out of ten were over 60 years of age (one respondent was between 30 and 40, and two chose not to answer the question). All of those who answered a question on their ethnicity (nine out of ten) described themselves as white. The majority of respondents were members of community organisations other than their tenants' or residents' association. The survey findings confirm, then, that the Advisory Committee is unrepresentative of the Globe Town community as a whole, being dominated by older, white residents who are active in a range of community affairs.

Surveys show that non-white residents were very enthusiastic about the *idea* of participation in decision-making. The 1988 neighbourhood survey found that 78% of Bangladeshi residents favoured more involvement for tenants (58% of the total sample favoured more involvement). When respondents were asked whether they themselves would consider getting involved, again the figure was higher for Bangladeshi residents (47%) than for the sample as a whole (35%) (Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, 1988). These findings suggest that the lack of involvement of minority ethnic groups reflects not a lack of interest in participation but a sense of alienation from Globe Town's structures and culture of participation. Participatory structures were based upon tenants' associations - historically 'white' organisations which continued to be dominated by older, well-established residents. In addition, no efforts were made to

provide translation or interpretation facilities at meetings. More generally, as we suggested in Part 1, Bangladeshi residents may identify less with the new neigbourhood concept. As a former Neighbourhood Chief Executive of Stepney neighbourhood explains:

> the Bangladeshi and other ethnic minority populations did not operate on a neighbourhood basis but in other networks and organisations that spanned neighbourhoods. (Baine in Stoker [ed], 1991: 376)

The former Globe Town councillor quoted earlier, acknowledges that the new participatory structures expressed a sense of 'belonging' for some groups, while others felt excluded. He relates this to the nature of the East End community and limitations in the design of participatory structures:

> The close ties that knit a community together are one of its strengths, but at the same time also create the insularity that can be one of its weaknesses. This is particularly apparent in areas with a traditionally strong indigenous social structure, such as the East End, where there is also a high influx of people from ethnic minority populations. The representative structures for involving the local population have to be constructed in a way that will give all sections of the population access to the participative process - and it is one of our failures that we did not do this at an early enough stage in establishing the structures. Unless the system is genuinely representative it will tend to institutionalise the views of a single dominant group within the local community, and they may then attempt to use their position to maintain their insularity. (Charters, 1994: 29)

There were, however, cases where white and Bangladeshi residents came together to address common problems - most notably in setting up a tenant management cooperative on one of the 'worst' estates in the neighbourhood. Interestingly, it also appears that Bangladeshis may be becoming increasingly involved in local politics at the formal party level. The number of Bangladeshi councillors increased from five in

1986 to ten in 1990 (six Labour and four Liberal). After 1990, Bangladeshi councillors made up one-fifth of elected members (23% of Tower Hamlets' population are of Bangladeshi origin). The distribution of Bangladeshi councillors among the seven neighbourhoods broadly reflected the spatial concentration of the Bangladeshi population in the west of the borough. Between 1986 and 1990 all Globe Town's councillors were white; in 1990 a Bangladeshi Liberal member was elected. Moreover, by the end of 1993, 500 out of the 700 members of the Liberal Democrat Party in Tower Hamlets were of Bangladeshi origin (Wintour, 1993: 1).

Conclusion

I argued in Chapter 5 that institutions are defined by: (a) a set of rules that structure social interaction in particular ways, and (b) shared knowledge of these rules among members of a particular organisation or community. In my model of the 'institutional lifecycle', the first stage was the 'creation' of new institutional rules - the process by which new rules were conceptualised and initiated. The second stage was 'recognition' - the process by which knowledge of new rules became shared among relevant actors and came to shape their behaviour and interaction. Through the process of recognition, actors come to understand the constraints and opportunities implied by the new institutional framework, and how the new 'rules of the game' differ from the old. As new rules are 'bedded down', they acquire the status of norms, operating as a new 'logic of appropriateness' and providing a relatively stable structure to social interaction.

I showed in the last chapter how the Liberals turned the structures of Tower Hamlets inside-out; in this chapter I looked at the development of new practices and relationships within the decentralised system. Focusing on Globe Town Neighbourhood, I assessed the extent to which new institutional rules were recognised by key actors and influenced their attitudes and behaviour. Below I summarise my findings in relation to the service interface, management and working practices, and decision-making.

In terms of the **service interface**, I saw that the vast majority of Globe Town residents could identify their neighbourhood. I argued that the high level of neighbourhood identification related in part to a resonance with East End 'community' traditions, but was also linked to people's instrumental need to identify service delivery points in a highly municipalised area. I noted the high levels of use of new neighbourhood facilities (notably the One Stop Shop) and public satisfaction with the accessibility and style of neigbourhood service delivery. I argued that such gains did not flow automatically from decentralisation, but from the successful 'bedding down' of new institutional rules concerning access and responsiveness. I showed that residents of Bangladeshi origin were less likely to be able to name their neighbourhood, whilst also making less use of the One Stop Shop, and expressing lower levels of satisfaction with their treatment. This seemed likely to relate in part to the absence of practical facilities (like translation and interpretation), whilst also supporting the argument made in previous chapters that the neighbourhood concept fitted most readily with white East Enders' understandings of community.

In terms of **management and working practices**, I showed that significant progress had been made in establishing a neighbourhood identity among staff and in developing new types of relationship with the public. The majority of staff saw decentralisation as leading to improved services, as envisaged by the Liberals. The Liberals promised that departmentalism and 'red tape' would disappear in the neighbourhood setting; I showed that Globe Town had indeed adopted a more informal management style and more inter-disciplinary and generic forms of work. Most staff were positive about the new approaches, but others were critical of the *ad hoc* manner in which generic working had developed, frequently arising out of necessity rather than design. For many staff their jobs had simply become larger - they were expected to do more without the benefit of new working methods. Many staff found it stressful adapting to new institutional rules, particularly when these were not clearly articulated by management or backed up by appropriate training and technology.

In terms of **decision-making**, I showed that councillors had adopted a new style of decision-making, characterised by its local focus, breadth of concerns and informality. An 'interactive' approach to policy-making had developed in which councillors worked closely with 'like-minded' officers. Councillors claimed to set the broad 'culture' and 'direction' for decision-making, although some officers complained of increased 'councillor interference'. The new approach placed great demands on councillors' time - demands which did not fit easily with their unpaid, amateur status. Councillors were more visible to the public, through contacts in the One Stop Shop and attendance at public meetings. The

public appeared to be developing an appetite for involvement in decision-making, and for holding councillors to account. This was witnessed in high levels of participation in new consultative forums and increased turnout in the 1990 election. Globe Town's participatory structures were based upon tenants' associations, which were dominated by older, white residents. Again, the neighbourhood concept appeared to express a sense of identity and belonging for one part of the community, whilst alienating another.

In the last chapter I showed how a new institutional framework was conceptualised (in the Liberals' 1986 manifesto) and put into place (by the 'D' Team and other change agents). This chapter has shown how new institutional rules have been 'bedded down' at the neighbourhood level. I recorded the enthusiasm and flexibility with which many of those associated with Globe Town Neighbourhood adapted to the new conditions and requirements. But I also pointed to the dissatisfaction of some staff with the new regime, the 'burn-out' among staff and councillors alike, and the alienation of parts of the community from the new structures. These factors created pressure for the on-going adaption of new institutional rules within the neighbourhood system. As I argued in Chapter 5, institutional rules are never 'complete' or unambiguous - they continue to evolve as actors interpret them in creative ways in dealing with new situations or responding to new environmental pressures. In the next chapter I look at the next stage in my model of the institutional lifecycle - the maintenance of institutional rules over time.

CHAPTER 9 - THE MAINTENANCE OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL RULES

Introduction

In the last chapter I analysed the extent to which new institutional rules were 'recognised' in Globe Town Neighbourhood and influenced the expectations, attitudes and behaviour of key actors. Here I look at the challenge of sustaining institutional rules - the 'maintenance' stage of the institutional lifecycle. I asserted in Chapter 5 that institutional rules are unlikely to provide a complete or unambiguous guide to action in all circumstances, particularly as environments change. Conflict and confusion over rule interpretation is a part of institutional life. Actors interpret rules in creative ways in dealing with new situations or responding to new environmental pressures. Rules may be tested in the face of new challenges, and old practices may begin to reassert themselves. The maintenance of institutional rules is a dynamic - and hard to control - process. If this dynamism is lost, institutional rules may fall into disuse or be deliberately undermined by groups seeking institutional change (leading to the 'collapse' stage of the institutional lifecyle). In short, the process of institutional change is hard to control: new rules evolve in unpredictable ways, reflecting shifting power relations and adaption to different contexts.

In Chapter 8 I reported a high degree of 'success' in achieving recognition of new institutional rules within Globe Town Neighbourhood. Here I focus on the *tensions* inherent in sustaining and embedding

institutional rules. Maintaining my focus on Globe Town, I look at three 'mini case studies', each of which shows new institutional rules 'tested' to their limits. In Part 1 I look at the experience of the Bancroft Community Team - an expression of the new rules taken to their 'logical conclusion' through the establishment of a multidisciplinary service team at community level. The case serves to illuminate the confusion and conflicts among different actors in interpreting new institutional rules. In Parts 2 and 3 I look at 'critical incidents' - events which provide a 'metaphor' for broader processes and dynamics (Fetterman, 1989: 93). In Part 2 I examine the debate surrounding plans for the Globe Centre - a proposed community-based facility for people with HIV or AIDS. This incident reveals the implications of seeking to suspend new rules (here concerning 'community control') on the grounds of a 'special case'. In Part 3 I look at a month-long, borough-wide strike by NALGO members. This incident illustrates the tension between new institutional rules and identities and practices persisting from the 'old days'. As in the last chapter, I draw heavily on participation observation (particularly attendance at key meetings and events) and on interviews with the main protagonists in each case.

Part 1 - The Bancroft Community Team: taking new institutional rules to their logical conclusion

Below I outline the objectives and way of working of the Bancroft Community Team (BCT). I go on to analyse the differing perceptions of those involved in the initiative - professionals from different services, and different sections of the community. Through an analysis of the BCT

I examine the implications of taking new institutional rules to their 'logical conclusion' through further decentralisation.

1.1 The objectives and method of working of the Bancroft Community Team

Set up to cover one of Globe Town's six 'estate areas' - covering Bancroft and Cleveland estates - the Bancroft Community Team was an example of a planned approach to inter-disciplinary and generic working. As such it contrasts with the experience of *ad hoc* shifts to generic working within the neighbourhood (detailed in the previous chapter). A review of the BCT after its first six months of operation explained its purpose thus:

> The Community Team... is a multi-disciplinary team which has been meeting since February 1988 with a view to providing a coordinated service to the community living in Bancroft/Cleveland Estate areas of the Globe Town Neighbourhood... The primary objective in the setting up of the Bancroft/Cleveland Community Team, [is] the improvement of service delivery through a multi-disciplinary, locally based team, responsive to and working with the community it serves... (BCT Progress Report, November 1988)

Although such sub-neighbourhood teams were not part of the original decentralisation plan, the aims of the BCT were very much in tune with the Liberals' objectives for institutional change: more accessible and responsive service delivery; the breakdown of departmental boundaries; and consultation with the local community. Globe Town sought to further these aims through the establishment of sub-neighbourhood service delivery points, building upon the already-established housing teams working at the estate level. The BCT was intended to be a pilot project,

with Community Teams being eventually extended to all parts of the neighbourhood.

The idea for the team came from Globe Town social services and a management group was set up involving senior representation from relevant services within the neighbourhood and from other agencies working in the area. An operational team was subsequently established. From the neighbourhood side it included a senior social worker (who led the team), two other social workers (one of Bangladeshi origin), the local home care organiser, the newly-appointed 'elderly persons' warden', the estate manager (who headed an estate-based team of housing officers), and the community development worker. From the health authority, two health visitors joined the team and there was some involvement from the community psychiatric nurse and the community midwife. From the voluntary sector, Age Concern and the Tower Hamlets Health Project sent representatives to Team meetings. Tenants' association (TA) representatives were also involved.

Once the BCT was established, the role of the management group tailed off (the relative lack of senior management support became a complaint among team members), while the operational team held two meetings a week - a 'cases' meeting and an 'issues' meeting. The 'cases' meeting considered referrals regarding individual cases and sought to produce a team 'action plan' setting objectives and detailing inputs from all relevant services. These plans were reconsidered at subsequent meetings to review progress. The 'issues' meeting aimed to develop policy and action on 'collective' as opposed to 'individual' issues - racial

harassment, child care, environmental improvements, community development and strategic planning for the area (interview with Globe Town Social Services Manager, June 1989; interview with BCT Coordinator, May 1990). Tenants' representatives were involved in 'issues' but not 'cases' meetings. The 'issues' meetings ran into problems (discussed below) and were reduced to fortnightly meetings, and then monthly meetings, gradually tailing off after the first nine months of the team's operation.

The BCT faced problems regarding administrative support and accommodation. More than two years after its creation, the BCT still had no office on the estate where all members could be permanently based (BCT Progress Report, November 1989). Members came together for meetings and met each other informally on case visits. Accommodation had been offered in a converted flat, but this was felt to be inappropriate and inadequate, leading to conflict between the BCT and senior management in the neighbourhood. As the BCT Coordinator commented: 'We were told that there was a commitment from the neighbourhood, but there was no tangible proof. The team carried on, but lacked stability - it had no base' (interview, May 1990). By mid-1990 office space had become available in a newly converted community centre on the estate, but the team was refusing to move to the offices until a full quota of staff, including an administrator and a welfare assistant had been appointed (interview with BCT social worker, June 1990).

1.2 Perceptions of 'community'

Due to the predominance of council housing in the neighbourhood, and the lead role taken by the housing department in shaping new policy and practices, Globe Town's 'estate areas' had quickly become no more than euphemisms for local housing offices. The BCT had difficulty in establishing that it was concerned with the needs of all those who lived within the 'estate area' boundary, and not just council tenants (BCT Progress Report, November 1989). It became neighbourhood policy to refer to 'community areas', but the name failed to stick given the 'real life' dominance of housing issues.

Another practical problem arose regarding the demarcation of the area. Estate areas were based on groups of housing estates, and yet tenants from these estates often felt no identity with each other and had separate tenants' associations. There was rivalry between estates for resources, and powerful images circulated regarding the character of each estate. The Bancroft/Cleveland estate area was no exception. Cleveland considered itself to be 'superior' to neighbouring Bancroft and the Cleveland TA had no wish to work with Bancroft tenants. Cleveland was smaller, had a high proportion of elderly tenants and was almost exclusively white. Bancroft, on the other hand, had around 50% Bangladeshi households, many with young children, and a 'problem' image. Widely regarded as a 'sink estate', Bancroft experienced high levels of unemployment, and severe housing and environmental decay; added to which there was a high degree of social polarisation and tension between white tenants and Bangladeshis.

The Community Team was intended to cover both the Bancroft and the Cleveland estates (plus the surrounding area), but from the beginning was referred to in day-to-day parlance as the 'Bancroft Community Team'. There was a tendency for Cleveland tenants to see the team as something aimed at the 'problem families' and 'ethnics' on the Bancroft estate. The Cleveland TA had already refused to involve itself with the Estate Base Committee (intended to bring the TAs together) and was unhappy that their housing office was located on Bancroft. They now refused to get involved with the Community Team (BCT Progress Report, November 1989). At the same time, Bancroft's TAs had also boycotted the Estate Base Committee and had instead set up a steering group to consider establishing a tenant management cooperative on the estate (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990). The steering group had the support of the estate manager (and the neighbourhood more generally) but its existence pushed an even greater wedge between Bancroft and Cleveland tenants, and cemented the link between Bancroft tenants and the housing office. As the BCT Coordinator explained 'There is a definite split. The Community Team is for both estates, but it isn't he right boundary. Bancroft and Cleveland won't work together' (interview, May 1990).

Globe Town's preference for working with tenants' associations - historically white organisations - led to difficulties in involving people from minority ethnic groups in participative structures (see Chapter 8). This difficulty was transferred into the BCT's attempts to establish consultation with the local community. While there was some success in attracting Bangladeshi tenants to BCT meetings, they frequently faced

hostility and insensitivity from white tenants and failed to return. As the BCT Coordinator put it:

> TAs had been asked to nominate people to join the 'issues' group - they were all white and male. X [Bangladeshi social worker] got Bangladeshi representatives involved, but they didn't participate much. There were racist remarks from the white tenants about resources going to the Bangladeshi community - the team found it hard to cope with and the Bangladeshi representatives stopped coming in. (interview, May 1990)

Clearly, establishing a 'community' team was problematic when different perceptions of what constituted 'community' existed among different groups of residents, local politicians and neighbourhood officers. The difficulty in demarcating Bancroft and Cleveland as a 'community' was compounded by the confusion arising out of the proliferation of neighbourhood-sponsored initiatives in the area. It was as if the neighbourhood responded to difficulties in the area by throwing at it more and more new projects and ideas: the estate office, the estate base committee, the community team, the tenant management cooperative. The relationship between different initiatives was unclear. The complexity of overlapping structures and the conflict among different parties undermined the establishment of a clear institutional framework for community-level working in the area (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990).

The situation on Bancroft/Cleveland was a prime example of the tendency reported by a former Globe Town councillor 'to do too much, in too many directions at once!' (Charters in Stoker [ed], 1991: 380). Previous chapters have shown that the successful introduction of new institutional rules regarding neighbourhood working related in part to

the clarity and single-mindedness of the vision and implementation strategy behind decentralisation. Such clarity was lacking in Globe Town's attempt to introduce sub-neighbourhood working. A BCT Progress Report (November 1989) referred to the 'lack of an integrated approach from senior management', in the context of 'unrealistic aims' and a 'hurried pace' of change.

1.3 Public reactions to the Bancroft Community Team

As noted above, the BCT aimed to involve tenant representatives in its 'issues' meetings which were designed to consider problems affecting the estate area as a whole. Tenants were, however, suspicious of the team and generally resistant to getting involved. Three points are particularly important:

(a) Tenants felt that the BCT was being 'imposed' on them and was another example of Bancroft being 'talked down to' by the council

One Bancroft tenant noted that: 'There was a feeling of people from outside telling us what to do - people don't like it. We thought they were saying, you will have it and like it!' (discussion with Bancroft tenants' representatives, May 1990). Although the purpose of the BCT was to bring services closer to the public and to involve them in decision-making, residents experienced the proposal as an externally-imposed 'solution' to their problems. This reveals a tension in the whole decentralisation programme. Although aimed at increasing access and participation, decentralised structures were imposed in a 'top down'

manner, with little consultation. The idea was that 'the ends will justify the means'. The public, however, had no reason to be confident that the promised 'ends' would materialise, and might have had different perceptions of intended outcomes anyway. In addition, public perceptions were affected by people's experience of the council in the past. One of the BCT health visitors explained the problem thus:

> There was very strong suspicion. Historically there was so little there, now suddenly we arrived and the tenants felt, 'who are you telling us what to do - if we want something we'll do it ourselves'. (interview, June 1990)

The interest in 'doing it for ourselves' was channelled through the steering group for the tenant management cooperative - an initiative established at the same time as the BCT but without consideration of how the two projects would relate to one another.

(b) Tenants were suspicious about the nature of the services that were to be delivered on their doorstep - the team was associated with social services which was largely seen as a coercive force

The BCT was firmly linked in the public's mind with social services: housing was already located in the estate base, so the 'new' element of the team must mean social workers. As one of the BCT social workers noted: 'A lot of tenants don't feel good about social services being on the estate - they think you are poking your nose into their business' (interview, June 1990). The BCT Coordinator argued that: 'There was a misunderstanding of social services' role - the idea that social services are coercive - they take your children away and so on' (interview, May 1990). As one tenant put it:

> We were concerned because it could cause a disruption, particularly

> to the elderly tenants living nearby. You could have someone who's had their child taken away from them. There will be tenants who've had decisions go against them... People are distrustful of social services - the power they have and what they can do with it. (disucssion with Bancroft tenants' representatives, May 1990)

The views expressed by tenants suggest that they did not regard improved access to services as a good thing *per se*. Tenants felt that it was one thing to be able to report your blocked drains to a housing manager located in a converted flat next door, but quite another to have social workers operating out of the same premises. Public reactions to the BCT suggested that new institutional rules regarding ease of access and local focus were welcomed more for some services than for others. The degree of decentralisation was significant too. As we saw in the last chapter, surveys show that the public welcomed the ease of access to services brought about through the One Stop Shop. However, considerable concern was expressed about 'taking it further' - stories circulated about a future scenario of each flat having a council officer 'under the stairs'! By taking the new rules of access and responsiveness to their logical conclusion, the BCT revealed tensions in the interpretation of these rules: tenants were fearful that ease of access could turn into ease of surveillance.

(c) Tenants were reluctant to participate in BCT discussions as community representatives, being concerned they would be used as 'spies' or 'snoops'

One Bancroft TA member expressed his reluctance to join BCT meetings thus:

> I don't think you can get tenants involved - it's people's private lives you're talking about. The meetings didn't get anywhere. We thought they wanted us to divulge information. (discussion with Bancroft tenants' representatives, May 1990)

Although the 'issues' meeting was designed to be separate from the discussion of individual cases, the distinction between 'issues' and 'cases' was hard for staff to explain and proved difficult to maintain. Explaining why the 'issues' meeting had been suspended, the BCT Coordinator expressed his own concerns about tenant participation thus:

> Is it appropriate to involve tenants when we could be talking about their neighbours? What about confidentiality? It all became very personal - for instance in terms of what TA reps thought other tenants deserved. (interview, May 1990)

The Coordinator maintained, however, that the meetings would be started up again, with more training for the team and for tenants, noting that: 'We are committed to the idea of partnership' (interview, May 1990). One of the BCT health visitors pointed to the more fundamental problems of working with service users to develop strategy for an area; she commented that: 'We would discuss a need and then find out we didn't have the power, resources or information to do anything about it. The tenants saw no results' (interview, June 1990). Another BCT member noted that: 'We talked a lot but didn't come up with too much tangible' (interview with BCT social worker, June 1990). A TA representative simply said that: 'The "issues" meeting didn't get us anywhere' (discussion with Bancroft tenants' representatives, May 1990).

The desirability of participation in BCT meetings was, like access to services, viewed differently by the public and staff. In addition,

limited resources and capacities made it impossible for the team to 'deliver' on the 'big issues' which were at the heart of many of the area's problems (unemployment, poverty, racism and so on), causing public scepticism about the benefits of new modes of operation.

1.4 Progress towards multi-disciplinary working

The BCT Coordinator pointed to the team's success in fostering 'increased communication and trust' between the agencies and individuals involved, thus echoing the positive feelings about interdepartmental working found in the neighbourhood more generally (see Chapter 8). He noted that there is: 'trust to know things will be carried out - we know things will be followed through and we get feed-back at weekly meetings' (interview, May 1990). One of the BCT health visitors explained that:

> Trust comes from personal, face-to-face contact. Before the Community Team we had telephone contact, but now it is personal. We have informal contact as well as business contact now and that helps - you can ask someone what they did last night, or something like that. (interview, June 1990)

The estate manager on the team noted that: 'The Community Team works well as a forum, to discuss a problem. It eliminates duplication of work - to-ing an fro-ing of memos' (interview, March 1990). The Elderly Persons Warden (a member of the BCT) remarked that:

> If I'm particularly worried about someone, I know there will be someone from social services or home care at the Community Team meeting. I can ask them, 'what do you think? are you getting the same feeling as I am? if so, what are we going to do about it?'. It can be difficult to get them on the 'phone or if you go up to the Neighbourhood Centre. (interview, July 1990)

Team members referred to the support they received from the BCT. A health visitor noted that:

> You get a special type of support in an inter-disciplinary setting - because we are working on the same cases - it's different from professional support. You don't feel like you're carrying the load by yourself. (interview, June 1990)

A social worker said that: 'I feel more close to the Community Team than to the social work team in the neighbourhood' (interview, June 1990).

While Chapter 8 showed that considerable progress had been made in inter-departmental working at the neighbourhood level, experience at the level of the Community Team was more mixed. Inter-departmental and inter-agency communication improved in some areas (particularly between health and social services), but conflict between departments (particularly housing and social services) stood in the way of closer collaboration. Old departmental loyalties and conflicts seemed to reassert themselves more strongly at the very local level. Further distanced from their professional peer group, individual officers seemed to feel more vulnerable and defensive.

As the BCT was seen as a social services initiative, it awakened resentment in housing, which had a sense of 'ownership' over estate-based projects. As the BCT Coordinator put it: 'Housing have been less than cooperative. They had a certain arrogance - that they were here first' (interview, May 1990). It became clear that housing saw itself as responsive and tenant-oriented, while viewing social services as prone to 'pontificating', endless meetings, and a lack of understanding of tenants' needs and interests (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager,

March 1990). Housing staff felt that social workers were trying to 'take over' their estate-based work, and were concerned that:

> The professionalism of social services will mean that they'll dominate housing - taking the higher jobs in Community Teams. We'll be treated as minions - receptionists for them. (interview with Bancroft/Cleveland housing officer, March 1990)

At the same time, social services saw housing as arrogant, naive and disorganised. The Neighbourhood Social Services Manager remarked that:

> Housing has an impetuous attitude to getting things out there quickly... but they lack the resources, skill and wherewithal to deal with the speed of innovation. They are well-intentioned but a bit naive. (interview, June 1989)

The Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager noted that: 'There has been a lot of hype. Services should be cooperating anyway, without a Community Team' (interview, March 1990). Social services reported that housing staff were rarely seen at team meetings.

I have already noted the difficulties in combining the local, 'common-sense' knowledge of tenant representatives with the professional, 'expert' approach of social workers, health visitors and so on. This problem was felt too in relations on the Team between 'professional' staff on the team and the Elderly Persons Warden, herself a tenant on the estate and active in the TA. One of the BCT social workers expressed the problem like this:

> Personal feelings and professional feelings can clash. I get worried about it. It is important for the Elderly Persons Warden to live on the estate, to get to know everyone, but this may cause difficulties (for the Warden herself too) - she may have friends' interests in mind. (interview, June 1990)

A health visitor had similar reservations:

> With the Warden's role, I'm concerned how much there is an invasion of other people's privacy in the information we get, and there's the problem of confidentiality about what goes on in the Team. (interview, June 1990)

The Elderly Persons Warden herself recognised the difficulties inherent in her role as arbiter between professional and common-sense viewpoints:

> At the meetings, I can only give a layman's guess - I can say something like 'his behaviour seems rather strange'... We had a very difficult problem - an elderly couple who wouldn't take any help, whatever we offered. In the end social services said there was absolutely nothing you could do, you've got to walk away and leave it. We've done our best but at the end of the day there's nothing you can do legally. It's alright for them, they don't live here. I live on the estate - I have to see that couple tottering around and hear the neighbours complain. (interview, July 1990)

The BCT reflected in a particularly intense form the difficulties of putting into operation Globe Town's new institutional rules - regarding community consultation, multi-disciplinary working, and increased responsiveness. By improving the public's access to services, and staff's understanding of local needs, demands on resources increased constantly. Increased responsiveness on day-to-day matters led also to difficulties in maintaining a strategic capacity and in meeting specialist needs. As the BCT Coordinator explained:

> Improved access and local knowledge means an increase in referrals. We need tight procedures on what to do and what not to do - or else we'll get overwhelmed. We're spreading already thin resources thinner. It is wrong to raise expectations if we can't meet them. We need to look at the provision of specialist care too. (interview, May 1990)

1.5 The BCT and new institutional rules

The BCT was not a necessary extension of the decentralisation idea, but fitted with its overall goals. The increased flexibility and local knowledge that accompanied decentralisation facilitated the launch of the project. The BCT represented a microcosm of decentralised working, taking ideas of responsiveness, inter-disciplinary working and community consultation to their logical conclusion. As such, the BCT's experience provides a 'window' on the contested and ambiguous nature of institutional change.

I have shown that the BCT meant different things to different people. The team was an ambitious attempt to bring representatives of different services together to respond to local needs, but it ran up against conflicts and differences of interpretation among the parties involved - between the different professional groups and services, between professionals and the public, and between different sections of the 'community'. For social workers and health visitors, the BCT stood for improved communication and trust. For housing staff it represented the intervention of 'professionals' and bureaucrats onto the estate - it made them feel vulnerable and jealous of their achievements in estate-based working. For Globe Town's Neighbourhood Chief Executive the BCT was a flag-ship, representing the best of decentralisation (interview, June 1989), but for the public the BCT became a symbol of their worries about decentralisation - that it could mean increased surveillance over their lives, and further unwanted interventions (or broken promises) from 'the

council'. Further decentralisation became linked in some people's minds with increased 'social control'.

The case of the BCT demonstrates how hard it is to control the process of institutional change: new rules are interpreted in diverse and conflicting ways and old identities and practices continually reassert themselves. Some of the difficulties faced by the BCT related to Globe Town's lack of clarity in determining an institutional framework for sub-neighbourhood working: new initiatives (each with their own 'champions') proliferated within a small geographical area, with limited practical support or sustained commitment from senior managers in the neighbourhood. Other problems related to 'pushing decentralisation too far'. Tensions between different professionals were heightened, as officers found themselves 'out on a limb' representing their 'discipline' within a small team. At the same time, the community was uneasy about being asked to participate in more detailed and sensitive decisions. Potential internal contradictions within the new institutional framework were revealed more clearly as services and decision-making were decentralised further. Was a local focus and community participation appropriate for all services? Was there a level of detail and 'intimacy' upon which people were unwilling to express their views? Was there a point at which the council would lose credibility if it sought to raise expectations further?

Part 2 - The Globe Centre: suspending new institutional rules

Below I describe the main events in the controversy concerning the Globe Centre, and then analyse the different perceptions of 'community participation' and 'community benefit' evident in the debate. I look at the relationship between this key incident and wider processes of institutional change. I focus on the tensions inherent in seeking to 'suspend' a new institutional rule in the circumstances of a 'special case'.

2.1 The plan to site an HIV/AIDS Centre in Globe Town

The plan for the HIV/AIDS Centre arose out of collaboration between the borough HIV coordinator and a local voluntary organisation, East London Community Action Service (ELCAS). In 1989 there existed no day-care facilities for people with AIDS or HIV-related illness in Tower Hamlets, despite the fact that 125 people in the borough had been diagnosed as HIV positive. Approaches had been made by the borough HIV coordinator and ELCAS to all neighbourhoods, and the disused Mile End baths site in Globe Town emerged as a possible location. In line with a broader policy of asset sales, Globe Town was already in discussion with a private developer regarding new uses for the site. Now tentative discussions were held between Globe Town social services, ELCAS, the HIV coordinator and the developer on the use of the site for the proposed centre.

When the possibility of funding from central government under the social services capital programme appeared in November 1989, progress speeded up (interview with Globe Town Social Services Development Officer, February 1990). There was early consultation with the local community via the Estate Base Committee (EBC), as all development plans were presented to the relevant EBC as a matter of neighbourhood policy. On 11 January 1990 a Neighbourhood Development Officer attended the EBC to explain developments concerning the baths site (which bordered the Osier estate), including the proposed Centre. The EBC was unhappy about the idea of the Centre and the tenants' association chair expressed concern that discussions were going on 'behind the back' of tenants. He noted that: 'It's already decided - they've got a name for it, the Globe Centre'. A provisional name did indeed exist but, as Globe Town's Social Services Development Officer explained: 'We had had to put a lot of things down on paper in a hurry, in order to get the application in for funding' (interview, March 1990).

Some tenants objected to the very idea of the HIV/AIDS Centre, while others were concerned primarily with its location, suggesting that such a facility should only be sited within a hospital complex. The 'Concerned Neighbours Group' was set up to protest against an HIV/AIDS Centre at Mile End Baths. The Group produced a leaflet, with the heading 'Don't die of ignorance' - hijacking the government's 'AIDS education' slogan. The leaflet was crudely produced and distinctly alarmist. The leaflet warned that: 'Their [sic] will be discarded *syringes* from *drug addicts*. You will have break-ins and unsavoury people on the estate' (Time Out, 7.2.90, p.1).

In the face of concern and opposition from community representatives, a special meeting with the EBC was called on 18 January to discuss the proposals for the Centre in depth. Development officers, estate officers, social services officers and a representative from ELCAS all attended. The Neighbourhood Advisory Committee (involving representatives from all Globe Town's tenants' associations) discussed the proposals at its meeting at the 22 January. ELCAS again made a presentation. Despite lobbying from Osier tenants, a stormy public question time, and an Advisory Committee vote against the proposals, the Standing Neighbourhood Committee agreed that the sale of the site, with a view to the establishment of the Centre, should proceed.

As a result of the strong feelings expressed by tenants present at the Standing Neighbourhood Committee, one of the councillors agreed to discuss the matter in greater depth with some of them the following week, on 29 January. However, an article appearing in the East London Advertiser referred to this as a 'public meeting', which led to a much larger attendance than had been envisaged. The meeting developed into a open debate about HIV generally and many concerns were expressed by those present (interview with Social Services Development Officer, February 1990). At this meeting it was agreed that an 'inquiry' should be held, to allow evidence to be presented both 'for' and 'against' the scheme. Volunteers were asked to assist with this and six people - those who had launched the Concerned Neighbours Group - put their names forward.

The 'group of six' met with neighbourhood officers on several occasions in the weeks that followed. They were offered support in the collection and presentation of their 'evidence', and some preliminary work was done on gathering witnesses and designing a survey for local residents. The inquiry was to be chaired by an outside party - the Bishop of Stepney was suggested. However, tenants remained unconvinced as to the inquiry's independence and were concerned about the quality of support they could expect from the neighbourhood, given that officers and councillors were clearly in favour of the scheme. After much negotiation, a tacit agreement was reached between the neighbourhood and the tenants' group as to an acceptable siting of the HIV/Aids Centre. The idea of an inquiry was dropped and it was agreed to site the Globe Centre in just one part of the re-developed baths, with an entrance at the front of the building, well away from the estate. A series of educative meetings for local residents on HIV/AIDS was subsequently organised by the neighbourhood, assisted by ELCAS and the London Lighthouse (interview with Social Services Development Officer, February 1990).

2.2 Perceptions of 'community benefit' and 'community participation'

We are less concerned here with the final outcome of the debacle than with various interpretations of the events surrounding the proposed Globe Centre. There was considerable publicity surrounding the proposals and the local campaign, including local press coverage and a London television programme interviewing the main protagonists. As we have seen, the neighbourhood reacted quickly to local people's concerns,

holding a series of consultation and discussion meetings within a very short period of time, involving both officers and councillors. Globe Town showed itself to be highly responsive and serious about allowing local people to express their opinions (Charters, 1994: 30). However, conflict arose in the light of different perceptions about what was best for the area and about the relative weight which should be given to tenants' views. Ultimately, much-heralded new institutional rules were 'suspended' on the grounds that the Globe Centre was a 'special case'. Rules regarding the primacy of local needs and preferences were overturned on the basis that councillors and professionals 'knew best' and were obliged to consider borough-wide priorities.

The development proposal for Mile End baths was presented originally to the EBC as an asset sale with some 'community benefit' attached - that is, the Globe Centre. The EBC, however, did not perceive the Centre as a community benefit at all, but rather as a threat to their well-being. They had no wish to be on the 'front-line' of community care for those with HIV and AIDS, and alarmist stories circulated about the 'undesirable' people who would use such a facility. While objection to the Centre was particularly acute due to homophobia and fear and ignorance about HIV/AIDS, resistance to community care facilities was not new. A campaign had also been mounted against siting a 'Family Centre' on another estate and, as I showed earlier, the Bancroft Community Team was greeted with suspicion by local residents. While new institutional rules regarding localness of focus and ease of access fitted well with residents' priorities for some services (notably housing management and

benefits), they sat less easily with public feeling regarding 'unpopular' or regulatory services.

As with the Bancroft Community Team, the Globe Centre was perceived as an unwelcome imposition by the council. A tenant captured this feeling when he said at a meeting: 'Give the public what they want, not what some council officer wants'. Tenants made suggestions as to what they would see as 'community benefit' in developing the old baths building - a laundrette, a play group, or a meeting place for the elderly. Such facilities would serve the 'real' community, not 'outsiders' and deviants like those they pictured using the HIV/AIDS Centre. Protesters turned back on Globe Town its own language of local priorities and local facilities for local people. They asked repeatedly whether the Centre would be for 'Globe Town people'. When the ELCAS representative explained to the Advisory Committee that there were 125 people in Tower Hamlets diagnosed as HIV positive, a tenant disputed his borough-wide focus. She asked: 'I thought we were Globe Town now - why should we worry about Tower Hamlets?'.

As previous chapters have shown, building a neighbourhood identity involved a weakening of an already shaky borough identity, and a reinforcing of East End parochialism. Globe Town's success in achieving public recognition of new institutional rules (specifically concerning the neighbourhood focus and the right of tenants to influence decision-making) now threw up problems for councillors and officers seeking to install an unpopular, specialist facility to serve the people of Tower Hamlets in general. Recalling the consultation meetings over the

proposed Centre, a former councillor notes that:

> When the idea was released into the consultation process all hell let loose, with an extreme fear (bordering almost on hysteria) of the devastation 'these people' would wreak on the community - including the idea that 'we don't have AIDS here - it stops at Aldgate'! I endured the most raucous and most aggressive meetings I have ever known defending the project. (Charters, 1994: 29-30)

The episode reveals the ambiguous and contested nature of the participation process. Residents replied to arguments in favour of the HIV/Aids Centre by saying: 'But we don't want it!'. There was a perception that Globe Town was not prepared to keep its side of the bargain on 'community empowerment' on an issue about which local residents felt strongly. The neighbourhood's participatory structures and its responsiveness to public concerns made it relatively easy for local people to make their feelings known to officers and members. But the neighbourhood faced a situation where these feelings were judged to be professionally and politically unacceptable; ultimately, on this issue, residents' views carried little influence. The Concerned Neighbours Group came to realise this and dismissed the proposed inquiry as a 'set up' (interview with Social Services Development Officer, March 1990). In the end they were only able to influence the siting of the Centre within the baths building.

The lead social services officer for the project felt that the conflict over the Centre had revealed the inadequacies of Globe Town's participatory structures. She believed that the neighbourhood should give a clearer policy lead, rather than 'playing the game of people's politics'. In addition, she felt that participatory bodies should be made

more representative and provide channels for more diverse voices within the community (interview with Social Services Development Officer, March 1990). By placing the tenants' associations at the heart of the decentralisation project, the Liberals had both strengthened and weakened the participation process. While they had achieved widespread recognition of the new institutional framework among older, white East End residents (building on their attachment to 'neighbourhood' traditions), they had also alienated other parts of the community and led the TAs to feel they had a privileged voice in determining Globe Town's policies.

2.3 The Globe Centre and new institutional rules

Globe Town's Social Services Development Officer described the case of the HIV/Aids Centre as 'a very good example of the problem of giving power to the people' (interview, March 1990). It was a test for the participatory structures and for the community development philosophy of the neighbourhood. The new institutional framework established through decentralisation shaped the way in which the controversy over the Globe Centre was dealt with. The neighbourhood system meant that members of the public who disliked the proposal had maximum opportunity to put their case forward at discussion forums and, at a practical level, to get access to those officers and councillors most closely involved with the project. Officers' local knowledge meant that protesters could be responded to on an individual and personal basis. As the Development Officer put it:

> In the old system, there would have been so many tiers to go through that they never would have found out whose baby it was.

> Now we can name those people and locate them and have a dialogue with them. (interview, March 1990)

Despite the atmosphere and reality of conflict, the close working relationships established through decentralisation ensured that dialogue was maintained between the Concerned Neighbours Group and Globe Town councillors and officers (Charters, 1994: 30).

The case of the HIV/AIDS Centre revealed differing interpretations of 'community participation' and 'community benefit'. A situation arose in which strongly-voiced community feeling was in opposition to both professional opinion and political judgement. What officers and politicians considered to be of benefit to the community, community representatives made clear they did not want. Objectors to the Centre used the 'language of decentralisation' to pursue their case; they argued that the project was not a 'local service for local needs' and did not meet with the approval of the 'community'. Their recognition of new institutional rules allowed them to take on the neighbourhood on its own terms. Their frustration related to a perception that the neighbourhood was 'suspending' the new rules for its own interests, preferring to revert to 'old ways' ('the council knows best') to deal with a 'special case'. Councillors were prepared to go against the dominant feeling expressed in consultative forums, thus demonstrating that their interpretation of consultation was different, and far more limited, than that of many activists. Councillors made clear that they had responsibilities to the wider community beyond Globe Town, and to non-vocal elements of the public - as well as tenant activists.

The Globe Centre incident demonstrates that processes of institutional change are hard to control. Globe Town councillors found that new institutional rules, once established, took on a life of their own. New rules were used by different actors to pursue different, and frequently conflicting, interests. For their own part, councillors felt that their approach to the Globe Centre debate was rooted firmly within the new institutional framework. From his particular standpoint, a former councillor argued that:

> Despite the uproar over the Globe Centre throughout the ward, three months later my colleagues were re-elected with vastly increased majorities. I suspect that most people in the area reasoned that while they disagreed with us on this one issue, they respected the fact that we gave them a structure which allowed their voice to be heard, and that we were forced to engage in a dialogue, rather than take decisions in an ivory tower. (Charters, 1994: 30)

Part 3 - The NALGO strike: conflict between old and new rules

Below I provide an account of the background to the October 1989 strike and of the main events of the dispute. I then consider the significance of the strike for councillors, managers and the staff involved. I argue that the incident reveals a tension between new institutional rules and persisting 'old' identities and practices. In many ways the strike represented a 'last stand' for aspects of the old institutional framework.

3.1 The background and main events of the dispute

The new Liberal administration was faced with a traditionally poor industrial relations climate in Tower Hamlets when it came to office in

1986. Chapter 7 showed how, through generous secondment arrangements, councillors acted quickly to incorporate the trades unions into the process of institutional change. I showed that union representatives viewed positively the experience of practical negotiations, while resenting the Liberals' intransigence on matters of principle. Councillors maintained their firm political direction of the decentralisation process; union leaders were unsuccessful in an attempt to mobilise their members to take action on the timing of changes. Distrust between unions and leading Liberal councillors was imported into the new decentralised system, as was resentment on the part of the union leadership that the politicians had managed to 'get one over on them'.

Despite animosity at borough level, in many neighbourhoods (including Globe Town) relatively good relations existed between councillors and union representatives. This related in part to the success of the new decentralised negotatiating machinery. A NALGO informant noted that:

> The new negotiating machinery does work well - we always wanted negotiations to be at as low a level as possible. If possible a steward and line manager should be negotiating. In the neighbourhoods we see that this form of negotiation means that structural reviews can be done very quickly. Before, this could take two or three years - that created hassle for everyone. The decentralisation of negotiations has proved excellent. (interview with NALGO Service Conditions Secretary, March 1990)

The industrial relations climate hotted up, however, in the summer of 1989 with NALGO's national strike action in pursuit of its pay claim. This had taken the form of selective strikes in key sections (finance, computing and so on), followed by six single days (over six weeks) of

all-out action. One-day strikers received no strike pay and had their pay docked by the authority. The action was successful, leading in late August to the acceptance of an 8.8% pay deal. As NALGO's first national strike, success led to a new confidence among union members.

Tower Hamlets' October strike arose out of the summer events in that it originated in a dispute between the NALGO branch secretary and two officers attempting to cross a picket line. One of the officers involved claimed that the branch secretary had assaulted her (or, as she later put it, 'restrained' her). The branch secretary claimed that, although there had been an angry exchange, no physical assault or restraint had occurred. The Borough Secretary called the police to the scene who, after interviewing witnesses and those involved, concluded that there was no basis for bringing a charge of assault. After seeking a barrister's opinion, however, the authority suspended the branch secretary, awaiting a Discplinary Hearing on charges of gross misconduct (Tower Power, 1.8.89, p.3).

NALGO claimed that the authority's action was in breach of the Disciplinary Code as neither the branch secretary nor witnesses to the event were interviewed prior to a decision being taken on the suspension. Union anger was further fuelled when it emerged that the Leader of the Council had met with the complainants and offered council legal advice should they wish to pursue a private prosecution. Member involvement, it was again claimed, was in breach of the Code. Aside from these technicalities, the union clearly saw the authority's action as politically motivated, involving the 'victimisation' of a union official

and an attack on the union's right to picket (Tower Hamlets NALGO statement, undated).

At the national level NALGO agreed to support action in protest against the branch secretary's suspension and, after a successful ballot, selective strike action (on full strike pay) began on 3 September. Two hundred NALGO members from 22 key sections were involved. On 11 September, a meeting with ACAS took place but the council rejected ACAS' offer to provide an arbiter to hear the charges made against the NALGO official (the result to be binding on both sides) (Tower Power, 15.11.89, p.1). NALGO's National Emergency Committee then agreed to the branch's request to ballot Tower Hamlets NALGO members on taking indefinite, all-out strike action. NALGO's District Organisation Officer wrote in a letter to all members that: 'The suspension was in breach of the Authority's own procedures and NALGO nationally has committed the union to achieve the reinstatement of your branch secretary' (letter, 14.9.89). This commitment involved the promise of full strike pay. The ballot returned a 'yes' vote and strike action involving 2,500 NALGO members commenced on 2 October 1989.

The Disciplinary Hearing took place on 4 to 6 October; the charges against the branch secretary were upheld, but despite being found guilty of gross misconduct, he was not sacked but issued with a 'final written warning'. The union claimed a partial victory, noting in its magazine Tower Power (10.10.89, p.1) that:

> Without all-out strike action X would have been sacked, the normal penalty for gross misconduct, but with 2,500 NALGO members on strike, the panel bottled out and substituted a final written

warning.

The same article argued that strike action should be continued until all charges were dropped, given that: 'From the Council's viewpoint this is nearly as good as the sack. The warning would hang over X for a year during which any other "misdemeanour" could result in dismissal'. The branch voted to continue the action, with support from the NALGO National Emergency Committee.

The borough Chief Executive wrote to all strikers at their home addresses after the Disciplinary Hearing, claiming the matter was resolved and that correct procedures had been followed. He also criticised the wording of the original strike ballot paper which had called for action for the 'unconditional reinstatement' of the branch secretary. The Chief Executive wrote that:

> I have to say I find it curious that you are on strike for the unconditional reinstatement of an individual who has not been dismissed. X has been employed by the Council for the duration of the dispute and he remains employed by the Council. (letter, 11.10.89)

A Disciplinary Appeal was held on 19 October which upheld the charges against the branch secretary. His final written warning remained, but with the inclusion of a special clause requiring that the branch secretary could not be sacked for a minor offence (the normal situation for individuals who have received such a warning) but only for a substantiated charge of gross misconduct. Despite the frequent claims that a return to work would only accompany the dropping of all charges, this clause was to signal the end of the dispute. The NALGO National Emergency Committee wrote directly to Tower Hamlets Chief Executive on

25 October saying:

> The Committee was made aware that the action, which had the full support of the union at national level, had resulted in X being reinstated.... X is now in no worse position than any other member insofar as you, as his employer, would now have to substantiate a case of gross misconduct in order to consider dismissing him... In view of the success of the action, the Emergency Committee has decided that there should be a return to work by our members on strike on Monday 30 October 1989. (letter, 25.10.89)

The letter criticised the authority for its breach of the ACAS Code of Practice and claimed that action would be resumed should further 'victimisation' of the branch secretary take place. With national support withdrawn, including strike pay, the branch voted to return to work immediately at a meeting on 27 October. A motion from the branch executive to make the return conditional upon the council entering into binding arbitration at ACAS was rejected.

I am less concerned here with the outcome of the strike, or with 'winners and losers', than with a consideration of the significance attached to the event in the context of the institutional change that had occurred in Tower Hamlets since 1986. I look now at perceptions of the strike among the actors involved, relating these to the experience of institutional change in the borough.

3.2 Union and staff perceptions of the strike

NALGO insisted that the council's action was 'politically influenced' and pointed to the Leader's involvement in the affair as proof. In a letter to strikers, the branch secretary referred to 'the cynical manipulation

of procedures by the Council and its gross attempt to victimise a leading Branch Officer' (letter, 13.10.89). NALGO placed an advertisement in the East London Advertiser (6.10.89) claiming that the action was: 'an attempt to undermine Trade Union organisation within the Council. Our branch has often been critical of Council policies and has recently helped to expose now discredited Senior Council Appointees'. The East London Advertiser (13.10.89) reported NALGO's belief in a link between 'the union's criticism of Liberal policies like decentralisation' and the 'victimisation' of the branch secretary. At the same time, Tower Hamlets councillors and management claimed that the union had wider objectives in pursuing its strike action. In his letter to all strikers on 11 October, the Chief Executive noted: 'It seems clear to me that NALGO view this dispute as a power struggle against the Council and are paying scant regard to the facts and... agreed procedures'. They also claimed that staff self-interest was behind support for the strike. As the Deputy Leader told the East London Advertiser (3.11.89) at the end of the strike: 'Now that funds have been withdrawn by NALGO they have crept back into work. What we are talking about here is not a matter of principle but a paid holiday'.

Of course, many industrial relations disputes degenerate into power struggles and 'mud slinging', but this dispute had particular significance in the context of the radical process of institutional change that Tower Hamlets had gone through. For the union leadership, the strike represented an attempt to assert its power vis-a-vis councillors who had taken a strong political lead in reorganising their members' working conditions. Councillors' incorporation of the unions into the

decentralisation process had left union officials on the sidelines when it came to issues of policy and principle. Although the unions acknowledged the success of the decentralised negotiating machinery for dealing with day-to-day issues, the break-up of borough structures had fragmented the union's identity and its political voice. Buoyed up by the success of the summer pay strike, the union decided it would take on the council and its brash, unpredictable leaders on an issue of principle - trade union rights.

The strike gave the union the chance to articulate its collective voice and to deal directly with the council leadership. This was, after all, a borough-wide issue (with national trade union support) that could not be directed down neighbourhood channels. Through the strike (which was undoubtedly kept 'solid' through the provision of full strike pay), NALGO could recreate the 'old Tower Hamlets' for a brief month at least. The strike was punctuated by a series of mass meetings in grand venues, like the Theatre Royal at Stratford and the old music hall at Hackney Empire. The meetings were colourful, good-humoured, almost celebratory occasions. Despite the 'paid holiday' jibe, they were well attended, attracting as many as 1,000 people and offering a chance to meet up with ex-colleagues from the 'old system'. Picketing involved significant numbers and a borough-wide focus too. Shop stewards from all the neighbourhoods and from the central sections were working together on a daily basis through the Strike Committee.

In 1986 many Tower Hamlets staff, and NALGO itself, had welcomed change in what was a demoralising and frustrating place to work (see Chapter

7). However, neighbourhood working had brought with it many pressures on staff - pressures relating to enforced generic working, limited investment in training and technology, constant change and innovation, and the demands of interventionist councillors (see Chapter 8). The high levels of stress experienced by staff during the process of institutional change contributed to the attraction of 'having a go' at the council leadership (and made the 'paid holiday' all the more attractive!). Few staff wished to return to the 'old days', but many were unhappy about the new demands placed upon them and about the general sense of confusion and instability that had accompanied institutional change. Going on strike reflected variously a desire to take control, a nostalgia for old identities, and a feeling of exhaustion and frustration with the never-ending process of change. Discussions on the picket line and at mass meetings suggested that staff were striking as much because they were 'fed up' as because of strong feelings concerning the suspension of the branch secretary.

3.3 Councillor and management perceptions of the strike

Councillors and many senior managers saw the strike as representing a test of 'loyalty' for staff. The Liberals made clear in their 1986 manifesto that the shape and direction of the local authority was a matter for politicians, and that staff should respect and comply with this: 'it will be the elected councillors who will take the decisions; Liberals will expect staff to accept this' (Tower Hamlets Liberal Association, 1986: 11). This may seem a basic principle of democratic functioning, but it was one which some staff found hard to accept (see

Chapter 8). This was due partly to the remoteness of the previous leadership, but also to the implications of the neighbourhood system for councillors' involvement in *day-to-day* issues of service delivery and policy. In this context, councillors set great emphasis on the issue of staff loyalty - to their employers in general terms but also to new institutional rules relating to neighbourhood identity and the primacy of service delivery. As a former member of the powerful Decentralisation Team put it: 'Members were only interested in people who wanted to work within their vision of service delivery' (interview, February 1990).

Strikers were seen to have failed the loyalty test. As the Deputy Leader of the council wrote in a letter to the East London Advertiser (27.10.89): 'Unfortunately, many council staff thought the lure of a few weeks' paid holiday was greater than their loyalty to the people who pay their wages'. The same councillor pushed for a hard line to be taken against strikers. Interviewed by the East London Advertiser (3.11.89), he said: 'I would have pointed out the breach of contract and said "thank-you and good-bye'. (A leaked document shows that councillors went as far as to take legal advice on procedures to be followed should they decide to sack strikers for breach of contract [Tower Power, 4.11.89, p.3].) Another leading councillor pointed out in a press release issued after the end of the strike that:

> During the four week dispute Liberal councillors were surprised at just how LITTLE effect the strike had on many services, information from the strike period is to be assessed to examine the scope for manpower reductions... It is perhaps ironic that such unreasonable action now seems likely to do so much good. (Tower Hamlets Liberal Councillors Press Release, undated)

At neighbourhood level, senior managers were angered by the fact that staff had been prepared to 'let the neighbourhood down'. In Globe Town, the Neighbourhood Chief Executive admitted to feeling personally let down by the action taken by his officers (interview, January 1990). Despite his commitment to an informal management style (see Chapter 8), he made his feelings known at the end of the strike, through a policy of minimum communication with former strikers. Globe Town's newly-established NALGO newsletter parodied his reaction thus:

> Door always open, mouth firmly shut... X, so called Neighbourhood Chief Executive and all round approachable good guy has recently been struck dumb. Apparently he is unwilling to talk to any staff who took strike action. (Global Action, December 1989)

After his initial period of 'silence', Globe Town's Neighbourhood Chief Executive interpreted support for the strike as relating, at least in part, to staff dissatisfaction with aspects of neighbourhood working. He concluded that there was a problem of 'burn-out' or 'commitment fatigue' among staff and suggested that a review of training and 'team building' was called for (interview, January 1990). However, within six months of the end of the strike he announced he was leaving Tower Hamlets - he admitted that his 'disappointment' over the strike had contributed to his decision. Within the new institutional framework - with its emphasis upon team working, common purpose and informality - it was difficult to make sense of, and cope with, the conflicts of interest represented by the strike. Indeed, they constituted a threat to the future vitality of the new institutional rules. As I asserted in Chapter 5, institutional rules are effective only in as far as they provide a reliable guide to others' likely future action.

3.4 The NALGO strike and new institutional rules

I have discussed the main events of the month-long NALGO strike and analysed its significance for different actors. I have not argued that the 'official' issues involved were unimportant in mobilising members or sustaining the strike (they ensured national support from NALGO, after all). Rather, I have sought to identify the other meanings that the strike held. For union members the strike represented an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the stresses and strains that accompanied decentralised working and institutional change in general. For the NAGLO leadership it represented a chance to 'stand up' to an interventionist council leadership which had succeeded in totally reorganising both local authority and trade union structures in two years. The strike provided an opportunity for the branch to work together and to overcome, for a while at least, the fragmentation of its political voice that had accompanied decentralisation. The images of the 'solid' strike, the mass meeting and the picket symbolised, and strengthened, the collective identity of the union. The strike led to increased membership and to a revitalisation of NALGO activity at neighbourhood level - in Globe Town the strike resulted in the reforming of a Shop Stewards Committee and the launching of a union newsletter.

For the council leadership, and some senior officers, the strike represented a breach of loyalty - not just to the employers but to the new institutional rules that had been put in place with decentralisation. Leading councillors saw NALGO as engaged in a 'power struggle' it could not win; some at least were prepared to take the toughest of action

against the strikers. The strike hit at the heart of the new institutional set-up. The images associated with the strike were in direct contradiction to those associated with the Liberals' vision of institutional change in Tower Hamlets; rather, they reflected the reassertion of 'old' identities and practices. The playing out of this industrial relations conflict represented in many ways a 'last stand' for 'the old ways'. The crushing of the strike was followed shortly after by the Liberals' resounding 1990 election victory; together the two events marked the successful (yet contested) maintenance of the new institutional framework created in 1986.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the challenge of sustaining institutional rules over time and in different settings. I have focused on the tensions and conflicts involved in embedding the new institutional rules associated with decentralisation. I presented three 'mini case studies', each of which showed new institutional rules stretched to their limits.

The case of the Bancroft Community Team (BCT) showed new rules taken to their 'logical conclusion', through the further decentralisation of service delivery and decision-making to community level. As such, it revealed internal tensions in the new institutional framework and differences in the interpretation of new rules. For Globe Town's senior managers, the BCT signalled the best of decentralisation - in terms of greater access, responsiveness and participation. For the front-line

officers involved, the BCT highlighted the difficulties of multi-disciplinary working and underlined the tenacity of professional identities and rivalries. For the community, the BCT raised questions about a possible link between decentralisation and increased social control. Residents had misgivings about the location of social services on the estate and were unwilling to be involved in decision-making on sensitive, personalised issues. Confusion and conflict in interpreting new institutional rules were exacerbated by a lack of sustained support and commitment at the neighbourhood level.

The debate on the Globe Centre showed how difficult it was for those who initiated new institutional rules to control their interpretation. New institutional rules took on 'a life of their own'; they were interpreted differently by different groups in pursuit of their own interests. Those campaigning against the Globe Centre felt that new institutional rules had been suspended on the grounds of a 'special case'. Campaigners phrased their objections in the 'language of decentralisation'. They pointed out that the Globe Centre was not a neighbourhood but a borough-wide facility, and that the scheme was not supported by local residents and did not reflect local priorities. At the same time, councillors and officers felt that the debate (while conflictual) had been carried out within the new institutional framework, with residents having full access to information and opportunities to put their views forward.

The case of the NALGO strike illustrates the tension between new institutional rules and old identities and practices. The strike hit at

the heart of the new institutional set-up. Open conflict between staff and councillors contravened new rules which saw member/officer relationships as based on daily contact, mutual trust and 'loyalty'. The strike's borough-wide focus challenged new rules which put neighbourhood identities to the fore. Stikers' willingness to put their own interests before those of service users challenged new rules which gave primacy to responsiveness and service-orientation. The strike showed that new institutional rules were not established in a 'once and for all' way. Rules were tested in the face of new challenges, and old practices and identities continued to assert themselves.

The three cases reflect the ambiguous and contested nature of institutional change. Institutional rules are never fixed or complete. Rather, they are interpreted in different ways by different actors - in the face of new challenges, changing environments, and the pursuit of sectional interests. Institutional change is hard to control. In maintaining an institutional framework over time, rules will be changed, modified and reinterpreted.

CHAPTER 10 - CONCLUSION

Introduction

My conclusion is divided into three parts. In Part 1 I provide a summary of my main argument. In Part 2 I consider the main contribution that the thesis makes to understanding (a) instititutional change, and (b) local government decentralisation. In Part 3 I consider how my approach might be further developed and applied. I finish the chapter with a brief postscript reflecting on developments in Tower Hamlets since the end of the research period.

Part 1 - The argument summarised

I began the thesis by noting the confusion surrounding definitions of decentralisation and setting out a framework for mapping different types of decentralisation in relation to key variables. This allowed me to specify clearly my object of analysis: area-based decentralisation of both decision-making and service delivery within local government. I went on to provide evidence of a trend to area-based decentralisation in local government in the 1980s. Reviewing interpretations of this trend, I noted that existing accounts were characterised by a concentration on 'grand theory', a normative focus, and a lack of sustained empirical analysis. I argued for the development of a middle-range theoretical approach to decentralisation, informed by case study analysis.

Drawing on 'new institutionalist' perspectives, I developed a series of theoretical propositions about institutional change. I proposed that:

- institutions comprise a set of formal and informal rules which structure social action and are shared within a particular organisation or community;
- change and stability are stages in an institutional lifecycle;
- strategic action plays an important role in driving institutional change, while norm-driven behaviour is a key force in sustaining institutional rules over time.

On the basis of these propositions, I developed a conceptual framework depicting four stages of an institutional lifecycle: creation, recognition, maintenance and collapse. I argued that at each stage of the lifecycle, informal institutional constraints influence the development of formal institutional rules. The destruction of old rules and the creation of new rules are associated with forms of strategic action. The recognition and maintenance of institutional rules are associated with forms of norm-governed behaviour.

I used this framework to analyse local government decentralisation as a process of institutional change. I chose as my case study the London Borough of Tower Hamlets where a new Liberal administration had embarked upon a radical decentralisation initiative in 1986. Tower Hamlets constituted a 'limiting case' in the decentralisation field: service delivery and decision-making were decentralised to seven 'neighbourhoods' and traditional departmental and committee structures abolished. The use of a single case study allowed for a depth of focus,

which was enhanced through my 'action research' methodology which drew heavily on participant observation. This approach allowed me to gain an understanding of informal as well as formal aspects of institutional change, and of the diverse interests and viewpoints of those involved.

The purpose of the case study was not to 'test hypotheses' but to cast light on my theoretical propositions and stimulate further reflection on the nature of institutional change. I examined my case study data in a theoretically-informed way, comparing my findings with the original propositions. I analysed decentralisation in Tower Hamlets in terms of the four stages of the institutional lifecycle:

Collapse: I argued that the collapse of old institutional rules was shaped both by contextual factors (social, economic and cultural) and by strategic action on the part of key local interests. I showed how the Liberals came to power in 1986 committed to transforming the institutions of the local authority through decentralisation. As well as exploiting the collapse of old institutional rules, the Liberals tapped into dominant informal institutions in developing their decentralisation vision.

Creation: I argued that the Liberals' success in creating a new institutional framework for Tower Hamlets related both to their clarity of vision (set out in their 1986 manifesto) and their strategic approach to implementation. Working through key 'change agents' and exploiting dissatisfaction with the 'old ways', the Liberals built support for institutional change within the authority. They effectively neutralised

potential resistance through coopting oppositional groups (crucially the Labour Party and the trades unions) into the implementation process, and through offering staff incentives in the form of regradings.

Recognition: Focusing on Globe Town Neighbourhood, I examined the extent to which new institutional rules associated with decentralisation were recognised by staff, councillors and the public. Drawing on survey evidence, interviews and participant observation, I traced developments in the service interface, management and working practices, and decision-making. I argued that considerable (if uneven) progress was made in 'embedding' new rules - on neighbourhood identification, ease of access for service users, flexible and generic working, and a more directive role for councillors.

Maintenance: Looking at the challenge of sustaining institutional rules over time, I argued that institutional change was inevitably ambiguous and contested. Through three 'mini case studies' from Globe Town, I looked at situations in which new rules were tested to their limits. Different actors interpreted new institutional rules in different ways, as they responded to new challenges and sought to further their own interests. At the same time, old identities and practices continued to assert themselves. I concluded that no institutional framework is ever 'fixed' or 'complete'. In fact, it is out of the ambiguous and contested nature of institutional rules that new cycles of institutional change develop.

Part 2 - The contribution of the thesis

In effect, my thesis has two objects of analysis: (a) institutional change, and (b) local government decentralisation. In concluding the thesis I seek to clarify my contribution to understanding institutional change in general, and local government decentralisation in particular. I consider the contribution of the thesis with regard to my methodology, my conceptual framework, and my characterisation of decentralisation as a process of institutional change.

2.1 Methodology

I have demonstrated how abstract concepts from new institutionalist theory can be operationalised and used to frame empirical analysis. I have also shown how case study investigation can be used to reflect upon and explore theoretical propositions. My 'action research' methodology, relying heavily on participant observation, has proved appropriate to the study of changing rules and norms of behaviour. As institutional change goes deeper than the introduction of new structures and paper policies, it is necessary to employ a methodology suited to the investigation of changing perceptions, identities and incentive structures.

My methodological approach has allowed me to contribute to the debate on local government decentralisation in two ways. First, my use of in-depth **case study analysis** complements existing accounts, which tend to offer 'snapshots' of particular authorities and do not trace the progress

of decentralisation over time. Second, my focus on the process of decentralisation complements other approaches which concentrate on the evaluation of specific initiatives. By focusing on process, I have been able to study unintended as well as intended effects, reversals as well as achievements, and conflicts and differences of interpretation among actors.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Through my model of the institutional lifecycle I have underlined that institutional change is not a one-off 'event', but a process which occurs over time and involves different phases. I have shown that the framework can usefully be applied to the analysis of 'real life' institutional change. Considering local government decentralisation specifically, my approach has addressed the limitations of existing literature in the field. As I noted above, much of the literature operates at the level of 'grand theory', with a strong normative focus. I have developed an approach based on middle-range theory and grounded in sustained empirical analysis.

By studying decentralisation as a process of institutional change, I have been able to move away from approaches which concentrate on identifying the merits (and sometimes the demerits) of decentralisation. Rather, I have focused on the capacity of decentralisation to destabilise existing institutional rules - to undermine established 'ways of doing things'. I have shown that decentralisation can be a powerful tool in shifting the institutional inertia which so many policy initiatives come up against.

The significance of decentralisation may be less in the specific outputs with which it is associated, and more in its capacity to secure change in the underlying institutional framework of local government.

2.3 Characterising decentralisation as a process of institutional change

My focus on institutional change has illuminated key aspects of the decentralisation process:

- As institutional change is not a 'one off' event, the full impact of decentralisation may only be felt over time as new rules embed themselves and are gradually recognised.

- As institutional change involves the interplay of formal and informal rules, decentralisation initiatives which have some resonance with local norms and sensibilities are likely to embed themselves most successfully.

- As institutional change involves both strategic action and the generalisation of new norms of behaviour, the implementation of decentralisation may require both clarity of leadership and general 'culture change'.

- As institutional change is hard to control, decentralisation may have unintended consequences as new rules are interpreted differently by different actors in diverse contexts.

Part 3 - Developing the approach further

My theoretical approach has provided useful tools for analysing local government decentralisation; at the same time, my case study has illuminated my original theoretical propositions. In concluding the thesis it is important, however, to reflect upon the limitations as well as the strengths of the approach. I consider below ways in which my approach could be developed and applied in the future.

3.1 Methodology: the need for comparative analysis

My focus on a single case study has been both a strength and a weakness of my thesis. It has enabled me to develop an in-depth analysis of changes in institutional rules and norms of behaviour over time. However, focusing on a single case makes it difficult to assess the relevance and value of my approach in more general terms. While my framework has proved useful in analysing decentralisation in Tower Hamlets, it may prove less appropriate elsewhere. It would be interesting to undertake comparative work using the same model. Through the analysis of other decentralisation initiatives it would be possible to 'check' my conclusions regarding the phasing of decentralisation, the impact of informal institutions, and the relative significance of strategic action and norm-governed behaviour.

In addition, while Tower Hamlets was a useful case study in that it displayed many different aspects of the decentralisation phenomenon, it is a 'limiting' rather than a 'typical' case. Thus it is necessary to be

circumspect about generalising from the experience of Tower Hamlets. As I showed in Chapter 2, there are different 'degrees' of decentralisation: not all decentralisation initiatives involve full-scale institutional change. The Tower Hamlets case has proved a rich source of data concerning the potential impact of decentralisation and the dynamics of institutional change. Comparative work would allow for further reflection on my theoretical propositions and their applicability to decentralisation initiatives of different types.

3.2 Conceptual framework: the limits of coherence

A limitation of my conceptual framework lies in its tendency to overestimate the 'coherence' of institutional change. While most theoretical models seek to impose order on a disordered world (March and Olsen, 1989: 12), my use of the 'lifecycle' analogy implies a high degree of coherence. The language of 'cycles' and 'stages' evokes an evolutionary process; it is hard to avoid the implication that phases inevitably follow one another in a predictable, sequential fashion.

I have asserted throughout the thesis that institutional change is hard to control - assertions that are backed up by my case study analysis. It is clear that institutional change involves both forwards and backwards movements and that conflict and confusion are common. Yet my model of the institutional lifecycle does not in itself express the ambiguous and conflictual nature of institutional change; rather, it implies coherence and closure. The lifecycle model has proved useful as a way of identifying analytically distinct developments, but has revealed

shortcomings too. Further work would be useful in trying to map the complex and uneven relationships that link phases of institutional change.

3.3 Characterising decentralisation as a process of institutional change: the wider context

Another limitation of my approach lies in its tendency to underestimate the role of contextual factors. I have undertaken a detailed analysis of institutional change in one locality, studying the interaction between locality-specific informal institutions and formal institutional change. While a locality focus has many strengths, these can be at the expense of an investigation of wider influences. It would be fruitful to develop an analysis of the impact of broader contextual factors on institutional change, and decentralisation in particular.

While local factors were very important in stimulating and shaping institutional change in Tower Hamlets, external triggers may be of greater significance on other occasions (legislation might, for instance, provoke decentralisation). Once institutional change is underway, external influences may continue to be of considerable significance. As March and Olsen (1989: 12) note, institutions are 'nested' within each other, linked by 'multiple, overlapping connections'. Institutional change in local authorities is likely to be influenced by changing institutional rules in different *tiers* of government (national and European) and in different *spheres* of activity (private and voluntary sector partners, for instance) (Lowndes, 1993: 134). It would be interesting to insert my

model of institutional change into a wider framework, able to trace the connections between different institutional 'systems'.

Lastly, it is important to note that *within* a local authority there are likely to be many different processes of institutional change underway. Decentralisation does not occur in isolation from other changes to institutional rules. The scale and speed of the changes associated with decentralisation in Tower Hamlets makes this easy to overlook; in Tower Hamlets the administration itself was prepared to put other developments 'on hold' while decentralisation was embedded. However, more commonly, local authorities experiment with decentralisation alongside other initiatives which also impact on institutional rules (for instance, the introduction of quasi-markets). It would be useful to modify my approach to allow for the study of the interaction and cumulative impact of different processes of institutional change occurring at the same time.

Postscript - Decentralisation in Tower Hamlets since 1990

I finish with a brief postscript on the development of Tower Hamlets' new institutional framework since the end of the research period. Developments since 1990 suggest that my approach has a continued relevance to decentralisation in Tower Hamlets.

Since 1990 Tower Hamlets has faced various challenges in attempting to maintain its new institutional framework. While it is not possible to go into these in any depth here, it is interesting to note that both internal contradictions and environmental changes have 'tested' the new institutional framework. In terms of **internal tensions**, the borough has had to grapple with the 'role of the centre' (Hanna, 1993); the allocation of neighbourhood budgets (Watt and Lowndes, 1993); political pressure to decentralise further (to sub-neighbourhood bases); and the limits of 'community politics' (in the light of the election of a British National Party councillor and allegations of racism in the local Liberal Party) (Arnold-Foster, 1993).

In terms of **environmental pressures**, there are question marks over the compatibility between an institutional framework based upon geographical decentralisation and the growing requirment to separate 'purchaser' and 'provider' functions within local government. Having premised its decentralisation programme on the need to decentralise *all* services, the borough is now in the process of recentralising support services (like information technology and personnel) into business units able to compete under the extension of compulsory competitive tendering. On

another theme, the new demands of community care legislation and the Children Act have placed the neighbourhood system under scrutiny. Concerns have been expressed about the implications of the new institutional framework for comprehensiveness of service cover, flexibility in the use of resources, and the monitoring of standards. Tower Hamlets became the first local authority to be ruled against under the Community Care Act in 1993 (Kossoff, 1993: 13).

At the same time, Tower Hamlets' new institutional rules have a certain resonance with many new developments in local government thinking and practice (see Lowndes, 1994: 3):

Citizen's Charters: The emphasis on the accessibility and responsiveness of services fits well with the neighbourhood and 'one stop shop' concept.

Purchaser/provider splits: Despite the tensions noted above, interest in community input to commissioning functions (eg. for housing management services) suggests potential roles for neighbourhood committees or forums.

Political management: The Department of Environment/Local Government Working Party stressed the potential contribution of area committees in enhancing the councillor's role as community representative and advocate (see Working Party on Internal Management, 1993).

New organisational structures: A questioning of 'taken for granted' organisational forms (like departments and service committees) is

fuelling interest in neighbourhood approaches (see Leach and Lowndes, 1993).

Local Government Review: The Local Government Commission's 1993 Progress Report and the Scottish and Welsh White Papers (1993) express a commitment to encourage (even require) the decentralisation of service delivery and decison-making within new unitary authorities (see Lowndes, forthcoming, b).

Despite internal tensions and the need to respond to new external demands, Tower Hamlets has to date succeeded in maintaining the new institutional framework it created in 1986. Authorities of all types and political colours continue to send wide-eyed delegations to look at what has been achieved in the borough. The extent and depth of institutional change in Tower Hamlets mark it out as a pioneer in decentralisation and in the restructuring of local government more generally.

APPENDIX A - DETAILS OF METHODOLOGY AND LIST OF PRIMARY SOURCES

This Appendix provides information on key data sources, namely:

- participant observation;
- interviews;
- surveys;
- documentary analysis;
- contacts since the end of the research period.

In each case, my method is briefly outlined, followed by a list of primary sources. The theoretical background to my methodology in discussed in Chapter 5 (Part 2); this Appendix provides technical details.

1. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

I worked on a full-time basis in one of Tower Hamlets' seven 'neighbourhoods', Globe Town, between June 1989 and August 1990. In addition to undertaking research activities, I worked for Globe Town as a Policy Development Officer. Although the position of being both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' carried it with it certain tensions, it also brought significant rewards in the form of in-depth and detailed research coverage over an extended period. Participant observation was invaluable in gaining an understanding of the changing 'culture' of the organisation and enabled me to investigate decentralisation from the viewpoint of constituencies often neglected in such studies, including, for example, junior staff and non-activist members of the public.

I was a participant and an observer in a wide range of activities over the research period, including: committee meetings; tenants' and residents' meetings; management team meetings; management 'away weekends'; and staff and trade union meetings. I acted as secretary/coordinator to several neighbourhood policy forums (involving members, officers and community representatives), including the Community and Consumer Orientation Group, Services Strategy Group, and Health Action Area Steering Group. I was able to gain 'on the job' research insights through periods spent in the One Stop Shop (which dealt with all public enquiries), the Bancroft Community Team, the estate base offices, and various departments in the neighbourhood centre.

It is important to note that the formal interviews listed below were complemented by a wealth of daily conversations and discussions with officers, councillors and members of the public. It is clearly impossible to record all these exchanges! Similarly, the documents listed below formed only part of the mass of papers that I had access to, and which informed my analysis.

2. INTERVIEWS

I carried out semi-structured interviews with key actors at the neighbourhood and borough level. I interviewed officers, councillors, community representatives and trades union officials. Interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours, and information was recorded in note form. I also used group interviews with councillors, tenants' representatives and voluntary organisations. I was never refused an

interview and many people commented that it was 'therapeutic' and/or 'stimulating' to reflect on developments since decentralisation. I was on occaision called back for a second meeting by interviewees who wished to continue a discussion!

Interviews were particularly useful for 'surfacing' different interpretations of specific events, and for encouraging reflection on key trends. In the case of the Bancroft Community Team, for instance, I interviewed all members of the multi-disciplinary team and attended several of their meetings. Through this process of 'methodological triangulation' I gained an in-depth understanding of the team's functioning (see Chapter 9).

I list below the interviews I carried out, detailing the status of the interviewee and the date of interview.

Tower Hamlets officers (central departments)

Head of Policy Unit, November 1989

Assistant Borough Treasurer, February 1990

Member of Special Projects Team (formerly the Decentralisation Team), February 1990

Chief Executive, March 1990

NALGO Service Conditions Secretary, March 1990

Globe Town officers

(a) Senior managers

Neighbourhood Chief Executive, June 1989; January 1990

Neighbourhood Arts and Information Manager, June 1989; July 1990

Neighbourhood Environmental Development Manager, June 1989

Neighbourhood Housing Manager, June 1989

Neighbourhood Property Services Manager, June 1989

Neighbourhood Social Services Manager, June 1989

(b) Other neighbourhood officers

Community Development Officer, June 1989

Housing Development Officer, June 1989

Policy Development Officer, June 1989

Senior Customer Liaison Officer, June 1989

Switchboard and Secretarial Manager, June 1989

Tenant Participation Officer, June 1989

Lettings Officer, December 1989

Press and Publicity Officer, December 1989

Rent Arrears Officer, December 1989

Rents Officer, December 1989

Social Services Development Officer, February 1990; March 1990

Personnel Manager, April 1990

(c) Estate-based officers

Digby/Greenways Estate Manager, January 1990

Digby/Greenways Housing Officer, January 1990

Parkview/Cranbrook Estate Manager, January 1990

Rogers/Victoria Estate Manager, January 1990

Bancroft/Cleveland Estate Manager, March 1990

Bancroft/Cleveland Housing Officer, March 1990

Bancroft/Cleveland Community Development Officer, April 1990

Bancroft Community Team Coordinator, May 1990

Bancroft Community Team Health Visitor, June 1990

Bancroft Community Team Social Worker, June 1990

Bancroft/Cleveland Elderly Persons Warden, July 1990

Globe Town Councillors and tenants' representatives

Chair of Standing Neighbourhood Committee, June 1989; January 1990

Labour Councillor, January 1990

Round-table discussion with Liberal councillors, February 1990

Round-table discussion with Bancroft tenants' representatives, May 1990

Round-table discussion with Rogers tenants' representatives, May 1990

Officers from other neighbourhoods

Stepney Neighbourhood Chief Executive, June 1989

Stepney Equal Opportunities Officer, June 1989

Stepney Policy Development Officer, June 1989

Wapping Head of Policy Unit, November 1989

Voluntary Sector: group discussion

Round-table discussion with voluntary organisations, March 1990, involving:

Community Arts Workshop

Oxford House Centre

St. Hilda's Community Centre

Tower Hamlets Community Organisations Forum

Tower Hamlets Health Project

Tower Hamlets Homelessness Project

Tower Hamlets Housing Association

Tower Hamlets Tenants' Federation

3. SURVEYS

I carried out two surveys in Globe Town Neighbourhood: on staff attitudes and on the views of community representatives involved in consultative forums. I also drew on public opinion surveys commissioned by Tower Hamlets and Globe Town Neighbourhood. I obtained demographic data from the London Research Centre's 'Population Advice Note', and from the 1991 Census, specifically Local Base Statistics, Tables L02, L06, L20, L49, L93.

Staff survey

I carried out a survey of staff attitudes to decentralisation in February 1990. After a pilot exercise, questionnaires were distributed (via the internal post) to the 300 white-collar staff employed by Globe Town Neighbourhood. A total of 105 questionnaires were returned: a response rate of 35% compares well with other work-place surveys. The questionnaire included 26 questions on management style, working practices and conditions, and relationships with councillors and the public. There were a further nine questions on individual circumstances

(eg. department, grade, length of service, gender and ethnicity). Some questions were 'open', asking staff for their own comments, but the majority required 'yes/no' answers or asked repsondents to rank statements in order of preference. Open questions were analysed manually (recording trends and specific quotations); other questions were analysed using dBase 3+ software. Interim and final reports on the survey findings were prepared for Globe Town's use (listed below). A copy of the questionnaire for the staff survey is attached in Appendix B.

Advisory Committee survey

I conducted a small survey of the views of tenants' and residents' representatives who sat on the Advisory Committee (Globe Town's main consultative forum). I distributed questionnaires to the 24 Committee members by hand or through the post. I received ten responses - a response rate of 42%. The questionnaire included 18 questions seeking views on how the Advisory Committee operated (the style of meetings and level of support from officers and councillors) and its degree of influence on neighbourhood policy. Questions were also included on the functioning of the Estate Base Committees. There were a further four questions on individual circumstances (eg. age, gender, ethnicity, housing tenure). Most questions in the survey required 'yes/no' answers or a choice between contrasting statements; two 'open' questions invited comments on Globe Town's participatory structures. Responses were analysed manually. A copy of the questionnaire for the Advisory Committee survey is attached as Appendix C.

Public opinion surveys

I had access to the findings of two public opinion surveys commissioned by Globe Town Neighbourhood in 1988 and 1989 repsectively. The surveys were carried out by Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, a local voluntary organisation. The surveys, which covered 10% of households (660 in number), included questions on attitudes to local authority services, patterns of service use, and feelings about the area in general. I also drew on the findings of a borough-wide MORI survey of residents' attitudes carried out in January/February 1990. The MORI survey covered all aspects of local service delivery and made comparisons between the performance of the seven neighbourhoods, and between Tower Hamlets as a whole and other local authorities (particularly in inner London). MORI interviewed 1424 people across the borough.

Survey reports

'Home Sweet Home: A survey into council services and housing aspirations in the Globe Town Neighbourhood of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, 1988

'Is Globe Town good for your Health? A survey of residents' views on local services, health, housing and the environment', Safe Neighbourhoods Unit, 1989

'Tower Hamlets Residents' Attitudes Survey. Research study conducted for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets', MORI, February 1990

'Staff Survey - Interim Findings', March 1990

'Decentralisation: For better of worse? Globe Town Staff Survey', March 1990

'Has Decentralisation brought People's Power to Globe Town? Globe Town Advisory Committee Survey', June 1990

4. DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

I had access to all relevant documentation within Globe Town Neighbourhood, including: committee reports and minutes; policy documents; consultative papers; consultants' reports; publicity materials; staff and trades union newsletters. I had some access to documents produced at borough-level and in other neighbourhoods. In addition to scrutinising key documents relevant to the period in which I was based at Globe Town (1989-1990), I also collected and analysed documents dating from the launch of the decentralisation scheme in 1986. I also drew on reports from the East London Advertiser, Tower Hamlets' main local newspaper, throughout the research period.

Documentary analysis was particularly useful in tracing the progress of particular projects and policy initiatives over time. It also allowed for an examination of the way in which the 'language of decentralisation' developed in Tower Hamlets and was gradually picked up and used across the borough by different interest groups.

I list key documents below, according to their origin.

Tower Hamlets

Decentralisation Committee, minutes, 1986 - 1988

'News from the 'D' Team', monthly staff newsletter, June 1986 - October 1987

'Decentralisation News', monthly staff newsletter, November 1987 - September 1988

'Power to the Hamlets. Decentralisation - What this will mean for you', 1986 (public information leaflet)

'Decentralisation: A Change for the Better. A Synopsis of Decentralisation in Tower Hamlets', January 1988 (promotional material)

'How to Contact your Local Councillor', 1990 (public information leaflet)

'Tower Hamlets News', various issues, June 1989 - August 1990 (borough newspaper)

'Housing Investment Programme, 1990/91'

'Empowering Users and Residents. Draft Decentralisation Prospectus', June 1993 (promotional material)

Globe Town

(a) Newsletters

'The Globe. News and Information for Globe Town People', various issues, June 1989 - August 1990

'GTs. Staff Magazine for Globe Town Workers', various issues, June 1989 - August 1990

'Global Housing: Quarterly Journal of Housing Management Policy Team', various issues, June 1989 - August 1990

'Global Action. NALGO Newsletter', various isues, December 1989 - August 1990

'Going Local. Staff Bulletin', various issues, May 1990 - December 1990,

(b) Strategy documents and consultative papers

'Bancroft Community Team Progress Report', November 1988; November, 1989

'Estimates for the General Rate for the Year, 1989-1990'

'Neighbourhood Action Plan, 1989-1990'

'New Homes for Globe Town Neighbourhood - Housing Development Strategy, 1989-1990'

'Community Development Strategy', February 1989

'Estate Strategy', February 1989

'Globe Town Green Charter', 1989

'Globe Town Health Action Charter', 1989

'Repairs and Maintenance Strategy: A Practical Working Guide', January 1990

'Community Government - The Way Forward', February 1990

'Bancroft Tenant Management Cooperative Steering Group: Bid to Department of Environment', 1990

(c) Committee reports and minutes

Advisory Committee, June 1989 - August 1990

Community and Community Orientation Group, June 1989 - December 1989

Health Action Area Steering Group, June 1989 - August 1990

Performance Review Sub-Committee, June 1989 - August 1990

Senior Management Team, June 1989 - August 1990

Services Strategy Group, January 1990 - August 1990

Standing Neighbourhood Committee, June 1989 - August 1990

Urgency Sub-Committee, June 1989 - August 1990

Other neighbourhoods

'Decentralisation: A Review of the Ways Forward' (Stepney), February 1989

'Neighbourhood Action Plan, 1989-1990' (Stepney)

'Neighbourhood Aims and Objectives, 1989-1990' (Wapping)

Political parties

'Defending our Community: A Charter for Change', Tower Hamlets Labour Party Local Government Committee, 1986 manifesto

'Handing Power to the Hamlets', Tower Hamlets Liberal Association, 1986 manifesto

'Fighting Back with Labour', Tower Hamlets Labour Party Local Government Committee, 1990 manifesto

'What next...?', Tower Hamlets Liberal Association, 1990 manifesto

Press releases from Liberal and Labour councillors, June 1989 - August 1990

Trades unions

Letter from NALGO District Organiser to Tower Hamlets NALGO members, 14 September 1989

Letter from Tower Hamlets Chief Executive to NALGO members, 11 October 1989

Letter from NALGO Branch Secretary to Tower Hamlets NALGO members, 13 October 1989

Letter from NALGO Emergency Committee to Tower Hamlets Chief Executive, 25 October 1989

'Tower Power', monthly issues, February 1986 - August 1990

'Tower Power - Strike Special', various issues, September - October 1990

Minutes and motions from branch meetings, June 1989 - August 1990

Strike and picketing information notices, October 1989

Consultants

'Appraisal of Tenant Participation in Globe Town Neighbourhood, London Borough of Tower Hamlets', Priority Estates Project, July 1989

'Globe Town Neighbourhood - An Evaluation. Interim Report', Vivien Lowndes and Gerry Stoker, May 1990

'London Borough of Tower Hamlets Human Resource Management Value for Money Audit', KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, June 1990

'Completing decentralisation. A Report by Vincent Hanna', October 1993

'Review of the needs based budgeting system: A consultancy report prepared for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets', Peter Watt and Vivien Lowndes, Institute of Local Government Studies, March 1993

4. CONTACTS AFTER THE END OF THE RESEARCH PERIOD

I maintained contact with Tower Hamlets and Globe Town Neighbourhood after the end of the 1989-1990 research period. In 1991 and 1992 I brought groups of undergraduate students from the University of Essex to visit Globe Town Neighbourhood. Since August 1992 I have been based at the Institute of Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham, and have worked with members and officers from Tower Hamlets in organising seminars on decentralisation. As editor of Local Government Policy Making I commissioned an article from the Liberals' Political Adviser on the role of councillors in decentralisation (see Charters, 1994).

In 1992/1993 I worked as a consultant for the borough, reviewing the allocation of budgets to neighbourhods (report listed above). In conducting this project I interviewed the Chief Executives of each of the seven neighbourhoods, along with finance staff and key councillors (October - December 1992). This opportunity allowed me to reflect on changes in the borough since 1990; these insights have informed my analysis of the earlier period with which the thesis is concerned.

APPENDIX B - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAFF SURVEY

The questionnaire used for my staff survey in Globe Town Neighbourhood (February 1990) is attached, entitled: 'Decentralisation - for better or worse?'. Details of my survey method are provided in Appendix A.

DECENTRALISATION - FOR BETTER OR WORSE?

This survey aims to find out the views of staff working in Globe Town Neighbourhood. Decentralisation and the setting up of the Neighbourhood system have brought a lot of changes to the way Council services are run in the area. For staff, decentralisation has meant new working conditions and new relationships with the public. Globe Town's staff have been a vital resource in making decentralisation happen, but they have not always felt consulted or informed about new developments.

The staff survey is being carried out as part of an evaluation of decentralisation in Globe Town. The evaluation is being organised jointly by the Institute of Local Government Studies and the Neighbourhood.

The survey results will serve two purposes. First, they will be taken into account as the Neighbourhood tries to improve services and working conditions. Second, they will ensure that the viewpoint of staff is included when Globe Town's 'story' is told. Many local authorities in Britain and abroad are interested to learn from Globe Town's experience of decentralisation - how to do it and, in places, how not to do it!

The survey is being distributed to all white collar staff and we are hoping for an excellent response. The questions can be answered quickly and simply - in most cases, just by ticking a box. The survey results will be made available to all staff, who will have a chance to comment on the findings. Absolute confidentiality will be maintained in dealing with survey responses. There is no need to put your name on the survey form. Please could you return completed forms to:

VIVIEN LOWNDES, NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, 62 ROMAN ROAD
ANY ENQUIRIES, PLEASE RING 980 8067 x2253

GLOBE TOWN STAFF SURVEY

PLEASE ANSWER WITH A TICK UNLESS ASKED OTHERWISE

1. How would you describe the management style at Globe Town?
PLEASE RANK IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE - 1,2,3,4

* Crisis management in an environment of chaos ☐
* Boldly experimental management, but with a tendency not to consolidate good ideas ☐
* Creative and supportive management which gets the best out of staff ☐
* Bureaucratic management where red tape stifles good ideas ☐

2. Are you kept informed about...

* Changes which affect your job? ☐
* Decisions made by the Senior Management Team ? (SMT = Neighbourhood Chief Executive and department/service heads) ☐
* Decisions made by the Standing Neighbourhood Committee? (SNC = Globe Town Councillors) ☐

3. Do you have an opportunity to ask questions or raise points (ie. make suggestions or criticisms) with your supervisor/manager?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Occasionally ☐

4. Do you understand what is expected of you in your job?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. **Do you know how well you are performing your work as far as your immediate supervisor is concerned?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. **Would you describe your responsibilities as...**

* Very broadly defined? ☐
* Broadly defined? ☐
* Tightly defined? ☐
* Very tightly defined? ☐

7. **Does your job description reflect the actual job that you do?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't have a JD ☐

8. **How would you describe your job?**
PLEASE RANK IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE - 1,2,3

* Determined by rules ☐
* Creative and independent ☐
* Reactive and fire-fighting ☐

9. **In your daily work, is most of your time spent...**

* Working alone? ☐
* Working closely with other staff? ☐

10. **Do you have regular team meetings where you work?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, are your team meetings effective?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. **Does your work involve dealing with with other departments/service areas?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, how would you describe your relationships with other departments/service areas?
PLEASE RANK IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE - 1,2,3

* Cooperative and friendly? ☐
* Formal and efficient? ☐
* Hostile and unproductive? ☐

12. **Does the Neighbourhood system make working with other departments easier?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

13. **Which departments are the...**

* Easiest to work with? ____________________
* Hardest to work with? ____________________

14. Do you think that the interests of any one department are dominant in the Neighbourhood?
PLEASE SPECIFY

Yes ________________ No

☐

15. Do you deal directly with the public in your work?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, how has your relationship with the public changed since decentralisation?
PLEASE CIRCLE ONE CHOICE ON EACH LINE

* Is it more friendly... less friendly... no different?
* Is it more rewarding... less rewarding... no different, for you?
* Is it more productive... less productive... no different, for the public?

16. Can you name the five Globe Town Councillors?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. What is the political persuasion of the Globe Town Councillors?

* Predominantly Labour? ☐
* Predominantly Liberal? ☐
* Predominantly Conservative? ☐

18. Do you work closely with Councillors?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, would you describe Globe Town Councillors as...

* Supportive – a positive influence on your work ☐
* Interfering – a negative influence on your work ☐

19. Do you think there is a problem of 'burn-out' among Globe Town staff?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

20. Do you suffer from stress related to your job?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, what do you think is the major cause of stress in your work?
PLEASE NOTE BELOW

21. Do you think decentralisation has led to...
PLEASE CIRCLE ONE CHOICE ON EACH LINE

* Better work-place... Worse work-place... No change
* Better staff/management relations... Worse relations... No change
* Better relations with the public... Worse relations... No change
* Better services... Worse services... No change
* More voice for the public in decisions... Less voice... No change

22. Who do you feel you work for...

* Globe Town Neighbourhood? ☐
* London Borough of Tower Hamlets? ☐

23. Over the next year, which option would you prefer for Globe Town?
PLEASE RANK IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE - 1,2,3

* Some degree of re-centralisation (eg. an increase in Borough powers vis-a-vis the Neighbourhoods) ☐
* Further decentralisation/localisation (eg. the transfer of staff and services to an Estate Base level) ☐
* A period of stability and consolidation ☐

24. What do you most like about working in Globe Town Neighbourhood?

25. What do you least like about working in Globe Town Neighbourhood?

26. Are there any other points you would like to make about the effects of decentralisation on services and working conditions in Globe Town?

THE FOLLOWING TWO PAGES ASK FOR SOME PERSONAL INFORMATION - THIS WILL HELP US ANALYSE THE SURVEY RESULTS. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SURVEY IS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL - THERE IS NO NEED TO PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM

PLEASE ANSWER WITH A TICK UNLESS ASKED OTHERWISE

1. What department/service area do you work in?

* Administration and Finance ☐
* Arts and Information (Libraries) ☐
* Community Development ☐
* Environmental Development ☐
* Housing ☐
* Neighbourhood Chief Executive ☐
* Property Services ☐
* Social Services ☐
* Other (please specify) ____________________

2. Where do you work?

* Estate Base ☐
* Digby Street ☐
* Neighbourhood Centre ☐
* Library ☐
* York Hall ☐
* Other (please specify) ____________________

345

3. What grade is your job?

- Sc 1 - Sc 3 ☐
- Sc 4 - Sc 6 ☐
- So 1 - So 2 ☐
- P 1 - P 3 ☐
- P 6 - P 8 ☐
- P 10 - P 13 ☐
- Senior Management Team ☐

4. How many years have you worked in...
PLEASE CIRCLE ONE CHOICE ON EACH LINE

* Local government	0 - 1	1 - 5	5 - 10	10+
* London Borough of Tower Hamlets	0 - 1	1 - 5	5 - 10	10+
* Globe Town Neighbourhood	0 - 1	1 - 2	2 - 3	3+

5. Are you...

Male? ☐ Female? ☐

6. How old are you?

- under 20 ☐
- 20 - 25 ☐
- 25 - 30 ☐
- 30 - 35 ☐
- 35 - 40 ☐
- 40 - 45 ☐
- 45 - 50 ☐
- over 50 ☐

7. Where do you live?

- Globe Town Neighbourhood ☐
- Tower Hamlets, but outside Globe Town ☐
- London, but outside Tower Hamlets ☐
- Outside London ☐

8. Which of the following do you say you are?

White: UK ☐
Irish ☐
European ☐
Other (please specify) ____________

Black: UK ☐
African ☐
Afro-Caribbean ☐
Somali ☐
Other (please specify) ____________

Asian: UK ☐
Bangladeshi Syletti ☐
Non Syletti ☐
Pakistani ☐
Indian ☐
Chinese ☐
Vietnamese ☐
Other (please specify) ____________

9. Are you...

Registered disabled ☐ Non registered disabled ☐ Not disabled ☐

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR FILLING IN THIS SURVEY
PLEASE RETURN TO VIVIEN LOWNDES AT NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, 62 ROMAN ROAD
ANY ENQUIRIES, RING 980 8067 x2253

APPENDIX C - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY

The questionnaire used for my survey of members of Globe Town Neighbourhood's Advisory Committee (June 1990) is attached, entitled: 'Has decentralisation brought 'people's power' to Globe Town?'. Details of my survey method are provided in Appendix A.

HAS DECENTRALISATION BROUGHT 'PEOPLE'S POWER' TO GLOBE TOWN?

Globe Town is carrying out a study on the effects of decentralisation. The aim of the study is to find out what benefits (or problems) the Neighbourhood system has brought to the area.

Decentralisation promised to provide greater opportunities for tenants and residents to influence decisions made about Council services and policies. This is your chance to say whether you think this promise has been fulfilled!

Globe Town hopes to take 'people's power' a stage further with its plans to locate services and decision-making to Community Bases.

Please take time to fill in the questionnaire - the results will be presented to the July meeting of the Advisory Committee. Most of the questions can be answered simply with a tick .

Please feel free to contact Vivien Lowndes at the Neighbourhood Centre (081 981 5236 x2253) if you have any queries or would like to discuss the issues further.

Please place the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and bring it along to the Advisory Committee meeting on 25 June 1990. Alternatively, you can drop it in to your Estate Base or the First Stop Shop.

YOUR NAME ______________________

YOUR T A OR R.A. ______________________

ABOUT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

How long have you been a member of the Advisory Committee?

* less than one year ☐
* one to two years ☐
* two to three years ☐
* three to four years ☐

How well does the Advisory Committee work, in your view?

* poorly ☐
* OK ☐
* well ☐
* very well ☐

Does the Advisory Committee get enough support from officers...

* Do officers attend when requested to ? yes ☐ no ☐
* Do officers provide a good quality of information to Advisory? yes ☐ no ☐
* Do officers listen to Advisory members? yes ☐ no ☐
* Do officers prepare satisfactory agendas, minutes and reports for Advisory? yes ☐ no ☐

Do councillors give the Advisory enough support...

* Do councillors attend the Advisory on a regular basis? yes ☐ no ☐
* Do councillors provide a good quality of information to Advisory? yes ☐ no ☐
* Do councillors listen to Advisory members? yes ☐ no ☐

How would you describe the Advisory Committee?

* informal ☐ or * formal ☐
* hostile ☐ or * friendly ☐
* productive ☐ or * unproductive ☐
* boring ☐ or * interesting ☐

Overall, how much notice do you think the Neighbourhood takes of the Advisory's views?

* very little ☐ * little ☐
* a lot ☐ * a great deal ☐

Do you think the Advisory Committee should have more of a say in how the Neighbourhood is run?

* yes ☐ * no ☐

How do you tell members of your TA or RA about what goes on at Advisory?

* don't bother! ☐ * word of mouth ☐
* TA/RA newsletter ☐ * report to TA/RA meeting ☐
* report to Estate Base Committee ☐ * other (please say how) ☐ ______________

Do you think there are any sections of the community whose interests are not represented by the Advisory Committee?

* yes ☐ * no ☐

If so, which groups? ______________________________

Are there any other organisations which you think should be represented on the Advisory (eg. churches or other religious groups)?

If yes, please say which ones ______________________________

ABOUT YOUR TENANTS' OR RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

How many members does your TA or RA have? ☐

How often does your TA or RA meet?

* once a fortnight ☐ * once a month ☐
* once every two months ☐ * once every three months ☐
* once every six months ☐ * no regular meetings ☐

Are the chair vice-chair, treasurer and secretary of your TA/RA elected?

* yes ☐ * no ☐

How well does your TA/RA work?

* poorly ☐ * OK ☐
* well ☐ * very well ☐

ABOUT YOUR ESTATE BASE COMMITTEE

Do you know what an Estate Base Committee is?

* yes ☐ * no ☐

Are you a member of your Estate Base Committee?

* yes ☐ * no ☐

If you are, how well does the EBC work in your view?

* poorly ☐ * OK ☐
* well ☐ * very well ☐

ANY OTHER COMMENTS? THESE ARE OPTIONAL QUESTIONS - IT IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO ANSWER THEM

Do you have any other comments on the working of the Advisory Committee or the Estate Base Committees?
(please write below)

Do you have any ideas about how Globe Town could increase the role of tenants and residents in making decisions about Neighbourhood services and policies?
(please write below)

ABOUT YOURSELF

These questions are not intended to be 'nosey', but to show which groups of Globe Town residents are involved in the Advisory Committee. All responses will be treated confidentially - please feel free to leave out any questions you don't like!

Are you...

* Council tenant ☐ * leaseholder (Right to Buy) ☐ * Housing Association tenant ☐
* owner occupier ☐ * other (please say what) ☐ ______

Are you...

* under 20 ☐ * 20 - 30 ☐ * 30 - 40 ☐
* 40 - 50 ☐ * 50 - 60 ☐ * 60+ ☐

How would you describe yourself?

* white ☐ * Afro-Carribean ☐ * Asian/Bangladeshi ☐
* other (please say what) ______

Are you a member of any other community organisations (apart from your TA or RA)?

* yes ☐ * no ☐

If yes, which ones? ______
Are they national or local organisations? ______

THANK YOU FOR FILLING IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE PLACE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND BRING IT TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OR DROP IT IN TO THE FIRST STOP SHOP OR YOUR ESTATE BASE.

REFERENCES

Aglietta, M. (1979) A Theory of Capitalist Regulation, London: New Left Books

Arnold-Foster, J. (1993) 'Fascist victory raises questions over local parties and policies', Local Government Chronicle, 24 September, p. 7

Association of Liberal Councillors (1982) Polling Day: A Guide to Organisation, Activists' Guides No. 2, Hebden Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Association of Liberal Councillors (undated, a) Knocking on Doors: Why do we do it?, Activists' Guide No. 3, Hebden Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Association of Liberal Councillors (undated, b) Leaflet Delivery, Activists' Guide No. 4, Hebden Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Association of Liberal Councillors (1985) Keeping Ward Records, Activists' Guide No. 5, Hebden Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Association of Liberal Councillors (undated, c) How to Produce Focus and Live, Activists' Guide No. 6, Hebden Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Bassett, K. (1984) 'Labour, socialism and local democracy' in M. Boddy and C. Fudge (eds.) Local Socialism? Labour Councils and New Left Alternatives, London: Macmillan

Beresford, P. (1993) Patch in Perspective: Decentralising and Democratising Social Services, London: Battersea Community Action

Besant, W. (1903) East London, London: Chatto and Windus

Boddy, M. and Fudge, C. (eds.) (1984) Local Socialism? Labour Councils and New Left Alternatives, London: Macmillan

Branson, N. (1979) Poplarism 1919-1925, London: Lawrence and Wishart

Brownhill, S. (1990) Developing London's Docklands: Another Great Planning Disaster?, London: Paul Chapman

Beuret, K. and Stoker, G. (1984) 'The attack on Labour's centralist faith: local paths to socialism?', paper presented to Political Studies Association Annual Conference, 3-5 May

Burns, D., Hambleton, R. and Hoggett, P. (forthcoming) The Politics of Decentralisation, London: Macmillan

Burns, T. and Stalker, G. (1961) The Management of Innovation, London: Tavistock

Burns, D. and Williams, M. (1989) Neighbourhood Working: A New Approach to Housing Provision, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies

Bush, J. (1984) Behind the Lines: East London Labour 1914-1919, London: Merlin

Butcher, H. Law, I., Leach, R. and Mullard, M. (1990) Local Government and Thatcherism, London: Routledge

Butler, R. (1991) Designing Organizations: A Decision-Making Perspective, London: Routledge

Byrne, T. (1992) Local Government in Britain, fifth edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Charters, S. (1994) 'Participation and the role of councillors in a decentralised authority: the case of Tower Hamlets', Local Government Policy Making, 20(4), pp. 24-30

Clegg, S. (1990) Modern Organizations: Organization Studies in the Postmodern World, London: Sage

Coase, R. (1937) 'The nature of the firm', Economica, 4(16), pp. 386-405

Cochrane, A. (1991) 'The changing state of local government: restructuring for the 1990s', Public Administration, 69(3), pp. 281-302

Cochrane, A. (1993) Whatever Happened to Local Government?, Buckingham: Open University Press

Coleman, A. (1985) Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing, London: Hilary Shipman

Conyers, D. (1983) 'Decentralisation: the latest fashion in development administration?', Public Administration and Development, 3, pp. 97-109

Conyers, D. (1986) Decentralisation in Development: Supplement to a Selected Annotated Bibliography, London: Commonwealth Secretariat

Cornwell, J. (1984) Hard Earned Lives: Accounts of Health and Illness from East London, London: Tavistock

Crook, S., Pakulski, J. and Waters, M. (1992) Postmodernization: Change in Advanced Society, London: Sage

Dahl, R. and Tufte, E. (1974) Size and Democracy, London: Oxford University Press

De Vroey, M. (1984) 'A regulation approach interpretation of the contemporary crisis', Capital and Class, 23, pp. 45-66

DiMaggio, P. and Powell, W. (1991) 'Introduction' in W. Powell and P. DiMaggio (eds.) The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-38

Docklands Consultative Committee (1992) All that Glitters is not Gold: A Critical Assessment of Canary Wharf, London: Docklands Consultative Committee

Dunleavy, P. (1991) Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf

Dunleavy, P. and O'Leary, B. (1987) Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy, London: Macmillan

Eade, J. (1989) The Politics of Community: The Bangladeshi Community in East London, Aldershot: Avebury

Eckstein, H. (1960) Pressure Group Politics: The Role of the British Medical Association, London: George Allen and Unwin

Fekete, L. (1990) 'Europe for the Europeans: East End for the East Enders', Race and Class, 32(1), pp. 66-76

Fetterman, M. (1989) Ethnography: Step by Step, Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage

Fishman, W. (1979) The Streets of East London, London: Duckworth

Fishman, W. (1988) East End 1888: A Year in a London Borough among the Labouring Poor, London: Duckworth

Geddes, M. (1988), 'The capitalist state and the local economy: "restructuring for labour" and beyond', Capital and Class, 35, pp. 85-120

Goss, S. (1988) Local Labour and Local Government: A Study of Changing Interests, Politics and Policy in Southwark from 1919 to 1982, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Gottdiener, M. and Lagopoulis, A. (1986) The City and the Sign: An Introduction to Urban Semiotics, New York: Columbia University Press

Graves, D. and Pilkington, E. (undated) Decentralisation: The Implications for Trade Unions, London: Institute of Housing

Greaves, B. and Lishman, G. (1980) The Theory and Practice of Community Politics, Hebden Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Granovetter, M. (1992) 'Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddeness' in M. Granovetter and R. Swedberg (eds.) The Sociology of Economic Life, Boulder, Co.: Westview, pp. 53-81

Greater London Council (1985) The London Industrial Strategy, London: Greater London Council

Gyford, J. (1985) The Politics of Local Socialism, London: Allen and Unwin

Gyford, J. (1986) 'Diversity, sectionalism and local democracy' in The Conduct of Local Authority Business - Research Volume IV: Aspects of Local Democracy, Cmnd. 9081, London: HMSO, pp. 106-131

Gyford, J. (1991a) Citizens, Consumers and Councils: Local Government and the Public, London: Macmillan

Gyford, J. (1991b) Does Place Matter? Locality and Local Democracy, Luton: The Local Management Board

Gyford, J. Leach, S. and Game, C. (1989) The Changing Politics of Local Government, London: Unwin Hyman

Hain, P. (1980) Neighbourhood Participation, London: Temple Smith

Hambleton, R. (1978) Policy Planning and Local Government, London: Hutchinson

Hambleton, R. (1988) 'Consumerism, decentralisation and local democracy', Public Admistration, 66, pp. 125-147

Hambleton, R. (1992) 'Decentralization and democracy in UK local government', Public Money and Management, July-Sept., pp. 9-19

Hambleton, R. and Hoggett, P. (1987) 'Introduction' in P. Hoggett and R. Hambleton (eds.) Decentralisation and Democracy: Localising Public Services, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, pp. 1-8

Hanna, V. (1993) Completing decentralisation. A Report by Vincent Hanna, London: London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Harvey, D. (1989a) The Condition of Postmodernity, Oxford: Blackwell

Harvey, D. (1989b) The Urban Experience, Oxford: Blackwell

Heery, E. (1984) 'Decentralisation in Islington' in R. Hambleton and P. Hoggett (eds.) The Politics of Decentralisation: Theory and Practice of a Radical Local Government Initiative, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, pp. 45-61

Hobbs, D. (1988) Doing the Business: Entrepreneurship, the Working Class and Detectives in the East End of London, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Hodge, M. (1987) 'Central/local conflicts: the view from Islington' in P. Hoggett and R. Hambleton (eds.) Decentralisation and Democracy: Localising Public Services, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, pp. 29-36

Hoggett, P. (1984) 'Decentralisation, labourism and the professionalised welfare state apparatus' in R. Hambleton and P. Hoggett (eds.) The Politics of Decentralisation: Theory and Practice of a Radical Local Government Initiative, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, pp. 16-34

Hoggett, P. (1987) 'A farewell to mass production? Decentralisation as an emergent private and public sector paradigm' in P. Hoggett and R. Hambleton (eds.) Decentralisation and Democracy: Localising Public Services, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, pp. 62-79

Hoggett, P. and Hambleton, R. (eds.) (1987) Decentralisation and Democracy: Localising Public Services, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies

Hoggett. P., Lawrence, S. and Fudge, C. (1984) 'The politics of decentralisation in Hackney' in R. Hambleton and P. Hoggett (eds.) The Politics of Decentralisation: Theory and Practice of a Radical Local Government Initiative, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies

Holme, A. (1985) Housing and Young Families in East London, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (1986) First Report from the House Affairs Committee Session 1986-7. Bangladeshis in Britain, London: HMSO

Hughes, P. (1987) 'Decentralisation in Tower Hamlets', Local Government Policy Making, 14(2), pp. 29-36

John, P. and Dowding, K. (1994) 'Tax's pulling power', London Government Chronicle, 18 February

Jordan, G. (1990) 'Policy community realism *versus* "new" institutionalist ambiguity', Political Studies, 38, pp. 470-484

Khan, U. (1989a) 'Neighbourhood forums and the "New Left": representation beyond tokenism?', paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association, Durham, 12-14 April

Khan, U. (1989b) 'Neighbourhood forums: the Islington experience', Local Government Policy Making, 16(2), pp. 27-33

Knight, J. (1992) Institutions and Social Conflict, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kossoff, J. (1994) 'Party poopers', Time Out, 5 January, pp. 12-13

Lane, J. The Public Sector, London: Sage

Lansley, S., Goss, S. and Wolmar, C. (1989) Councils in Conflict: The Rise and Fall of the Municipal Left, London: Macmillan

Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1987) The End of Organised Capitalism, Oxford: Polity

Lawrence, P. and Lorsch, J. (1967) Organization and Environment, Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press

Le Grand, J. and Bartlett, W. (eds.) (1993) Quasi-Markets and Social Policy, London: Macmillan

Leach, S. and Lowndes, V. (1993) Fitness for Purpose: Shaping New Patterns of Organisation and Management, Report of the Working Group on Internal Management, Luton: Local Government Management Board

Lennon, P. (1993) 'Home truths from a street fighter', The Guardian, 4 December, p. 27

Lipietz, A. (1987) Mirages and Miracles: The Crises of Global Fordism, London: Verso

Logan, J. and Molotch, H. (1987) Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place, Berkley, Ca.: University of California Press

London Research Centre (1990) 'Unemployment by borough, March 1990', unpublished circular

Loughlin, M., Gelford, M. and Young, K. (1985) Half a Century of Municipal Decline 1935-1985, London: George Allen and Unwin

Lowndes, V. (1992) 'Decentralisation: the potential and the pitfalls', Local Government Policy Making, 18(4), pp. 53-63

Lowndes, V. (1993) 'The other governments of Britain: local politics and delegated administrations' in I. Budge and D. McKay (eds.) The Developing British Political System: The 1990s, Harlow: Longman, pp. 125-150

Lowndes, V. (1994) 'Decentralisation: the continuing debate', Local Government Policy Making, 20(4), pp. 1-4

Lowndes, V. (forthcoming, a) 'Local governance' in S. Weir and K. Boyle (eds.) The Democratic Audit of the UK, London: Routledge

Lowndes, V. (forthcoming, b) 'Decentralisation, devolution and the "local" dimension' in S. Leach and H. Davies (eds.) Strategy and Tactics in the Local Government Review Process, Birmingham: Institute of Local Government Studies

Lowndes, V. and Stoker, G. (1992a) 'An evaluation of neighbourhood decentralisation. Part 1: Customer and citizen perspectives', Policy and Politics, 20(1), pp. 47-61

Lowndes, V. and Stoker, G. (1992b) 'An evaluation of neighbourhood decentralisation. Part 2: Staff and councillor perspectives', Policy and Politics, 20(2), pp. 143-152

Mackintosh, M. and Wainwright, H. (1987) A Taste of Power: The Politics of Local Economics, London: Verso

Majone, G. (1989) Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process, New Haven: Yale University Press

March, J. and Olsen, J. (1984) 'The new institutionalism: organizational factors in political life', American Political Science Review, 78, pp. 734-749

March, J. and Olsen, J. (1989) Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics, New York: Free Press

Marsh, D. and Rhodes, R. (eds.) (1992) Policy Networks in British Government, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (1989) Designing Qualitative Research, Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage

Means, R. (1984) 'Decentralisation and the personal social services' in R. Hambleton and P. Hoggett (eds.) The Politics of Decentralisation: Theory and Practice of a Radical Local Government Initiative, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, pp. 80-95

Meyer, J. and Bowan, B. (1991) 'Institutionalized organizations: formal structure as myth and ceremony' in W. Powell and P. DiMaggio (eds.) The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 41-62

Miller, W. (1988) Irrelevant Elections?, Oxford: Clarendon Press

MORI (1990) Tower Hamlets Residents' Attitudes Survey: Research study Conducted for Tower Hamlets Borough Council, London: MORI

Morphet, J. (1987) 'Local authority decentralistion: Tower Hamlets goes all the way', Policy and Politics, 15(2), pp. 119-126

Murray, R. (1988) 'Life after Henry (Ford)', Marxism Today, October, pp. 8-13

Newton, K. (1982) 'Is small really so beautiful? Is big really so ugly? Size, effectiveness, and democracy in local government', Political Studies, 30(2), pp. 190-206

Niskanen, W. (1971) Bureaucracy and Representative Government, New York: Aldine-Atherton

Niskanen, W. (1973) Bureaucracy: Servant or Master?, London: Institute for Economic Affairs

North, D. (1990) Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Ostrom, E. (1986) 'An agenda for the study of institutions', Public Choice, 48, pp. 3-25

Painter, J. (1991) 'Regulation theory and local government', Local Government Studies, 17(6), pp. 23-43

Parry, G., Moyser, G. and Day, N. (1994) Political Participation and Democracy in Britain, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Perrow, C. (1987) Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay, third edition, New York: McGraw-Hill

Peters, T. and Waterman, R. (1982) In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies, New York: Harper and Row

Pirie, M. (1988) Micropolitics, London: Wildwood House

Platt, S. (1987) 'The Liberals in power', New Society, 11 September, pp. 8-10

Polanyi, K. (1944) The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time, New York: Holt, Rinehart

Pollitt, C. (1986) 'Democracy and bureaucracy' in D. Held and C. Pollitt (eds.) New Forms of Democracy, London: Sage, pp. 158-191

Powell, W. and DiMaggio, P. (eds.) The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Rennard, C. (1988) Winning Local Elections, Hedben Bridge: Association of Liberal Councillors

Rentoul, J. and Wolmar, C. (1984) 'Liverpool docked', New Statesman, 2 March, pp. 8-10

Rhodes, R. and Marsh, D. (1992a) 'Policy networks in British politics: a critique of existing approaches', in D. Marsh and R. Rhodes (eds.) Policy Networks in British Government, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-26.

Rhodes, R. and Marsh, D. (1992b) 'New directions in the study of policy networks', European Journal of Political Research, 21, pp. 181-205

Rondinelli, D. (1981) 'Government decentralisation in comparative perspective: theory and practice in developing countries', International Review of Administrative Sciences, 67, pp. 133-145

Rondinelli, D. (1983) 'Implementing decentralization programmes in Asia: a comparative analysis', Public Administration and Development, 3, pp. 181-207

Rose, G. (1988) 'Locality, politics, and culture: Poplar in the 1920s', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 6, pp. 151-168

Rose, M. (1951) The East End of London, Bath: Portway

Sabatier, P. (1988) 'An advocacy coalition framework of policy change and the role of policy-orientated learning therein', Policy Sciences, 21, pp. 129-168

Safe Neighbourhoods Unit (1988) Home Sweet Home: A Survey into Council Services and Housing Aspirations in the Globe Town Neighbourhood of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, survey conducted for Globe Town Neighbourhood, London: Safe Neighbourhoods Unit

Safe Neighbourhoods Unit (1988) Is Globe Town Good for your Health? A Survey of Residents' Views on Local Services, Health, Housing and the Environment, survey conducted for Globe Town Neighbourhood, London: Safe Neighbourhoods Unit

Scott, W. (1991) 'Unpacking institutional arguments' in W. Powell and P. DiMaggio (eds.) The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 183-203

Seabrook, J. (1984) The Idea of Neighbourhood, London: Pluto

Self, P. (1993) Government by the Market: The Politics of Public Choice, London: Macmillan

Selznick, P. (1957) Leadership in Administration, New York: Harper and Row

Sharpe, L. (1970) 'Theories and values of local government', Political Studies, 18(2), pp. 153-174

Shepsle, K. (1989) 'Studying institutions: some lessons from the rational choice approach', Journal of Theoretical Politics, 1(2), pp. 131-147

Smith, B. (1985) Decentralisation: The Territorial Dimension of the State, London: Allen and Unwin

Stewart, J. and Stoker, G. (1988) From Local Administration to Community Government, Research Series, 351, London: Fabian Society

Stoker, G. (1985) 'The politics of urban renewal in Withington Village, Manchester 1962-1983', PhD thesis, University of Manchester

Stoker, G. (1987) 'Decentralisation and the restructuring of local government in Britain', Local Government Policy Making, 14(2), pp. 3-11

Stoker, G. (1989) 'Creating a local government for a post-Fordist society: the Thatcherite project?' in J. Stewart and G. Stoker (eds.) The Future of Local Government, London: Macmillan

Stoker, G. (1990a) 'Government beyond Whitehall' in P. Dunleavy, A. Gamble and G. Peele (eds.) Developments in British Politics 3, London: Macmillan, pp. 126-149

Stoker, G. (1990b) 'Regulation theory, local government and the transition from Fordism' in D. King and J. Pierre (eds.) Challenges to Local Government, London: Sage, pp. 242-264

Stoker, G. (1991) The Politics of Local Government, second edition, London: Macmillan

Stoker, G. (1992) 'Urban regime theory in comparative perspective', paper presented to the Urban Affairs Association Annual Conference, Cleveland, 30 April - 2 May

Stoker, G. (1993) 'Rethinking normative theories of local government and democracy: an introduction', paper presented to the ESRC Local Governance Programme Conference, 20-21 May, Glasgow

Stoker, G. (ed.), Baine, S., Carlyle, S. Charters, S. and Du Sautoy, T. (1991) 'Reflections on neighbourhood decentralization in Tower Hamlets', Public Administration, 69, pp. 373-384

Stoker, G. and Lowndes, V. (1991) Tower Hamlets and Decentralisation: The Experience of Globe Town Neighbourhood, Luton: Local Government Management Board

Stoker, G. Wedgwood Oppenheim, F. and Davies, M. (1988) The Challenge of Change in Local Government: A Survey of Organisational and Management Innovation in the 1980s, Birmingham: Institute of Local Government Studies

Stoker, G. and Young, S. (1993) Cities in the 1990s: Local Choice for a Balanced Strategy, Harlow: Longman

Stone, C. (1989) Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988, Lawrence, Ka.: University of Kansas Press

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990) Basics of Quantitative Research, Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage

Swedberg, R. and Granovetter, M. (1992) 'Introduction' in M. Granovetter and R. Swedberg (eds.) The Sociology of Economic Life, Boulder, Co.: Westview, pp. 1-26

Thompson, E. (1980) The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Tiebout, C. (1956) 'A pure theory of local expenditures', Journal of Political Economy, 64, pp. 416-424

Tomlinson, M. (1989) 'Restructuring Tower Hamlets: local authority decentralisation as a response to crisis and change', MA dissertation, Polytechnic of Central London

Tower Hamlets Liberal Association (1986) Handing Power to the Hamlets, London: Tower Hamlets Liberal Association

Townsend, P. (1987) Poverty and Labour in London: Interim Report of a Centenary Survey, London: Low Pay Unit

Urry, J. (1987) 'Society, space and locality', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 5, pp. 435-444

Vickers, G. (1968) The Art of Judgement, London: Methuen

Wainwright, H. (1987) Labour: A Tale of Two Parties, London: Hogarth Press

Walsall Council (1982) Walsall's Haul to Democracy: The Neighbourhood Concept, Walsall: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Walker, R. (ed.) (1985) Applied Qualitative Research, Aldershot: Gower

Ward, C. (1976) Housing: An Anarchist Approach, London: Freedom Press

Warf, B. (1991) 'Power, politics and locality', Urban Geography, 12(6), pp. 563-569

Watt, P. and Lowndes, V. (1993) Review of the Needs Based Budgeting System: A Consultancy Report prepared for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Birmingham: Institute of Local Government Studies

Webman, J. (1983) Reinventing the Industrial City, London: George Allen and Unwin

Webster, B. (1982) 'Area management and responsive policy making' in S. Leach and J. Stewart (eds.) Approaches in Public Policy, London: George Allen and Unwin

White, J. (1991) 'Images of administrative reason and rationality: the recovery of practical discourse' in H. Kass and B. Catron (eds.) Images and Identities in Public Administration, pp. 132-150

Whitely, R. (1992) 'The social construction of organizations and markets: the comparative analysis of business recipes' in M. Reed and M. Hughes (eds.) Rethinking Organization: New Directions in Organization Theory and Analysis, London: Sage, pp. 120-145

Whyte, W. (ed.) (1991) Participatory Action Research, Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage

Widdicombe Committee (1986) The Conduct of Local Authority Business, Cmnd. 9797, London: HMSO

Widgery, D. (1991) Some Lives: A GP's East End, London: Sinclair Stevenson

Williams, R. (1983) Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, London: Fontana

Williamson, O. (1975) Markets and Hierachies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications, New York: Free Press

Williamson, O. (1985) The Economic Institutions of Capitalism, New York: Free Press

Willmott, P. and Young, M. (1960) Family and Class in a London Suburb, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Wintour, P. (1993) 'Bangladeshis urge Ashdown to expel "racist" Lib Dem councillors', The Guardian, 17 November

Woodward, J. (1965) Industrial Organisation: Theory and Practice, London: Oxford University Press

Working Party on Internal Management of Local Authorities in England (1993) Community Leadership: Unlocking the Potential, London: HMSO

Wright, A., Stewart, J. and Deakin, N. (1984) Socialism and Decentralisation, Fabian Tract, 496, London: Fabian Society

Wright, P. (1991) A Journey Through Ruins: The Last Days of London, London: Radius

Yates, D. (1973) Neighbourhood Democracy: The Politics and Impact of Decentralisation, Lexington, Ma.: Heath

Yin, R. (1984) Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Beverly Hills, Ca.: Sage

Young, M. (1981) Bigness is the Enemy of Humanity, London: SDP

Young, M. and Willmott, P. (1957) Family and Kinship in East London, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Zucker, L. 'The role of institutionalization in cultural perspective' in W. Powell and P. DiMaggio (eds.) The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 83-107