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Community resilience and narratives of community empowerment in Scotland

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Abstract The concept of resilience is now routinely put forward by both policy-makers and social activists as a way for communities to use and develop their resources and respond positively to change, including decarbonization to address climate change. The extent to which a community is able to utilize all its resources depends on the extent to which it feels empowered to take action and is a major determinant of its resilience. A narrative of community empowerment has recently emerged from Scottish Government, driven in part by the situation in Scotland, in which a skewed pattern of landownership and distant structure of 'local' democracy combine to disempower communities by disconnecting them from local resources and local representative democracy. Recent Scottish legislation appears to provide new opportunities for community groups to gain control of local assets, become more financially sustainable, undertake climate-related mitigation actions and overcome some of the current local democratic deficit. At the same time, an increasingly well-organized and networked community sector and some within the Scottish Government are actively exploring new ways to enable public participation and deliver public services. This paper analyses the current Scottish policy framework and aspirations for community empowerment and, through interviews with stakeholders, assesses the potential, this may provide for communities to become truly resilient and to actively engage with transformational change.

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Introduction

> 'The classic kind of empowered community is one that is confident, resilient, energetic and independent. It is well networked. It has a high degree of social capital. It is confident enough to imagine a better future for itself, and is in a position to take control of that future. It has the breadth of vision to be able to enlist others and other agencies in helping it to deliver its ambitions.' (Elliot, 2014)

The emerging narrative of 'community empowerment' in Scotland, along with associated legislation, has provoked a debate about community resilience. Is this legislation likely to succeed in enabling Scottish communities 'to do things for themselves'? And to what extent will this enable communities to develop the resilience necessary to proactively engage with the urgent need to decarbonize society?

Resilience is everywhere in debates about how communities of place can deal with multiple, increasingly unpredictable and complex, social, economic and environmental challenges (Furedi, 2008; Brown, 2013; Cinderby *et al.*, 2016; Baldwin and King, 2017). The term is invoked, by theorists and practitioners, policymakers and activists, as a framework and strategy for both dealing with uncertainty and change and for developing locally appropriate solutions for a low-carbon, sustainable future (Hopkins, 2008; Scottish Government, 2009; Scottish Community Development Centre, 2011; Wilding, 2011; Berkes and Ross, 2013). Resilient communities, it is argued, are able to utilize their human and natural resources to respond and adapt to the challenges and opportunities brought about by rapid and often unpredictable socioecological change (Flora and Flora, 2013; Steiner and Markantoni, 2013).

From its origins in understanding of ecological and, later, socioecological systems (Holling, 1973; Berkes and Folke, 1998; Walker and Salt, 2006), the concept of resilience is much debated among scholars and there exist multiple interrelated complementary and contested framings of the concept (Davoudi *et al.*, 2012; Freshwater, 2015; Cinderby *et al.*, 2016). The main distinction is between resilience as ability to 'bounce back' (to normal) from adversity, shock or disaster, and resilience as ability to innovate, transform and 'bounce forward', in response to changed conditions (Steiner *et al.*, 2016; Grove, 2017). These two narratives broadly correspond with two strands of resilience now utilized by policymakers to enlist communities and citizens in preparedness for emergencies such as adverse weather or terrorist attack and by social and environmental activists seeking radical systems change through local action (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013; Cretney and Bond, 2014). There is a clear danger of the notions of self-organization and self-reliance that are central to resilience thinking being

co-opted by ideologies advocating withdrawal of the state from local governance responsibilities (Nelson, 2014). Related to this is the question of 'resilience for whom?' Disparities in access to capital and power both within and between communities need to be acknowledged (Mason and Whitehead, 2012; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013), while resilience as enhanced ability to 'bounce back' may create a rigidity that leads to more catastrophic systems collapse later (Pelling, 2011).

We take it as axiomatic that learning to live within planetary boundaries will require fundamental transformation of social, political and, above all, economic systems at all levels (Douthwaite, 2012; Speth, 2012). Our interest is therefore in how communities can build 'transformational resilience', as a creation of fertile ground for seeding positive, systemic renewal and reorganization at local level (Henfrey *et al.*, 2015) that actively contributes to building alternatives to current high-carbon, neo-liberal, capitalist and consumerist orthodoxy, from the bottom-up.

In this vision, there are multiple aspects to a 'transformationally' resilient community. Individually, people will have a high level of well-being, with good-quality personal relationships, a good connection to nature and a strong sense of control over decisions that affect them. The community will be self-confident, creative and inclusive, actively working for social justice and open to exploring ways of working that encourage real deliberation and value everyone's contribution. The local economy will be connected with and positively stewarding the local environment, ensuring that local resources are regenerated and biodiversity enhanced, with a thriving 'ecosystem' of local enterprises that meet many local needs whilst providing meaningful, low-carbon livelihoods. Fianlly, it will have active links with other communities, ready to give and receive support, to share knowledge and ideas and to develop active partnerships. (Wilding, 2011; Cox and Johnson, 2015; Cinderby *et al.* 2016).

Communities of place are themselves comprised of and embedded in wider, multilevel networks of association and governance which influence agency and the capacity to utilize their natural and social resources as assets to cope with change (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010). Important here is the policy context and how different policy areas interpret the resilience agenda (Shaw, in Davoudi *et al.* 2012). In Scotland, recent legislation has been enacted with the potential to enhance community resilience by providing for greater community empowerment through involvement in planning and provision of public services and, giving community organizations new powers to acquire land and have a say in how land is used. Scotland has a particularly well-organized community sector that supports over 2000 community-based initiatives (CBIs) and enterprises across Scotland networked through the Scottish Community Alliance.

This paper explores the views of different stakeholders to assess the implications of these recent policy enactments for the ability of Scottish communities to engage with systems change. Our particular concern with the role communities can play in shaping a low-carbon transition stems from qualitative interviews in the FP7 EU TESS project[1] looking at impact and success of CBIs taking action to tackle climate change. These interviews highlighted how groups in Scotland consistently reported a lack of agency and sense of disempowerment due to a disconnect from local environmental resources (land) and decision-making (local democracy – much more so than in the other countries of Finland, Spain, Italy, Germany and Romania). This lack of empowerment considerably limited their ability to take action to decarbonize their community and appeared to stem from the particular historic context of landownership in Scotland combined with long-standing, centralized structures of democracy.

This paper first outlines the wider context of institutional and governance arrangements embedded in democracy and landownership in Scotland. We then describe the methods employed to gather and analyse data for this study, including interviews with stakeholders from the community sector, landowners, academics, politicians and officials from local and Scottish Government.

Our findings suggest that interconnected issues around local democracy, landownership, land prices and land-use planning remain unaddressed and that tackling these will be key to unleashing the potential of community action -including community-led climate action.

Disconnected communities – democracy, land and planning

Instrumental in driving the community empowerment narrative within Scottish policy has been the Community Empowerment Action Plan (COSLA, 2009) and the Christie Commission Report (Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services, 2011), culminating in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (CEA) in 2015. The CEA is set to open up new opportunities for community groups to have a greater say in the delivery of public services, through involvement in 'Community Planning Partnerships' and through new powers to make 'participation requests'. It also extends community 'right to buy' provisions[2] to include urban areas,

1 Towards European Societal Sustainability, Funded under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme, 2013–2016, grant agreement no. 603705, see: http://www.tess-transition.eu

2 In reality, this is a right to register an interest in purchase, should the land come on the market. See: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/rural-land/right-to-buy/Community accessed on 13 September 2016.

intended to enable more communities to bring land and buildings into community ownership. Supporting the CEA, the new Land Reform (Scotland) Act of 2016 (LRA 2016) builds on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LRA 2003) and creates new obligations on landowners to engage with local communities.

The aims of this legislation become apparent in the current context of Scotland's remote and centralized 'local' government structures, coupled with highly concentrated patterns of private landownership (MacMillan *et al.*, 2010; Hunter, 2012), which are briefly outlined below.

The issue of democracy

Scotland has one of the most centralized systems of local government in Europe with the fewest number of elected representatives per head of population (Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, 2014). Highland Council, for example, covers a geographic area the size of Belgium, whilst Argyll and Bute would be served by ten councils, were it in Finland. Furthermore, Scottish local government has only minimal fiscal autonomy and limited discretion to decide on local priorities, within the framework of National Priorities set by the Scottish Government. To support coordination and delivery of these priorities, all public bodies in each local authority, including health and emergency services, are now brought together in a 'Community Planning Partnership' (CPP).

Diminishing budgets combined with increasing statutory obligations mean that Scottish Councils and their associated CPPs have necessarily become focussed on economies of scale, cost-cutting and efficiency-savings, leading to a standardized approach to service delivery which takes little account of the wide diversity of Scottish communities, the particular challenges and opportunities they face and the need for locally appropriate solutions. A sense of local knowledge and ideas being ignored or undervalued undermines local autonomy, empowerment and resilience (Cinderby *et al.* 2016). The mismatch in scale makes meaningful engagement between Councils and local communities a challenge for both sides (Shortall, 2008).

In many places, 'community councils',[3] set up forty years ago following the abolition of town councils, still function but these are not a tier of government, have minimal resources, little influence and struggle to be representative. Far from needing to hold elections, most have difficulty recruiting enough volunteers to fill vacant seats.[4] Over the past twenty

3 Community councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They are voluntary and can express the views of their communities to local authorities on a range of issues.

4 Community Councils in Scotland, report available at: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0039/00391640.pdf accessed on 13 September 2016.

years or so, Development Trusts and similar community bodies have emerged in many places, seeking to address perceived local needs whilst often creating a vibrant culture of participatory democracy. Adding to this mix, CPPs have recently been required to establish smaller, more local 'area partnerships', that bring together community councils and third-sector representatives along with their local authority Councillors, in an attempt to improve coordination and communication.

The issue of landownership

Community action towards decarbonization frequently requires access to land and natural resources, for example, food growing, installation of community owned renewable energy generation, creation of a cycle path, to build affordable housing or create workshop space for local enterprises. This may require ownership or a lease or access agreement. In other instances, a community may simply want to have some influence over how surrounding land is managed, perhaps to make flooding less likely. Community access to land can be extremely difficult or impossible given current patterns of landownership. Inability to engage with this crucial aspect of local capital inevitably restricts opportunities to develop community resilience (Magis, 2010) – or 'resourcefulness' as MacKinnon and Derickson (2013) term it.

Scotland has the most concentrated and monopolistic landownership structure in Europe (Shucksmith, 2010). Around 0.1 percent of the population hold 80 percent of private land by area (McGregor, 1993) and much of this has been under the ownership of just 1500 estates for over 900 years, with some families in hereditary occupation for more than 30 generations (Callander, 1987; Wightman *et al.*, 2002). The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 enabled a number of community trusts to purchase land, develop assets and build income streams around housing, renewables, microbusinesses and tourism (McMorran and Scott, 2013) as well as doing much to open up most land to access for recreation. However, the legal system still prioritizes the protection of property rights and attitudes to landownership by those who own and manage land show little signs of changing (MacMillan *et al.*, 2010; Dinnie, Fischer, Huband, 2015), despite calls for greater engagement between landowners and local communities (McKee, 2015).

Driven by planning policies and restrictions, tax reliefs, agricultural and forestry subsidies, land has become a commodity and a means of storing capital in a tax-efficient way. This has pushed up land prices, making housing unaffordable for many young families and encouraging increasing numbers of absentee or passive landowners with little interest in the local community, or even in productive use of the land. An added barrier in many cases is that the lack of a comprehensive and transparent land register can make it impossible to trace ownership of a particular piece of land.

Land-use planning

Land-use planning links numerous issues around local democracy and landownership, highlighting the disempowerment that communities feel over decisions that affect them. The development and use of land, but not how it is managed, are decided by the Scottish planning system. It is a top-down, plan-based system based on national priorities. Whilst the intention is to ensure effective partnership working across administrative, sectoral and political boundaries, the effect is that crucial decisions affecting local communities have usually already been made well before they have the opportunity to engage. In any case, planning policy and law is a complex area that is challenging for the general public to engage with (Shucksmith, 2010). Most community engagement is purely reactive and many argue that the system is skewed in favour of large developers.[5]

Lack of local democracy, skewed landownership patterns and an obscure planning system have all contributed to low levels of community empowerment, meaning that communities have limited opportunities to develop the skills and capacities necessary to become more resilient.

Methods

Data for this paper were gathered by the first author between February and May 2016. A purposive sample of nine stakeholders, drawn from policymakers, practitioners, academics, public and third-sector employees, with differing viewpoints, and from across Scotland were interviewed. Interviewees were carefully chosen for their specific expertise, recent experience and involvement with current debates around land, local democracy and community empowerment. The semistructured interviews explored these issues and recent policy responses. The aim was to obtain a wide range of views on current policy direction from organizations that had emerged as important in CBI activities and governance from earlier stages of TESS project research. These interviews were supplemented with data from four previous interviews conducted in 2015 as a part of the main data collection in the TESS project. In total the findings below therefore include data from 13 interviews.[6] This work is also informed by perspectives from a wide range of relevant recent policy briefings, reports and other background literature.

5 See for example: http://www.planningdemocracy.org.uk/category/equal-right-appeal/ accessed on 13 September 2016.

6 Nine interviewees were male and four female. Of these, four were from community groups or community support networks, two were academics, one represented landowners, four were officials and two were elected politicians in local or national government.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using qualitative data analysis software. An iterative grounded approach was taken to analysis in which recurrent themes were identified from close reading and coding of the data. Findings are presented according to these emergent themes. Quotes from the interviews are included in verbatim. To preserve confidentiality interviewees are simply referenced by sector as follows: community (C), landowners (L), academics (A), politicians (P) and officials (O).

Findings

Landownership, use and management

The view of Scottish Land and Estates, the body representing the interests of landowners in Scotland, is that who owns land is of less importance than how land is used and managed:

> '… actually we shouldn't be focussing on "who owns what'", we should be focussing on what we do with it and how do we get the most out of it. And at the moment the focus on "who owns what" is actually detracting from "how do we manage it better?"' (L).

But what constitutes 'better management' is open to question and in the absence of local democratic forums in which this can be discussed there is no mechanism for deliberating on conflicting interests in a creative way. Scottish Land and Estates has a 'landowner's commitment' which encourages community engagement. Such engagement will be increasingly required of landowners as part of the newly enacted LRA 2016 but some interviewees predicted this could become a tick-box compliance exercise to receive subsidy payments, unless it can be supported through training and incentives to involve local communities in decision-making.

There was general support to keep land issues on the political agenda and for improving transparency of ownership. However, several interviewees felt that some aspects of recent legislation has been rushed through without proper consideration, and others were concerned that key, and politically more contentious, issues around urban land development, land-use planning, housing and land prices, where change is really required to support community activity, are still not being addressed;

> 'There's this much bigger picture about… local taxation, land value taxation, land ownership, and also community empowerment (A)'.

Nonetheless, there was a feeling that the CEA in particular represents;

> 'a big step for the Scottish Government, because that puts the community agenda at the forefront… and it grounds a lot of their principles, – their

> intentions towards a more socially just local democracy and land system in Scotland (A)'.

Culture change – passive recipients or active participants?

It was recognized by interviewees that the CEA and LRA2016, coupled with commitment for further land reform legislation in the next Scottish Parliament and creation of the Scottish Land Commission,[7] indicate a culture change. However, several interviewees highlighted how devolution of powers from the UK to Scottish Government currently stop at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, with no push to continue this devolution through to local level;

> 'So it's really paradoxical….to see an SNP government – and also others with a devolution sensibility – to keep making arguments about devolving to Holyrood and not to see the very argument of devolving to local government!' (A).

Another interviewee was reluctant to admit to any current deficit in local democracy:

> 'I don't think I would accept that per se there's a democratic deficit in Scotland in terms of local accountability' (O).

However, this terminology is revealing, highlighting what another interviewee termed the conflation of administrative and democratic functions, confusion between accountability for how money is spent and services delivered and an open and public debate to be had …

> ' … about the strategic decisions that create a space for those services, that make choices of services, that work through the trade-offs between services, through the difficult decision making and the balancing of competing views and perspectives' (A).

In recent years, as a part of seeking greater public participation and engagement, the Scottish Government has trialled a number of 'national conversations', for example, to inform policy around a 'Fairer Scotland'[8] and future provision of health services. One interviewee highlighted how government is increasingly open to

> 'direct engagement specifically looking to engage with people who are not the usual suspects' (O).

None of this, however, does anything to address current feelings of disconnect between people and decisions that directly affect their own local

7 https://landcommission.gov.scot/ accessed on 16 May 2018.

8 See: https://fairer.scot accessed on 13 September 2016.

community. This perceived void is increasingly being filled by a range of CBIs, such as Development Trusts. These were felt to be successful precisely because they have emerged from within communities. Their evolutionary development has encouraged innovation and has tapped into local knowledge and creativity:

> ' … I suppose I've always felt that one of the greatest resources of Scotland is the Scottish people themselves and the question is "how do you unlock that potential, that creativity, that…sense of enterprise?"' (C).

Whilst membership of these grassroots' organizations is open to anyone who is motivated to join, they cannot, and would not, claim to be representative. Only a few people are likely to have the commitment and time required to take on unpaid but onerous governance roles as board members of what are often complex organizations running multiple projects and employing many staff with uncertain funding. Whilst such organizations can have a key role in building social capital and community resilience (Cretney and Bond, 2014), there is always a danger that, in addressing short-term, local issues they can inadvertently serve to prop up a failing system, particularly where they assume 'responsibility without power' (Peck and Tickell, 2002) and are inadequately supported and resourced by the state.

Many of these organizations have experienced the suspicions, jealousies and misunderstandings that can arise in any community and which can be difficult to resolve in the absence of a local deliberative 'platform where we can have those discussions. At the moment they don't happen…or they don't happen involving those who should be round the table' (C).

A confused space and new opportunities

At the moment the local space where such a platform might creatively consider and deliberate on conflicting ideas and opinions can seem messy and confused.

> 'What we seem to have is not a system but a number of players with quite a lot of tension between them, and I think it's important for the health of democracy to try and create that functioning system' (P).

These players include local authorities, community councils, community planning partnerships and, often, one or more CBIs. The roles of these different organizations are not always well defined or understood:

> 'I don't think anybody really understands why you've got a Community Council and why you've got a Development Trust and I think there needs to be a clarity about what's happening there' (P).

This lack of clarity can lead to feelings of competition and mistrust between bodies that can lead to a lack of action:

> ' … there is often a significant tension between community councils and development trusts…because community councils feel quite threatened by a different democratic accountable body …good community councils will actually see that development trusts can do things that they can't (there should be a synergy there) but not all community councils are 'good' (C).

A 'very practical, and sort of cultural, disconnect' (O) between the 'public sector' and CBIs was highlighted as one difficulty in developing creative relationships but sometimes it is simply a question of scale of operation. Local Authorities necessarily 'tend to do things big as opposed to small and that creates its own dynamics, it creates bureaucracies, and it creates a silo mentality' (C).

Whereas a community may be able to see how things manifest and connect at local level, for the local authority 'it's two different departments or two different agencies or whatever' (C) and there may be a conflict of interest between the wider priorities of the Local Authorities and the specific needs of a particular community: 'Local Authorities make policies and deliver services, while at the same time they are also in charge of 'community support'. Are officials capable of supporting initiatives that may be in the interest of a particular community but actually go against the priorities of the LA?'.[9]

Whilst recognizing the important work that local authorities do, several interviewees noted that a change in how they are structured may be required, in particular because they have been 'stretched and stretched and stretched so can no longer provide all the services they do, well' (C).

There was much discussion around getting democracy 'at the right level' – asking what local authorities do well, and what they should continue to do whilst enabling more involvement and innovation at local level. As the lowest level of local representative democracy, community councils might be expected to fill this role, however their absence from the CEA was seen as an oversight by interviewees:

> 'How can you have a Community Empowerment Act and say no word about community councils? It will eventually have to happen because it's going to be that or local government reform full scale' (A).

9 Report from a forum to inform The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, 2014, *Strengthening Local Democracy in Scotland*, Academy of Government, Edinburgh University. Available at: http://www.localdemocracy.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Report-VAS-TSI-COSLA-Commission-March-2014.pdf

Some felt that Community Councils should have more power and change how they operate to become more inclusive:

> 'It's not just that they don't have resources, [with an average budget of just £400 per year]; it's not only that they have a limited role…that in the end attracts a particular type of profile of citizen that ends up creating a particular type of space that ends up reproducing a particular type of dynamic…. We know that open spaces – open participatory spaces – are actually some of the most selective that we come across, because time and again we find those with a higher level of education and a higher level of income occupying those spaces' (A).

To prevent this, it was suggested that Community Councils could become more open to scrutiny and instead of seeing themselves as representatives, see themselves as: 'as facilitators and develop the skills of the public facilitator who has mediation skills, negotiation skills, knows how to design processes that are inclusive, knows how to use a range of platforms, is agile…' (A). If the culture of Community Councils could be changed to improve the quality of dialogue people would see them as spaces where communities can come together to make changes as: 'deliberative citizens who, you know, take the job much more seriously, engage with the evidence and the arguments….But more often than not these kind of local spaces are not designed in that way' (A).

This perception of a need for different ways of bringing people together, of engaging and facilitating a range of views and interests, provided common ground for all interviewees. 'What is needed are these hosting, convening skills. It's not the same thing as consulting people on options, it's more about an open-ended conversation where you are generating new possibilities…on equal terms… Where actually people are open to enquiring into the others' positions' (O).

It was also suggested that, in order to overcome barriers to participation, people could be compensated for their time.

> 'You know, there are plenty of roles that one can do voluntarily that I accept are better not paid; but the job of creating spaces for meaningful local deliberation, to shape decisions, to improve decisions, to reshape services, to tackle really difficult complex issues; that's not the kind of the thing that I would leave to open, voluntary spaces' (A).

Without such action to overcome barriers to participation and ensure diverse representation, this interviewee felt there is a real risk that the CEA will simply benefit those communities that are capable of harnessing it to take advantage of the new opportunities the CEA brings:

> 'If you don't have that wealth of social capital in a local area then it might mean that the Community Empowerment Act benefits those who are already mobilised.' (A).

Discussion

Access to land, workspace and an ability to provide affordable housing are all crucial to empowering communities to create local livelihoods and vibrant, resilient low-carbon economies. Too often none of these are within local community control, even those with strong 'community anchor' organizations. Legislation may improve access to land, decision-making over how it is managed and also provide new opportunities for community groups to gain control of local assets, thereby becoming more financially sustainable. However, much remains to be done to transform the current situation, particularly regarding land-use planning, high land prices and provision of housing.

However, it is one thing to provide legislation and another to change a culture and long-standing mindset that has excluded community participation in planning and local land management. The recent growth of networks such as Development Trusts Association Scotland, Community Woodlands Association and Community Land Scotland, which support communities to develop the skills and capacities needed to take on management of land and other assets, apply for public funding and develop community-focussed enterprises, is starting to address this.

Cross-community links are in many cases already strong, thanks often to the intermediary network organizations that form the Scottish Community Alliance. Links between community groups and other sectors are much more limited. Community Planning Partnerships, which should in theory link different sectors and actors, mostly have little connection with local communities. Future 'participation requests' by community groups to the public sector may open up possibilities for more engagement and mutual understanding but may be hampered by the 'cultural disconnect' highlighted by several interviewees. Also, such opportunities are more likely to be taken up by communities that already have the knowledge and motivation to do so. New democratic spaces and processes to ensure links between sectors and actors across local and regional scales will be crucial here.

Of necessity, the community sector is often highly creative and open to new ways of working and of overcoming challenges (Smith and Ely, 2015). Many CBIs are themselves actively experimenting with practicing and developing inclusive processes for governance and facilitation of their own

activities (Campos *et al.*, 2015) but they mostly lack resources or legitimacy to themselves convene the creative, deliberative, representative, political spaces that are currently so lacking at community level. By their participatory nature, they form a self-selected group, often dominated by volunteers from a particular educational or social background (Shortall, 2008) and their intention is usually to provide a way for people to come together to implement practical projects. However, by working in partnership with reimagined, facilitative Community Councils or similar new, 'real political spaces', they could become a practical delivery vehicle for achieving locally agreed aspirations.

For this to work, not only will there be a need for more people to learn and practice facilitating, hosting and convening skills but ways will need to be found to overcome the current barriers to participation so that a representative sample of views are included in these new conversations. Recent renewed interest in forms of 'mini-public' such as citizen's juries may provide one way forward (Escobar and Elstub, 2017). By ensuring diverse representation, these have been shown to produce a high quality of scrutiny, dialogue, deliberation and decision-making (Roberts and Escobar, 2015). Such new democratic spaces and inclusive processes could ensure that all voices are heard, differing perspectives are considered and conflicts used to find creative ways forward in resilient communities of the future (Stirling, 2015). The CEA does not address the current democratic void but it is encouraging that the Scottish Government is now in the very early stages of bringing forward a new 'Decentralization' bill[10] and it is to be hoped that the 'local governance review'[11] now in process will itself encourage local participation and deliberation in creating locally appropriate solutions and structures.

Calls for better structures for participation, for developing skills of facilitation, debate and deliberation to enable community empowerment are perhaps what mark out community-led transformational resilience from more top-down efforts to cope with change and crises (Cretney and Bond, 2014). Interestingly, no interviewees raised the potential contribution of Community Learning and Development (CLD) professionals in supporting the development of such skills and structures, perhaps reflecting the decimation of CLD services in recent Local Authority funding cuts. Thus, the support that CLD might offer to developing community-led action on climate change mitigation remains largely absent at a local level. This absence may constitute a crucial barrier in changing the cultural politics around

10 See Scottish Parliamentary Debate on Local Democracy, November 2016: https://www.theyworkforyou.com/sp/?id=2016-11-30.14.0 accessed on 29 August 2017.

11 https://beta.gov.scot/policies/improving-public-services/local-governance-review

community-led climate action. This more 'critical pedagogy' (McGregor and Crowther, 2016) will need to be addressed in local communities if climate change action is to engage with wider political, economic and social systemic changes.

Conclusions

Most Scottish communities of place remain disconnected from decisions that affect them and from local land and resources, limiting their ability to self-organize and develop the fully rounded resilience necessary to proactively engage with rapid decarbonization. This paper has briefly considered the extent to which recent policy developments in Scotland are likely to address these long-standing barriers to unlocking community resilience and has suggested what else may be needed to develop communities as political spaces. Whilst recent legislation should help to open up more opportunities for community participation in design and delivery of public services there is a long way to go in rethinking local democracy and a much more explicit distinction is needed between public service delivery and the democratic processes for discussion and decision about the priorities and values that shape those services.

Whilst the shortcomings of the current setup present the challenges for all sides, the very lack of a functioning system of properly local democracy also creates an opportunity to go beyond minor adjustments and to prototype truly innovative spaces for local dialogue and deliberation. Without dictating a one size fits all structure, there is a scope for the Scottish Government to play an enabling role that fits with its ambition 'to be known for a more participatory form of government', for communities to 'have a say in shaping the things that matter to them' and to ensure that a voice is given to those that 'are not often heard' (O). In line with its experiments with holding 'national conversations' to shape Scottish Government policy, there is a scope to encourage 'local conversations' through support for new and existing community-led experiments in enabling dialogue and deliberation on local issues, providing support and training in appropriate facilitation methods and skills as well as funding to remove cultural barriers to local participation. These would promote a model of 'facilitative leadership' in which 'the role of leader is to mediate and negotiate amongst competing interests and agendas in order to reach agreements and make things happen' (Bussu and Bartels, 2013). Crucially, Scottish Government can take a lead in creating a culture change in which the outcomes from these local deliberations, cascade up to shape policies and politics at regional and national level.

A new framework of democracy has not yet been established nor, above all, a new culture and mindset in which central government is empowered by active and politicized communities and not the other way around. However, the new legislation does set a clear agenda and direction of travel around community empowerment that seems likely to further enliven current active debates around democracy and role of communities and in particular, their role in Scotland's transformation to net-zero carbon.

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Liz Dinnie is a qualitative sociologist with research interests in community-based sustainability, social change and food growing. She is interested in developing collaborative approaches and participatory methods to do action-orientated research with communities and community-based initiatives.

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