

PARTICIPATION, POWER AND RURAL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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Full Report of Research Activities and Results

Background

The government of rural Britain has changed radically in recent years as a new local *governance* structure has been constructed, engaging the voluntary and private sectors and individual citizens in the governing process alongside traditional state agencies (Goodwin 1998). One of the key features of this transition has been the encouragement of rural residents to become more involved in the leadership of their own communities as numerous responsibilities for social provision and development have been effectively devolved to the community scale. This has been promoted through community development initiatives, including LEADER and Rural Challenge; through the increased emphasis placed on competitive funding programmes, such as those supported by the National Lottery; and through policy developments in fields including education and crime prevention. The trend has been reinforced by policy innovations during the period of this research, notably in the English Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000). Significantly, in contrast to earlier emphases on voluntary engagement, recent proposals have included a renewed focus on the potential role of town, parish and community councils as vehicles of community leadership (DETR/Defra 2001).

However, the analytical framework available to social scientists engaging with these developments has been limited. Prior to this research, little was known about participation in rural community leadership or about the wider implications for issues of democracy and accountability of initiatives to 'empower' rural communities. The new wave of research on rural governance since the mid 1990s tended to focus on the structures and processes of governance with little direct engagement with issues of participation (Little 2001; Marsden and Murdoch 1998). Conversely, rural development and planning literature on community participation largely adopted a normative stance that was uncritical of the *politics of participation*. At the same time, work on participation and democratic renewal in political science and social policy directed little attention towards either the community scale or the rural context. A central aim of this research project, therefore, was to address this perceived gap in analysis.

The research has been positioned against three bodies of literature. From political science and policy studies we have drawn on theories and studies of participation (Finkel et al. 1989; Milbrath 1965; Olson 1965; Parry 1972; Parry et al., 1992; Whiteley & Seyd 1998), as well as literatures on social capital (Maloney et al., 2000; Putnam 1998, 2000), local governance and democratic renewal (Pratchett 2000), and voluntary sector engagement in governance (Taylor 2000). From political geography we have incorporated the importance of place, scale and local culture in shaping political processes. From the rural social sciences we have drawn on writing describing the reconstituted nature of the British countryside and the social and political consequences (Marsden et al. 1993; Mormont 1987). This includes work that proposes that rural community leadership had become characterised by intra-class factional conflict or local/incomer competition (Cloke 1990; Cloke & Thrift 1987), and that defence of a socially-constructed rurality forms a motivation for participation in community leadership (Harper 1987; Murdoch & Marsden 1994).

The project has also drawn on earlier research by the directors. This includes work by Woods on changing rural power structures (Woods 1997), and the role of elite networks in rural governance (Woods 1998); work by Edwards on community participation initiatives (Edwards 1998); and the involvement of both Edwards and Woods in research on partnership working which identified the need to examine the means of

enrolment of community representatives and the processes of reporting and accountability (Edwards et al. 2000). Further perspectives have been contributed by each of the research assistants appointed to the project. Anderson brought a background of research into the participatory pathways and experiences of environmental activists (Anderson, forthcoming), Fahmy contributed expertise in youth participation in politics (Fahmy 1998) and Gardner had completed doctoral research on parish councils in Worcestershire, addressing issues of power and routes to participation (Gardner 2003).

These pre-existing knowledges were employed in the setting of parameters for the project. Firstly, we have positioned 'community governance' as a *context* for our research rather than as an object of inquiry. By employing the term 'governance' we seek to imply a focus on the processes of governing within rural communities, that is, activities that involve either the provision of public services within the community, or the representation of community interests to external agencies. Furthermore, in recognising that governance is a dynamic process that operates through the 'tangled hierarchies' of public, private and voluntary sectors, we have interpreted governance as the *consequence of participation in community leadership* rather than as the *context for participation*.

Secondly, *participation in community governance* is hence defined as incorporation in the *governing of a community*. This includes not only parish councillors but also – for example – members of the village hall committee, school governors, officers of residents' associations, organisers of applications for external funding to provide community facilities, trustees of community-run shops or transport schemes, leaders of anti-development protest campaigns and so on. Whilst participants in many of these roles would describe their activity as apolitical, they could all however be construed as political acts in a broad sense in that they all seek to *represent* the community to some extent, and in that they all involve mediation between the community and the state or its agencies. By this token, there are numerous forms of participation in community life which do not qualify as participation in community governing – running a scout troop, organising a babysitting circle, playing on the cricket team, contributing to the church flower rota, etc..

Consequently, we have focused on community *self-governing* - participatory activities that are performed by residents of a community within that community for the collective benefit of that community. In making this qualification we have excluded from our analysis both residents who participate in higher tier governance activities (e.g. as county councillors or magistrates), and residents involved in political and voluntary participation in organisations which are targeted at a specific sector of the population – for example, volunteers in meals-on-wheels services.

Thirdly, our interest has been not with *mass participation by community residents*, but with *elite participation in positions community leadership*. Whilst mass participation may take many forms and involve varying degrees of engagement from passive membership of a residents association to active participation in public meetings, all such actions are clearly differentiated from community leadership by the time commitment, information required for effective intervention, resources employed and dependency on the support or compliance of others. We have hence focused on community leaders as those participants with a *routine engagement* in issues of community governing.

Objectives

The objectives of the research were identified in the original application as:

1. To construct a database of parish, town and community council election statistics which will provide a national picture of participation in elective community governance across rural England and Wales.
2. To produce a descriptive representation of the nature and scale of voluntary participatory activity in rural community governance across England and Wales using ten surrogate indicators.
3. To analyse how and why participation occurs in particular geographical settings through the use of intensive case study research to construct detailed qualitative accounts of participation in selected communities.

4. To employ findings from the above research to develop an integrated theoretical framework for the analysis of the multiple nature of participation in rural communities and its implications for wider rural governance.
5. To examine the research findings in the context of policy initiatives to encourage participation in order to produce a series of 'best-practice' statements for use by public and voluntary sector agencies.

Objectives 1, 3 and 4 have all been fully achieved, as is described in the results section below. Objective 2 has been achieved in a modified form as data was not available for all the initially proposed indicators, requiring a wider range of sources to be employed. Objective 5 has been fulfilled through on-going engagement with policy makers and practitioners, including contributions to the Countryside Agency Equipping Rural Communities Learning Network and the submission of a response to the DETR/Defra consultation exercise on 'quality' town and parish council proposals.

Methods

The research has been undertaken in two phases, each of which involved a number of data-collection exercises. Phase one concerned identifying and mapping evidence of participatory activity in rural community governance across England and Wales as a whole. This concentrated not on quantifying the *volume of participants*, but on enumerating the *opportunities* that exist for participation and the extent to which these are taken up by rural residents. Data collection involved the construction of three databases recording:

1. *Elections to parish, town and community councils* in England and Wales, 1998-2000. Election results (including candidate details, turnout and uncontested seats) were obtained from electoral officers in district or unitary authorities. Town, parish and community councils exist in 284 local authority areas, of which 219 (77%) supplied usable data. Data was entered and analysed by *parish ward*. Where councils are elected as a whole, they were counted as comprising a single ward. In total, data was collected for 9,677 parish wards comprising approximately 7,000 town, parish and community councils, or 78% of all councils.
2. *The opportunities for participation available through community groups*, enumerating by local authority district the groups registered with Councils of Voluntary Service and Rural Community Councils in England, and with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, using information supplied by these organisations. Data was also collected on Neighbourhood Watch schemes by police authority region and on credit unions by local authority district.
3. *Projects in rural communities* funded by the Community Fund (National Lottery Charities Board), the Sports Councils for England and Wales, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Lottery Fund, the Millennium Fund and the Shell Better Britain Campaign, using data supplied by the funding bodies. Information on projects supported through the Lottery funds was obtained by local authority district, information on projects supported by the Shell Better Britain Campaign was obtained by county. Data on applications was also obtained for the Community Fund and the Shell Better Britain Campaign.

Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the *funding bodies and umbrella associations*, including, for example, the National Lottery Charities Board and Community Matters.

Phase two addressed the practice of participation in community leadership within place, through four case studies – Alresford (Hampshire), Beaminster (Dorset), Kington (Hereford) and Winchcombe (Gloucestershire) – each comprising a market town and five to six adjacent parishes. These study areas were selected to produce exemplars from the *marginal* to the *comfortable*, from the *remote* to the *accessible*, and from the *clientist* to the *contested* in contrasting areas of re-constituted rural Britain. Data collection in this phase involved three elements:

- Enumeration of the groups and initiatives providing opportunities for participation in community governance in each of the study areas, using information from the above databases, records and directories in local libraries, and other publicly accessible sources.
- Postal questionnaire surveys of all town and parish councillors in the case study areas exploring their background, pathway to participation and role perceptions. 140 questionnaires were returned (68% response rate).
- In-depth interviews with a selection of councillors and other community leaders. A total of 75 people were interviewed in individual or group interviews across the four case studies, of whom 24 were serving town or parish councillors.

Results

The preliminary findings and conclusions of the research are summarised below, organised in response to the research questions outlined in the original application. The numbers at the end of paragraphs indicate the output, listed in appendix A, where the point is developed in more detail.

What kinds of participation in community leadership are taking place?

- Leadership activity in rural communities is generally vibrant, diverse in format, and often successful in drawing down resources from external bodies to the community. It involves participation both through statutory arenas, such as parish councils, and non-statutory, associational forms of voluntary action. However, the level of activity is not uniform either across domains or between communities.

Participation in Local Councils

- Contested elections for town, parish and community councils are the exception and not the norm, occurring in only 28% of wards. In many areas there appears to be a significant problem with the recruitment of candidates. Over third of wards had less candidates nominated than seats vacant in the last elections, whilst no candidates at all were nominated in around 3% of wards. The proportion of wards requiring contested ballots has fallen sharply over the last decade, whilst the proportion with a shortage of candidates has doubled (table 1) (2).

	1964-1967 ¹	1987-1990 ²	1998-2000
More candidates than seats	32	44	28
Same number of candidates as seats	46	38	32
Fewer candidates than seats	22	18	36
Uncontested (n.k)*	na	na	4

* Uncontested (n.k.) = Election uncontested where number of candidates or seats not known

¹ 1964-1967 = Royal Commission, 1969; ² 1987-1990 = DoE, 1992

**Table 1: Contestation in local elections in England and Wales, 1998-2000
(% of wards; 1998-2000 data: n = 8573)**

- The sharpest decline in contested elections and the greatest increase in wards with insufficient candidates have both been for wards with less than 1,000 electors. Only 18% of wards with less than 1000 voters had contested elections in the 1998-2000 cycle (compared to 36% in 1987-90) whilst 40% had insufficient candidates nominated (compared to 18% in 1987-90) (2; 10).

- Where contested elections are held, levels of voter turnout vary substantially, from 4.1% (Trawden Forest, Lancashire) to 98.5% (Wolfhampcote, Warwickshire). Generally, turnout is highest in small rural parishes and lowest in urban wards. In over two-fifths of elections the turnout is between 30% and 45%, and the overall trend in turnout is downwards (2).

Participation in Associational Activity

- An extensive infrastructure for voluntary engagement in community governance has been generated through funding programmes and community development initiatives. Rural areas have a larger number of local voluntary groups relative to their population than urban areas, reflecting the community focus of many groups and the larger number of individual discrete communities in rural areas (8; 13).
- Notwithstanding the tradition of self-help within rural communities, initiatives in mutuality such as neighbourhood watch schemes and credit unions are less commonplace than in urban areas. The presence of such mutual groups reflects localised perceptions of need. Thus, the most extensive coverage of neighbourhood watch schemes is in rural areas close to metropolitan regions, such as Bedfordshire, Sussex and Cheshire; whilst rural districts with a significant presence of credit unions include sparsely-population areas like Hambleton and Allerdale where access to conventional banking services may be difficult (13).
- Rural areas have in general produced more applications for funding to bodies such as the National Lottery Charities Board (now the Community Fund) and Sportslot, relative to their population than urban areas. Rural areas have also received a greater share of grant funding from these sources than their population size would warrant given a geographically even distribution of funds (8; 13).

What structures the nature of this participation?

- Participation in community leadership is a spatially situated and contingent act. Discourses of place can provide motivations for participation, as well as shaping the opportunities for and modes of participation. Place, hence, can give rise to both *reactive participation*, as participants act to defend a cherished attribute of a particular place, and *proactive participation*, as participants act to develop or promote a geographic community.
- The performance of community leadership involves both horizontal networks within place, and vertical networks that can connect with exogenous authorities and resources (or 'bonding capital' and 'bridging capital' to employ Putnam's (2000) terms). The capacity to 'jump scales', to draw in exogenous resources or to engage with higher-tier actors, is an important positional authority of leadership (1; 11).
- The pattern of participation in town, parish and community councils is uneven. Contested elections are more likely for councils with larger populations and in urban and suburban districts, and least likely for councils with small populations in rural areas (map 1). Structural factors are significant here, with larger councils having a greater ratio of electors to councillors (and thus more competition for places), and greater political party involvement. However, these structural factors are not sufficient to explain the overall pattern (2; 10).
- Initiatives by local authorities to promote town, parish and community council elections have had little discernable effect in increasing participation (2; 10).
- The absence of contested elections does not necessarily indicate a low degree of community activity. One in three wards – notably in rural areas and including 41% of wards with less than 1000 electors – had exactly the right number of candidates nominated to fill all the available seats. In many cases, these 'equilibrium' councils reflect a functioning consensual community power structure in which candidates are actively recruited to the council and potential dissent and competition is identified and resolved before nominations are confirmed (2; 10).

- Patterns of participation in rural parish and community councils have been influenced by the consequences of social and economic restructuring. Traditional power structures and social structures that promoted consensual approaches to community governance and produced 'equilibrium' councils have been eroded by trends such as in- and out-migration, social recomposition, increased mobility and changing lifestyle and consumption practices, and the decline of agricultural employment. In different circumstances this has led to both contested elections and candidate shortages. Contested elections occur as newcomers challenge existing community leaders or when conflicts arise over aspects of rural development, planning or lifestyle. Shortages of candidates are produced as the community cohesion fragments and as networks of proactive candidate recruitment break down (2; 10).
- There are significant regional variations in Lottery and similar funding, with Wales, South West England and North East England generally performing more strongly than other regions. These variations in part reflect targeting by funding bodies to direct funds to disadvantaged areas, but previous experience of competitive funding programmes and community engagement initiatives is also significant. There appears to be some correlation between the best performing regions and those areas receiving EU Objective 5b and LEADER funding in the 1994-1999 round (map 2) (8; 13).
- There are also spatial inequities at a local scale with the majority of Lottery grant awards in rural areas concentrated in market towns and larger villages, even allowing for population differentials. This both reflects and enhances the role of market towns in servicing a wider rural population and has positioned market towns as sites of social investment in the countryside as well as economic investment. (3)
- Policy initiatives and funding competitions can produce new opportunities for participation that may lead to the engagement of new actors into community leadership. This may occur, for example, where the scope of collective governmental activity is extended by the availability of grants for, for instance, youth work, sports facilities or environmental projects. In communities where the opportunity for participation had been previously restricted to traditional institutions such as parish councils, such developments may lead to competition and conflict.

Who participates in community governance? Are some forms of participation more inclusive than others?

- The restructuring of rural local governance has produced a new *discourse of leadership*, in which leadership is envisaged not as a paternalistic or coercive relationship, but rather as an act of *facilitation*. Leadership is positioned as the *outcome* of processes and practices orientated towards creating a *collective capacity to act* through the engagement and enrolment of the skills and resources available within communities (1; 11).
- The nature of rural community leadership is also contingent on the changing nature of rural 'communities', in that the relations of affiliation and interaction that constitute *communities of place* are increasingly intersected by *communities of interest*. The performance of leadership within geographical communities is hence a negotiated and contested act in which the competing interests and discourses of fractions within the community must be either incorporated or neutralized (1; 4).
- Contemporary rural community leadership rests on *multiple authorities* that do not necessarily stem from class position or economic influence, but include positional authorities such as age, gender, localness as a positional good, and professional and technical skills and competences; experiential authorities; and discursive authorities (12).
- The pool of individuals that may be enrolled into leadership positions has hence been broadened, but this has not necessarily produced inclusive and representative governance structures. Significant biases remain in the characteristics of community leaders.

- Across England and Wales, only around one in three town, parish or community councillors are women – little more than the proportion a decade ago. In our four case study areas, half of councillors surveyed were aged over 60, and only one out of 140 was aged under 30. A third of councillors were retired, and the majority were middle class (12).
- Around half of the members of the four town councils in our case study areas were employed in 'service occupations', as were the largest proportion of councillors in rural parishes. One in four rural parish councillors were farmers or landowners, but the significance of the historic civic business elite has declined with local employers and business owners constituting only 15% of town council members (12).
- Over half of the councillors in our case studies have been council members for over 12 years, and nearly a fifth have served for over 20 years. Turnover of councillors is higher in the towns than the rural parishes (12).
- Leadership roles in rural and small town communities are concentrated with a comparatively small group of individuals who are active across a range of domains. The 140 town, parish and community councillors surveyed in our case studies collectively held 180 officer roles in other local organisations (12).
- There is an observable gendering to the activities and role perceptions of community leaders. Male parish councillors are more likely to describe their role as 'representing community interests', whilst female councillors are more likely to be involved in fundraising and 'directly helping others' and marginally more likely to describe their role as involving supporting events (12).
- The continuing significance of local / newcomer competition and intra-class conflict in rural communities has been over-emphasised. All the councils in our case studies included both members who had been born locally and in-migrants. Furthermore, over half of the in-migrant councillors had been council members for over 12 years – a sign of the absorption of in-migrants into community leadership. Equally, over a third of in-migrant councillors had joined the council within five years of moving to the area, although the opportunity to do this varies by locality (12).

What influences who participates and who does not?

- An individual's pathway to participation in community leadership may be shaped by a number of factors. Some are mobilised by a particular event, for others enrolment is a gradual process involving steps of intensifying participation. Many are actively recruited to leadership positions and previous involvement in certain organisations can be an important route to such activity in particular places. Opportunities to participate in community leadership may be influenced by the stability of the community power structure and the extent of elite control, the level of competition – or lack of – for positions, and the personal skills and attributes of an individual. Barriers to such participation include time, family commitments, employment situation, expense, perceptions about the nature of the leadership role, and failure to meet requirements contained within local discourses of leadership.
- Familiarity to existing leaders and demonstrations of community commitment are significant qualifications for recruitment into leadership roles. On average, the councillors surveyed in our case studies had been involved in two other forms of community activity before joining the council (12).
- Social networks are highly significant as mechanisms for identifying and recruiting new community leaders and for building coalitions of action around new initiatives and domains of activity. Only a third of councillors in our case studies had put themselves forward for election or co-option to the council; the rest had either been encouraged to stand by a serving councillor or the parish clerk (39%), approached by the council for co-option (19%), or encouraged to stand by a local group or organisation

(8%). As communities grow in size, or become more fragmented, the continuing importance of networks may reinforce the exclusiveness of leadership groups (11; 12).

What are the implications of the patterns of participation in community leadership for accountability and democracy in rural communities?

- The British countryside is a reconstituted space in a political as well as a social and an economic sense. Fragments of an historic paternalistic leadership still survive, but in most communities this has been supplanted by a facilitative mode of leadership, based upon multiple authorities and engaging a far wider range of participants – albeit frequently still through the use of elite social networks – and directed towards social provision for social consumption. Rural community governance hence combines elements of representative democracy, participative democracy and deliberative democracy.
- As policy initiatives have increased the scope for community action, and as the practice of community organizing has become more formalized, so community leaders have had to assess the personal implications of risk and responsibility. Greater capacities to act also place greater responsibilities – including legal and financial responsibilities – on the individuals concerned. In some cases this can lead not to empowerment and increased participation, but to disengagement with community leadership and a reduction in the facilities or services delivered (1).
- A significant proportion of Lottery and similar grants have been used to part- or wholly- fund the provision of services and facilities that might have previously been provided by the state, or which could be provided within the statutory powers of town, parish and community councils. As such, community and voluntary groups have assumed a quasi-governmental role in rural society.
- The involvement of town, parish and community councils in bidding for and managing external funding varies. Whilst some councils have played a lead role in constructing applications and managing projects, in other communities grants have been administered by independent organisations that have developed into alternative foci for participation, thus producing a competitive structure of rural community governance.
- There is a strong perception of the role of town, parish and community councillors as ‘non-political’, and hostility from many councillors to moves to ‘professionalise’ community governance. In some communities this was translated into opposition and resistance to the introduction to the new ‘code of conduct’ in April 2002. Conversely, some newer councillors, and several participants in non-statutory community initiatives explicitly describe their contribution as promoting a professional approach.
- We critique the normative assumptions underlying numerous policies that high levels of observable participation are inherently good and low levels inherently bad. High levels of measurable participation, for example in contested elections, may indicate a fragmented and dysfunctional community, whilst low levels may indicate stability and consensus (2).
- Many ‘community empowerment’ initiatives require only the engagement of community leaders whom are often not accountable in any formalized way to the wider community. As such, the devolution of powers and responsibilities to communities may serve to reinforce the power of community elites rather than empower citizens in communities. Community development policy needs to recognize the performance of leadership within communities and to generate approaches that can promote more inclusive participation (8).

Drawing together the above observations, the results of the research lead to the following conclusions and critiques of conventional theoretical approaches to participation and community leadership:

- Conventional models of community leadership are inadequate to explain and interpret the practice of leadership in contemporary rural society. New models are needed that acknowledge leadership as a facilitative process, recognise it as collective, situated and contingent act, and provide the means to analyse the complex practices through which leadership is performed to a community (1; 4; 11; 12).
- Similarly, the participatory pathways and experiences of community leaders cannot be adequately understood through existing theories of participation. Greater emphasis needs to be afforded to the *recruitment* of individuals into leadership roles as opposed to their decisions to participate, and to subconscious and non-linear development of participatory careers, than conventional approaches warrant (see Finkel, Muller and Opp 1989; Milbrath 1965; Olson 1965; Parry 1972; Whiteley and Seyd 1998). Furthermore, we challenge the contention of community identification and social interactionist theories (Hampton 1970; Putnam 1966), that political participation is greater in smaller communities. Participation, we argue, is shaped by many factors including opportunities for participation and motivational issues, and cannot be directly correlated with community size (7).
- We also reject the Putnam 'social capital' approach to explaining decreasing political participation as insufficiently sensitive to spatial context. We contend that evidence at the community scale shows not a uniform decrease in participation, but shifting patterns of participation that are strongly influenced by localized experiences of social and economic restructuring (2).

Additionally, the analysis points to two key conclusions with respect to current government proposals:

- The complexity of participation in rural community governance is such that proposals in the 2000 English Rural White Paper to develop indicators of 'community vibrancy' are subject to serious methodological and conceptual problems. Furthermore, whilst the government's proposals for 'Quality Parish Councils' in England are broadly to be welcomed, the proposition that an electoral mandate be a requisite for accreditation risks severely restricting the number of councils that would qualify for the scheme (8; 14).
- The compilation of the electoral and voluntary action datasets has highlighted a number of problems that will confront any effort to construct an overarching measure of community vibrancy. These include: (i) the existing data is too disparate in scalar, spatial and temporal coverage and in their units of record to be combined into any meaningful aggregate indicator; (ii) the relative size, demography and prosperity of communities, local perceptions of need, and the opportunities provided by spatially-targeted initiatives and programmes, will all shape the involvement of communities in particular domains of activity – any evaluation of observed levels of activity must accommodate adjustments for this background context; (iii) the degree of penetration of active participation into the community varies – a high level of observed activity may reflect simply the intensive involvement of a small group of people. (8)

Activities

In addition to presenting findings from the research to academic conferences (see appendix A), the project team have also participated in events organised by the Democracy and Participation Programme. Two presentations have been made to annual meetings of the programme, with a third to be given in January 2003, and members of the research team have contributed to two associated seminars, on 'Democracy, Participation and Political Involvement' (March 2001) and 'Network Analysis and Social Movements' (November 2002).

Engagement with user groups has been undertaken primarily through an Advisory Panel of representatives from interested organisations (box 2). The group has met formally to discuss the findings from phase one of the project and members have also been contacted and received documentation on an individual basis. Additionally, a workshop on the themes of the project was organised at the ACRE Rural Life conference in September 2000.

Helen Thomson	Head of Community Development, The Countryside Agency
Lorna Sambrook	Head of Policy, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
Stephen Wright	Director, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
John Findlay	Chief Executive, National Association of Local Councils
Lyn Llewellyn	Secretary, Welsh Association of Community and Town Councils
Holly Yates	Rural Policy Officer, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Linda Douglas	Chief Executive, Action for Market Towns
Gwenan Davies	Policy Officer, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

Box 2: Members of the Project Advisory Panel.

Outputs

The outputs to date from the project are detailed in appendix A and include two papers submitted to academic journals, two book chapters and eight presentations to academic conferences. Where applicable these outputs have been recorded on the Regard database. In addition to the outputs listed a schedule of further journal papers has been planned and a book proposal is in development for consideration for a Routledge series linked to the Democracy and Participation Programme.

The datasets generated by the research have been offered to the Data Archive.

Impact

The process of disseminating findings and analysis from the project is at an early stage, however, evidence of the impact of the research to date include:

- Use of findings from phase one in the submission from the Countryside Agency Equipping Rural Communities Learning Network to the DETR/Defra consultation on 'Quality Town and Parish Councils' (Cadman & Derounian 2002).
- Media coverage of phase one findings, including by the Western Mail, Liverpool Daily Post, Local Government Chronicle and BBC Radio Wales, and citation in a Daily Telegraph article on the code of conduct for parish councillors (Howard 2002).
- Employment of the definition of community governance developed by the project in a paper on rural community governance in Australia (O'Toole and Burdess 2002).

Further Research

The findings of the project indicate a number of avenues for further research. Some of these are already being followed by the project team in a subsequent research study commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government on the role, functions and future potential of town and community councils in Wales. This project is developing further a number of aspects identified in the ESRC research concerning the background of councillors, their role perceptions and their attitudes towards modernisation, for which there is also scope for research in England, especially in the context of the new code of conduct and proposed 'Quality Town and Parish Councils' initiative.

More generally, the observations on rural community leadership reported here raise a number of issues that warrant further investigation within the broader field of research on rural citizenship. In particular, the significance of market towns as sites of participation in the rural remains – as highlighted by our findings – is deserving of further research, including consideration of the importance of civic tradition and the dynamics of town-hinterland interactions.

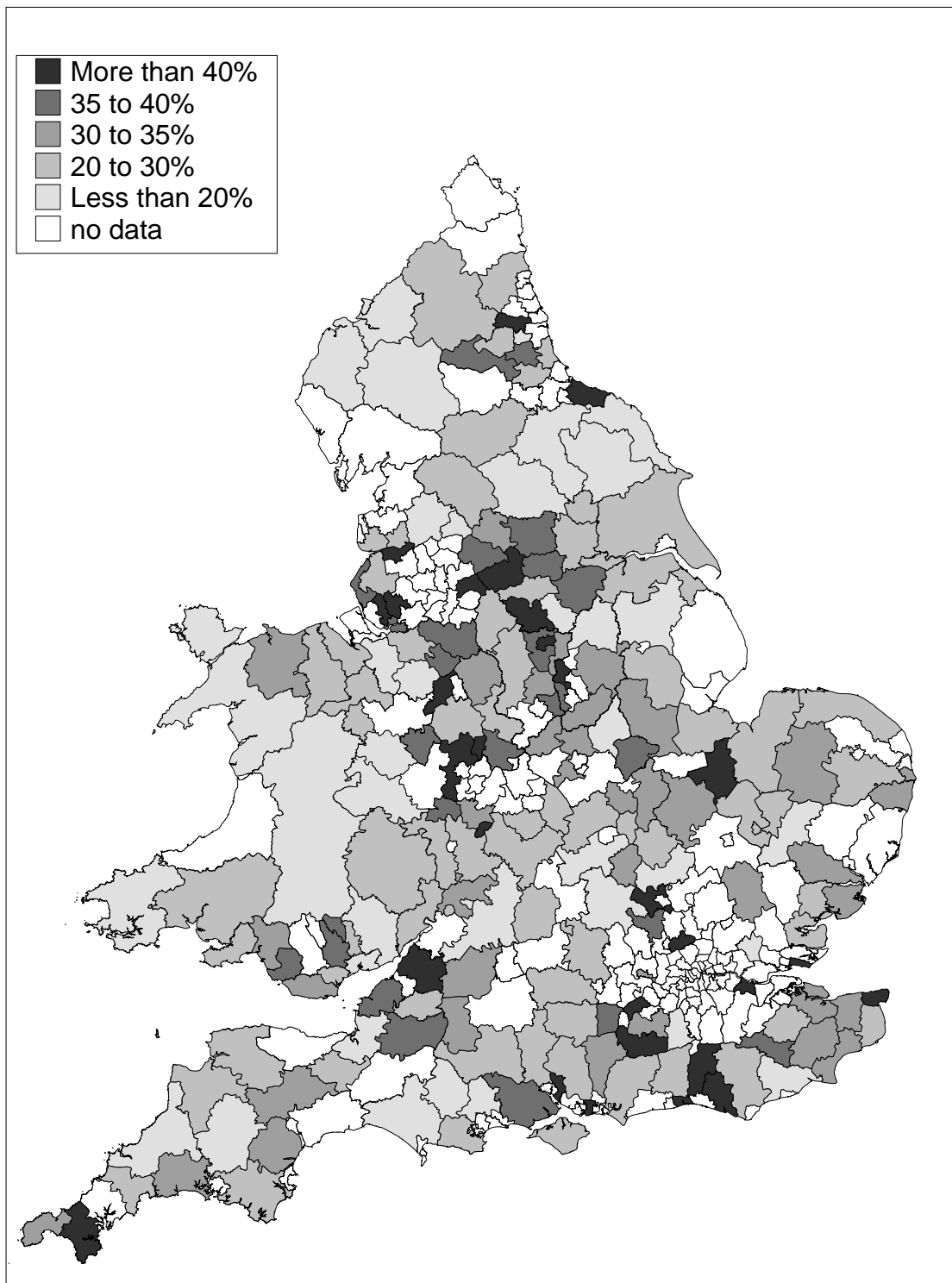
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Not including project outputs which are listed in appendix A.

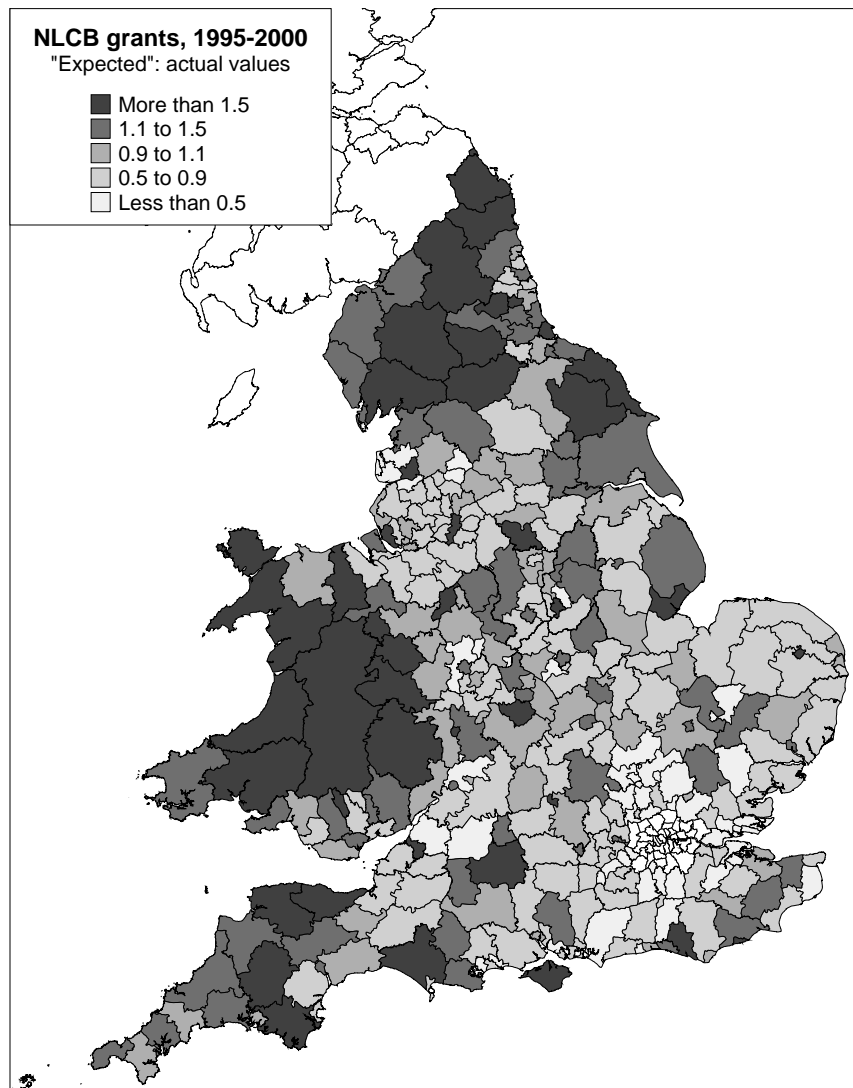
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Map 1: Percentage of town, parish and community council wards requiring a contested ballot in the 1998-2000 election cycle by local authority district.



Map 2: Actual number of NLCB grants received by local authority district compared to 'expected' allocation forecast from relative population.

APPENDIX A

Research Outputs to Date

Journal Papers

- (1) 'Endogenous leadership: process and practice in rural community governance', submitted to *Sociologia Ruralis*, November 2002.
- (2) 'Electoral participation in town, parish and community councils: a new critical analysis. To be submitted to *Local Government Studies*, December 2002.

Book Chapters

- (3) 'Citizenship, community and participation in small towns: a case study of regeneration partnerships', in R. Imrie and M. Raco (eds) *Urban Policy*. Policy Press 2003. (Authors: B. Edwards, M. Goodwin & M. Woods).
- (4) 'Mobilising the local: re-thinking community participation and endogenous engagement with local governance', in M. Kneafsey and L. Holloway (eds) *Geographies of Rural Cultures and Societies*. Ashgate, 2003 (In preparation, to be submitted Dec 2002).

Conference Papers

- (5) 'Governing through communities: emerging geographies of rural citizenship' – Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) Annual Conference, Plymouth, January 2001
- (6) 'Patterns and permutations of participation: community leadership in rural Britain' – Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, New York, February 2001.
- (7) 'Participation, power and rural community governance – project issues paper' – ESRC Democracy and Participation Programme Workshop on Democracy, Participation and Political Involvement, Manchester, March 2001
- (8) 'Vibrant communities? New geographies of participation in rural community governance' – Progress in Rural Geography Conference, Coventry, July 2001
- (9) 'Participation in town and community council elections in Wales' – University of Wales Rural Studies Network Meeting, Gregynog, November 2001
- (10) 'Participation in town, parish and community council elections: patterns and interpretations' – ESRC Democracy and Participation Programme Meeting, Essex, January 2002
- (11) 'Endogenous leadership: authority and power in rural community governance' – Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, March 2002.
- (12) 'Democracy and participation: deconstructing the multiple authorities of leadership' – Rural Economy and Society Study Group Conference, Cardiff, September 2002.

Other outputs

- (13) Electoral and voluntary sector participation in rural community governance: report on phase one of the 'Participation, power and rural community governance' project. Working Paper, August 2001.
- (14) Response to 'Quality Parish and Town Councils: a consultation paper'. Submission to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, January 2002.