

Social dimensions of urban  
regeneration: discourses, policies and  
practices of social sustainability in  
Hastings, England

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## Abstract

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This thesis develops an alternative critique of social urban regeneration practice by using a political-governance approach to examine the impact of regeneration governance upon barriers and opportunities for social sustainability. The research responds to a call from scholars to refocus sustainability research on the institutional, political and governance space that fosters or marginalises its presence and form. This ethnographic case study involved a year-long cycle of participant observation within the extensive Hastings regeneration governance infrastructure, and interviews with key stakeholders in that regeneration community. An analysis using NVivo was undertaken of thirty-one interviews, fifty regeneration governance meetings and the documents from each meeting. From that data emerged a strong argument for the centrality of the specificity of place in the construction or obstruction of social sustainability. Of particular importance is the impact of the socio-political context and the institutional and cultural legacy of New Labour partnership-led regeneration.

The alternative critique identified in the Hastings example, in part emerges from the agency of a large-scale, political, and active Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) that is integral to, and embedded into the local governance infrastructure. The alternative model of activism employed by the VCS core utilises governance norms and practices to navigate the complex regeneration policy and governance landscape to contribute to, and disturb dominant agendas. In this regeneration landscape a distinctive local socio-political context, an alternative model of activism, and a valued good governance partnership culture enable what other commentators have termed 'actually existing' social sustainability (AESS). The research findings advance an understanding of principal critiques of the New Labour regeneration project, including the notions of 'post-political regeneration tactics' and democratic deficit, through a critical analysis of their presence in terms of their obstruction of AESS. The alternative critique that emerges from this research explores a possible shift in the locus and production of power, and the redistribution of roles in UK regeneration practice that enables a stronger VCS position.

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Declaration

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I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed 

Dated 9.5.2012.

Social sustainability is the most academically neglected of the three pillars of sustainable development (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Holden, 2011). It is regularly subsumed by a dominant agenda of neo-liberal economic growth in UK regeneration practice (Jones and Evans, 2008). This research responds directly to the relative paucity of academic work interrogating social sustainability within regeneration practice and specifically how it is influenced by the nature of urban governance. The findings begin to fill gaps that exist in understanding the inter-section between social sustainability, regeneration and urban governance. In particular, the research reveals the repercussions for social sustainability of over a decade of rescaling of regeneration governance by New Labour (now continued by the Coalition government), that has contributed to a renegotiation of the relationship between the citizen and the state in terms of roles and responsibilities in regeneration policy and practice (Evans *et al.* 2009; Raco, 2005; Wallace, 2010).

The aims of this research are to investigate, through an ethnographic case study of Hastings, how social sustainability is embedded in discourses, policies and practices of urban regeneration. Specifically, the research seeks to understand the impact of modes of urban governance, political regimes and institutions on the presence, absence and form of social sustainability in urban regeneration practice. In keeping with previous research, both these aims necessitate a focus on geographical specificities that shape social sustainability in particular places.

This thesis employs a political-governance approach for analysing social sustainability. This approach is adopted in response to calls for research into sustainability to pay greater attention to the impact of cultural and institutional specificity upon the form and nature of sustainability practice and values (Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; Krueger and Gibbs, 2007, 2010; McKenzie, 2004; Pincetl and Katz, 2007; Whitehead, 2003). Further, this approach takes account of the Evans *et al.* (2009) assessment that a 'more fine grained analysis' (p.695) is required of regeneration governance in order to advance our understanding of its capacity to deliver sustainability. In doing so, this thesis identifies and

presents an empirical examination of actually existing social sustainability (AESS). The term 'actually existing', is adopted from the critique by Krueger and Agyeman (2005) from their study of urban sustainability policy and practice in projects throughout the United States. In keeping with their research findings, the study of Hastings reveals evidence of social sustainability in practice but not in name. The concept 'social sustainability' is absent from official policy, strategy, governance and community discourse in this case study.

Chapter 2 highlights how the research aims outlined above emerge from the recent growth in academic interest in the contested concept of social sustainability (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Manzi *et al.* 2010). These aims are also a response to contemporary debates in both academic and policy literature around post Third Way regeneration, the hegemony of technocratic 'business as usual' sustainability, and possible alternative approaches to measuring social development (Davidson, 2010; ONS, 2010; Pares and Sauri, 2007; Regeneration Management Network, 2010; Sandel, 2009; Stiglitz *et al.* 2009). Crucially, this recent policy/political emphasis on the 'social' is in sharp contrast to the observed hegemony of a technocratic and neo-liberalised economic sustainability in UK urban regeneration practice that critics argue has marginalised social and environmental concerns (Couch and Denneman, 2000; Evans and Jones, 2008; Raco, 2003).

Amongst academic research there has been only a limited and recent focus over who forges the vision of social sustainability, the nature of that vision, and how it manifests in governance, policy and discourse (Davidson, 2009, 2010; Holden, 2011; Manzi *et al.* 2010; McKenzie, 2004; Partridge, 2005). The reluctance of researchers to address the social dimension of sustainability may be due to its' contested and highly context dependent nature (Colantonio, 2008; Holden, 2011), as is observed in the Hastings example. This limited focus on the social may be due to the historical dominance of ecological and economic sustainability in academic and policy debate (Colantonio, 2008; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Littig and Griessler, 2005). Such dominance was also evident in parts of the governance arena in the Hastings case study and is articulated as a barrier to social sustainability in Chapter 7. Only recently has the diverse and political character of social sustainability been explored (Colantonio, 2008; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2009, 2010; Holden,

2011; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Manzi *et al.* 2010). The case study seeks to contribute to this emerging area of work and offer a more developed conceptual engagement with social sustainability. In doing so the work moves away from the dominant focus within existing sustainability research on a fixed and technocratic approach to sustainability indicators and measurement (Littig and Griessler, 2005; Whitehead, 2003). Instead this thesis examines social sustainability as an approach to urban development which addresses the 'softer' aspects of the concept around enabling social capital, engaged governance, social equity/justice and social infrastructure (Cuthill, 2010).

### *Social sustainability and the 'post-political condition'*

This research was initiated in 2008 within the context of UK New Labour 'Third Way' communitarian politics, where the role of the hybrid partnership was a dominant component of regeneration practice and governance (Gilchrist, 2006). This 'governance beyond the state' approach to urban policy characterised UK urban regeneration under New Labour (Jones and Evans, 2008). Understanding both the construction and outcome of the resulting regeneration practice legacy is central to this research. As the findings of this research indicate this approach to urban policy was manifest in the localisation and hybridisation of governance structures, accompanied by a regionalisation of large parts of regeneration policy (Krueger and Gibbs, 2010; Taylor, 2003). These modes of governance were associated with a controversial hollowing out of central government, and a delegation of responsibility to local and regional agents including private, voluntary and third sector partnerships (Jessop, 2002; Taylor, 2003). An ethnographic political-governance approach to examining the resulting complex regeneration landscape in Hastings reveals the continually evolving legacy of skills, cultural norms and partnership infrastructure that act as both barriers and enablers of social sustainability.

There is an established body of work regarding the relationship between urban governance and environmental sustainability (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Dengler, 2007; Gibbs and Krueger, 2005, 2007). However, there is far less consideration of this relationship with specific regard to social sustainability. This thesis will seek to make a contribution by using an under-employed focus on social sustainability to analyse the impact of partnership-led regeneration

governance. The political-governance framing of the concept of social sustainability adopted in this research focuses less on the often contested and evolving indicators of social sustainability as seen in recent studies, (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011 and Manzi *et al.* 2010). Instead it looks to understand the socio-political and institutional features of the environment in which the concept is enabled or marginalised. In this way the research engages with a widely observed theoretical weakness in research in this field that other observers argue is a function of a failure to develop accepted conceptual foundations for social sustainability. Social sustainability research has instead been largely dominated by a focus upon indicators for technical measurement of this element of sustainability (Colantonio, 2008; Littig and Griessler, 2005).

The intention here is to advance our understanding of the dominant post-political condition critique of partnership-led 'governance beyond the state' (argued by Baeten, 2009; Davidson, 2010; Raco, 2005, 2007; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008); by taking account of how AESS is influenced by these aspects of urban regeneration governance. By doing this the research addresses the implications for social sustainability of the current critiques of urban regeneration governance including: democratic deficit (Swyngedouw, 2005), post-political regeneration tactics (Baeten, 2009), an absence of real political debate around what societal values to sustain (Davidson, 2010) and a shallow understanding of 'community' as a target of social regeneration policy that favours targeting and responsabilising the prescribed 'active citizen' (Raco, 2008; Wallace, 2010). There are a limited number of detailed empirical studies with an explicit focus upon social sustainability within the well-established urban regeneration governance critiques. This is curious given the explicit conceptual overlaps between social sustainability and social goals of recent urban regeneration governance in terms of aspects of localism, social cohesion, community empowerment and engagement (Manzi *et al.* 2010). The research, therefore, in seeking to understand how AESS is influenced by the nature of governance, pays particular attention to the issue of prescribed community roles and the reality of risks of foreclosing alternative agendas due to the post-political features of partnership governance.

Existing research on the post-political condition of partnership also critiques the consensual, performance management and technocratic characteristics of

urban regeneration governance for creating a shadow state (after Wolch, 1990). This occurs through co-opting community representatives into a state agenda, neutralising the political capacity of community organisations, and determining a prescribed and narrow profile of citizenship (DeFillipis *et al.* 2006; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008; Taylor, 2008). DeFilippis *et al.* (2006), however, also stress that communities are multiple in nature and as such capable of co-option, or contestation simultaneously. As the findings of this thesis indicate the presence of both co-option and contestation occurs in Hastings. The critical governance literature widely questions the reality and integrity of these post-political localisation policies, not just due to the tight controlling strings of central government targets and funding, but also because of questions over the capacity and willingness of the local communities to fulfil devolved responsibilities (Davies, 2005; Wallace, 2009). More fundamentally, others challenge the role of community as a positive norm and argue that it has malignant properties that risk encouraging exclusion if common identities cannot be found (Wallace, 2009; 2010). In this critique an engaged and active community has the capacity to be oppressive and marginalising to those external to that community (Wallace, 2010). For the most part these critiques portray urban regeneration policy based on local partnerships as 'localism at a cost'. They argue the rolling back of the state has meant a reduced responsibility for central government, and an increased accountability and measurability of 'active citizenry' (Raco, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008). These post-political critiques of localism and community focussed regeneration policy are recast in this research and examined in terms of the limitations and opportunities they construct for local social sustainability.

Previous commentators have argued that the post-political condition results in a real politics gap and failure to debate what social is to be sustained, or challenge what institutions are likely to enable those ambitions (Davidson, 2009; 2010). This study of Hastings provides an empirically grounded examination of the reality and impact of that real politics gap by analysing the presence, character and role of activism, community politics and political traditions in this governance space. The research reveals the distinctive and influential practices of an alternative model of activism in this post-political governance landscape that promotes social sustainability. In this sense the

research develops the dominant critique and understanding of the post-political condition in UK regeneration.

### *Co-production of regeneration practice*

Previous scholars have critiqued UK localism and active citizenship policy as being part of the creation of a depoliticised (or post-political) space shaped by the central state agenda not by society (Daly, 2003; Davies, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005). In this critique the 'active citizen' is in fact a 'passive citizen' tied by and made accountable for centrally determined funding criteria, targets and indicators (Raco and Imrie, 2003; Wallace, 2009). In this thesis, however, innovative aspects of the research findings will suggest a more complex and less universally detrimental outcome for social urban regeneration can result from this re-articulation of roles. The AESS enabled in Hastings by an alternative model of activism, progressive hybrid partnership culture and narrative of collaboration means these findings engage with wider academic debates around co-production of regeneration practice. Co-production in Hastings involves increasing shared public, civic and statutory sector project delivery, strategy development and institutional shaping. Co-production is concerned with the evolving re-articulation of the relationship between the citizen and the state as regards social urban policy. Further, this co-production raises the prospect in Hastings of a version of the recession-induced redistribution of regeneration roles and responsibilities noted by Evans *et al.* (2009). The conceptual focus of this thesis centres around the implications for AESS of a continually evolving community-state relationship, the post-political condition, and the legacy of rescaled hybrid partnerships. These concepts are developed further in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

### *An ethnographic case study methodology*

Interrogating these concepts through the research aims described above was achieved by developing an in-depth case study of the institutional and cultural specificity of social regeneration practice in Hastings, East Sussex. A detailed single case study of Hastings was in part selected in order to respond to calls for more locally specific, empirically informed political governance led research on sustainability (Jonas *et al.* 2003; McKenzie, 2004; Raco, 2007; Whitehead, 2003). Further, the distinct nature of Hastings owing to the complexity of the

governance landscape, unusual regional-local context, and substantial regeneration policy/capital intervention focus, made this single case study a valid site with which to explore the implications of a complex local governance landscape for the form and opportunity for social sustainability (discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5).

Hastings is a coastal town on the South coast of England burdened by many of the social and economic challenges typical of coastal towns across England today (Beatty and Fothergill, 2008). In Hastings these challenges include, areas of entrenched deprivation resulting in it being rated 19<sup>th</sup> in the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Further, the town struggles with poor education results, high levels of crime, 46% public sector employment reliance, a low wage and low skill economy, a severe jobs deficit, poor quality housing, and a high level of social security benefit claimants with 1 in 3 adults claiming benefits in 2010 (Beatty and Fothergill, 2008; Centre for Cities, 2011). Hastings is the most deprived town in the South East region (outside of London) and this distinct position relative to the rest of the largely affluent county of East Sussex, and within the most affluent region in the country makes for a distinctive local geographical and socio-political context (ESIF, 2010). The importance of this geography and specificity of place are highlighted throughout this thesis as central to a detailed analysis and understanding of the nature of social sustainability.

In response to these social and economic issues Hastings has been in receipt of over £200 million of regional, national and European funding over the last decade (HBC, 2010). This investment has been accompanied by a plethora of partnership structures developed to deliver the funding or intervention. This complex and rapidly evolving multi-scalar governance landscape provides a good case study for exploring post-political regeneration practice and governance.

Ethnography was specifically employed in this research design in order to gain a greater insight into the complex and dynamic relationships, social processes and governance practices within the regeneration community in Hastings. Central to this approach is the acknowledgment that institutions are social structures that can shape policy implementation, and in turn be shaped by their context, the actors within them and the institutional practices, or traditions that

they forge (Coafee and Healey, 2003; Davies, 2004; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). Using this research approach has enabled the thesis to explore and demonstrate the link between forms and practices of local governance (and the socio-political context in which they develop), and the local state of social sustainability.

Participant observation of governance meetings, interviews with key stakeholders within the regeneration community, and relevant meeting and policy documents were used to capture detailed qualitative data with which to explore the research aims. The key social regeneration themes, the dominant governance structures, and the governance cultural norms, discourses and practices were identified using qualitative thematic analysis of the data. Ethnography is particularly valuable as an approach in enabling an understanding of the socio-political-historical context of a case study. This proved to be central to the generation of research findings that demonstrate the contribution of the local specificity of place in the evolution of the policy approach to AESS. The detailed process and justification of this research design, methodology and methods employed in this research are described in Chapter 4.

#### *Analysis and discussion structure*

The socio-political context of the Hastings case study, and the key characteristics of this context that prove to be contributing factors to the nature of social sustainability are discussed in Chapter 5. The chapter draws on established arguments regarding the centrality of specificity of place in the construction of local sustainabilities (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006; Evans *et al.* 2009; Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). Particular attention is paid to the cultural and social implications of Hastings's distinct socio-economic history, political traditions, the specificity of its coastal geography, and its identity of difference (and subsequent distinctive policy needs) within the relative affluence of the South East and the county of East Sussex. These characteristics are demonstrated to be active agents in the forging of opportunities and challenges for social sustainability in Hastings.

Chapter 5 also describes the dominant social regeneration themes observed within this context and considers how local regeneration policy involves not only

the adoption of central and regional regeneration policy/interventions, but also a process of renegotiation and conflict. The implications and causes of an absence of an explicit social sustainability agenda are considered throughout the case study. In this chapter the dominance of an economic sustainable growth approach to sustainability within the regional scale is highlighted. This discussion is coupled with analysis of the pervasive local scale adoption of central government regeneration agendas of 'narrowing the gap', community engagement and education-led regeneration, which consequently contribute to a mixed and complex experience of social sustainability.

The central influence of multiple scales of governance structures on local regeneration policy focus and practice is key to the nature of social sustainability in Hastings. Chapter 6 addresses the key themes of regeneration governance that the research identified as being the definitive variables in this relationship. All three key themes relate to the rescaling of governance and include the prolific development of hybrid partnerships (Gilchrist, 2006), the pervasive and problematised use of 'community' as a target and mode of governance (Wallace, 2010), and finally the influential regional tier (now abolished). The latter was a critiqued signature feature of the market-based approaches to the New Labour regeneration project (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). These three governance themes are introduced in Chapter 6 as being important in an analysis of the institutional landscape features that impact upon local social sustainability in Hastings.

This understanding of the case study features (captured in Chapters 5 and 6) are brought together in Chapters 7 and 8 in order to interrogate the institutional specificity, cultural practices, social regeneration agendas and governance norms that enable or create barriers to social sustainability in Hastings. The barriers to social sustainability are presented in Chapter 7 and the features that enable the presence of social sustainability are discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 7 makes clear that the Hastings example confirms the well-established academic critiques of New Labour regeneration governance, including 'post-political regeneration tactics' (Baeten, 2009), institutional vulnerability or failings (Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2007), and democratic deficit (Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008) that in turn act as barriers to social sustainability. In contrast, Chapter 8 will show that the research findings also question features of this critique. The

chapter presents evidence of an alternative institutional space of community activism and a valued good governance partnership culture that can be usefully understood as 'actually existing' social sustainability (after Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). Both barriers and enablers to AESS co-exist in this case study, and they are shaped by an institutional legacy and the agency of governance norms, practices and traditions. The identification of AESS through a more granular analysis of local regeneration governance and cultural practices contributes to existing critiques of New Labour regeneration policy and informs emerging social sustainability debates.

Chapter 8 presents an alternative critique of the social aspects of urban regeneration practice that is in part articulated by a large-scale, political, and active Voluntary Community Sector that is integral to, and embedded into the local governance infrastructure in Hastings. The alternative model of activism employed by the VCS in this regeneration community utilises governance practices to navigate the complex policy and governance landscape in order to contribute to, challenge and also disturb dominant agendas. The varied influence of macro-level policies of co-production, localism, active citizenship and participatory democracy, combine with the distinctive local socio-political history to create an institutional and cultural environment that facilitates social sustainability within the regeneration practice in Hastings. Chapter 8 will detail how partly through the codification of governance practices and discourses AESS is secured in this space.

In summary, the following chapters explore the potential of social sustainability as a conceptual and critical focus for analysing social regeneration practice. This counter-hegemonic conceptual focus for visioning, practicing and evaluating social regeneration offers an alternative contribution to urban policy debate. The research findings begin to explore the social justice and political dimensions of sustainability that have received limited focus in urban sustainability research and practice to date (Holden, 2011; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Pares and Sauri, 2007). The relationship identified in this case study between engaged good governance spaces, a progressive partnership culture and an alternative model of activism, highlights the role urban governance and local socio-political context can play in the construction of AESS. The resilience, or response of this AESS to dramatic funding cuts and a changed political

administration is yet to become clear. Nevertheless, the following chapters explore how this relationship has possible ramifications for a shift, (not without complexity and unevenness) in the locus and production of power, and redistribution of roles in UK regeneration practice. Acknowledging both this alternative positive critique, and the barriers to AESS created by neo-liberal market-based mechanisms and the 'post-political condition', this research offers an empirically grounded insight into the workings of urban governance in both mobilising and marginalising social sustainability.

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## Chapter 2. The narrative of sustainability in UK urban regeneration governance

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### 2.1. Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 offer a summary critique of the academic debates central to this thesis and identify areas of research not yet properly understood in the literature from which the author's own research question evolved. This chapter provides a scene-setting introduction to the contested concept of social sustainability and its relationship with new modes of urban governance within UK urban regeneration. It offers a specific focus on UK urban policy over the last decade, highlighting the dominant critique of the New Labour urban regeneration project, as that period in UK urban policy draws to a dramatic close, and as questions over its legacy emerge.

The critique will be divided into two chapters. The current chapter tracks the evolution of sustainability as an urban policy normative, and its highly interlinked but problematic relationship with urban regeneration policy and multi-scaled urban governance. Chapter 3 investigates research debates on the contested character of social sustainability, and how it is absent, or is constructed in UK urban regeneration policy. These chapters will present the case for the researcher's own work by providing a context that makes explicit the inter-dependency of these three topics, and by identifying an area requiring further research that sits at the junction of urban governance, regeneration policy and the concept of social sustainability. The limited and relatively recent academic exploration of the concept in an urban policy/regeneration context echoes its minor role in UK regeneration policy, discourse and practice (Manzi *et al.* 2010). A very technocratic and neo-liberalised version of economic sustainability has in fact dominated regeneration practice while environmental sustainability has dominated academic debate (Evans and Jones, 2008). Whether social sustainability exists, and how it might manifest in UK urban regeneration governance is inadequately addressed in this literature as I will go on to suggest.

## 2.2. The evolution of sustainability: 'from urban policy apple pie to empty signifier'?

### *The many faces of sustainability*

Sustainability has been a watchword in all forms of development (urban and rural; northern or southern hemisphere) since it was launched onto the world stage proper in the Brundtland report in 1987, and through Agenda 21 following the 1992 UNCED Rio conference (Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). Its dominance was evident as early as 1996 when Campbell observed “ . . . in the battle of big public ideas, sustainability has won: the task of the coming years is simply to work out the details, and to narrow the gap between its theory and practice” (Campbell, 1996:312). Yet despite over 20 years of policy making, international conferences, diplomacy, activism and research there still remains considerable confusion and conflict over its meaning, and over how to deliver or practice it, (i.e. how to narrow the gap between its theory and practice) (Evans and Jones, 2008; Pacione, 2007; Partridge, 2005). Sustainability is readily acknowledged in academia as having a plurality of meanings and discourses. Gibbs and Krueger (2005) explain “ . . . sustainability as a regulatory construct is uneven and locally unique – there are a variety of sustainabilities, rather than one single outcome” (p.409). This variety of discourse has been used for varying policy objectives and as such clearly underlines the highly political and multiple nature of sustainability described by Raco as “ . . . a chameleon-like discourse which has been (re)interpreted and deployed by a range of often contradictory and different agendas” (Raco, 2005:324).

Some researchers argue that the intensity of interest in sustainability is only likely to increase as environmental resources become more scarce, thus placing increasing pressures on traditional sustainable development models and discourse (Raco, 2007b). It is this challenge of re-visioning models of sustainability in times of crisis that make researching the institutional/ governance framework in which these models evolve especially timely.

The construction and nature of sustainability can be, and has been interpreted or defined with varying foci. One approach is to consider sustainability at

different scales. For example, either a global and strategic scale as associated with sustainable development, or a localised scale relating to sustainable neighbourhoods (Hanson and Lake, 2000). Alternatively, Hanson and Lake (2000) presented a multi-scale framework as integral to their interpretation and analysis of urban sustainability.

A more traditional approach to sustainability is to select either the one pillar, or three pillar model (Littig and Griessler, 2005). The former gives primacy to the ecological dimension of sustainability and environmental focussed debate, (while acknowledging this may have socio-economic impacts). The latter approach addresses a much wider interpretation of sustainability and argues for a more balanced and inter-related consideration of the social, economic and ecological aspects of sustainability (Pacione, 2007; Whitehead, 2003). The respective dominance or hegemony of each sphere or pillar, and how much they are perceived to relate with the other two is time, context and user specific (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). The ongoing debate over the respective weighting of each field results in claims of an ambiguity within sustainability that is perceived as a major barrier to effective sustainable regeneration “[because sustainability] is a mule that can be hitched to many wagons, sometimes the mule is abused” (Hopwood *et al.* 2005:xiii). This ambiguity and the subsequent hegemony of neo-liberalised economic interpretations of sustainability are discussed below, as they are key to the muted presence of the third pillar (social sustainability) in UK regeneration policy and research (Davidson, 2010). It is in response to this muted role of the third pillar that this thesis sought to understand the presence, absence and interpretations of social sustainability in regeneration practice and governance.

History has played a crucial role in the respective dominance of the three pillars. Sustainability has traditionally been dominated by an economic or environmental focus, while social sustainability has only received greater attention in the last decade (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2009, 2010; Manzi *et al.* 2010; Partridge, 2005). Agyeman *et al.* (2003) argued that to-date sustainability has largely been a project of environmentalism that has ignored issues of social justice and equity. Their thesis concerns the need for a ‘just sustainability’ where the dominant

environmental sustainability debate takes better account of issues of social justice and equity. Krueger and Savage (2007) advance this argument by focussing on social reproduction issues to sustainability analysis to progress efforts to place justice at the centre of the sustainability debate. They argue that for sustainable development to engage in a more progressive course “the analytical entry point must extend beyond environmental sustainability to engage in concepts of economic development and social justice” (Krueger and Savage, 2007:221). In their consideration of social sustainability and public space both Partridge (2005) and Pares and Sauri (2007) reinforce this concern around the failure to focus on the social and political in sustainability discourse, policy and theory: “ ... the social dimension of sustainability has received much less consideration, while the political dimension, grounded in the involvement of the citizenry in the construction of a sustainable future for their communities, has been virtually ignored” (Pares and Sauri, 2007:160).

The dominance of the environmental ‘pillar’ and one pillar model is of course entirely natural given that the concept of sustainable development was conceived within the wider context of the environmental movement and the rise of environmentalism (Littig and Griessler, 2005). Alternatively, the hegemony of economic sustainability has been observed to be especially true in urban regeneration (Couch and Denneman, 2000; Evans and Jones, 2008; Raco, 2003). Evans and Jones (2008) describe this theme in a number of regeneration case studies as “the hijacking of sustainability agendas by economic interests” (p.1420). They make it clear that “the interpretation of sustainability along purely economic lines is a common theme within regeneration literature, and the ambiguity of the term is often depicted as enabling the economic agenda” (Evans and Jones, 2008: 1419). This debate continues in contemporary academic critiques of the Coalition’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for “explicitly privileging the economic role of planning and in giving priority to ‘planning for prosperity’ – seemingly where necessary to the detriment of environmental and social issues” (Jones *et al.* 2011:380).

### *The relative neglect of 'social sustainability'*

The subjugation of the social aspect within models of economic and environmental sustainability has resulted in what McKenzie (2004) describes as “a paucity of genuine research within the framework of ‘sustainability’ into what sustains and promotes an equitable and just society” (p.11). It is within this recognition of the need for greater understanding of the role and utility of the concept of social sustainability that this thesis has developed. Western dominance in this debate has also meant that sustainability discourse was originally the exclusive focus of global economic policy directed at changing the development processes of ‘southern’ less developed states (Littig and Griessler, 2005). Even today some commentators feel the goals of social sustainability are incompatible with hegemonic neo-liberal trends in Anglo-American politics, and as such have received less political or academic attention (Littig and Griessler, 2005). A contribution to the arguments for the reintroduction of the ‘social’ to sustainability research in a developed world urban setting is key to the motivation and academic context for this thesis. Some academics explain this limited attention to the social pillar as the product of an ideological tension: “The greater attention given to social justice and inclusion which characterised the original foundations of the sustainability movement sit uneasily with neoliberal, trickle-down economics in which development capacities are to be maximised with scant regard for redistribution or social justice” (Raco, 2005:7).

This view is reinforced by the current political hegemony of an ecological modernisation interpretation of sustainable development. In the tradition of US style ‘Smart Growth,’ economic growth and the environment are not in conflict, and a neoliberal business-as-usual development strategy dominates (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Partridge, 2005). Such is the dominance of this interpretation of sustainable development, (as observed in UK major regional regeneration policies) any alternative approach has had limited space in the neo-liberal political agenda (Keil, 2007). Importantly for the political multiplicity and integrity of the sustainability concept “the ability to develop counter-hegemonic coalitions is thereby limited by state structures” (Gibbs *et al.* 2002:133). By examining the limitations and opportunities for a social

sustainability agenda that emerge from state structures in Hastings this thesis seeks to advance the debate over the potential of the concept of social sustainability in urban regeneration.

The historical and political context described above has contributed to the slow adoption of social sustainability, and resulted in it being the most academically neglected of the three pillars of sustainability (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Holden, 2011; Partridge, 2005). The reluctance of researchers and practitioners to address this social dimension may also be due to the fact that social sustainability is often less understood than environmental and economic sustainability (Baehler, 2007; Partridge, 2005). This trend has been entrenched by the description and assessment of economic and environmental sustainability in the discourse of economic theory or ecological science. Alternatively, social sustainability is often described in more reflective and qualitative terms that are subject to differing interpretations (Colantonio, 2008; 2009; Lehtonen, 2004). McKenzie makes clear the complexity and relative neglect of this aspect of sustainability: “[s]ocial sustainability is far more difficult to quantify than economic growth or environmental impact and consequently is the most neglected element of the triple bottom line reporting” (McKenzie, 2004:7).

This confusion over the nature of social sustainability partly originates in a basic disagreement over the meaning of ‘social’. This can be a narrow interpretation as used in ‘critical social capital’ that limits its definition to basic social needs (e.g. healthcare, food, housing), or it can be a wider interpretation that includes social relationships, education, recreation and self-fulfilment (Littig and Griessler, 2005). The polysemic nature of ‘social’ means that the objectives and form of social sustainability policy, even more so than the other two pillars, are dependent on the views and constructs of those that have the power to define them (Littig and Griessler, 2005). This point is central to this research, which aims to understand the impact of regeneration governance structures, stakeholders and discourse upon the form of social sustainability that emerges in this space. In this way the research will identify what ‘social matters’ in Hastings and how that agenda is constructed and advanced in the formal governance spaces.

The absence of a clear framework for social sustainability results in a confusion that means that while there is a noticeable amount of cohesion amongst advocates of ecological sustainability, this is not true of social sustainability (Colantonio, 2009; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005). This confusion is underpinned by an absence of accepted conceptual foundations, and instead a focus on the operational indicators that enable technical measurement of the concept (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Partridge, 2005). Littig and Griessler (2005) responded to this absence by proposing a sociological conceptual framework for social sustainability that reconsiders the role of 'work' in society. Littig and Griessler (2005) offer a definition of social sustainability that draws on the sentiment that there are social values and resources worth preserving for future generations:

“Social sustainability is a quality of societies. It signifies the nature-society relationships mediated by work, as well as relationships within the society. Social sustainability is given, if work within a society and the related institutional arrangements:

- satisfy an extended set of human needs
- are shaped in a way that nature and its reproductive capabilities are preserved over a long period of time and the normative claims of social justice, human dignity and participation are fulfilled” (p.72).

Pares and Sauri (2007) are less prescriptive, but equally call for a focus on social and cultural values that define what they call social and political sustainability. These include social inclusion and social capital, but also a sense of citizenship or civic engagement, identity and social interaction. Similarly Cuthill (2010) also seeks to develop a conceptual framework for improving our understanding and delivery of social sustainability. His framework integrates components including social capital, social infrastructure, social justice and equity and engaged governance (Cuthill, 2010).

In reviewing the literature and policy around social sustainability Colantonio (2008; 2009) recognises basic needs and social equity as common elements that dominate many of the definitions. He also observes a shift over the last decade in the development of operational themes that now include 'soft'

indicators such as, happiness, social mixing/cohesion, social capital, engagement, and a sense of place. These are in addition to the traditional ‘hard’ indicators such as poverty alleviation, skills/education and employment (more tangible and measurable by nature). Table 1 below highlights the traditional and emerging themes included in definitions of social sustainability. Colantonio (2009) draws the policy shift and research trends together when he observes the increased prominence of different aspects of social sustainability depends on the theoretical school adopted. So inter/intra-generational equity dominates in the equity and human rights approach; capital stock approach highlights the value of relationships or social capital; institutional theorists instead focus on engagement, participation and governance; while more recently transition academics have explored elements required for societal shifts to a more sustainable development model (Colantonio, 2009).

Traditional	Emerging
Basic needs, including housing and environmental health	Demographic change (aging, migration and mobility)
Education and skills	Social mixing and cohesion
Employment	Empowerment, participation and access
Human rights and gender	Health and safety
Poverty	Social capital
Social justice	Well being, happiness and quality of Life

Table 1: Traditional and emerging social sustainability key themes (Source: Colantonio, 2009)

It is useful to be aware of these trends in the conceptual debates around social sustainability when considering which aspects (if any of them) are present in the UK regeneration context and why this is the case. The full breadth of the current understanding of social sustainability was needed in order to interrogate missing, conflicting and alternative dimensions of the concept within the case study. What aspect of social sustainability dominates or is marginalised is crucial to the nature of the urban regeneration policy developed and implemented. Further, how social sustainability is measured, historically through Social Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments, and more

recently Sustainability Assessments, can in turn enshrine and reinforce these varying interpretations (Colantonio, 2009; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). By observing how policy, discourse and practices of social dimensions of urban regeneration are formed, measured and propagated within multi-scalar governance, this thesis discusses how and why (not) social sustainability is manifest in contemporary UK regeneration.

Four clear conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above. First, while the commentators remind us of the universally desirable nature of sustainability, there is clearly a great deal of debate over its focus, definitions, and how it is to be implemented. Second, beyond this state of confusion the hegemony of the ecological and economic pillars, in urban regeneration in particular, has meant limited serious interest politically or academically in the social pillar until recent years (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Holden, 2011; Manzi *et al.* 2010). Third, it is clear that the form and definition of social sustainability is even more contested than the other two pillars, and importantly its form is often shaped by the political and institutional context in which it evolves. Finally, Cuthill (2010) and Littig and Griessler, (2005) highlight the traditional dominance of research interests in normative/operational definitions, and a limited consideration of how the concept of social sustainability is actually understood, implemented and evaluated. Colantonio (2009) is explicit on this point when he explains, “there is limited literature that focuses on social sustainability to the extent that a comprehensive study of this concept is still missing” (p.4). It is in this emerging space of limited empirical research into the concept of social sustainability, and its role or agency in developed world urban regeneration policy that the research seeks to make a contribution, and to which this review now turns.

### 2.3. Sustainability: a problematised UK urban regeneration policy normative

This section highlights the increasingly integrated, though not unproblematic relationship between social sustainability and urban regeneration. The following points are key to understanding the relationship in terms of UK regeneration policy and academic discourse. In the first instance the relationship has developed out of a more established link between ‘sustainable city’ discourse

and urban regeneration policy as the political and academic community have responded to the unprecedented social and ecological threat of urbanisation over the last decade (Manzi *et al.* 2010; Jones and Evans, 2008). Further, the presence of an ongoing call for a more meaningful critique of the sustainable city narrative and a more theoretically driven observation of the social construction of sustainability is evident in the literature (Davidson, 2009, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Whitehead, 2003). In terms of the UK urban policy context the social sustainability and urban regeneration agenda has largely been dominated by Sustainable Community and Urban Renaissance policies and discourse (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Davidson, 2010; Manzi *et al.* 2010). These policies have been involved with and shaped by the New Labour political modernisation and urban regeneration agendas of inclusion, engagement, partnerships, active citizenship and local governance (Davidson, 2010; Wallace, 2009).

In critiquing these urban regeneration policies and highlighting their negative social impacts and costs, Lees (2008) and Davidson (2008) have called for a more informed debate on the social aspects of urban regeneration. Given the dominance of technocratic, neo-liberalised economic sustainability in UK regeneration over the last twenty years (Evans and Jones, 2008), this policy debate about the social dimension clearly needs to include a questioning of the form, value and presence of social sustainability. These points, and the areas of under-research that emerge from this analysis of the social sustainability and urban regeneration literature are developed in more detail below.

### *Sustainability as a pervasive urban policy normative*

Despite the greater historical focus on ecological or economic debates academics now increasingly observe, “how in little more than 20 years ... sustainability has gone from being a global-scale environmental debate to urban policy normative” (Davidson, 2009:607). Evans and Jones (2008) discuss the fundamentally integrated nature of sustainability and urban regeneration policy when they explain that “the mantra of sustainability lies at the core of the regeneration agenda and is loaded with expectations of being a magic bullet for delivering ‘better’ cities” (p.1418). Certainly, the growth in urban policy engaging

in sustainability can be witnessed in the number of high profile major city sustainability plans launched in recent years (e.g. Sustainable Sydney 2030, PlanNYC 2030, and the Vancouver municipal engagement strategy on social sustainability) (Davidson, 2009; Holden, 2011). In the case of the UK, Raco (2005) discusses the explicit New Labour ambitions, upon taking office in 1997, of committing to urban regeneration “informed by the key tenets of sustainable development” (p.9). This growth in consideration of sustainability in urban policy has developed as part of a growth in research into the paradigm of a ‘sustainable city’ (Whitehead, 2003).

Some observers bemoan the lack of research into both the sustainable city and social sustainability that moves beyond research concerning the practical implementation of sustainability policy (Whitehead, 2003; Littig and Griessler, 2005). Holden (2011) offers a rare theoretical engagement with the concept of social sustainability and the post-political critique of urban governance in her case study of Metro Vancouver. Whitehead (2003) also engages in a more theoretical approach by analysing the relationship between discourses and practices of urban sustainability, their conditioning by social and political institutions, and the nature of sustainable city that they then form (Whitehead, 2003). In using a regulationist reading of sustainability Whitehead proposes a “more meaningful critique of this hegemonic paradigm of metropolitan development” (Whitehead, 2003:1187). Alternatively, this debate is also informed by an institutionalist analysis of state structures and their actors, in order to advance the understanding of their agency in shaping narratives of sustainability (Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). A more generic political-governance approach to interrogating the structural capacity needed to deliver sustainability has also been employed by and advocated by other observers (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Evans *et al.* 2009).

#### *‘Social sustainability’ and the urban policy focus on sustainable communities*

Despite this growth in focus on urban sustainability, specific research and policy development around the social sustainability pillar has only been evident in UK urban policy discourses in recent years. This follows a wider shift at global and European institutional level in terms of the World Bank and United Nations

focus on social capital in the 1990s. This was followed by the Lisbon European Council including the social dimension of sustainability for the first time in 2000, which was in turn developed at the Bristol Accord in 2005, and more recently in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities in 2007 (Colantonio, 2009; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). Within this context the UK has observed a growing, but still muted, use of social sustainability through the dominant sustainable communities policy and discourse from 2000 onwards. The key national policies being 'Sustainable Communities: Building for Our Future' (ODPM, 2003), 'Homes for All' (ODPM, 2005a), 'People, Places and Prosperity' (ODPM, 2005b) and the Sustainable Communities Act 2007. The governance structures that have been evolving in response to this focus have repeatedly featured local neighbourhood and community partnerships (Cuthill, 2010).

The sustainable communities agenda was premised on "responsibilizing communities" (Raco, 2007b:220) and a shift in state-citizen boundaries. Sustainable communities embraced a familiar New Labour regeneration approach "of inclusiveness, multi-agency partnerships and the shift from government to governance that have been pursued with great enthusiasm since the election" in 1997 (Evans and James, 2008:1416). Sustainable community discourse is presented by Raco (2007b) and others as being a hybrid of sustainable development and a pro-growth strategy making it entirely a product of the dominant New Labour neoliberal political and environmental modernisation agendas over the last decade.

Key to the sustainable community agenda under New Labour's 'Third Way' (or political modernisation agenda) is the "active and productive citizen" (Jessop, 2002) or "sustainable citizenship" (Raco, 2005). The subjectivities of these new forms of citizenship centre around the active citizen taking responsibility for their community and breaking free from a culture of dependence on the state – i.e. sustainable communities (Raco, 2005; Wallace, 2009). For some observers this neo-liberal active citizen-led community governance is often perceived as the institutionalised decline of the welfare state (Raco, 2005). In later work Raco (2007b) argues that it is the discourse of sustainability itself that is used as a political tool to legitimise a 'smaller' less interventionist government structure. This structure is viewed as part of a widely observed change in American and

UK politics that promotes active-participatory democracy and voluntarism, which in turn presents traditional representative democracy as 'outdated' (Raco, 2007b).

The shift in political and governance processes encourages the heavily critiqued 'post-political condition' of consensus and partnership driven governance beyond the state (Baeten, 2009; Davies, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008; Wallace, 2010). Observers argue this condition limits the space for counter-orthodox voices and agendas by employing the 'post-political regeneration tactics' (Baeten, 2009) of professionalisation and institutionalisation of the local governance stakeholders, structures and practices. This dominant critique is further developed in Section 2.5 where the chapter focuses on the main criticisms of the New Labour regeneration project. Analysing the post-political condition of UK governance and its consequences for social sustainability is central to the thesis's methodological and empirical addition to the regeneration-sustainability debate.

Government through community, (i.e. a form of devolved governance beyond the state) was commonplace as part of the New Labour welfare reform response to the highest social and spatial inequalities in the European Union (Raco, 2007b; Wallace, 2009, 2010). Yet, there is a growing body of researchers that are demanding a more nuanced critical reflection upon the concept of sustainable communities and the retreat of the state (Davidson and Lees, 2005; Raco, 2007b; Wallace, 2010). Part of the critique of urban renaissance and the sustainable community policy is centred around the social costs of these regeneration policies. "Urban renewal projects are often beset with social problems such as destruction of existing social networks, expulsion of vulnerable groups and adverse impacts on living environments" (Chan and Lee, 2008:243).

One particular area of critical debate has centred on the dominance of 'social mixing' in UK urban renaissance policy. Davidson and Lees both argue a more critical approach to social mixing is required which takes into consideration the potential for negative outcomes of gentrification such as social polarisation, social exclusion, social segregation and indirect/direct displacement (Davidson,

2008; Lees, 2008). These concerns could easily be framed as a concern for the need for an alternative view of social sustainability in urban policy.

In critiquing the social sustainability agenda Davidson (2009) stresses that “what constitutes a sustainable society and whether such an aim is useful/desirable will require continual revisiting if the concept is to have utility” (ibid:9). This question of ‘what social matters and how to sustain it’ was echoed in criticisms of the sustainable communities program for failing to consider wider cultural heritage and environmental issues (Raco, 2007b), and the critique of the narrow/anaemic appropriation of ‘community’ in New Labour social policy (Wallace, 2010). It follows that these issues have far reaching implications for investigations like this research into the value and form of social sustainability in urban regeneration policy, and the governance structures in which it evolves, or is made absent. It is within this academic context of calls for greater understanding of the utility of social sustainability, and explicit challenges to the social equity of New Labour urban regeneration policy that this research seeks to make a contribution.

Having demonstrated above the links between social sustainability and urban regeneration policy, this next section highlights the more established, yet still dynamic relationship between urban regeneration and modes of governance. The areas of research in this relationship in need of more attention are made explicit and how this thesis looks to respond to some of the questions this raises is made clear.

#### 2.4. The interrelationship between urban regeneration and local modes of governance

For many years research has stressed and investigated the close relationship between regeneration and governance. Bassett *et al.* (2002) describe regeneration schemes acting as a symbol “of urban renaissance and a transition to new forms of urban governance” (p.1773). This close relationship was entrenched by the New Labour ‘urban renaissance’ policy focus on bottom-up, ‘active citizen’ led regeneration to achieve local governance, community cohesion, local participation in decision-making and representation from hard to

reach communities. Under the New Deal for Communities it was felt by some observers that the government was “testing out a new approach to the governance of the regeneration process” (Robinson *et al.* 2005:24) by involving local residents in the ownership, shaping and management of the regeneration practices. This was again apparent in the previously discussed responsabilizing communities and citizens through the sustainable communities agenda (Raco, 2007b). This approach to urban regeneration, or at least its policy discourse, is in sharp contrast to the top-down governance approach of UDC (Urban Development Corporations) of the 1980s that focussed on physical development and business-led regeneration that was premised on the belief in a trickle-down effect to deprived communities with often only very limited and tokenistic involvement of the local community (Jones and Evans, 2008; Robinson *et al.* 2005).

### *Rescaling urban regeneration governance*

New Labour urban regeneration policy, funds, and practice were tied up with, and laden with the discourses of localised governance and a partnership approach. “[T]he rhetoric and practice of partnership has now become central to any attempt to lever funding for regeneration projects and to encourage inward investment” (Tewdwr-Jones and McNeill, 2000:125, in Cento Bull and Jones, 2006).

This relationship, between forms of localised community governance and regeneration (as will be demonstrated in the next section on the critique of new modes of local urban governance), can be problematic and fragile. In brief, community and partnership-led regeneration delivered through local governance has proved difficult to implement with a high incidence of failure to achieve full representation, problems with limited community capacity and friction in local partnerships, specifically with local government (Houghton and Blume, 2011; Robinson *et al.* 2005; Taylor, 2007). It has been suggested that the key to this fragility lies in the lack of a parallel shift of financial control from centralised institutions to complement the shift of governance. Cento Bull and Jones (2006) succinctly describe this dichotomy by explaining that “[t]he localisation of the social in the new UK governance/social-capital approach, has

taken place without any corresponding localisation of financial resources” (p.783).

This localisation process and relationship between regeneration and governance was further complicated in the UK by a growing regionalisation strategy orchestrated by the Blair government. This regional tier has since been abolished by the Conservative led Coalition government. Key to this strategy of regionalisation was the delegation of power, responsibility and resources to nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) now due to be dissolved by 2012. These extra tiers of unelected state structures greatly affected local governance autonomy, and were instrumental in places in determining the shape of social and economic regeneration practices (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006). The RDAs were often a key holder of government and EU financial resources for regeneration, which were devolved to this regional governance tier rather than local authorities (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007). How reduced central funding will be distributed in the light of their abolition is as yet unclear, but is likely to be through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). LEPs are a new form of governance at a sub-regional level introduced by the Coalition in 2010 (Pugalis and Townsend, 2010). Concerns regarding limited civic society input into urban regeneration have been raised owing to the minimal VCS involvement during the inception period of these new business focussed structures (ippr North, 2011).

In replacing RDAs the LEPs form part of an additional tier of governance that contribute to a landscape critiqued for its institutional congestion (Landry, 2008). Further, observers argue this hollowed out governance is still dominated by central state agendas that in turn limit the scope for alternative political action (Davies, 2004). Other regional bodies added to this congestion under New Labour included the nine regional Government Offices, parallel Regional Assemblies and latterly Partnership Boards. These have all since been abolished by the Coalition. In the South East region, (the site of the author’s empirical studies) the regional landscape was occupied by GOSE (Government Office South East) (until 2012), SEEPB (South East England Partnership Board) (abolished in 2010), and SEEDA (South East England Development Agency)(until 2012).

Responsibility for sustainable development in the region was covered by all three of the above bodies with a resulting 'institutional muddle' of regional strategies in addition to the national policy layer (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007). In their case study of SEEDA, Batchelor and Patterson (2007) claimed the devolution of responsibility for sustainability to the neo-liberalised RDA structures and focus on market-based solutions "has resulted in the weakening of sustainable development" in the UK (p.209). They argue that "[t]he strengthening of neoliberal structures and the constrained capacities of sub-national government will continue to inhibit the development of meaningful policies for sustainable development in Britain" (p.210). This seemingly contradictory framing of sustainable development policy ambitions in market-orientated solutions by New Labour, has been examined with specific reference again to the South East region by Krueger and Gibbs (2011). The abolition of the RDAs, and replacement with LEPs, raises these questions afresh in terms of the institutional, policy and socio-political legacy these sub-regional governance structures will inherit, especially given their self-evident focus on economic growth (IPPR North, 2011). The impact of this dichotomy of ambitions, of urban sustainability and pro-growth development models, is explored in the research findings with reference to SEEDA, the new LEP sub-regional governance landscape and its impact on Hastings social regeneration.

In order to better understand the trend of localisation, rescaling and hybridisation of urban regeneration governance, the next section provides a summary of the critique of these dominant modes of governance and their role in the New Labour regeneration project more widely. It will also highlight their obvious, yet rarely discussed relationship with social sustainability.

## 2.5. Dominant critiques of New Labour urban regeneration governance

Critiques of collaborative urban governance structures, including neighbourhood governance or community partnerships are fairly comprehensive in terms of investigating the barriers that they create, the challenges they face, their impact on regeneration and urban policy generally (see Davies, 2004; Gilchrist, 2006; Robinson and Shaw, 2005; Taylor, 2006). The limitations of the critique seem to lie in the minimal consideration of the

implications of these governance structures for a more holistic social urban policy like social sustainability. So while the successes and challenges for these modes of governance are understood in terms of urban regeneration objectives this has not been fully extended in the body of governance research to understand what impact they have on visions and form of social sustainability (i.e. why it is the way it is). Further, there appears to be limited research evidence of the concept being used to evaluate social regeneration policies and the institutional structures that author or are the product of these policies.

The following section outlines the criticisms levelled at the New Labour regeneration project for their policies of neo-communitarian styled community-led partnerships, active citizenship, and community cohesion. This critique of urban partnerships is central in guiding the analysis of the construction of social sustainability explored in this research. They provide an insight into the urban regeneration institutional and political framework in which social sustainability might evolve, and the associated social dimensions of urban regeneration that become prioritised.

These hybrid modes of governance have in summary been repeatedly challenged for their democratic deficit owing to poor representation, accusations of 'voice but no influence' for participants, non-transparency and selective inclusion. In addition, critics argue they are too time consuming, suffer from internal conflicts, overburden community members and responsabilise citizens for resolving complex social deprivation issues without providing the resources to fulfil this end. Observers note an absence of VCS support resulting in insufficient social capital to fulfil roles, absence of accountability and enduring power differentials between the community and local government (Davies, 2004; Gilchrist, 2006; Raco, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005; Taylor, 2003, 2006, 2007). It is clear that these limitations are not universally experienced across all collaborative partnerships, but are symptomatic of some of the challenges and limitations faced in UK regeneration governance today. Clearly testing these critiques in the author's own case study and reflecting on their impact on social sustainability offers an alternative conceptual lens through which we can begin to evaluate the institutional fall out of governance beyond the state regeneration and the legacy of New Labour political modernisation within regeneration

practice. In order to fully understand later analysis of this critique, and where this work fits into these observations, the remainder of this section provides further details of the criticisms summarised above.

### *The post-political condition of governance beyond the state*

The New Labour regeneration project has been heavily critiqued by parts of the academy as the proliferation of what Wolch (1990) described as the 'shadow state'. In this critique the community partnerships do not trigger a real and just local political engagement, but rather, are co-opted into the central government agenda through funding ties and institutionalisation that in turn neutralises dissent (Baeten, 2009; Davies, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005). These features are described as the 'post-political condition' by Swyngedouw (2005, 2007) who critiques these modes of governance for foreclosing alternative political action, voices and agendas by determining a narrow definition of the role of the citizen in these structures. Davidson (2009, 2010) also critiques this post-political state in his concern for the absence of real politics in the social sustainability debate foreclosed "by a governance process that concentrates on efficiency and institutional reorganisation" (ibid:877). Baeten's (2009) recent work in south London develops this theme when he describes this process as 'post-political regeneration tactics'. He explains that dominant elites and the central state agenda retain control through the de-politicisation of the partnership process using formalisation, professionalisation and performance management 'tactics'. This is part of a critical theorist argument that community organisations lose their autonomy, become an extension of the state, and so their political capacity is severely limited as a result (DeFilippis *et al.* 2006). In contrast, recent work by Holden (2011) challenges the post-political critique and argues there is reason for scholars to explore the re-politicisation of sustainability in urban governance contexts. Her case study of Metro Vancouver highlights emerging evidence of political engagement in alternative development pathways using the concept of social sustainability (Holden, 2011).

Both the observations of a post-political condition, and the re-politicisation of citizens through engaged local governance, is about a re-articulation of the relationship between the citizen and the state (Holden, 2011; Raco and Imrie,

2003; Swyngedouw, 2008). Some critical governance authors challenge the objective of engaged 'community' involvement as a positive norm, and argue that it has potentially malignant properties that risk encouraging exclusion if common identities cannot be found (Davies, 2004; Wallace, 2010). Further, the engaged community are critiqued for being centrally prescribed, excluding traditional community activism models, and focusing solely on the internal community without any input into a wider political-economy debate (DeFilippis *et al.* 2006). DeFillippis *et al.* (2006) does however, acknowledge the multiplicity of communities and that they can perform both a co-opted and dissenting role simultaneously. This recognition of the complexity of community character is a point made as being absent from the state community policies. Wallace is concerned that their "anaemic meaning of 'community' ... foreclosed the multiplicities, tensions and differences of the local" (Wallace, 2010:1). This particular interpretation of community, as manifest in attempts to forge correct and prescriptive active citizens, greatly undermines the capacity for regeneration policy to successfully achieve equitable social outcomes (Raco, 2005, 2007; Wallace, 2010).

Swyngedouw (2005, 2008) provides a damning 'democratic deficit' critique of local partnership governance. He argues this deficit is caused by the structures often being ill-defined forms that are non-codified, non-transparent and non-accessible. The critique extends to the selective inclusion of participants that through varying degrees of influence entrench existing political elites and exert controls over others through governance tactics. Swyngedouw (2005) articulates fundamental questions over the depth and validity of representation, and absence of substantive accountability. These hybrid partnership structures are described as 'janus-faced', for on the one hand offering increased civic participation/inclusion, while on the other defining a heavily prescribed and centrally determined type of citizenship (Swyngedouw, 2005).

This research empirically tests and reflects upon these criticisms of community partnership within the regeneration governance structures of Hastings. The findings pay specific attention to the charge of 'democratic deficit' and the 'post-political condition' in order to situate this thesis within the established critiques

of New Labour urban regeneration policy and the challenges for social sustainability of governance beyond the state.

### *Obstructive governance norms, traditions and practices*

The nature of the post-political condition, or the potential for re-politicisation of urban regeneration governance described above, are often a direct function of the governance norms, traditions and practices employed in the structures by their stakeholders. An institutionalist analysis of urban regeneration governance stresses that the structures are social constructions that inherit, are shaped by, and in turn shape the governance cultures, traditions and norms employed within them. In this way they enable or obstruct political action, and foreclose or define the scope of social regeneration goals (Coafee and Healey, 2003; Davies, 2004; Jones and Evans, 2008; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). The practical governance norms that are exhibited in many partnerships often prove to be barriers and challenges to delivering equitable and socially sustainable regeneration. Therefore, recognising and understanding the construction and impact of these governance norms, including discourse and practices, was central to the research design and methodology. The ethnographic methodology employed to enable this understanding is discussed in Chapter 4.

The norms identified in other local governance research are extensive, and some of the most commonly featured are outlined below with a view to being aware of them and their possible presence or absence in this research. For example, often the nature of the process of local governance itself proves to be a barrier to successful community engagement and participation. The complex nature of their social goals are often forgotten during the focus on delivery that dominates owing to the high level of central state performance management and a pervasive audit culture (Robinson *et al.* 2005; Taylor, 2003). The additional time, resources and capacity building that is required to successfully work as a partnership of equal members often makes state actors disinclined to engage, obstructive of partnership working, or reluctant to cede power to other members (Gilchrist, 2006; Houghton and Blume; Robinson *et al.* 2005). Equally, the process culture, (e.g. formal meetings including, minutes, technical documents, chair, agenda, presentations and terms of reference), can be

intimidating and inaccessible for some elements of the partnerships and prove to be a barrier to full participation particularly for some community members (Davies, 2004; Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2006).

On the other hand it has been noted that VCS partners that do engage with this process are often perceived as being institutionalised thus creating a gap between the community representative and the community itself. This can lead to questions and concerns regarding the legitimacy and accountability of these governance structures (Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2003, 2006). These concerns are exaggerated where selected community representatives in these partnerships become 'the usual suspects', or 'community stars' favoured by official partners resulting in considerable overlap of membership in different networks (Bassett *et al.* 2002; Taylor, 2006). This feature of local partnership contributes to problems "reconciling representation and leadership with widespread participation" (Taylor, 2006: 274).

The accountability issue is raised again when looking at the independence of partners when these structures rely so heavily on government grants, and are tied in so relentlessly to government targets (Gilchrist, 2006). The pressure and inflexibility of national targets can ironically make the growing volume of localised governance structures less locally relevant and responsive (Taylor, 2006). A recognition of the implications of these particular governance norms is central to the author's own research questions around the relationship between urban governance and social sustainability. These norms can generate a critique articulated as 'voice but no influence' and having 'representation but not being representative' (Swyngedouw, 2008; Taylor, 2007). These in turn have clear implications for depth of community participation, voice, social capital and social justice. Social capital, social justice and citizen participation are central tenets of social sustainability (Cuthill, 2010).

A lack of social capacity in both the community and official partners has long been recognised as a barrier to the success of these structures, and governments have responded with large numbers of official community development guidelines, funds, grants, and capacity building programmes (Houghton and Blume, 2011; Taylor, 2006). Issues of poor leadership can also

result in an inability to take a more strategic view, and inadequate skills to make a full contribution to the partnership (Basset *et al.* 2002; Taylor, 2006). Added to this challenge, there is widespread evidence in the literature evaluating partnerships structures of burn-out of overburdened representatives, failure to consider succession of those usual suspects, and failure to access and include hard-to-reach community members (Gilchrist, 2006; Robinson *et al.* 2005; Taylor, 2003, 2006).

Despite efforts to respond to these social capital concerns an enduring power differential exists between members of the partnerships and is repeatedly highlighted in this literature as a challenge for successful partnership working (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006; Davies, 2004; Taylor, 2003, 2006). The link between the power differential and knowledge of the governance norms described above is stressed by Taylor (2006). Davies (2004) goes further and argues the governance literature underplays the extent to which the transaction costs of collaboration outweigh the benefits. This research explores these governance cultures and norms in the Hastings regeneration landscape to determine if, and why, this is the case, and what this means for social sustainability.

These criticisms are of course not universal across all community partnerships, as these modes of governance were developed upon varied landscapes of differing degrees of pre-existing VCS infrastructure and public/private sector experience of community partnership (Taylor, 2006). The past political history, the nature of existing social networks and the specificity of local implementation is also highly influential in determining the success or otherwise of a pluralistic participation model like community partnership (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006; Davies, 2004). At the same time there has been ongoing evolution of partnership or network structures that further complicates any assessment (Robinson *et al.* 2005). As Taylor (2003) points out, “new governance spaces in the neighbourhood renewal field offer unprecedented opportunities for communities to engage in shaping their future; but they contain many tensions within them” (ibid:194). The critiques do also highlight examples of where local partnerships are providing a strategic voice for the local neighbourhoods and communities (Robinson *et al.* 2005; Taylor, 2006). In her 2007 paper Taylor

reminds us of the possibility for participants to implement alternative agendas and articulate and make space for resistance (Taylor, 2007). Further positive observations can be drawn from social movement theorists who stress that new structures have unintended outcomes and once social movements are mobilised they have the political power to transform cultural and institutional practices (as argued in Taylor, 2007).

New spaces may offer up opportunities for wider participation, access to resources and networks that communities would otherwise not have acquired. Jones (2003) argues in this new governance space where the community are expected to be at the table they are in some places able to “manipulate prevailing discourse to their own advantage” (p.595). What is more it is wrong to assume that all local elites are subordinating as in some cases they welcome the community sector involvement and parity of position. Coaffee and Healey (2003) suggest that some partnerships might emerge as ‘arenas of hope’ with implications for a new power dynamic in the local governance landscape. The agency of these modes of governance (negative and positive) is explicit in the above discussion and it is in an effort to understand this agency with relation to social sustainability that this thesis looks to make a contribution.

## 2.6. Conclusion

The previous sections have been engaged in scene setting in terms of summarising and bringing together the academic debate regarding the complex relationships between modes of urban governance, urban regeneration and social sustainability. Understanding that relationship is a key foundation on which to offer any insight this case study can provide into a very dynamic, highly topical debate around the future of urban regeneration, the nature of the social sustainability narrative within that future, and the role of ‘governance beyond the state’ in shaping that future.

The chapter has outlined the debate over the definitions of social sustainability, its origins in the sustainable development debate and its highly contested and political nature. Further, the chapter has described recent political interest in the use of the concept of social sustainability, and possible reasons for academic

reluctance to dig deeper into a theoretical concept to underpin the more normative research that dominates work in this field. This was followed by a discussion of the links between the urban regeneration debate and social sustainability in order to justify the bringing together of these two literatures, and the need to interrogate the formation of social sustainability in the urban regeneration context. The dominant critique of recent UK urban regeneration governance appears to demand a more nuanced debate over the vision and utility of social sustainability in social regeneration policy. The literature highlights the need for a political debate over 'what 'social' matters' and what structures might hinder or facilitate that end (Davidson, 2009). This thesis will respond by interrogating the relationship between urban regeneration governance, the societal values it sustains or marginalises, and what these mean in terms of social sustainability. To inform this objective Chapter 3 offers a review of the dominant themes identified in urban governance research as potentially influencing the evolution and construction of social sustainability in urban regeneration.

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## Chapter 3. Social sustainability – the construction of a contested concept

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### 3.1. Introduction

Social sustainability, as established in the previous chapter, is the least examined aspect of sustainability (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Holden, 2011; Manzi *et al.* 2010). Responding to this need for greater understanding of the construction of social sustainability, and questioning its' contribution to urban regeneration is the central framing context of this thesis. In this way the author seeks to respond to calls for greater scrutiny of the spatially and socially uneven construction and institutionalisation of sustainability 'storylines' mobilised in development strategies across cities around the world (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007). Specifically, this research acknowledges that an understanding of "concepts of nature, scale, economic change, institutions, and governance must accompany sustainability analyses" (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007:6).

Building on this need for greater interrogation of the concept of social sustainability this chapter will provide a focus on the productive role of three themes in its' construction, namely: urban governance, specificity of place and 'ontological baggage'. The discussion below describes the agency of each theme and how they have guided this project. The chapter concludes by bringing together areas identified as needing further research, and in doing so outlines how the author's own research aims have emerged from within the gaps within the literature on urban governance, UK urban regeneration policy, and a problematised academic social sustainability narrative.

### 3.2. Modes of governance

#### 3.2.1 Modes of governance and sustainability

While urban policy outcomes and their impacts on stakeholders are regularly analysed there is less focus in academic literature on the implications for sustainability of the politics of institution building (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; Le

Heron, 2006). Hence the importance of opening space for debate about social sustainability that is alive to power relations, politics, and the concepts of regulation and governance (Le Heron, 2006). Batchelor and Patterson (2007) subscribe to this view when they describe their belief in the necessity of “understanding changing powers, functions and structural arrangements” (p.193-4) of governance in order to explain how sustainability policy frameworks are being weakened. Littig and Griessler (2005) are also explicit in highlighting the importance of society’s functional systems and institutions (economic, political and cultural) in constructing the discourse of sustainability. While Evans *et al.* (2009) stress the need for a more fine-grained analysis of regeneration governance and its capacity for sustainability. In response to these concerns, an exploration of the construction and impact of processes of urban governance upon social sustainability is central to the contribution this research seeks to make in advancing sustainability debates.

The complexity, fluidity and general ‘messiness’ of social sustainability referred to above is given as one of the key reasons why the academy has resisted this debate. Perhaps for these reasons the academic commentary generally offers limited exploration of the impact of local political economy (e.g. power structures, modes of governance, and institutional setting/context) on the form of social sustainability discourses, policy and practice. Instead, (with a few exceptions including, Cuthill, (2010); Davidson (2009, 2010); Littig and Griessler (2005), Manzi *et al.* (2010)) current academic research has focused on the practical implementation and evaluation of social sustainability, with limited explanation of why it is what it is, and how it has come to be that way. The centrality of governance in understanding the construction of social sustainability is linked to its inherently political nature as Manzi *et al.* (2010) make clear: “... the interdependent nature of social sustainability should acknowledge a political dimension; in particular by questioning how processes of power and control operate in urban policy contexts” (p.5).

Whitehead (2003) has historically criticised the predominately ‘practical’ empirical research in sustainability that ignores the highly complex socio-political influences on its form, and “conceals the asymmetries of power which inform the social construction of urban sustainability” (p.1187). Developing this

argument Jonas *et al.* (2003) stress the need to move beyond simply recognising this influence of politics and towards mapping and understanding that influence upon sustainability:

“ ... environmental governance remains locally structured and spatially contingent in form. ... In other words, local policy and politics (as well as ‘real’ local biophysical environments) matter. ... At the heart of such a perspective has to be a more convincing mapping of the state, policy and politics onto space, and a closer theoretical integration of concepts of economy, polity and environment” (p.165-166).

The nature of governance is an influential and recurring theme in the literature regarding the construction of urban sustainability and its relationship with the socio-political context in which it emerges and evolves. Understanding this relationship is at the core of the emerging understanding of social sustainability (Manzi *et al.* 2010). By observing the formal and informal networks of governance and their daily practices, norms, traditions, beliefs, rules of engagement, and other dominant discourses, we can better understand the encoding of power and production of hegemonic or marginalised policy narratives (Coafee and Healey, 2003; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010; McGuirk, 2000). Drawing on these observations regarding the agency of institutional context and governance practice, this research pays particular attention to the interaction between social sustainability and the socio-political context, discourses, policy and practices of governance in Hastings.

### 3.2.2 Modes of governance and UK urban regeneration

This review now focuses on two dominant governance trends specific to the UK urban regeneration landscape over the last decade. These governance trends are collaborative/multi-agent partnerships and rescaling. In this way these next sections explore the evidence from existing bodies of research in terms of the potential institutional factors that may shape the form social sustainability takes or is made absent. It should be noted that much of the institutional landscape is now subject to change under the new Coalition government elected in 2010.

Yet overall the hegemony of partnership and localism, albeit with different focuses, continues apace (Bishop, 2010; NALC, 2010).

Perhaps the most dramatic and far reaching regulatory shift under New Labour has been the rapid acceleration of the existing paradigm shift from government to governance (Gilchrist, 2006). This governance framework has been associated with a discourse and policy around increased participation, engagement, community partnerships and the involvement of the third/voluntary sector (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006). The fluid multi-scalar, multi-agent and cross-sectoral nature of these governance structures is fundamental to the changing centres of production of power. This in turn has implications for who has access to resources, influence over policy and the form of regulatory frameworks, and the power to implement policy objectives (McGuirk, 2000).

Urban governance structures have been investigated through a variety of theoretical frameworks often looking to highlight the changing modes and instruments of regulation, and map the changing locus of power (McGuirk, 2000). These frameworks have included utilisation of, urban regime theory (e.g. Bassett *et al.* 2002 and Gibbs *et al.* 2002), a regulation theory approach (e.g. Jessop, 2002; Whitehead, 2003), structuration theory and shared power world theory (e.g. Dengler, 2007), political economy (e.g. Le Heron, 2006) and Latourian social production of power (McGuirk, 2000). Other investigations of changing modes of governance have resisted a theoretical framework and focussed on more practical considerations such as logistics of implementation and methods of evaluation (e.g. Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). This section now moves on by breaking this discussion of modes of governance into collaborative/multi-agent partnership structures and rescaling (regionalisation and localisation). This divide usefully highlights two dominant and influential themes discussed in the critical governance literature as defining New Labour governance and regeneration policy in the UK over the last decade (Jones and Evans, 2008).

### 3.2.3 Modes of governance: Collaborative/multi-agent structures

Gilchrist (2006) talks of how a “key feature of the new institutional environment has been a massive shift towards multi-agency partnerships operating through more open structures” (p.76). Multi-agency/sector partnerships are presented in the literature as a key collaborative framework or new political sphere where environmental and sustainability norms are being developed and replicated (Gibbs and Krueger, 2005). For the last decade partnerships and an integrated multi-agency approach have been a priority in the governments’ plan for trying to address complex problems of social exclusion, particularly in regeneration projects (Gilchrist, 2006).

This proliferation of collaborative/partnership structures is a signature of the New Labour political modernisation agenda that rejects both left wing state interventionism and right wing opposition to state involvement, with the adoption of a ‘Third Way’ of local governance via partnership (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Davies, 2004). This shift to a partnership governance structure was repeatedly presented by New Labour as a key delivery mechanism for urban sustainability and regeneration. Specifically, in implementing Sustainable Community Strategies which are responsible for what was Local Agenda 21 and for combating social exclusion (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007).

Gibbs *et al.* (2002) stress the need to investigate in greater depth the role the state plays in shaping the local economy-environment landscape through the promotion and facilitation of these urban partnerships. Dengler (2007) explored this point when she demonstrated the benefits to environmental governance of including multiple organisations in policy creation in a highly politicised space. While the literature addresses the theoretical implications of collaborative multi-sector partnerships in environmental governance/sustainability, there appears to be limited theoretical analysis of these governance structures in evolving, facilitating or creating barriers to social sustainability in an urban regeneration context. This thesis responds to this limited analysis by examining the role of the collaborative/multi-agent governance framework of urban regeneration delivery vehicles, networks and partnerships in producing, managing and re-articulating social sustainability practices and story-lines.

This question has largely been approached and articulated historically by scholars through the lens of neighbourhood governance and renewal, and all things 'community' (e.g. sustainable communities and community partnerships) (Raco, 2005; Wallace, 2010). It is interesting that this literature rarely refers to social sustainability despite the obvious common objectives of social inclusion, community engagement, social capital building, citizen empowerment and democratic participation that dominate their discussions of community and regeneration. This thesis hopes to bridge this limited interaction between these bodies of work.

#### 3.2.4 Modes of governance: Rescaling

A second key feature of urban governance and urban regeneration policy over the last decade has been the acceleration of rescaling of governance to both the local and regional scale. Environmental and wider sustainability issues have also witnessed a growth of localisation of policy, discourse and governance structures in the UK (Bassett *et al.* 2002). Both aspects of rescaling are presented as part of a wider (contested) global trend that has involved a 'hollowing out of the state': "[T]he functions of the state are redistributed upwards, to international and trans-national organisations and institutions, downwards, to cities and regions, and outwards, to non-state actors" (Bulkeley, 2005:883). This 'hollowing out' of the state is a widely observed trend in Europe and the United States often associated, in part, with the dominant neo-liberal politics of these regions (Jessop, 2002). These changes of governance structure are associated with a stepping back by central government, and a delegation of power to local and regional agents including private, voluntary and third sector representatives and networks (Taylor, 2003).

The localisation of urban governance in the UK was largely driven by the repeated Blair government commitment to 'local solutions to local problems' (Jones and Evans, 2008). The apparent devolution of governance to regional, local and even neighbourhood level has involved a transfer of responsibility away from the central state (Taylor, 2003). There is, however, an ongoing debate over whether this results in a decentralisation of power, or in fact a new

form of centralisation through extensive targets and audit systems (Baeten, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2008; Taylor, 2003). Key within this rescaled governance landscape is the “active and productive citizen” (Jessop, 2002; Raco, 2005) and the prescribed ‘community’ urban policy target and subject (Wallace, 2010). Here the citizen becomes the locus of governance in the ultimate rescaling and hollowing out of the state. Interestingly, there is considerable overlap between the active citizenship and prescribed community profile of the New Labour administration and the Big Society narrative of the new Conservative led Coalition government. Both propose a re-articulation of the relationship between the citizen and the state, community self-sufficiency and a break from state dependency (Wallace, 2009). Both were keenly observed in the thesis case study not least due to the overlap between these concepts and elements of social sustainability including social capital and participation. The interaction is outlined in detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

Scaling and rescaling of governance is clearly interlinked with struggles for dominance of power and control (Bulkeley, 2005). The shift of scale, networks and localisation of regeneration modes of governance has potentially created new geographies of power with their own challenges, failings and opportunities as regards social sustainability. In turn these modes of urban governance have raised a number of theoretical and practical questions as regard the role of social sustainability in urban regeneration policy and practice. For example, is ‘institutional pluralism’ better equipped to address the complexities of social sustainability as Meadowcroft, (2002) claims regarding environmental governance and Gilchrist (2006) does when discussing social exclusion? Alternatively, does it limit social sustainability practice through institutional paralysis and marginalisation of voices through the post-political condition of institutionalised partnerships (Davidson, 2010; Davies, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008)? Yet if sustainability, and social sustainability in particular, requires a departure from ‘business as usual’ capitalism and a humanisation of neo-liberal projects as claimed by Whitehead, (2003) is this collaborative institutional framework evidence of that? As discussed above these questions remain not yet properly understood by scholars in this context and need further investigation.

This section has highlighted the potentially important influence upon social sustainability of changing modes of governance and in particular alterations in institutional frameworks and scales of regulation. The potential for these factors to impact upon social sustainability is made more obvious by its explicitly political nature. Yet the social sustainability debate appears limited in this respect despite the well-documented emergence of multi-scalar governance structures responsible for UK social regeneration over the last decade. This concept of governance rescaling, and the widely observed shift to multi-scalar/agent governance structures (including, collaborative partnerships, and processes of localisation) are demonstrated to be central to the relationship between the three literatures of social regeneration, urban governance and social sustainability. The research highlights the need to question the impact of these changing modes of governance upon the construction of social sustainability. Section 3.5 outlines how this research will seek to begin to explore these questions. The next section outlines the second of three themes highlighted in the literature as affecting the form sustainability takes by now exploring the impact of ‘specificity of place’.

### 3.3. Specificity of place

A second major influence on the construction of [social] sustainability identified in the literature is the specificity of place, or the importance of the local context. Evidence cited in an editorial by Gibbs and Krueger (2005) highlights the important role specificity of place has on influencing the multiplicity of forms sustainability takes:

“ . . . sustainability as a regulatory construct is uneven and locally unique – there are a variety of sustainabilities, rather than one single outcome. . . . The nature of place is therefore interrelated with discourses of sustainability and we need to understand these interrelationships to interpret how dominant local versions of sustainability arise and are incorporated into local politics and projects” (Gibbs and Krueger, 2005:408-09).

For this reason Gibbs and Krueger (2005) make a call for more research into local capability to deliver sustainability. They revisited this argument in their edited work on the Sustainability Paradox when they argue in order to understand how to achieve sustainable regulatory regimes we need a far greater understanding and exploration of “the organisational and institutional specificities involved over space and time” (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007:9).

This focus on local context, which is also aware of local-global connections, is the favoured conceptual framework for Hanson and Lake, (2000) and Pacione (2007) who accept that the “local context can lead to different and locally contingent perspectives on the meaning of and conditions for sustainability and the means to achieve it” (Hanson and Lake, 2000:2). This necessity for a local framework was reiterated by Whitehead (2003), who highlighted that the social and political construction of sustainability, and associated complex power relations, result from issues of context, history, political and regulatory legacy and from the specificity of place.

Local sustainability is presented in the literature as being limited by its international and national level conceptions and institutions – a set of discourse/definition/policies handed down from above in tension with local interpretations and objectives. Hanson and Lake (2000:2) argue that the “greatest barrier to sustainability lies in the absence of institutional designs for defining and implementing sustainable practices in a local context”. This has led to a call for ‘local political-economic context’ aware research by Krueger and Agyemen (2005) who claim geographers have largely shied away from examining the relationship between political economy, power and local sustainability and that there is value in using this approach:

“The power of the political-economic explanation is that it can transport sustainability from normative concept to actions existing in a social context that are beholden to ‘logics’ of prevailing economic systems, ideologies and discourse. ... [N]arrowing the gap between theory and practice [of sustainability] exist[s] in the domain of politics and power” (p.416-7).

Pincetl and Katz (2007) reiterate this call for more context-specific case studies that take account of what is being sustained, by/for whom, and crucially, in terms of the development of urban governance and sustainability research, which institutional mechanisms are being used to deliver those policies. McKenzie (2004) draws on Polese and Stren (1999) when he reiterates the need for social sustainability research to concentrate on local policies and institutions, and a specific reference to the space and scale they occupy. It is on the local scale that Evans *et al.* (2009) propose new approaches of more sustainable urban development described as 'organic sustainability and regeneration'. This need for a place specific political-economy approach that includes the governance and institutional landscape in researching social sustainability, and how it is used in this research, is discussed further in Section 3.5. This follows after a discussion of the third variable described by the research as impacting the form of sustainability, namely, 'ontological baggage' (Davidson, 2009).

#### 3.4. Deconstructing the concept of social sustainability

An alternative consideration of the factors influencing the construction of strains of sustainability has emerged from recent discussions by Davidson (2009) regarding what he calls the 'ontological baggage' of sustainability. In his deconstruction of social sustainability Davidson highlights the differing emphasis on the 'social' or 'sustainability' in 'social sustainability' and the resulting different interpretations and associated politics (Davidson, 2009). On the one hand, there is a body of work that presents social sustainability issues as driven by ecological requirements. On the other hand social sustainability can be presented through a specifically 'social' lens that gives primacy to urban social relations not ecological systems (Stren and Polese, 2000).

Davidson (2009) argues calls for social sustainability can attach themselves to different ontological traditions and mean different things, propagate different norms and affect urban policy and practice very differently. For example, Davidson (2009) argues that the focus on the 'sustainability' in social sustainability promotes the principles of an ecological thesis rather than a set of social values. This is a hegemonic approach also found in more general notions

of urban sustainability that focus on protecting ecological systems and doing this through technical solutions (Hanson and Lake, 2000). This focus extends to a preoccupation with the 'product' (e.g. mixed use regeneration scheme) and not the 'process' (e.g. engaging and involving communities in the regeneration process).

The concentration on the 'product' has resulted in a growing focus on the impact of urban design on social aspects of urban regeneration projects (CABE and DETR, 2001). Significant technical factors in socially sustainable urban design projects include: the provision of social infrastructure (e.g. schools, and housing); accessibility of townscape design; preservation of local characteristics; and the ability to fulfil psychological needs (e.g. security and sense of belonging) (Chan and Lee, 2008). Despite the traditional primacy of a 'product' or 'technical sustainability' focus on social sustainability, when Herd-Smith and Flewings (2008) looked at the presence of social sustainability during the construction phase of regeneration projects in the UK they found evidence of both 'product' and 'process' at a very practical and tactical level. 'Process' focused social sustainability practices observed included fully integrated, accessible and transparent involvement of stakeholders in the consultation phase, engaging local workforce for the construction work, and then taking responsibility for the development of their skills and training (Herd-Smith and Flewings, 2008).

While the literature accepts that the 'product' and 'technical' solution has a role in delivering sustainability, there is a growing popular and academic opinion that stresses the key barriers to urban sustainability are social, cultural and political not technical (Hanson and Lake, 2000). They explain that "conceptualizing sustainability solely as a technical problem obscures the social, cultural and political arrangements underlying existing unsustainable practices and implies that sustainability is possible while leaving in place those underlying relationships" (ibid:3). Consequently my research focuses on the socio-political context, and the norms and processes of urban regeneration governance, in order to understand the barriers and enabling agents that impact social sustainability.

The political dimension in particular has been observed to have been “virtually ignored” in research to date (Pares and Sauri, 2007:160). This is despite politics being viewed as integral to the achievement of social change through strong involvement of the citizenry (ibid). Whitehead (2003) also discusses how both the analysis and formation of sustainability is too often ‘reduced’ to a technical exercise concerned with “traffic management, architectural design and the development of green technologies” (p.1187). He bemoans the limited consideration of the wider web of socio-political, ecological and economic forces at play in the construction of regulatory and governance frameworks in cities. Whitehead proposes a more holistic consideration of regulatory processes that views sustainability as a social, political and economic construct to be interpreted within the dynamic frameworks, structures and regimes that are historically and spatially specific to that place and time (Whitehead, 2003).

Davidson (2009) also argues for a more conceptually based analysis of social sustainability when he proposes a political focus on the ‘social’ in social sustainability. He claims that this is needed in order to question and debate those principles on which to base the future plans for a sustainable city. Without a questioning of principles and values on which to construct urban policy he argues it is “ ... possible that policy initiatives aimed at social sustainability simply sustain the prevalent inequitable political relations and/or uneven development geographies” (Davidson, 2009:613-614). Davidson, (2009) argues the absence of these questions in the social sustainability debate highlight a largely unexplored political gap. Swyngedouw (2007) also stresses the importance of addressing this political gap when he makes clear that without asking what socio-environmental arrangements we wish to produce, and then producing the appropriate ‘storylines’ to be able to mobilize that vision, we restrict any alternative discussion of socioeconomic futures to the dominant neoliberal consensus. He characterises the sustainability debate as stalled in a post-political condition that does not allow for a questioning of alternative meanings and routes, but instead is dominated by a technocratic neo-liberalised ‘business as usual’ sustainability (Swyngedouw, 2007). Alternatively, Holden (2011) argues that there is evidence of intense political engagement around the concept of social sustainability in her case study of Metro Vancouver. She argues there is value in researching the re-politicisation of sustainability in

urban governance, and the links between social sustainability and political participation (Holden, 2011).

Krueger and Gibbs, (2007) concur with this need to investigate the construction and institutionalisation of sustainability 'storylines' in terms of the processes and problems of social change, not just the traditional interpretations of economic and ecological agendas. Again this broader analytical approach is premised on the assertion that "the notion of sustainability is not ontologically fixed" (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007:6). While Raco (2007a) claims a more progressive agenda is only possible if research questions the established governance structures that currently act to reproduce existing power relations.

This thesis recognises the concern within the literature regarding an absence of room for counter-hegemonic sustainability agendas owing to a 'post-political' governance condition and conceptual 'ontological baggage' (Baeten, 2009; Davies, 2004; Davidson, 2009; Evans *et al.* 2009; Swyngedouw, 2007). The risks posed for a progressive social sustainability agenda by a politics gap and the post-political condition informs the examination in this research of the construction and nature of social sustainability values in Hastings. Equally, the research explores the possible presence of a re-politicisation of sustainability in urban governance raised by Holden (2011). Specifically, the research will seek to advance the understanding of the construction of social sustainability by exploring the agency of regeneration governance discourse, practices, and cultural norms, and how these are in turn framed by their locally specific socio-political context.

The sustainability literature is critiqued by Gibbs *et al.* (2002) and Littig and Griessler, (2005) for being dominated by research that is under-theorised and focuses on issues of sustainability 'best practice' techniques, assessments and indicators. Littig and Griessler (2005) stress the importance of acknowledging the normative and analytical aspects of social sustainability. This lack of analytical investigation has in part been blamed on the widespread acceptance and reification within research of the hegemonic paradigm of the sustainable city as an ontological object (i.e. assuming its pre-existence, desirability and apolitical form) which fails to question the "complex discursive processes and

socio-political struggles through which sustainable cities are produced” (Whitehead, 2003:1187). It is in examining the agency of the case study socio-political context, and governance discourse and practices that this thesis will make a contribution to our understanding of the nature of social sustainability in urban regeneration governance. This next section details how the research sought to make this addition within the context of contemporary debates around partnership governance and social dimensions of urban regeneration policy.

### 3.5. Exploring a political-governance research approach

It is clear from the discussions above that the sustainability literature stresses the importance of local political-governance led research. Yet it is also clear that despite this focus there has been limited exploration of the relationship between social sustainability, local socio-political context and urban regeneration governance. This lack of focus on social sustainability at local governance level, in combination with the ‘politics gap’ and post-political condition (Davidson, 2009, 2010; Raco, 2007a; Swyngedouw, 2005), highlights a need for research to investigate the relationship between social sustainability and local structures of urban governance. Given the recent policy (re)focus on localisation in UK urban governance following a change central government this research approach has continued relevance.

It is hoped that by investigating in this research the dynamic local modes of urban governance, their socio-political context, and associated agents and discourse, that it is possible to better understand the political-governance space in which social sustainability emerges in urban regeneration policy and practice. In this way the research seeks to respond to Raco’s concern that there exists a methodological gap in development policy research that fails to integrate: “... analysis of discourses and representations on the one hand and the processes, practices and politically constructed nature of policy implementation and delivery on the other” (Raco, 2007b:232). Central to this approach is a recognition of the agency of institutions and their actors as social structures whose practices, cultural norms and inherited legacies impact policy implementation, and enable or constrain alternative political action (Coafee and Healey, 2003; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010; Davies, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005).

This political-governance approach is perhaps all the more timely given the belief that there is a close connection between the development of new modes of governance and global transition periods like the contemporary global financial crisis (Evans *et al.* 2009; Harvey, 2010). For example, Evans *et al.* (2009) describe the possibility of crisis-induced challenges to dominant political narratives like market-led regeneration. They suggest the possibility of replacing them with more organic regeneration and sustainability approaches to development that are locally grounded, small scale and rooted in politicised action. This approach would involve a redistribution, or fluidity of regeneration roles and so the potential democratisation of development.

The political-economy and governance context potential for such an alternative intervention is explored in this thesis through the concept of social sustainability. The intervention of an informed, locally relevant social sustainability framework may allow urban regeneration to break free from the traditional replication of capital accumulation regimes and modes of production inherent in neo-liberal property-led regeneration. The potential alternative development pathway is a more progressive and political social sustainability agenda (Davidson, 2009, 2010; Holden, 2011; Littig and Griessler, 2005).

Gibbs *et al.* (2002) also stressed the importance of understanding how hegemonic and marginalised governance 'regimes', and their discursive practices might affect how local sustainability is implemented in UK urban regeneration practice. This argument has influenced the author's own research design in observing the regeneration governance meetings, interviewing their participants and analysing their documents in order to understand how social sustainability might manifest and be implemented in regeneration practice in UK towns and cities. Like Gibbs *et al.* (2002) this thesis offers a focus on how "urban regimes both influence and are shaped by the social, economic and political forces operating in and through the national and regional state" (p135). The research explores the agency of socially constructed governance practices, traditions and cultural norms that shape, enable or obstruct the narrative and values of social sustainability in this case study.

For the last twenty years sustainability debates have regularly ignored the political/governance dimensions central to social sustainability in their consideration of urban policy (Davidson, 2009, 2010; Manzi *et al.* 2010). In that time urban regeneration in the UK has been characterised by a technocratic, neo-liberalised version of economic sustainability (Evans and Jones, 2008). Over the last decade related research has been dominated by a regeneration critique concerned by the neo-liberalised, post-political condition of regeneration practice (Davidson, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2007). In this academic context the research seeks to investigate the influence of the multi-scalar, hybrid modes of urban regeneration governance upon social sustainability. Through deconstructing their practices and cultural norms the research aims to identify embedded hegemonic and marginalised representations of social sustainability in the social dimensions of urban regeneration policy and practice. Chapter 4 will outline the research design, methodological approach and methods used in this research, and discuss practical techniques employed to help ensure the validity and quality of the research findings.

### 4.1. Methodology and research design

The chapter will discuss the ethnographic case study approach adopted in this research design, and the methodological detail of the participant observation, interviews and documentary analysis undertaken. Further, it will justify the methods selected and outline practical and analytical techniques employed to help ensure the quality and validity of the research findings. Research design is meant here as a collective term for the empirical research process including: the methodological approach; methods selected; the data capture, management, and analysis; and finally the dissemination of research findings. Each component of Figure 1 is discussed in this chapter.

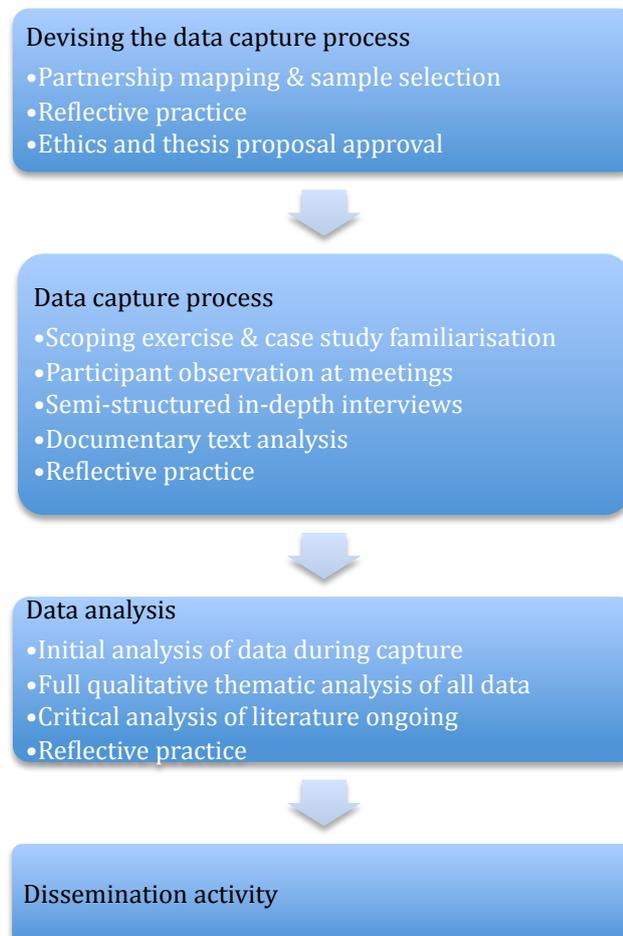


Figure 1. Research project process diagram

This research design and methodology was selected in order to best address the research aims. The first research aim was to investigate how social sustainability is embedded in discourses, policies and practices of urban regeneration. The second aim was to understand the impact of modes of urban governance, political regimes and institutions on the presence/absence and form of social sustainability in urban regeneration practices. These aims were achieved by using a political-governance approach in developing an in-depth ethnographic case study of the institutional and cultural specificity of urban regeneration practice in Hastings. These aims were satisfied using a number of objectives. Specifically, this included the thematic analysis of data gained from participant observation of fifty governance meetings, thirty-one interviews with key stakeholders, and multiple related meeting documents. This data was then used to identify the key elements of the social dimensions of urban regeneration, describe the governance and socio-political regimes involved in their delivery and explore their impact upon social sustainability practices and values in Hastings.

#### *Methodological context of existing studies in this field*

These research aims, emerged from previous research on social sustainability, governance and urban regeneration. The intersection of new urban governance structures and sustainability has been investigated through a wide variety of methodological frameworks. A variety of these methodologies and methods are outlined below in order to contextualise this specific research project design, and offer a critical review of research methods relevant to this research topic.

Urban governance has been dominated by a political-economy approach over the last twenty years that has adopted a number of theoretical frameworks including variations of governance theory (Le Heron, 2006), urban regime theory (Bassett *et al.* 2002; Gibbs *et al.* 2002), structuration theory (Dengler, 2007), regulation theory (Jessop, 1995; Whitehead, 2003) and interpretative institutionalism (Coafee and Healey, 2003; Davies 2004; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). The empirical investigations within these conceptual frameworks have included a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative methods have been dominated by single and multiple case studies, that utilise

in-depth interviewing of stakeholders, documentary analysis, and/or participant observation methods (e.g. Gibbs *et al.* 2002). More quantitative methods have included stakeholder and network analysis (e.g. McGuirk, 2000). Raco (2007b), however, highlighted a concern over the methodological gap in development and spatial policy research due to the failure to integrate “analysis of discourses and representation [with the] processes, practices and politically constructed nature of policy implementation” (ibid:232).

Studies of social sustainability are equally mixed in their approaches, though much fewer in their number with activity in this field growing from the late 1990s onwards (Colantonio, 2008). The academic writing on sustainability is dominated by empirical research into practical delivery and evaluation (Littig and Griessler, 2005). Critical reviews are often explicit in bemoaning the limited amount of work focussing on conceptual or theoretical frameworks for urban sustainability, and social sustainability in particular (Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Pares and Sauri, 2007; Whitehead, 2003). Holden (2011) offers a rare theoretical case study analysis that begins to explore the relationship between the post-political critique and social sustainability. Colantonio (2009) identifies three main research approaches to social sustainability that are led by ‘capital’ (social capital stock); ‘institutional theory, stakeholder analysis and governance’; and ‘well-being and quality of life’ (p11). Such research is typified by an increasing use of mixed methods and this is attributed to the increasing use of soft indicators in formal assessments of social sustainability that require qualitative research methods (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011).

This research will seek to take account of the methodological gap highlighted by Raco (2007b) by employing a political-governance focussed ethnographic case study. This approach to analysis enables the research to focus on both the discourses, or representations of social sustainability and political processes employed in this urban regeneration governance space. This approach engages with the social-political context that impacts on the regeneration landscape and the resulting governance practices that shape policy implementation at a local and regional scale. This research design acknowledges ideas from new institutionalism by approaching the governance

landscape as a social construct. Thus both the governance landscape and actors that occupy it are viewed as part of the co-production of cultural norms, traditions, and practices, that in turn shape the space they occupy and social activities they implement (Jones and Evans, 2008).

In seeking to respond to concerns in the literature about the dominance of normative and technical accounts of social sustainability (Cuthull, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Pares and Sauri, 2007), this thesis has employed a political-governance approach to allow for a broader consideration of the socio-political and governance context in which social sustainability is formed. The research seeks to develop a more conceptually focussed contribution to the social sustainability debate. While the research design follows a political-governance approach it does so without aligning to any one explicit theoretical framework in its design. There are two reasons for this. The first was to avoid 'concept stretching', a process where by generalising an existing concept to a new case study that it does not apply to, results in the concept being distorted. This of course has implications for the validity of some conclusions and these are discussed in section 4.9. The second was to allow for a more pluralistic and open conceptualisation during analysis and conclusions. This was to avoid aligning the findings prematurely to a particular discipline and allowed the data to lead the research conclusions as much as possible.

The inductive nature of the ethnographic methodology employed is compatible with a political-governance approach. The qualitative methods selected are also in keeping with the increasing presence of soft indicators in formal assessments of social sustainability (Colantonio, 2009; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). The use of a case study approach responds to the call by leading authors for more locally specific, empirically informed political governance led research on sustainability (Jonas *et al.* 2003; Raco, 2007; Whitehead, 2003).

#### *Justification of methodology and methods*

The section now describes the adoption of an interpretative and qualitative approach to the research question, and the specific selection of ethnography as the methodology of choice within this framework. This discussion is positioned

within a wider description and critique of ethnography, which is used to illustrate the accepted advantages and limitations of the approach adopted and how these influenced the research design.

The research aims lent themselves to questions about the values, relationships, practices and norms in the Hastings urban regeneration governance community – questions well suited to an interpretative approach. An interpretative approach is based on exploring the ‘insider view’ and perceptions, and how they are created, reproduced and marginalised through social activities (Mason, 2002b). Hence, it was felt that these questions were best addressed in an ethnographic study by a qualitative research design and methods. Data analysis was done inductively, and sometimes interactively to establish patterns or themes. In keeping with the qualitative tradition (Mason, 2002b) the researcher looked to develop a research design that framed human behaviour within the social, political and historical context of the case study.

In selecting ethnography as the research interpretative methodology the work draws upon a cultural anthropological tradition of investigating the link between behaviour and cultural processes and how these processes develop over time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Brewer (2000) defines ethnography as:

“[T]he study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally” (p.6).

In using ethnography the research was focussed on investigating shared patterns of behaviour, values, beliefs and language (Cresswell, 2007). By utilising participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and gathering site documents for analysis, the research sought to gain a more ‘emic’ (or native) worldview of this single case study (Cresswell, 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In keeping with the ethnographic tradition capture of the empirical data was done in a natural setting over a sustained period (Brewer, 2000). Data captured in this methodology is highly descriptive and interpretive

in nature and was collected largely from field observation notes, interviews and site documents (Cresswell, 2003).

The research question is an investigation into the impact of governance on the form, construction and presence of social sustainability in urban regeneration in a UK coastal town. This question issues from a social constructionist world-view interested in social processes, the social construction of meaning, multiplicity of truths, the relevance of social, cultural and historical setting to meaning and knowledge, and the explicit impact of the researcher (Cresswell, 2007). Sustainability *and* governance are in part social constructs, created and sustained by people's beliefs, meanings and cultural/institutional norms (Gibbs *et al.* 2002; Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). They are also both fluid dynamic processes, rather than fixed end results (Davidson, 2009). Both this element of social construction and dynamic process necessitated using a methodology like ethnography that can capture and unpack meanings constructed through social interaction, while acknowledging the role and impact of the researcher. A strength of ethnography, and one that satisfies the research aims, lies in its ability to enable the researcher to study people, institutional practices and social processes in context over time to access entrenched meanings and representations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

By asking people their views in such a way that they present them in their own words, and through observing them in their natural setting, ethnography is ideally suited to identifying dynamic social processes created through human interactions like urban governance (Brewer, 2000). The flexible observation and interviewing of participants in natural settings, rather than investigating in highly systemised, unnatural, fixed timeframe circumstances, avoided imposing artificial structures upon the participants and data. This natural setting and use of open and in-depth interviews was used to try to gain insight into complex meanings and constructions that other methodologies were unlikely to identify due to artificial time and research setting constraints (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Furthermore, it is argued that an understanding of the impact of social and cultural context upon representations can be better investigated through research in the natural setting as this ethnographic approach entailed (Cresswell, 2007).

There are of course limitations to this research methodology in its capacity to address the research aims. The validity of these limitations will depend on what, (and whose) criteria the academy uses to evaluate ethnographic research of this style (Cresswell, 2007). The following section outlines three main limitations identified at the outset of the research that aspects of the research design seek to address. Firstly, while the natural science model values the objectivity of the researcher and research methods, in ethnography the researcher interacts and sometimes participates within the case study. Deriving from an interpretivist epistemology, (Brewer, 2000) and using the researcher as the key research tool means that ethnographic research cannot be simply replicated and, with the exception of the work of positivist ethnographers, it does not claim objectivity or to present a value-neutral position. This epistemological approach can lead to a questioning of the scientific authority of ethnographic research. Ethnography recognises the influence of the researcher and uses reflexive practice to purposefully highlight this. The highly structured form of natural science work that contributes to this tradition of objectivity is in opposition to the flexible and unstructured methods that ethnographers can employ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The use of detailed descriptive qualitative data from interviews, field notes and documents to substantiate interpretations is viewed in this positivist critique as too subjective a process (Brewer, 2000). The second limitation of ethnography from a positivist perspective results from the importance that perspective places on identifying a tested, observable truth, or causal relationship. Alternatively, reflexive ethnography, is premised on identifying multiple and socially constructed truths or voices as acknowledged above (Brewer, 2000).

Third, a positivist approach to science advocates the robust nature of deductive methods in identifying fact and truth. Instead, ethnography identifies patterns, themes and meaning through a bottom up inductive approach. Following this inductive approach, truth claims should emerge from the data and not be imposed on the data in advance (Brewer, 2000). The ethnographic research methodology and single case study approach adopted, and impact of the researcher when measured against this orthodox criteria creates limits to transferability or generalisability (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005). The research

design includes measures to minimise these limitations, however they can never be, nor are they intended to be ruled out all together. Efforts to respond to this critique in the researcher's own work are outlined in section 4.9.

#### 4.2. A case study approach

Before justifying the use of a single case study approach it seems sensible to first define what is understood by a case study. A simple definition used by Hay *et al.* (2005) best reflects the researcher's understanding and use of this approach: "Intensive study of an individual, group, or place over a period of time. Research is typically done in situ" (ibid:276).

In this interpretation a case study is very much compatible with the core tenets of ethnographic work not least of all the importance of contextual conditions in understanding this phenomenon, and as such is internally consistent with the researcher's methodological approach. Continuing to draw on an epistemological approach that stresses the situated nature of knowledge the single case study approach is usefully adopted here not to identify the truth, but rather "to offer interpretations of realities and to critically situate those interpretations" (Ettlinger, 2009:1017). This compatibility within the research design (i.e. constructionist ontology, interpretivist epistemology and ethnographic methodology) was integral to the early selection of a case study approach and contributes to the internal rigour of the design (Carter and Little, 2007). Further, the research aims meets Yin's (2009) criteria of case study selection:

1. The form of question being asked is of the 'how and why' explanatory nature.
2. The behaviour or social phenomenon being explored is active (live) and beyond the researcher's control and so best addressed through case study techniques such as direct observation and interview of active members of the culture.
3. The research question largely addresses contemporary events and as such would not suit using a history as an alternative approach.

4. Specifically, the selection of a single embedded case study is predicated on the rarity condition that is fulfilled by the distinct nature of the regeneration governance landscape in the field site.

The distinctiveness of the Hastings case study in the South East region is key to the justification of a single case study approach. Ettliger (2009) makes a strong argument for research into such cases that are 'deviations from a norm'. She argues that cases in the minority may offer insight into a "set of possibilities that may become scaled up," (ibid:1019) and even if they don't, not researching 'the other' means "we become unwitting agents" in the process of othering (ibid:1019). The rarity of the Hastings example is detailed further in the next section.

From a practical perspective, the case study approach was also initially chosen due to the considerable depth of data available in this field site due to facilitated access and in-depth scoping made available through the research funding body, Sea Space which is the URC in Hastings. Usually closed meetings and governance structures were made accessible due to this funded position. However, this access made comparative work problematic due to uneven access levels and subsequent data imbalance. The impact of practicalities such as access and funding from Sea Space are acknowledged in the research design in the interests of transparency and ethical practice as proposed by Bradshaw and Stratford, (2005).

Beyond the practicalities there were other important advantages to satisfying the research aims in selecting a case study approach. The research question involves the complex and real-life phenomenon of urban regeneration governance, which is beyond the control of the researcher, with multiple variables that demand the use of an in-depth research approach like a case study. A case study provides a richness of data and makes available a variety of sources of evidence. This richness of data from multiple sources can be used to check gaps and reinforce themes identified and as such provide a strong foundation of data in efforts to improve the quality of the work (Yin, 2009).

Yin (2009) notes that a case study approach is also particularly well suited and commonly used to investigate complex organisational structures and related socio-political phenomena. In this way the researcher felt the congested and highly politicised institutional landscape observed in scoping would be best unpacked with such an approach. The research seeks to describe *and* explain the relationship between urban regeneration governance and social sustainability, and the case study offers both these functions (Yin, 2009). Specifically, the design can be characterised as an embedded single case design well suited to this very complex and multi-scale institutional landscape.

#### 4.3. Justification of the Hastings single case study

A detailed profile of the case study can be seen in Chapter 5, however, it is useful to provide a brief introduction to Hastings at this point as this is integral to the justification for its selection as a case study in this research design. Hastings is an urban coastal town situated on the South coast of England (see Figure 2), 30 square kilometres in size and with a population of 86,000 (GOSE, 2009). Hastings has a rich historical and cultural history, including its association with nearby Battle and the 11<sup>th</sup> Century Norman Conquest, many centuries as a successful fishing town and 19<sup>th</sup> Century emergence as a popular and affluent Victorian spa resort. This was followed by a well-documented economic decline from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century onwards (Hastings Regeneration Partnership, 2002).

This decline is a common trend in English seaside resorts over this period, often associated with, though not exclusively, the rise of the European foreign holiday, poor quality new developments, poor transport links (and so physical and social isolation), transient populations, seasonality of employment, and low wage and low skill economies. This is in addition to poor quality housing, high levels of privately rented Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and structural underinvestment (Beatty *et al.* 2008; Communities and Local Government Committee, 2007).



Figure 2. Location of research field site Hastings, East Sussex, in South East England (Source: 1066 Online, 2009) [Original in colour]

The scale of economic and social decline is today monitored by the UK Government using Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The most recent results show Hastings local authority is 19th out of 326 local authorities nationally (1 being the most deprived) (DCLG, 2011). This concentration of high levels of deprivation is associated with poor levels of educational attainment, low levels of democratic participation, high levels of crime, unemployment, benefit claimants and social exclusion (Hastings ranks in the bottom 10% of districts in the country for the community cohesion national indicator) (Beatty *et al.* 2008; Communities and Local Government Committee, 2007; DCLG, 2011; HBC, 2009). Despite improving results for health, crime reduction, skills and teenage pregnancies between the 2004 and 2010 IMD reports, Hastings continues to be significantly more deprived than the national average on the majority of indicators examined under the IMD (ESIF, 2011). Further, it fell from 38th to 19th most deprived district nationally between the two sets of results (DCLG, 2011).

This picture of acute and entrenched urban social deprivation within an academic and political context of a problematised sustainable urban

development meta-narrative (Whitehead, 2003), make research questions around social sustainability and the institutional and regulatory infrastructure in which it evolves all the more pertinent.

The case rarity of Hastings is also a product of the formal governance response to the entrenched economic and social deprivation described above. Hastings has received central, regional and local government regeneration investment well beyond that of other coastal towns in the South East region over an intensive ten-year period (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2007; Hastings and Bexhill Economic Alliance, 2008). Following the final SEEDA corporate review in 2009, that saw a scaling back of regeneration investment across the South East, Hastings remained one of only three continued areas of regeneration focus for the RDA in the region (SEEDA, 2009). The distinctive scale of deprivation and resulting regeneration investment has coincided with a dangerously high level of reliance on public sector employment in the town, (42.3% of working population (Centre for Cities, (2009)). This has led the Centre for Cities to list it as one of the top five most vulnerable cities in England during the current climate of extensive public sector financial cuts (Centre for Cities, 2009). This ongoing focus of activity and increasing vulnerability makes the resulting governance in the case study particularly distinct and so worthy of investigation. The literature on urban governance and sustainability repeatedly focuses on issues of scale (i.e. multi-scalar and specifically the reality at a local scale) and the complexity of governance structures under a neo-liberalised political modernisation agenda (Gibbs *et al.* 2002; Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). Both these points of focus are usefully investigated in Hastings given the explicit presence of complex and multi-scalar governance in regeneration in the town. The complexity of the language, policy and governance landscape in this case study generates a plethora of acronyms and these are listed in the Glossary in Appendix 1. In summary, this single case study has been selected for the following reasons:

- The complexity and overlap of governance structures.
- The scale (i.e. of members of participants) of governance structures.
- The volume (i.e. number) of governance structures.

- The greater historical focus of regeneration work and investment in Hastings by local and regional governance structures, combined with national regeneration funding streams, has created a more established regeneration governance landscape.
- The ongoing regeneration governance focus on Hastings at a local, county, regional and national level in a period of considerable regional and sub-regional governance review following the Sub-National Review in 2008/9 and regional tier abolition in 2010.
- Vulnerability of Hastings owing to the public sector dominance in employment (Centre for Cities, 2009).

Despite the rarity of the Hastings case study, an IMD rankings well below the national average is common to 29 out of 37 major urban coastal resorts around the UK (Beatty *et al.* 2008; Communities and Local Government Committee, 2007). So while this research will offer an in-depth insight into the workings of this case study, it also offers insight into urban social sustainability conceptualisations that can be utilised to better investigate social policy dimensions of urban regeneration governance in other coastal towns. In this way the Hastings case study addresses the possibility of analytical generalisability and the test of external validity advocated by Yin, (2009). The rest of this chapter will now describe the scoping exercise and data capture, management and analysis processes employed in exploring the distinct case study of Hastings.

#### 4.4. Scoping exercise

A three-month scoping exercise at Sea Space, (the URC in the field site) was completed in order to familiarise the researcher with the field site, particularly with regard to the political, administrative and geographical context of the site, and associated practical and analytical research project challenges. This involved attending and observing over twenty different regeneration stakeholder meetings in the field site while shadowing a Sea Space representative. As the major (physical/economic) regeneration agent in Hastings Sea Space are involved in many of the formal structures associated with regeneration in the field site. As such, access was given to meetings of varied scale, formality,

stakeholder mix and topic. This time was fundamental for identifying and evolving a research aim that was grounded in the current situation in Hastings as well as the academic and policy context.

The depth of knowledge required of a case study approach made the scoping exercise a key first step in this exploration. Part of this submersion in the case study was learning the language of governance specific to the regeneration community in Hastings. From a practical perspective the scoping exercise allowed the researcher to introduce her research and herself to over fifty active members of the regeneration community. This in turn facilitated negotiating access to the meetings, interviews and documents.

#### 4.5. Sampling strategy

This sub-section describes the sampling strategy adopted in terms of approach, sampling techniques, total unit populations, sampling criteria, time in the field, and justification for these choices. The sampling strategy and criteria for the governance structures observed, stakeholders interviewed and documents analysed is detailed below.

##### *Governance structure sampling*

A non-statistical and non-probability approach to sampling was adopted (Brewer, 2000). A purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of meetings to attend and stakeholders to interview “based on researcher judgement they formed a valuable unit of the topic being investigated” (Brewer, 2000:80). The initial governance structure and stakeholder populations were identified through the partnership mapping exercise described below. Both the mapping and subsequent purposive sample selection of meetings and interviews evolved over time in the field using a snowballing technique, that involved “obtaining units, such as informants, from other units” (Brewer, 2000:79). This was aided by an ongoing formal mapping of governance structures by Hastings Borough Council (Hastings Borough Council, 2009b). Further informal conversations with meeting participants during the scoping phase and input from experienced local regeneration actors, enabled the

completion of the mapping and an adjustment of the sample accordingly (Figure 4). Despite some of the limitations of snowballing (Mason, 2002b) the scoping phase and involvement of locally informed actors in this sample population made snowballing a successful technique.

The time in the field extended over a twelve-month period (2009-10) in addition to three months scoping in October-December 2008. This extended time in the field was selected in an effort to observe and investigate a full range of activities and the full year's routine governance meetings. This enabled exposure to the full spectrum of stakeholders and their respective agencies (Brewer, 2000). In this way the researcher looked to satisfy the temporal element of the sampling strategy, that is, "the need for some kind of completeness, which can be achieved through sampling people at different places, and at different times" (Massey, 1998:4).

The governance mapping exercise involved identifying all formal regeneration governance structures in the field site and was conducted through becoming familiar with the governance landscape via the scoping exercise, web-based research and policy archives. A partnership map (see Figure 3) was also created by HBC and this confirmed the researchers' own investigations. Following the mapping exercise the purposive sampling strategy was driven by relevance of the governance structure to the research topic of social sustainability and the social aspects of regeneration. Information needed to determine structure relevance was captured during the scoping exercise, through initial meetings, formal council mapping of all regeneration structures in the town, and by national policy on the stated role of regeneration governance structures in sustainability. The list of structures purposively selected from the mapping exercise to be included in the sample can be viewed in Figure 4.

A detailed summary of the relevance of the governance structure sample is provided in Appendix 2 as this was a key foundation of ensuring a rigorous sampling strategy for all three methods. In summary, at Borough level the relevance of structures for selection was identified through the centrality of the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) (both at Borough and County level), its five Thematic Partnerships (TP) and associated Area Based Structures (ABS), to

the planning and delivery of social regeneration (see Figure 3). The distinctiveness of the hybrid partnership governance of the ABS, and its level of involvement in social aspects of regeneration in Hastings meant that its four Area Management Boards (AMBs), and four Neighbourhood Forums (NFs) were selected into the sample. At a national level the LSP and the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) are acknowledged as central to local delivery of sustainability thus making their selection doubly valuable to this research sample (Sustainable Development Commission, 2008).

A further structure feeding into the SCS and identified in mapping as key to social dimensions of regeneration is the Community Cohesion Steering Group. While not a Thematic Partnership the significance of this group is partly a function of it being a lead partnership for a key chapter in the SCS. The decision to add the community cohesion partnership to the sample was further endorsed by a national policy narrative focus on community cohesion and social exclusion that developed apace in 2009 (Hastings Borough Council, 2009a).

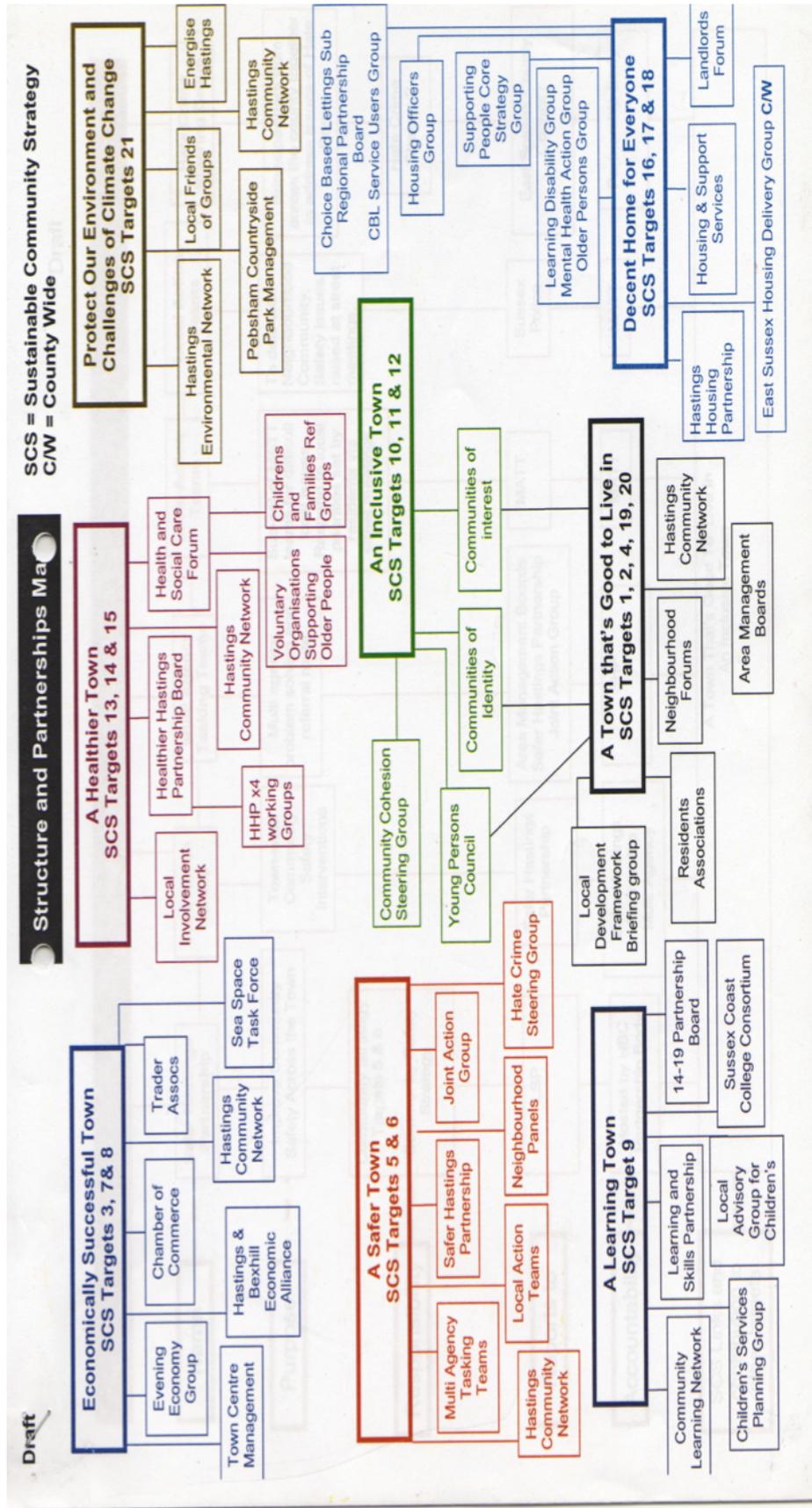


Figure 3. Regeneration partnership map of Hastings [Hastings Borough Council, 2009] [Original in colour]

No	Governance Structure
1	SEEPB (South East England Partnership Board) – Attended open public meetings, formal attendance allowed and content in public arena.
2	SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) - Attended open public meetings, formal attendance allowed and content in public arena
3	Hastings & Bexhill Taskforce (Interviews only)
4	Sea Space (URC) (Interviews only)
5	Hastings & St. Leonards Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
6	Hastings & Bexhill Economic Alliance (TP)
7	Safer Hastings (TP)
8	Hastings Housing Partnership (TP)
9	Learning & Skills (TP)
10	Healthier Hastings (TP)
11	Nth St Leonards Area management Board (AMB)
12	South St Leonards Area management Board (AMB)
13	Central Hastings Area management Board (AMB)
14	East Hastings Area management Board (AMB)
15	Castle Ward Forum (NF)
16	Gensing & Central St Leonards Forum (NF)
17	Ore Valley Forum (NF)
18	Greater Hollington Association (NF)
19	Hastings Community Network (HCN)
20	East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP)
21	Community Cohesion Steering Group

Key	
	Interviews only. Observation not consented (unless public meeting)
	Partnership not active.
	Attended. Consent given for year of observation

Figure 4. Governance structures selected from the partnership mapping exercise to be included in the sample [Original in colour]

In addition, there is a town wide VCS (voluntary and community sector) network that has multiple seats at the LSP. This is called the Hastings Community Network (HCN) and was selected for analysis for its explicit

social regeneration and social justice agenda and its direct connection/involvement with both the Borough and County LSP.

At a regional level the now abolished SEEPB (South East England Partnership Board), via the Single Regional Strategy (SRS), was placed at the centre of the New Labour governments' final policy on regeneration: "Transforming places; changing lives: taking forward the regeneration framework, 2009".

The SRS was to be co-authored and co-managed by SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) who have now also been abolished by the Coalition government with effect from March 2012. SEEDA's own mandate following their Corporate Plan refresh from November 2009 was sustainable economic development (SEEDA, 2009). Hastings was one of only three priority regeneration programmes for SEEDA following this refresh (SEEDA, 2009). As regeneration and strategic sustainability roles were core to SEEDA and SEEPB they were included in the sample. The previous role and now abolition of SEEDA will have far reaching implications for the dominant regeneration agenda in Hastings going forward.

In Hastings, SEEDA's regeneration programmes were guided by a partnership called the Hastings and Bexhill Taskforce (including, local Borough and County Councils, GOSE, SEEDA and HCA) set up in 2001 and dominated by a physical (urban renaissance), economic development and education agenda ([www.seaspace.org.uk](http://www.seaspace.org.uk), 2010). The 5 Point Plan devised by the Taskforce is delivered on the ground through the business plan of Sea Space (the URC). For these regeneration roles both the Taskforce and Sea Space structures were included in the sample.

In summary, due to levels of access and the extended period in the field available to the researcher, the scale of structures sampled extended from regional, county, borough, down to area and neighbourhood level. This broad scale was selected in order to investigate as completely as possible the multi-scalar landscape of governance responsible for social dimensions of regeneration and their associated knowledge construction. This purposive

sample was selected from a fixed known population size, as the formal governance structures while dynamic over time are explicit in their formation due to their formal character and therefore are known and easily mapped.

Any gaps in the observation sample (for example, where access to observe meetings was not given), were remedied through interviews with participants from missing structures and access to meeting minutes and documents. These gaps were anticipated and the research design included the three data collection methods (i.e. participant observation, interviews and document analysis), in order to attempt to complete the data missing from any one source for this reason.

### *Interviewee sampling*

The interviewee selection was directly determined by the governance mapping exercise and subsequent structure sample. The membership list of the governance structures identified in Figure 4 tends to be fixed at the point of formation. Interviewees were selected from this membership list purposively. As with the meetings this sample was augmented by a snowball sampling strategy where those interviewed identified other relevant participants in the governance structures (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005). This type of purposeful sampling can be further described as 'criterion sampling', (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005) as the project interviewees were selected from the fixed population where they met the criteria detailed in Box 1 below.

#### Box 1. Interviewee sample selection criteria

1. Involvement in the selected governance structures;
2. Formal position or dominant leadership (and non-leadership) role in the structure;
3. Responsibility for, experience of, or involvement in social regeneration themes identified during observation that needed to be explored in more detail through the interview method;

4. Political representation from each major group in the governance landscape where possible.

The above criteria were selected as they offered diverse and often opposing experiences and representations of the respective structures, and an opportunity to highlight the associated power dynamics and dominant governance practices. Further, they offered a detailed insight into the discourse used specifically relating to the research subject matter of the social aspects of regeneration. The full details of partnership and interviewee sample are available in Appendices 2 and 3.

### *Document sampling*

Finally, the documents selected to generate a third data source were also selected using a purposive criteria sampling strategy. The criteria used for selection is detailed in Box 2 below.

#### Box 2. Document sample selection criteria

1. The fact they were generated for, or associated with the meetings attended (e.g. minutes, agenda and reports) ;
2. They are referred to (by those interviewed, observed, or in other documents) as instrumental policy, consultation or white paper documents regarding these governance structures and their social regeneration remit.

These criteria clearly mean the documents chosen were in part a function of the observation and interview sampling strategy (described above). The documents (e.g. minutes, agendas, policies, and consultations), are tightly linked to the structures in which they are used and by the structure participants that produce them. They are a key product of the self-documenting nature of this governance community and as such were selected with this in mind.

#### 4.6. Data collection methods

It is a key feature of ethnographic work that multiple and diverse data sources and methods are employed in order to gain insight into the complex and multi-faceted culture being investigated (Massey, 1998). The explicit complexity and richness of the field site and research aims meant using three different methods that garnered a “multi-dimensional appreciation of the setting” (Massey, 1998:2).

##### *Participant observation*

The first method used was the observation of regeneration governance structures and their participants in meetings (see Figure 4). Participant observation is defined by Brewer (2000) as involving “... data gathering by means of participation in the daily life of informants in their natural setting: watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities” (p.59). The purpose of the meeting observation was to understand the nature and characteristics of the regeneration governance structures in Hastings, their role in social dimensions of regeneration and how they might impact upon the production of social sustainability in a regeneration context. Observation was used in the tradition of ethnographic studies to immerse the researcher into the regeneration governance culture. Observation offered the preferred opportunity to study the social process of regeneration governance in ‘its natural state’. Rather than testing preconceived ideas (deductive science), observation was used to identify ideas and themes inductively in this context.

The decision to observe governance through meetings was selected following the scoping exercise that demonstrated the richness of the data available at the meetings. They brought the varied regeneration community participants together where their relationships, practices, language, and cultural norms were explicit and on display. They also appeared to form a large part of the governance process, (given the time allocated to them and

the volume of meetings attended by participants) and so offered a very typical experience in which to observe the culture. As such they presented a clear window into this culture. Not only did these sites provide a richness of data sources to help improve validity, they facilitated the opportunity to build relationships with participants that helped gain access to and inform the sample of interviewees. Furthermore, themes identified in the observation sessions were key to informing the interview guide and were used in combination with questions that arose from the scoping process, and critical review of the academic writing on urban regeneration and social sustainability.

From September 2009 to October 2010 the full cycle of annual meetings of the sampled bodies was observed. A total of fifty meetings were observed. This time period was purposefully selected as this is the annual cycle of formal governance that ties in with political, grant and budgetary timetables. It was felt that this extended period and full cycle would offer a 'completeness' of sample of different structures at different times, places and with different people participating (Massey, 1998).

There are many forms of participant observation and the author's role in this project is best described as 'observer as participant' (Gold, 1958, in Kearns, 2005). Kearns describes 'observer as participant' with the example of "a newcomer to a sport being part of the crowd" (p.196). Similarly, I was new to the regeneration governance culture and observed and participated indirectly from the sidelines. I introduced myself, my research and gained consent at the beginning of meetings and then observed from the same meeting table as the full participants (i.e. observing in the setting). I also had informal discussions before and after the meetings with participants that were included in the field notes.

The choice for this level of participation was based on the following methodological considerations. The 'observer as participant' is often considered the most ethical approach to observation due to the explicit nature of the observation with the research and researcher purpose clearly explained to the group (Kawulich, 2005). Further, full participation would

involve formal verbal contribution to meetings and would have demonstrated my own views and potentially offended those with opposing views. This may have resulted in them not wanting to be interviewed or censoring their answers. Finally, full participation would have complicated my positionality as a funded student. Box 3 in Appendix 2 sets out the process used at each observation session in order to try to capture and understand the practices and norms of this urban regeneration governance culture.

Where written consent was requested in the first meeting of each governance structure further meetings involved a verbal request by the chair at the beginning of the meeting to remind attendees of my role and presence. The shift to verbal requests was made in an effort to limit my disturbance of the meetings and also to try to become a familiar part of the governance community. As the year progressed and meetings were attended from the same structure for the third or fourth time there was repetition of themes and the field notes and transcripts reflected this with less detailed annotations. A matrix of governance structures and observation sessions can be seen in Appendix 2.

#### *Semi-structured in-depth interviews*

The second method adopted was semi-structured in-depth interviews which were undertaken with key stakeholders (leaders and non-leaders) from the governance structures observed (Figure 4). These were identified through a stakeholder analysis following the partnership mapping and sampling. The interview sampling developed over the period of observation and initial interviews using the snowballing technique described above.

The purpose of the interviews was to build on themes and gaps identified in participant observation in order to further understand the governance structures, their role in social dimensions of regeneration and how they might impact upon the production of social sustainability. Importantly, the interview method offered the informant the opportunity to express opinions and representations of urban governance and social sustainability in their own words (May, 2001). Interviews were a key opportunity to gather a rich raw

data source in keeping with the ethnographic research design (Brewer, 2000). Semi-structured interviews were selected for this research project as they provide an opportunity for a more in-depth questioning of the interviewee allowing detailed probing of themes and opportunity for clarification on points raised or identified in meetings (May 2001).

Following May (2001) a thematic guide of open questions was developed prior to each interview and opportunities to expand or introduce new themes were included. The interview guide was informed by themes and questions identified in both the critical review of writing on regeneration and social sustainability (outlined in Chapter 2 and 3), and initial analysis of the participant observation findings. The guide evolved over the course of interviews, informed by newly emerging central and local policy, the changing political landscape (i.e. change of central and borough political administrations), evolving fiscal landscape (i.e. threatened 'double dip' recession and unprecedented public sector cuts), abolition of regional governance structures, and newly emerging academic and government policy narratives such as 'Big Society' and 'localism' (Centre for Cities, 2009, 2010). From a practical perspective three pilot interviews also led to changes in the guide in terms of language used and length of the guide. Themes explored in the interviews covered: governance practices and hegemonic agendas; the governance landscape in terms of dominant stakeholders, localism, hybridisation, and partnership structures; social dimensions of regeneration; presence/form of social sustainability; and future developments. The interview guide is provided in Appendix 5.

The more flexible semi-structured interview method described also changes the balance of researcher/interviewee control over the direction of discussion, and so facilitates a more open questioning that goes some way to redress the power imbalance of a structured interview, while still addressing the topics of interest to the researcher (Brewer, 2000; Dunn, 2001). This open, relaxed, and more equitable research scenario was desirable for three reasons. First, from an ethical perspective this open structure offers the participants greater say in the interview and so research agenda, and in doing so empowers them (Dunn, 2001). Second, it offers the

researcher an opportunity to better address complex social processes in a more interactive process (Dunn, 2001). Third, it helps moderate distortions to replies caused by the 'interviewer effect' (Brewer, 2000) in an effort to elicit an honest and natural voicing of opinions and representations by the participant.

Following pilot testing the interview questions were adjusted and simplified in order to reduce confusion and also encourage a fuller response to questions. The testing and evolving nature of the guide aimed to improve the validity of the findings by generating more fluid discussions where the participant was comfortable with the language and accessibility of the questions posed (Fielding and Thomas, 2008).

Interviews were largely held in the interviewee's place of work, or in local cafes of their choice. The place of interview was selected in order to make the participant feel more relaxed. It was felt that by interviewing the participants on their 'territory' this also went some way to redress the power differential that traditionally favours the interviewer. An overview of interviews undertaken including date, role and structure membership can be seen in Appendix 3. Box 4 in Appendix 5 shows the detailed process adopted during the interview data collection. Themes explored in the interviews are listed in the interview guide in Appendix 5.

These two methods (interviewing and participant observation) are not without limitations. Such limitations are mostly a product of the semi-structured nature of the interviews and participant observation methods which meant that there were views and representations that were misunderstood, or went unobserved by the researcher. By choosing to digitally record interviews and meetings this helped identify those missed verbal representations during transcription. However, non-verbal communication was not digitally recorded, and so where it was not identified by the researcher it was missed. Not being able to record one interview and three of the partnerships (owing to confidential issues discussed) created a very practical and analytical limitation. Practically, it is impossible to accurately note all that is said and so evidence in the form of direct quotations can be lost. Further, looking down to

record what is discussed makes active observation challenging. However, adequate data was captured by supplementing observation data from each of the three non-recorded structures with additional interview and meeting documents.

### *Documentary texts – their selection and analysis*

The third data source employed in this research design was the sample of documentary texts whose selection was described above. This data source was selected due to the weight given in governance structures to such documents (e.g. terms of reference or policy documents) in defining and enshrining meaning, prescribing action and delineating stakeholder roles, relationships and subsequently their power. Further, such documents often act as an integral part of the governance process itself. For example, they outline the agenda for the meeting, provide evidence of activity in the form of a report to the board, and minutes of other meetings act as a verbal representation of what was agreed, challenged or actioned. The self-documenting nature of this culture makes documentary texts an important mechanism in the social construction of accepted norms (Waitt, 2005). Atkinson and Coffey (2004) highlight the failure of many ethnographic accounts to include documentary realities when studying literate societies and organisational cultures where they often form an important part of the representation of social processes. Documents play an active role in the formation of the collective memory of a culture and entrenchment of knowledge or truth (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004).

In analysing these texts the researcher was explicit in observing how the documents were produced and used. This included the medium of production, authors, format, distribution, access, cultural values attached to them and use or role as these are key to understanding their purpose, capacity and agency (Waitt, 2005). This was also addressed where relevant in interviews when discussing practices of governance.

It can be seen that the meaning endowed nature of these texts and relevance to the research question is explicit. These documentary texts were

selected as they offered a rich data source of discourse mechanisms relating to urban regeneration governance, that could then be deconstructed in order to understand how they might affect a narrative like 'social sustainability'. Box 5 in Appendix 4 summarises the process adopted when undertaking documentary analysis. An inventory of key documents analysed is also provided in Appendix 4.

#### 4.7. Data management

This sub-section describes the data management and storage during the research project. The process adopted was influenced by practical, ethical and University procedural considerations in terms of research good practice.

Data was managed on a day-to-day basis through the collection of manual field notes in successive research diaries. The field notes supplemented data collected at meetings and interviews using a digital recorder. The recorded data was then transcribed with additional supporting notes from the field diaries including both reflective notes and field memos. This was an important element of ensuring reflective practice throughout the data capture and analysis stage. This data was imported into NVivo to facilitate the manipulation and coding process for thematic analysis. The data was stored electronically to aid the clarity and transparency of the research process audit trail. The confidentiality of this data was secured through the re-coding of private data. This included changing names of participants and where relevant organisations were given generic umbrella terms in order to ensure anonymity. The majority of secondary documentary data was publicly available (e.g. in libraries, town halls, public body archives and on organisation websites) and as such did not contain sensitive or private data. Some meeting minutes or reports were considered sensitive and as such were held privately by the participants. In this case the confidentiality procedure was adhered to in keeping with the University of Brighton code of practice. All data has been stored on a password-protected computer and backed up on a secure external hard drive. In line with the University ethical procedure the data will be stored securely for ten years.

#### 4.8. Data analysis

This section details the process of data analysis and a justification of this element of the research design in satisfying the research aims. Analysis techniques used for all three methods adopted an inductive thematic analysis approach (TA) (Brewer, 2000).

TA was used to identify social regeneration agendas and norms of practice within the regeneration community that construct, privilege, marginalise or obstruct the development of certain agendas. Once these were established this approach was employed to explore relationships between the themes identified with reference to the research focus of social regeneration, urban governance and social sustainability. TA was employed drawing on a process outlined by Mason (2002a). This was combined with elements of the discourse analysis approach advanced by Waitt (2005) to give a fuller exploration of the (de)construction of discourses so key to the nature of social processes identified during TA. This analytical approach was consistent with the richness and depth of data captured through the ethnographic methodology used to address the research questions. This process is detailed in Box 6 below.

TA is not a linear process and many steps were repeated, or fed back into earlier steps over the course of the analysis. This is particularly true of the coding steps that often involved returning to the data and redefining, subdividing, removing, merging or creating new codes. In the most part analysis was done once each method was completed, though there was of course initial interpretative analysis during writing of field notes, reflections and transcription after each meeting, interview or text reading. This iterative approach allowed the researcher to check back against older data as interpretations developed, as well as re-directing the data capture process accordingly. The inductive nature of coding (bottom-up) means identifying codes as they emerge from the data not pre-empting them in advance as done in theory testing. However, in this approach it is also understood that

coding will be affected by the research aims and the key issues identified from existing literature detailed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Appendix 6 shows the visual representation of open codes that was used part way through the analysis and data collection process to reflect upon, and illicit initial interpretative codes from the data. By collating the open codes into major themes more nuanced indexing was possible when recoding for interpretative codes. This enabled the process of analysis to advance beyond the literal observation to an interpretive level that situated the findings within the broader governance and social sustainability academic debates. The visual representation process facilitated the identification of connections, over-lap and exceptions within the codes already identified (Mason, 2002b). These codes were then re-situated (elevated, demoted, re-coded) within the new interpretative code structures.

TA was used to achieve the research objectives by identifying the different, (sometimes conflicting) representations and practices of the social dimensions of regeneration and social sustainability, and by understanding how within this governance context those representations are 'privileged as truth' or marginalised. With this analysis it was then possible to draw conclusions about the impact of governance structures on the presence, absence and form of social sustainability and nature of social regeneration practiced.

In terms of managing the coding or categorisation of data the researcher used CAQDAS, (specifically NVivo 8) to facilitate the indexing and retrieval of data. When demonstrating these themes and patterns in the analysis chapters qualitative descriptions have been provided with supporting evidence, in the form of data quotations from interviews and meetings, and wider field note extracts, with the intent of providing 'thick descriptions' that improve the reliability of the findings. Box 6 outlines the steps followed during the coding process.

## Box 6. Thematic analysis coding process

1. Familiarisation of the texts: i.e. reading and re-reading.
2. Open coding or literal reading: Identification of recurring core content themes and sub-themes (i.e. indexing the data into categories). This is an identification of descriptive or literal codes and does not at this stage include interpretation. This involves looking at the data for recurring and outlying literal meanings, structures and form.
3. Interpretative indexing categories: Identification of broad groups of categories drawn from within the open codes through initial interpretation of themes. This is dominated by a process of synthesis and review of multiple open codes and is placing the interpretation within the context of the research question. This initial analysis also requires consideration of:
  - Persuasion: Investigation into how these themes are “privileged as truth” or constituted (for example via discursive structures, authorship, medium of communication).
  - Incoherence: Identification of inconsistencies (i.e. exceptions).
  - Reflexive indexing categories: Identification of researcher effect that might explicitly or implicitly affect the evidence and analysis. This involved placing the author within the data and recognising the co-construction role of the researcher. This was drawn from the field diaries.

In summary, this section has detailed the three methods selected for data capture including their features, system of application and purpose within this design. The section has concluded with a discussion of the data management and analysis process. The next section provides a discussion of the additional techniques employed to help secure the validity, reliability and quality of the research design, methods and findings.

### 4.9. Validity and reliability of the research findings

There are a number of different validity and reliability criteria the academic community uses to evaluate the quality of empirical qualitative research in

terms of research design, practice, and conclusions (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005). One test of research validity addresses whether what is explained, or measured is in fact the topic of investigation/ measurement (Mason, 2002b). Mason (2002b) suggests demonstrating this validity can be achieved through showing that your research design provides appropriate tools in addressing your research question and specifically generating the data needed to answer this question. Mason (2002b) also proposes that for a test of quality the researcher must be able to demonstrate the methodological, theoretical, ethical and practical steps taken to convince the reader of the careful design, appropriateness of methods and accuracy of data collection. The following discussion outlines the internal consistency of the research design as an indicator of research validity (Carter and Little, 2007; Mason, 2002b). This is followed by a summary of additional techniques employed to ensure the test of quality is also satisfied in this research.

The author's ontological and epistemological position helped forge the research question, and so in turn these three elements, (i.e. including the question) informed the selection of methodology and methods. This is central to the justification of the validity and quality of the research (Carter and Little, 2007). Methods are determined fit for purpose by their compatibility with the methodology selected, and likewise the selection of methodology should be internally consistent with the epistemological position taken (Carter and Little, 2007). This research design has evolved from the author's social constructionist world-view, which is internally consistent with an interpretivist epistemology, which in turn is compatible with an ethnographic methodology, and qualitative methods of participant observation, interviews and documentary analysis.

Additional practical and analytical techniques employed to improve the validity and quality of research design and findings included:

- reflective practice (Finlay and Gough, 2003),
- respondent validation (Yin, 2009),
- a clear audit trail (Brewer, 2000; Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005),
- systemisation of ethnographic process (May, 2001)

- dissemination strategy (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005),
- adherence to formal University sanctioned ethics procedure.

There is a dual purpose in including reflective practice in this research design. Firstly, practically, in terms of the research findings it is important to situate the researcher's knowledge-making practice within personal, institutional and cultural contexts in which research is conducted (Anderson, 2004; Kusenbach, 2003). This contributes to the increased validity of the work. Secondly, by developing a research skill that means reviewing the world and projects from a reflexive standpoint hopefully allows the researcher to identify an opening for the research in areas and perspectives previously not considered (Mason, 2002b).

Steps taken to improve the validity and quality of findings were reinforced by efforts to achieve 'subjective adequacy' and systemisation of the ethnographic process utilising the indices designed by May (2001). The specific application of the indices is detailed in full below in Box 7.

Box 7. How the indices of subjective adequacy were applied in this research

- Time – prolonged period of time in the setting in order to gain a greater understanding of the culture. Further, increased time in the field, reduces participant 'reactivity' to being observed or interviewed thus providing the researcher with a more valid insight into the culture. *The research has involved twelve months in the field and three months advance scoping.*
- Place – concentration on a physical setting, *like this case study concentration on Hastings only, is said to improve consistency, relevance and understanding.*
- Social circumstances – a varied and multiple people, activity and place experience of the culture improves the depth of understanding and findings. *The three different points of interaction with the participants, (scoping, observation and interviews) over a repeated sample period did improve insight into the multi-faceted nature of representations.*

- Language – being familiar with the language used helps the researcher access the culture. Indeed the language is key to that culture. *As part of the scoping exercise the researcher observed meetings and became familiar with grey literature and documents used in the field site and so was familiar with language style, content, patterns in advance of the data collection stage proper. This familiarity with the cultural language reduced barriers to understanding between both parties during observation, interviews and documentary analysis.*
- Intimacy – by developing relationships with participants May (2001) describes an improved understanding of meaning. *By virtue of the time spent in the field, including the scoping phase, professional relationships developed that provided an insight that would have otherwise not been possible.*
- Social consensus – a shared understanding between the researcher and the participant improves the validity and quality of interpretations. *By following an honest and comprehensive ethical procedure, (including respondent validation, clear informed consent and research dissemination to participants) the researcher worked hard to break down any misunderstandings and ensure clarity for all parties involved.*

The University of Brighton School of Environment and Technology Ethics Committee application and approval also informed the research design, and was a formal process designed to ensure the quality of the research project and findings. The ethics application discussed measures integrated into the research design to ensure the highest possible quality of the research process and data collection. These measures included: respondent validation, informed consent, project information sheets, reflective practice, research dissemination to participants and coding data to achieve anonymity. The scoping exercise was also approved by the Ethics Committee. The main research did not commence until full Ethics Committee ethical approval had been given. The ethical considerations and measures taken to ensure the ethical integrity of this research are briefly outlined below. [Note: examples of the consent forms and information sheets are provided in Appendix 7.]

Participants in governance structures and their respective agent bodies were always observed and interviewed with informed consent, right to withdraw, access to further information and anonymity in presentation of research findings. Participants in the meetings were where possible contacted in advance to gain consent and provided with the research information sheet. This process was repeated again verbally in the meeting/interview and point of recording to ensure understanding, opportunity for questions, and peace of mind for the participants. In the event that participants could not be contacted in advance (for example, due to a changing attendee list) they were provided with the information sheet, consent form and verbal explanation at the meeting in the knowledge they can have their comments removed from the research at any point after giving consent.

The informed consent process aimed to achieve a clear verbal and written explanation of research aims, objectives and methods. Also the clear communication of the purpose, value and extent of participant involvement including:

- Voluntary nature of involvement in the research.
- Right to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Anonymity of participant through coding of names.
- Security of data held through secure data management process.
- In the case of interviews the opportunity for respondent validation (see below).

Following each interview all participants were offered the opportunity to engage in respondent validation meetings to ensure they were happy with the transcripts. Only two participants requested this.

In terms of dissemination, following consultation with participant groups the researcher shared the findings throughout the final stage of the research project. The co-production of the dissemination strategy with regeneration and community managers from the council and VCS leaders, has meant ensuring the methods and mediums employed are as inclusive, useful and meaningful as possible. The VCS in particular have demonstrated a real

interest in the findings and have used them to structure future meeting agendas, inform strategic debates within the sector and develop training in areas identified as obstructing social sustainability. I have been involved in community network Question and Answer sessions, CVS AGM presentations, Community Network training days, and have delivered a formal executive summary for distribution throughout the LSP and partnerships. This dissemination strategy continues to be supplemented by formal academic dissemination at conferences, seminars and in publications.

In summary, this section has outlined the techniques and formal methods of systemisation that were integral to the design and execution of the research in the interests of achieving improved validity and quality of findings.

#### 4.10. Conclusions

This chapter has sought to contextualise the research design, methodologies and methods within the wider body of academic work on urban governance, social sustainability and associated methodological practice. As discussed, the ethnographic approach adopted was central to addressing the thesis aims and development of core arguments that required gaining understanding into the social constructions of the regeneration community in Hastings, specifically regarding policy, discourse and governance practices, and what that might mean for the form of social sustainability in UK regeneration. These methods allowed the researcher to identify the key social elements of regeneration in the case study and unpack the complex governance landscape in which they were determined and shaped. Capturing and analysing the discourses, policy and practice of this governance community enabled the researcher to explore how these modes of governance and socio-political context might be impacting on social sustainability.

### 5.1. Introduction

The aim of Chapter 5 is to present an analysis of the local socio-political context and dominant agendas of social regeneration policy and practice in Hastings. The case study features presented in the discussion below are demonstrated in later chapters to be key in determining the presence or absence of AESS. Four socio-political features are found to be especially impactful upon the social regeneration agendas and governance culture. These features include: changing geographies, an explicit place-making process that stresses the distinctive needs of Hastings, a culture of social purpose and local political traditions. Analysis of these case study features is followed by a discussion of the key social regeneration agendas that dominate this governance space. This analysis introduces the implications for AESS of the absence of an explicit social sustainability agenda, and the presence of the 'narrowing the gap', community engagement and education-led regeneration agendas.

Chapter 6 will develop this focus upon the distinctive case study features by providing an analysis of the evolving modes of governance that have emerged in this socio-political context. Both chapters seek to contextualise the specific and common elements of the Hastings regeneration landscape within the wider national regeneration policy, and also academic debates around urban governance, a problematised sustainability narrative and social regeneration.

### 5.2. Socio-political context of case study

Analysis of the case study data underlines a well-rehearsed academic argument around the need for understanding the specificity of place in urban governance and sustainability research (Evans, *et al.* 2009; Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; McKenzie, 2004). The findings demonstrate the important role played by Hastings' social, political and cultural context in the shaping of AESS. By highlighting the importance of identifying this distinctive context,

the research stresses the value of an ethnographic case study method in delivering an understanding of the relationship between the socio-political-governance culture and local sustainabilities.

The social context and needs of Hastings are overtly presented by stakeholders via political lobbying and place-making. In this case 'place-making' refers to the construction of the 'Hastings story' or 'making the case' for Hastings in governance meetings and policy documents using discourse of distinctiveness and entrenched deprivation. This place-making in turn plays a part in shaping social regeneration policy, funding and the governance structures that develop to manage regeneration practice in Hastings. The story of Hastings' regeneration needs is a representation constructed from the central state focus on the particular challenges facing English coastal towns in the Twenty First Century, and the IMD evidence collated around understanding the town's deprivation. This context is made more complex and challenging by long-term conflicting local and county political traditions in this two-tier system. Finally, this story of Hastings is also interwoven with a spirited local culture of social purpose and community activism. An analysis of the impact of this distinctive context, and the way that 'story of Hastings' is constructed and deconstructed within this governance culture is presented below.

#### *Social geography of a deprived coastal town*

The distinct nature of the English coastal town decline, growing deprivation and very particular regeneration challenges are shown below to be an important feature of this case study. Hastings's coastal geography has been a key influence upon the social regeneration policy focus of the town, the scale of interventions and the landscape of institutions that have developed to deliver those policy objectives.

Hastings experienced a well-documented economic and social decline from the mid-twentieth century onwards (Hastings Regeneration Partnership, 2002). The nature of this decline resonates with many English coastal towns over this period (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2007; English Heritage/CABE, 2003). The distinct collective challenges of English

coastal towns were made clear from a policy and central government perspective for the first time by Beatty and Fothergill (2003) and again in 2008. The case study meetings, interviewees and policy documents undertaken in this research concurred with the challenges highlighted in these reports and repeatedly presented the limitations Hastings faces from the one hundred and eighty degree economic hinterland, physical isolation due to poor transport links, the decline and seasonality of the tourism industry, a low wage/ skill employment pool, high social security claimant rates, a severe jobs deficit, and the scale of social support needed for transient and often very vulnerable populations. These issues were central to the complex social regeneration needs of the town and are common to the challenges facing other large English coastal towns (Beatty and Fothergill, 2003). The contribution these distinctive challenges and histories make to the social regeneration story of Hastings are highlighted in this quotation from a leading county politician:

“Where I would agree is, the 180 degree club, all the coastal towns up and down the country, if you look in land they have 360 degrees but we are restricted, we are always at the end of a line, so we have different problems there like isolation. ... if we don't get the link road I don't know, there is no Plan B, we won't get the houses, the businesses or improved infrastructure, the link road was the final piece of the jigsaw of the £380 million coming down that would start with education and the college ...” [Thomas-3.11.10 – County Councillor]

Multiple interviewees stressed that this coastal context has been made more complex by the lasting social implications of political decisions in the 1980s to accept London Borough social housing population overspill. This agreement involved thousands of people from London Boroughs, often from a socially fragile demographic, being re-housed in Hastings. This distinctive socio-political context was revisited with interviewees expressing concerns that the changes in housing benefit by the Coalition government in 2011 will lead to further economic displacement of socially vulnerable families from London Boroughs to Hastings owing to the cheaper cost of housing:

“... we are only just recovering financially from the 1980s and what was cruelly called the South London detritus sent down to B&Bs in Hastings, mainly led by the Tory politicians at the time, the B&Bs and hotels were Rachmanised, and with these new housing benefit caps it is yet another form on social cleansing, people that can't afford their rent in London are being shipped off to elsewhere we are the only country in Europe practising economic migration and don't forget these people will be casual workers. It has a major impact on social justice and life chances.” [Rob – 1.11.10 – Councillor/Private Sector]

Hastings is the only currently active dispersal town in Sussex for asylum seekers with often very complex social support needs and implications for social tensions in a predominantly (94.1%) white, poor population (ONS, 2001; The Links Project, 2011). The subsequent social regeneration issues around community cohesion that have developed over the years are in part a consequence of this distinctive coastal town and wider macro political context. The social cohesion and deprivation issues that are a function of common coastal town issues and a complex history of political and social policy decisions is made clear below by a local council officer:

“... the Pathfinder area of Hollington is the area where the GLC dumped tenants in the 1980s which took Hastings up by 20,000 and I can't prove it but I understand anecdotally not necessarily the most desirable tenants not to stigmatise those people too much but it meant a lot of people lacking family ties, and this was on the back of decades of underinvestment post war in Hastings so the accumulation of factors led to Hastings being one of the most socially deprived areas of the country ... and build that on to poor transport links and demographically a disproportionate number of young males who are contributing to significant underperforming in educational skills and the best people choosing to move out of town and that social stew has led to make the town quite challenging.” [George - 13.10.10 – Safer Hastings Partnership]

The coastal geographical identity has become even more relevant post 2010 to how the town seeks to align itself. This is evident in the plans to consider

leading a coastal partnership governance structure now that the regional tier has been abolished. An HBC Director makes this coastal alignment point clearly below:

“We need to abandon the county approaches and work with other coastal communities to create a sub-LEP structure that represents that interest, there will be a structure for Thames Gateway I have no doubt but I have a letter being typed up out there to give to xx (Leader) that I don’t know whether he will want to sign that, but I think he will, that proposes to the other districts that we discuss that, but the county councils will not be happy bunnies. Our real interests start in Thanet or Whitstable and works all the way down the coast to Eastbourne. ... Hastings hasn’t been part of that club of coastal communities led by Lincolnshire, we haven’t paid any attention to it as we were so busy with regeneration that we haven’t needed that club, or a club like it, and of course now we do. What we probably do have, provided we aren’t all sacked, is the capacity to do that, we are quite outgoing, we have the capacity to work with others, we know the people up in Kent. The issue is we are a Labour council and I don’t know if that will work politically with all of them being Conservative.”  
[Kevin – 23.11.10 – HBC Director]

The feared relative obscurity of the Hastings voice in the new sub-regional LEP, contrasts heavily with its prominence in the SEEDA regional regeneration agenda. As a consequence the construction of the distinct Hastings regeneration story is now felt by senior politicians, VCS leaders and HBC officers to be better served by looking along the coast. In Chapter 8 this ability to evolve the Hastings story and lobby for its distinct voice through the creation of new partnerships will be presented as part of the evidence for the emergence of AESS. The collective and distinctive social challenges and histories of this deprived coastal town have been stressed as important in shaping the nature of governance and focus of social policy in Hastings. As such this distinctive geographical identity plays a determining role in a political-governance approach to the analysis of AESS that is alive to the impact of the socio-political context of place. Further, the distinctive social and geographical profile of the town within the county and region has created

an 'identity of difference' that was seen to be promoted through the place-making process discussed below.

### *Place-making the 'distinct needs of Hastings'*

The careful construction of representations of Hastings through a place-making process is a governance mechanism repeatedly observed in meetings and documents in this case study. 'Place-making' or 'making a case for Hastings' is key to the construction of the social policy profile of Hastings as a town with pockets of entrenched deprivation and distinct regeneration needs. This governance mechanism is aimed at shaping the nature of local social regeneration policy and by default shapes the nature of and opportunity for AESS. Place-making was identified in this research as a governance practice employed to exert influence in directing funding allocation, regional and county institutional focus and political profile raising at all scales. The dominant 'Hastings story' observed being promoted in this landscape is one of 'distinct needs' and it focuses a great deal on social justice issues including the need to 'narrow the gap' between the life chances of those in Hastings and the rest of the county. The 'narrowing the gap' social regeneration agenda is discussed further in section 5.3. This section outlines the key features of the process of place-making within this urban governance landscape and how this helps shape the regeneration policy focus of this case study.

The proliferation of targets, indicators and value of an audit culture under New Labour has left a lasting impact on the local regeneration governance landscape in terms of reified governance practices (as discussed in Chapter 6). These practices involve evidence capture and then using that evidence to persuade County Council, the RDA, regional government and Whitehall of Hastings' distinct needs. IMD transformed the understanding within the town of the scale of deprivation, methods of measurement and the value of the national league table that was used to convince central government that this level of deprivation was not exclusive to the North of England. The IMD enabled local Hastings politicians and HBC to secure an 'identity of difference' centred around unique levels of need in the otherwise mainly affluent county of East Sussex. HBC officers, politicians and senior statutory

bodies refer to that case as having to be repeatedly made, and that argument needing to be won then (1997-2003) and again now that the town is subject to extensive funding cuts (2010-11). This case was in part constructed through IMD indicators and ranking. In 2004 the district of Hastings was the 38<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the country, in 2007 it was 31<sup>st</sup> and in 2010 that figure had dropped to 19<sup>th</sup> (with 1<sup>st</sup> being the most deprived) (East Sussex In Figures, 2011).

The characteristics of this deprived coastal town are made more distinctive politically, economically and socially for being situated on the edge of the least deprived region in England, and by being surrounded by a relative sea of affluence and health in East Sussex, (for example there is a 13.3 year life expectancy difference between some of the most deprived wards in Hastings and the most affluent wards in the wider county) (OCSI, 2008). The implications of measuring this deprivation, the explicitness of its acute and entrenched nature, and the implications of recognising that identity of difference within the region, resulted in considerable cross-party lobbying at local level that helped draw the attention, funding and intensive regeneration interventions of the County Council, central government and SEEDA. So distinct are the needs of Hastings within East Sussex that the Hastings VCS and HBC successfully lobbied for a separate chapter allocated to Hastings in the East Sussex Strategic Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy. This clearly reinforces the town's identity of difference in the County.

In this comment from a senior VCS leader the importance of making a distinctive case and constructing that representation for Hastings is stressed as central to securing funding and a Hastings voice in strategic governance structures. This point is key to the discourse of distinctiveness that is used throughout the governance structures and in policy documents to persuade the central, regional and county structures of the special needs of the town:

“... at a local level the lobbying work of HBC and LSP around the custody of the community strategy and around SEEDAs' interest in Hastings after the link road didn't happen there was concerted political and community lobbying around the next agenda. The presence of Hastings in the South East means it is focussed on as it statistically

brings the whole place down, for example the education, East Sussex would be a different place if Hastings didn't exist and that leads to the academies agenda ... Certainly SEEDA and Sea Space have been physically delivering it but it is an expression of a broader drive to recognise the town as a place of deprivation which it once wasn't recognised that led to assisted status, SRB and the final physical regeneration so almost a 20 year journey." [Brian – 21.7.10 – VCS Leader]

While the interview comment above stresses Hastings' identity of difference within its geographical context, the quotation below from a senior VCS member provides an insightful broader national context for this distinction and again returns to the importance of this local coastal geography introduced above:

"We are a northern town on the south coast and with the new government agenda we are in direct competition with those towns and we can't demonstrate that level of deprivation as there is better quality of life down here and rather than look at county wide collaboration we should look along that coastal strip from here to Margate, looking at Kent towns and communities that have similar issues, and opportunities together." [Janice – 15.11.10 – VCS Leader]

The role of place-making in the explicit construction of the social policy profile and needs of Hastings was identified as a dominant mechanism in the governance practice in this regeneration community. The repeated construction of the distinct Hastings story was used by senior politicians and VCS alike in the lobbying and persuasion of the regeneration needs of both the town as a whole or specific neighbourhoods. The role of evidence, statistics and the IMD led audit culture are central to this place-making process and are reified and repeated in governance practice/discourse. The relatively distinctive social-political context and geographical position of Hastings within the region, county, and nationally is also employed within this construction of the 'distinct needs of Hastings'. Place-making is presented here as a process that shapes the governance landscape through the scale and geography of partnerships and networks it promotes. Further, it helps

determine the focus of social policy objectives upon issues of deprivation and social justice.

### *A culture of social purpose*

An analysis of the key case study features continues now with an introduction to what is described in the research as a culture of social purpose. This is an additional feature of the distinct socio-political context of Hastings that contributes to an urban regeneration governance culture that in part enables AESS. A key argument underpinning the thesis centres on this distinctive culture of social purpose that was so often noted in the field research and repeatedly discussed in the interviews by stakeholders across all sectors. A 'culture of social purpose' is understood here to mean a collective cultural value for and predisposition towards encouraging, facilitating and getting involved in civic society supporting activity. This culture of social purpose is manifest in large-scale volunteer numbers (equivalent contribution of £5,589,220 per annum (HVA, 2008)) employed in over three hundred and fifty VCS organisations in the town. Further, there is evidence of an explicit belief in community activism articulated by the growing stream of new campaigns that were observed in addition to the large numbers of existing long-term community local issue groups. Capitalising on, and in part leading this culture of social purpose is a sophisticated VCS core embedded in the senior governance structures and helping to develop a growing number of new organisations to support different communities of identity and interest. The core VCS are of particular interest to the research owing to their reach into all the structures observed often at Board level including Chair or Vice Chair positions within those structures. For example, there was a VCS Chair of the LSP from 2008-10. In Hastings this contributes to a contrasting picture of increased influence rather than the neutralised and less powerful (almost subservient or dependent) picture of VCS roles in these hybrid partnerships that are commonly observed by other scholars (Baeten, 2009; Davies, 2004; Jones and Evans, 2008; Taylor, 2007).

In Chapter 8 the nature of the VCS is explored as part of the thesis argument of AESS enablers, and key to this discussion is their scale, seniority in

governance structures, cross-sector allies, and knowledge developed over a decade of experience in regeneration. This knowledge is integral to the institutional learning around partnership and collaboration that is central to AESS in the Hastings case study. Evidence from meetings, interviews and the scale of civic activity observed makes it clear that this is a town that believes its voice should be heard, and if the service is not provided by the state, or a subdued private sector, then it will be filled by the community. This appetite, even in deprived pockets of Hastings, for volunteering and community participation is stressed in a cohesion meeting by an RSL Director:

“We are consulting on a community development strategy which does have community cohesion element to it and we had a consultation residents event last Saturday and one of the interesting themes that is coming out is people want more support on how to volunteer in their communities and people want to do things on their own terms but don’t know how to do it or are discouraged to doing it e.g. through CRB checks ...” [Cohesion Mtg – 21.6.10 - RSL Director]

Passionate interview responses from Councillors, local government and agency officers and VCS members shows this culture of social purpose is heavily tied up with the distinctive history and identity of Hastings. This plays an important role within the distinct characterisation of Hastings constructed by all sectors within the regeneration community. As the mission statement for the town’s Sustainable Community Strategy makes clear this identity of social purpose goes to the core of the social regeneration vision for Hastings, and indeed the social sustainability of its distinct values and culture:

“To build on the town’s strong community spirit, culture and diverse population and extraordinary natural environment to create a safer, healthier more sustainable and more prosperous place with lasting opportunities for everyone.” [SCS Mission Statement, 2011]

One senior HBC officer explained how important it was to demonstrate this social purpose and depth of community participation when lobbying for

funding support. In the quotation below a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) housing officer explains this history and culture of activism in the town:

“There have always been movements in Hastings, it is a changing town not scared of new ideas and critically looking at itself at what needs to change. There has been activism – before I became an adult – like the Broomgrove riots a big feature of this region and raised the profile of Hastings as a deprived area and when it came round to Neighbourhood Renewal the issues of deprivation put Hastings on the government agenda hence why Hastings was picked as one of the Management Pathfinder pilots.” [James – 6.10.10 – RSL officer/AMB and NF member]

A senior HBC officer describes the presence and agency of that genuine narrative, or representation of activism, and how that usefully now fits in with the current central government narrative of Big Society. This culture of social purpose is also a part of the place-making and construction of the distinctive story of Hastings:

“It is about giving her [the MP] the narrative and being smart with the discourse of Big Society and giving her a story to tell in Whitehall about the Big Society in Hastings, let’s make it easy for them to say this is what it is, we are already doing it ... there is something about Hastings that is not just attracting artists but community activists of a real quality and that is really exciting and it is not coincidence.” [Gloria-21.10.10 – Senior HBC officer]

The culture of social purpose that exists in the town forms a key part of the distinctive history and socio-political context in which AESS is framed. Further it feeds into wider academic debates over the use of ‘community’ as a target and instrument of regeneration under early New Labour as the preferred site of regeneration interventions (Wallace, 2010). The pre-existing and organic presence of an engaged civic profile is separate to and in conflict with the critiques of a shallow understanding of community, and inequity of a prescribed ‘active citizenship’ encouraged under New Labour as argued by

Raco (2005) and Wallace (2010) respectively. Acknowledging this culture of social purpose and its role in the social construction of the distinctive Hastings story reinforces the importance of analysing the presence of pre-existing social networks and organisations in the likely success of engagement practices (also argued by Cento Bull and Jones, (2006)).

### *The importance of political traditions*

Underlining much of the distinctive characterisation of Hastings is a particularly active community politics dominated by a well-established local Labour party presence. As demonstrated in the quotations below there are three important issues with regard to the political traditions of the town that are further developed in later chapters regarding the construction/obstruction of AESS. The first is the tension and conflicting priorities that have developed between the predominantly Labour District Council and the Conservative East Sussex County Council. The second issue around political traditions is to do with the culture of community politics and activism that is encouraged by a very visible and active majority of local Labour Councillors in Hastings. The third point relates to the processes of getting the story of 'deprived Hastings' heard in Whitehall.

The conflicting and so obstructive political traditions of the two-tier council can be seen in this quotation from a senior VCS member. This further reinforces the identity and geography of difference Hastings secures through such opposing discourses of regeneration between a deprived coastal town and that of a relatively affluent county:

“Has it [social agenda] always been narrowing the gap?” [JOW]  
“It always has, that is the community strategy, and that is what has dominated, trying to bring Hastings up, there are other agendas, East Sussex is aggressively Tory and we are fairly aggressively Labour and there was always a feeling of why do you need all that money, almost pull yourself up by your bootstraps – then when we got a Labour MP in 1997 and it has been an ongoing tension as a 2 tier authority – with Hastings it is narrowing the gap, where as East Sussex are about we

are great and we want to be greater not let's bring these people up, we don't want to be just the best region in Britain we want to be the best in Europe." [Jemima - 8.6.10 – VCS leader]

The impact of the dominant culture of local Labour politics upon local governance can also be seen in the explicit and vocal engagement by Labour councillors with central New Labour government discourses of community empowerment, participation, and the importance of 'narrowing the gap'. This clearly creates a climate of increased engagement with the VCS and a strong belief in the role of the VCS in local decision-making. While the next quotation from a senior HBC officer demonstrates the implications of the return of experienced Labour politicians after the uncertainty displayed by less experienced Conservative councillors. Clearly the established Labour political tradition in Hastings has an impact on its governance culture and the nature of the social regeneration agenda that it then shapes:

"There is a difference in how Labour and Conservative groups do business with Labour wanting to drive the agenda, and Conservatives who had been out of power for a long time when they came in were very much officer led and Labour have come back and taken the initiative back in terms of being the decision-makers so they want to have their stamp on everything and there is nothing wrong with that, that is part of a democracy and you use the expertise of the officers and they make the decisions at the end of the day and the balance of power has swung back and clearly you have Councillors back who are used to running the shop." [George – 13.10.10 – Safer Hastings Partnership]

The shifting links between local and national political traditions also has implications for the nature of social regeneration in this complex case study. When Hastings had a Labour MP and a Labour Council for the majority of the New Labour years this led to a more direct link and mutual empathy with central government policy and discourse. During this time Hastings was repeatedly highlighted as an example of best practice or selected for pilot projects in community partnership, engagement and cohesion work (e.g. the

Hollington Pathfinder). The impact of political traditions became even more explicit towards the end of the time in the field (2010/11) with the change of central government to a Conservative led coalition and locally a return to a Labour majority District Council. This shift in the political landscape determines the focus of social regeneration discourse, policy and practices in Hastings and the subsequent construction of AESS (as discussed in the following chapters). The change of central government has seen an aggressive cuts agenda with serious implications for a public sector reliant city such as Hastings (Centre for Cities, 2009). Equally the Coalition abolition of the regional tier that was so central to directing the funding to Hastings, and was such a key player in the construction of the Hastings story, has dramatic implications for where and how that story will now develop.

Since 2010 the governance and regeneration landscape in Hastings has been dominated by three Coalition government political agendas. The most dominant at a local scale is the Localism agenda with the introduction of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill. This is related to the second agenda that involves trying to understand and capitalise on the central government Big Society narrative. Finally, following the abolition of the regional tier, finding a forum for the Hastings message in the vast sub-regional Kent, East Sussex and Essex LEP has become a new focus of local government. The role of political traditions and the changing nature of making the case for Hastings depending on the political/governance landscape is made clearly by a senior Labour Councillor below:

“A rapidly changing landscape, change of administration at the centre, and locally - what does this mean in terms of the regeneration agenda?” [JOW]

“Pre 2006 we had a Labour government, Labour council and Labour MP, and then we had a hung council and Labour MP and now we have a Labour council, and Conservative MP and Conservative government, we were only previously in power with a Labour government and we had a good in road into national decision-making as the Labour MP would take up our issues we wanted and that was how we got the money for the Taskforce really as we locally and him

nationally were able to convince the government of the special needs of Hastings, and Hastings has benefited massively in terms of physical regeneration and the other money like Neighbourhood Renewal we were entitled to. ... so we are now in a very different situation with a government committed to cutting the budget deficit in 4 years which I could say is philosophically attuned with spending less in the first place. We have an MP that shares their philosophical view not ours. So it may be a case of defending Hastings against those cuts and promoting Hastings to get the benefits of government support ... we have to argue now that Hastings is vulnerable to public sector job losses, but with the potential to develop if the private sector can be encouraged. We can unlock the potential of Hastings with government support.” [Harry]

“So a change of packaging?”[JOW]

“Yes!!” [Harry – 22.11.10- Senior HBC Councillor]

As illustrated above place-making is key to the construction of the Hastings story and so the nature of Hastings’s social regeneration. Senior stakeholders continue to make the case for Hastings with renewed vigour, and by learning the new language/discourse of current political fashion (i.e. Big Society/localism) in order to make that case more effectively. The lobbying of agencies to remember the specific case of Hastings despite dramatic funding cuts dominated meetings observed from 2010. The research highlights that as the governance and political landscape shifts so too do the routes and rules of place-making. The changing geographies of representation of the Hastings story in senior structures is part of that evolving governance strategy as this senior Councillor describes:

“So we will continue to argue the particular needs of Hastings, no longer as part of the South East but within East Sussex, Kent and Essex, so what we are doing is looking to link up with other coastal communities within the LEP area that will have a particular set of interests of which Hastings is the most significant but there are similar interests in east Kent and in east Clacton, that are somewhat similar to those that Hastings face and we will want to make sure within the

LEP there are governance arrangements that cover that.” [Harry]  
“Do you know yet how Hastings will get its voice into the LEP?” [JOW]  
“No – but it would mean something like the County Council and two Districts on the LEP. We will say that it would be bloody ridiculous if Hastings is not on there given it is the only one that hits all criteria [for the Regional Growth Fund].” [Harry – 22.11.10 – Senior HBC Councillor]

This section has outlined the dominant themes within the Hastings socio-political context that this thesis argues have an agency in shaping the nature of regeneration governance and policy focus in the town. This is a central part of the research objective of developing a case study of the Hastings regeneration community. The very specific social regeneration challenges of this deprived coastal town were given weight and understanding through an IMD led audit culture that was key to the managerialist approach to urban regeneration that was so valued by New Labour (Jones and Evans, 2008). This evidence and bench-marking forced an important shift in acknowledgment by regional and central government stakeholders of the needs of Hastings as a deprived town. The evidence base was used by politicians, public sector officers and VCS members to feed into the construction of a case for ‘the distinct needs of Hastings’.

Specific focus is given in this section to the shifting geographies prioritised in this political and governance place-making of Hastings in relation to East Sussex, the South East and other deprived English coastal towns. Finally, the coastal geography is given renewed focus within contemporary efforts to align the Hastings story with other deprived towns along the South coast. This thesis argues that the specificity of the Hastings geography, a culture of social purpose, alignment and conflicts of political traditions, and an increased evidence base of social and economic policy indicators are central to the construction of the distinctive Hastings regeneration story. In this way the place-making (i.e. the mobilising of Hastings ‘storylines’ and representations) and the broader socio-political context shape the nature and focus of regeneration policy, the scale of funding streams and the form of institutions that then deliver those interventions. In turn they help shape a

governance landscape and culture that both marginalises and facilitates AESS (as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8).

Section 5.3 describes the dominant social dimensions of urban regeneration in Hastings, and how they comply with or resist wider national trends and critiques of UK urban regeneration policy and practice. This will build on the case study content introduced above and directly addresses the research objective to identify the key social regeneration agendas in Hastings.

### 5.3. Dominant social regeneration agendas in this landscape

In addressing one of the key objectives of this project, the following analysis explores the dominant social regeneration themes observed in this case study. The analysis focuses on themes that relate directly to social regeneration, social sustainability and the legacy of the New Labour regeneration policy context locally. The discussion below explores the notable absence of a holistic sustainability agenda and distinct absence of an explicit social sustainability agenda in this governance landscape. This draws on a particular inconsistency of sustainability agendas and discourse between regional and local scales. However, the social sustainability related topics of community participation and narrowing the gap (as described above) are especially noted for their dominance and their prevalence across multiple structures. This prevalence manifests in terms of the time and resources allocated to them, the power of the narrative in influencing policy, and their role in mobilising Hastings storylines.

Through analysing how these social regeneration themes manifest and are shaped by this landscape the discussion highlights how AESS might emerge or be obstructed accordingly. The findings below describe how the 'narrowing the gap' agenda issued from New Labour national policy and how this has been embedded and renegotiated in the local regeneration governance culture. The section is however, dominated by a discussion of the variegated use of 'community' in social regeneration themes in Hastings. Reflecting on the arguments of Raco (2005; 2007) and Wallace (2010) the way community is used as both a target and instrument of social regeneration policy is

introduced in this section, and developed further in later chapters as both an enabling and limiting factor in AESS. The section concludes with an analysis of the dominant education-led regeneration policy focus in Hastings. A very localised focus upon large-scale physical investment in education was a prominent element in the Hastings regeneration Masterplan over the last decade. Education is shown to be the key social aspect of the otherwise neo-liberalised physical/economic regeneration interventions led by SEEDA.

### *Elusive holistic sustainability agendas*

The objectives of the research meant being alive to the presence or absence of explicit sustainability agendas, and specifically social sustainability in social regeneration discourse and practices in Hastings. At a regional level an analysis of the data could be said to demonstrate the complete dominance of a neo-liberalised, technocratic and economic prosperity sustainability agenda, with secondary reference to climate change and the green economy, (thus echoing the observations of Batchelor and Patterson, 2007). The absence of social sustainability discourse in regional policy meetings was notable and only hinted at in the lowest of four SEEPB regional priorities after economic growth, low carbon society and resilience to climate change. Even this was challenged by a SEEDA member for not focussing enough on capital investment in infrastructure, which led to the relegation of the environmental sustainability agendas:

“I support the economy being at the top but we can’t have the 4 others without any reference to infrastructure investment ... so I suggest you put low carbon society and climate change resilience together and put infrastructure investment second.” [SEEDA Board Member – SEEPB mtg – 30.3.10]

The negative implication for the social policy pillar of a regional tier that is dominated by such an explicit neo-liberal economic agenda is made clear in this quotation from a Environment Agency representative:

‘You will not narrow the gap if you follow an invest in success line ...

the environmental and social elements of [objective] 4 needs to be much much clearer.' EA

"No 4 is really a catch all . . . ' Planning Dir [ SEEPB mtg – 30.3.10]

Any specific references to social sustainability at this scale were largely observed in technical sustainability assessment planning documents relating to the SRS (Single Regional Strategy) as determined by central government. Social sustainability and its underlying normative values are otherwise usurped at this scale of regeneration governance by a zealous sustainable economic growth discourse. The aggressive neo-liberal economic discourse used at the regional level is presented in Chapter 7 as a clear obstruction to AESS. Echoing the critiques of both Batchelor and Patterson (2007) and Gibbs *et al.* (2002) it was clear that the dominant neo-liberalised structures at the regional scale ensure that any form of counter-hegemonic agenda receives little support or opportunity of expression.

The further weakening of the regional holistic sustainability agenda was observed during the research following the Sub-National Review of the regional tier in 2008/9. A broader sustainability agenda evident in the SEEDA Regional Economic Strategy (2006-16), the SEERA Sustainable Futures Group, (2007-9) and their mutual responsibility for the Regional Sustainability Framework (2008-9), was foreclosed when they all ceased to exist following this reorganisation. It was clear from the stated objectives and dominant meeting and policy discourse of the new SEEPB ('invest in success' and 'sustainable economic growth') and SEEDA ('smart growth' and 'sustainable prosperity') that the economic sustainability agenda was king. This dominance has since been amplified by the abolition by the Coalition government of the regional tier, and their replacement with sub-regional LEPs that place even greater focus on the economic agenda and have no VCS involvement. At the same time as the holistic sustainability agenda lost any regional presence the Coalition also abolished the central government Sustainable Development Commission whose remit was to encourage a holistic sustainability agenda across Whitehall departments. Further, the Coalition are currently consulting on a contentious new Draft National Planning Policy Framework which places the 'presumption in favour of

sustainable development' (DCLG, 2011:V) thus risking placing greater priority again on the economic rather than the environmental and social pillars of sustainability. The fast-paced reshaping and rescaling of sub-national governance in England over the last decade continues to challenge a meaningful institutional embedding of holistic sustainability values at this level and so has implications for AESS at a local scale.

At a more local level social sustainability as a concept often lacked meaning to the interviewees and structures in this case study. Sustainable community policies are not explicitly labelled and the phrase is not utilised in any of the county, district, area or neighbourhood level meetings. An exception is the central government labelled LSP 'Sustainable Community Strategy.' The absence of social sustainability discourse at a local level is interesting given the growing focus at national level on social elements of sustainable development over the last decade. This includes, Sustainable Communities: Building for our Future, ODPM, 2003 and the Sustainable Communities Act, 2009. While social sustainability is a concept absent in meetings, interviews, and policy documents, its softer normative values of social capital, social equity, engaged governance and community participation dominate Hastings governance. This goes to the core of the thesis argument of Actually Existing Social Sustainability (AESS), building on the argument made by Krueger and Agyemen, (2005) concerning 'Actually Existing Sustainabilities'. It is argued in this research that social sustainability is active in practices in some local regeneration governance, but is not explicit in policy discourse or narratives at this scale. Sustainability discourse locally is used in terms of climate change and framed by narratives of coastal town adaptation, the sustainable fisheries, or central government imposed national indicators (Sustainable Community Strategy, 2003, HLSP). The thesis argument concerning the 'actually existing' nature of social sustainability in Hastings demonstrates the importance methodologically of examining the agency of both discourses/representations of sustainability *and* governance practices in mobilising and marginalising social sustainability practice (as argued by Raco, (2007b) in terms of urban development research more generally).

### *Narrowing the gap*

'Narrowing the gap' is the most prevalent overarching social regeneration agenda in the local structures in Hastings and is in part a discourse and policy legacy of the New Labour Neighbourhood Renewal policies (Houghton and Blume, 2011). The discourse is a very powerful political agenda employed in this institutional space to great effect by VCS members and local Councillors in particular when highlighting gaps in service delivery and geographical disparity of IMD or National Indicator results. Its absence under the two year Conservative led hung District Council corporate plan was a lobbying point for the VCS and it was reinstated with the return to a Labour council in 2010.

'Narrowing the gap' is an agenda designed to reduce the quality of life gap (regarding health, education, employment and well-being), between those most deprived parts of Hastings and the rest of the town, and between Hastings and the rest of East Sussex and national averages (Hastings Corporate Plan, 2009/10). This agenda is loaded with national level policy legitimacy, given the level of resources and policy time it has been allocated over the last ten years through Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Cohesion and New Deal for Communities funding. It is also infused with ethical and moral imperatives of social justice and social equity. For this reason it is heavily linked with social sustainability values (Cuthill, 2010) and described in Chapter 8 as an enabling AESS agenda. Responding to the economic and social justice gap experienced in England's towns was a central tenet of the Blair/New Labour regeneration project that led to the development of the IMD, and a plethora of social regeneration policies, funding streams and white papers. These included: New Deal for Communities 1998-2008 (SEU, 1998); Sustainable Community Strategy 2002 (HLSP, 2002); National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, (SEU, 1998) and A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal, (SEU, 2001) (Jones and Evans, 2008).

In Hastings the allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal funding and selection of Hollington as a Management Pathfinder pilot led to the development of

Neighbourhood Forums in the four most deprived communities in the town: Hollington, Ore Valley, Gensing and St Leonards and latterly the Old Town. The narrowing the gap agenda is the main LSP target and was concerned with this social regeneration investment around social capital building, community engagement, engaged governance and equitable access to services: all aspects of social sustainability practice and values (Cuthill, 2010). It has been the overarching target of the Sustainable Community Strategy since 2003 and so is a key aspiration for the town's social regeneration. It is now included again in the HBC Corporate Plan and the local Labour party manifesto. It is repeated in meeting documents and minutes, is monitored as part of a review of social regeneration targets and through this repetition has been embedded into local governance practice and culture. This exchange in a Community Cohesion meeting highlights the value placed on the 'Narrowing the Gap' agenda by a VCS leader, HBC officer and a Labour Councillor:

"Nice to see narrowing the gap back on the agenda with Indices of Multiple Deprivation being ignored for the last 2 years ... nice to see it back on the agenda." [LSP Chair]

"There is a lot of IMD data missing from that time." [HBC officer]

"Yes well a lot of work to do but nice to see it back and it is one of the priorities." [Chair - Cohesion Mtg – 21.6.10]

Narrowing the gap is a dominant social regeneration agenda in Hastings. In particular the social justice imperatives it can stand for have proved to be valued, and then lobbied for and renegotiated locally. This renegotiation has been constructed through the Sustainable Community Strategy targets, the distinctive social profile in the region and the dominant left leaning political traditions in the town that have supported and advanced this agenda.

*'Community': engagement or responsabilisation?*

The chapter analysis of key social regeneration agendas continues now with a discussion of the second dominant agenda of community engagement and participation. New Labour use of 'community' in social regeneration policy is

heavily critiqued (Raco, 2005; Wallace, 2010). How 'community' based policy manifests or is implemented at a local level in Hastings has implications for barriers and enablers of AESS in terms of participation, social justice and empowerment. This section will explore 'community' in terms of straightforward engagement processes and structures, but also in terms of its dominant role in community cohesion, neighbourhood management, neighbourhood policing and the community health agendas in Hastings.

Community engagement is an extremely prevalent social regeneration agenda from Neighbourhood Forum to ESSP scale in this governance landscape. Engagement frameworks, protocols, methods, evaluation, monitoring and critiques of poor engagement practices repeatedly feature in debates, policy documents and governance practices in Hastings. The sub-regional structures all regularly gave priority to this agenda over the course of the year of observation. While the role of community partnerships is discussed as a major governance theme in Chapter 6, it is also a dominant social regeneration agenda in its own right. From the Urban Renaissance White Paper (1999) onwards the role of community engagement (i.e. local people involved in decision-making regarding the regeneration of their neighbourhood and town) was a central New Labour regeneration theme and key to achieving local sustainability through urban regeneration and renewal projects (Jones and Evans, 2008). Central government reports repeatedly critiqued previous 'done to' regeneration programmes that failed to engage local people, and worse, further marginalise them through top down regeneration policies (ODPM, 2005). Harnessing local knowledge and involvement to resolve local problems was a Blair government priority (Raco, 2005) as can be witnessed through the scale of White Papers and legislation that was issued under their tenure to try to make community engagement in local regeneration a reality. This included: Sustainable Community Strategy, (2003); Firm Foundations, (2004); Communities in Control: real people, real power – empowerment white paper, (2008); Creating strong, safe and prosperous communities, (2008) and the duty to 'inform, consult and involve', (2009).

The community engagement social regeneration agenda in Hastings was

clearly influenced by this national discourse and group of engagement policies. The Firm Foundations and Communities in Control White Papers were repeatedly used by VCS members in meetings to leverage increased community engagement in the governance process in Hastings. Latterly in the research process the Duty to Involve legislation triggered a review of depth of representation and quality of consultation process and policy across the LSP structures. Further, there was commitment in parts of the infrastructure displayed in meetings and terms of reference or protocols to the East Sussex Compact. The Compact is an East Sussex-wide localised version of the National Compact published by New Labour in 1998 that is a VCS-public sector agreement to commit to principles of diversity, equality, community engagement, respect and accountability in their relations (ESCC, 2003). The dominance of the engagement agenda and the embedded nature of the hybrid partnership structures and participatory models of governance in Hastings are discussed in Chapter 8 as enabling a climate of social change. The dominance of this agenda in the Hastings landscape is made clear by this senior Councillor:

“What in your view is the dominant social regeneration agenda in the town and how has that changed?” [JOW]

“It is difficult to say the primary activity as there are many parts. But there have been two major aspects of regeneration – one has been developing the community capacity to get involved in decision making and have stake in their own area and the second is getting people in a position to take up the employment opportunities we hope the physical regeneration will unlock.” [Harry – 22.11.10 – Senior Councillor]

The scale and maturity of the engagement culture has resulted in a raised level of expectation of involvement of the local community and movements towards a collaborative and dialogue based framework of town-wide engagement. This point is evident in the comment by a Thematic Partnership board member below regarding the embedded nature of the consultation process across social regeneration themes and in this case education and the new academies:

“It is important to stress community/parent group representation in this governance model to ensure we have fair representation and raise expectations on this ... It is the whole responsibility of the community as is representation from health as welfare of the children is key ... the consultation process begins again and we have had the terms of reference for the stakeholder group signed off by the LSP and it has already expanded following the last LSP meeting.” [LSTP member - HHPmtg – 18.5.10]

Increasing community participation and so ownership and then responsibility for local issues is a key process of the hollowing out of the state and ultimate rescaling of governance to the active citizen (Taylor, 2003; 2007). In Chapter 7 the limitations and flaws of this process of community engagement/participation in the Hastings infrastructure are highlighted as barriers to AESS. In Chapter 8 however, this embedded institutional normative and its valued presence in governance practice is understood as an enabler to AESS given that scholars highlight the role of participation in engaged governance and the social capital involved with that process as key foundations for social sustainability (Colantonio, 2009; Cuthill, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005).

#### *‘Community’ and crime and safety*

Part of the construction of the ‘community’ as both target and instrument of New Labour regeneration policy is witnessed in the key social policy area of crime and safety. The Thematic Partnership for crime and safety was dominated by a Home Office agenda and a formal practitioner-led culture in the meetings with limited VCS involvement. In the wider Area Based Structures however, the community was heavily involved in the dominant neighbourhood policing and co-production approach to this aspect of social regeneration that has been a mainstay of New Labour policing policy (see Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, 2006; Neighbourhood Policing Programme, 2006-8; Community Safety Partnerships/Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, 2007). Every AMB and NF meeting attended during the research included senior and local police representatives giving up-to-

date statistics for that area and engaging the community representatives to be involved in the monthly street meetings. Each of these structures had a crime and safety SIG with multiple sector members including the community.

The scale and comprehensiveness of community and neighbourhood policing has had a significant impact upon the crime levels in Hastings over the last decade with NRU commendations and requests to speak at national conferences on the neighbourhood and community safety partnership approaches developed in Hastings ([www.saferhastings.co.uk](http://www.saferhastings.co.uk), 2010). This engagement with the community to act collaboratively with the police and other services is indicative of what Wallace (2010) describes as the appropriation of the community concept by loading it with moral overtones of self-governance and responsibility. Neighbourhood policing and the co-production of neighbourhood management with the community elicits from the New Labour communitarian approach to governance that emphasizes rights and responsibilities (Manzi *et al.* 2010). The quotation below from a neighbourhood police officer at an AMB meeting stresses the importance of community engagement in this policing process in Hastings and how embedded this agenda is within the regeneration governance landscape:

“We try to improve public perception of what we do and trust and access you all have and how we ensure the influence of the community with x number of street meetings, area panels and that is now embedded ... we need to look at how we engage the community better and how we can work better as a partnership for example working with registered housing, fire service etc. ... also we have just signed a memorandum with community payback of 3000 hours for the year and we can discuss in the panels what you would want that resource spent on.” [Neighbourhood Police officer - AMB mtg 23.2.10]

Wallace (2010) argues this use of community is one where the concept is reified and prescribed as a stable, depoliticised and cohesive technology of governance. This he argues fails to take into account the fluidity, multiplicity, contested and sometimes destructive nature of the concept. The neighbourhood policing focus and extensive micro-community governance

structures developed in Hastings have critiqued 'moral renaissance' (p.6) implications (Wallace, 2010). This is implicit in the use of community to encourage self-policing, surveillance and the creation of mutual values for security in efforts to achieve sustainable communities. Yet these structures and intensive neighbourhood policing commitments in the most deprived areas provide a growing social infrastructure of groups that meet fortnightly and monthly at street, neighbourhood and area level to debate and support a common sense of how a culture of safety/livability can be sustained or created in their town (i.e. what social is to be sustained). They provide a route into engaged governance that reaches from the very local scale to strategic levels, and helps community members develop confidence in participating in local decision-making. These are all identified by other observers as aspects of social sustainability (Cuthill, 2010; Pares and Sauri, 2007).

'Community' has been observed to be a central scale and instrument of the crime and safety social regeneration theme in Hastings. Determined by a strict Home Office agenda that funds and shapes a successful crime and safety partnership and comprehensive neighbourhood policing approach, this use of community has distinct central policy hallmarks. While the prevalence of the central New Labour community discourse is clearly evident in Hastings there is still some degree of renegotiation at a local level in the process of co-production of neighbourhood safety. That process of co-production increases community engagement, involvement in local policing priorities, social capital and further develops an already extensive network of social infrastructures. While this morally loaded appropriation of community must be interrogated and challenged (Wallace, 2010), its contribution to AESS must also be critiqued and acknowledged as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

#### *'Community' and community cohesion*

Community related concepts dominate social regeneration themes in the case study including the community cohesion agenda. In terms of governance this theme is dominated by the Community Cohesion Steering Group which is largely led by, or facilitated by the local council. This structure

has recently evolved to respond to shifting national agendas and legislation around Equalities and the development of an Equalities Protocol by the local Labour administration in 2010/11. The original cohesion targets in the SCS are a function of Place Survey results which in 2006/7 showed Hastings in the lowest scoring 10% of councils nationally with regard to people from different backgrounds getting on (Sustainable Community Strategy, 2003, HLSP). The cohesion agenda was prominent in the New Labour urban renewal project as part of a response to the growing racial and cultural tensions in England and the parallel rise in nationalistic politics by groups like the BNP who were making efforts to achieve a presence in Hastings. For this reason Hastings was in receipt of cohesion project funding as a way to respond to cohesion concerns around a large disenfranchised white deprived community.

The social equality theme that sits at the core of this agenda and the passion and activism with which this hybrid partnership engaged with varied cohesion topics gave further weight to the presence of ethical imperatives of social equity and justice that are features of AESS in Hastings urban regeneration practice.

Notable as absent from the community cohesion agenda, in contrast to the national policy picture, was a mixed community housing policy (Sustainable Communities: Building for our Future, ODPM, 2003; Creating strong, safe and prosperous communities, DCLG, 2008). This omission is likely to be due to the lack of major residential development in the town over the last decade other than a stalled Millennium Community housing development in Ore. The well-established critique that highlights the social costs of purposeful gentrification (Lees, 2008), was therefore also absent in Hastings. Nevertheless, this critique may take on new relevance in the future with new 'Local Space' housing models being developed in Hastings that may lead to the Compulsory Purchase Order of small areas of run down HMOs that will then be redeveloped.

### *'Community' and neighbourhood management*

The Housing Thematic Partnership of the LSP doesn't currently meet hence it was not available to be included in the observation sample. Instead the theme was explored through interview and policy discourse analysis plus the frequent Registered Social Landlord (RSL) presence at most other structures. This decision not to meet was explained by an RSL Director as a consequence of the top-down control of housing targets by the regional tier and central government – i.e. there is nothing to debate and the major decisions had already been made.

Yet the housing theme was important in this space not least of all due to the heritage of activism that has issued from extensive social tenant structures in the town. Also the presence and active involvement of the RSLs on all the other AMB and NF structures was explicit and notable in the meeting observation. Further, their active engagement in the ABS extended to committing small grants to community groups and NFs for their campaigns and events. The RSLs in Hastings embraced the New Labour communitarian neighbourhood management approach discussed above in the crime and safety and community engagement themes. This included the facilitation of separate tenant engagement structures through the provision of community space, small grants, help with setting up and maintaining the group's activities and engagement in the estate management decisions. This building of social networks and social capital in the tenant communities through these structures was encouraged under New Labour to mitigate 'neighbourhood effects' through neighbourhood management and the responsabilisation of communities (Manzi, 2010).

The frequent RSL-led community consultations and co-produced strategies (e.g. Youth Play Strategy and Community Development Strategy), were an important part of the community being involved in local decision-making around social regeneration issues. From this perspective the agency of RSLs in this space can be understood as enablers of AESS through their role in community empowerment, engagement and participation. Yet the role of RSLs in Hastings regeneration can also be critiqued as part of the wider

discussion of the responsabilisation of citizens (Raco, 2007). Further, the dominant top-down central government control of the housing agenda described above clearly demonstrates the continued limitation of VCS influence in some hybrid partnerships (Davies, 2004, 2005).

### *'Community' and health inequalities*

The research demonstrates that 'community' agenda is also very evident within the workings of the health inequalities theme through the fostering of community participation, partnership and co-production through the health Thematic Partnership. The health Thematic Partnership is particularly active, has six VCS representatives and has protocols that establish the VCS voice in strategic structures as well as statutory agency responsibilities to the VCS. Further it funds VCS groups on a long-term basis and through small annual grants for the delivery of shorter-term community health and wellbeing projects. Each health Thematic Partnership meeting attended included strong VCS representation with agencies being held to account and the processes of engagement repeatedly challenged and debated. Once again the Hastings governance landscape facilitates the building of social capital through partnership and participation (Manzi, 2010). A VCS leader involved in the health structures comments below on the value of this community participation and the co-production of community well-being through a hybrid partnership model:

"I have been very impressed within the Health area locally, they are very receptive and we have a good rapport and VCS has a good representation on the HHP and we have protocols now and we realise this is a two way process of getting information out there [as well]. In day care we are very much involved as Hastings is a very deprived area and a large elderly population and we from the VCS have been involved with Age Concern and working closely with them. I think partnerships will be even more important in the future than they have been as there is so little to go round." [Albert – 25.5.10 – VCS leader]

Health related social regeneration practice further extends the use in this

case study of the 'community' in the co-production of a healthier town. The role of hybrid governance structures and the governance practices used to engage community members are particularly central to this collaboration. The nature and evolution of this prolific form of governance in Hastings regeneration is examined further in Chapter 6.

### *Education-led regeneration*

After 'narrowing the gap' and the role of community participation, the third and final dominant social regeneration agenda was that of 'education-led regeneration'. This agenda was prevalent in debates from grassroots forums (NF and RA) to senior town-wide strategic structures (Taskforce and LSP). It is a dominant discourse in any formal description of the Hastings regeneration agenda. Education-led regeneration is both a key feature of the social regeneration strategy ('A learning town' - Sustainable Community Strategy, LSP, 2003), and also a key priority of the physical/economic agenda of the Taskforce and URC led Masterplan (Five Point Plan, Hastings and Bexhill Taskforce, 2001):

"I have been very involved in the 5 Point Plan and at the top of that agenda was education-led regeneration as the key priority for regeneration in Hastings." [Greg - 21.3.11 – Taskforce member]

From a physical capital investment perspective this has involved the development of University Centre Hastings (HE provision in the town for the first time), South Coast College Hastings (a new FE college) and now two new academies (to replace failing secondary schools).

The learning and skills Thematic Partnership structure has a strong VCS presence and voice, but is fundamentally controlled by ESCC who are responsible for the delivery of education services in the town. Yet the VCS voice and capacity maintained around this agenda in all structures was that of a critical friend and challenging voice. This is in addition to VCS led delivery of formal town-wide education conferences, consultations and research initiatives that issued from the NFs and AMBs. Their engagement and leadership on this macro issue was an impressive demonstration of the VCS influence and level of activity in this town. This is again counter to the

DeFillipis *et al.* (2006) critique of community organisations co-opting into state prescribed roles/agendas and failing to engage in or challenge such important macro issues. This is also further evidence of the culture of social purpose that enriches parts of this community identity and makes for a distinctive socio-political and institutional context for the evolving form of AESS. This VCS contribution to driving forward the education agenda was acknowledged at a Community Network meeting:

“I would like it minuted our thanks for all the considerable work done by xx [NF member], he bore the burden for a very successful conference ... this conference did involve all those attending ... this started in 2007 with the conference [again led by an NF] when we couldn't have been in a worse position and xx [NF member] has led the work with University of Brighton to do some research that is already showing results ... working on ideas of how children live and we are sharing that information ... March 2010 conference was a turning point. We would never have looked at these things [as a town] without all the work of xx [NF member].” [George – 8.4.10 – Community Network meeting]

From a SEEDA perspective this investment in education-led regeneration was presented as a transformational action aligned to its skills, innovation and global competitiveness objectives (Regional Economic Strategy 2006-16). The inclusion of education in the Five Point Plan is presented by Taskforce members as demonstrating their more holistic approach to urban regeneration. The other four aspects of the Five Point Plan are focussed on physical infrastructure and economic growth. This close linking of the employment and education agenda in Hastings reflects a neo-liberalised engagement with education regeneration policy under New Labour that was aligned to national strategies of innovation, enterprise and knowledge-based economic growth (Jones and Evans, 2008). This mixing of sustainability issues like education and market-based solutions and institutions (e.g. the URC business plan) is a point highlighted in the urban governance research by Krueger and Gibbs (2010). This point is reflected in the comments made by a Sea Space member regarding the education-skills link and ultimate economic RDA priority. The broader agenda of regional economic

competitiveness is the key reason for SEEDA's focus on education in Hastings as these comments make clear:

“How would you characterise the Sea Space agenda?” [JOW]

“It is really about improving skills, creating quality jobs through creation of education establishment, new degrees and creating business space to attract local businesses and businesses from outside.”[Lucy]

“Is education also a priority at regional level?” [JOW]

“It probably depends where you are in the region – across the region as a whole the level of education is good – but there are pockets of deprivation especially along the coast and so it will remain a priority to address those pockets of deprivation as if you can address those issues in those locations then you can make the region incredibly successful – if you can tackle economic inactivity across the region as a whole which is already very good overall – and it will remain a priority for that reason.” [Lucy - 18.2.10 – URC member]

Education-led regeneration has been the watch-word of Hastings regeneration for the last decade. It is the social face of the neo-liberal economic agendas of the RDA and of the Masterplanning process. In contrast the VCS involvement and even leadership has led a bottom-up groundswell of community activism around three education conferences, county and government office lobbying, community-led university research, and fighting for local accountability within local education governance structures. The VCS involvement and degree of influence is in opposition to usual critiques of the impotence of community partnerships. It will be argued that this level of involvement and influence is a function of an alternative form of activism identified in this case study and described further in Chapter 8 as central to AESS. This activism and political lobbying for the ‘distinct of needs Hastings’ at county and regional level enabled considerable political and financial investment in education in the town. The education agenda has created a unique point of overlap between the otherwise physical/economic and social regeneration agenda disconnect that will be explored in Chapter 6.

#### 5.4. Concluding remarks on the local context

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the key elements of the Hastings case study in terms of the socio-political context and dominant social regeneration agendas that will shape the nature of AESS in this governance landscape and culture. It has been argued that the construction and mobilisation of the 'distinct needs of Hastings' storylines is a function of this socio-political context. Both the place-making and context are key determinants in the form and focus of social regeneration in Hastings. The specificity of place in terms of a shifting geographical focus (coastal, county or regional), political traditions, and a culture of social purpose have interacted with the national and regional policy and governance practices to forge a distinct canvas for both opportunities and potential barriers to AESS.

The findings highlight the AESS related social regeneration agendas in Hastings and how these are shaped by the local socio-political context and the national policies that they resist and affirm. The thesis demonstrates an absence of an explicit local social sustainability agenda, the dominance of an economic neo-liberalised representation of sustainability at the regional level, and throughout, an environmental sustainability agenda that is dominated by climate change. The presence of AESS, however, is demonstrated in the prevalence of the 'narrowing the gap' and community participation agendas. It has been argued here that the latter is particularly significant in the use of 'community' as an instrument of social policy governance. The discussion above however, has made clear the problematic use of 'community' by New Labour as a prescriptive and morally loaded social policy intervention is also present in Hastings regeneration practice (Houghton and Blume, 2011; Raco, 2007; Wallace, 2010). Finally, the research discusses the prominent focus on 'education-led regeneration' in Hastings with evidence of a complex multi-scaled agenda. The education agenda has been forged by a combination of regional scale intervention, national level accountability, and active evidence-led local lobbying of the distinctive needs of Hastings by both the VCS and local political elite. As the social face of a neo-liberalised economic agenda, the RDA education intervention reflected a national level education-skills link with knowledge based economic growth and a regional economic competitiveness policy under New Labour (Jones and Evans, 2008).

This chapter has sought to provide the foundations for the main research target of understanding the influence of different scales, practices and forms of governance upon social sustainability. Chapter 6 develops these foundations by presenting the dominant governance themes forged within and by the distinctive context presented above.

### 6.1. Introduction

In order to explore the impact of governance upon the creation of social sustainability values and practices, I needed to first understand what those governance structures were, their form, how they interacted in the landscape and the cultural governance practices that have developed within them. This chapter discusses the findings of that investigation and situates the core themes of the governance landscape in Hastings within the wider academic discussion on urban governance in England over the last twenty years. The governance themes that emerged as important in influencing social aspects of regeneration (and so AESS), are all related to the process of rescaling and 'governance beyond the state'. These themes include: proliferation of local hybrid partnerships; Urban Renaissance and community as a mode of governance; and the regionalisation of urban development policy. Community as a scale or mode of governance is addressed in this chapter as distinct from the analysis of community as a subject of social regeneration in Chapter 5.

This chapter will build on the profile of local specificity of socio-political context and social regeneration agendas drawn in Chapter 5 with an interrogation of the distinct form of local regeneration governance that has evolved in Hastings. Throughout Chapter 6 the growth and retreat of the influence of central government upon the landscape and discourse of local governance is made apparent. Subsequent chapters demonstrate how the features, form and practices of these evolving modes of governance impact on AESS.

### 6.2. Mapping a complex partnership governance landscape

The profile of deprivation described in Chapter 5 and the subsequent multi-million pound regeneration investment from central and regional government

has created a very locally specific partnership governance landscape in Hastings. The distinctive socio-political and geographical context has been instrumental in the evolution of this very particular governance infrastructure as this Taskforce member makes clear:

“Yes – what do you need in terms of a governance structure to achieve the sorts of [social] changes involved? You have ESCC who have an interest as Hastings as the most deprived town in the county, HBC and its role, you have SEEDA as Hastings is one of the lowest and most deprived towns in the South East region along with other coastal communities along the Kent coast. You have the Taskforce steering group as a local partnership body and the interesting dynamic with the delivery body Sea Space. The way they came together with all those partners around the table in the steering group, money from government routed through SEEDA and then the creation of the regeneration company, who’s job was to deliver on the plan devised by the steering group, so it is an unusual structure ... The governance structure in place has allowed those things to happen and without them they would have had difficulties.” [George – 21.3.11-Taskforce/SEEDA]

The RDA, the senior regeneration Taskforce, a URC and a proliferation of local governance structures are all a function of the acceleration of ‘governance beyond the state’ that has been a dominant feature of regeneration in Hastings for the last decade.

#### *Hollowing out the state and a culture of partnership*

As discussed in Chapter 2 the macro political economy trend of ‘governance beyond the state’ or ‘hollowing out of the state’ has been a widely observed phenomenon in the shift from government to governance across Europe and North America over the last two decades (Jessop, 2002). This phenomenon gained increased momentum under the New Labour government from 1997 onwards and was a key principle of their Third Way politics (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007). This approach was manifest in the development of regional and local tiers of governance both of which are evidenced as central to the

nature of the governance landscape in Hastings. At a regional scale there is the dominant and sustained impact of SEEDA and the SEEDA led URC, while at a local scale there has been a decade of proliferation of multiple local partnerships.

The introduction of a regional tier of governance through the RDAs and Assemblies (later replaced by regional partnerships) was heavily critiqued for their absence of electoral mandate (Jones and Evans, 2008). Certainly in Hastings a perceived sense that SEEDA and Sea Space have delivered 'done to' regeneration, limited consultation and community involvement, and a disconnect of social and economic agendas is passionately articulated in the interviews with members of the VCS:

"I have to say especially at the beginning of the process with Sea Space, it would have benefited them to develop community relations, ... they didn't do themselves any favours by not listening and just a few small wins would have made the whole thing so much simpler, there were so many embarrassing and awful things, ... the consultation process was appalling, I feel like I want to say I won't miss them at all, but they have made a difference to the town, and maybe it is about time this town stood on its own two feet, and sadly it feels like it has had regeneration done to it, but it is never easy ... part of the charm, coherence and cohesion of the town is that it is stropy and it won't be driven. Combine that with 'you will have regeneration whether you want regeneration or not' is not a good combination and leads to sparks." [Gwen – 4.11.10 – VCS member and NF Chair]

At the local level in England as a whole Labour achieved 'hollowing out' through the encouragement of the proliferation of local multi-agency and multi-sector partnerships (i.e. a localisation and hybridisation of local governance) (Gilchrist, 2006). This acceleration of shift to partnership governance was presented by New Labour as central to their urban sustainability and regeneration policy (Jones and Evans, 2008). Governance mapping in Hastings for this research shows the wholesale adoption of the localised and hybrid governance rescaling encouraged by the centre. The complex picture of different regeneration funding streams received by

Hastings is matched by the multitude of governance structures involved in its delivery at different scales. The power of the state within those structures varied along a continuum (minimal to direct control) depending on the funding set up, targets and consequentially the degree of statutory agency/local authority ownership of the agendas. Certainly the Davies (2004 and 2005) critique regarding the enduring uneven distribution of power and state dominance within these partnerships (as directed through the RDA, County Council, Local Authority or Statutory Agency) was evident in this governance landscape.

Further, the research found the Hastings profile of acute urban deprivation (described in Chapter 5) to be combined with a complex and congested partnership-led governance landscape. Nevertheless, this picture of a governance landscape of multiple hybrid partnerships is in sharp contrast to the single community engagement partnership structure that existed prior to 1997. This shift from very limited partnership and engagement skills to a wealth of skills and experience now held within the regeneration community represents a considerable bank of social capital, and so potentially facilitates AESS. However, the research also demonstrates that this busy partnership landscape affirms the wider critique that this governance approach has created institutional and policy congestion (Landry, 2008):

“How do the structures impact the social agenda?” [JOW]

“I think that is interesting, can I explain it in a metaphorical way? It is like a big tank of water on top of a building, water is flowing down, by the time it reaches lower level it is like a drop that is how I see it. There needs to be a good connection between the tank and where it is going. So the system is too big, too many pipes and need to be cut down and have one huge tube directing to the issues.” [Peter – 28.6.10 – HBC Officer]

The wholesale adoption of multi-agency and community-led partnerships is witnessed as a dominant feature within the Hastings regeneration community. In addition the centrality of aspiring to good governance within these partnerships is explicit in the data. This is discussed as part of both the obstruction and facilitation of AESS in Chapters 7 and 8 and is integral to the

thesis argument around the role governance practices play in the formation of local sustainabilities.

The belief in, and appetite for ongoing and evolving new partnership models in Hastings in order to resolve complex social regeneration issues is prominent in observation, policy and interview data and discussed in more detail in the following chapters. It will be suggested that the culturally embedded value of partnership continues to shape an alternative local institutional space for the production of AESS. This appetite extends to consideration of how to use these 'partnership assets' to make a head start in terms of the Big Society and Localism agendas. In addition, these structures have become integral to securing funding and continue to be a key part of EU regeneration bids from Hastings with the new tranche of EU funding placing increased focus on citizen and community participation. The comment below from a senior HBC officer at an AMB meeting highlights the value these structures bring in terms of the construction of the distinct Hastings message and securing funding through valuing good governance and strong multi-sector partnership working:

“... the AMB feature in the European funding plans as it is considered very unusual to have such rich partnership structures with the community, business, elected members [i.e. Area Based Structure] so we should be proud as we are viewed as 'proper' in the views of European funding.” [AMB mtg – 14.7.10 – senior HBC Manager]

Like Gibbs and Krueger (2005) this research finds a collaborative partnership framework and the culture it forges is providing an important space, or site, for the development and replication of sustainability values. While Gibbs and Krueger (2005) focus on environmental sustainability practices this work echoes their findings from a social sustainability perspective.

The embracing of this form of governance has benefited the regeneration community in terms of place-making, securing large scale funding, and partnership skills. The partnership skills legacy of the last decade has led to central government commendations for partnership best practice and the

valuable experience of coming together for the first time to agree a vision for the town and gain a broader understanding of the causes of deprivation. The acquired culture of partnership, that was distinct in its absence prior to 1997, is key to the thesis argument of the nature of AESS and is discussed in Chapter 8. This partnership culture built on an already established culture of social purpose and a pre-existing appetite for activism and social networks (see Chapter 5). Long-term members of the regeneration community observed these foundations as important receptors to this new form of governance and key to creating the climate for social change that many observe the partnership culture has secured. The centrality of pre-existing social networks and context in the evolution of new governance landscapes is a point stressed by other observers of urban governance (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006; Whitehead, 2003). The research shows this was clearly important in the way the hybrid local partnership governance model developed in Hastings under New Labour. The governance landscape institutional legacy of the last decade (in terms of skills, experience and governance culture) is shaping this space once again as a new chapter in local governance is emerging under the Conservative led coalition. This time the partnership assets (both literal and in learning) are being employed to forge coastal partnerships and sub-LEP structures (as demonstrated in Chapter 5), but also to galvanise a more meaningful collaborative approach in the LSPs and re-badging the AMBs as forums to develop the local neighbourhood plans following the Decentralisation and Localism Bill (2010):

“Given the policy of revisiting localism is Hastings set up to respond to that?” [JOW]

“Yes we have the structures in place which other districts might not ... I have been mulling over how the AMBs might relate to the new ideas of neighbourhood planning ... Maybe AMBs can take on that planning responsibility.” [Harry - 22.11.10 – senior Councillor]

This thesis suggests that the multi-scalar, hybrid modes of governance evolving locally in the delivery of urban regeneration in Hastings have a clear impact on social capital, participation, empowerment and good governance – and so have implications for AESS. Governance beyond the state continues

to re-shape the broader governance context in the UK with an accompanying redistribution of roles, creation of new players and the removal of others altogether. The result is that Hastings is looking to lobby and persuade other governance structures, (for example through increased approaches to the EU and sub-LEP partnership) of their distinct needs and making use of the 'rich partnerships' as a key part of that representation and place-making.

### *Urban Renaissance*

The governance landscape of Hastings has not just been shaped by general hollowing out of the state and a local partnership culture, but also by the New Labour regeneration project of Urban Renaissance. Urban Renaissance was an overarching policy approach that evolved out of the 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' report from the Urban Task Force (1999) and the subsequent White Paper (2000) (Jones and Evans, 2008). The impact of the emphasis on physical regeneration that dominated the 1999 report can be seen in the public realm improvement objective of the Hastings Five Point Plan, also labelled Urban Renaissance. However, with the White Paper a more community element emerged as key to this approach (Jones and Evans, 2008). Urban Renaissance became an all-encompassing approach to the regeneration of urban areas that focussed on enabling and rewarding active citizenship where citizens took responsibility for and ownership of their communities in order to break from a culture of state dependency. Active citizenship was tied into encouraging community-led local partnership governance (as described above). The partnerships and active citizenship were both tied into policy, discourse and funding around the community, participation and empowerment agendas (Imrie and Raco, 2003). Urban Renaissance rhetoric, if not in practice, had the notion of sustainability as a concept at its core with related planning policy stressing the interdependence of sustainability practices and community involvement (Jones and Evans, 2008).

Urban Renaissance style hybrid partnerships (e.g. the Area Based Structures and the LSP) dominate the strategising and monitoring of the social aspects of regeneration in Hastings. The focus of the last decade has been on

neighbourhood or community scale interventions and localised evidence based interrogation of complex social issues. To that end the Neighbourhood Renewal discourse of 'narrowing the gap' has dominated. Perhaps unusual in this case study and in contrast to observations by Taylor (2007) and Houghton and Blume (2010) is the prevalence of the VCS in terms of numbers involved, and their reach into all the structures mapped regardless of theme or seniority. For example, the VCS majority on the LSP and the fact it is one of few LSPs across the country to have a VCS Chair. Further, their explicit commitment to a set of protocols for the Community Network's engagement with the LSP and particular attention to being 'Compact' compliant both create an AESS enabling environment. This commitment to community engagement is a key part of the Urban Renaissance agenda.

In order to achieve such a step change in levels of participation, engagement and crucially a shift in responsibility these communitarian styled policies were accompanied by considerable investment in community networks to help develop local social capital, increase community empowerment and their engagement with partnership structures (Houghton and Blume, 2011). This is central to the New Labour shift of focus to 'community' as an instrument of urban regeneration delivery (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Wallace, 2010). The case study data show that the central government discourses of community, partnership and participatory politics have been normalised in this governance landscape over the last decade given this shift in approach to regeneration. With central government encouragement HBC has acted as a facilitator to the development of partnership structures and encouraged the collaboration between government, agencies and civil society in this town. Again this is in compliance with wider national themes of governance that observed the role of central and local government shift to be that of facilitator rather than deliverer (Imrie and Raco, 2003).

This engagement with the community as a scale and instrument of regeneration governance is not without problems. Drawing on the work by Wallace (2010) describing New Labour's engagement with community as 'anaemic', it was clear from the frustrations expressed by VCS members in interviews and meetings that the efforts at shaping community led

governance and collecting 'active citizens' around a common sense of community identity or sense of place was fraught with conflicting, shifting and multiple ideas of what that place or identity was. Further, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, the extent of the infrastructure interaction with 'harder to reach' communities is acknowledged within the structures as being limited. The risk of marginalising those outside the construction of 'community' as a mode of governance and the resulting barriers to widening representation and influence was evident in the research analysis.

Wallace (2010) is concerned with the foreclosure of voices and agendas that are external to the prescribed active citizen community profile, and certainly the performance management culture embedded in Hastings governance limits a raw or unprocessed form of activism in that formal space. Yet the highly diverse and sometimes anarchic nature of the VCS as a whole (bemoaned by senior VCS members, agencies and local government in interviews) rejects the homogenising of one form of community governance and challenges that foreclosure.

The mixed experience in Hastings of community governance delivering both increased community empowerment and a morally loaded instrument of state control is complex and evolving. In part this is in keeping with the Swyngedouw (2005) critique of the 'Janus-faced' nature of local governance and the strictly defined means of citizenship it advances. Similarly, Wallace's (2010) critique of a prescribed practice of active citizenship that limits engagement with or access for a more diverse and complex community profile is highlighted by a HBC Director below. The role of performance management governance practices and 'post-political regeneration tactics' discussed in the next section are integral to this critiqued engagement with community:

"My view of the forums is we have institutionalised them too much and I think for neighbourhood to be at its best it needs that raw element and to be linked in with anger and that is not just Hastings as when we institutionalise things we lose that. The forums aren't now strong enough in representing the view of the angry, disenfranchised or

young. Some of the meetings I go to or read the minutes, in quite poor parts of the town and you hear a predominantly middle class concern being expressed. So I do believe in the forum model but actually it needs to be re-radicalised to be successful. ... the AMBs were about getting in contact with the poorest parts of the town and hearing their views, some of that needs to be not too structured.” [Kevin – 23.11.10 – HBC Director]

Just as in other NR towns across England the devolution of responsibility to the community mode of governance in Hastings was accompanied by a political modernisation that gave primacy to the professionalization of partnerships, and the close central target and indicator led performance management of those communities. This well rehearsed critique asserts the fallacy of a localisation policy that delivered a decentralisation of responsibility but with the ongoing centralisation of power via extensive central target control and failure to devolve budgets (Davies, 2004; Raco, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Swyngedouw, 2005). Governance practices of strategy review cycles, audit, targets, indicators are pervasive and powerful in the Hastings landscape, and act as both a barrier and enabler to social aspects of regeneration. Baeten (2009) describes this managerialist culture as an enactment of ‘post-political regeneration tactics’ that neutralise dissent, encourage co-option into a state agenda, and limit alternative models of development. This thesis argues that these tactics are evident in this landscape, however their negative impact upon participation is limited by an alternative model of activism employed by the VCS (and allies) in utilising these practices to their own end. This is a central element of the thesis argument and is explored at length in the next two chapters. For now it is important to stress the compliance in Hastings with the wider theme in English regeneration of the prevalence of a performance management governance culture. A senior County councillor demonstrates the point of questionable legitimacy of a localism agenda compromised by overbearing central targets when he explains: “If the umbilical cord to central government is cut there is still the will to achieve these targets locally ... it will be a real LAA instead of someone else’s ideas - brilliant!” Councillor [ESSP – 21.7.10].

It is worth noting that these debates are being revisited with the Coalition led Localism agenda and Big Society narrative that once again is attempting to re-articulate the relationship between the citizen and the state, with an increased weight of responsibility upon the citizen for their local community (Blume, 2010). The degree of devolution of power to accompany that responsibility is yet to be made clear, but certainly the funding needed to facilitate that shift in role appears absent. The shifting nature of governance and the future implications for key tenets of social sustainability in terms of participation and engaged governance are yet to be understood. However, their potential risks and opportunities are not without parallels to that of Urban Renaissance policies as highlighted by the example of Hastings. Such debates would benefit from being mindful of the lessons learnt from the New Labour regeneration project.

#### *A neo-liberal model of regional governance*

The influence on the governance landscape in Hastings of hollowed out and multi-scaled governance can also be seen in the dramatic impact of the regional tier of governance upon Hastings regeneration delivery and governance practices. The regional tier can be understood as part of the acceleration of the rescaling, or hollowing out of the state under New Labour. RDAs were responsible for developing regionally specific competitive models of physical and economic development (Jones and Evans, 2008). These were heavily critiqued for their limited or absent electoral mandate (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007). Their interest in Hastings was directed by the case made for the 'distinct needs of Hastings' lobbied for by local politicians as being very different to the needs of the wider South East region (as argued in Chapter 5). The initial £38 million given to Hastings by central government to help trigger physical and economic regeneration was devolved to SEEDA to control and distribute. SEEDA's control of the purse strings meant their control of governance structures and agendas. They chaired the senior strategic Taskforce partnership responsible for developing a regeneration Masterplan, while the URC set up to deliver that plan was in practice largely initially SEEDA funded and populated by SEEDA staff.

Batchelor and Patterson (2009) critique the SEEDA approach for being a neo-liberal economic sustainability model of development that left little room for alternative agendas. Jones and Evans (2008) meanwhile, articulate the familiar concern that the RDAs and URCs embodied an un-coupling of the economic and social regeneration agendas by central government. The RDA regeneration agenda, discourse and approach in Hastings has been critiqued by some VCS and agency members for similar charges of failing to connect with the social agenda in a meaningful way and for their poor record of community engagement in the Masterplan delivery. This SEEDA-led regeneration in Hastings has focussed on improving the public realm, creating professional office space, education-led regeneration, and attracting external investment to address employment and stagnant local economy issues. The research found this approach dominated by a commercial model delivered through Sea Space with minimal VCS involvement. They exhibited limited communication with the wider community making them less accessible and less transparent than the social regeneration governance structures. It is noteworthy that the researcher's access to the Taskforce meetings was refused by the SEEDA chair of that structure, while all the social agenda structures were keen to be involved in the research process. The contrast in transparency of the economic/physical and social structures mirrored the observed disconnect of social and physical agendas. This HBC officer describes the social-economic agenda divide articulated by many stakeholders and repeatedly observed in meetings:

“With my community activism hat on we need to look more at individual families and it hasn't really reached that level, a few in Hollington and Ore valley to do research about the issues, but we have lots of new buildings which yes change the perception, but how much it affects them I don't know as they are already so disconnected, how much has an impact on their aspiration?” [Peter]

“So is there a disconnect there between physical and social regeneration?” [JOW]

“Yes I think so. To benefit from physical regeneration the social regeneration has to be at a certain stage and it is a parallel intervention.” [Peter – 28.6.10 – HBC officer]

This apparent disconnect at the regional level was amplified during the 2009 SEEDA strategy review and SEEPB foundation which led to an increasing policy focus of sustainable economic prosperity. Observation of SEEDA and SEEPB meetings highlighted a weak representation of advocates of the social regeneration agenda at this level and a dominant (even aggressive) neo-liberal competitive economic model echoing the shift away from softer social regeneration policies by the Brown/New Labour government at the time. This comment from a NF chair expresses the dominance of the RDA competitive economic model of regeneration in the town:

“What has been the dominant social regeneration agenda over the last 5 or so years?” [JOW]

“I think really it has been to get major employers down here, more footfall, get a critical mass, I understand why that has been the case, I don't necessarily agree ... so I think that is the hard core line, and very much driven by Sea Space, and I have to say when they started I very much felt they did not listen to or support the community at all, we were there in terms of consultation on the plans in the town centre just as a tick box not to have any major influence ... it has been very economics driven and I guess also there has been concerns about the IMD and poor education results and money has being spent on that ... [they are] not addressing the real issues in areas like Hollington, it is easy to do the window dressing.” [Gwen – 4.11.1 – VCS member/ NF Chair]

Following the abolition of the RDAs the impact upon the town of the replacement sub-regional LEPs is framed in terms of new place-making and evolving governance priorities by a leading councillor:

“Up until now the regional tier has been helpful for us, when the government gave the £38m to Hastings it was given to the regional tier to deliver and they have doubled that in the last 5-8 years, so Hastings has had a substantial sum of money from the regional tier as delivered by Sea Space and it [SEEDA] has also chaired the

Taskforce, it has been a beneficial impact to the town, it is yet to be seen if the LEP will be interested in us, the point though is there is less money and the RGF is a third of the RDA funding, and LEP have to be self-funding, so we will continue to argue the particular needs of Hastings, no longer as part of the SE but within East Sussex, Kent and Essex, so what we are doing is looking to link up with other coastal communities within the LEP area that will have a particular set of interests of which Hastings is the most significant but there are similar interests in east Kent and in east Clacton, that are somewhat similar to those that Hastings face and we will want to make sure within the LEP there are governance arrangements that cover that.”  
[Harry-22.11.10 – Senior Borough Councillor]

The regional tier as a dominant part of the New Labour regeneration hollowing out of the state occupied an influential role in the Hastings governance landscape in terms of funding, directing central government attention upon Hastings and delivery of a largely economic sustainability agenda via a competitive model of governance in the URC. The regional tier intervention could be said to have offered Hastings minimal community engagement, a perceived disconnect with the social regeneration agenda and democratic deficit. The institutional legacy of a regional tier, its’ abolition, and the creation of the new sub-regional tier have important implications for the Hastings regeneration story and the governance landscape that shapes and is shaped by that narrative. These points are explored in the following chapters.

### 6.3. Concluding remarks on the mapping of governance

This chapter has sought to develop a contextualised mapping and analysis of the governance structures that occupy the institutional landscape of the regeneration community in Hastings. This thesis continues to articulate the overwhelming impact in Hastings of the New Labour ‘governance beyond the state’ approach to urban policy, but also, importantly the local specificity of how this is manifested. The role of nationally driven rescaling agendas around community, the hybrid partnership and the now abolished regional scale or unit of governance have been renegotiated at a local level and

characterise this institutional space. The evolving shape of dominant forms of governance in the urban policy landscape continue to act as an indicator of the shifting relationship between the citizen and the state, and as a vehicle for the complex exchange of discourses, policies and practices between different scales of regeneration governance. The practices, cultural norms and traditions that are a product of these units of 'governance beyond the state' are highlighted in Chapters 7 and 8 as co-determinants of the locus of power, the content of the agendas, and as a result both the barriers and enabling factors of AESS.

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## Chapter 7. Barriers to Actually Existing Social Sustainability (AESS)

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### 7.1. Introduction

This case study concurs with the body of work on social sustainability that argues there is limited evidence of the concept being used to evaluate social regeneration policies, or the institutional landscape that authors them (Cuthill, 2010). This chapter will reflect upon this evidence within the context of dominant critiques of the New Labour regeneration model. Importantly in terms of articulating the key thesis arguments, the chapter discusses what this means in terms of barriers to different forms of social sustainability, (i.e. what aspects of social sustainability are marginalised by this governance landscape, policies and discourses). As discussed in the literature evaluation in Chapter 2 this is an unusual analytical lens through which to test the well-established critiques of 'governance beyond the state' and the legacy of a decade of New Labour political modernisation within regeneration practice. Central to this argument is an understanding of the context-specific nature of institutional mechanisms and their governance practices that evolve to inhibit (this chapter), or facilitate (next chapter), a more socially just sustainability. In this way the research responds to calls for greater scrutiny of the spatially uneven construction and institutionalisation of sustainability 'story-lines' mobilised by varying development strategies, institutions and urban governance models (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Evans *et al.* 2009; Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; Le Heron, 2006). This analysis is alive to the implications of existing power structures, modes of governance and the socio-political context (as discussed in Chapter 5) upon the presence and absence of social sustainability in Hastings.

Following this discussion of institutional, socio-political and cultural features that act as barriers to AESS, the next chapter will move the argument of the thesis on by demonstrating a further layer of the case study with an alternative critique of the New Labour regeneration model. It will thus be argued that the richness of the landscape offers not just one reading, endorsing the dominant critiques and the barriers to social sustainability they

create, but also one that offers evidence of AESS. In this way both chapters demonstrate and justify the value of a greater interrogation of the political-governance framework in which social sustainability does or does not form. This is an aspect of the social sustainability debate that has received less academic attention to date (Davidson, 2010; Manzi *et al.* 2010).

## 7.2. The democratic deficit critique

Over the course of the last decade aspects of the New Labour regeneration model including urban renaissance, active citizenship, local governance through hybrid partnerships, and a centrally controlled performance management culture have been the subject of heated academic debate (Jones and Evans, 2008; Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2003; 2006; Robinson and Shaw, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008; Wallace, 2010). As explained in Chapter 4 Hastings offers an insightful case study to recast the dominant critiques that emerged from these debates and the legacy of New Labour regeneration in terms of their contribution to social sustainability. This section addresses the implications for social sustainability of key elements of the critique of democratic deficit that were recognised in this case study. These key elements will include issues of limited depth of representation amplified through a reliance on community stars; a prescribed or narrowly defined means of citizenship; limited community influence, and the challenges of mixing participatory and representative models of governance.

### *Community stars and usual suspects*

New Labour sought to gain increased civic engagement and provide local solutions to local problems through improving community empowerment, and responsibility by encouraging local governance in the form of multi-agency partnerships (Wallace, 2009). The proliferation of collaborative partnership structures was a key signature of the New Labour political modernisation process, and central to their policies around regeneration and sustainability (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007). That legacy of partnerships is clear in Hastings (as described in Chapter 6) and key to the institutional context in which social sustainability normative values and practices are being moulded

and obstructed in this town. The explicit values and dominant discourse in this partnership approach in Hastings of community participation, social inclusion, empowerment and engaged governance sit at the centre of any discussion of social sustainability (Manzi *et al.* 2010). Yet this approach is heavily criticised in existing research for its failure to achieve these values in practice, owing to inadequate depth of community representation and through enabling only a voice, but no influence for the community (Swyngedouw, 2005; Taylor, 2006; Wallace, 2010). The academic critique repeatedly highlights the absence of a depth of grass-roots community representation in the proliferation of local partnerships that evolved during this model of 'governance beyond the state' (Swyngedouw, 2005; Taylor, 2007).

Concerns regarding the partnerships failing to be representative of the wider Hastings community are explicit in the debates observed in local governance meetings. A majority of the regeneration community stakeholders are aware of their lack of depth of representation, and efforts to remedy this were repeatedly a feature of meeting agendas and policy documents. Interviewees from both the VCS and public sector in Hastings criticised the local governance landscape for reliance on VCS 'usual suspects' and 'community stars' (as also described in the critiques by Bassett *et al.* 2002 and Taylor, 2006). The real concern for the VCS is the absence of large numbers of the next generation of activists coming through, with most of the core VCS members in their late middle age and older – in this way they fear for the vulnerability of the structures and culture of social purpose so evident in the landscape currently. They want to pass on those skills and increase the depth and reach of representation and social capital, but that is proving to be a difficult task. A task they fear will become harder with resources for community development being reduced from 2011 onwards. Clearly the passing on of these skills and this knowledge, and the building of social capital in this way is key to social sustainability and in particular the inter-generational foundation of this concept (Manzi *et al.* 2010). This institutional vulnerability, therefore, creates risks for the future presence of social sustainability in this landscape as made clear by this VCS member:

“I do worry about the usual suspects, and I worry about the next generation coming through, I am probably one of the last generation who had an understanding of power in how to attend meetings, represent people and speak in public and I worry about that being lost, but the Young Persons Council is very strong, and lobby well, I have been quite impressed by them in meetings.” [Gwen - 4.11.10 – VCS member]

While the VCS in Hastings is large in scale, only a small percentage engage in the formal governance landscape. The ‘same faces’ were observed at multiple structures and meetings with representatives having to be explicit which of their ‘many hats’ they are representing that day. Obvious efforts to be transparent were observed, including minutes, agendas and papers shared up and down the hierarchy of structures, and to be accountable, including reports and ideas being fed back to the wider community forums and consulted upon. Nevertheless, this issue of ‘usual suspects’ shows some evidence of the democratic deficit concerns with regard to depth of representation that Swyngedouw and others claim blights many of these partnerships (Swyngedouw, 2005). This concern around representation limits the depth of community engagement and so creates a barrier to social sustainability. In this quotation a senior councillor acknowledges and regrets this failure:

“The problem with community representation is there are too few people involved at every level from those organisations. Too few actively involved in RAs, so you end up seeing the same people at NFs, AMB and LSP, they are very devoted and committed but I can’t say we have cracked it in terms of reaching down into the community and involving more people. We might have involved the community representatives more in decision making but we have to be careful not to say we have involved the community more as there are many people in the community who have no idea what an AMB, or LSP is and may never make contact with their own RA, so we have a long way to go to really crack community involvement in decision making proactively rather than reacting when you do something they don’t

like.” [Harry-22.11.10- Senior Councillor]

There is a fear expressed within the structures regarding the further marginalisation of those not engaged in this route to empowerment. The presence of the ‘usual suspects’ and evidence of a ‘democratic deficit’ means an absence of representation from the true demographic profile of the town with a concentration of white middle aged/elderly representatives and absence of many young representatives, members of the BME community, or those of working age with families. Observations of meetings for over a year highlighted how the structures struggle to reach the most disadvantaged in their communities on any substantial scale with only a few members of those communities engaged.

The decline in residents from the most deprived estates in the Ore Valley or Hollington area in their NFs was discussed in these forums as a failure to meaningfully engage the communities the forums hope to represent. Those community champions that are present are largely the exception not the rule, and while their social capital and empowerment are realised through these structures they are often a lone voice for that community. This leads to justifiable questions of legitimacy of a grassroots voice at the LSP by the VCS itself and by statutory bodies. During the research concerns over the health partnership lacking representatives from youth, disabilities or BME communities and the crime and safety partnership only having one VCS representative were all identified as a failure to reach marginalised communities of interest and identity. This limited representation is clear from this comment by a senior councillor:

“All of the organisations we are talking about all of them would say the problem is resources and people, not enough to run the community organisations and need to refresh the people involved, to get a better age balance, to get a better balance of people from different backgrounds, all that is the case, together we need to try to crack that, they will never be totally representative, but to make them more vibrant and so when asked in a survey do you feel you can influence council decisions they can say yes, they go to the NF or AMB and put

their ideas forward. The age profile of the AMB and LSP that is not the age profile of the town, though we do have a youth representative and I understand why that is as the retired have more time than those working and with young children, we treasure the people who come along but we can't be satisfied we have cracked it." [Harry - 22.11.10 – Senior councillor]

Providing practical methods for the most disadvantaged and disengaged in these communities to engage with these structures, or for their voice to be fed in if the structures are not how they want to engage, is important for the ongoing evolution of this governance landscape and development of true social sustainability. Efforts to strengthen this representation are discussed in evidence of an alternative reading of this urban governance landscape in the next chapter.

Despite an awareness in the regeneration community and efforts to limit the presence of 'usual suspects' and widen representation, failure to do so in any substantial way unintentionally mainstreams what Wallace (2009; 2010) describes as an 'anaemic' understanding of 'community.' The term 'anaemic' is used to refer to a narrowly defined community profile that does not accommodate the reality of the multiplicity of community identities and needs. The limited depth of community representation in the partnerships results in a governance culture that is only informed or influenced by the opinions and values of a narrowly prescribed active citizen. By valuing the input of the prescribed active citizen the governance culture encourages further selective inclusion and this marginalises wider community views, issues and values. The views of those outside the VCS core were largely missing from the structures observed in Hastings, and as Wallace (2010) asserts, this greatly undermines the capacity for policy and structures to achieve improved social equity, and so by extension it creates a barrier to social sustainability.

National government projects such as Connecting Communities and the wider community cohesion partnership are trying to remedy this 'anaemic' understanding of 'community'. However, in the case of Connecting

Communities this effort was a limited timescale one-off intervention that underlines a major issue with short-termism in community interventions and social regeneration more generally. Projects that fail to offer a sustained community development solution owing to the rapid change of policy and funding risks reinforcing the sense of disconnect disenfranchised communities feel. When the intervention is withdrawn or cut short (as in the case of Connecting Communities) this limits the partnership or agency understanding of community and community issues. Frustrations with this policy churn and resulting short-termism is evident in this comment by a VCS leader:

“ ... it goes from now we are doing construction related regeneration and then it was tourism and now it is culture and actually we need to take a more holistic view... I struggle with the shifting emphasis ... I have sympathy with responding to funding streams xx itself has had to evolve over the last 20 years responding to the flavour of the month but local intelligence is needed as they [central funding bodies] don't tell us a lot we don't already know.” [Janice - 15.11.10 – VCS leader]

It was clear in the meetings and interviews that this central prescription of funding targets, indicators and difficult timescales for delivery, combined with their rapid change of subject due to political fashion, made the achievement of local socially sustainable projects and practice problematic. This was particularly true in the months running up to and after the national election in 2010 that led to a lack of direction and uncertainty that saw the structures treading water, or engaging in short term projects with questionable social sustainability value.

### *Barriers to community influence*

The specificity of the democratic deficit critique in Hastings is further developed now with a consideration of the presence of community voice but limited influence. This critique is explored, as with the discussion of usual suspects and limited depth of representation above, in terms of how this shapes and constructs barriers to AESS. The local Area Based Structures

were felt by many interviewees to 'lack teeth' or any form of substantial influence. This observation concurs with the dominant critique of 'voice but no influence' repeatedly levelled at these local partnership structures by a number of researchers (Baeten, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2005; Taylor, 2007). In Hastings the degree of influence of the different structures and the VCS representation within them covers the full spectrum of Arnstein's well-known ladder of citizen participation (1969). The partnerships with strong government-led agendas and targets (such as the crime and safety or economic alliance) only achieved low level engagement or community information sharing, and so were situated towards the bottom of the ladder. This lack of VCS influence was often acknowledged by members of these partnerships, and yet efforts to remedy this situation were slow. Alternatively, in other structures, particularly where there was investment by statutory bodies in the partnership process, the VCS input was evidently valued and recognised as essential by senior stakeholders. In these examples, such as the health thematic partnership and community cohesion partnership, there was greater VCS engagement that ranged from consultation to partnership. Evidently, these limitations to meaningful public participation and influence over local decision-making are an explicit barrier to the good governance elements of social sustainability (Manzi *et al.* 2010; Stren and Polesse, 2005).

Rather than directly impacting major decisions in the town the VCS influence observed in this governance landscape was more to do with raising the profile of alternative agendas and shaping the governance culture. The absence of greater influence is largely a function of the financial grants and targets being controlled by the local, county or central government. There was clearly more influence, and so redistribution of power observed, where the partnerships had devolved participatory budgets. The influence that the community partnerships do have lies more in advancing a culture of partnership and increased collaboration, which is central to the thesis argument concerning AESS described in Chapter 8.

The degree of influence of local structures is also limited by the imbalance of power between the local district council (HBC) and the senior county council

(ESCC). This tension forms a barrier to AESS by obstructing meaningful community participation and influence over local decision-making. This relationship with the ESCC is an ongoing, often repeated and explicit barrier. For the most part members of the regeneration community expressed in meetings and interviews a feeling that the specific needs of Hastings are not fully acknowledged or addressed by ESCC. While at the county LSP meetings the sentiment varied between an understanding of the very different needs of Hastings within East Sussex, and a weariness with the 'begging bowl' case being continually made for Hastings by local politicians and VCS. This tension between scales of governance and its detrimental impact on AESS is returned to in the discussion of evidence of governance congestion and complexity below. The level of tension in this relationship is evident in this comment made by a local councillor and previous VCS representative:

"I still believe public enemy number one is the County Council ... the only time Hastings is useful to the county is when they want a set of bad statistics and they are holding out a begging bowl and they don't see us contributing much else, they believe East Sussex should end at Eastbourne and we should be attached to Kent and now with the new LEP we are, I feel a lot easier being hand in glove with Kent than Lewes." [Rob - 1.11.10 - Councillor]

In this way (as discussed in Chapter 5) it can be observed how local political traditions influence and determine what 'social' is sustained, and the barriers to partnership and engagement that exist because of those traditions in Hastings. This reinforces the point made by Whitehead (2003) around the centrality of understanding a local political context in studies of the construction of sustainability.

In the Hastings example governance practices that inhibit community influence are central to the construction of barriers to AESS values of equitable participation and engaged governance. For example, the flawed governance practices around community consultation and feedback observed in meetings and discussed by VCS interviewees visibly obstructs

meaningful and equitable participation. The VCS interviewees expressed frustration with poor consultation techniques, duplication by different agencies, and failure by local government and agencies to feed back, or demonstrate VCS views impacting decisions. This has naturally resulted in consultation fatigue and a degree of cynicism within the partnerships. This discussion at a Community Network meeting demonstrates the blockages to social sustainability that exist in community engagement and participation in Hastings as a consequence of poor consultation:

“The thing with consultation is it is also about getting feedback. People have to feel their views have been taken into account. I brought it up at the LSP. ...” [NF 1]

“... vast amounts of work goes into an enormous document that is difficult for even very articulate people to respond effectively. We did a workshop a few months ago and even people who form RAs who are familiar with planning asked how do you get the community reacting to enormous document in 6 months. We need to get the community agenda to make it easier to respond in a proactive fashion ... key factor is early consultation.” [Community Planner]

“I am sick of consultation ... it is very hard to get it right ... we all want consultation but in reality less is more ... just a few and have them done well and have the time to answer them and having officials come to talk to you and explain to you ... I don't know how practical it is for it all to be done properly.” [NF 3] [HCN mtg - 8.4.10]

Despite this cynicism there was a balance of positive experiences noted during the research period that highlighted how the VCS and partnership views can impact regeneration practice. Regardless, the familiar challenges for local hybrid partnerships around limited community influence continue to erode the value of these modes of governance in terms of the presence of participation and engagement elements of social sustainability (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). The limitations to VCS influence are described by a senior Councillor:

“... yes the VCS are better equipped, capable and more involved in

discussions, but this is always going to be an issue as to what extent are they participating in decisions, only to a modest degree, I am not sure how I can find a way round that. Statutory organisations will always make a decision based on evidence and finance and Sea Space and the Taskforce will work based on that general strategy we have all agreed but in terms of where shall we build that building / shall we sell it to that company, those are commercial decisions. ... it would be harsh to say [they have] no influence but maybe voice but limited influence.” [Harry - 22.11.10 – Senior Councillor]

The critique of limited community influence is often linked in existing research to a concern around usual suspects being co-opted into the state agenda and the development of a body of community representatives acting as the shadow state (Bassett *et al.* 2002; Jones and Evans, 2008; Taylor, 2007). Despite the presence of ‘usual suspects’ in Hastings there was little evidence of outright co-option. Observations, documentation and articulation in interviews all underlined a strong and clear advancement of multiple alternative (non-state) agendas within the structures and evidence of a stubborn refusal by ‘usual suspects’ to be co-opted. The nature and reasons for this exception to the co-option critique are explored in Chapter 8.

### *The mixing of participatory and representative governance models*

The governance and cultural implications of the well-established critiques of New Labour partnership-led regeneration are recast in this chapter with a view to understanding what they mean for barriers to AESS. In this section I present the barriers to AESS constructed by the tensions between participatory and representative governance models that emerged during the New Labour push for local partnership governance (Jones and Evans, 2008).

Increasing community empowerment, participation and influence through hybrid partnerships was a foreign way of working within the regeneration community in Hastings, and indeed in most parts of the country, when it was rapidly advanced under Neighbourhood Renewal from 2001 onwards. That mixing of participatory and representative governance models in towns

across the country was not without real growing pains and conflict over power and legitimacy of mandate (Houghton and Blume, 2011). In addition, scholars observed evidence of the reluctance of many statutory agencies to invest time and resources in these partnerships, which in turn limited their value and impact (Davies, 2004; Gilchrist, 2006; Robinson *et al.* 2005). This reluctance was not as severe in Hastings with a notable amount of statutory body input observed in meetings and referred to by stakeholders in terms of time and resources they committed to partnership building and conflict resolution. However, the growing pains of mixing these models was a feature observed in the stakeholder frustrations of partnership work in terms of the demands of compromise, the slow pace of progress, and the bureaucratic barriers creating frisson, and occasional outbursts of anger. This is a familiar critique well documented within the literature, (Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2003; 2006) and present to varying degrees in all the structures observed with implications for the success of engagement and empowerment and so AESS.

Achieving the balance between a participatory and representative model of local governance has been made more difficult in Hastings for two reasons. The first was an issue of absence of partnership skills in both the public and third sector when these structures were established over a decade ago. This again is a familiar critique in the literature on community partnerships and local governance under New Labour (Taylor, 2006). The extreme learning curve experienced by this regeneration community is key to the thesis findings around the value now placed on partnership work and the contribution to AESS made by this institutional legacy.

The second and more intractable issue has been the tension between the power and assumed legitimacy of the democratic mandate of the councillors, and the ethical, social justice and practical benefits of adopting a wider participatory model. Again the importance of political traditions plays its role in shaping the governance culture that develops that in turn enables or obstructs AESS. In the Hastings example, the legacy of partnership learning and negotiation of legitimacy of mandates has resulted in a hybrid developing that moots a more collaborative approach to local governance. However, it

was clear that tensions continue to be negotiated as can be seen in this observation from a VCS leader articulating concerns over AMBs being too councillor-led. This evidence of imbalance of power and state dominance in some of the partnerships (also argued by Davies, (2004, 2005)) risks the legitimacy of equitable engagement and so the opportunity for AESS:

“Does the ABS offer a vehicle for calling to account and voice?” [JOW]

“Based on my experience of east Hastings I would say yes – but the chair is nominated by the political parties so the AMB are still being squeezed by the politicians and officers.”[George - 16.10.10 – VCS leader]

Davies (2004) argues that the literature has failed to properly account for governance through partnership and underplays costs such as the imbalance of power demonstrated above. This research responds to this observation by demonstrating the barriers to securing social sustainability in Hastings created by the practices and cultural norms of local partnership governance. This section has highlighted the costs for AESS in Hastings of issues of bureaucratic process, political tensions, limited depth of representation and influence, short-termism, and foreclosure of alternative agendas by reliance on community stars and in some structures the dominance of state power. Yet this discussion has also highlighted the mixed picture of this critique in Hastings that does show evidence of VCS dissenting voices, resistance to co-option and some progress towards a more collaborative mode of governance that engages both participatory and representative models in greater harmony than previously observed in other towns (Houghton and Blume, 2011). This alternative analysis is explored further in Chapter 8.

### 7.3. Post-political regeneration tactics

#### *Professionalisation through language and governance practices*

In the discussion below the presence and local manifestations of what Baeten (2009) describes as ‘post-political regeneration tactics’ are explored in terms of how they inhibit social sustainability. The specific governance practices and cultural norms that are a feature of these regeneration tactics,

and the 'post-political' critique more broadly are explored in terms of how they advance existing elites and agendas while obstructing and marginalising others. In Hastings these tactics forge explicit barriers to engaged governance and meaningful community participation that are central to social sustainability practices and values (Cuthill, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Pares and Sauri, 2007).

'Post-political regeneration tactics' include the professionalisation of partnerships through mainstreaming the use of managerialist governance practices and discourse that then become legitimizing agents in that governance culture. These in turn neutralise the impact or likely presence of agendas or voices that don't use that language or accepted way of working (Baeten, 2009; Davies, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005). Certainly the prolific use of professional and technical governance language in combination with other traditional governance practices has been a striking feature of this Hastings regeneration governance culture. These practices included: speaking through the chair, formalised meeting spaces with boardroom set up, following a strict agenda, validating minutes, continued reference and use of technical policy reports and the professionalised structure of partnerships with terms of reference, constitutions, protocols, and SIGS (special interest groups). These practices were observed to have agency in this space by determining the language that is used, the way issues are debated and the way issues can be added to, or made absent from an agenda. For example, protocols and terms of reference are used in a number of the thematic partnerships of the LSP to be clear what can and should not be brought to that forum for discussion. This was further illustrated when the LSP, upon a change of chairmanship from the VCS to the local council, explicitly broke their agenda down into topics open to discussion and those for information only as can be seen in this quotation from a Community Network meeting:

"I will be stepping down as LSP chair on the 19th and xx wants to put his stamp on this from the beginning which is right so you see there are discussion items and others for information, you can ask questions, but he doesn't want drawn out debates ... he has stated the papers should come out 2 weeks before the meeting ... he doesn't

want time spent on silly discussions ... he wants to make things more strategic.” [HCN representative]

“We need to watch that as if things slip from the discussion section it doesn’t mean we can’t ask questions.” [CDO] [HCN Exec mtg - 8.4.10]

Both tactics, or governance practices close down the remit of the partnership and what topics are available for challenge and debate. Raco (2003) and Wallace (2009) have questioned the reality and scale of community empowerment that have resulted from this localist agenda and governance beyond the state through hybrid local partnerships. Davidson (2009; 2010) describes this ‘post-political regeneration condition’ as limiting genuine political debate around social sustainability owing to the dominance of a governance culture that prioritises efficiency and institutional reorganisation. Further evidence of what is described as the ‘post-political condition’, was observed in Hastings in the prevalence and expectation of the language of diplomacy, which meant anything of an overtly aggressive, anecdotal or emotional nature was quickly closed down and managed by the chair and other members. One senior partnership Chair explained this use of diplomatic language proudly to the researcher as an indication of the maturity of the partnership. Through the valued nature of the language of diplomacy, and the technocratic professional opinion, only a limited amount of language associated with a traditional activist model was observed. It was explicitly acknowledged in a number of meetings that the process of partnership meant slow progress towards aims, accepting some degree of compromise and choosing your battles carefully. There was less room for anger, raw unprocessed views and anecdotal evidence was dissuaded. So to this end the community network run a pre-LSP meeting for their members in order to fine tune points to be made in the meeting proper. This formalisation through discourse mechanisms and governance practices restricts the range of voices and how opinions can be heard in this landscape. In doing so this shapes the nature of politics and debate in this governance infrastructure. This point is highlighted by a VCS leader below:

“It is quite unusual to have so many VCS in the LSP?” [JOW]

“Yes ... but it is so staged, it is about making us look more credible

and it is too much hand holding and it is the bonkers view of representation in this town. ... we have tried to make it democratic and it makes it falsely democratic and bureaucratic and they cling onto the constitution, the open meeting, executive meeting, prep-meeting ... we can think for ourselves, we have rehearsed questions and no rehearsed answers which looks amateurship. We are not improving the skills of debate.” [Janice -15.11.10 – VCS leader]

The findings of this research clearly show how the Hastings governance landscape and agendas are shaped by the ‘post-political regeneration tactics’ described above. The governance practices, discourse and cultural norms that are a feature of these tactics and have evolved within this ‘post-political condition’ are seen in turn to create barriers to AESS values of engaged governance and meaningful participation. How these barriers are reinforced by governance practices around documentation and the agency of discourse in those documents is discussed below.

The discourse of diplomacy and technical jargon described above also dominates the governance documentation at all scales. The documentation, (agendas, minutes, reports etc) was observed to be an important tool for securing dominant agendas or an expectation of a way of working within the partnerships. First, the meeting documents offer a way of advancing an agenda owing to their permanence which future proofs a message in formal recorded papers rather than be lost in the detail of the debate on the day. Second, this self-documenting governance practice is advanced by the obvious culture of reverence owed to the meeting papers within the governance community. For example, not having read the papers or to make an argument without reference to the papers was frowned upon. Further, the meetings documents were explicitly used to make points more effectively, secure attention in the meeting and gain gravitas for the argument. The agency of these documents in advancing governance practices is amplified by the prolific self-documenting nature of this community at all levels. Each of the fifty meetings observed from Neighbourhood Forum level to regional level entailed five or six papers at a minimum, with over ten papers not unusual. A number of interviewees from both the VCS and public sector in Hastings also

see this discourse of diplomacy and technical jargon combined with a formal document-led approach to meetings as a way of sanitising and neutralising the VCS voice within this post-political governance condition.

For some stakeholders in both the VCS and public sector they feel the Area Based Structures have become mainstreamed in their governance practices and so tamed by this professionalization. A fear is expressed within the partnerships for those not engaged owing to the barriers these discourse and practices create. The concern is that those who are disengaged will be further marginalised by not accessing this route to empowerment. This marginalisation challenges the underlying aspiration of social justice and social equity that drives the foundation of social sustainability. The research findings demonstrate that the practices and cultural norms of this 'post-political' governance infrastructure creates barriers to social sustainability values around meaningful participation, engaged governance and social equity as expressed by this HBC director:

“The forums aren't now strong enough in representing the view of the angry, disenfranchised or young. Some of the meetings I go to or read the minutes, in quite poor parts of the town you hear a predominantly middle class concern being expressed. So I do believe in the forum model but actually it needs to be re-radicalised to be successful. If I am in a central AMB are angry because basic things aren't being done I respect that but if I spend two hours debating the shape of lamp-post then I am not sure, that is for a residents association the AMBs were about getting in contact with the poorest parts of the town and hearing their views, some of that needs to be not too structured”. [Kevin-23.11.10 – HBC director]

It was clear in meetings that the more experienced councillors are familiar with this governance culture, and use that knowledge of the cultural norms and governance practices to navigate the structures, lobby their agendas and to ensure their views are received in the right forum. These governance practices are therefore used to ensure power remains seated in the traditional sites within this governance landscape. These practices curtail

efforts to realise the potential of community partnerships to aid the equal distribution of local power and influence.

The complex nature of the governance practices and language described above are an obstructive agent to full participation in Hastings, a critique of this model of governance that is familiar within the literature (Davies, 2004; Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2006). It was evident from observations in meetings and interviews that some members of the VCS were extremely reluctant and nervous to speak in the more senior forum as they struggled to understand the issues discussed owing to the complexity of governance jargon and intimidating nature of the environment. In this way the discourse of professionalised governance acts as a barrier to participation and further marginalises those unfamiliar or learned in this language or practice. This obstruction to engagement through technical language is described by a community leader:

“The changes have been embedding bureaucracy into things that should be common sense and in a way the bureaucracy has got in the way and taken over... the problem is often terminology and sometimes words get in the way for ordinary people to understand.” [Fred - 30.9.10 – Community leader]

The repeated VCS, statutory and public sector body discourse around their concern over engaging the ‘hard to reach’ underlines this disconnect between a professionalised governance landscape and the wider multiple communities in the town. One community development officer articulated this tension by explaining it is not the communities, but the structures that are ‘hard to reach’ owing to the complex and alien code of professional and technical governance they adopt. This discourse and practice acts as a central institutional mechanism in inhibiting a greater degree of AESS in Hastings. This obstruction is clear in the quotation from a CDO HBC officer reflecting on this institutional culture:

“[T]he other aspect of formality is so much waste of resources and those structures become like a machine. They have to speak in a

certain way, they aren't able to challenge their behaviour, their reactions are like another tribe with another language in the Amazon but speaking in English!!" [Peter - 28.6.10 – HBC officer]

For the VCS members that have learned to navigate these governance practices and use this language, the research showed evidence of this disconnecting or alienating them from the wider community they sought to represent and champion. In a number of local forum meetings core VCS members were challenged by other community members for using a language not understood by the wider community. This disconnect described below is a concern for NFs trying to encourage members not familiar with this policy discourse:

"To remind you Retail vitality money is available to help small businesses and we welcome that as a forum." [Chair]

"Can you explain retail vitality as there are an awful lot of people who don't attend these meetings and don't know what it is. It is not a criticism but there is an awful lot of presumption that people will understand and they don't." [Community member] [NF mtg -8.12.09]

This institutionalisation of VCS representatives and the consequent disconnect with their representative community is familiar within prominent critiques of these structures (Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2003, 2006). In this thesis it emerges as a barrier to social sustainability.

Barriers to meaningful participation and engagement in local governance such as obstructive governance practices and discourse mechanisms which reinforce existing power elites and the dominance of their agenda, challenges the presence of social sustainability. This research offers an understanding of the institutional mechanisms in the case study that shape or marginalise social sustainability including discourses of diplomacy, technical jargon and intimidating formalised document-led meeting practices. These findings speak directly to calls from geographers for research to be more aware of the institutional landscape that shapes sustainability normative values and practices (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; McKenzie, 2004; Pincetl and

Katz, 2007). The next section develops this theme by describing the agency of the broader institutional culture and the associated mechanisms of performance management that in turn also constrain the opportunities for social sustainability.

#### 7.4. Localism lost through central performance management

##### *A governance culture of audits, targets and indicators*

The obstructive discourse of technical and diplomatic governance jargon is partly a function of a broader culture of professionalisation advanced under New Labour's political modernisation, that valued and rewarded strong performance management and a pervasive audit culture (Robinson *et al.* 2005). The dominant academic critiques of local regeneration partnerships are especially scathing of a managerialist approach by New Labour that made local citizens increasingly regulated by centrally guided indicators and targets (Davies, 2005; Raco, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2008). Observation of twenty partnerships structures, through multiple scales and over the course of a year in the regeneration community in Hastings did nothing to dispel this critique. The conflict between local issues and central performance targets is highlighted by a senior HBC officer:

“... there has always been a dichotomy between what the service providers think are important which is performance target led, yet from a local people community safety perspective litter, graffiti, dog fouling, abandoned cars, quality of life issues matter, it is a managed neighbourhood.” [Greg -13.10.10 – Senior HBC officer]

This audit culture is pervasive in the local partnership infrastructure and as one county officer neatly observed at an ESSP meeting “we spend more time fixing the car than driving it”. The time and resource taken in creating and monitoring a huge evidence base dominates meetings and was a clear criticism from all sectors in interviews. This is particularly true of the VCS who increasingly have their funding tied to detailed central targets. The time spent on reviewing, refreshing, researching and monitoring targets appeared

to leave little time in meetings for open debate, substantial political challenge or any opportunity for changes of direction. This echoes Davidson's (2009) assertion that by failing to debate and challenge what we want to sustain or nurture within our society we risk blindly reproducing the same inequalities that are often shaped by existing institutions and the values they propagate. This was particularly true of practitioner-led structures in the case study with a dominant central government agenda, such as the crime and safety partnerships, that had little time for debate and responded directly to the requirements of central government targets.

In the structures where the central government agenda was particularly strong (i.e. education, crime, and economy) the indicators and targets were felt to be especially obstructive of any form of local VCS impact on the agenda. This absence of opportunity to influence and debate what values the town wants to sustain is a real barrier to social sustainability and leads to concerns that as a consequence of the practices and cultural norms of the governance landscape the partnerships only sustain aspects of society that are measureable and centrally determined. If there aren't the tools to measure a target it is difficult in this managerialist culture to persuade funding partners of the targets' value.

The VCS in Hastings witnessed this first hand when trying to secure a target in the SCS around the health and growth of the voluntary sector activity. The opposition and resistance they experienced (discussed in the quotation below at a Community Network meeting) demonstrates how central the performance management approach is to this governance model and the challenge it raises around debates about what social should be sustained and the political agency of the concept of social sustainability:

“Within these targets there is one called Target 11 it is ours as the VCS fought for it – not increasing volunteering, but increasing capacity for VCS activity underpinned by a set of standards. We are trying to say to HBC “buy into community development” which is the real way to empowered and happy communities. ... Unsurprisingly this wasn't liked as they were being challenged at this level so over the last few

years the Network has been outspoken about not losing that.”[CDO]  
“It is worth adding T11 is a council trade off and the trade off is the VCS events, the major investment through the voluntary sector e.g. lottery awards, and it is a significant employer. I have stressed that this is a hard target in my paper that is with council now. The VCS in Hastings delivers such an important part of the town.” [VCS Director]  
[HCN mtg - 1.10.09]

A performance management culture also means the meetings were tied to the technical strategy documents and so a lot of time in meetings is spent reinforcing and so giving credence to technical governance jargon described in the previous section. The SCS at both district and county level had locally determined targets under regional government office guidance. While the presence of these local strategies offered a more tailored ‘localist’ agenda their monitoring under the Comprehensive Area Assessment by the Audit Commission during the research period meant the culture of central performance management was still explicit and influential. Davidson (2009) argues that if the nature of society is centrally determined and enforced then social sustainability loses its local agency or value as a concept. In the light of the discussions above this is real risk for Hastings, but only in part, as evidence of a locally forged and contingent form of AESS will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

Interviews and meetings showed how centrally determined targets such as worklessness are shaping local projects in Hastings, and precious project delivery time is spent on monitoring and evidence gathering for those targets in order to gain and retain limited funding. There were examples given of VCS organisations being directed in the nature of their projects by the political trends of the day. This leads to evidence of the critique of central funding chasing, short-termism of projects, the structures being less locally relevant and responsive, with the ad hoc development of projects to meet central state policy fashion (Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2006). There is an absence of a set of agreed values to this regeneration landscape other than the SCS and the ‘5 Point Plan’. Both of these are strategies with targets and indicators that can evolve with a changing political economy. This was

observed in the strategy reassessment for both the local and county SCS that involved reduced targets to allow for the recession and public sector cuts. In this way the strategies don't advance a set of values, but instead respond to the political or economic climate of the day. Were the local governance landscape given the autonomy and devolved finance to direct projects based on more socially sustainable values the waste and ineffectiveness caused by constant re-shaping to meet changing policy trends perhaps could be avoided. The frustration felt by some stakeholders with the time lost to endless cycles of policy review, revisiting targets and a failure to mainstream a set of values is expressed by community leaders in a Community Network meeting below:

“Until you have targets and strategies that address the root causes and not the symptoms you can't address the problems. It is a sad failing of the community strategy. There are targets you can't attack.”  
[Board member]

“The length of time the refresh has taken and we still don't have clear targets. And they are talking of narrowing the gap and what do we understand by narrowing gap but I'm sorry if after 7 yrs they don't know what narrowing the gap is there is something very, very wrong. Those of us involved in the priority wards we had all this set up and in place this was let slide at the end of neighbourhood renewal and there are people that desperately need our help. The SCS is a very important document for this town and it belongs to the people of this town and not HBC and that means it belongs to us because we are there to represent those people and I get very upset and angry and tend to go off on one.” [Board member] [HCN mtg - 1.10.09]

Using a social sustainability framework for development planning (see Cuthill, 2010; Holden, 2011) would mean explicitly hard-wiring a set of values into the governance landscape regarding the importance of community participation, engaged governance, social capital and social equity. These values would then be as central within the governance culture in Hastings as the more easily quantifiable and so entrenched economic indicators. This would also go some way to mitigate the observed local frustrations with

central government political 'fashion' led funding cycles. The negative impact of this policy churn on VCS stability, coherence and the wider social regeneration agendas was evident in meetings, interviews and policy documents. Senior VCS members expressed concern that the scale of the deprivation in Hastings requires a more consistent and long-term commitment than the constant cycle of politics (local, regional and national) and strategy reviews allow. A social sustainability framework would include increasing the value placed on the security and legitimacy of the link between grass-roots voice and their impact on debate and decisions that affect them. As is acknowledged by many of those involved in social regeneration in Hastings the most disadvantaged continue to be disenfranchised and marginalised from the structures that offer them the most chance of empowerment and change. Making those structures known, more accessible and more meaningful to those isolated communities would better secure core social sustainability values of participation, empowerment, social capital and social infrastructure (Colantonio, 2009; Cuthill, 2010; Pares and Sauri, 2007).

#### 7.5. Citizen-state relations and social sustainability

AESS is further inhibited in Hastings by the community burden of governance created by the New Labour drive for active citizenship, and the resulting vulnerability of local partnerships and social infrastructure this burden generates. The burden of governance is characterised within academic critiques by the extreme levels of social capital investment required of community representatives, and the responsibility they carry to maintain the VCS voice and influence in this partnership model of local regeneration governance (Gilchrist, 2006; Robinson *et al.* 2005; Taylor, 2003; 2006). Interviewees from all sectors observed this VCS burden as a real challenge for the success and future of a partnership model that has been made more difficult by cuts to community development staff and resources.

The remarkable VCS investment of time, resources, skills and emotions were evident in every sub-regional meeting observed. VCS members expressed concerns in meetings and interviews about community representative 'burn out' as a result of over work and over concentration of responsibility in just a

core set of individuals. Further they were critical of the need for greater investment in community development in order to build social capital and community empowerment in existing and new members. They explained this was essential in order to help the community-led structures engage more sustainably with the 'hard to reach' communities, and overcome issues of capacity and depth of representation described earlier in the chapter. In addition, community members argued that a more socially just partnership model would also offer greater support for participation through formal expenses policies for transport, printing and child-care amongst other issues. This frustration at the burden of governance and the resulting vulnerability of the structures (and so security of social sustainability) is reflected in this quotation from an interview with a VCS representative:

“It just gets so time consuming, to do it properly and to feedback properly and go to pre-meets so you are confident speaking at an LSP level is really, really time consuming, I found it exhausting, you think I will commit time to my town but you don't want to be stuck doing it forever, it was very hard to get the broader community involved and share that work, they are great ideas but you have to be virtually unemployed or retired or of independent means to participate properly.” [Gwen - 4.11.10 – VCS member and NF Chair]

Raco (2005) and other academic commentators characterise this burden of 'active citizenship' as the state responsabilising citizens without providing them with the adequate resources, support or power to enable them to deliver their objectives. This politically charged challenge of achieving an equitable and enabled localism agenda was revisited in Hastings with the prospect of the Coalition government led Decentralisation and Localism Bill (2010-11) and Big Society agenda. Central to these political narratives is the citizen-state relationship, which continues to evolve, and is expressed in wider academic and policy debates around the co-production agenda and redistribution of regeneration roles and responsibilities that are explored in the next chapter.

In agreement with the more conceptually focussed sustainability literature,

(Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; Raco, 2005; Whitehead, 2003) this research underlines the importance of recognising the construction of social sustainability as a political narrative and development model, shaped by complex locally specific socio-political and institutional issues. How social sustainability emerges going forward in these conflicting (local/county/central) politics is yet to be seen. Certainly both active citizenship (Labour) and Big Society (Conservative) contain elements of social sustainability, including building of social capital, engaged governance and participation. The challenge for any critique is to understand the opportunities and risks this creates for the manifestation of social sustainability on a local scale. As discussed above, key to those risks under New Labour was the over burden of VCS members, the institutional and cultural limits imposed on their degree of influence, and the challenge of achieving meaningful representative participation.

#### 7.6. Institutional vulnerability

The next section will build on this discussion of the 'burden of governance' and how this limits the presence of social sustainability by analysing further aspects of the vulnerability of these structures evident in the data. Vulnerability in this context is understood as the risk to the structures' future existence and will be discussed below in terms of limitations in partnership membership capacity, membership numbers, funding, community development resources, absence of succession planning and personality dependence. It is clear that the more vulnerable the structures are the less likely they are to be sustained and so a route to participation, empowerment and engaged governance will be lost, and the foundations they offer in terms of social sustainability will be lost with them.

A number of the structures were observed to be overtly vulnerable during a turnover of membership, particular in terms of the turnover of officer/board roles. There was repeated evidence of uncertainty over the future of a partnership when it was not immediately clear who would take on the officer roles required to run them, where there was concern over lack of capacity in terms of numbers and also lack of social capital. This concern was also

evident where there was a threat to funding, and greater still where there was a concern around the appetite within the wider community to fulfil these responsibilities. This was particularly evident in a community structure that was re-forming after previous central funding had ceased. Observation in meetings and interviews highlighted the fragility of the group dynamic and the degree of energy required to support it at that early stage. The social capital building at this stage was very intensive, with two CVS officers facilitating and training. A community leader describes his fear regarding the vulnerability of the community partnerships that he views as clearly needed, but also at risk owing to this threat to resources in terms of people and funding:

“I certainly think that the area forums like the xx [NF] are certainly a very good idea and if we didn't have them we would think we would have to invest in them and similarly with the AMBs, but I feel distinctly dissatisfied with both of them. It's partly because we have seen a gradual move away from residents towards organisations because the activists have been active for many years and are ready to move on and hand over and it is not clear who they will hand over to and some residents associations have closed. ... it is not difficult to see why we should continue it is difficult to see how we can continue particularly if funding is going to stop. So I can't help but feel the structures are good but it is how they are made into things that more people understand and want to participate in I don't know.” [Fred - 30.9.10 – Community leader]

This vulnerability around capacity was heightened by the 'personality dependence' of these structures where they rely on particular individuals and the force of their personality to drive the partnership. The centrality of the personality of the Chair and group officers in particular to the partnership dynamic, discourse, agenda and sense of identity was repeatedly observed in the meetings and reiterated in interviewee responses. The research reinforces the importance of local specificity when understanding how centrally determined modes of governance evolve on the ground. Partnerships in Hastings are the sum of personalities with their own politics

and history, with regionally and centrally determined processes imposed that are then heavily moulded by those personalities.

All these vulnerability factors were concurrent with the literature and the reasons observed elsewhere for the potential failure of local governance partnerships in the regeneration of urban areas (Gilchrist, 2006; Taylor, 2003; 2006; Wallace, 2010). The reliance of the community led structures in Hastings on public sector funding for administration, officer posts, devolved budgeting and community development support is perhaps its greatest vulnerability going forward in a public sector reliant city with one of the highest percentage central government revenue decreases in England for 2011-12 (Centre for Cities, 2009; 2011). While the very presence of long standing, valued, inter-connected local partnership structures is a key tenet to the thesis of AESS, their vulnerability through limited VCS capacity, and cuts to resources places real questions over their future. In turn, the future of these 'arenas of hope' (Coaffee and Healey, 2003), that provide the infrastructure that shapes social sustainability in this town are placed in jeopardy. The next section considers the final barriers to AESS identified in the research. In this case study barriers to community engagement and participation have been generated by multi-scale regeneration governance congestion, and the hegemony of an economic competitive model at a regional scale that restricted the opportunity for social sustainability agendas to emerge.

#### 7.7. Institutional congestion and a neo-liberal competitive governance model

##### *Governance congestion and complexity*

One of the main complaints of the governance beyond the state approach to urban regeneration has been the cost and barriers caused by governance congestion and complexity owing to the proliferation of partnerships encouraged under New Labour (Davies, 2004; Landry, 2008; Robinson *et al.* 2005). This critique is largely concerned with the duplication of effort and resources, the breakdown or laboured nature of communication, delay through bureaucracy, and lack of clarity of direction and accessibility.

Further, Davies (2004) argues this state dominated institutional congestion leads to reduced space for alternative political action. Elements of all of these concerns have been observed in Hastings.

Over the course of a year the researcher observed the often repeated, almost default governance practice of creating new partnerships in order to respond to any new issue that developed. The result was a veritable spaghetti junction of structures, strategies and policies that resulted in governance congestion and barriers to engagement. Not only was this institutional ecology difficult to understand without a year in the field, more importantly this web of structures was felt by many stakeholders to be meaningless to most of Hastings' citizens, and understood only in part by those that are engaged in it. A senior stakeholder attending one of the thematic partnerships for the first time was shocked by the complexity of the structures and asked the researcher: "How do you cope sitting through these meetings - they are byzantine?" [Board member] [HBEA mtg - 16.3.10]

Certainly the complex and involved nature of these meetings is frustrating and intolerable for many stakeholders thus creating barriers to equitable engagement. Without a guide or introduction this complexity acts as a barrier to understanding and access to routes of empowerment for local communities. The link between the grass-roots and strategic forum would be more secure and legitimate in nature if that route was more accessible. In this way the town could be more certain of the social sustainability the infrastructure provides and the depth of voice that feeds into it. One HBC officer used a metaphor to describe the obstructive nature of this complexity:

"How do the structures impact the social agenda?" [JOW]

"It is like a big tank of water on top of a building, water is flowing down, by the time it reaches lower level it is like a drop that is how I see it. There needs to be a good connection between the tank and where it is going. So the system is too big, too many pipes and they need to be cut down and have one huge tube directing to the issues. I look at all those systems, what impact do those structures have on reality, I tested it with an area I know about, how the language they use and I

realise what does that have to do with reality, they talk about community being hard to reach, it is not the community who are hard to reach but the services.” [Fred - 28.6.10 – HBC officer]

A partnership ‘habit’ has emerged in the local regeneration governance culture in Hastings which shapes the form local governance takes and in doing so determines the opportunities, or barriers to social sustainability this allows. The complexity of this governance landscape shows no sign of easing following the abolition of New Labour’s regional tier and replacement with sub-regional LEPs.

### *Competitive vs. collaborative models of regeneration*

Batchelor and Patterson (2007) argue that this complex and congested landscape is guilty of limiting the presence of a counter-hegemonic agenda such as sustainability owing to the dominant influence of a number of the structures within it that are formed in a neo-liberalised mould (in particular the RDAs and URCs). Certainly one of the greatest potential barriers to social sustainability observed in Hastings has been the overtly neo-liberalised economic sustainability agenda that dominates at regional level and the competitive model of the SEEDA backed local delivery body Sea Space (as described in Chapter 5 and 6). Here there was evidence of what Jessop (2002) describes as the subordination of social policy by an economic policy focus on enterprise and innovation. This economic focus is important in terms of the absence of an explicit social sustainability agenda in Hastings as the RDA has been the dominant power structure in determining the form and nature of government capital investment in the town over the last decade.

At regional scale meetings and also in interviews with the URC (Sea Space), the language of sustainability features mostly in terms of sustainable economic prosperity, or as short hand for climate change and a green economy (as shown in Chapter 5). Here the meaning of sustainability is framed and seemingly entrenched in the technocratic discourse of assessment that has dominated urban regeneration for decades in the UK (Jones and Evans, 2008; Whitehead, 2003). This entrenchment is partly

reinforced by the dominance of the planners in these structures at a senior level and their role on forming the Regional Strategy that adheres to a technical and practical sustainability agenda issued by central government. There was limited conversation in regional meetings about local engagement and democracy, with evidence the SEEPB was slow in its engagement with wider stakeholders. The community voice as represented by local councillors, seemed particularly quiet on issues around equality, social justice and engagement that so preoccupy the local scale debates. Rather than engage in dialogue regarding social regeneration issues, the meeting focus and discourse was often thick with metaphors of business, prosperity, global competition and economic growth. Again, the balance of the sustainability agenda is demonstrated to be a function of a set of political questions and politicised narratives. The neo-liberal, competitive regional agenda of the SEEPB structure leaves the social sustainability agenda for Hastings extremely vulnerable as can be seen in the quotation from a board meeting of the SEEPB below:

“Will we keep investing millions in the south coast to stand still – why keep developing on the south coast when this makes for challenges of resilience to climate change.”[SEEPB board]

“I am concerned about Objective 4 [ensure the changing and growing needs of our communities are addressed sustainably] is incredibly fluffy.” [EA representative]

“Yes deliberately so.” [Planning officer]

“But you will not ‘narrow the gap’ if you follow an ‘invest in success’ line. The environmental and social elements of 4 needs to be much, much clearer.” [EA representative].

“Yes number 4 is really a catch all.” [Planning officer]

“I agree this needs radical shaping before we present it to the public for consultation ... we need to give it a bit of sex appeal because quite frankly at the moment it is a bit boring . . . we need to remind the rest of the nation that the SE is the engine room of the entire country... and this [consultancy tool] will help us get more bangs for our buck.”  
[Board member] [SEEPB mtg - 30.3.10]

The conflicting models of 'competition' employed to drive the physical and economic regional agenda, and a model of 'collaboration' adopted to address the local social agenda could not have been more at odds in their discourse and practice with detrimental consequences for AESS. This dislocation of the physical/economic and social regeneration agendas and governance cultures was observed in meetings and was often repeated by interviewees. This senior HBC officer comment regarding the dislocation of the SEEDA agenda and local structures is one such example:

"It was not a choice to come together it was imposed and it is the big elephant in the room but that is not the mature conversation and we had a good reason that was cash from SEEDA to come together. ... they had such a different agenda and it didn't gel as a consequence... we have always had a greater affiliation with the central government agenda than county or regional, SEEDA were always going for growth, which is fine but it is a bit Alice in Wonderland, 'have some more tea – well I haven't had any yet.'" [Abi - 23.11.10 – HBC Manager]

This failure to commit to community engagement in urban regeneration practices is familiar in the UK literature: "too often in the past, delivery vehicles have been imposed on local communities, rather than harnessing their local knowledge and expertise" (ODPM, 2003:48). Sadly, as this comment by a thematic partnership Chair demonstrates this imposition of a delivery vehicle with limited engagement with locally informed social agendas is also true of the Hastings example:

"The Taskforce is interesting as there are overlaps but not direct connections with the LSP which is why Sea Space has always been ambivalent towards the LSP – there has been no direct coming together – it is not transparent and so a real lack of understanding created suspicion as far as the LSP was concerned." [John]

"And that appears to have driven a wedge between physical and social regeneration?" [JOW]

"Absolutely, totally, and we won't reconcile that ever ... Sea Space will

continue to be an independent company with no public remit.” [John – 28.5.10 –TP Chair]

The absence of a transparent, democratic mandate at regional level discussed in Chapter 6 was evident to observers of SEEPB meetings in that most work politic appeared to be done away from the table in small huddled groups before, after and during breaks in the meeting. Critical observers and even representatives of this regional structure characterised these meetings as 'boxing in the shadows'; 'smoke and mirrors' and 'same faces, different location' that represented the less collaborative more politicised and bureaucratic face of governance. There was limited room in this discourse or in these governance practices for a more just reading of sustainability, or the more holistic understanding of regeneration that addresses social equity and well-being. As described in Chapter 6 when this was raised and stressed by the EA representative his was a lone voice. Social sustainability, (in the social tradition as opposed to the ecological tradition, Davidson (2009)) was largely absent in this regional institutional space thus constraining the presence of social sustainability practices and norms in Hastings.

The section above has highlighted the barriers to AESS created in Hastings by the presence of well-established academic critiques concerning institutional congestion (Landry, 2008) and neo-liberalised governance models (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Jones and Evans, 2008). These prominent critiques of regeneration in England over the last decade are well understood as a function of the acceleration of a hollowing out of the state, and a proliferation of partnership governance at both regional and local level (Gilchrist, 2006; Jones and Evans, 2008; Taylor, 2006; Wallace, 2009). The foreclosure of alternative sustainability agendas in the neo-liberalised institutional structures at regional level is well argued by Batchelor and Patterson (2007) with specific reference to environmental agendas. These research findings suggest a point less evident in the literature that this foreclosure of agendas by neo-liberalised models of governance (through their discourse, actors and practices), extends to social sustainability.

## 7.8. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the presence and implications for social sustainability of dominant critiques of the New Labour regeneration model. Framing the analysis of these well-established critiques in terms of their relationship with social sustainability has illustrated the centrality of understanding the construction of barriers to AESS by regeneration governance practices, discourses and cultural norms, and the broader socio-political context in which these are shaped.

The potential for AESS in Hastings has been shown to be limited by: democratic deficit (Swyngedouw, 2005), foreclosure of wider community voices through the presence of usual suspects (Taylor, 2003; 2006); control of stakeholder contributions and agendas via an anaemic prescribed active citizen understanding of 'community' (Wallace, 2010) and by post-political regeneration tactics (Baeten, 2009) that include the pervasive performance management and professionalised institutional culture that makes communities measurable and calculable (Raco, 2005). Additional barriers are constructed by the burden of governance and vulnerability of structures that are seen to further limit the security of the VCS voice (Raco, 2005; Taylor, 2006). The chapter closed with evidence of barriers to AESS generated by institutional congestion and neo-liberalised structures that foreclose social sustainability agendas (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007).

The chapter has sought to articulate the barriers to AESS this institutional landscape creates through the obstruction of social sustainability values of meaningful participation, engaged governance, community empowerment and ethical imperatives of social equity and justice. Specifically, and importantly in terms of addressing areas under-researched in this context, the research highlights the restricting implications for social sustainability of the multi-scaled, collaborative partnerships and localisation trends of urban governance observed in UK regeneration over the last decade. However, as has been hinted at throughout the chapter, this is only one reading of the structures and their governance practices, and their contribution to facilitating AESS is explored next. What is clear is that interrogating the institutional and

governance specificity of this case study is a rich seam in which to explore the obstruction/construction of local sustainability values and 'story-lines' just as Krueger and Gibbs suggested (2007). The next chapter will build on this first part of the social sustainability 'story' in Hastings by offering a departure from the dominant critiques discussed above in order to argue how governance practices can also combine to facilitate 'actually existing social sustainability' in multiple and varied forms in this governance space.

### 8.1. An alternative critique of urban regeneration governance

This chapter will attempt to offer an alternative to the dominant critiques of the New Labour urban regeneration agenda outlined in Chapter 7. The shift in scales of governance and the proliferation of collaborative partnerships under New Labour regeneration policy has created a new set of governance spaces in this case study. In Hastings the cultural and institutional practices that are a product of a specific socio-political context and the legacy of a national policy of 'governance beyond the state,' help construct 'actually existing social sustainability'. In common with the critique by Krueger and Agyeman (2003), the term 'actually existing' is used to explain that in Hastings there is evidence of social sustainability in practice, despite the social regeneration policies and projects being rarely labelled as having social sustainability as their aim. In fact the phrase 'social sustainability' is noticeable in its absence from policy and governance discourse, and was often meaningless to stakeholders in the case study. As argued by other observers, (Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; McKenzie, 2004; Whitehead, 2003) this chapter further highlights the fact that the social, political and historical specificity of place is integral to constructing a distinctive local version of social sustainability forged through cultural and institutional/governance practices and discourse.

The analysis and discussion in the previous chapter highlighted the barriers to social sustainability in this regeneration governance landscape. Nevertheless, the thesis does also identify in local partnerships the presence of what Gibbs *et al.* (2002) hoped would be new state spaces offering an opportunity for the growth of a counter-hegemonic agenda. In Hastings that alternative agenda is around actually existing social sustainability (AESS). These are alternatively described as potential 'arenas of hope' by Coafee and Healey (2003) and may prove yet to be an institutional and cultural route to a more socially just sustainability in Hastings. The rest of this chapter will explore the key characteristics of this governance landscape that have led to

such a conclusion, and in doing so will position this evidence within the broader sustainability, governance and regeneration debates to which it contributes. The chapter explores three main features of this governance landscape and regeneration community culture that enable AESS. The following sections will discuss in turn, the presence of an engaged partnership governance infrastructure, an alternative model of activism and culture of social purpose, and finally, the institutional legacy of a community engagement agenda. In the final section these features, and their impact on AESS, are discussed in terms of their relevance in a rapidly shifting political-economic context.

## 8.2. Engaged governance and community partnerships

### *A partnership skills and infrastructure legacy*

Hastings has an extensive and engaged, though admittedly flawed, partnership infrastructure. The partnership structure map is, while complex, rich in providing networks of social infrastructure to support and provide access to local decisions and debates around social change. The qualities of that partnership landscape and culture are partly a product of a learning legacy from a decade of New Labour commitment to multi-agency partnership working in regeneration. Importantly however, this learning curve developed in combination with the pre-existing culture of community-based politics and social purpose discussed in Chapter 5. This culture was nurtured in a New Labour policy environment that valued the discourse of participation and empowerment (Wallace, 2010). Interviews with long-term stakeholders in the regeneration community stress that before the investment over a decade ago partnership working was a foreign model of governance in Hastings. Prior to the regeneration investment, neither the public sector, nor the VCS had the necessary skills or experience to make a success of partnership working. Today there is a legacy of engaged partnership governance populated by representatives from multiple sectors, rich from a decade of building partnership skills and valued cross-sector relationships. I therefore argue that the local hybrid regeneration partnerships in Hastings are the institutional mechanisms that provide (imperfect) foundations for the social

sustainability values of social capital building, engaged governance, and social infrastructure. These imperfect foundations are described by an HBC officer in the quotation below:

“What about the area based structures does that not enable community representation?” [JOW]

“It does, it does, it is a really good model but why do people get involved in their own community, 80% involved are community activists, that makes them go, their motivation and why they are part of that, if you take out those and look at the intervention there are not many others so there is a lot of work to be done in terms of civic involvement. ... But they are fantastic models for communities to be involved in their area. ... [In terms of the legacy of NR] Community participation that’s where I see the impact, community participation - that is an indirect impact - a cultural shift. When money ended it didn’t end ... it is now a way of doing things.” [Peter - 28.6.10 – HBC officer]

A number of senior interviewees noted that the shift to hybrid partnerships had generated a progressive step-change in regeneration practice in the town. This shift in governance culture is described by an RSL director:

“How has this investment in neighbourhood and partnership impacted ways of working?” [JOW]

“Does that create the climate to make those things happen? Yes I suppose it does ... So I think in terms of information sharing, and willingness to work together and the very good relationships there are, by and large now all the major players do get on well and are very supportive ... Even if partnership working has achieved better working together, information sharing and some joint projects, then it has been worth it. ... We didn’t achieve major bending of funding, but that is difficult in a 2 tier political level, especially with political difference it makes it more difficult. So it hasn’t achieved the radical transformation of services that some of us aspired to but we have achieved a lot in more intimate and smaller ways and in ways that are meaningful for local communities.” [Danny - 9.12.10 – RSL Director]

A legacy of regeneration investment and local commitment to partnership working and community engagement has forged in Hastings a governance landscape more conducive to social sustainability. The following sections explore the nature of this partnership infrastructure and skills legacy, and how this developed within a specific socio-political context to shape a civic-governance space that enables AESS.

### *An embedded VCS voice in local governance*

One of the clear strengths observed in this governance culture is the embedded, and often highly valued nature of the structures that reach down to a grass-roots voice through multiple RAs and NFs. The partnership infrastructure provides an opportunity for community engagement that reaches from the grass-roots organisations to town-wide strategic forum (e.g. the LSP). This grass-roots-strategic link enables access to alternative resources, social capital building, senior forums to express community views and opportunities to develop senior alliances. Establishing this link and subsequent engagement benefits has proved problematic in other urban governance landscapes (Houghton and Blume, 2011; Taylor, 2006). In Hastings this reach, no matter how imperfect, means a framework exists for multiple opportunities for greater community participation. This framework values and embeds engaged governance and so in turn constructs the recognised access and participation elements of social sustainability (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Manzi *et al.* 2010). The value of such a grass-roots reach is expressed by a community leader in the first quotation and by an NF chair in the second:

“Does the ABS offer a vehicle for the community voice?” [JOW]

“Based on my experience of east Hastings I would say yes ... they are a good way to get down to street level and best way I have come across ... there are people on my RA that have never been in the council chamber until I took them there [through the AMB].” [George - 126.10.10 – Community leader]

“Sometimes the community voice is taken on board and the change of structures helps, the community groups and AMBs and the MATT teams have been really great, so people are talking to each other more and there is more flexibility in those structures, a community rep is always at the LSP.” [Gwen - 4.11.10 – NF chair]

By embracing this partnership model the regeneration community in Hastings have forged a governance culture where there is an expectation for VCS involvement at nearly all sub-regional scales of governance. This expectation of VCS involvement in regeneration governance creates a more progressive engagement infrastructure and enables AESS. There are VCS representatives in all the formal regeneration structures including chairmanship and ten seats (a near majority) in the LSP. One council officer stressed the level of expectation of VCS involvement in the partnership process when she described how some HBC departments would not now dream of advancing a policy without consulting the NFs and AMBs first. The Hastings example reinforces the point made by Jones (2003) that partnership structures can create governance spaces where the VCS are expected at the table and this creates the opportunity for them to manipulate or disrupt dominant discourse.

This local to strategic partnership infrastructure allows local bodies and their communities to play an active role in town-wide and even county-wide macro issues as well as local level topics of social change. In the meetings observed in Hastings local NFs address and even lead the debate around strategic issues on education, health, housing and cohesion on a town-wide basis. This is in contrast to the dominant critique of community-led governance in neo-communitarian political frameworks that contend that the VCS fail to engage with wider macro issues (DeFilippis *et al.* 2006). In the quotation from an NF meeting below the members from the local VCS are engaging with macro issues on the national regeneration stage by attending BURAs conferences (the national regeneration body annual event), and improving their knowledge of alternative regeneration models adopted across the country:

“We went to the BURA conference at Scarborough... The model of regeneration in Scarborough is something we were keen to explore - the town theme they have there is really getting the community involved in regeneration ... it would be possible to include Neighbourhood Forum people to go to Scarborough on a trip [to look at this] and the forum could fund their train tickets.” [Chair] [NF mtg - 9.3.10]

This research demonstrates, as also noted by Robinson *et al.* (2005) and Taylor, (2006), that these partnership structures can offer an embedded and strategic voice for the community. The link between empowering people to have a voice in local decisions and developing the governance infrastructure in which to hear that voice is a clear objective of the Area Based Structures. The structural connectedness of this infrastructure is an important aspect of that objective. Structural connectedness is secured through the attention paid to links between structures in terms of information shared and issues escalated between them from grassroots to strategic forum. The combination of this connectedness and the level of expectation of a VCS voice facilitates the development of social capital and empowerment through participation. As such these features of the governance culture contribute to the evidence of AESS in this space. Identifying and examining the opportunities for social sustainability that are enabled and propagated by the regeneration governance infrastructure, practices and culture in Hastings is central to the thesis. How these governance practices and values have been normalised within this regeneration governance culture is discussed in more detail below.

The partnership structures were further embedded into the local governance landscape during the research period by a set of processes and practices that codified the role of this engagement infrastructure. Codification involved the formal linking of the structures in their terms of reference by agreeing their format, membership, resources, and duties of transparency and accountability. The explicit and formalised linkages between structures in terms of representatives, transparency of communication and clarity of accountability, is key to facilitating the values of good governance central to social sustainability (Littig and Griessler, 2005; Manzi *et al.* 2010). The

evidence of good governance in this case study is in sharp contrast to well-established critiques of this model of governance observed elsewhere. Hybrid and community-led partnerships in UK regeneration are often critiqued for being ill defined, non-codified, non-transparent and characterised by democratic deficit (Swyngedouw, 2005; Baeten, 2009). These features would otherwise obstruct AESS and their reduced presence in the Hastings partnership infrastructure creates a progressive governance space that is more conducive to social sustainability.

### *Constructing AESS and embedding practices of good governance*

This sub-section will build upon section 8.2 by stressing the features and practices of the Hastings governance culture that enhance its capacity to secure AESS through good governance, equitable partnership and by more meaningful community participation. The maturity of these partnerships was evident in the organic evolution of structural connections and the ongoing institutional partnership learning observed in meetings and reflected upon by interviewees. For example, this evolution was evident in efforts made to address democratic deficit through reassessing structural form and membership. Such efforts included the HCN developing its equalities protocols and election process, while the community cohesion, health and crime Thematic Partnerships all reviewed their breadth of VCS representation during the course of the research. The effects of this reassessment can be understood as important for the sustainability of these structures. The ongoing relevance of the partnerships to future generations and emerging social regeneration issues is made more likely by their capacity to evolve. Evidence of these efforts to remedy democratic deficit is demonstrated in the quotation below from a VCS leader:

“Hastings is less the usual suspects than some places, working in xx there were the same boards on these different organisations, same few people, it is not quite like that here it is like a big venn diagram and there is a little cross-over, where there are usual suspects they are aware of it, and it is not through want of trying, that is very refreshing for me, they do want to recycle their skills and take things

forward, they have that sophisticated awareness.” [Janice - 15.11.10 – VCS leader]

The value of partnership in this governance landscape was clearly witnessed in repeated efforts to secure good governance which is described in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy as one of the five core elements of sustainability (ODPM, 2005). The commitment to good governance was observed as partnerships reviewed their governance practice around depth of representation, transparency and structural connectedness. Another example of good governance was observed during succession planning for the anticipated end of local authority funding. A number of the NFs registered as charities and developed strategies to identify other sustainable forms of funding and income generation. In one example this is being done through using the forum premises for local community training to ensure their future and future relevance to local needs.

Such good governance practices were increasingly embedded into the regeneration community culture through: internal elections (e.g. Community Network elections), transparency of data available (LSP and ESSP meeting documents are accessible to all), open public debates (e.g. as those conducted regarding the closure of the Day Care Centres and the HBC ‘Big Conversation’ about the cuts), and commitments to formal best practice protocols (e.g. adherence to and promotion of the Compact, the national voluntary-public sector agreement discussed earlier in Chapter 5). In addition, the protocol developed for one of the Thematic Partnerships, demonstrates a maturity of partnership in that roles, expectations and boundaries are entrenched and the VCS voice/participation is protected. The social equity and good governance elements of AESS were also codified through the governance practices of the Community Network Equalities Special Interest Group to ensure more equitable community engagement:

“This is an equalities issue and an issue of reaching out further to groups that are not likely to be represented - this is a key point and relates to our equalities sub group terms of reference ... this is an important issue about the hard to reach and there are huge numbers

out in the community that don't feel their voice is heard and perhaps our equalities group can help with that and how the real voice of the community is represented is a real big one and needs to concentrate our thinking in every piece of work we do." [Board member] [HCN mtg - 8.4.10]

Securing a more representative and influential VCS voice through the governance practices described above within these partnerships structures is key to embedding social sustainability values.

### *Eroding barriers to participation*

The presence of AESS in this governance landscape is also a function of the erosion of commonly observed barriers to equitable engagement and participation. The absence, or ongoing erosion of traditionally observed barriers to community partnership (such as local authority reluctance to engage or statutory agency refusal to cede power), has resulted in an engaged governance landscape that is more conducive to meaningful participation and to the building of social capital. This absence is of course uneven as the barriers described in the previous chapter indicate. However, a decade of partnership learning and experience has resulted in adjustments to governance practices that have eroded some frequently observed barriers such as inaccessibility of local bureaucracies and absence of consultation (Houghton and Blume, 2011). One example of how these governance practices have been adjusted is the attendance by HBC Directors at each of the AMBs to purposefully act as champions for that partnership. Their explicit role as a 'champion' is to help their partnership navigate the governance system and ensure strategic escalation and faster resolution of issues. Interviewees in the VCS also noted that this governance practice made them feel that senior members of the council were taking them and their voice seriously.

In terms of local authority engagement, HBC officers noted how the previous tension between representative and participative democracy models has been partly eroded through additional adjustments to governance practice.

These adjustments involved explicitly including councillors in the participatory process and aligning the participatory and representative models for increased accountability. This tension was also eased by the dominant presence of Labour councillors within the partnerships (in terms of numbers and meeting attendance), who were observed explicitly valuing and acting as advocates for the participatory model. The result of these adjusted governance practices and local Labour party support is that the local political culture is more receptive to community engagement. As a consequence community engagement is advanced rather than obstructed as has been observed elsewhere in other towns (Davies, 2004; Houghton and Blume, 2011). As outlined in Chapter 7, the usual tension between participative and democratic representatives is present but managed in the Hastings governance infrastructure. By negotiating a more balanced distribution of leadership roles to both forms of representative, power is thus more evenly distributed in terms of agenda setting, voting and the provision of seats on strategic partnership structures. Interviews with both HBC officers and Councillors refer to the AMBs in a positive but flawed light in terms of accessing community voice and understanding community needs. The interviews suggest this has taken years to negotiate and recent local alignment of the participatory and representative models has been part of that process:

“... we did a scrutiny [of ABS] and it was absolutely ridiculous because we had ended up with 4 wards and 8 politicians over-ruling everything, I said this is ridiculous we need to get to a point where instead of politicians running these we should have the public running the AMBs so we do at least have VCS rep as Vice Chair now and the officers are given more freedom to be out in the wards, we didn't know what we could feed through them and they are now getting their hands dirty and feeding back into the structures, there is a now a shift, away from the [prescribed structure form] you know what happens in Birmingham is Birmingham it is not Hastings!” [Thomas - 3.11.10 – County Councillor]

This decade of partnership experience has meant the development of long-

standing personal cross-sector relationships, from junior officer to senior director level, and this also eases any tensions or reluctance to engage in this model of governance by the statutory agencies. In fact, interviewees for statutory agencies repeated their respect for the level of commitment, expertise and experience of the VCS representatives and how this has enhanced the partnership building process. My observations in meetings and interviews highlighted the comprehensive support of the ABS partnership structures by social housing, HBC officers, education and police bodies in particular. These statutory body representatives were observed making involved and passionate contributions in nearly every meeting the researcher attended at both local and county level. These representatives were using the structures as a valued route to message sharing, consultation and a formal way of engaging with the community. In fact the commitment of these representatives was regularly observed over the course of the research to revive fatigued NF structures with their commitment to local knowledge, consultation, contribution of resources, or the connections they forged in order to facilitate NF activity. The value placed on this process, respect for the VCS role within it, and the local knowledge it contributes is reflected in the following quotation from a statutory agency officer:

“They bring value, of course, through partnership, especially with the VCS contracts where they are out there on the ground ... the partnerships are a great conduit for information and tracking of evidence, they come to the table with that evidence as a start ... and we are moving away from the anecdotal due to the protocol so that now that communication, consultation and responsibility is two way ... certainly Hastings always seems to pioneer [these structures and relationships] ... they are an exceptional group of people, a lot of them very forward thinking ... it is not about bashing service providers it is about sharing the agenda. ... because of their higher attendance [to these meetings] because of the high levels of deprivation you tend to get hard hitters attending ... and we have moved forward to more work on information sharing and budgeting and so they are given influence certainly at a local level.” [Brenda – 26.5.10 – Statutory agency officer]

The importance of the partnership skills and infrastructure legacy for the presence of social sustainability in this regeneration governance culture has been stressed in the discussions above. Specifically, I have described the impact of those governance practices that have evolved in this governance landscape to help secure engaged governance and actively erode barriers to participation. The next sub-section discusses the set of political traditions in Hastings that have further promoted and facilitated community partnership and engagement. Evidence of the considerable impact of both the political traditions and governance practices upon this case study reinforces the value of a political-governance approach in examining the barriers and enablers of AESS.

### *The power of political traditions*

Many interviewees explained that the obstructive local authority approach to community engagement observed by other researchers (Gilchrist, 2006; Robinson *et al.* 2005) is less evident in Hastings owing to the local Labour political traditions. The active presence of Labour party councillors in the regeneration governance structures and their political commitment to a localised form of community engagement enables participation. For example, the importance of political support in securing the success and future of the ABS can be seen in this quotation from a Thematic Partnership board member:

“I was very keen from my period working nationally at the NRU to see how those structures were developing and to return to Hastings, one of the forerunners on that, and to see how the good practice in Hollington was spread town-wide, there are few areas of the country that have done that, of course Hastings lends itself to that with 16 wards that divide easily into 4 and with a long term Labour administration here who were keen to support the flagship initiatives like that, in a number of areas we were the forerunners and very keen to pilot those type of concepts, and they have been a force for good and so clearly even without support structures for them one would be keen for them to continue in the future ... they are still quite officer

driven here, but nevertheless, particularly with a Labour administration coming to power [locally] they are keen to use them as a vehicle to take those [engagement] agendas forward.” [Greg – 13.10.10 – HBC officer and Thematic Partnership board member]

Interviewees repeatedly noted the explicit return of community engagement and narrowing the gap discourse within HBC policy on the return to a Labour leadership of Hastings Borough Council in 2010. This followed a two-year Conservative led hung council that had been less overt in their support of this discourse. There was also an increased focus on social regeneration issues in partnership debates following this shift in local politics. Issues that received greater focus included community engagement, community development, cohesion and equalities. In terms of the latter this included the development of a town-wide Equalities Charter as can be seen in the LSP meeting comment below:

“I am very pleased to be here to present this initiative this is part of our manifesto during our election we said to sign up the statutory agencies to challenging discrimination and promotion of equalities in all our service delivery ... you can see how many people signed up for this and listening to the earlier discussion of the importance of partnership working here we have good practices here already.” [Senior Councillor] [LSP mtg - 19.7.10]

This comment is indicative of the social justice imperative that underpins social sustainability coming to the forefront of regeneration discourse and policy at a local level owing to a combination of political traditions and a partnership legacy. This evidence highlights the importance of acknowledging the social and political construction of sustainability in any analysis and in particular, the impact of “local political traditions and historical regulatory legacies in the discursive construction of strategies of sustainable urban development” (Whitehead, 2003:1202).

### *Urban regeneration and partnership solutions*

The value placed on the partnership mode of governance by the local regeneration community helps shape AESS by working to secure engaged governance, empowerment and community participation. The received wisdom from nearly all my interviewees was the need to respond to future fiscal and social challenges with new models of collaborative governance. These challenges included widespread concern over the possible detrimental impact upon social regeneration in Hastings presented by the rapidly evolving political and governance landscape. Local regeneration practice was placed in a state of uncertainty by the change of central government in 2010 which brought an absence of a concerted national level regeneration policy focus and sharp public sector austerity measures. These concerns were heightened by the abolition of the regional structures that had previously filtered so much capital investment into Hastings.

Solutions for the future were repeatedly presented both in meetings and interviews through the framework of an alternative or evolved partnership model. Solutions suggested included the model adopted by the Magna Carta Councils that involved pan-agency policy, budgeting and co-location. The collaborative approach was mooted again in terms of having a voice and influence in the LEP by creating a sub-LEP coastal partnership. While at County and District level LSPs there was a rallying cry expressed in meetings at both scales that in the face of a new Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the Big Society agenda there was room for more, not less influence for the LSPs. This appeared to represent a clear shift towards working together as equal partners with explicit recognition of the greater role of the VCS. The following quotation from a discussion at the last LSP observed in October 2010 demonstrates a genuine appetite for collaborative and progressive working practices in the face of a very uncertain future for regeneration in the town:

“The council is undergoing a consultation about those priorities [cuts in spending] as I assume other partners are ... new structures will come forward with the LEP and planning, and so we need to understand

how services are shared with less overlap and develop new and more useful models as this is a new situation and how we respond as a town to this financial and localism agenda is important ... some of this is coming down but some of this is going up ... how do we as a small place make sure we are heard and we need to also contribute to the wider debate at county level and we are putting some leadership and energy into that and of course the key part of that is how with less resources we continue with our community consultation.” [HBC Dir]

“... I think we still believe in the sustainable community strategy not because we have them, or the money for them, but because Hastings needs them ... you could argue the role of the LSP is more important than ever if we are going to work out how to achieve these targets with less money, working more smartly and collaboratively and the stronger role of the LSP.” [Senior Councillor]

“... in terms of community engagement this issue can only be addressed by collective action ... now it is important to show the maturity of our partnership work which will be tested and show what we do best and the ABS is an example of open local frank discussions ... the VCS does an enormous amount of work in this town for a relatively small amount of investment and we need to protect that ... we need to work out our priorities ... and use the strength of this partnership that we have built up over the years.” [CVS officer] [LSP mtg -19.7.10]

The centrality of a collaborative partnership approach in this local governance culture facilitates community participation, creates new spaces for community voice, and contributes to the ongoing building of long-term social infrastructures that facilitate AESS.

This section has involved a discussion of the substantial impact of discourse and policy of engaged governance and community partnerships upon the construction of governance practices and an infrastructure that enable AESS. This analysis demonstrates the locally specific partnership skills and infrastructure legacy of the New Labour regeneration agenda and allied interventions. In Chapter 7 it was noted that this partnership governance

legacy can contribute to elements of the democratic deficit critique of Swyngedouw (2005) and Baeten (2009). Nevertheless, this legacy has also nurtured a culture of good governance that sees efforts within the structures to improve in terms of equitable representation, transparency, accountability, engagement and quality of consultation. The ethical framework of good governance in parts of this infrastructure builds foundations for a future collaborative approach and security of space for community participation and empowerment so central to AESS (Colantonio, 2009; Houghton and Blume, 2011; Jones and Evans, 2008).

Traditional barriers to participation have been partly eroded to create a more favourable environment for AESS. Barriers to participation including local authority obstructions, the tensions of a participatory and representative model of governance, and statutory agency reluctance to cede power have all been reduced through a combination of dominant political traditions and adjustment of governance practices. Those governance practices have been shaped by the scale of investment in community engagement expertise, and by the collective skills, friendships and partnership experiences of a now well-established regeneration community. The partnership legacy of the last decade has resulted locally in the regeneration community seeking solutions to future challenges through new versions of that mode of governance. This multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach to complex social regeneration issues draws on the holistic understanding of social sustainability described by Manzi *et al.* (2010) and further enables AESS.

Despite funding cuts the future of the partnerships seems more hopeful given the senior stakeholder expressions of commitment to them, and due to the sheer level of expectation from the VCS of inclusion in local decision-making. As Taylor (2007) argues, this level of expectation and the local political power supporting that can be very difficult to reverse once mobilised as it has been so convincingly and explicitly in Hastings. This expectation of VCS inclusion also extends to wider partners (such as RSLs), who value and respect their involvement. As Jones (2003) explains this expectation of a VCS place within decision-making forums can create spaces of opportunity to disrupt and manipulate prevailing agendas as will be discussed below.

### 8.3. Alternative model of activism and a culture of social purpose

In the following section the argument for AESS continues to be developed by demonstrating the agency of a sophisticated VCS and a culture of social purpose that reinforces values and practices of social sustainability. The discussion will detail the evidence of an alternative model of activism that utilises partnership expertise and knowledge of governance practices to manipulate prevailing agendas and escalate others. The section makes clear the contribution to AESS of a broader culture of social purpose that this alternative model has evolved within. Finally the discussion acknowledges the role of VCS leadership, facilitators and allies in the ongoing construction of this alternative model of activism and an evolving form of collaborative governance.

#### *Self-defining active citizens*

This research highlights the expertise of the VCS core and their skilled navigation of the governance landscape. In this way the VCS advance an alternative model of activism that utilises reified governance practices and discourse to advance community agendas. In contrast to a traditional model of raw opposition this alternative model of activism uses the hierarchy of structures to lobby effectively, adopts governance norms to improve their influence in this space, develops strong relationships with key influencers through intelligent networking and advances a 'policy of agitation' to doggedly challenge and influence. This 'policy of agitation' is all about committing to an agenda, becoming well informed in its detail and being relentless in its follow-up at a number of forum. Further, it involves challenging partners with irrefutable facts and figures of injustice in service delivery. This alternative model is in contrast to the culture of community deference, co-option, and compromise characterised in the orthodox post-political critique (Baeten, 2009; DeFillipis *et al.* 2006). The combination of non-co-option and use of an alternative model of activism is witnessed in the following frank challenge between a County Council senior officer and a community leader:

“... this is a draft for discussion, we want to keep it manageable but at the same time we have to make sure it is inclusive and we take people with us and they are kept up to date and then they feed back into the development of the academies ... this is a consultative group to make sure the community views are effectively fed into this process...”  
[ESCC officer]

“I don’t think you have the balance right - you don’t go down enough into the community, I appreciate you have space for parents on there but many of these can be described as dare I say it Borough Council/County Council payroll people ... you could include HCN which then covers the whole town voluntary sector... one or two voices is not enough to carry a message ... this group should be as diverse and non-company heads as possible.” [Community leader] [Thematic Partnership mtg - 11.5.10]

By mastering the rules of engagement of a managerialist governance culture those practices that are otherwise seen as barriers to participation (Taylor, 2006), are employed with equal skill in the advancement of social change and in challenging political and statutory elites. For example, the VCS core often put forward an expert in the field from within their membership to address specific issues at meetings knowing that a technocratic and professionalised governance system is more likely to respond positively to a professional contribution of this kind. These are what Taylor (2007) describes as ‘self-defining active citizens’ who are “capable of manipulating prevailing discourse to their own advantage” (Jones, 2003:595). This alternative model of activism enables social sustainability values to evolve where the dominant critique has traditionally observed them as obstructed, absent or marginalised (Baeten, 2009; Taylor, 2006). A long-standing community leader describes how the governance culture has changed and highlights some of the features of this alternative model of activism:

“People are seeing things are changing and with people doing things it is embarrassing to go to that meeting and have not done your action and it shocks you into doing it. It is an important record. It is not enough to consult ... it is ongoing. Being a member of the xx Thematic

Partnership it is about continually learning and then as you develop your confidence and then you can have a dialogue outside of the meeting as well...” [Albert]

“Developing social capital?” [JOW]

“That’s right and social capital is very important. Buildings and structures cost money and personal relationships can be done for very little – good will and respect.” [Albert]

“Do you think the structures enable that?” [JOW]

“Well if we feel they are not it is up to us to bend them and mould them. The structures should be there to enable us to do what we have to do. That is why you need to refresh them. It is not as rigid as it once was. You need to know the rules and regulations but if something isn’t working it may be the rules and regulations that need addressing.”

[Albert - 25.5.10 – Community leader]

Certainly this knowledge and expertise is not universal, and is seen developing at each meeting and through ongoing training and mentoring sessions held by the local CVS and community network. VCS members are encouraged by CDOs and community leaders to adopt the traditional governance practices of these structures by articulating their debate with supporting evidence and policy relevance to gain influence in open meetings. In this way the culture of alternative activism evolves with implications for the forging of AESS through development of social capital, community participation and empowerment (Colantonio, 2009; Cuthill, 2010). The training indicates that this alternative model of activism is purposefully developed and therefore may be a useful model for other communities undergoing regeneration to consider.

The expertise of core VCS in Hastings and their engagement with practices of governance is partly a function of the scale of investment in community development and empowerment through Neighbourhood Renewal, Pathfinder and SRB funding. This has led to a large core of skilled, experienced VCS that are respected by statutory services and as such command a degree of influence in this space. Their employment of partnership skills and the ability to take a strategic view on issues is in

contrast to the observations of other researchers that highlight the absence of this capacity as a reason why community partnerships often fail (Basset *et al.* 2002 and Taylor, 2006). Instead in Hastings the VCS core use the technical discourse of governance and regeneration policy to demonstrate expertise and the legitimacy of their role in decision-making. They know how to operate through the Chair in order to amend the agenda and they ask for key points to be minuted and actioned by a fixed time so their agenda is advanced. They carefully select what topics to action at each meeting and build a groundswell of support for it by moving the agenda up through the hierarchy of structures. In following the appropriate governance process they avoid being diverted and increase the legitimacy of their cause. The discussion below at the Community Network meeting highlights the strategic commitment to engagement the VCS have adopted:

“I am concerned about community involvement in the academies ... the academies are vital to the future of the town and if there is not enough community involvement in the governance then they will quickly become exactly what the existing secondary schools became not responsive to interests of the local community ... that representation does not need to be political but maybe through the forum ...” [NF member 1]

“If you look at the terms of reference we have one community rep, the HVA Dir, 3 parents, AMBs one each ... there is nothing there to encourage more community members.” [NF member 2]

“We need to get in there early [the governance development process] this is where we need to focus.” [NF member 3] [HCN mtg -14.7.10]

The Community Network partnership was observed influencing the LSP structure by successfully lobbying for and defending their VCS activity target despite senior political challenges. In this way the VCS changed the profile/purpose of the LSP and in doing so shaped the agenda for social dimensions of regeneration. VCS activity is now embedded in the Sustainable Community Strategy targets and as such another step is taken towards normalising this as a valuable aspect of Hastings society to be sustained, monitored and supported. The governance practices have been

utilised by the VCS to effect social change and institutionalise social sustainability in the form of support for community voice, and the community engagement and social infrastructure this generates. This model of activism and employment of governance practices is described by one senior stakeholder as “challenging in the ‘right way’ and through long-term commitment and expertise it has ‘earned them their stripes!’” [Edward - 28.10.10 - URC member].

The movement towards a more collaborative approach to partnership and an alternative model of activism is not without critical reflection within the regeneration community. Local councillors and VCS members I interviewed outlined the problematic balance between robust challenging, and slipping back into a more historically partisan position. So as this quotation demonstrates there is still some room for the partnerships to continue to evolve into a more collaborative approach to local governance:

“It is a bit like the AMB, yes it has value, but has it worked exactly as we would want it probably not. There is a little bit of a tendency in the LSP rather than develop a vision for the town it can become if you are not careful a fora for the VCS to hold the statutory agencies to account. ... we have to guard against it [just] being a space for VCS reps to challenge, it isn’t the only avenue to do that, there are loads of opportunities to do that ...” [Harry - 22.11.10 – Senior Councillor]

In this section I have presented evidence of what Taylor (2007) describes as ‘self defining active citizens’ and their impact upon AESS. This research highlights a VCS core who are manipulating and disrupting prevailing agendas through the adoption of an alternative model of activism. This approach to activism employs post-political governance practices and a collaborative partnership model that are otherwise critiqued for limiting AESS values of participation and empowerment (Davies, 2004; Raco, 2005; Taylor, 2006).

### *Professional and strategic VCS leadership*

My discussion of the alternative model of activism in Hastings now turns to the role of the VCS leadership. Their efforts to define and articulate a strategic sector argument on key debates, and secure the sectors' literal strategic role in senior forum is fundamental to this form of activism. Through training and facilitating the professional practices and regeneration expertise of the VCS core they are also advancing this alternative model. Through shaping and sustaining this alternative model of activism the VCS leadership have directly impacted AESS in this governance space by prioritising and enabling community empowerment, participation and social capital.

Part of the success of the alternative activism model in Hastings is as a result of the strength of strategic leadership and representation by the CVS in driving the sector forward towards a position of collaboration with local government and statutory agencies. The VCS leadership are advocates of a form of activism that encourages a more asset-based approach to community development and empowerment. Two of the key leaders in this regard are very professional and politically experienced members and so enable a strategic voice that is well received in this managerialist governance culture. Both leaders employ the technical discourse of governance and lobby for a more intelligent and collaborative relationship with the VCS. Through their membership of senior partnership structures (such as, the Taskforce, Sea Space Board, HBEA, ESSP and LSP), the VCS agenda and alternative model of activism is advanced. The professionalization of the sector through the Community Network, with its democratically elected board and ongoing training, means the VCS voice is more valued by other partners. In this way the VCS position is normalised in this space. This is made very clear by an RSL Director comment on the role of the CVS leadership:

“I think we are very lucky in Hastings with the CVS ... they have shown enormously strong leadership in the VCS and amazingly influential and good partners to the HBC and others. They have been able to act as a point of contact between the bureaucracy and the people, they have created a whole set of protocols which kind of is required for

people to be taken notice of by people like me so I know where they come from and what is their legitimacy. The CVS have been critical in creating that structure for people to work in, and have done their level best to not make that too bureaucratic and so there are routes in for anybody who has a view and to get their view heard, ... [the CVS] have been very good at taking the temperature of the sector and I suppose representing them so in creating a climate where the individual activists can come through and supporting them and making sure they don't burn out – they have created that climate and structures.” [Danny - 9.12.10 – RSL Director]

The exchange below at a Community Network meeting further highlights the leadership role of the CVS, the encouragement of the use of the alternative model of activism described above and the centrality of the engagement agenda in this space. They highlight the potential for normalising the participation and good governance values of AESS through the effective use of governance practices:

“We have an hour to have a right old debate to get a mandate about where we think as a VCS we fit into consultations, there is a lot of reviewing of engagement strategy currently and at some point they will be out for consultation. So what I want from this meeting is to get to a point where we have a position statement to send out wholesale and also I am part of the community development coalition as is xx and xx and this brings together all agencies who support VCS organisations ... we aim to create a framework to be used by all LSP members as a baseline for community engagement methods and approaches and start putting pressure on them to get this right ...” [CVS1]

“We led a workshop at the last LSP on this and one of the themes we need to get our heads around is an awful lot of wasted money and time goes into consultation and we always end up complaining as a sector it wasn't done right or not Compact compliant ... so we have an opportunity as we have got the LSP to agree to consider the framework to see how all partners engage with the VCS as a whole it is more constructive for us to say this is how we want it done rather

than complaining, and also with vast swathe of public sector cuts coming it is worth us thinking about if resources are not available for community engagement then there is a real role for the HCN to articulate how we think engagement should be organised and engaging in ways that are more effective.” [CVS 2] [HCN mtg - 8.4.10]

In interviews VCS leaders discussed their rebranding and promoting of the sector by using the discourse of the dominant economic development regeneration model and audit culture. Perhaps the best example of this is the State of the Sector report compiled by HVA (2008) which makes effective use of a fiscal discourse by placing figures and values on hours worked, funding captured and monies saved by the sector. This document offers legitimacy for the sector and leverage in a governance culture that values evidence, audits and value for money. By conforming with the governance practices in the same robust nature as other partners this provides another way of normalising the strategic position of the sector and stressing the seriousness with which it needs to be taken within partnerships. As such, the research thus highlights again the effective use of governance practices to secure the VCS voice and a strategic position in this landscape that in turn enables AESS through increasing community empowerment and meaningful participation.

### *Capitalising on a culture of social purpose*

The next section explores the contribution of a distinctive local culture of social purpose to the presence and form of AESS in Hastings. The discussion highlights the important role played by local political activism traditions and the pre-existing form of social networks in the shaping of governance engagement practices in Hastings.

The culture of social purpose in this town (as introduced in Chapter 5) is an asset that naturally advances the social equity and social justice imperatives of social sustainability in Hastings (Colantonio, 2009; Cuthill, 2010). The first notable and most obvious characteristic of this culture is observed in the scale of VCS organisations in the town. Hastings has over 350 groups in a

town of just 86,000 people. In the previously mentioned State of the Sector report the value of the sector to the local economy through volunteering is valued as £5,589,220/week, plus 625 paid full-time jobs and 420 paid part-time jobs and an additional median income of £12,889 per VCS organisation/annum (HVA, 2008).

One interviewee (a VCS member and latterly councillor), described this social economy strength as being the product of a number of key soft enablers in the town including high levels of community activism, social purpose, high levels of volunteering, social enterprise and political lobbying. There is certainly a long history of activism in Hastings that includes housing protests in the 1960s and the subsequent development of an influential social tenant movement. This culture of social purpose is also reinforced by the largely socialist leaning politics of the town which is engrained in its identity through a very active local Labour party presence at community level.

The prevalence of action groups, campaigns and community politics events typifies the nature of the culture of social purpose and activism in Hastings. This is in addition to the more established VCS organisations that have been in place in some cases for decades. The numerous long-term community networks in Hastings provide the social infrastructure so central to social sustainability (Cuthill, 2010). They offer evidence of what Therival (2011) describes as “reservoirs of stability” (p.68) and as such are a valuable feature of this governance landscape in times of change and crisis. Such civic activity is a major asset in this case study and strong foundation for AESS values of social capital, social infrastructure and social equity. The embedded nature of the VCS in this case study and its strong tradition is repeatedly noted:

“In Southwick I set up a charity so know what it is like in London and what you would see is the VCS collapse and have to rebuild every 30 months... not in Hastings ... we have some special and committed people here.” [George - 1.6.10 – Community leader]

This comment in an NF meeting is indicative of the appetite for community

politics and smart organisation linking that was repeatedly observed:

“I know the Seniors Forum are interested in having a presentation on this. Maybe we could organise a meeting on the green way and xx who is in the room is thinking about reviving the green way executive.”

[Chair]

“I would love to do that and getting together as a pressure group to keep council interested in pursuing these issues.” [NF member] [NF mtg - 9.3.10]

In addition to the VCS scale and expertise, its' spirited and often 'spiky' nature was observed as a prominent feature within this regeneration community. Nearly every interviewee described the spirited characteristic of the sector while using language such as 'fighting tooth and nail', 'tenacious', 'anarchic' 'refusal to be co-opted' and 'guardians of social sustainability' to describe them. This built on observations in meetings where expressions of VCS pride in their town and Hastings' history of activism around protecting social justice, civil rights and community voice values were passionately articulated. While this character is not unique to the Hastings VCS, it is in sharp contrast to a seemingly dominant caricature that has developed in the prominent local governance critiques of a compromised, submissive sector, co-opted into the state agenda through post-political regeneration tactics (Baeten, 2009). This contrast is evident in the colourful description of the sector below by a long-standing community leader:

“It is almost as though people in Hastings have been underdogs for so long that they have thought that they are not putting up with it anymore and they are coming out of the woodwork.” [Audrey]

“Do you think neighbourhood renewal has a lot to do with that?” [JOW]

“It was the catalyst for that.” [Audrey]

“Do you feel the nature of VCS since neighbourhood renewal has meant it has become more demanding?” [JOW]

“Yes! Much more demanding!” [Audrey]

“Has it changed the way you work?” [JOW]

“All the old activists – if I can use that terminology – we had so much

training we were taught how to do the job and then having taught us they don't want us to do it!!" [Audrey- 17.6.10 – Community leader]

Interestingly contested definitions around the evolving role of an activist were articulated both at governance meetings and in interviews. A number of VCS and HBC interviewees refer with regret to the absence of a more traditional and raw activism model that existed in the town historically, and included protests and a more partisan challenging style. However, the capacity of the alternative model of activism in Hastings to disrupt and manipulate prevailing agendas, questions the argument that 'real politics' is the only legitimate route to a more socially just sustainability (Davidson, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2005; 2008). The politics of social sustainability is manifest in this case study in the active lobbying, campaigning and effective use of governance practices. This alternative model of activism, and its contribution to AESS builds on the recent evidence presented by Holden (2011) regarding the need for researchers to explore the re-politicisation of sustainability in urban governance. More specifically, this model of activism develops the explicit links between social sustainability and evolving forms of political participation.

#### *The role of VCS facilitators and allies*

In addition to the historical foundations of a broader culture of social purpose, the VCS is observed to be fortunate in receiving support from a number of political and statutory partners. Overt expressions of respect for the VCS and an acknowledgement of the need for their input was repeatedly observed in meetings and interviews. While this commitment to VCS support was not universal (as described in Chapter 7) many partners nevertheless acted as VCS allies by facilitating community input into partnership work. The outcome of this facilitation is VCS members working on multi-sector collaborative projects across the town and across the partnerships. This development of social capital and the embedding of the VCS voice within the formal structures is counter to the common observation of local government and statutory agencies failing to support the VCS role in community partnerships (Houghton and Blume, 2011; Taylor, 2006). The increasingly accepted

governance culture of collaboration and partnership is seen in this quotation from a senior community leader:

“We had a review of consultation by HBC and I was one of the ones interviewed and it was put in their report. We have a good relationship with middle management and good understanding and they understand the role of the VCS. Things need to be more transparent but it is getting more transparent and with the famous Compact you wonder is it lip service but we hope it is more than that here. We have lots of dialogue and we are on first name terms.” [Albert - 25.5.10 – Community leader]

The support is not only at senior level it also exists in a very passionate and informed capacity at junior officer level. VCS facilitators like community development officers (CDOs) are central to the VCS input in this model of governance. CDOs repeatedly provide an essential point of connection between the different sectors that in turn helps erode barriers to successful partnership, meaningful engagement and VCS influence. In short they play an important role in facilitating and enabling AESS in the structures by breaking down many of the barriers described in the prominent critiques of this governance model. Despite this important role in enabling social sustainability, it must be recognised that the facilitator or ally also becomes an additional source of influence upon the nature of the structures. These non-traditional positions of power shape AESS by determining how and what values or practices are institutionalised in this governance landscape. For example, some CDOs place a great deal of focus upon formalising the structures and legitimising the depth of representation in order to erode democratic deficit. While other CDOs focussed more on VCS influence, thus increasing social capital and the quality of participation.

The agency of facilitators and allies is constructive in the development of this empowered VCS role. This alternative model of activism questions established critiques concerning the enduring power differential between the government and the community in hybrid local partnerships (Davies, 2004; 2005). In fact the opposition to community engagement and empowerment

witnessed by other researchers (Robinson *et al.* 2005) is less evident in Hastings where many local government and statutory partners have worked to facilitate and secure the VCS voice in this governance landscape. As Jones (2003) observes not all local elites are subordinating.

This section has explored the presence and implications of an alternative model of activism identified in this research as facilitating AESS values of participation, empowerment and social infrastructure. Aspects of this governance landscape and socio-political context that have enabled this model of activism to emerge include a distinctive pre-existing local culture of social purpose and active community politics. Key to this analysis of 'post-political' urban regeneration governance are the specific practices and norms that have been learnt and are employed tactically in this alternative model to advance VCS agendas. The next section explores the third and final aspect of this landscape that has enabled the presence of AESS. To this end section 8.4 explores the local institutional and cultural legacy of the New Labour community engagement agenda.

#### 8.4. The institutional legacy of the community engagement agenda

Meaningful community engagement and opportunities for participation by the community in local decision-making is a central feature of social sustainability (Manzi *et al.* 2010) and a dominant theme in the institutional and cultural fabric of social regeneration in Hastings. The section addresses the agency of a pervasive community engagement agenda and its impact upon the practices of regeneration governance. This discussion stresses the AESS enabling legacy of a decade long policy and discourse focus on community engagement.

##### *The discourses and practices of engagement*

Community engagement and empowerment were a key part of the central government urban regeneration narrative under New Labour (Jones and Evans, 2008) and that narrative has continued to dominate in the local

governance structures in Hastings. In their review of New Labour regeneration policies Houghton and Blume (2011) conclude that efforts towards community empowerment and engagement through NR were limited by a failure locally to value the importance of community engagement within the regeneration process. In contrast, in Hastings this is largely accepted now as standard practice across the governance landscape. That acceptance of this agenda is in some part driven home by a strong VCS and CVS strategic leadership on this issue, as illustrated below by a community leader:

“What agenda is the sector advancing in social regeneration?” [JOW]  
“Well community engagement and equalities and diversity. ... They are influencing those structures partly by the fact that we are there all the time [attending the meetings] and they are beginning to realise we are not going to shut up! We are in for the long haul. And a lot of the service providers now have community engagement written into the manifesto and those that haven’t will have to as we will keep going on at them till they do.” [Audrey- 17.6.10 – Community leader]

Debates over how to engage the community including, different approaches, failings, successes and alternative models, occupied a large percentage of meeting time during the research. In addition passionate critiques of poor or excellent engagement processes filled multiple stakeholder interview responses. The engagement discourse that litters these discussions included: ‘inclusive governance,’ ‘stakeholder groups’; ‘consultation’, ‘focus groups’, ‘questionnaires’, ‘public meetings’, ‘consultation fatigue’, ‘participation’; ‘dialogue’, ‘community engagement policy’, ‘community voice’; ‘Compact agreement’; ‘community representation’ and ‘hard to reach communities’. The centrality of the engagement agenda language is important to recognise given the power of discourse to normalise institutional values and practices (Waitt, 2005).

The escalation of scale and opportunity for community engagement over the last decade was repeatedly highlighted in interviews with long-term stakeholders. One senior interviewee recalled how ten years ago the

prospect of developing beyond the single town-wide community partnership was 'laughable' and perceived as too great a resource commitment by the local council. In contrast, today this commitment to engagement is witnessed by the support of all twelve of the Area Based Structures and town-wide consultations on regeneration priorities. This engagement is indicative of an emerging collaborative partnership approach as can be seen in this feedback at a Community Network meeting:

"What they [BC] did and I think we should welcome this ... is get together funded projects and interested parties for a really big meeting at white rock and it sounds strange but it was a really positive attitude to what we face ... for next year we need to find a way of communicating at a borough and county level about the cuts and also the arguments won in the past about Hastings being a very deprived area in the middle of an affluent area of the South East needs to be re-won and the council need to work on that and Hasting faces the double whammy of higher percentage reliance on public sector and higher percentage of reliance on claimants ..." [CVS]

"... it really was a feeling of we were all in it together ..." [VCS leader]  
[HCN mtg - 8.7.10]

The sometimes progressive nature of this engagement agenda extends to senior executive level efforts to bring the whole town under a Community Consultation Framework. This is designed to be a more sophisticated and effective way of engaging the community to remedy consultation practice concerns identified by VCS, agency and local government members. Remedying this bad practice and developing a more holistic framework helps develop a more meaningful and constructive engagement process that improves the level of VCS influence and empowerment.

The money oiling these community engagement structures is fading and yet the determination to continue to make them happen by sharing responsibility was earnestly witnessed at county, district, and neighbourhood level. The emerging shift in VCS role within this regeneration community to funding partner or delivery organisation echoes the arguments of Evans *et al.* (2009).

They argue that one potential implication of the 2008 recession is the growth in organic regeneration where the absence of government funds mean other partners, including the VCS, could take on new roles previously dominated by local government and agencies. The potential dramatic redistribution of roles in the regeneration process in Hastings is clear in this comment from a senior HBC officer:

“If I was in the voluntary sector, after the budget, if I was xx (Dir CVS) and company, I would say to xx (HBC leader) can I take you out somewhere with a couple of your colleagues, and just have a discussion about how the sector can usefully be involved in providing services to the sector in the town in the future, not on a one off basis, can we have an ongoing debate over six months till the next budget round. Do you want to make that shift, yes or no, what are pluses and minuses for the council and the town, because the two are not necessarily the same, let’s have this debate.” [Kevin - 23.11.10 – HBC Director]

The multiple routes to make your voice heard and engage with civic life in Hastings through both participatory and representative democratic options are quite distinctive and extensive. These include, police street meetings, neighbourhood panels, residents associations, Neighbourhood Forums, Area Management Boards, LSP, Community Network, local actions groups, social housing tenants associations and councillors surgery. These should be seen as clear evidence of the richness of the social infrastructure in the town. Just as Meadowcroft (2002) observed in terms of environmental sustainability, this ‘institutional pluralism’ appears better equipped to perhaps not address, but certainly identify and respond to the complexity of social sustainability issues that affect Hastings. This multiplicity of opportunities for engagement is described by an RSL Director:

“So there was real engagement with residents through those groups and of course they were dominated by activists but really we were proud of that, but times have changed and communities have changed, and now there are all these other routes and more activity in

groups of interest, whereas before there was just one route, there was less community of interest, so that has been a very positive move where previously silent communities have found a voice through that whole process.” [Danny - 9.12.10 – RSL Director]

Recognising the diverse nature of this large scale VCS has helped deliver a more sophisticated engagement agenda in this governance landscape. However, there remains a tension between the formalised and embedded engagement process and a more fluid interaction with different communities that would enable a greater understanding of their needs. As described above the efforts towards a dialogue based system rather than one off engagement can only contribute to a more equitable and informed participation process. The importance of recognising the multiplicity of community identities is stressed by the VCS as they discuss the formation of the Consultation Framework and securing this complex understanding of ‘community’ within the Hastings governance culture:

“My concern is the day to day practice engagement with the community... trying to change that is more difficult but as organisations take this on board they will adopt best practice and that will make a change.” [Board member]

“... the engagement agenda is part of the citizenship agenda and the VCS is very much part of that and so it is important to be clear and recognise our (different) roles as community group, support groups with members, are you engaging on behalf of those members, or as part of HCN where you are democratically elected members of a network, which is just one engagement mechanism, and also as yourself as an individual like through the RAs, ... how do you want to be communicated? And we need to capture some of this in the framework to explain to them that there needs to be a variety of approaches as the VCS organisations are not there in a box you created for them, they are there in their own right and it is up to you as statutory bodies to understand how to work with them.” [CDO] [HCN mtg - 8.4.10]

The prominence of the engagement discourse is central to the agenda being prioritised and embedded in the landscape. The scale of consultation in the town, and the vast array of routes and methods to engagement can be seen as a way of overcoming evidence in Hastings of the more ‘anaemic’ New Labour understanding and use of ‘community’ critiqued by Wallace (2010). The legacy of the New Labour engagement agenda in this governance landscape helps secure the AESS values of community participation and engaged governance. By capitalising on this legacy the VCS may secure an emerging strategic role in this regeneration governance landscape. In doing so they engage with contemporary debates concerning the democratisation of urban development (Evans *et al.* 2009), that evidently has implications for securing VCS participation and influence in local decision-making.

#### *AESS and the risks and challenges of Big Society*

A redistribution of regeneration roles (for example developer, commissioner, critical observer, organiser or funder) presents both opportunities and challenges for the local governance capacity for AESS as I will point out below. The stakeholder debates over the current Coalition government policy of increased localism and a narrative of Big Society are illustrative of the possible risks and opportunities created by such a redistribution. Across the public and voluntary sectors interviewees articulated a wish to embrace localism and address locally some of the unique needs of Hastings. Yet despite this appetite for localism, many interviewees were wary of a small state/big cuts scenario – “it is like giving the kid a toy and not giving them the batteries” [Cllr]. In terms of the Big Society, interviewees questioned the integrity of the mechanisms in place to deliver this ‘empowering’ agenda and thus the reality of the greater VCS voice and influence it promises. Further, there remains a fear articulated by a number of senior HBC directors and councillors that the concept is ill thought through, and constitutes a facile engagement with social regeneration policy. They argue that the Big Society agenda fails to recognise those not interested, or not able to be involved. As one HBC Director challenged: “I don’t believe in the Victorian concept of the happy poor.” This issue of equity runs to the heart of this critique of Big Society, and so perhaps to the heart of what it might mean for social

sustainability values of justice and equity in this governance space. This point is evident in the comment below from a senior Labour Councillor:

“If by badging what we are doing as the Big Society to continue that funding then that’s great, similarly we may need given the reduction in our income have to look to the VCS and volunteers who may want to play more of a role in delivering services, in allotments or wherever, that is also because of funding that we are looking at that but it is also about community involvement and enablement and I am all in favour of that, ... if we increasingly rely on volunteers and benefactors then that principle of equity is lost, so I don’t believe in the Big Society as it is being presented by this current government but I do believe in social responsibility ... but that is not an alternative to properly funded local government provision that provides equity for all.” [Harry - 22.11.10 – Senior Councillor]

When VCS representatives were asked what they thought of the Big Society in Hastings they indignantly explained “we invented it!” or “we are the Big Society” or “what do they think we have been doing for bloody years?!!” So for many in Hastings the Big Society agenda is merely a re-articulation of their existing culture of social purpose and activism. At a strategic level the discourse of Big Society was viewed more prosaically. This new political narrative offers the opportunity to ‘re-badge’ or ‘re-brand’ existing local governance infrastructure and community empowerment projects with the newly heralded ‘Big Society’ label in order to garner favour from Whitehall. A senior HBC officer describes how the Big Society might secure progressive social change in Hastings:

“Where does the Big Society narrative fit into the future of regeneration in Hastings?” [JOW]

“I think we can make a strong argument ... you could argue that Hastings is a town that does this already, but at the core of it you need the resources to support and make that happen. When I came here it took me back how much people do here, do you know what I mean? There is in parts of the town an extraordinary sense of identity, and so in theory that Big Society agenda ought to suit Hastings down to the

ground.” [Kevin - 23.11.10 – HBC Director]

Even the most vocal critics acknowledged that the structures in place in Hastings, characterised in this thesis as part of a governance culture of social sustainability, offer a head start for a more locally empowered agenda:

“Given the policy of revisiting localism is Hastings set up to respond to that?” [JOW]

“Yes we have the structures in place which other districts might not ... I have been mulling over how the AMBs might relate to the new ideas of neighbourhood planning ... Maybe AMBs can take on that planning responsibility.” [Harry - 22.11.10 – senior Councillor]

The Big Society agenda offers a potent political narrative that may yet be leveraged by the VCS and local government. Given the institutional and cultural inheritance of governance discourse and practices described above, the agency of Big Society supporting narratives like community engagement and co-production may further accelerate the emerging shift in local governance power in favour of the VCS. Clearly this shift would have implications for the form and strength of AESS in terms of security of community voice, influence, depth of representation and scale of meaningful participation.

## 8.5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate an alternative critique of the New Labour regeneration project and the legacy this has had upon the form of AESS in Hastings. In particular, it has drawn on work by Pincetl and Katz (2007), Krueger and Agyeman (2005) and Krueger and Gibbs (2007) who call for context-specific studies of sustainability. This research has tried to interrogate what ‘social’ is being sustained, the local socio-political-economy context in which it is being sustained, and the role of governance practices and discourse in forging AESS values. Hastings is a town with a history of social tenant movements, long-standing neighbourhood forums, residents’ associations and local action groups campaigning for social change. That picture has evolved and the nature of activism has changed with it. Today

activism involves less shouting, less opposition politics, and in its place there is a legacy of a decade of intensive investment in partnership-based regeneration. This legacy in turn builds upon pre-existing social assets by advancing social regeneration through a collaborative partnership governance model and a community engagement agenda shaped in part by an alternative model of activism.

The risks and barriers for AESS of Swyngedouw's (2005) 'Janus-faced' local partnership governance, and Baeten's (2009) 'post-political regeneration tactics' were acknowledged in this research in the previous chapter. However, the navigation of this complex governance landscape by experienced activists employing an alternative model of activism highlights a more hopeful critique. Davidson (2009, 2010) expresses the concern that the 'post-political condition' of the UK regeneration governance model is liable to foreclose real political debates of redistribution of power, services and social change. In contrast, this research stresses the link between an alternative form of political participation or activism and social sustainability. Wallace (2010) meanwhile fears the foreclosure of 'other' voices and agendas in this 'post-political condition' through the 'anaemic' understanding and use by New Labour of the concept of community. While there is some evidence of this prescriptive active community profile (as described in Chapters 5 and 7) the failure to understand the multiplicity and fluidity of community is being challenged by the VCS and by its allies in Hastings. The growth in multiple forms of engagement and the development of a more equitable dialogue based consultation framework all indicate some acknowledgment within the governance culture of the true complexity of community and meaningful participation.

The construction of social sustainability in this case study can quite evidently be categorised as drawing from a social ontological tradition with associated values, policy and practice that issue from this social lens. That is a version of social sustainability that gives primacy to urban social relations rather than ecological systems (Davidson, 2010). This chapter presents the picture of an evolving partnership governance model that combined with an alternative model of activism enables AESS in Hastings. Specifically, AESS has been

shown to be constructed and codified through governance practices, political traditions and cultural norms. Through this alternative model of activism the VCS and allies seek to drive change with a narrative of social justice that is at the centre of AESS and is explicit in this comment by an NF Chair:

“If social sustainability is made up of issues of quality of life, social justice, building social capital, social equity and participation is that present in the social regeneration agenda in Hastings?” [JOW]

“I would say that from my experience of NF, that is the key to why people are there, the VCS are the guardians of that social sustainability, I have to say that this town is very rich in that.” [Gwen - 4.11.10 – NF Chair]

The evolving regeneration roles I have identified within the local partnership infrastructure creates the potential for a more strategic position for the VCS in response to reduced local government funding. Evans *et al.* (2009) consider the recession-induced redistribution of roles within the regeneration process, and frame this as organic regeneration and the democratisation of urban development. Their work anticipates this redistribution of roles through the small practices and actions of residents and VCS members. In the discussion above it has been argued that in the Hastings example that shift may be of a more strategic and less radical nature.

The view of social sustainability that emerges from this research is one that is clearly not an end state, but an evolving and uneven political-governance process with elements of failure and vulnerability. In this case study the academically neglected concept of social sustainability has been used as a critical lens of analysis of social regeneration governance and practice in Hastings. Using this alternative lens of evaluation the author has been able to demonstrate how AESS emerges from the specificity of practices and norms in this institutional space, and so the validity of a local political-governance analysis in that evaluation. This acknowledges a need for an understanding of institutional influence upon the construction of sustainability values (MacKenzie, 2004; Pincetl and Katz, 2007). Integral to this analysis is an understanding of the contribution of the socio-political context and

specificity of place in which institutional mechanisms are forged. In Hastings the political traditions, a culture of social purpose, community activism and the strength of VCS leadership are all demonstrated to have particular agency in this respect. Further, the construction of the town's identity of difference, the politics of place-making involved, and Hastings' shifting relational geographies with the coast, the county and the region have all proved key to the nature and culture of governance that has emerged to shape the presence of, or opportunity for AESS in this regeneration governance landscape.

### 9.1. Introduction

By adopting a political-governance approach in developing a case study of the social regeneration practice in Hastings this research has highlighted the central contribution made by the geographical, socio-political and institutional specificities of place to the nature of social sustainability. This research offers an empirically grounded contribution to the debate over the role and nature of social sustainability by highlighting the agency of governance practices (including discourses), political traditions and cultural norms in this urban regeneration governance landscape.

The case study findings demonstrate that how these political traditions, governance practices and cultural norms are constructed and evolve has significant consequences for how they in turn create barriers and opportunities for AESS. The methodological focus within the research upon the construction of the governance practices and cultural norms of this regeneration governance landscape is central to the contribution of this thesis. The findings show how the adoption, renegotiation and codification of national policy discourse at a local level in part shape the social sustainability 'story-lines' in this governance culture. Further, the embedded local political traditions, distinctive social histories and place making activity are also demonstrated to play an important role in the construction or obstruction of AESS. The reification of cultural norms of good governance, partnership and social purpose, in addition to the disruption and shaping of social agendas by an alternative model of activism have all contributed to a complex and evolving space of challenges and opportunities for AESS.

This concluding chapter reflects on the value to the research findings of the ethnographic case study approach employed, and what this approach contributed to the understanding of social sustainability in urban regeneration. The intellectual context of the research findings are then stressed in terms of the key theoretical themes within previous research on

social sustainability and urban regeneration governance to which this thesis hopes to contribute. For the main part this chapter seeks to draw together the core arguments underpinning this thesis in order to demonstrate how the research narrative contributes to current debates around social sustainability.

## 9.2. Researching a regeneration community – an ethnographic approach

The use of an ethnographic case study employing a political-governance approach was designed to address concerns within the literature that more empirically informed governance led research on sustainability, and local sustainability in particular, is needed (Jonas *et al.* 2003; McKenzie, 2004; Raco, 2007; Whitehead, 2003). Further, such an approach has attempted to contribute to the need described in recent research for more ‘finely grained’ interrogations of urban governance capacity for sustainability (Evans *et al.* 2009).

An ethnographic approach proved highly compatible with gaining an insight into the dynamic and complex social processes of the regeneration community in Hastings. Central to this approach was an examination of stakeholder views, and the cultural and governance norms they construct, disrupt and employ in this context. Both the initial scoping period and extended time in the field allowed the researcher to become familiar with the language, norms and modes of operation that in turn were found to be integral to the governance practices and AESS in this landscape. Central to this methodological approach is an understanding of institutions as social structures whose discourses, norms, practices and cultural traditions are co-constructed by their actors, institutional inheritance and socio-political context (Coafee and Healey, 2003; Davies, 2004; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010). Rather than research a set of technical measurements and indicators this research sought to provide a more conceptual engagement with social sustainability. An ethnographic approach that acknowledges the importance of context facilitated such an ambition by providing insight into the impact upon the barriers and enablers of AESS of the cultural, political and institutional traditions that continue to evolve and adapt in this space.

### 9.3. Beyond an orthodox critique of New Labour regeneration

The recent growth in political and academic interest in social sustainability is in sharp contrast to the observed dominance of a technocratic and neo-liberalised economic sustainability agenda in UK urban regeneration practice (Couch and Denneman, 2000; Jones and Evans, 2008). From an academic perspective there is only limited and recent focus over who forges a vision of social sustainability, how it manifests in governance, policy and discourse, and what constitutes that vision (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2009, 2010; Holden, 2011; Manzi *et al.* 2010). By investigating a political-governance conceptual framing for social sustainability this research has engaged in a line of investigation that starts to respond to the widely reported theoretical weaknesses underpinning research into this aspect of sustainability (Colantonio, 2008; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Partridge, 2005).

The 'post-political' critique of a 'governance beyond the state' approach to government and the associated prolific growth in local hybrid partnerships has been a dominant academic narrative of UK urban regeneration under New Labour (Raco, 2003, 2007; Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008; Taylor, 2007). It is in re-examining key elements of this critique through the critical focus of social sustainability that the thesis has sought to make a contribution. In particular, the thesis is concerned with the impact of the 'post-political condition' of governance upon the presence or absence of counter-hegemonic agendas and 'other' voices as a result of post-political regeneration tactics, depoliticised governance, a professionalised performance management governance culture and democratic deficit (Baeten, 2009; Davidson, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2005; 2008). An analysis of these elements through a conceptual engagement with social sustainability advances our understanding of both local social sustainabilities and the dominant 'post-political' critique of urban regeneration governance.

During the New Labour focus on political modernisation, when the 'post-political condition' was accelerated in UK governance, the government regeneration policy advanced an intensive narrative of 'active citizenship' spatially articulated in sustainable communities and neighbourhoods (Raco,

2005; Wallace, 2010). This engagement and prolific use of 'community' within regeneration policy is challenged by Wallace (2010) for being anaemic or narrow in its interpretation and construction of community. The conceptual overlap explored in this thesis between the New Labour narrow community profile, an agenda of active citizenship, and the barriers to social sustainability provides an additional layer to this critique. Specifically, the thesis highlights the barriers to wider political engagement and AESS created by the marginalisation of those community members outside of the preferred active citizen or community profile. The thesis has interrogated the central governance themes of a prescribed 'community' role and profile, the 'post-political condition', and the prolific trend of hybrid partnerships in terms of their impact on social sustainability.

Given a renewed intellectual engagement with issues of social justice, well-being and resilience (CLES, 2010; ONS, 2010; Sandel, 2009; Stiglitz *et al.* 2009; Therival, 2010), researching the utility of social sustainability as a conceptual and critical lens of analysis of social regeneration practice appears timely. Sandel (2009) has argued that it is possible that given the failure of 'market mimicking governance' (in the light of the financial crisis) a conceptual space exists for an alternative form of governance. Such a governance model founded on social justice has gained ground following the European Commission's 'Stiglitz Report' (2009) that outlined the need for alternative indicators to GDP in measuring social progress (ONS, 2010). In response to this influential report the UK ONS is exploring how to identify 'beyond-GDP' indicators of development concerning national societal well-being (ONS, 2010). Further, Colantonio and Dixon (2011) argue that the focus at EU policy level on social-inclusion and partnerships following the Leipzig Charter (2007), will mean that social sustainability agendas are likely to "dominate urban policy at the EU level in years to come" (p.101). This macro political and policy context creates a favourable climate for a re-evaluation of the conceptual tools used to frame social issues of regeneration. The social sustainability critique of social urban regeneration articulated in this thesis is one such alternative.

## 9.4. What 'social' is being sustained?

### 9.4.1. Hastings and AESS

Evidence that confirms the well-established academic critiques of the New Labour regeneration project, including 'post-political regeneration tactics' (Baeten, 2009) and democratic deficit (Swyngedouw, 2005, 2008) is also shown to have a detrimental impact on the construction of social sustainability in this case study. While acknowledging elements of this dominant critique, the thesis findings also suggest that there is evidence of an alternative institutional space of civic and political community activism, and a valued good governance partnership culture that can be usefully understood as 'actually existing social sustainability' (in an extension of the Krueger and Agyeman (2005) critique of 'actually existing sustainabilities'). This data highlights the centrality of the specificity of place in terms of how it impacts on the institutional and cultural legacy of the New Labour government partnership and community-led regeneration policy focus. The research suggests that the nature of this legacy and associated traditions in turn affect the construction or obstruction of localised social sustainability practices including social capital, engaged governance, social infrastructure, and an ethical imperative of social equity and justice (Cuthill, 2010). However, it is important not to reify the local (Massey, 2007) and these findings certainly acknowledge the importance of the dialogue that exists between the local case study scale and the wider geographies of the county, the south east coast, the region and Europe (see Chapter 5).

The research shows how the interaction between key variables in the socio-political context, leading social regeneration agendas and dominant governance themes identified through the research were found to be instrumental in shaping the form of AESS that emerges in Hastings. These case study characteristics provide a foundation for the main arguments of this thesis concerning the construction of enablers and obstacles to AESS. In this way the thesis contributes to urban policy debates by offering an alternative critique of the New Labour regeneration project that engages

AESS as a concept for understanding the social dimension of regeneration practice.

#### 9.4.2. The construction of local social sustainabilities

##### *Hastings socio-political context*

The case study approach employed identified the dominant features in the specificity of place and geography in Hastings that in turn develop or obstruct the conditions for AESS. The conclusions drawn from Chapter 5 stress the well-rehearsed argument concerning the importance of understanding the specificity of place (geographical, social, political, cultural and historical), in the construction of sustainability at a local scale (Cento Bull and Jones, 2006; Evans, *et al.* 2009; Gibbs and Krueger, 2005; Krueger and Gibbs, 2010; McKenzie, 2004). The distinctive socio-political context of Hastings is tied into, and shaped by its political traditions which are dominated by local Labour community focussed politics, active place-making through discourses of deprivation, and a distinct identity of difference shaped by local, county, coastal and regional geographies. The cultural values and practices that have evolved in response to this context are active agents in influencing the form and presence of AESS.

The representation of Hastings' needs is also forged by an embedded local culture of social purpose and community activism that in turn has provided rich foundations for New Labour policies of active citizenship and community empowerment (Wallace, 2009). The socio-political context of a history of active and vocal community politics and a large scale VCS securing a notable social economy is central to the role the VCS play within the regeneration community. This context has enabled the emphasis locally on the AESS values of social infrastructure and social equity described by Cuthill (2010) and Therival (2010). Further, the local politics of the last decade has been, for the most part, dominated by community focussed Labour party traditions inclined to support the discourse of the equalities, engagement, empowerment and community agendas of central government (Wallace, 2010). These findings stress the importance of understanding the impact of political traditions and pre-existing social networks in shaping

evolving governance structures and cultures (Whitehead, 2003). This analysis extends this argument through stressing the integral part these political traditions and the existing broader social context plays in shaping the institutional cultures and practices that in turn enable or create the opportunity for AESS.

### *Major social regeneration themes in Hastings*

The dominant social regeneration themes in Hastings and the agency of the discourses and practices associated with them have shaped AESS. The research objective of identifying dominant social regeneration agendas highlighted the absence of an explicit social sustainability agenda at local, county and regional level. Instead the regional level was dominated by an economic neo-liberalised representation of sustainability. While throughout all scales of governance any consideration of environmental sustainability was dominated by a central government defined climate change agenda.

The AESS argument, however, is developed in the prevalence in Hastings of social sustainability related themes of 'narrowing the gap' (i.e. reducing inequality) and 'community engagement and participation'. The latter is particularly impactful through the use of 'community' as an instrument of social policy governance (in keeping with the Wallace (2010) critique). This community focus is manifest locally in neighbourhood policing, neighbourhood management, community partnerships, co-production of wellbeing projects and the community social cohesion agenda. Yet the problematic use of 'community' by New Labour as a scaled, prescriptive and morally loaded social policy intervention is also explicit in social regeneration practices and processes in Hastings and as such can also create barriers to AESS (Houghton and Blume, 2011; Raco, 2007; Wallace, 2010).

Finally, the dominant education-led social regeneration focus in Hastings offers a narrow bridge between the often disconnected social and physical/economic agendas. It provides a social equity dimension to the regional tier interventions through Sea Space (the URC) that are otherwise dominated by a neo-liberalised economic growth and regional competitiveness focus. This inter-relationship of market-based solutions or

institutions to issues of social deprivation is in concurrence with the observation of market-based approaches employed to deliver sustainable development noted by Holden (2011) and Krueger and Gibbs (2010).

### *Dominant governance themes in Hastings*

The research objective of mapping the urban regeneration governance structures identified three aspects of governance rescaling that emerge as influential in shaping AESS in Hastings. These governance features include: the adoption of 'governance beyond the state' through an extensive partnership infrastructure and the New Labour regeneration policy of Urban Renaissance that was closely associated with the role of the 'community' as a target and tool for regeneration. The final dominant feature is the regionalisation of governance and policy that is characterised locally by a disconnect between the centrally driven social communitarian agenda (delivered by local government) and the regionally driven physical/economic regeneration agendas.

Key to the repercussions for AESS of these dominant governance features is the impact of this rescaling legacy upon the shifting citizen-state relationship in terms of new roles and responsibilities in regeneration policy and practice (Evans *et al.* 2009; Raco, 2005; Wallace, 2010). The rescaling of governance and renegotiation of central agendas through the governance practices of those rescaled units are in turn determinants of the locus of power and so the dominant social regeneration agendas. As a result they create both barriers and enabling factors regarding the presence or form of AESS. The chapter develops this argument below and responds directly to the main research aims regarding the impact of urban governance structures and practices upon the nature of, or potential for, social sustainability in Hastings.

#### 9.4.3. Urban regeneration governance and barriers to AESS

The well-established critiques of the New Labour regeneration model (including 'post-political regeneration tactics', democratic deficit, institutional congestion, foreclosure of counter-hegemonic agendas at a regional scale and a narrowly defined means of citizenship) are evident in Hastings and can

be understood and re-examined through the lens of social sustainability. In particular it is important to examine what aspects of social sustainability are marginalised and how this is achieved by the governance practices, cultural norms and political traditions in this regeneration governance landscape. In this way it is possible to contribute to calls for greater understanding of the uneven construction of sustainability 'story-lines' made active by urban development strategies, institutions and governance models (Batchelor and Patterson, 2007; Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; Le Heron, 2006).

Evidence of established critiques in Hastings was examined with specific consideration of social sustainability and was found to be demonstrably creating obstacles to a more just development model by eroding the values of community participation, social capital building, engaged good governance, social infrastructure and social equity. Importantly, in terms of addressing areas under-researched in this context, the findings stress the restricting implications for social sustainability that result from the proliferation of flawed hybrid partnership structures. Of particular importance in terms of restricting AESS are the controlling managerialist trends within the partnership infrastructure and associated governance practices that endorse and propagate a narrowly prescribed citizenship profile. The link between these critiques and the barriers to AESS they form are stressed below.

Democratic deficit critiques (Swyngedouw, 2005; 2007) are manifest in Hastings in an over-reliance on community stars and usual suspects that limits the depth of representation and true community participation. Further it is evident that while a community voice is secured in this partnership infrastructure their influence upon major decisions is limited. The success of participation is also partly constrained by the growing pains of mixing participatory and representative governance models. A reliance on community stars is a well-known critique of community-led or hybrid partnership structures (Taylor, 2003; 2006). This reliance forecloses a more meaningful understanding of community needs in Hastings and is in concurrence with the critique of New Labour's narrow social policy engagement with community argued by Wallace (2009; 2010). The evidence

of a lack of depth of representation, reliance on community stars, the foreclosure of a wider community voice, and VCS limited influence around major decisions, all act as barriers to meaningful engagement and empowerment, and as such they are key barriers to AESS in Hastings.

'Post-political regeneration tactics' (Baeten, 2009) are also evident in the case study through the professionalisation of governance language and practices that isolate and marginalise those not familiar with these governance norms. In contrast those existing elites that know 'the rules of the game' are better equipped to secure and advance their voice, agenda and hence power. Barriers to meaningful community participation and engaged governance, such as obstructive governance practices and discourse that reinforce existing power elites and their agenda, challenges the presence of social sustainability (Cuthill, 2010; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Pares and Sauri, 2007). The institutional mechanisms in the case study that are shown to marginalise social sustainability include discourses of diplomacy, technical jargon and intimidating formalised meeting practices involving a reified technical document-led approach to governance. Batchelor and Patterson (2007) argue that neo-liberalised institutional structures at regional level in the UK foreclose the presence of alternative agendas such as environmental sustainability. This argument was equally relevant in Hastings with regard to social sustainability agendas, however, as argued below this is only a partial picture, as a positive alternative critique also emerges in this space.

Social sustainability is further inhibited in Hastings by the 'burden of governance' the community are exposed to in these partnership models. This is one of the central limitations to community engagement observed in the dominant critiques of the local hybrid partnership mode of governance (Gilchrist, 2006; Robinson *et al.* 2005; Taylor, 2003; 2006). In Hastings this burden also contributes to institutional vulnerability caused by limitations in partnership membership capacity, membership numbers, funding, community development resources and personality dependence. This institutional vulnerability places at risk an important route to participation, empowerment and engaged governance. Should the partnership infrastructure be lost the foundations they offer in terms of social sustainability will be lost with them.

These aspects of institutional vulnerability were concurrent with reasons observed elsewhere by scholars and practitioners for the potential failure of local governance partnerships in the regeneration of urban areas (Davies, 2004; Gilchrist, 2006; Swyngedouw, 2005; Taylor, 2003; 2006; Wallace, 2010).

The relationship that has emerged between practices of urban governance, national regeneration policy/discourses and a very distinct local context is not solely about obstacles to AESS. This socio-political-governance context has also enabled the values and practices of AESS to emerge in Hastings. The result is a hopeful and alternative critique of the New Labour partnership and community-led governance legacy.

#### 9.4.4. Urban regeneration governance and factors enabling AESS

The shift in scale of governance, proliferation of networks, and collaborative partnerships under New Labour regeneration have created a new set of institutional geographies in Hastings that create opportunities for social sustainability values and practices to evolve. The cultural and institutional practices are a product of a specific socio-political and economic history, and the legacy of the wider national and regional policy of 'governance beyond the state.' In turn they contribute to a form of AESS that draws on a 'social' tradition or ontology (Davidson, 2009).

The partnership skills and infrastructure legacy of the New Labour regeneration agenda has been embedded through the codification of practices to ensure a VCS voice exists in Hastings that reaches from grass-roots to strategic forum. This creates a rich social infrastructure, and the opportunity for engaged governance, both key features of social sustainability (Colantonio, 2009; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010). This infrastructure is further disposed to enabling AESS through the evident partnership culture of good governance where the structures evolve in terms of just representation, transparency, accountability, engagement and quality of consultation. This culture of good governance in parts of this partnership infrastructure builds upon the provision of secure spaces for community

participation and empowerment so central to AESS (Colantonio, 2009; Houghton and Blume, 2011; Jones and Evans, 2008). AESS is further enabled by the absence of what are often seen as traditional barriers to participation such as local authority obstructions and statutory agency reluctance to cede power (Houghton and Blume, 2011). These have been partly eroded in Hastings by the dominance locally of a politically left tradition, the scale of investment in community engagement expertise, adjusted governance practices, and by the collective skills, friendships and experiences of a now well-established regeneration community. The future of the partnerships and the presence of the VCS within them is made more secure by explicit senior stakeholder commitments to the continuation of the structures and established high levels of expectation of VCS inclusion in local decision-making.

In Hastings the increasingly sophisticated and well-established VCS employ an alternative model of activism, and build on a culture of social purpose that reinforces values of social sustainability. In this alternative model of activism the core VCS members utilise processes of governance to manipulate prevailing agendas and escalate others. The VCS adoption of an alternative model of activism makes use of the post-political governance practices and a collaborative partnership model that are normally critiqued for limiting their participation and empowerment (Davies, 2004, 2005; Raco, 2005; Taylor, 2006). The VCS navigate the 'post-political regeneration tactics' of a managerialist culture (Baeten, 2009) by developing regeneration and governance expertise that secures their role in strategic fora. This alternative approach is enabling AESS through the development of social capital and participation in a flawed but engaged governance structure (Cuthill, 2010).

This form of activism is in opposition to critiques that argue these regeneration governance structures limit the political capacity of community organisations and result in their co-option into a state agenda (DeFilippis *et al.* 2006). Instead the VCS are capitalising on the institutional changes that have developed through political modernisation to better leverage or exert agency on this landscape. Nevertheless, the political gap critique by Davidson (2009; 2010) that argues real politics is made absent by this 'post-

political' governance was evident in the regret expressed by cross-sector interviewees regarding the absence of a model of political protest and the risk of marginalising those outside this alternative model (Wallace, 2010). Despite this concern the research indicates that politics and activism takes a different form in Hastings that includes utilising the politics of lobbying and mastery of governance practices employed in debates around what social values should be challenged or sustained. The explicit presence of this alternative form of political activism and participation contributes to the recent argument asserted by Holden (2011) that social sustainability scholars should explore the re-politicisation of sustainability in urban governance contexts.

The alternative model of activism employed in Hastings is in part enabled by, and in part capitalises upon the culture of social purpose evident in the large VCS scale, sector longevity, levels of volunteerism and history of community activism. This culture of social purpose is closely tied to the town's identity and its' capacity for AESS. This culture is central to the wealth of social infrastructure and social capital in parts of the civic society within the town which scholars argue are key to the social pillar of sustainability (Cento Bull and Jones 2006; Cuthill, 2010).

Further, the findings stress the important role of VCS leadership, along with supportive facilitators and allies in the statutory sector in the ongoing shaping of both the alternative model of activism and the reality of a more socially just collaborative governance model. The alternative model (including its' leaders, members, facilitators and allies) challenges the well-rehearsed arguments that community partnerships are limited in their ability to address the power differential between local government and the community (Davies, 2004).

Part of the impact of this alternative model of activism is rooted in the agency of the New Labour community engagement agenda legacy in Hastings. This is a dominant theme in the institutional and cultural practices of social regeneration in this case study as indicated by its repeated prominence in strategic agendas, active engagement skills training, constant VCS challenges around community engagement best practice and in the

development of a town-wide consultation framework. This legacy of New Labour national engagement policy is not without failings, but it does still contribute in part to an AESS enabling governance culture. The prominence of the engagement discourse, and the agency of this discourse through discursive mechanisms, is key to the agenda being prioritised and embedded into the institutional landscape and culture in Hastings.

In addition, the scale of consultation in the town, and the vast array of routes and methods to engagement can be seen as a way for the multiple aspects of the VCS to avoid the critiqued shallow New Labour understanding and use of 'community' (Wallace, 2010). The VCS and allies are capitalising on the legacy of this engagement agenda by embedding a progressive dialogue consultation framework, securing VCS inclusion in senior strategy responses to public sector cuts, and encouraging the increasing role of the VCS to work collaboratively with partners in response to gaps in services. These can all be understood as part of a broader potential redistribution of roles and shift of power dynamics within the regeneration community. This shift in citizen-state relations signals a development in the co-production model of UK regeneration policy and governance (Evans *et al.* 2009) with implications for the form and strength of social sustainability. It is clear from these research findings that AESS is an evolving and uneven process with elements of possibility and vulnerability. For example, the degree of community engagement that will be available in this urban governance landscape in the face of extensive funding cuts remains uncertain. Further, as is demonstrated above a considerable note of caution is needed due to the evidence of barriers to AESS that exist in this regeneration governance landscape.

#### 9.5. Research dissemination and future lines of investigation

The findings of this research have been directly fed back to the regeneration community involved in the research as part of a dissemination strategy co-developed with the research participants. The researcher has been asked to be involved in Community Network feedback sessions around both the positive enabling factors and advances observed, as well as barriers and challenges for social sustainability and therefore social regeneration. VCS

core members, local councillors and regeneration officers have all requested reports and briefings on the findings in order to inform efforts to secure the advances made through intensive regeneration activity and partnership over the last decade. The findings are being used during a period of review and reflection in the regeneration community and governance infrastructure, as they plan their response to a new public sector funding and social regeneration policy context. As the VCS in particular plan their strategic response to public sector cuts the findings are being used to inform partnership and engagement plans. This includes briefings to the Community Network executive group, aiding with induction day planning and training, as well as a keynote presentation and workshop at the CVS AGM. The positive manner in which the research findings have been used by local stakeholders to inform training and debates over change of practice reflects the progressive governance culture and alternative model of activism observed.

Future research might build on these research findings by engaging in a comparative study in order to contrast the Hastings case study with other deprived coastal towns across England. While previous research describes a degree of commonality of development factors in English coastal towns (Beatty and Fothergill, 2008) this thesis has found local specificity to be central in forging the presence/absence and form of social sustainability. A comparative study would build on these findings by examining the outcomes for social sustainability that result from not only the specificity of place, but also insights provided by common experiences in the construction of cultural and institutional traditions. In this approach a theoretical framework such as interpretative institutionalism (as recently employed by Krueger and Gibbs, 2010) may offer a way to provide greater generalisability of findings.

The context focus of this research describes how the cultural norms and political traditions that impact on AESS are forged in a framework of rapidly changing politics, governance structures and policy. Given this framework has changed so dramatically over the last year (2010-11) with shifts in the political administration at all scales accompanied by shifting policy and governance structures, the research findings could benefit from being developed through a longitudinal study of such characteristics. Davies (2004)

is critical of the capacity of partnership structures to be embedded in the UK and sees them as a transitional stage of governance. Therefore, a longitudinal study would provide additional depth to our understanding of the resilience of AESS identified in Hastings partnerships, and would reflect on how embedded these structures and practices are in the local governance landscape.

#### 9.6. Advancing the social sustainability debate

The Hastings example highlights the link between forms and practices of local governance structures, the context in which they develop, and the nature and opportunity for social sustainability. An understanding of the evolving institutional and organisational specificity in which social sustainability norms evolve is central to this thesis and its contribution to context-specific studies of social sustainability within urban regeneration governance.

The political-governance approach employed in this research is all the more relevant in a rapidly evolving UK urban regeneration governance landscape that continues to have far reaching implications for the changing relationship between the citizen and the state (Raco, 2005; Evans *et al.* 2009). In Hastings local governance structures, discourse and governance practices are a major contributing factor in the parameters of that relationship. Further, our understanding of how social sustainability norms develop in response to changing social regeneration policy and modes of governance must be considered within the local historical socio-political context in order to have any real depth of analysis. This understanding of the specificity of place and geography in Hastings and its impact upon the construction of social sustainability reinforces the argument that a locally unique sustainability will be forged by the local interrelationships of discourses or practices of sustainability and the nature of place (Gibbs and Krueger, 2005).

How central regeneration policies are deployed locally very much affects the balance of social sustainability values, and the opportunities or limitations to AESS that emerge in practice. Again this is not to overstate the value of the

local as a site of research (Massey, 2007), but to act as a reminder of its importance in the construction of sustainability. This is in concurrence with the questions raised around the degree to which dominant discourses of sustainability are developed at national level and then, given the scale of localisation in urban governance, renegotiated at the local level (Gibbs *et al.* 2002).

Through the distinctive depth of empirical evidence in this single case study approach, the research findings can be usefully employed in contemporary policy and academic discussions on social sustainability, post Third Way regeneration, and topical narratives such as Big Society. This case study highlights the impact upon the form and presence of AESS of the specificity of place, and the locally re-negotiated legacy of the intensive New Labour urban regeneration policy focus of the last decade. The findings contribute to an emerging body of work on governance challenges for delivering social sustainability in a developed world urban regeneration context (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Cuthill, 2010; Davidson, 2009, 2010; Holden, 2011; Manzi *et al.* 2010).

Members of the regeneration community in Hastings argue that the most disadvantaged continue to be disenfranchised and marginalised from the structures that offer them the most chance of empowerment and change. Making those structures better known, more accessible and more meaningful to those isolated communities would better secure core social sustainability values of participation, empowerment, and social infrastructure. Through developing our understanding of the relationship between urban regeneration governance and social sustainability, steps can be taken to identify and resolve barriers, while securing and developing enablers to AESS. Without such an understanding, regeneration practice and governance risks reinforcing the existing dominance of an unjust economic sustainability policy focus. Further, without this understanding we may fail to recognise the advances made in opportunities for 'actually existing' local social sustainabilities. This more conceptual engagement with social sustainability, and the political-governance environment that shapes it, offers a balance to the technical and operational focus of work by other researchers (see

Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). As a critical analysis approach to social regeneration it offers an alternative perspective on the principal critiques of the New Labour regeneration legacy that continue to shape and inform UK regeneration practice today.

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## Appendix 1. Glossary of terms and acronyms

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ABG – Area Based Grants

ABS – Area Based Structures (generic term for AMBs, NFs and MATTs)

AESS – Actually Existing Social Sustainability

AMB – Area Management Board (four AMBs, all are part of the sample)

CC – Community Cohesion Steering Group (part of sample)

CDO – Community Development Officer

CVS – Community and Voluntary Sector (umbrella organisation for the VCS)

DCLG – Department of Communities and Local Government

ESCC – East Sussex County Council

ESSP – East Sussex Strategic Partnership (part of sample)

GOSE – Government Office South East (abolished 2010)

HBC – Hastings Borough Council

HBEA – Hastings and Bexhill Economic Alliance (Thematic Partnership in sample)

HCN – Hastings Community Network (part of sample)

HHP – Healthier Hastings Partnership (Thematic Partnership in sample)

HHTTP – Hastings Housing Partnership (Thematic Partnership in sample)

HMO - Houses of Multiple Occupation

IMD – Indices of Multiple Deprivation

LEGI – Local Economic Growth Initiative (central government regeneration funding)

LEP – Local Enterprise Partnerships

LSP – Hastings Local Strategic Partnership (part of the sample)

MATT – Multi-Area Task Team (practitioner led area teams)

NDC – New Deal for Communities (national regeneration programme)

NF – Neighbourhood Forum (four NFs exist and all are part of the sample)

NR – Neighbourhood Renewal (national regeneration programme)

RDA – Regional Development Agency (abolished 2010-2012)

RSL – Registered Social Landlord

SRS – Single Regional Strategy (abolished in 2010 before developed by SEEPB)

SCS – Sustainable Community Strategy (town strategy led by LSP)

SEEC – South East England Councils

SEEDA – South East England Development Agency (RDA for region, part of sample, abolished 2012)

SEEPB – South East England Partnership Board (part of sample, abolished 2010)

SEERA – South East England Regional Assembly (abolished 2009)

SHP – Safer Hastings Partnership (Thematic Partnership, part of sample)

SIGs – Special Interest Groups (sub-structures of partnerships)

URC – Urban Regeneration Company (Sea Space)

VCS – Voluntary Community Sector

WNF – Working Neighbourhood Fund (national regeneration programme)

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## Appendix 2. Summary of participant observation activities

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No	Governance Structure	Meetings Attended
1	SEEPB  (South East England Partnership Board) – Attended open public meetings, formal attendance allowed and content in public arena.	17.09.09; 26.11.09  30.03.10
2	SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) - Attending open public meetings, formal attendance allowed and content in public arena	5.11.09
3	Hastings & Bexhill Taskforce	Interviews only
4	Sea Space (URC)	Interviews only
5	Hastings & St. Leonards Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	12.10.09; 25.1.10  19.07.10; 18.10.10
6	Hastings & Bexhill Economic Alliance (Thematic Partnership of LSP)	23.09.09; 9.12.09  16.03.10
7	Safer Hastings (Thematic Partnership of LSP)	20.10.09; 2.2.10  5.5.10
8	Hastings Housing Partnership (Thematic Partnership of LSP)	Not Active/ Interviews only
9	Learning & Skills (Thematic Partnership of LSP)	17.12.09; 11.05.10
10	Healthier Hastings (Thematic Partnership of LSP)	24.11.09; 09.03.10  18.05.10
11	Nth St Leonards Area Management Board (AMB)	22.10.09; 16.02.10
12	South St Leonards Area Management Board (AMB)	21.6.10
13	Central Hastings Area Management Board (AMB)	08.10.09; 23.02.10

14	East Hastings Area Management Board (AMB)	14.10.09; 10.02.10 14.07.10
15	Castle Ward Forum (NF)	08.12.09; 09.03.10
16	Gensing & Central St Leonards Forum (NF)	29.10.09; 21.01.10
17	Ore Valley Forum (NF)	05.11.09; 04.02.10 01.04.10; 13.05.10
18	Greater Hollington Association (NF)	8.3.10
19	Hastings Community Network (HCN)	01.10.09; 07.10.09; 20.01.10; 08.04.10; 08.07.10; 14.07.10; 19.07.10
20	East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP)	02.10.09; 14.01.10 28.04.10; 22.07.10
21	Community Cohesion Steering Group	03.02.10; 15.03.10 21.06.10
	<b>Additional supporting participant observation activity in the town:</b>	
	HCN Local Democracy Training	2.12.09
	Town Centre Management Meetings	10.3.09
	Pebsham Countryside Park Management	31.9.09
	Wavelength Hastings Regeneration Conference	17.10.08
	Connecting Communities event	6.2.10
	MATT meetings	8.10.09
	Multi-Agency and Community Joint Planning Day	8.7.10
	St Leonard's Community Festival 2010 & 2011	07.10 and 07.11
	Hastings Education Conference 2010	3.03.10
	Town Conference 2011	26.09.11

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Appendix 2. continued – Governance sampling strategy (detail)

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This Appendix demonstrates additional detail of the governance structure sampling process and justification of the structures selected into the sample. This detail supplements the summary of this process in Chapter 4 and was felt to be important owing to the centrality of the governance structures to the core research aims and findings.

Hastings LSP selection: The sustainable development theme is widely acknowledged (in policy terms) to be rooted locally in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), and as such structures associated with it are clearly an important focus for the study (DCLG, 2008; Sustainable Development Commission, 2008). The SCS is owned by the Local Strategic Partnership (HLSP). HLSP was one of the eighty-eight initial LSPs set up across the country in 2001 in the most deprived towns under the Local Government Act, 2000. They are now nationwide structures. In addition, the LSP is the key governance structure for community and social regeneration at town level. In this way it brings together both urban regeneration and social sustainability, and was selected accordingly.

East Sussex Strategic Partnership selection: Owing to the two-tier nature of local governance in Hastings (i.e. Borough Council and County Council) there is a further level of LSP at County level (East Sussex Strategic Partnership or ESSP), which the Hastings LSP feeds into, and this has its own countywide SCS that includes a specific chapter on Hastings, (owing to its unique levels of deprivation). This direct link and the explicit feedback mechanisms between the two LSPs meant ESSP was purposively selected into the sample.

Thematic Partnerships selection: Hastings LSP has five Thematic Partnerships that feed into it. Each has its own action plan, engages regeneration stakeholders and is responsible for the monitoring and in part the delivery of key SCS targets. These five Thematic Partnerships were also

selected into the sample as being relevant and influential to the research topic.

1. Hastings & Bexhill Economic Alliance
2. Safer Hastings Partnership Board
3. Hastings Housing Partnership
4. Learning & Skills Partnership
5. Healthier Hastings Partnership

Area Based Structure partnerships selection: Further key structures that feed into the LSP, (i.e. have an official seat on the board) are part of the pre-existing Borough Council community regeneration initiative known as Area Based Structures (ABS). Area co-ordination was introduced to Hastings in 2006 and divides the town into four areas, each with four wards. The ABS is made up of four Area Management Boards (AMBs), four priority Neighbourhood Forums (NFs) and four Multi-Area Task Teams (MATTs) (very practical delivery action teams which were observed but not included in the sample due to their practical case led front line role) (HBC, 2009b; HBC, 2009c). This spatial division of the town was not a statutory requirement but was done in response to the end of central government Neighbourhood Renewal funding that had been intended to be mainstreamed with the creation of neighbourhood forums rolled out across all sixteen wards. Given the positive response in the town to local governance the council agreed to area management and locally fund four AMBs that NFs could then feed into (HBC, 2009c).

The four AMBs feed into the LSP and are key to informing locally specific social regeneration and were selected into the sample accordingly. They include:

1. North St Leonards Area Management Board
2. South St Leonards Area Management Board
3. Central Hastings Area Management Board
4. East Hastings Area Management Board

These AMBs are in turn partly made up of Residents' Associations (RAs), Neighbourhood Forums (NFs), service providers and county/borough councillors and officers. The four priority regeneration NFs, are a legacy of central government Neighbourhood Renewal or Pathfinder regeneration funding streams, (Hastings Borough Council, 2009c) and these were selected into the sample for their social regeneration focus and importance placed upon them due to the ABS. They include:

1. Castle Ward Forum
2. Gensing and Central St Leonards Forum
3. Ore Valley Forum
4. Greater Hollington Association

SEEDA and SEEPB selection: Running parallel, (and sometimes linking) to these governance structures are the strategic physical and economic regeneration led structures that feed down from the Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG). The 2007 Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration redrew the regional regeneration map (Wallace, 2009). The Regional Assemblies were deconstructed in 2009 and replaced by Partnership Boards drawn from local government and RDAs. In the South East this new regional governance structure was the South East England Partnership Board (SEEPB) and was selected into the sample for the priority owed to it under the Sub-National Review and its role in regeneration. These regional bodies were subsequently abolished in 2010 after the researcher's time in the field.

SEEPB (made up of the South East England Leaders Board and SEEDA) was developed to devise the Single Regional Strategy (SRS) combining the South East Plan (spatial plan) and the previous SEEDA Regional Economic Strategy. Both the SEEPB and the SRS have since been abolished by the Coalition government. The SRS was to be organised with sustainable development at its core. SEEPB via the SRS was placed at the centre of the New Labour governments' final policy on regeneration: "Transforming places; changing lives: taking forward the regeneration framework, 2009". Within this policy (on the first page and highlighted) it is very clear that : "Regeneration

is central to our ambition to create sustainable places where people want to live, work and raise a family” (DCLG, 2009:1).

The SRS was to be co-authored and co-managed by SEEDA who have now also been abolished by the Coalition government with effect from March 2012. SEEDA’s own mandate following their Corporate Plan refresh from November 2009 was sustainable economic development (SEEDA, 2009). Hastings was one of only three priority regeneration programmes for SEEDA following this refresh (SEEDA, 2009). For both of these core regeneration and strategic sustainability roles SEEDA was included in the sample.

Not all structures within the fixed regeneration governance population (see Figure 3) were selected including sub-groups and executive groups in nearly all the above structures. The following factors meant they were excluded: limited time and overlap, restricted access, and thematic duplication (i.e. much of what is discussed at the sub-groups and boards is fed into the central structure to be decided upon). Those units that did not contribute to the social dimension of regeneration and as such did not contribute to the research topic were also excluded.

Box 3. Governance meeting observation process

1. Identify meeting to be observed via partnership mapping and further snowballing.
2. Identify chair/ chief point of contact for the structure and negotiate access.
3. Prepare for observation: for example familiarity with location, appropriateness of clothing and consideration of positionality.
4. Attend meeting. Proceed with informed consent and wider ethics procedure.
5. Set up digital recording if consent given. Meetings varied from one hour to three hours in duration.
6. Attentive/active listening, observing and informal conversations.
7. Field notes in research journals were taken in the observation session of verbal communication, written documents (e.g. minutes, presentations, papers, policy documents), body language, structure and form of meeting, events, power dynamics, language used and not used, location of meeting, seating arrangements, and arrival and departure periods. Structure of field notes during all three methods included: jottings (aide memoir), data (descriptions), analytical memos (to help weave question and phenomena together) and reflections.

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### Appendix 3. Interview matrix

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	<b>Date</b>	<b>Interviewee Title</b>	<b>Interviewee Sector</b>	<b>Governance Structure Membership</b>
1	18.2.10	URC Manager	URC	HBEA/URC (Pilot)
2	3.3.10	Councillor	HBC	AMB/NF/CC (Pilot)
3	9.3.10	Health Manager	NHS	LSP/HHP/L&SP/SHP (Pilot)
4	19.5.10	Community Developer Officer	VCS	HCN/AMB
5	21.5.10	Community Development Officer	HBC	AMB/NF
6	26.5.10	VCS Representative	VCS	HHP/HCN/LSP
7	26.5.10	Partnership Officer	NHS	HHP
8	28.5.10	Chair/ Education	ESCC	L&SP/AMBs/NF/LSP/HHP
9	1.6.10	VCS Representative	VCS	LSP/NF/HCN/AMB/SHP/ L&SP
10	8.6.10	VCS Representative	VCS	LSP/HCN/AMB/NF
11	15.6.10	Community Development Officer	HBC	AMB/NF
12	17.6.10	Community Development Officer	HBC	AMB/NF/LSP
13	17.6.10	VCS Representative/ Chair	VCS	NF/AMB/LSP/HCN/CC
14	28.6.10	Partnership Officer	HBC	CC/AMB
15	19.7.10	Partnership/Policy Officer	HBC	LSP/ESSP

16	21.7.10	Director VCS Organisation	VCS	LSP/HCN/HBEA/SHP/ L&SP/ESSP/ Taskforce
17	30.9.10	VCS representative	VCS	LSP/HCN/L&SP/AMB/NF
18	6.10.10	RSL Officer	RSL	AMB/NF
19	13.10.10	Partnership Officer	HBC	SHP/CC
20	21.10.10	Regeneration Manager	HBC	AMBs/LSP
21	28.10.10	URC Manager/ Chair	URC	LSP/HBEA/URC/Taskforce
22	1.11.10	Councillor	HBC	LSP/HBEA/ESSP/L&SP
23	3.11.10	County Councillor	ESCC	LSP/HBEA/AMB
24	4.11.10	VCS Representative/ Chair	VCS	LSP/HCN/AMB/NF
25	15.11.10	Director VCS Organisation/ Chair	VCS	LSP/HCN/HBEA
26	22.11.10	County Councillor/ Council Leader/ Chair	HBC	SEEDA/SEEPB/LSP/ESSP/ HBEA/AMBs/Taskforce
27	23.11.10	Regeneration Manager	HBC	AMB/NF/LSP/HBEA
28	23.11.10	Regeneration Director	HBC	AMB/LSP/HBEA/SHP
29	30.11.10	Senior Community Police	Police	AMB/NF/SHP
30	9.12.10	RSL Director/ Chair	RSL	LSP/ HHTP/ CC
31	21.3.11	Chair	HE	SEEDA/Taskforce/URC

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## Appendix 4. Documentary analysis process and key documents selected

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### Box 5. Documentary analysis process

1. Selection of document using sample criteria
2. Negotiate access to document
3. Analysis:
  - All meeting documents were read in advance of each meeting to identify key themes to be covered and details to be referred to in the meeting. This information was key to understanding meeting language, direction and purpose. This was important for accessing and becoming familiar with a specific local governance knowledge.
  - This is also central to the ethnographic element of the participant observation method. Just as meeting attendees had to read these documents in advance, so did I. This gave me an insight into the level of burden of preparation required to be informed and influence meetings as without key document knowledge views seemed to be perceived as less valid and impactful. For example, if documents had not been read by attendees then sincere apologies were made. In contrast, document knowledge by attendees: 1. demonstrated a degree of professionalism (highly valued in this community) but also 2. enabled the participant to negotiate the agenda and arguments more readily. This was about being skilful in using the meeting tools to advance a cause or argument. My reading the documents in advance gave me insight into this process. This was also key to demonstrating my commitment and knowledge to this community, which I felt was key to gaining access to research interview participants.
  - Key documents were printed out and annotated prior to the meeting and reference made by attendees to key documents in the meeting were referred to in my field notes and transcriptions in order to acknowledge their influence, value and agency in this community.
  - After the meeting initial broad reflections upon agency of texts in the meeting were included in the field notes if relevant.

- Upon completion of the participant observation method, documents or sections of documents identified in the meetings as influential on the debate were analysed in greater detail using discourse analysis and the results of which were used to support or problematize meeting and interview data captured.

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Appendix 4. Continued – Summary of core documents selected for analysis

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Note: The minutes, agendas and key papers for each meeting attended (Appendix 2) were read and used to understand the agency of the format and structure of documents, discourse mechanisms, governance norms around agenda setting, minute taking, and accessibility of documents. These all informed the research findings in Chapters 5-8.

*Specific documents selected for further analysis (as per the criteria in Chapter 4):*

Audit Commission, April 2010 Comprehensive Area Assessment 2010 presentation to ESSP [Collected ESSP 28.4.10]

Community Cohesion Action Plan Objectives, 2010 [Collected CC 21.6.10]

DCLG, (2008) Communities in control: real people, real power. The Stationery Office (TSO), London. [Sourced post HCN 07.10.09]

ESCC (2003) The East Sussex Compact, East Sussex County Council. [Sourced post ESSP 14.1.10]

ESSP (2008) East Sussex Strategic Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy – Pride of Place. [Refresh collected ESSP 02.10.09 and full document sourced post meeting]

Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, (2001) Five Point Plan [Sourced in Scoping exercise 09-12.09]

Hastings and Bexhill Economic Alliance, (2008) Hastings and Bexhill Economic Development and Inclusion Strategy 2008-13. Hastings: Hastings and Bexhill Economic Alliance. [Sourced post references in HBEA meeting 23.9.09]

Hastings and Bexhill Economic Alliance, (2010) Third Sector Representation Request and confirmation Form [Collected HCN 8.4.10]

Hastings Borough Council, (2009) Many Voices, One Hastings: Community Cohesion Action Plan. Hastings: Hastings Borough Council [Collected in CC steering group 15.3.10]

Hastings Borough Council, (2009) Structure and partnership map. Hastings: Hastings Borough Council [Collected in HLSP 12.10.09]

Hastings Borough Council, (2009) Area Based Structure Review. Hastings: Hastings Borough Council [Collected in all four AMB March 2010]

Hastings Borough Council, (2010) Terms of reference for area boards and area champions. [Documents collected in all four AMBs in March 2010]

Hastings Borough Council, (2009/10) Hastings Borough Council Corporate Plan. Hastings: Hastings Borough Council [Collected in EAMB 10.02.10]

Hastings Borough Council, (2010) Scrutiny Review of the Council's Consultation process [Collected HCN 8.4.10]

Hastings Community Network (2009) Draft terms of reference for Equalities Sub group [Collected HCN 1.10.09]

Healthier Hastings Partnership (2010) Protocol and operating procedures for the relationship between the Hastings & Rother health and social care forum and the healthier hastings partnership board [Collected HHP 18.5.10]

HVA (2008) The state of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Hastings, Hastings Voluntary Action [Sourced in Scoping exercise 09-12.09 and HCN 01.10.09]

Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion Ltd (OCSI), (2008) Deprivation levels and trends across East Sussex: Understanding the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007. [Sourced in Scoping exercise 09-12.09 and post HLSP 12.10.09]

Hastings and St Leonards Local Strategic Partnership, (2003) Sustainable Community Strategy (2003-2013) [Sourced post HLSP 12.10.09 - refresh collected]

The Hastings journey: getting there together (2010) Hastings Education Conference Report. March, 2010. Hastings Conference Working Party [Collected L&STP 11.05.10]

SEEDA, (2006) The Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016 - A Framework for Sustainable Prosperity [Sourced in Scoping exercise 09-12.09]

SEEDA, (2009) Corporate Plan Review. [Collected at SEEDA AGM 5.11.09]

## Appendix 5. Interview guide and process

<b>1. Introduction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to researcher and project.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reiteration of informed consent, recording, anonymity, opportunity for respondent validation and dissemination strategy.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any questions?</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Social Dimensions of Regeneration</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is their perception of the priority local, county, regional and national social regeneration agendas and why? (inc how is this manifest?)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social dimensions of regeneration their structure is responsible for?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompts: In terms of               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Key policies</li> <li>2. Delivery</li> <li>3. Targets</li> <li>4. Interaction with other structures (scales &amp; sectors)</li> <li>5. Interaction with central and regional policy</li> <li>6. Concentrations of control or driving forces within that wider architecture (where is this power located)? [Prompt: key recent changes?]</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has this agenda changed over the history of the structure &amp; how (Prompt: include impact of politics)?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other structures do they view as being responsible for social dimensions of regeneration in the town:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Key policy narrative or agenda?</li> <li>○ Dominant or leading structures in this?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>If not already discussed . . .</b>	
<b>3. Community Engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their views on the Engagement agendas in terms of impact/role of social regeneration in the town?</li> </ul> <p>[Prompt: Local govt, &amp; public involvement in health act. Local democracy, economic development construction bill; communities in control and local compact.]</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has it impacted social regeneration policy, structures or language?</li> </ul>	
4. Community & Voluntary Sector	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the role of CVS in this town – in terms of social regeneration?</li> <li>• What influences that role/s?</li> <li>• Has that changed over the last 2 years? Why?</li> <li>• Does the governance structure affect that role?</li> <li>• What impact does the CVS have upon the governance structure - if any?</li> <li>• Are there risks or opportunities for regeneration of the town owing to their role?</li> <li>• Do you see that role changing over the next few years? Why?</li> </ul> <p>[Growth of discourse and role of active citizenship, community and third sector responsibility in regeneration (e.g. Smarter Government, Transforming Places, Putting the Frontline First (community enterprises strategic framework) – is that your experience?]</p>	
5. Social Sustainability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What aspects of sustainability feature in the regeneration agenda?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which aspects are prioritised and how [and why?]</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How do people and communities fit into discussions of sustainability?</b></li> <li>• Does the term 'social sustainability' have any meaning in the regeneration landscape of Hastings in your experience? <b>[In terms of values, norms, practical objectives]</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Prompt definition:</b></p> <p>Social sustainability is one aspect of sustainable development that describes a quality of society. Social sustainability encompasses an extended set of human needs inc human rights (inc health and education), inter/intragenerational equity/social justice, participation and strong institutional governance. In common with environmental sustainability, social sustainability is the idea that future generations should have the same or greater access to social resources as the current generation without compromising the reproductive capacity of environmental systems. Social resources include ideas as broad as cultures, relationships, and civic participation.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does it/How does it manifest in regeneration structures, policy, language, politics (if at all)?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who drives/shapes that agenda if anyone? And why &amp; how? [At different scales?]</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What institutional structures would be best suited to this (e.g. formal, informal, public, private, CVS, partnership) and on what scale (individual, local, neighbourhood,</li> </ul>	

borough, vounty, regional, national?)	
<b>6. Future</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will the next 18 months hold for the regeneration agenda and specifically social sustainability including consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public spending cuts,</li> <li>○ Reviews</li> <li>○ General election &amp; change of local politics,</li> <li>○ Future of RDAs and regional governance more generally?</li> <li>○ New agendas and narratives forthcoming?</li> <li>○ New structures?</li> <li>○ New governance models beyond partnership?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>7. Closure/Cooling Down</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary/cooling down questions to manage participant expectations,</li> <li>• Reassure the participant of their chance to view the transcript, anonymity, contact details for any further questions</li> <li>• Express appreciation of their time and views.</li> </ul>	

Box 4. Interview process

1. Interviews were set up by email or phone, and the interviews were mostly held in person in the participant's place of work, or governance structure meeting place at a convenient time and agreeable timescale for them. Every effort was made to ensure that the interview could not be overheard.
2. Ethical procedures and informed consent determined.
3. Preparation for interviews: for example confirmation of time and location. Familiarisation with interviewee profile and previous observations. Reconsideration of interview guide.
4. Attend interview: Reiteration of informed consent, anonymity, opportunity for respondent validation and dissemination strategy. Set up digital recording if consent provided.
5. Use of interview guide to use largely open questions loosely following a hybrid of funnel and pyramid structure to the interview (i.e. moving from simple, non-sensitive questions, to abstract/concept based questions, while increasingly moving to more sensitive (usually political) topics (as per Dunn, 2001). This was followed by summary/cooling down questions to manage participant expectations, signal the end of the interview and reassure the participant of their chance to view the transcript, anonymity, contact details for any further questions and finally appreciation of their time and value of their opinions for the researcher's work (Dunn, 2001). Interview sessions varied from thirty minutes to two hours.
6. Field notes include observations of arrival and departure, physical environment, non-verbal communication and initial key themes highlighted.



Shift in local governance landscape as uncertainty of central funding, abolition of regional tier & central audit is creating a vacuum that the VCS may fill in face of public sector cuts & their future use

Governance beyond the state

Reification of good governance

Alternative view of the institutional space occupied by VCS & their role, agency, influence in this space

Varying experience of partnership

Growing community engagement agenda & VCS role & influence

Legacy of neighbourhood regeneration experience = VCS increased social capital/capacity for local governance & level of expectation of engagement, participation & consultation

Talking shops / "just boxing in the shadows" (regional experience)

Central government agendas, funding ties & parameters politicises some structures if not challenged, manipulated or disturbed by VCS & allies

Constructive dialogue & robust challenge

Common emotive desire to improve H

Exchange of intelligence, process of facilitation, collaboration & connectedness

A way of working embraced rather imposed structures & agendas

Moulding institutional space for the expression of & commitment to community engagement

VCS capitalising on engagement legislation & involvement; Local democracy & Devolution & localism bill??

Model of activism, resistance dissent, lobbying & rights & equalities based agenda

VCS wealth of expertise built up over decade of regen'n

Appetite for 'active citizenship'

Building of social capital via training

VCS burden of limited time, resources, capacity

CVS strategic leadership, training & high level rep'n

Increasingly organised, & sophisticated VCS

Recognition of complexity & non-homogenous nature of sector

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## Appendix 7. Ethics consent and information forms

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1. Information Sheet – Meetings
2. Consent Form – Meetings
3. Information Sheet – Interviews
4. Consent Form - Interviews



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Fax 01273 642922

## **Meetings Information sheet for PhD research on: Social dimensions of urban regeneration.**

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### **Why have I been given this information sheet?**

Ethical and high quality research requires participants be fully equipped with the information they need to make informed decisions about their involvement in the research process.

### **What is this sheet?**

This information sheet explains:

- who I am and where I am studying,
- the nature and purpose of my research,
- my data collection process,
- how that data will be stored, used and presented,
- who to contact if you have any questions or concerns.

### **Who am I?**

My name is Johanne Orchard-Webb. I am a PhD student at the University of Brighton. My PhD is part funded by Sea Space. The research is entirely independent of Sea Space. They have no access to the data I collect or influence over the nature of the research, or participants selected. They will receive an anonymised executive report of my findings only.

### **What am I researching?**

The broad area of my study is 'sustainable urban regeneration' with Hastings as my case study. I am looking at the different elements of sustainability in urban regeneration policy and practice, with a specific focus on the social dimension of regeneration, and social sustainability in particular.

In order to try to understand the different characteristics of sustainable urban regeneration in Hastings I need to observe and understand the different organisations and partnerships involved in this process. As part of this process I will be observing meetings.

**What measures are taken to ensure the accuracy, security, anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected?**

The most reliable way for me to ensure I accurately capture the information shared in meetings is to electronically record them and then transcribe the recordings. My University academic supervisor (Professor Andrew Church) and I are the only people with access to the raw data from the recordings. The data will be stored on a password protected personal computer and discs held in a secure location. The data from the recordings will be coded so as to ensure your anonymity in any presentation of the findings. The audio and document data files will be destroyed ten years after the completion of my PhD.

**What if you would like to view the research results?**

As part of a process of communication of the research findings at the end of the project you will be given the opportunity to select to view the results of the research in your preferred format (i.e. hard copy executive report, poster display or presentation).

**How will this information/data be used?**

For the purposes of my research raw data includes verbal and non-verbal communication during the meeting, including minutes, reports and presentations. It also includes characteristics of the meeting process itself. The anonymised data from this meeting observation will be included in my PhD thesis, related academic papers and reports for the funding body.

**What if you don't want to be recorded?**

Please let me know if you would prefer not to be recorded and I can simply take notes. Alternatively, please email or phone me after the meeting (using the contact details below) and I can remove your comments from the records.

**What if you don't want to be involved or decide to withdraw?**

You can withdraw from taking part in the research at any time and you will be asked if you want your data to be removed from the records.

**What if you have any questions or concerns?**

Please feel free to ask me any questions and I will try to answer these as best I can. If you have any concerns with the research please contact Professor Callum Firth, Head of School, School of Environment and Technology at the University of Brighton on Tel: 01273 642289

**For further information on this research please contact:**

Johanne Orchard-Webb  
Tel: 01273 642288  
Email: [j.m.orchard-webb@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.orchard-webb@brighton.ac.uk)

**Thank-you for taking the time to read this information and for any involvement in my research.**



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**Participant Consent Form - Meetings**

**For PhD research on: Social dimensions of urban regeneration**

- ◆ I agree to take part in this research which is to *explore social dimensions of urban regeneration and specifically social sustainability*.
- ◆ The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.
- ◆ I have read the information sheet and I understand the principles, procedures and possible risks involved.
- ◆ I am aware that I will be observed and recorded during this meeting.
- ◆ I understand that the anonymised data will be used in Johanne's PhD thesis, related academic papers and funding body reports, and that any confidential information will be seen only by Johanne Orchard-Webb and her University supervisor Professor Andrew Church and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- ◆ I understand the audio and document data files will be stored in a password protected computer file and then will be destroyed ten years after the completion of Johanne's PhD.
- ◆ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.
- ◆ I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used with my permission by the researcher for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Name (please print) .....

Signed .....

Date .....



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## **Interview Information sheet for PhD research on: Social dimensions of urban regeneration.**

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### **Why have I been given this information sheet?**

Ethical and high quality research requires participants be fully equipped with the information they need to make informed decisions about their involvement in the research process.

### **What is this sheet?**

This information sheet explains:

- who I am and where I am studying,
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- who to contact if you have any questions or concerns.

### **Who am I?**

My name is Johanne Orchard-Webb. I am a PhD student at the University of Brighton. My PhD is funded by Sea Space. The research is entirely independent of Sea Space. They have no access to the data I collect or influence over the nature of the research, or participants selected. They will receive an anonymised executive report of my findings only.

### **What am I researching?**

The broad area of my study is 'sustainable urban regeneration' with Hastings as my case study. I am looking at the different elements of sustainability in urban regeneration policy and practice, with a specific focus on the social dimension of regeneration, and social sustainability in particular.

In order to try to understand the different characteristics of sustainable urban regeneration in Hastings I need to understand the different organisations and partnerships involved in this process. As part of this process I am interviewing members of the different organisations.

**What measures are taken to ensure the accuracy, security, anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected?**

The most reliable way for me to ensure I accurately capture the information shared our interview is to electronically record it and then transcribe the recordings. My University academic supervisor (Professor Andrew Church) and I are the only people with access to the raw data from the recordings. The data will be stored on a password protected personal computer and discs held in a secure location. The data from the recordings will be coded so as to ensure your anonymity in any presentation of the findings. The audio and document data files will be destroyed ten years after the completion of my PhD.

**What if you would like to view our interview?**

As part of a process of participant validation you will be given the opportunity to check the interview transcript and can be given access to the transcript at any time.

**What if you would like to view the research results?**

As part of a process of communication of the research findings at the end of the project you will be given the opportunity to select to view the results of the research in your preferred format (i.e. hard copy executive report, poster display or presentation).

**How will this information/data be used?**

For the purposes of my research raw data includes your answers to questions and any non-verbal communication. The anonymised results from this interview will be included in my PhD thesis, related academic papers and reports for the funding body.

**What if you don't want to be recorded?**

Please let me know if you would prefer not to be recorded and I can simply take notes.

**What if you don't want to be involved or decide to withdraw?**

You can withdraw from taking part in the research at any time, (without giving a reason) and you will be asked if you want your data to be removed from the records. Equally, you have the right to decline to answer any question in the interview.

**What if you have any questions or concerns?**

Please feel free to ask me any questions and I will try to answer these as best I can. If you have any concerns with the research please contact Professor Callum Firth, Head of School, School of Environment and Technology, at the University of Brighton on Tel: 01273 642289

**For further information on this research please contact:**

Johanne Orchard-Webb  
Tel: 01273 642288 Email: [j.m.orchard-webb@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.orchard-webb@brighton.ac.uk)

**Thank-you for taking the time to read this information and for any involvement in my research.**



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**Participant Consent Form - Interviews**

**For PhD research on: Social dimensions of urban regeneration**

- ◆ I agree to take part in this research which is to explore social dimensions of urban regeneration and specifically social sustainability.
- ◆ The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.
- ◆ I have read the information sheet and I understand the principles, procedures and possible risks involved.
- ◆ I am aware that I will be asked to answer questions on social dimensions of urban regeneration and related governance structures.
- ◆ I understand that the anonymised data will be used in Johanne's PhD thesis, related academic papers and funding body reports, and that any confidential information will be seen only by Johanne Orchard-Webb and her University supervisor Professor Andrew Church and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- ◆ I understand the audio and document data files will be stored in a password protected computer file and then will be destroyed ten years after the completion of Johanne's PhD.
- ◆ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.
- ◆ I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used with my permission by Johanne for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Name (please print) .....

Signed .....

Date .....