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**SMALL VOLUNTARY
ORGANISATIONS
IN THE 'AGE OF
AUSTERITY'**

Funding Challenges and
Opportunities

Pauline McGovern



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in the 'Age of Austerity'

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For Mike, with love

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEVO	Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
CAF	Charities Aid Foundation
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Groups
CIC	Community Interest Company
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
HoM	Hearts of Midlancet (<i>name changed</i>)
IEA	Institute for Economic Affairs
KVV	Keep Volunteering Voluntary
MHHG	Midlancet Heart Health Group (<i>name changed</i>)
NATCAN	National Community Activists Network
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
NCIA	National Coalition for Independent Action
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SOLFED	Solidarity Federation
TSRC	Third Sector Research Centre
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

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Introduction

Abstract This chapter outlines the scope of the book. It introduces the “loose and baggy monster” of the UK voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and, using a Bourdieusian conceptual framework, introduces the links between how voluntary action has come to be defined in recent years and the neoliberal value system (orthodoxy) that underpins state policy.

Keywords State power · Orthodoxy · Social fiction

The “third” sector of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations is important in UK government policy. In recent years, the state has withdrawn from direct provision of some health and social care services, which are to an increasing extent outsourced to private and VCSE organisations. What does this mean for the VCSE sector? In this book, I explore recent changes in government definitions of the purpose and role of VCSE organisations within a Bourdieusian theoretical framework. I illustrate my argument using evidence from two recent case studies and also secondary data from large-scale national datasets.

This book focusses on grassroots organisations (Ware 2014). These are small VCSEs, established to meet a local need and set up by local people. They comprise the majority of organisations in the VCSE sector and are small-scale community groups run by volunteers with no or few paid staff.

Some may not leave an audit trail because they lack legal or charitable status. McCabe and Phillimore estimate that these small VCSEs make up three-quarters of the organisations in this sector (2009).

Grassroots organisations are important in civil society because many work with and for the vulnerable, people who may not always be well-served by statutory services. We all encounter such organisations in day-to-day life. Some common forms are mutual support groups for people with specific health conditions or disabilities; social and special interest clubs; and sports clubs or luncheon clubs for the elderly. There are also lobbying grassroots organisations that may be short-lived or with a history of protest over many years that campaign about local, national or global issues such as siting of household waste facilities, new homes on greenbelt, against fracking or against war. These give a collective voice to the man in the street that might otherwise not be heard.

Not all small local VCSEs are forces for good but the value of this group of small organisations as a whole cannot be doubted. Yet they are fragile and depend on volunteers and members who can vote with their feet if their requirements are not met. Small local VCSEs are truly an expression of the force of civil society and of particular importance in times of austerity when, as Piketty shows, the gap between “haves” and “have nots” tends to widen (2014).

VCSEs are organisations that have a social purpose but, apart from this generalisation, there is neither a statutory definition nor any agreed definition in common use. In 1996, Kendall and Knapp famously characterised the voluntary sector as “a loose and baggy monster” with a multiplicity of structures, activities and orientations (1996, p. 133). This is still true of VCSEs today. Indeed, Rochester (2013) argues that this diversity is so great that in practice there is no such thing as a voluntary or VCSE “sector” (see also Buckingham et al. 2014, p. 3; Macmillan 2015, p. 107).

Their common feature is that they are independent from government, even if they receive loans, grants or contracts, because they have a separate institutional identity. This loose and baggy monster is important to various stakeholders and interest groups because it comprises many organisations, fulfils social purposes that (in general) most people recognise as good and has vast economic value. It has become a weapon of government and lobbyists alike.

Reflecting the varied definitions of the role and purpose of VCSEs, names for organisations that have a social purpose have proliferated. Some common terms are: voluntary sector; third sector; civil society organisations; voluntary

and community organisations; and VCSEs. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) definition includes only non-profit distributing organisations. It excludes all “social impact” organisations that can raise capped shares (NCVO 2015). Using this definition, NCVO estimated that the number of VCSE organisations in the United Kingdom in 2009/10 was 163,763 (NCVO 2012). More than half (53.5 %) had a turnover of less than £10,000 with only 15.3 % designated as medium to very large organisations, with turnovers of over £100,000. On the other hand, Wikipedia, that barometer of the public mood, gives a more wide-ranging definition that includes organisations with a social mission that are non-governmental and in which the *majority* of profits are re-invested for their social purpose.

There are a range of organisational and legal forms for VCSEs. Under the *Charities Act 2006*, a VCSE has charitable *status*, not from Charity Commission registration but as a result of having “wholly and exclusively charitable” purposes that operate “for the benefit of the public”. The Act defines 13 kinds of public benefit: poverty relief; education; health; citizenship; the arts and sciences; amateur sport; civil rights; environmental protection; amelioration of inequalities; animal welfare; emergency services; and a catch-all category of any other charitable services.

Many VCSEs are unincorporated. Unincorporated associations are not registered in a legal form. They are assumed to exist as soon as two people start doing something together for a common purpose that is not primarily for business, call themselves a “group” and have membership criteria and rules. This does not include a relationship that is purely between members of a family or friends. An association does not necessarily have a constitution, bank account or money. There are also a range of possible UK legal forms for VCSEs that wish to engage in substantial income-generation activities. They include industrial and provident societies, companies limited by guarantee, community interest companies (CICs) and limited liability partnerships.

VCSEs may take the organisational *form* of a charity by registering with the charity commission. Charity registration gives financial advantages (exemption/reduction of some taxes) and also makes it easier to gain grants from public sources, grant-giving trusts and local government. Some charities are charitable trusts or foundations. These have property placed into trust for beneficiaries as a result of an endowment during the life of the donor or as a result of a will. Traditionally, the income from the property has gone wholly to the beneficiary whilst the trust or foundation retains the capital.

The role of VCSEs has changed over time. When the welfare state came into existence after World War II, the role of the VCSE sector in the United Kingdom was defined by Beveridge as a supplementary service for those whose needs were not met by statutory welfare services. As the direct state provision of welfare services began to shrink from the late 1970s, a range of health and social care services were outsourced to the private and VCSE sectors. The role of the VCSE sector came to be redefined in the 1998 and 2010 *Compacts* in terms of independent partnership and complementary provision of services. The *Compacts* focus on active partnership to provide welfare services that *replace* some state provision.

An important change in the legal definition of what VCSEs can be came into being in 2006 with the introduction of the new business form of CICs. For the first time in the UK history, VCSEs were able to make a profit that could be distributed whilst retaining tax benefits and other advantages as organisations with a social purpose. CICs can raise capped shares and distribute some profit provided that the majority of their profit is used for their social purpose.

The legal status of charities has also changed in a similar way recently. They are now allowed to raise capped shares and distribute some profit, whilst protecting their charitable status. At one stroke, these VCSEs have moved from being non-profit-making organisations with a social purpose to being businesses that have “social impact”. The intention is that CICs and charities will become self-sustaining as a result of their own income-generation activities.

The importance of the VCSE sector to state policy is shown in our modern equivalent of the draft. A majority Conservative administration was elected in May 2015. In keeping with Cameron’s aspiration to have a “nation of volunteers”, the 2015 Manifesto commitments included passing a law requiring public sector employees and companies with more than 250 staff to give staff up to three days a week to do voluntary work and provide guaranteed places for young people on the National Citizen Service, a programme to promote volunteering (House of Commons Briefing Paper 2015). Finance to enable VCSEs to become self-sustaining is also available. There are now loans for start-up and development from Big Society Capital and other sources and tax incentives for social investment in the *Finance Bill 2015*.

At the same time that VCSEs are encouraged through legislation to become “enterprising” and to have an organisational structure that is

similar to that of private companies, state discourse about their altruism and community worth has been intensified. There are a constellation of words that come to mind in relation to VCSE organisations: altruistic; trustworthy; community-focussed; and non-mercenary. These words seem to describe social reality but actually construct it.

The voluntary sector is enveloped in a warm glow, a valorised configuration of social relationships underpinned by a particular vision of that world, a world in which the ordinary laws of the economy can be suspended, a place of trust and giving, a place where “... interest, in the narrow sense of the pursuit of equivalences in exchanges, is suspended” (Bourdieu 1994, p. 65). Why should VCSEs be defined both as entrepreneurial organisations and as communitarian keepers of society’s values and stability?

For Bourdieu, the state has the capacity to define the nature of social phenomena, including what VCSEs are, through *orthodoxy*. Orthodoxy is the value system that underpins state policy. In *The State Nobility* (1989), Bourdieu argues that in differentiated societies the state unifies social domains within a single system of values. It provides a framework within which inequalities are, in general, perceived to be within acceptable limits within the different domains.

Orthodoxy is the guiding principle of practice within social life (Chopra 2003, p. 429). It structures our taken-for-granted mental classifications of the boundaries of action (Bourdieu 1994, p. 55). The values of orthodoxy are naturalised – they “demarcate[s] the limits to what is thinkable” within domains and provide a tacit law of perception and practice that, Bourdieu argues, is the basis of shared views of the world for the citizens of a society (Bourdieu 1994, p. 427). The state is the source of the national consensus on shared self-evidences – for the basis of what citizens of a society regard (in general) as common sense. This is shown most clearly in the legal system:

The state is the site par excellence of the imposition of the *nomos*, the official and effective principle of the construction of the world... The form par excellence of the socially instituted and officially recognised symbolic power of construction is the legal authority, law being the objectification of the dominant vision recognised as legitimate, or, to put it another way, of the legitimate vision of the world, the ortho-doxo, guaranteed by the state. (Bourdieu 1997, p. 186)

Bourdieu argues that contemporary Western democracies have a neoliberal orthodoxy of individualism and self-responsibility (Bourdieu 1994).

He condemns neoliberalism as the glorification of unfettered capitalism, in which financial markets have no law but that of maximum profit. For Bourdieu, neoliberal orthodoxy is not simply an economic matter but permeates all areas of social life. It contains assumptions about the goals of human action that can go unnoticed because it claims the status of objective truth beyond historical context:

... the reshaping of social relations and cultural practices after the U.S. template which has been forced upon advanced societies through the pauperization of the state, the commodification of public goods and the generalization of job insecurity, is nowadays accepted with resignation as the inevitable outcome of national evolution, when it is not celebrated with sheep-like enthusiasm. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001, p. 4)

Sandel expresses this in terms of the change from a market economy to a “market society” in which people are assumed to operate in all domains of life within a cost-benefit framework: “Social relations made over in the image of the market” (2013, p. 11). As a political programme, neoliberalism is dehistoricised, desocialised and depoliticised (Chopra 2003, p. 423).

The recent changes in government definitions of what VCSEs are and can do may go largely unnoticed but they are important because they reflect the development of neoliberal orthodoxy and mark massive changes in the UK society. This book explores how it is that voluntary action has come to be defined as it is. I want to suggest that social realities such as VCSE organisations are both “social fictions with no other basis than social construction and really exist, inasmuch as they are collectively recognised” (Bourdieu 1994, p. 66). The state has “a genuinely *creative*, quasi-divine, power” (Bourdieu 1994, p. 52) in stating with authority what a thing is, by giving it a socially legitimate definition. As Bourdieu says: “Words make things” and definitions are both descriptive and prescriptive (1994, p. 67). In defining what VCSEs are, orthodoxy defines their “space of possibles” for action and serves the interest of powerful groups (Bourdieu 2001a, p. 59). This is important in considering the challenges and opportunities for small voluntary organisations in our present ‘Age of Austerity’. In the rest of this book, I will explore this further.

Chapter 2 maps important changes in orthodoxy over time and how it links to the role of voluntary action in the amelioration of poverty. It gives

most attention to the period from the 1970s onwards when economic forces came to dominate the state and there were more changes in the VCSE sector than in the previous 500 years.

Chapter 3 looks in greater detail at the stages through which voluntary action came to be redefined from the 1970s onwards and the purpose this serves for the state. It includes the interlinking between leaders of the VCSE sector, business, intellectuals and the state.

Chapter 4 explores life in two grassroots organisations for people with heart disease in the industrial city of Midlancet (name changed). It illustrates how neoliberal orthodoxy affects the internal dynamics of grassroots organisations, both in their leadership and in their goals.

Chapter 5 investigates the cross-sector partnerships that these grassroots organisations made with powerful organisations that provided funding and other resources. It indicates the way in which such partnerships are infused with neoliberal principles.

Finally, in **Chap. 6**, I focus on the limitations of neoliberalism in defining what grassroots organisations are and can do and the countervailing influence of social capital. I argue that attention to the social mission of such organisations is the most important aspect of their sustainability and positive development. The book ends with a discussion of the scope for supportive coalitions between small VCSEs and other organisations to increase the “space of possibles” of such organisations and stresses the importance of politicising neoliberal orthodoxy as the basis for informed choice about alternative futures.

The Roots of Neoliberalism and the Neoliberalising of the VCSE Sector

Abstract This chapter discusses four historical moments that illustrate how orthodoxy changes over time as a result of changes in the social, political and economic forces that dominate the UK state. Orthodoxy determines attitudes to the poorest in society and has an effect on the role of voluntary action in ameliorating poverty. I suggest that, as a result of the emergence of neoliberal orthodoxy in the 1970s, the role of voluntary action has been redefined more radically in the last 40 years than in the previous 500 years.

Keywords Economic liberalism · Monetarism · Legislation

This chapter explores changes in orthodoxy in the United Kingdom over time and the attendant changes in the role of voluntary action to ameliorate poverty. The main focus will be on the period from the 1970s onwards. This is a period that in many ways has led to more changes in the “space of possibles” of voluntary action than the previous 500 years.

Societies seek to ameliorate poverty because the poor have always been viewed as a social, civic and moral problem. The poor may present the threat of insurrection, crime or behaviour outside that which is generally considered to be acceptable. They may be a social problem in publically expressing the lack of basic necessities, including homelessness and lack of food and warmth. Morally, there is always an element of judgement, of

whether an individual is worthy of resources that have not been earned through personal work or their own capital.

What voluntary action can do to alleviate poverty has changed over time depending on current ideas about what degree of deprivation and infirmity is acceptable in society, about the moral status of those who cannot maintain themselves and need help from others and about what behaviour is tolerated. Bourdieu calls this value system *orthodoxy*, the set of dominant assumptions about the boundaries to acceptable conduct and the limits to individual responsibility that are generally shared by citizens of a society and that may change over a longer or shorter time.

ORTHODOXY

It is worth spending time thinking about how orthodoxy works. Orthodoxy is expressed in government policy statements and in regulatory and legislative frameworks. It changes over time and context and is not entirely consistent but the mutating product of struggles between competing dominant groups to control the state and therefore, the relative value and exchange rate of different kinds of resources in society (Bourdieu calls these resources symbolic and material capitals). Orthodoxy serves the interests of the powerful, those holders of capitals who are successful in struggles to control the state. Bourdieu argues that this is expressed most clearly in a country's legal framework because laws define the nature of social phenomena and the acceptable limits of action in relation to them (2001a, p. 36).

Immediately we think of powerful individuals such as David Cameron, Richard Murdoch and Phillip Green. However, for Bourdieu, state power works to the *advantage* of dominant groups within society but it is not held in a substantive form by individuals. It is the outcome of competing *forces* and is something that circulates and functions in the form of a chain. At this point, Bourdieu's theorising is very similar to that of Foucault and well expressed in this quote:

And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power... In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault 1980, p. 98)

As the expression of state power, orthodoxy operates within public bureaucratic systems that are impersonal and have an aura of neutrality

and fairness. The way these systems are structured gives them legitimacy within society (Bourdieu 1994, p. 47).

Orthodoxy is an important factor in the actions of individuals and collectivities (a “structuring structure”) but it need not *determine* action because, for Bourdieu, society is reproduced and changed performatively and social agents can have an element of freedom. This is a fundamental point about orthodoxy and resistance which I will come back to in the later discussion of the limits to neoliberal orthodoxy.

In the rest of this chapter, I map how orthodoxy has changed in the United Kingdom since the Middle Ages in relation to voluntary action to ameliorate poverty. The chapter is divided into sections that mark important changes in orthodoxy. I give most attention to the rise of neoliberal government discourse and policy in the years since Margaret Thatcher came to power and the consequences for the VCSE sector, both in how it is defined and in the limits to what it can do. Of necessity, in such a short summary, it is inevitable that many significant details are glossed and some important historical moments are missed.

PHILANTHROPY AND THE TROUBLESOME POOR: THE LATE MIDDLE AGES TO THE REIGN OF VICTORIA

This section explores changing attitudes and policy in relation to the most disadvantaged in society and the role of philanthropy in the time period before Victoria came to the throne. It is based on Chesterman’s book (1979) and other sources. I describe the shift over time from an orthodoxy based on the perception and management of an undesirable collective problem group, the poorest in society, to an orthodoxy based on the individualisation of poverty and the emergence of the perception that they constitute a moral underclass to be hidden away.

In the Middle Ages, when many citizens lacked basic necessities and inequality was extreme, the threat of insurrection was the major reason to alleviate poverty. Society was structured so that the poor were the responsibility of specific social groups – the large feudal estates were responsible for their serfs and those outside estates were the responsibility of religious institutions. The most important law of the time, the *1349 Statute of Labourers* divided the unemployed into the “undeserving” (able-bodied) and the “deserving” (incapable of work due to youth, age or infirmity). This law punished begging by the undeserving and prohibited almsgiving to them.

By the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, the church was in decline with the dissolution of the monasteries. A new rich merchant class was emerging but with it came increasing vagrancy and begging from former feudal tenants, soldiers, and nuns and monks from the monasteries. This was a period of rapid social change with struggles over control of the state apparatus between the aristocracy and merchant class. There was still a widespread fear of insurrection and this is reflected in the way that the lives of the poorest became more circumscribed and regulated by the state. Philanthropy became institutionalised with specialised organisations as a result of the 1597 and 1601 *Statutes of Charitable Uses*. These formulated legal rules for “charitable and godlie uses” within secular courts. There were severe measures for disciplining the undeserving poor; workhouses and “houses of correction” were established; and harsh penalties were imposed for unlicensed begging and vagrancy.

By the seventeenth century, the new rich merchant class and rural gentry had become more united and in control of state apparatus (Chesterman 1979, p. 32). After the Civil War, the attitude to the poor became even more repressive and rulers felt less need to ameliorate poverty as a means to prevent organised insurrection in England. In 1662, the *Law of Settlement* punished the poor if they moved from their place of birth. Severe penalties began to be imposed for crimes on private property.

By the mid eighteenth century, with labour shortages and urbanisation, charity was largely institutionalised within existing organisations. Religion encouraged private philanthropists at this time by acting on their conscience; and charitable institutions such as charity and workhouse schools and voluntary hospitals provided a basis for “moralising” the poor. There was an increase in the number of voluntary associations for the alleviation of poverty that raised money from members or by public subscription (Chesterman 1979).

In conclusion, from the late Middle Ages to the reign of Victoria, attitudes to the poorest and most disadvantaged in society changed. In the Middle Ages, there was a clearly structured social hierarchy in which the most powerful groups in society held responsibility for those at the bottom. By the time of Victoria, poverty was an individual matter unless it became a social problem. The poor were expected to be self-responsible and severe penalties came to be imposed for unlicensed begging and vagrancy. Workhouses and “houses of correction” were established as a harsh deterrent for those who would not be self-responsible and designed to drive the poor to work. This was a dominant trend from the eighteenth century

onwards when there were labour shortages as the Industrial Revolution began to change working practices and people flooded into the towns.

Philanthropic action, at first operating within a highly structured social hierarchy, became in time a formalised and separated activity. Management of the poor was, by Victoria's reign, the responsibility of specific philanthropic organisations that were structured and controlled within state legislation and policy.

INDIVIDUALISM AND THE MORAL UNDERCLASS: VICTORIAN SELF-HELP

In the Victorian period, the entrepreneurial spirit was celebrated and economic forces controlled the state apparatus as the Industrial Revolution burgeoned. State orthodoxy extolled the personal virtues of independence, respectability, thrift and character, as exemplified in Samuel Smith's book *Self Help* (Smiles 1866). The moral dimension of poverty became most important and there was a prevalent belief that moral degeneracy was the reason why people who could work did not. By 1850, the name "pauper" carried a social stigma second only to that of the convicted criminal (Levitas 1998).

Laws were enacted to punish the most disadvantaged in society, to discourage support for the poor and to hide away those subject to public support. The major law in relation to poverty was the 1834 *Poor Law Amendment Act*. This stated that relief under the Poor Law should always be "less eligible", less desirable for the recipient than wages and living conditions as an employee (Chesterman 1979, p. 42). It prohibited outdoor relief to all poor persons who were able to work. They were confined to harsh workhouses and stigmatised – put away in conditions that reflected what was felt to be their moral degeneracy. Radical political groups, such as the Chartists and the suffragettes, compared workhouses to "bastilles" and argued that they were intended to produce a subservient workforce with low wages.

Philanthropy was largely institutionalised but dependent on private donation. Private philanthropy to the "undeserving" poor was discouraged and most gave to charitable organisations such as charity schools, voluntary hospitals, orphanages and reform schools. Even so, there was a general belief that Poor Law relief was a bad thing. It "...increased rates, reduced personal independence and thrift, and undermined the moral sanctity of the family" (Turner 1985, p. 196).

The most important voluntary institution of this period was the *Society for Organising Charity and Repressing Mendacity* [the Charity Organisation Society (COS)]. This was established in 1869 and prevented other charities from dispensing relief indiscriminately. Members of COS were middle-class professionals who made judgements about whether relief claimants were worthy of support based on their frugality, temperance, religious observance and other moral attributes. The “undeserving poor” were considered to be unworthy of help until their own behaviour improved: “The level of the lower *couches sociales* cannot rise until foresight has displaced the hand-to-mouth habit of mind which takes no account of the future” (Leppington 1897, p. 35 cited by; Turner 1985, p. 26). This moral discourse of individual responsibility defined the boundaries (acceptable levels) of inequality in Victorian society as it does in the United Kingdom today. This will be discussed in a later section.

STATE WELFARE AND THE WELFARE STATE

By 1870, Britain was the most industrialised and powerful country in the world and the most urbanised. It was a time of great political and social change. There was pressure for more democratic involvement from the Chartist movement and the suffragettes. This led to new laws on voting rights, trade unions became legal and education became compulsory for children. The railway system opened physical and social communications and the popular press burgeoned.

At this time, there were massive struggles to control the state apparatus between many competing interests in the field of power. These were divided between those groups who advocated the Victorian ethos of self-help and individual responsibility and those who advocated a structural approach to poverty and inequality. This is reflected in the mix of insurance-based and tax-based provision that characterised state welfare until the end of World War II. The policy to introduce old age pensions and unemployment relief by Booth at the end of the nineteenth century was an example of the struggle between corporatists and individualists to control the state apparatus (Booth 1892, p. 66). Although half of all persons aged 65 or above in England was a pauper or on the verge of pauperism at this time, Booth was “vigorously” opposed by the COS and others who argued that it discouraged thrift (Turner 1985, p. 200; Chesterman 1979, p. 53).

The statutory provision of welfare in housing, education and health rose from the end of the nineteenth century. The state and voluntary organisations worked closely together at this time and organisations such as friendly societies and trade unions acted as the administrators of state provision. Charities became exempt from income tax and a permanent Charity Commission was established.

After World War Two, William Beveridge and John Maynard Keynes became the liberal architects of centrist state policies and many of the major changes in law that shaped the welfare state were enacted for income maintenance, healthcare and education. With a Coalition government in power, the *Beveridge Report* proposed a financial safety net to ensure “freedom from want” for citizens. This laid the foundations for the welfare state – the “cradle to grave” system of state provision of services for citizens, especially for those in financial or social need, paid for through taxation. This marks a key turning point in orthodoxy, away from the individualism of the Victorians towards a corporatist approach to poverty (Levitas 1998).

Laws were enacted to provide a state safety net of services that protected the most disadvantaged. Voluntary and municipal hospitals were taken over by the state under the 1946 *National Health Service Act* (Chesterman 1979, p. 88) and state insurance against sickness, injury, unemployment and old age was made compulsory (following the *Beveridge Report* and established by law in 1948).

In his 1948 report, *Voluntary Action* Beveridge argued that voluntary activity was important for the healthy functioning of society and that such organisations should work in a way that was complementary and supplementary to state provision (Chesterman 1979, p. 87; Kendall and Knapp 1996; Alcock and Scott 2002). The formation of the welfare state stimulated the creation of new voluntary organisations that worked to support groups that fell through the gaps of state provision, such as older, disabled and mentally ill people. Modern voluntary self-help groups are the descendants of these early mutual benefit organisations.

The 1950s–1970s British governments shared the view that the professionally run local authority was the senior partner in service delivery and that the voluntary sector was subsidiary (Kendal and Knapp 1996, p. 135; see also; Chesterman 1979, p. 81). This is reflected in the 1978 Wolfenden Report *The Future of VCSE Organisations*. From our perspective today, this paternalistic orthodoxy seems to belong to a benign and long-distant past.

ECHOES OF ECONOMIC LIBERALISM

The 1970s was a period of inflation and economic stagnation in the USA and Europe, partly as a result of the 1973 oil crisis and the failure of the Bretton Woods system that tied national currencies to gold reserves (Hogg and Baines 2011, p. 343). It marked a period of economic, political and social change in the Europe and the United States.

By the late 1970s, inflation in the United Kingdom had soared and trade unions fought for pay settlements that reflected the cost of living. This resulted in the 1978–1979 “Winter of Discontent” when industrial action shut down essential services in parts of the country. It led in 1979 to the election of the Thatcher government and a sudden step change in policy related to the cost of welfare and the belief that the welfare state had failed to meet the needs of service users (Rochester 2013, p. 70).

In Europe and the USA, this was a time of transition in the field of power in which economic liberal forces emerged to dominate the state, expressed clearly in Adam Smith’s argument that the “self-regulating market” is the basis of a prosperous society, that the most efficient way to allocate resources is through market mechanisms and that the state should be minimal (Thorsen 2010, p. 196; Venugopal 2015). This (1970s version) is often referred to as the *new* form of economic liberalism – “neoliberalism”.

In the period since the 1970s, in relation to the most disadvantaged, state discourse has focussed on the *cultural* roots of poverty. A distinction is made between “good” citizens – those who make an effort to help themselves when enabled by the state – and “bad” citizens – those who show no personal responsibility (Levitas 1998, p. 13). It echoes the Victorian assumption of the moral degeneracy of the “undeserving” poor. During this period, voluntary organisations came to be defined as a distinct sector of society and underwent more changes in their legal status and role than in the previous 500 years. In relation to the most disadvantaged, the voluntary (or VCSE) sector became one of the providers of public welfare services outsourced by the state (Paxton et al. 2005). The main stages in the development of neoliberal policy in relation to this sector are illustrated in Table 2.1.

This did not happen overnight. What Bourdieu calls “Thatcherism” did not start with Margaret Thatcher. The seeds were sown post-World War Two by intellectuals, journalists and businessmen in the United States, United

Table 2.1 The emergence of neoliberal policy in relation to voluntary action from the 1970s onwards

<i>VCSE organisational form</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>State policy</i>
Not-for-profit organisations: external funding mainly by grants; focus on social mission of organisation	1979–1997	Privatisation, mainly ad hoc partnerships in welfare service provision with voluntary organisations
	1998–2009	Subcontracting of public services mainly to private sector; formal partnerships with VCSE subcontractors, mainly in social care; CICs established
Social impact organisations: external funding mainly by contracts; focus on state need	2010–2016	VCSE loss of service contracts after banking crisis; <i>YET</i> : VCSE subcontracting extended to other areas of public services; changes to legal status of charities; social investment



Kingdom and France (Bourdieu 1998a, p. 30; see also Jones 2014). In the 1940s and 1950s, there were lonely voices that argued against welfare statism (Jones calls these “outriders”), most famously Hayek and Popper. They were original members of the Mont Pelerin Society and subsequently the right-wing think-tank, the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA). In the 1970s and beyond, think-tanks such as the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute provided a “clear and in many ways compelling narrative” for neoliberalism and assisted its widespread dissemination (Jones 2014, p. 30). For Bourdieu, this has produced a “Washington consensus” of categories of perception and made “a transnational relation of economic power appear like a natural necessity” (2001a, p. 4).

During the Thatcher administration, the centrist liberal policies promoted by Beveridge and Maynard Keynes were gradually replaced by the monetarist, neoliberal approach advocated by Milton Friedman. With *New Public Management*, the government adopted policies and practices designed to introduce business processes and a competitive marketplace into the provision of public services.

There was privatisation, the rolling back of state welfare provision and the introduction of the internal market for welfare services, with a split between purchaser and provider. Public services including utilities, the railways and optician services were de-nationalised and a “flexible” labour market was created. Public service users became “clients” and “modernised” public services became output orientated (Weikart 2003, p. 38; Tucker 2004, p. 58). Local authorities were portrayed as “profligate overspenders” and government activities were contracted out with the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering in 1980 and the private finance initiative in 1992. This led to “quasi-markets” in health and social care with a focus on budgets, contracts, performance-related pay, competition and end-user empowerment (Kendall and Knapp 1996, p. 139).

This marks the beginning of a continuing change in UK welfare provision from the former universal “cradle to grave” welfare state towards outsourced provision of welfare services. In this change, the state is evolving into a regulator and enabler of welfare services rather than a direct provider. The role of the voluntary sector is gradually being redefined in this process. Voluntary organisations began to be encouraged and subsidised to replace the state as service provider in some areas of welfare (Rose 1999, p. 141). In England, the 1990 *National Health Service and Community Care Act* required local authorities to contract out social care services for disabled adults and older people. This led to increased VCSE

provision in social care. Hogg and Baines (2011, p. 343) note that, in 1997, 44% of home help/care contact hours were provided by non-governmental providers, compared to 2% in 1992.

The National Lottery was launched in 1995 and, from this time, has provided grants to the VCSE sector as one of the “good causes” in return for activities that enhance social welfare. Tax concessions for both individual and corporate donors were liberalised for planned (covenanted) giving and exemptions were granted for one-off giving (for example, through Gift Aid). There were also concessions on VAT and mandatory relief from business rates. There was a new focus on budgets, contracts, performance-related pay, competition and end-user empowerment in both the public and VCSE sectors, and the regulatory environment of the VCSE sector was enhanced through the 1992/1993 *Charities Acts* (Kendall and Knapp 1996, p. 10). Even with these changes, as Hogg and Baines comment, the periods of the Thatcher and Major governments were characterised by “piecemeal and *ad hoc*” attention to the VCSE sector (2011, p. 344). Their main focus was to shrink the state and strengthen the markets.

When New Labour came to power in 1997, their policies continued the neoliberal trend of the Conservatives but their rhetoric changed and developed. In the ideal type of a neoliberal society, the free market exists and functions without subsidies, monopolies or regulation. The mechanism of free choice means that markets are efficient at tailoring supply to demand. In actuality, the New Public Management strategies of the Conservative governments had resulted in a narrow focus on improving the functionality of public services. There was a tendency to micro-manage front-line services using centralised inspection regimes (Tucker 2004, p. 59).

With the new administration, the Conservative approach to public services management was redefined as *Public Value* (Giddens 2000). Public Value had a more decentralised approach with local democratic control over provision. In his defence of New Labour’s third way, Giddens argued that the state should have a facilitative role, providing resources for citizens to assume responsibility for the consequences of what they do rather than being the statutory provider of welfare for all (2000, p. 165).

For Bourdieu, New Labour was Margaret Thatcher’s greatest victory and showed how neoliberal orthodoxy became depoliticised for European socialist governments in the 1990s, as illustrated in this comment:

If the socialists had simply not been as socialist as they claimed, that would not shock anyone – times are hard and there is not much room for

manoeuvre. But what is more surprising is that they should have done so much to undermine the public interest, first by their deeds, with all kinds of measures and policies (I will only mention the media . . .) aimed at liquidating the gains of the welfare state, and above all, perhaps, in their words, with the eulogy of private enterprise (as if one could only be enterprising within an enterprise) and the encouragement of private interest. (Bourdieu¹)

Bourdieu was sharply critical of “le neo-liberal troika” of Blair, Jospin and Schroder. For Bourdieu, England showed the most perfect form of naturalised “neoliberal reason” as a cover for economic interests, led by “a bicephalous Trojan horse, with one political and one intellectual head, in the dual persona of Tony Blair and Antony Giddens” (2001a, p. 5). Giddens is, for Bourdieu, one of a dangerous breed of intellectuals who present neoliberalism as an essential truth and work insidiously, in the guise of disinterested intellectual endeavour to promote neoliberalism: “lackey intellectuals who’ve been active from day-to-day imperceptibly and therefore invisibly, for years”.

For Bourdieu, “new intellectuals” such as Giddens create a climate favourable to the withdrawal of the state and a focus on solutions to social problems within civil society:

I’m thinking of what has been called the “return of individualism”, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy which tends to destroy the philosophical foundations of the welfare state and in particular the notion of collective responsibility (towards industrial accidents, sickness or poverty) which has been a fundamental achievement of social (or sociological) thought. The return to the individual is also what makes it possible to “blame the victim” who is entirely responsible for his or her own misfortune, and to preach the gospel of self-help, all of this being justified by the endlessly repeated need to reduce costs for companies. (Bourdieu²)

With New Labour, the rhetoric of market prosperity and enterprise was enhanced by rhetoric about the importance of civil society as the foundation for social life (Levitas 1998; Rose 1999, p. 167). Local communities were framed as the building blocks of civil society with responsibility for the alleviation of poverty, crime and other social ills (Franklin 2007). Levitas commented critically that:

There is a disturbing tendency for civil society and the community to be reduced to an arena of unpaid work, a means of mopping up problems created by the market or a mediator of social discipline. (Levitas 1998, p. 168)

For Franklin there is an inherent contradiction in this Third Way discourse of the individualised consumer and the communitarian conceptualisation of the social group as a mutually supportive community (2007, p. 9). The irony of this communitarian rhetoric for Franklin is that, within it, people are individualised and separate agents that must be managed. In consequence, the New Labour state did not wither in its management of civil society but instead had a substantial regulative role.

During the time of New Labour, an important weapon in the state withdrawal from direct provision of welfare services was the increasing emphasis on the provision of welfare services through partnerships with the VCSE sector (Bode and Brandsen 2014). VCSE organisations came to be conceptualised in state discourse both as a cohesive moral force in civil society and also as entrepreneurial, competitive providers of services previously within the remit of the state (Giddens 2000, p. 81).

The *Deakin Report* in 1996 set the scene for an explicit statement of the relationship between government and the VCSE sector. This became the 1998 *Compact*, a statement of the broad principles of government and VCSE sector partnerships (Deakin 2001, p. 42). It asserted that there should be an independent voluntary sector; there should be complementary roles for the voluntary sector and government in welfare provision; and that partnership working between the public, private and voluntary sectors with common goals and objectives would be a public good. The *Compact* set the scene for increasing formal partnerships between the state and the VCSE sector in the provision of welfare services. It was comprehensive and applied to all the statutory agencies, national, regional and local and to all VCSEs from the largest to the smallest (Rochester 2013, p. 48).

In the period since the 1998 *Compact*, public funding regimes have been instrumental in facilitating the role of the VCSE sector in welfare services provision. Public grant funding and loans became increasingly available to VCSE organisations, both to directly facilitate welfare service provision and also to restructure organisations to the social enterprise form so as to enable them to subcontract to provide welfare services.

In seeking to outsource welfare provision to the VCSE sector as well as to the private sector, the balance of public finance shifted, during New Labour's administration, from grant funding to subcontracting. The amount of public grant funding available to the sector fell during the period of this government: from £5.2 billion in 2003/04 to £4.2 billion in 2006/07. In the same time period, public sector funding to this sector through contracts grew from £4.5 billion to £7.8 billion (NCVO Almanac 2009).

VCSE organisations have become increasingly involved in the provision of health and social care services since the 1990s. The trend of greater sector involvement is indicated in a range of White Papers. The 1999 *Modernising Government* White Paper gave the general principles of New Labour policy. This was first signalled for health policy in the 1999 *Saving Lives* White Paper and opened the discussion on National Health Service (NHS) partnerships with other organisations.

The 2000 *NHS Plan* went a step further to promote partnerships in health between the NHS and other agencies. This became the 2001 *Health and Social Care Act*. The Treasury Report (2002) *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Service Delivery: A Cross-Cutting Review* led to widespread interest in capacity building in the sector and gave rise to the creation of the *Futurebuilders* and *Communitybuilders* programmes to financially support VCSE development. The *ChangeUp* programme, introduced in 2004, was targeted at infrastructure agencies such as local branches of the Council for Voluntary Services (Alcock et al. 2013, p. 9).

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) were launched in April 2000 and the original 303 PCTs were fully established across England in April 2002. The aim was to localise health decision-making by transferring responsibility for service provision in primary care from health authorities to the smaller PCTs (Department of Health 2001). They became responsible for 80% of the NHS's annual budget which was used to commission health services for their local populations through general practice (GP) referral (£76 billion in 2005, House of Commons Health Committee Report). They also had responsibility for public health, including community-based health services such as district nursing and community hospitals. PCTs were required to work in partnership with other organisations, and this included the subcontracting of service provision to VCSE organisations where it would improve the quality of service (Department of Health 1999).

The seeds of the 2012 abolition of the PCTs and rise of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) were sown in the 2004 *NHS Improvement Plan*. This outlined how GP practices wishing to do so would be given indicative commissioning budgets. This was part of the government's plans to devolve responsibility for commissioning services further, from PCTs to local GP practices.

Three Key White Papers followed, during the New Labour administration. The 2004 *Choosing Health* White Paper set the frame for community health services as partnerships between the NHS and the VCSE sector. It

aimed to promote individual responsibility for health by focussing on smoking, obesity, diet and nutrition, exercise and sexual health and supported personalised services and coordinated working between the public and private sectors.

After 2004, there was a growth in commissioning and procurement models designed to bring VCSEs into service delivery. The 2005 *Commissioning a Patient-Led NHS* contained the key proposal that some VCSE organisations could become subcontractors for PCTs. It suggested that PCT commissioning should be restructured and that a proportion of services should be outsourced to other agencies, including VCSEs, to “bring a degree of contestability to community-based services” (DoH 2005).

By 2006, the number of PCTs was reduced to 152. The last significant national document, during the period of this Labour government, is the 2006 *Our Health* White Paper. This put VCSE organisations at the heart of community health services. The detail of commissioning services and their regulation was largely devolved to the level of the PCT. The Public Accounts Committee Report *Working with the Voluntary Sector* (House of Commons 2006) criticised the slow take up of public commissions by VCSEs. The government put a number of measures in place in order to improve this situation, including creating the Office of the Third Sector, which was tasked with bringing a “step change” in the relationship between the government and VCSEs.

Before 2010, most subcontracting of public services was in the area of social care commissioned by local authorities (Alcock et al. 2013), p. 14). In 2007, PCTs were orientated towards increasing the role of VCSE organisations in healthcare although their actual involvement was minimal. For example, Midlancet (name changed) PCT *Primary Care Commissioning Strategy 2007/08–2017/18* expresses the intention that VCSEs should have a future role in “increased service provision in the community”. In its 2009 *Strategic Plan 2009–2014*, VCSE are still only potential providers “who make valuable contributions to the health and wellbeing of the community” and whose capacity must be developed “in social marketing to underpin health promotion and commissioning activity” (2009, p. 61). Even in 2009, this PCT had got no further than planning to involve VCSEs in subcontracting.

State encouragement of the role of VCSEs in the provision of public services continued after the change of government to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010. In the *Revised Compact*, launched in

December 2010, the objectives of the 1998 *Compact* were refined and strengthened to include: more independence for VCSE organisations; more collaborative working between government and the VCSE sector (as the “voice” of the local community); greater resources to enable the VCSE sector to deliver welfare services; and increased accountability for VCSE organisations (www.ncvo-vol.org.uk).

The Coalition Strategy Document *Building the Big Society* (2010) declared the government intention to “support the creation and expansion of mutuals, cooperatives, charities and social enterprises and support these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services”. After 2010, subcontracting of public services was extended to other significant public programmes, including the *Work Programme*, which provides employment advice and placements to the unemployed (Alcock et al. 2013, p. 14). As the recession caused by the banking crisis of 2007–08 bit, the growth of the VCSE sector was reversed, with the loss of grants and service contracts. More VCSEs became corporate subcontractors and Milbourne and Cushman argue that this led to more inflexible and harsh terms of service subcontracting and the standardisation of provision (2015, p. 471).

The *Localism Act 2011* signalled the state’s intention to shift service provision from central government to local control. It encouraged local community action to provide solutions to local needs including giving a formal right to VCSEs to express an interest in subcontracting local authority services. Alcock et al. suggest that this has not been successful in encouraging service provision by VCSEs because of cuts in local authority budgets to support local action (2013, p. 15).

The range of NHS services that are now open to tender has increased. The *Health and Social Care Act 2012* prospectively abolished the hundred or so NHS trusts, to create 145 foundation trusts. The foundation trusts had their private patient income cap abolished and are now permitted to receive 49 % of their income from non-NHS sources. To date, 113 private providers have been licensed and tendering for services has been made “virtually compulsory” (Peter Roderick QC, drafter of the *NHS reinstatement Bill*, December 2015). The *Centre for Health and the Public Interest* estimated in 2015 that there were 53,000 contracts between the NHS in England and the private/VCSE sectors, of which the CCGs held 15,000 with an annual value of about £9.3 billion (2013–14).

VCSE involvement in subcontracting is potentially strengthened by the *Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012*. The Act encourages commissioners of public services to get maximum value from their procurements by

considering how they can also provide wider social, economic and environmental benefits. It makes public contracts more accessible to charities, social enterprises and small businesses by making local authority commissioners consider the potential social value offered by bidders in addition to cost, as the Minister for Civil Society commented in January 2013: “[This Act] supports our commitment to make it easier for charities and social enterprises to help deliver better public services”. The *Lord Young Review* of the Act, published February 2015, found that where the Act is being implemented, it has had a positive impact but that its overall effect has been minimal so far.

In addition to strengthening VCSE involvement in the provision of public services, there is now a new commissioner of services. PCTs were abolished in April 2013. CCGs were set up under the *Health and Social Care Act 2012* to organise the delivery of NHS services in England. CCGs include all of the GP groups in their geographical area and are led by clinicians. They commission healthcare services including most community health services. At the end of March, 2013, there were 211 CCGs.

With the election of the majority Conservative government in May 2015, they have pledged to further implement NHS England’s *Five Year Forward View* (published October 2014) to close the NHS’s 2020/21 forecast £30 billion gap between health spending and health needs “by one-third, one-half or all the way” (Roberts et al. 2012). This makes further contraction in public health and social care services probable.

There may also be increased austerity, as a result of our referendum vote to leave the European Union in June 2016. This will affect our trading links globally and may cause a recession. It is likely to affect the free movement of labour as immigration was an important issue in the referendum. This may affect staffing in public health and social care services, many of whom come from other European countries. The probable consequence is greater utilisation of grassroots services to fill widening gaps in our public welfare provision.

What we do know is that there is a shift in investment from acute to primary and community services – which make it likely that more VCSE organisations will become subcontractors of community health services. The key strategy is to facilitate more efficient ways of organising and delivering patient care by integrating out-of-hospital care within local “health communities” (including VCSE organisations) and engaging in “hard-hitting national action on obesity, smoking, alcohol and other major health risks” (NHS 2014). Hogg and Baines argue that the proposed

plan to roll out personalised social care in the NHS, in which individuals will hold their own budgets for care, will result in further diversification of the supply side of public, private and VCSE provision (2011).

In terms of the spread of service provision, the National Audit Office (2014) reports that the budget for social services has declined far more than the budget for health services since the 2007–08 banking crisis and subsequent recession (361 % compared to 15 %) and this is likely to affect the kinds of subcontracting that VCSEs undertake. NAO estimates that half of the £187 billion spent by the public sector was for subcontracted services. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills used an estimate in 2008 to calculate that £1 in every £3 spent on public services goes to independent suppliers.

Government policy encourages VCSE organisations to become subcontracted providers of health and social care services by the provision of start-up loans through such schemes as the Social Capital fund and the Local Sustainability Fund. Community Interest Companies (CICs) are a new legal form for VCSEs in England, Scotland and Wales, introduced under the *Companies Act 2006*. Assets owned by the company are held in an asset lock which secures them for applications for the good use of the community. CICs can distribute shares but have an aggregate dividend cap that must not exceed 35 % of the distributable profits. The primary focus remains on achieving benefit for the community. CICs must be registered at Companies House.³

Data from Companies House shows that, in 2013, there were 3,719 registered CICs, a very small fraction of the VCSE sector – and that they are very diverse (FAME 2013). Nearly three-quarters (2,604, 70.02 %) have no income which may indicate that they plan to engage in substantial trading in the future but are still in the set-up phase. Most CICs that do trade have a turnover of less than £50,000 p.a. (692), which shows very modest trading activities. Only 77 CICs have a turnover of more than £1,500,000 and, of these, only 17 CICs have a turnover of more than £16 million.⁴ Ten of these take half the market share of the CIC turnover (54.82 %, £616,777,000).⁵ The Gini coefficient for the distribution of turnover between CICs reflects the enormous diversity between organisations (Gini = 0.95). Not surprisingly, using 2012 data from FAME there is an almost perfect correlation ($B = 0.977$) between turnover and number of employees in CICs.

The transformation of the VCSE organisations into businesses continues apace. The legal status of charities has recently changed as a result of the *Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016*. Charities are

now allowed to raise shares with a dividend cap and to distribute some profit. This marks an important neoliberal change in the legal definitions of charities in the United Kingdom, from non-profit-distributing organisations to social impact businesses.

With the advent of CICs and the legal changes to charities, social enterprises have more commercial freedom to attract capital investment and to make decisions based on a business strategy. They are encouraged by these business forms to compete to attract social investors who will weigh up their potential gains – symbolic, practical and economic. This makes social enterprises closer in legal form to private companies and also potentially places the individual investor in the neoliberal role of a consumer with a set of potential profits and risks. Iain Duncan Smith commented in neoliberal terms on the development of social impact bonds for investors in a recent speech at the Cabinet⁶:

... But perhaps the one area where the UK has made most progress of all is in the government's development of social impact bonds. This works on the basis of government monetising the value of a given positive outcome, and underwriting the return – creating a bond into which others invest. If the programme delivers the outcomes, investors see a return, whilst government pays not for the process of tackling the problem, but for success at the other end. (Iain Duncan Smith, 19 March 2015)

There are also new preferential tax advantages to investors who invest in VCSEs, through Social Investment Tax Relief. It is not yet clear whether SITR will be successful. At present, the limits of investment are low and the investment often high risk. VCSEs can only raise £250,000 through SITR and many fund managers see this as too small to spark their interest when there are other tax-efficient investment vehicles. This kind of investment may prove to be appealing only to the niche market of well-off socially-minded investors. Recognising this, the UK government applied in 2015 to the EU to raise SITR investment limits to £5 million a year. If this happens, it is likely that the larger, corporate social enterprises that already engage in substantial trading will benefit from SITR at the expense of the large number of smaller VCSEs with modest trading activities and tailored services that target local need. Investors can also invest indirectly in VCSEs through the Social Venture Capital Trust and gain tax relief on their investments.⁷

To conclude, the recession of the 1970s combined with the increasing costs of our welfare state led to the need for massive retrenchment in the

United Kingdom and economic forces with a focus on profit maximisation “naturally” came to dominate the state, buoyed up by powerful intellectual justifications for policy choices. The result was privatisation, the shrinking of direct state provision of welfare and a market in health and social care.

Since the 1970s, the neoliberal value system that underpins state policy and sanctions great inequality whilst limiting the safety net that protects the most disadvantaged to those who show “self-responsibility”, has spread through our society and become orthodoxy. In this process, voluntary action has been instrumentalised to serve the interests of those who dominate the state by dominating economically. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Bourdieu (1992) *La main gauche et la main droite de l'état*, interview by R. P. Droit & T. Ferenczi for *Le Monde* 14th January – applied to Alain Juppe’s French government of 1992 but as applicable to New Labour.
2. Ibid.
3. <http://www.cicassociation.org.uk/about/what-is-a-cic>
4. The median and mean indicate this in different ways. The median turnover at 2014 is £28,000 but the average is £1,009,000 indicating a positive skew with more CICs on the lower end of turnover but a few very large ones. The highest performing CIC is Plymouth Community Healthcare CIC at £92,853,000 in 2013. Fifty per cent of companies show a value between £7,000 and £107,000 so have quite low turnover.
5. In 2014, the four largest were Plymouth Community Healthcare, Peninsula Community Health, City Health Care Partnership and Sirona Care & Health. These account for 27.17% of turnover. When inner and outer London are separated, the largest number of CICs were in the North West (580). The smallest number were in Scotland (91). Of the CICs with turnover of more than £16,000,000, six were in the South Western Region, three in Eastern, three in Yorks and Humberside, two in outer London and in South Eastern and one in East Midlands. The highest concentration of the smallest CICs (less than £50,000) was in the North West. All regions had more of the smallest CICs than any other form as would be expected.
6. <http://www.ukpol.co.uk/2015/03/19/iain-duncan-smith-2015-speech-on-social-investment/>
7. <http://www.gov.uk/publications/social-investment-tax-relief-factsheet>, accessed 6 June 2016.

Re-defining Voluntary Action

Abstract In this chapter, I explore the social processes through which voluntary action came to be redefined in neoliberal terms from the 1970s onwards. This includes the creation of the VCSE sector as a unified entity separate from the public and private sectors. I discuss the creation of Local Strategic Partnerships to provide public services; the emergence of strategic lead organisations for the sector; and the growing linkages between academics, business and the state to frame a neoliberal evidence base. In the final sections, the connections between state policy and discourse and the organisational form of different kinds of VCSEs are examined.

Keywords Sector · Partnerships · Bureaucracy

In the last chapter I argued that, since the 1970s, neoliberal orthodoxy has emerged in the UK, containing the fundamental assumption that social agents are “naturally” in competition personally and professionally and that there must always be a “winner” (Bourdieu 1997, p. 98; see also Foucault 2008). This chapter discusses the institutional processes through which voluntary action has come to be redefined in this time period.

ORTHODOXY AND INEQUALITY

Let us start with changes to definitions of the tolerable limits to inequality, because this underpins the role of voluntary action in the amelioration of poverty. Piketty traces the trend of increasing inequality in Western developed countries since the 1970s (2014).

He explores the way in which the growth of neoliberal values and economic development go hand in hand. The period from 1910 to 1970 was, he argues, a period of declining inequality because of government policy in relation to the two world wars and their aftermath. It is from this period that we have the UK welfare state, a national guarantee that no one slips below an accepted level in terms of basic life conditions.

Using tax returns, Piketty argues that there has been increasing inequality since the 1970s based on two factors. One is the increasing disparity in the top decile of income, mainly because executives set their own pay. The other more important factor is that, in periods of slow economic growth, the rate of growth in capital is faster than the growth in income or economic output. This means that the more wealthy individuals get, the faster their wealth will grow in relation to incomes and inequality increases.

He concludes that a market economy, if left to itself, contains powerful forces of divergence that are potentially threatening to democratic societies and social justice: "The ideal policy for avoiding an endless inegalitarian spiral and regaining control over the dynamics of accumulation would be a progressive global tax on capital" (Piketty 2014, p. 471). A less utopian alternative might be a regional or continental tax. It does however depend on automatic sharing of bank data and such financial transparency and information-sharing does not exist at the moment.

This matters because neoliberal orthodoxy works on the premise that people act as the result of rationally assessing the costs and benefits of their choices (Bourdieu 1997; see also Rose's "enterprise form", 1999, p. 141). As the orthodoxy of our time, neoliberalism says that success is the reward of the talented who are able to make the most of their opportunities, that we live in a meritocracy: "In fact the strength of the neo-liberal ideology is that it is based on a kind of social neo-Darwinism: it is 'the brightest and the best', as they say at Harvard, who come out on top" (Bourdieu 1998a, p. 42). In a neoliberal society where inequality is increasing, this leads to an overtly moralistic assessment of success and failure.

Jones develops this argument (2014). He suggests that "the establishment" – the powerful groups that dominate British society – are unified by

a common mentality that those at the top deserve their power and fortunes because they are the most talented and worthy. This shared belief in their own worth and in the lack of talent of the majority who do not make it to the top of the pecking order encourages them to seek to increase what they have, guarantees their growing riches and power and exacerbates social inequality.

Levitas (2012) goes further. She argues that our current political leaders are part of this establishment and use the language of “austerity” as a justifying mantra for Coalition and Conservative neoliberal economic and social policy, an excuse to further concentrate wealth and power in a few private hands and to make cuts to welfare services. The agenda of “localism” deflects state responsibility for these cuts by devolving responsibility to seemingly “independent” organisations such as hospital trusts, schools and local authorities that actually take a strategic lead and are funded (ultimately) through government departments (Levitas 2012, p. 33).

What about the “failures” in our neoliberal society? In Victorian times, the “undeserving” poor were considered to be immoral and degenerate. Bourdieu suggests that now the most disadvantaged such as single mothers or people with large families who live on benefits are often labelled as scroungers – as “stupid” and undeserving. As Wacquant points out, a paradox of neoliberalism is that the “free market” is anything but free for the most disadvantaged who have experienced greater state interference over time through benefit constraints and an increasingly repressive penal system (2010; see also Bourdieu 1998a, p. 32; Jones 2014, p. 125). This has implications for voluntary action. VCSE organisations are struggling to cope with the increased demands on their services due to the massive cuts in living standards of the poorest and most vulnerable especially since the banking crisis in 2007–08 and subsequent recession (Benson 2015).

ORTHODOXY AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

How voluntary action is defined in the UK and the scope of its remit has changed since the 1970s, as a result of the emergence of neoliberal orthodoxy. The state defines the nature of social phenomena in orthodoxy and sets the boundaries to what is thinkable (discuss-able) within it. As a “social fiction”, the VCSE sector exists in its present form

because of the state's capacity to "institute socially guaranteed identities" that serve its interests:

By stating with authority what a being (thing or person) is in truth (verdict) according to its socially legitimate definition, that is, what he or she is authorized to be, what they have a right (and duty) to be, the social being that they may claim, the state yields a genuinely *creative*, quasi-divine power. (Bourdieu 1998b, p. 52)

There are various stages in the process by which voluntary action came to be defined as a sector and institutionalised to serve state interests in the period from the 1970s to the present day. In the 1970s, voluntary action comprised a diverse and diffuse range of activities undertaken without payment, legitimated as a result of the collective recognition of its social value. Since that time, it has become a formalised, standardised entity based on "objectified symbolic capital, delegated and guaranteed by the state" (Bourdieu 1994, p. 51). This has enabled the state to define and encourage the "good" VCSE organisation in the interest of state policy. This is illustrated in Fig. 3.1.

The first stage in this process was the definition of voluntary action in terms of a distinct sector of activity. In the 20 years from the late 1970s–90s (between the *Wolfenden Report* and election of Thatcher's government; and the *Compact* and election of New Labour) voluntary action was redefined as a sector that had specific characteristics and was different from the public or private sectors (Rochester 2013).

For Rochester, this redefinition enabled the state to manage voluntary organisations and actions so that they could be instrumentalised as a tool of government. It led to the wholesale application of policy to the sector horizontally, rather than within specific policy areas by government department (Rochester 2013, p. 46; see also Buckingham et al. 2014, p. 8 for full discussion).

This process was enhanced by the 2001 establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships. Local authorities were required to partner with public, private and VCSE sector organisations to tackle key social needs, with VCSE participation facilitated by the network of local CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) branches. In 2008, a local authority performance indicator was created on "having an environment for a thriving third sector" (Rochester 2013, p. 49). This allowed the government to "deliver on the partnership commitments which framed their policy mainstreaming" and led

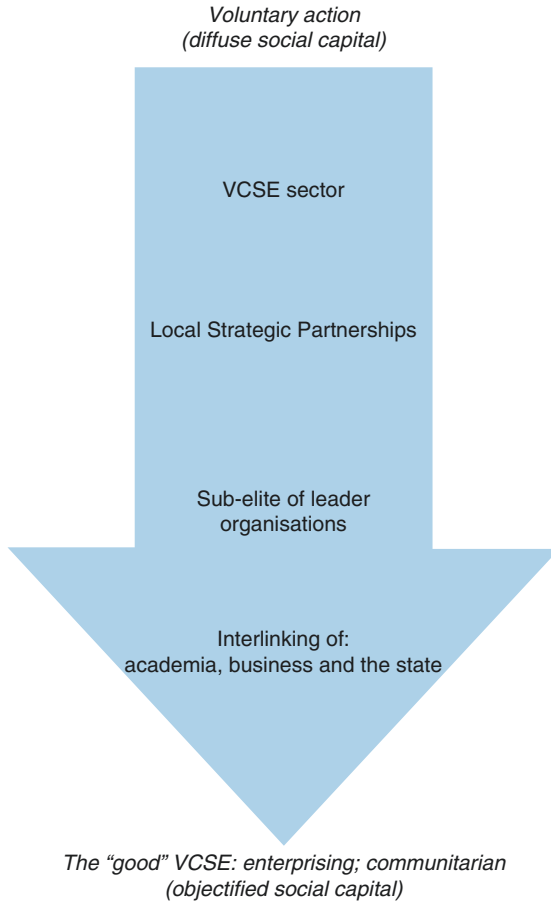


Fig. 3.1 Stages in the redefinition of voluntary action

to new streams of investment to support VCSE development as subcontractors (Alcock et al. 2013, p. 8; see also Buckingham et al. 2014, p. 5 on “hyperactive mainstreaming”).

In order to manage relationships with the sector, a “sub-elite” of VCSE leader organisations, including the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the Association of Chief Executive of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), the National Association for Voluntary and

Community Action (NAVCA) and the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), emerged to become strategic partners to the state (Rochester 2013, p. 38). Rochester suggests that these leader organisations work to achieve government goals rather than maintaining independence – that they show, in Bourdieu's term, *doxic* submission to neoliberalism. He goes on to argue that they are compliant with government policy and facilitate “welfare pluralism”, with VCSEs taking a central role in the delivery of statutory welfare services rather than being supplementary (Rochester 2013, p. 37).

Buckingham et al. make the point that these leader organisations may not have legitimacy for the sector because of their “lack of ability to move beyond the vested interests of the well-established in order to truly represent the sector as a whole” (2014, p. 16). The interlinking between government and these strategic partners *is* interesting. When New Labour set up the Office for the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office the new director, Campbell Robb, had previously been the policy lead in NCVO (Alcock et al. 2013, p. 8).

These leader organisations have encouraged VCSEs to become more business-like in organisational structure in recent years. For example, in 1983, NCVO set up the Management Development Unit to provide support for VCSE organisational development. This has been refined and developed in the 2004 *Change Up Programme* and the 2008 *Capacity Builders* organisation to provide business development support and training.

The orientation to VCSEs as underdeveloped businesses is also reflected in the trend to appoint leaders of national infrastructure VCSE organisations from the private sector, for example, in the recent appointment of Cliff Prior as Chief Executive of *Big Society Capital*. Big Society Capital was set up to provide loans to VCSEs via intermediaries such as the *Charity Bank* to pump-prime social enterprise. It is telling that the new Chief Executive is a former investment banker, the founding partner of the private equity group Apax Partners and part of the UK task force that called on governments to view “impact investment” as a “vital stream of financing for domestic social programmes”.¹ The Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC), among other organisations, has questioned whether “new” VCSE leaders such as Prior have enough experience of the sector and understand it sufficiently to represent it (Buckingham et al. 2014, p. 9).

This is important because infrastructure organisations are crucial in protecting the independence of VCSEs. Many researchers argue that VCSEs have become less independent in recent years as a result of public policy. Benson suggests that open dissent by VCSEs is seen as unacceptable to local and national state agencies, that there is a conformist atmosphere

reinforced by dependency on funding (2015; see also Milbourne and Cushman 2015, p. 478; Rochester 2013, p. 235).

Buckingham et al. also discuss the fears of VCSE organisations that are in receipt of statutory funding over being “frozen out” if they criticise state policies (2014, p. 15; see also the work of: the National Coalition for Independent Action, Aiken 2014; the Baring Foundation Independence Panel, Singleton et al. 2015; and Milbourne and Cushman 2015). There is also a threat to the independence of VCSE governance in the whole catalogue of public functions, including museums and galleries that are nominally charities but actually tightly controlled by government (Singleton et al. 2015, p. 7). Singleton et al. argue that some local authorities also seek to exercise control over local VCSEs that receive a small amount of funding or in-kind support, such as use of premises.

In recent years, the interlinking between academia, business and state agents has been intensified and this has resulted in a plethora of research that seeks to maximise the positive effects of government policy towards the VCSE sector. The *Third Sector Research Centre*, for example, is co-founded by the government and the ESRC and based within the Universities of Birmingham and Southampton. Rochester argues that it has developed no critical theory about the wider socio-political environment of the VCSE sector or formulated any alternatives to neoliberal goals (2013, p. 50). As a result of its political location, it serves the state by providing an evidence base of VCSE sector characteristics that unreflectively naturalises neoliberalism.

An example is the TSRC Working Paper by Walton and Macmillan (2014). This outlines a pilot project with a new model, in which infrastructure organisations can support VCSEs, by providing “demand-led” capacity building. In this new model, VCSEs choose the support they require from a range of suppliers. It is a “managed market for capacity building support”. Walton and Macmillan suggest support mechanisms for VCSEs based on a cost-benefit analysis of their support needs and assume that a business model is appropriate for such organisations. In their model, there are “customers” and suppliers of services.

Walton and Macmillan concluded that frontline VCSEs needed more support to engage in this process than anticipated. They found that VCSE capacity to engage was highly variable and limited: “The language of markets, and choice and control, appears to have moved further ahead than the practice of the sector. For the large part the sector seems to remain not quite yet marketised, although efforts to make markets involving the third sector continue apace” (Walton and Macmillan 2014, p. 4).

Benson argues that VCSEs are damaged by having their services marketised in this way to serve state priorities (2015). This is harmful, he argues, because VCSEs essentially offer care and support that is important but difficult to quantify, such as friendly and familiar volunteers who have time to chat. The result of these pressures is that there is potential for VCSEs to be deflected from their central purpose.

Research by Livingstone and Macmillan on VCSE subcontracting for criminal justice services illustrates the problem that Benson identifies. They use the language of markets, providers and supply and demand and their research does a cost-benefit analysis of easily quantifiable outputs (2015). They do not consider the less tangible aspects of the treatment and rehabilitation of offenders that may be offered by VCSEs and which may have large effects, such as having time to listen to offenders and providing a personalised service. Although Livingstone and Macmillan implicitly suggest that VCSEs may offer something different from private companies, they do not step outside the commissioning box to discuss alternatives to subcontracting, such as on-going audited grant funding and provision of free resources for VCSEs that work with offenders such as accommodation, stationery and administrative services.

Some “mainstream” academic research at universities also works within the assumption that the VCSE sector is an underdeveloped business environment (see Rochester 2013, p. 126 for full discussion of this issue). For example, Peter Alcock² argues that the relationship between the state and the VCSE sector since the 1990s has been characterised by *interdependence* rather than a reduction in the independence of VCSEs – as if such partnerships are between equal partners (2015). He does not address the issues that arise from the power imbalance between powerful partners that offer external funding and VCSEs, in particular the extent to which smaller VCSEs may be diverted from their social missions and become a tool of state policy. Another example of research that works within the assumptions of neoliberal orthodoxy is that of Ware who explores the challenges and benefits for grassroots organisations in working with local authorities without discussing the potentially damaging effects of unequal partnerships (2014).

ORTHODOXY AND ORGANISATIONAL FORM

If the institutional changes above have redefined the scope for voluntary action in neoliberal orthodoxy, VCSE organisations have also been redefined in terms of efficient operation. Within neoliberalism, VCSEs, like a

wide range of organisations that in the past would not have been assessed in this way (such as universities and hospitals), are assumed to operate most efficiently and effectively in competition. In employment, workers are considered to be self-created as a result of their competencies and decision-making: “free and autonomous entrepreneurs” (Hamann 2009, p. 43). Most of us would recognise this trend in competitive work practices, annual performance reviews and performance-related pay.

For the VCSE sector, this is shown in assumptions about what they must do to be winners in the outsourcing game, in the face of competition from other VCSEs and from private companies. In neoliberalism, the most effective organisational form for VCSEs is as self-sustaining trading organisations (social enterprises³) that are “active and entrepreneurial” within their own markets (Giddens 2000, p. 81; see also Haugh and Kitson 2007; Peattie and Morley 2008; Zahra et al. 2009; Baines et al. 2010).

VCSEs have been encouraged to become bureaucratic with managed functions fulfilled by (often paid) post-holders with specialist skills. Those that enter into commissioning processes in order to gain income are channelled and moulded into particular kinds of organisations that are more tightly controlled by state agencies. Milbourne and Cushman frame this behaviour as isomorphic to the powerful organisations that control public services and resource decisions: “adopting mainstream discourse and modes of operation to gain legitimacy and influence” (2015, p. 479).

This bureaucratic form is legitimated in terms of its benefit to VCSE organisations, in giving them: “a degree of self-reliance and independence which puts them firmly in control of their own activities”.⁴ This emphasis on entrepreneurial activities is underpinned by recent regulatory and legislative changes that allow some VCSEs to become more similar to private companies by raising shares and distributing some profit.

Neoliberal assumptions are permeating into some aspects of volunteering itself by defining this as an output. In his 2015 literature review of volunteering research, Dean gives examples of recent neoliberal rhetoric and policy directed to young people and the unemployed in which volunteering serves to improve one’s skills base in the jobs market and as a tool of competition that universities employ to provide a market advantage for students. The government’s *Help to Work* scheme includes mandatory placements in VCSEs for the unemployed, linked to benefit sanctions for non-compliance. In response to this, the activist group *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* (KVV)⁵ was launched in 2014 and aims to end “workfare” and to encourage VCSEs not to participate in the scheme because of this marketised approach to volunteering.

Sandel provides a clear argument about why prioritising the benefits of volunteering to the individual over the benefits to the collective can be damaging. For Sandel, there are two ways that marketising behaviour in this way is harmful. Economically, social norms such as civic virtue and public-spiritedness are good value and motivate socially useful behaviour that would cost a lot to buy. This is negated in instrumental volunteering. Ethically, he argues that marketing behaviour is corrupting because it bypasses persuasion and attention to community need (Sandel 2013, p. 119).

Perhaps there is a split between “professional” volunteering and what happens generally in grassroots organisations. Phillimore and McCabe interviewed 29 stakeholders in their study of UK grassroots organisations (2015). They found that what made such organisations distinctive was the capacity of volunteers to blur the boundaries between their personal, political and civic action. They found grassroots organisations to be sites of “experiential knowledge” founded on personal experience of the central issue of their organisation (Phillimore and McCabe 2015, p. 145). This was a deep knowledge that enabled such organisations to meet the needs of vulnerable communities in ways that statutory services were often unable to do. For this reason, formal service delivery contracts with public bodies were too bureaucratic and unlikely to deliver policy objectives:

Without formality they were uninhibited by bureaucracy, able to act immediately without sanction and thus were said to be more fluid, flexible and informal than constituted organisations. (Phillimore and McCabe 2015, p. 142)

Phillimore and McCabe’s research sheds light on why grassroots organisations may operate fundamentally different from private businesses. The community stakeholders that they interviewed argued that their organisations learned by experience rather than through formal learning opportunities. Activists tended to use social networks to access knowledge and skills iteratively, rather than going through the formal process of approaching VCSE sector development agencies for help. They talked to members of other grassroots organisations and adapted practices to their own organisation. Phillimore and McCabe point to the “substantial gap between policy expectations about how SCSOs [small scale civil society organisations] should learn and how they actually used learning to replicate, rather than ‘scale up’, alternative models of grassroots activity” (Phillimore and McCabe 2015, p. 144).

A BADLY FITTING MODEL FOR THE VCSE SECTOR

Voluntary action has been redefined as a result of legal, institutional and organisational changes since the 1970s. Much is made of the importance of VCSE subcontracting in public welfare provision and, indeed, the balance of grants and contracting to the VCSE sector for welfare services has shifted in recent years from grants to contracts. NCVO data shows that local and central government grants and contracts to this sector totalled £13.7 billion in 2011/12 (UK Civil Society Almanac 2014). This is the second biggest source of income after individual giving (£17.4 billion) over the same year. Since 2000, the balance of grants and loans to the sector has shifted and it now receives far more money from government through contracts to deliver services (£11.2 billion) than from grants.

Rochester argues that grants are a preferable source of funding in that they give VCSEs a greater measure of autonomy than contracting. The shift from grants to contracts reflects changes in assumptions about the role of the VCSE sector, from a focus on state support for VCSE organisations' own plans and priorities to an emphasis on this sector as a means to deliver state plans and priorities (Rochester 2013, p. 93; see also Benson 2015). With this change comes commissioning and procurement regimes that are based on private sector practices that operate within competitive business relationships (Singleton et al. 2015, p. 6).

Present UK government policy encourages VCSEs to contract to provide statutory welfare services but, unsurprisingly, it is the largest corporate organisations that are most likely to be contracted. Most small VCSEs have very little or no income. The *National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises 2010* (Cabinet Office) shows that most grassroots organisations do not engage in contracting or have regular national or local statutory funding. Only 2 % of VCSEs with an income of £20,000 or less consider that contracts are the main source of their income. In contrast, the largest VCSEs are disproportionately involved in contracting welfare services. Only 6.2 % of VCSEs have an income over £1 million but one-fifth of these large VCSEs consider that contracts are the main source of their income (Cabinet Office 2010b). Benson suggests that some of these large VCSEs behave in aggressive, competitive and predatory ways, compete with one another and swap contracts as they win or lose in different areas (2015).

The large corporates and the small VCSEs are very different kinds of organisation. An important difference is that, where most small VCSEs are

volunteer-led and may have no paid staff, the large ones are more likely to be professionalised and similar in organisational form to public or private sector corporations even if they have branches that operate more like small local VCSEs (Milligan and Fyfe 2005; Buckingham 2012).

The large VCSEs have formalised business processes with audit trails, performance targets and a division of labour with specialised staff roles. They are well-placed to engage in the subcontracting of public services, to attract social investors and gain from government tax breaks to VCSEs that trade, because they already operate like businesses. As democratic organisations, these corporate VCSEs are required to have an elected and voluntary board of governors but in some cases, this may be window dressing. Anecdotally, as a governor for my local NHS Foundation Trust, I found the board to be toothless, with the “responsibility” to represent patients without a consultation process and with no input into the strategic direction of the organisation or the key day-to-day operational and financial processes that are controlled by paid professionals.

In contrast, small VCSEs do not operate like businesses and may be ill-placed to deliver government contracts (Milbourne 2009). Hind et al. (2014) were commissioned by the NHS to look at whether a local franchise of a national charity could deliver a telephone friendship intervention in order to sustain mental well-being in people aged more than 75 years. The researchers met their recruitment targets of ≥ 68 volunteers recruited in 95 days but too few volunteers stayed to deliver the service and the trial closed early. They suggest that small VCSEs are unlikely to be effective subcontractors of welfare services, where they use volunteer workers (see also Alcock et al. 2013, p. 38).

In addition, grassroots organisations are small-scale and personal in approach, unlike many corporates that work to a central strategy and control. They are set up to fulfil a specific local need may have members and volunteers who are resistant to making instrumental changes to their social mission so that their organisation can be commissioned to provide statutory services. Members of such organisations may also lack the requisite skills set to manage the process of subcontracting services. These issues make it less probable that many small local VCSEs will successfully become subcontractors of public welfare services compared to other kinds of organisation in the VCSE sector.

If the corporate VCSEs do a disproportionate amount of contracting of public services, what then is the role of grassroots organisations in neo-liberal orthodoxy, if any? In general, researchers do not focus on this issue.

Much has been written about the *effects* of government policy on VCSE organisations but far less on the moral discourse that underpins it (see, for example: Benson 2015; Singleton et al. 2015). I suggest that state discourse about the *nature* of VCSEs focusses not on the large corporate VCSEs but on the traditional idea of a small, altruistic and local grassroots organisation that is embedded in its local community and serves a local need. In this discourse, grassroots organisations are an important engine of community cohesion (Carney 2014).

Theorists such as Putnam argue that social networking in VCSE organisations leads to trust between members of local communities and to the growth of civic responsibility (Putnam 1993, 2000; Putnam and Goss 2002; Anheier and Kendall 2002). Deakin famously defined VCSE organisations as the “yeast in our culture” (2001, p. 48) and David Cameron said they were the “glue that binds people together”.⁶ They are framed as organisations that can be trusted because they are altruistic and community-orientated rather than focussed on making a profit (Hogg and Baines 2011, p. 346). Yet this definition is not a good fit for the large corporates that benefit most from state policy. It is particularly appropriate in relation to small VCSEs, established in local communities with services tailored to local needs.

The purpose that this serves in neoliberal orthodoxy is to present the VCSE sector as the acceptable face of outsourcing. It provides a credible moral backdrop to state policy, the “respectability badge” that Rees et al. discuss (2012, p. 8). Government discourse, I suggest, is designed to obscure the goals of government policy. Present Conservative public policy aims to reduce the cost of statutory welfare services by outsourcing as much as possible to the best provider that is available, be it public, private or VCSE sector. Yet public opinion is against privatisation. In a YouGov poll in 2013, 84 % of respondents said that the NHS should be run in the public sector compared to only 7 % who said that it should be run by private companies.⁷

The role of state discourse in this process is to valorise a somewhat domestic and small-scale version of a VCSE organisation and to suggest that the provision of public services by this kind of organisation does not threaten the quality of services but actually keeps them in quasi-public ownership (because they would be owned within local communities). Evidence by Hogg and Baines confirms that, in this era of public spending cuts, there is an intensified interest in VCSEs as providers and raised expectations that they will be able to deliver better welfare services than

profit-orientated private businesses (2011). In actual fact, most outsourcing to the VCSE sector is to large corporates that are more similar to private companies in their practices. This is *soft* privatisation – privatisation by the back door.

THE LIMITS OF NEOLIBERAL ORTHODOXY

In neoliberalism, economic forces control the state apparatus and the definitions of the nature of social phenomena in orthodoxy are set to the advantage of those who dominate economically. Are we then heading towards an increasingly unequal society, without a welfare state, where VCSEs are just another kind of business and where suicide, domestic violence and isolation are the lot of the poorest in society?

Jones argues that we are an increasingly unequal society with odds stacked in favour of those at the top, whose activity is subsidised because the state interferes in the free flow of trade by manipulating public assets to the advantage of private business (such as selling off the railways, outsourcing public services and introducing a market in health and social care services). Jones comments that: “The ‘free market’ cherished by the Establishment is, then, based on fantasy. It might be argued that socialism flourishes in modern Britain, but it is a socialism for the rich and for corporations” (Jones 2014, p. 179).

An example of how events may work to the advantage of dominant groups is shown by government action during the global financial crisis of 2007–08. In “the most serious crisis of capitalism since the crash of 1929”, governments and central banks of wealthy countries created liquidity to avoid waves of bank failures (Piketty 2014, p. 472). This marked the beginning of the deepest recession since the war and the onset of our ‘age of austerity’ that impacted disproportionately on the poorest, with an NHS in deficit, cuts to benefits for the disabled and incomes declining in real terms (Roberts et al. 2012). Jones provides numerous examples of private business rescued by the public sector during this time including subsidies to railways and nuclear power; public research and development used for industry and the topping up of low wages with tax credits (see also Piketty 2014, p. 472).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, there is, however, reason for optimism. Bourdieu argues that a fully neoliberal society is not an inevitability because there are constant struggles in the field of power for control over state apparatus, and this gives neoliberalism an inherent instability.

Neoliberalism is an increasingly unstable system riven with internecine struggles between ministries that control market-driven policies, such as the treasury, and those that are involved in the consequences, such as education and health (Wacquant 2009, p. 313). Bourdieu's 1993 analysis is remarkably prescient of today's UK context:

I think that the left hand of the state has the sense that the right hand no longer knows, or, worse, no longer really wants to know what the left hand does. In any case, it does not want to pay for it. One of the main reasons for all these people's despair is that the state has withdrawn, or is withdrawing, from a number of sectors of social life for which it was previously responsible: social housing, public service broadcasting, hospitals, etc. . . . What is described as a crisis of politics, anti-parliamentarianism, is in reality despair at the failure of the state as the guardian of the public interest.⁸

Peck believes that, as a result of this instability, neoliberalism is ripe for mutation into a new, more highly regulated "Fourth Way" (2010, p. 108). This is why, as Bourdieu argues, dominants must make use of increasingly rational and technological justifications in order to dominate (1994, p. 90).⁹ Piketty also sees this system as inherently unstable: "The crisis of 2008 was the first crisis of globalised patrimonial capitalism of the twenty-first century. It is unlikely to be the last" (2014, p. 473).

The rest of this book will explore the effects of neoliberal orthodoxy on grassroots organisations and also its limits. In the next chapter, we move from the meso level of the VCSE sector to the micro level of two grassroots organisations for people with heart disease. I discuss how neoliberal definitions of what VCSE organisations are and can do, affect the internal dynamics of these organisations and how these definitions can be subverted.

NOTES

1. *Financial Times*, 16 November 2015.
2. A professor at the University of Birmingham who was, until 2014, Director of the TSRC.
3. NCVO has a traditional view of social enterprises as VCSE sector trading organisations with profits that are not distributed but that serve their central mission (www.ncvo-vol.org.uk). In government publications and Ministers' speeches, this definition has changed as a result of the introduction of the new business form of Community Interest Company. CICs can raise capped

shares and distribute some profit provided that they retain a social purpose and reinvest the majority of profit.

4. www.dh.gov.uk
5. www.keepvolunteeringvoluntary.net
6. Speech 23 May 2011.
7. www.yougov.co.uk/news/2013/11/04/nationalise-energy-and-rail-companies-say-public/
8. Bourdieu (1993), *ibid.*
9. See also Will Hutton's article (22 November 2015). Everything we hold dear is being cut to the bone. Weep for our country. *The Guardian*.

Getting Needed Resources: Life in Small VCSE Organisations

Abstract This chapter explores the effects of and limitations to neoliberal orthodoxy within two grassroots organisations for people with heart disease. Using Bourdieu’s concepts of generic and specific forces that act on fields, I argue that neoliberal values do affect such organisations. Leaders emerged who were of higher social class than other members and with experience in contracts and financial management. They “naturally” pursued external funding. However, this orientation was counterbalanced by internal forces that related to the social mission and the role of volunteers in their organisations. These internal forces were a safeguard against the unrestrained pursuit of external funding as a primary organisational goal.

Keywords Funding game · Social mission · Profits

For Bourdieu (1998, p. 96), neoliberalism presents itself as a kind of logical machine, as a chain of constraints impelling economic agents and intrudes commercial considerations into the wider social world. How does neoliberal orthodoxy affect small voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSEs)? This chapter looks at the effects of neoliberal orthodoxy on the internal dynamics of two grassroots organisations for people with heart disease. I illustrate the argument with findings from research undertaken between 2007 and 2011.

One grassroots organisation, Midlancet Heart Health Group (MHHG), is long established and holds fortnightly meetings at a number of sites in the large, industrial city of Midlancet. The other is a relatively new online support forum, Hearts of Midlancet (HoM). The development of both small VCSEs was shaped by their search for external funding and the tensions that this created in each organisation.

I will examine the specific and generic logics of these organisational fields. Specific logics are the internal forces that maintain the status quo. Generic logics are the external forces that influence the structure of fields. Bourdieu suggests that the structural forces of specific and generic logics “govern or orient practice” (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 33). The combination and weighting of these logics determine the goals of fields and the arsenal of tactics and strategies used to achieve them. In relation to the two grassroots organisations, their specific logic results from their genesis and social history.

The most important external logic is that of orthodoxy. I have argued that the value system (or orthodoxy) that underpins UK society has become increasingly neoliberal in recent years, with VCSEs encouraged to become “enterprising” so that they can compete in the provision of public services. A key way in which the state affects such organisations is by facilitating or providing external funding in the form of grants, loans or contracts to enable them to provide welfare services. This is a funding game in which the “successful” VCSEs get income. Playing the funding game can change the organisational structure of grassroots organisations directly and can also indirectly affect them through the cross-sector partnerships they form with more powerful state agents and other organisations. This chapter explores the first kind of generic influence – the direct effect of the funding game on the way grassroots organisations develop. The direct and indirect paths between state power and small VCSEs are shown in [Fig. 4.1](#).

THE ESTABLISHED VCSE

At the time of fieldwork, MHHG had 150 members. It catered mainly for the above 50s and there were some members in their 80s. The group’s Management Committee had ten elected voluntary members, three of whom (the Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer) were the key decision-makers in the group. There were also two paid admin staff and hourly paid therapists who came in to do reiki and other activities with members during the fortnightly meetings. It operated from a main site in the centre

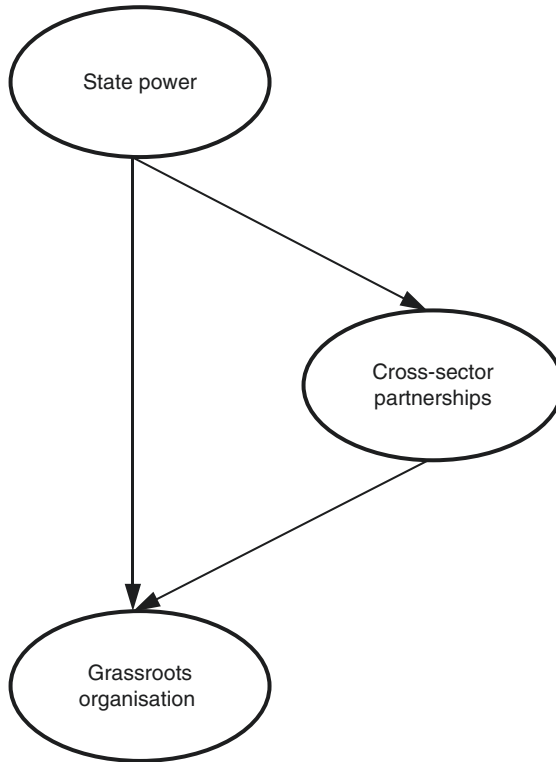


Fig. 4.1 Links between state power and grassroots organisations

of the city with four new branches in the suburbs. Reflecting the history of this industrial city in the Midlands, most group members were either former clerical/office workers or had manual trades. I was an overt participant observer with the situated identity of a volunteer, at the main site and the branches.

Most members of MHHG went to the meetings at the main site and paid an entry fee for each session, in addition to their annual subscription fee. With an average of 40 members at each meeting, this site was self-funding. Five branches were set up in 2007 but one failed because there was not enough local interest. The four remaining branches had less than ten members at each meeting and none were self-funding.

Of the few members who attended sessions at the branch sites, half were dedicated volunteers who also attended the meeting at the main site and did most of the practical work of the group. They were truly the life blood of this organisation. They kept the branches afloat by bringing everything to the meetings – tea, coffee, milk, sugar and biscuits, cups and plates, raffle tickets and prizes from the main site and, sometimes, bric-a-brac.

MHHG was founded 20 years ago by a local factory worker with heart disease, Jack Smith, who retired from paid work due to ill-health at the age of 38 and set up the group. He felt completely unsupported by statutory services and wanted to help others in similar circumstances: “It changed him a lot, the fear of it coming back – y’know,” Jilly, his wife explained. His daughter, Joanne, went on to say: “He felt very isolated. He decided he’d like to help others fast track, if you like, rather than go through it all.” Jack died of heart disease a year later.

His extended family have been involved with the group throughout its lifetime and are proud of what he achieved: “He left something behind when he died and not many people can say that” (Jilly). Both Jilly and his brother, Peter, still sat on the Management Committee and various family members worked extensively in diverse roles, paid and voluntary, over the group’s lifetime. During my fieldwork period, Joanne (his daughter) and her sister, Lynne, did regular counselling and relaxation sessions within the group.

The family of the founder had high status in the group because of their deep investment in it over so many years. They were the informal leaders of the volunteers and of the long-standing members, as Marjory (always behind the tea urn during the break period in meetings at the main site) said: “Jilly has been here from the beginning. She’s over us, like.” This came at a cost. Joanne said ruefully: “Whenever there’s a group around me, they expect me to sort things out. Look at that group yesterday. They don’t want to do anything.” She spoke of the toll it took on her life: “It cost me my first marriage, sort of thing, because it was so heavy” and trained as a counsellor as a result of this life experience: “That’s what directed the way I went in life.”

For the founders, the specific logic of the VCSE, as an organisation that has been successfully providing mutual support over many years was primary. They understood the importance of the group in the local community and its social history, in which the original mission to support local people with heart disease had always been paramount. The volunteers in

MHHG were also long-standing members and shared this commitment. They originally joined the group because of their own heart disease and understood personally how terrifying it could be. They wanted to help others as they have been helped, as Benedict remarked: “I took a lady to St. Matthew’s who was a shivering wreck when I went to pick her up and Joanne spoke to her for about an hour. All of us with heart disease, we’re all timid and worried and, if you can get people at the right time . . . you know, we learn things gradually, that we can manage this, that we can manage that.”

The Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary who led MHHG at this time were distinctively different in class from the founders and most members. They were retirees in their sixties who had had high-status professional jobs during their working lives (from the senior ranks of personnel management, the fire service and the police service). They were relative newcomers to the group (within the last six years) and were elected onto the Management Committee within six months of arrival. As Harry, the Treasurer said, work had been a central part of his life and he searched in retirement for something to replace it: “I thrived on the responsibility.”

For members of small VCSEs (as in other social fields), the potential to gain organisational and personal profits (material and symbolic) is linked to ownership of a high volume of scarce capitals. Bourdieu argues that agents are defined in the social hierarchy by the composition and volume of their capitals. The “weight” of an agent, the capacity to gain profits, depends on the mix of capitals held in relation to that of other social agents in the field (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 34).

In small VCSEs where income is important and precarious, a dominant species of capital is likely to be the skills required to gain external funding. For MHHG, possession of a large quantity of this scarce capital gave the leaders power over the field and over less endowed agents. As former professionals who were familiar with public funding regimes, they understood and were competent in this “game”. Of itself, this would not be enough to give them dominance. A crucial component in dominance is *illusio* (belief). The leaders shared the *illusio* that funding was important, not simply to sustain the organisation but also to enhance its status as a successful VCSE and also their position in the social hierarchy (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 41).

This is important because issues around group finances were the main source of tensions in the group. The group had a history of

gaining grant funding. In 1998, the founder's family had got a grant of £100,000 for MHHG from the Big Lottery Fund and because of the stress on the family from constant work in the group they withdrew from active management: "[We] left it secure..." (Jilly). They were dismissive about how this grant was used, not to increase the number or composition of local people who could be supported but to provide outings for existing members. The group certainly did not grow in size or change during this time.

At the end of 2006, the new leaders of the group was successful in gaining £60,000 primary care trust (PCT) grant funding to set up the branches at several sites in the city, using church halls, leisure centres and community centres. It was at this point that the two staff members were recruited and the organisation professionalised. The staff "naturally" followed the lead of the leaders who were their line managers. They had no family history of heart disease, that personal experience that would provide deep empathy, and they were more detached from the mission of the organisation and more concerned about their own continuing employment. From that time onwards, the PCT also provided a range of time-limited resources to encourage secondary prevention in heart disease patients, including a dietician to promote healthy living and projects on eating well and increasing physical activity through walking with a pedometer.

When the PCT funding ended, the leaders devoted most of their time to a search for new external funding and resources for their newly expanded and professionalised organisation. There are a large number of organisational networks for small VCSEs that seek external funding and the MHHG leaders sat on many external committees, as Harry explained: "The trouble is, once you get involved in one committee, there's other committees you get attached to, as well." This provided opportunities for the leaders to network, as Harry explained: "Jed [the Chair] and I go to different places and meet groups from all over the country" and to present the case for MHHG funding to local statutory bodies: "We did a very professional presentation and gave it to them and they were quite amazed at what we had done."

During this time, the leaders were encouraged by the PCT and other organisations to convert their organisation into a social enterprise that would provide training for other VCSEs in community-based secondary prevention activities. They were also tempted to increase the number of branches linked to MHHG because it would bring in more funding from the PCT: "We are going to open a group before April because of the

money we had. They didn't say we had to but we thought, if we could get another group going . . . [we would get more funding]" (Harry). As part of this plan, they wanted to move counselling and relaxation from branches and the main site into a central location, so that they could pay for a private counsellor at less cost than one operating in all the branches.

The family of the founder believed that the leaders' plan to expand and professionalise was poorly thought-through and focused on finance at the expense of members needs. As Joanne said: "I know the Chair and people on the committee really want people to buy us in or part of the services, which is great, but we're not backed up, we're not ready for it." Jilly argued strongly that counselling should be available for members at the point when they felt ready rather than by appointment centrally:

Some people won't ask for counselling. The staff say that it should be, not 'proactive' but that other word where you advertise it. People won't go for counselling like that. You know, you can't say to somebody "do you want counselling?" because you think they need it. They've got to come to you to say "look! I've got problems". (Jilly, interview)

The volunteers agreed with Jilly. Having suffered the trauma of a diagnosis of heart disease, they understood from personal experience that counselling works best at the point of need and not on an appointment system. They went regularly to branch meetings and also saw the pitfalls in opening new branches before the existing ones were properly established. They were aware of the tensions of the group and fiercely loyal to the family of the founder. James always ambling around at the North Town Community Centre branch hissed: "I can't stand the politics. Just because it's not going in the direction they [the leaders] want, they say it's the members who are to blame."

Factions began to form within the group, as illustrated by the contrast between the 2010 twentieth-anniversary party of the group and the Christmas party. The first was organised by the family of the founder and the second by the leaders. The anniversary party was a lavish affair held in a local hotel with entertainment by an Elvis impersonator and a full meal included in the entry fee. It was well-attended by members generally but only one member of the Management Committee came and no staff attended. Various awards and certificates of merit were handed out to members (including to my embarrassment as a "neutral" observer, to me)

for “outstanding contributions” to the group. Members seemed to enjoy the evening immensely.

In contrast, the Christmas party that the leaders organised took place a couple of weeks later and was a lunchtime event in the local Conservative club. There were no alcoholic drinks and a buffet with too little food for all the members who came. It was attended by the senior members of the Management Committee and the staff as well as by half the members from the main site, but very few members from the branches. None of the founding family came. There was much complaining afterwards by members about the organisation of the event, the entertainment and the catering.

As tension mounted, the factions in the group sought to defend their positions. Harry acknowledged that there were disagreements: “I think we’ve stood on some people’s toes because we’ve implemented things they don’t like. But we’ve got to move with changing legislation – there’s a heck of a lot of that going on.” Sarah (the Administrator) accused Joanne of claiming expenses to which she was not entitled, in a report to the Management Committee. Joanne found out from her mother, who was a Committee member, and suggested that Sarah was incompetent: “I think it’s because she found her own job too hard and I think she was looking for a scapegoat and my name came up.”

In circumstances of increasing fragmentation in the group, the leaders maintained a fragile dominance in decision-making about group development in the face of the informal influence of the well-respected founders by circumventing the formal structure of decision-making and making key decisions outside the committee meetings. Harry admitted that decision-making was often informal: “Several of us on the committee discuss where we think it could go” but Sarah was more explicit about this:

... you don’t know exactly what is going on. I go to committee meetings and sometimes decisions are taken by the committee that I don’t know about – maybe sometimes people will decide *off-site* and I don’t always get to hear about it. (Sarah, field notes)

For Bourdieu, “comfort” is linked to the congruence between the habitus¹ of social agents and the structure of the field (1997, p. 143). The physical layout of MHHG reinforced the high social positioning of the leaders in the formal structure of the organisation. In the main site, the leaders shared an office with the staff and were often to be found standing at the head of the main hall with the staff during meetings, observing

proceeding. They had structured the physical layout and organisation to reinforce their dominance and they were “comfortable”.

In contrast, the founders were inconspicuous, sitting with members at tables in the main hall or leading relaxation sessions in a small side room at irregular times specified by the staff. They did not have access to the office, a source of irritation to Joanne, who had used it regularly in the past. The founders were “out on a limb” and ill at ease in the main site (Bourdieu 1997, p. 157). In the formal hierarchy of the organisation, the leaders had pushed the founder “challengers” to the social and physical periphery (Fligstein 2001, p. 109).

The splits within the organisation were the result of incompatibility between its generic and specific logics. With their backgrounds and positioning in the formal hierarchy, it was “natural” for the leaders to think in neoliberal terms and to see their organisation as competing with other VCSE organisations. They sought to show that MHHG was enterprising and able to compete for external funding and understood that success in external funding games is measured by outputs and that the “right” boxes on funding applications had to be ticked. They knew from experience that external funding is a short-term option and that they would need to compete time and time again.

The orientation of these leaders of the formally structured organisation can be contrasted to that of the founding family. As informal leaders, the founders were *also* influenced by the generic logic of neoliberalism and wanted external funding in order to maintain the organisation in its present size, just as the leaders did. However, they saw this as *secondary* to the core mission of mutual support.

Both factions were powerful but the balance of power was in favour of the founders because they had the loyal support of the volunteers. The practical work that sustained MHHG was carried out by the founders and the volunteers and, although they could not prevent the leaders from pursuing external funding in their own way, they could refuse to work within the organisation if it deviated too far from its core mission to support local people with heart disease.

Their strength of commitment to the core mission of mutual support ensured that the organisation did not over-expand to the point of failure. The specific logic of the field worked subversively against the generic neoliberal logic of expansion and professionalisation. In the end, the specific logic was the stronger influence on the development of MHHG

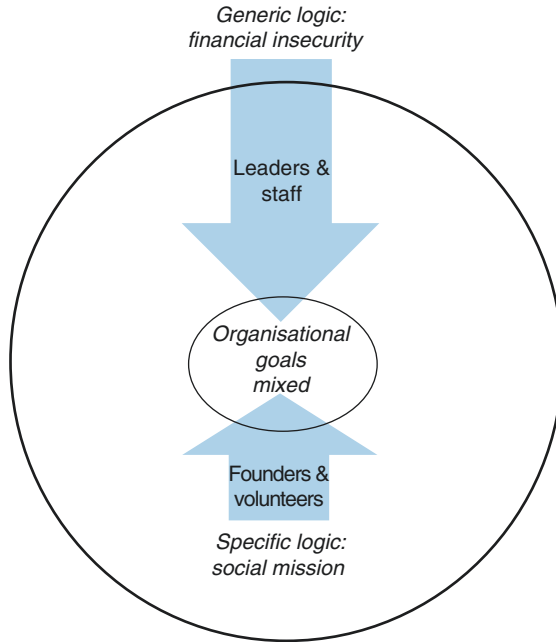


Fig. 4.2 The generic and specific logics of the established grassroots organisation

and the organisation did not expand beyond its capacity or convert into a social enterprise. [Figure 4.2](#) illustrates this.

THE NEW VCSE

In contrast to MHHG, Hearts of Midlancet (HoM) was a recently established online group for people with heart disease and their families. It was set up as part of a research project at the University of Midlancet in 2006. The research team created it to test the effects on participants' health of facilitated access to a dedicated health portal. They originally had 200 older participants who were given computers, printers and internet access and divided into small, mutual support groups that could communicate with each other via email. Cases had six months facilitated access to the health portal followed by three

months unfacilitated access whereas controls had no access. After this time, both cases and controls were allowed access to the portal. In 2008, the research project ended and the online group became an independent online VCSE organisation. I was a member of the original research team and then a participant observer in the independent online group. The organisation ceased to exist in 2012.

There was an interim period after the ending of the research project before the group consolidated its constitution and created the committee structure and governance arrangements. During this time, the numbers in the online group dwindled quickly to fewer than thirty members and three volunteers managed the group. These were the Administrator (John) and two facilitators (Larry and Irene).

John, the Administrator, very much felt a personal responsibility for the group and actively influenced the direction it took. He had a high administrative burden after the group became independent because of his desire to formalise its structure:

There's quite a lot of paperwork, quite a lot. All the site policies, the guidelines, everything had to be changed [after the research project finished] and it was quite a massive job. . . . The biggest thing that I've missed since Christmas is, when you're doing something like this, it's great to have someone to bounce ideas off. . . . There's been nobody to do it with. (John, interview)

Ironically, in an online support group accessible 24 hours a day, the result for John was isolation: "It's just been a bit lonely. It would have been a lot easier if I'd been doing it on my own, which might sound daft."

The dynamics of the group was affected by the fact that it was online, rather than face-to-face. As is often the case with online message boards, the five members who posted were, to some extent, a simplified and somewhat more extreme version of their non-virtual selves. For example, Derek, a mild-mannered man in his "real" life believed that he enlivened the forum postings with his comments. For example, about nudists, Derek wrote (in capitals, as he often did):

I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THOSE NUDIES WANT TO DO WHAT THEY DO, OK FOR TODDLERS BUT NOT GROWN UPS, ALL THOSE DANGLING BITS, SOMEONE DOING THE BACK STROKE WITH A SUBMARINE TRAILING AND OTHER THINGS. NO, NOT FOR IT. (Derek, forum post)

Most of the members of the online group logged on but did not post messages on the website. These non-posters felt that Derek's postings were too extreme and silently disapproved. Glynis expressed a view shared by several members about these postings: "No, I don't interrupt. I just think, well, you're stupid for saying that, like. . . . It definitely does put me off. I don't [post] because what can I say apart from, you're a stupid man for writing like you do."

There were clear differences in the group between John and other members, triggered, as in MHHG, by funding issues. Among the active members, only John had specific ideas about the development of the online group and he linked development to possible grant funding sources:

Our hook is the health thing, because that can attract funding. But what I don't think can happen is that the social things can exclude the health things 'cos I don't think you'd be able to find the money to keep it going. We may eventually have paid staff. (John, interview)

The majority of members shared the view that the group needed very little external funding and could get enough funding from member subscriptions. Brian typified the response: "They say they need more money to sort things out. All I would say is that they only need funding for expenses to keep the website up and running because volunteers make up most of the organisation."

With muted opposition simmering in the background, John created the constitution and committee structure as a preliminary to grant-funding applications. As part of his vision for the future, more formalised structure of the group, he had a clear idea of who he wanted to be voted in as Chair of the group in the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April 2009. He encouraged Brian, a member who had not been very active but who was an accountant before retiring, to put his name forward: "And I. . . basically I pushed him a little bit because I didn't want to be Chair errrr. . . and I think I can work with him" (John).

Derek, the active but outspoken member, was also interested in becoming Chair. His perception of the way in which the Chair of the group was selected is different from that of John but both indicate John's key role in the way the online group developed. Derek told me that, at the first AGM, he had volunteered to be Chair when no one else offered to do it. He said that John ignored him, turned to Brian and said to him: "So, you'll do it?" Derek felt that it had been decided in advance by John and was upset: "I've felt shot down and it's altogether wrong and I think it was contrived, that it was set up for this to happen."

John was the only member to apply for external funding after the AGM. He applied for grants from the local authority, the Lottery and from the British Heart Foundation and got £10,000 for two laptops, a laser printer, publicity materials and the website hosting. His plans were bigger: "If we could run for a few months and get results and prove it works, then it'll be something to put to much bigger funders." This did not happen. After the first AGM, membership dwindled further and the online group was finally wound up in 2012.

The generic and specific logics of the field of a new VCSE operate in a different way to that of an established organisation. In HoM, there was an ongoing active struggle to shape the terms of reference of the field. Formal roles were not well-defined. There was little history or established social mission to guide HoM's development. In this situation, allegiances can shift quickly, the organisation may mutate rapidly and leaders may change. Essentially, the specific logics of the field were less developed.

In this organisation, the specific logics of the field did not relate to a long history of mutual support. The organisation was evolving rapidly. The most important specific force on the development of the group was not its central mission and history, as it was for MHHG. Here, commitment to the group was linked instrumentally to the mental and physical health of members and not to shared goals. There were clear difference in health between the five members of the group who used the website intensively and posted frequently and the other members, a difference that points up the real value of online mutual support groups for people who are restricted physically and socially. The active members were all in poor health and socially isolated. For example, John retired at 51 years with heart disease, was on maximum medication and had limited mobility. Ian developed heart disease at the age of 48 years after his wife died suddenly and he had four acute phases in the years after this. Derek had a triple bypass at the age of 63 years but differed from the others in attending the gym three or four times a week. Irene was very depressed before she joined the project: "It was a lifeline. It was someone to talk to without having to leave the house and, very regularly, in the middle of the night 'cos I didn't sleep then at all, no."

All five lived alone and three were smokers. They also had traumatic events in their backgrounds. Three of them had recently suffered the death of a spouse or parent and Derek's wife recently left him. Two of the deaths occurred in exceptionally stressful circumstances and left the members severely traumatised. Ian, for example, kept his house as a shrine to his former wife, with photographs on the walls and with the water glass she drank from the evening before she died, still on the bedside table. He

attributed his ill-health to grief. In contrast to these active members, the other members all had a busy face-to-face social life – either with family members or with friends – and all either lived with spouses or had pets.

The leader, John, had a high degree of relative autonomy but not a stable role. The generic logic of the funding game was important to John but not to other members. His wish to gain external funding for the group, as an important early goal, was linked to his habitus and the volume and composition of his capitals. He is an example of a socially mobile working-class man who married young, had children and started work without educational qualifications. He rose to senior positions in public sector organisations whilst doing part-time further education courses. His former jobs included working as a training manager for a health authority where he was instrumental in setting up Project 2000 training for nurses. He routinely applied for and managed over £1 million grant funding per annum. After retiring as a result of his heart problems, he “found it very difficult to adjust to not working, it was difficult.” The research project came up soon after and he commented: “At that point, I was looking for something to do.” With his background and skills, John had both inclination and competence to focus on funding goals in the new group.

Because of his capitals and habitus, John was able to steer the organisation towards funding goals but there was no commitment from other members to this direction of travel. The most active members had a range of instrumental reasons for their commitment to the organisation but this did not make them a strong group. This organisation failed because there was not enough shared commitment to cohesive goals based either on neoliberal values or the specific logic of a shared social mission and inertia took over. [Figure 4.3](#) illustrates the generic and specific logics of this organisation.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The central focus of leaders in both these grassroots organisations was gaining external funding/income because they believed that their organisations were financially insecure. The way the challenges and opportunities for each group was framed internally related to differences in the social class of leaders and those who challenged their leadership. Leaders were of higher social class than challengers. They benefited from using an elaborated vocabulary and were experienced and confident in making strong arguments, using evidence, for their decisions and plans. They had backgrounds that were a good fit to a leadership role in their organisation,

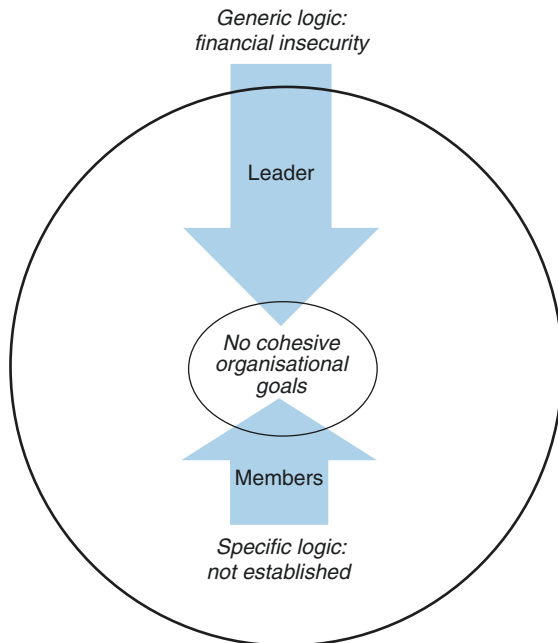


Fig. 4.3 The generic and specific logics of the new grassroots organisation

having had former employment in managerial roles in which they held budgetary oversight, engaged with external funding organisations and networked professionally.

Rochester argues that, in the “mainstreaming” of the VCSE sector to become sub-contractors for public services, this kind of leader with a background in contracts and financial management is likely to rise to prominence (2013, p. 93). With their backgrounds, one could predict that the leaders of these two small VCSEs would focus on funding issues. In contrast, the challengers to their leadership, from the lower non-manual and also manual occupational classes, were less articulate and less confident in arguing their cases within the formal boundaries of their organisation.

How much can these findings be generalised to other small VCSEs? In their research in the UK and the Netherlands, van der Pennen and van Bortel (2015) found that “empowered citizens” who engaged actively and

cooperatively with government agencies and other institutions were more likely to have high social class than those that did not engage. There is also statistical evidence that voluntary (as opposed to paid) leaders of VCSEs are likely to have higher social class than that of members as a whole. In the Cabinet Office *Community Life Survey, 2013–2014* of adults in England ($n = 5,105$), the association between class and volunteering is highly significant (Chi-square, $p = 0.003$). Over half of the respondents (57.9%, 2,954) had volunteered in the previous year; 18.2% (538) of those who volunteered had either led a VCSE organisation or been a member of a committee.

When respondents' socio-economic status (NS-SEC in three categories) is cross-tabulated against volunteering, there is a clear association between class and being a volunteer. Respondents of higher managerial, administrative or professional occupations volunteer more than the intermediate or routine or manual group (16.8% compared to 15% and 13% respectively).

The association between class and leadership of VCSE organisations is also highly significant (Chi-square, $p = 0.000$). Respondents of higher class are over-represented in leadership of VCSE organisations with one-quarter of respondents of the higher occupations (24.3%, 286) being leaders or committee members compared to only 17.3% (120) of those from intermediate occupations and only 10.3% (88) from a routine or manual occupation. Respondents who have never worked or are long-term unemployed are underrepresented at 9.7% (7).

A logistic regression of the relationship between NS-SEC (in three categories) as the independent variable and leadership of a voluntary organisation gives the likelihood of being a leader by class group. Using the higher managerial, administrative and professional group as the reference category, the intermediate group is only two-thirds as likely to become leaders (OR = 0.651). The routine and manual group is even less likely to be leaders (OR = 0.357). This is a similar likelihood to that of those who have never worked or are long-term unemployed. This result is a useful, triangulated confirmation of my findings. It is statistical confirmation that class differences are likely to exist between members of VCSE organisations and the volunteers who become their leaders.

The leaders of the two VCSEs explored here not only had scarce and valued capitals that made their rise likely but also the *motivation* to use their skills and experience to gain external funding. As Bourdieu points

out, capital does not of itself predispose people to act. Habitus is the mediating factor in position-taking (Bourdieu 1994, p. 15). The habitus of the leaders was aligned with the generic logic of neoliberalism – that VCSEs should be enterprising and that success can be measured in terms of gaining external funding in contracts or grants:

Investment is the disposition to act that is generated in the relationship between a space defined by a game offering certain prizes or stakes (what I call a field) and a system of dispositions attuned to that game (what I call a habitus). . . . In other words, investment is the historical effect of the harmony between two realisations of the social – in things through institutions and in bodies through incorporation. (Bourdieu 1993, p. 18)

But perhaps the true explanation of their funding orientation is simply that the VCSEs needed external funding to survive? Certainly, these two small VCSE organisations had leaders who believed that they needed external resources in order to survive. However, that this is one of several possible *definitions* of organisational need is clear when one considers that both groups could survive without external funding.

The established VCSE could have been self-funding by means of member subscriptions if it retained only its original site, which most members attended and closed the branches and if it did not have paid staff but used the loyal and willing volunteers in administrative functions. The new VCSE, in contrast, had very few fixed costs and these were associated with the maintenance of the website and could be met by membership subscriptions.

If the state funding game was not a “natural” goal for the leaders, why would they ignore the possibility of maintaining their organisations without external funding? They did not seem to even consider this option. There were serious threats to the established organisation from pursuing external funding but no doubt in the mind of the leaders that their organisation *needed* to gain this funding. The cognitive structures of the VCSE leaders were homologous with the generic logics of the field and constantly adjusted to the expectations of the funding game. They “naturally” sought these profits.

For the leaders of these organisations, gaining external funding/income had potential symbolic as well as material profits which played to their advantage as dominants (Bourdieu 1993, p. 26). In small VCSEs, gaining external funding can be a source of status for social

agents that gain it. In established organisations, acquiring funding is likely to involve expansion and professionalization with increased differential in the power difference between the senior members of the management committee – where the leaders manage the paid employees and also have budgetary oversight – and the ordinary members.

At the same time, if there is no real consultation with members on the direction of development, they are likely to feel excluded from a process that in VCSE organisations should be democratic. This may cause factions to form or to be exacerbated. Gaining external resources also increases the responsibility of small VCSEs to produce specific outputs and this relies on the commitment and time of volunteers who may feel increasingly disaffected.

For new grassroots organisations, just getting external funding may be a novel experience and the amount may seem to be a great deal of money compared to personal income/wealth. There may be a tendency to look for things to purchase such as computers, as if it was Christmas. Such funding facilitates formalisation of such organisations by requiring them to clarify their mission statement within a written constitution and to set up a committee structure to oversee the work of the organisation. The profit in taking a leading role in the formalisation of the group and in gaining funding is in framing the terms of reference of the field – in establishing the social hierarchy, a process that will give dominance to some social agents. The potential cost is that it may produce disunity and lead some agents to feel that there are individuals who have taken control of the group in a way that reduces their own “space of possibles” for action (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 59).

The big challenge in established grassroots organisations such as MHHG is oligarchy – that one group of individuals becomes so powerful that organisational democracy is threatened. This is possible because, as MHHG illustrates, organisations may have an iceberg structure of decision-making with formal committee meetings but also informal decision-making that is not subject to formal committee approval. This can lead to splits in organisations that may be fatal if the views of members are not given due weight and disaffection spreads through the membership (for full discussion of this, see McGovern 2014, p. 651).

New small VCSEs, in contrast, have no history or established structures and may be changing rapidly. The field is evolving and struggles between social agents to establish the terms of reference for the field are the primary

ways in which the social hierarchy is established. In a new organisation, there may be structural ambiguity. The formal roles are not well-established and the scope of the group's mission may not be clear. John, as the leader of HoM, had a more socially ambiguous position than the leaders of the established VCSE. He operated in a "zone of uncertainty" in the field and had substantial, if precarious, control over development of the group:

The dialectic between dispositions and positions is most clearly seen in positions situated in zones of uncertainty in social space, such as still ill-defined occupations, as regards both the conditions of access and the conditions of exercise. . . . Because these posts, ill-defined and ill-guaranteed but open and "full of potential" as the phrase goes, leave their occupants the possibility of defining them by bringing in the embodied necessity which is constitutive of their habitus, their future depends on what is made of them by their occupants . . . (Bourdieu 1997, p. 158)

With the formalisation of new VCSEs by the creation of a constitution and committee structure, the terms of reference of the field are likely to become more firmly resolved and the social hierarchy established (provided that the field *is* stabilised and does not fail).

The major challenge for new grassroots organisations is to create a clear definition of their social mission with an effective committee structure so that the organisation can be *seen* by members to be democratic and to take action based on decisions that are not made arbitrarily by one or two members. Local branches of CVS are ideally placed to support new groups in this process.

Clearly, there are opportunities for grassroots organisations in gaining external resources, where this is done with due regard to members' views. Potentially, expansion can lead to a larger member base in an organisation that is a stable platform, for activities that are informed and guided by NHS professionals with development properly calibrated to group resources. With planning, small VCSEs can use the experience within their own organisation to provide an effective caring and supportive environment for members.

The "Space of Possibles" of Small VCSEs

So what is the space of possibles for small local VCSEs that are tempted by the carrot of public funding in the form of grants and contracts? Many

small VCSEs do feel pressured to play this funding game. There is a large body of international research that suggests that where VCSEs are publically funded, they absorb state definitions and become hybridised organisations that are, effectively, government agencies (see Wolch 1990; Callinicos 2001, p. 65; Craig and Taylor 2002; Frumkin 2002; Gregory Dees and Battle Anderson 2004; Anheier 2005, p. 286; Hogg and Baines 2011; Hustinx et al. 2015; Mullins and Jones 2015).

For example, Spratt et al. use the term “para-public sector” to denote government-funded VCSE organisations (2007). They argue that such organisations are not independent of government but are hybrids that have the same focus on targets, performance indicators and other bureaucratic processes as do large public sector organisations (Spratt et al. 2007, p. 474; see also Alcock 2009).

Rose and other theorists assert that VCSE organisations are not simply structural hybrids but are tools of state control (Rose 1999, p. 141; see also Yarwood 2005; Milbourne 2009; and Macmillan 2010). He argues that VCSE organisations absorb state definitions of their identity and are government puppets. In a similar vein, Henriksen and Bundesen argue that VCSE organisations are cultural dupes – “carriers of modernisation” – that reflect “political, social and economic realities” (2004, p. 623; see also Rees et al. 2012, p. 11). This may cause VCSEs to move away from their specialist or locally responsive provision to more generic services that reflect state requirements (Milbourne and Cushman 2015, p. 477).

It is possible that some small VCSE organisations *may* subjugate their own social purpose to the demands of more powerful organisations that want to use them as a tool to fulfil their own goals. The findings of this study suggest that this may be limited. There was general consensus in MHHG, for example, that the organisation should expand by setting up branches in unfamiliar areas of the city at a pace determined by the PCT, in exchange for external funding and other resources. However, the group as a whole refused to consider changing the focus of activities from mutual support for people with heart disease (a mission “sanctified” by the founder of the group) to a focus on activities for people with long-term conditions as suggested by the PCT commissioner:

I recommended that they needed to change their name and that the ethos of the organisation needed to be changed in order to get Lottery money. They

would have to do something *radically different* or be proposing something *radically different* from what they are currently doing. (Jo, PCT commissioner)

This did not appear to be seriously considered by the group, even though they may have gained public funding as a result.

It is reasonable to suppose that many small VCSEs that attempt to convert to social enterprise, as MHHG did, will not have the resources and skills required within their organisations. The infrastructure VCSE organisations that support them, such as CVS, may also lack the necessary entrepreneurial skills to facilitate this process successfully. The evidence does suggest that the process of converting to social enterprise has costs. MHHG, for example, focussed on becoming a social enterprise to the extent that it did not prioritise other necessary activities, such as consulting members on development, a consultation that would have made the process more inclusive and reduced members' worries over the direction of change.

There is research evidence that there may be hidden disadvantages for small VCSE groups that *do* successfully convert to social enterprise as a means to maintain their organisation. It has been recognised by researchers of the VCSE sector for many years that the maintenance needs of VCSE organisations can result in the displacement of their founding goals (for an early example, see Sills 1957, p. 255).

There is much evidence that a tension exists between commitment to the core mission and professionalisation of VCSE organisations so that they can engage in substantial trading, including subcontracting welfare services (see Eikenberry and Drapal Kluver 2004, p. 136; Foster and Bradach 2005, p. 94; Guo 2006, p. 123; McDonald 2007; Carman 2010; Ebrahim and Rangan 2010). In his qualitative meta-analysis of 19 case studies, Valeau (2015) argues that the biggest challenge to the development of VCSE organisations is mission drift as a result of professionalisation. He argues that the contradictory demands of a professionalised organisation and a mission founded in grassroots culture leads organisations towards an “existential crisis” characterised by contradiction and uncertainty. This provides an opportunity for “deciders” (those who make decisions within the organisation) to determine its direction of long-term development.

Certainly, both VCSE organisations explored here suffered existential crises reflected in contradictory views about how they should develop. However, despite having strong leaders, in both cases the direction of development was not at the whim of specific individuals. The failed VCSE,

HoM, illustrates this. Even with a strong “decider” and grant funding, there was no agreement by members on how it should develop. The evidence suggests that small VCSEs are built on the consensus of their volunteers who do most of the practical work of the organisation and, without this consensus, such organisations are likely to fail.

Research evidence also suggests that, in addition to the effects of trading activities, grant funding can have a negative impact on the development of small VCSE groups. In their quantitative study of the factors that contribute to the closing of VCSE groups in the United States, Hager et al. (2004) argue, counter-intuitively, that small organisations that do *not* get grant funding are more likely to survive than those that do.

They suggest that this is because grant funding is “fickle”: short-term and with differing requirements in each funding round (Hager et al. 2004, p. 180). Phillimore and McCabe come to a similar conclusion in their 2015 study of grassroots organisations. Their respondents felt that unfunded grassroots organisations were more sustainable than funded organisations in a recession. One of their respondents commented that: “They are already at the bottom and there is no way down” (Phillimore and McCabe 2015, p. 145). This actually makes them less susceptible to the problems that arise when short-term funding ends.

The findings here confirm this. After exhausting the grant funding gained from its PCT partner, MHHG was destabilised. There was desperation at the top of the organisation about the fiscal solvency of the organisation and volunteers and members lost confidence, both in their leaders and in the direction of development. These were tensions that had the potential to cause members to leave and for the group to fail, as Hager et al suggest.

Even if small VCSEs do not achieve increased funding to maintain their organisations after expansion and professionalisation it is reasonable to suppose that many *will* survive although at a reduced size, with less members and a smaller range of activities because they fulfil a need in their local communities. They can be kept afloat with income from traditional funding activities such as subscriptions, donations and fundraising and group activities for which members pay.

Expansion and professionalisation may be harmful to some grassroots organisations per se. Certainly, MHHG appeared to have an “organic” size that was appropriate to local need and to their volunteer resource bank. Other small VCSEs may also find that they do not work effectively in an expanded and professionalised form and have the additional problem of

trying to sustain their larger organisation – a problem that can, in itself, divert them from their central missions and encourage the pursuit of further external funding.

To conclude on an optimistic note, the results show that small VCSEs are not simply tools of government policy but can be resilient, independent organisations able to weather organisational changes that result from short-term funding or the pursuit of it. Where small local VCSEs, such as MHHG, survive over a number of years, this may reflect their capacity to serve a distinct local need. The heart of small VCSEs will always be the body of altruistic and community-orientated volunteers who feel passionately about serving that community need. Without their commitment and the members who respond to it, such organisations would fail. This is not to deny that there will always be casualties that are diverted from their central mission by the pursuit of external funding and fail as a result, as did HoM.

The findings show that the specific logics of grassroots organisations militate against the pursuit of external funding for its own sake and provide an important balance for such organisations, within neoliberal orthodoxy. As Rochester suggests, expressive behaviours characterise such organisations and are an area of non-economic goals where investment in the field precludes economic gain (2013, p. 148).

NOTE

1. Bourdieu argues that habitus is both a bodily orientation (a “hexis”, 1997, p. 141) and an embedded system of classification of the nature of reality which may be largely pre-conscious (1994, p. 8). Both aspects combine to give:

...an immediate relationship of involvement, tension and attention, which constructs the world and gives it meaning. (Bourdieu 1997, p. 142)

Inequalities of Power: Cross-Sector Partnerships

Abstract This chapter examines how neoliberal orthodoxy affects the cross-sector partnerships in which the two grassroots organisations engaged in order to gain external resources. Powerful organisations can affect the way grassroots organisations develop by exchanging resources for some control over development and also by their “weight” in the field. I conclude that the leaders, with a “practical sense” of the terms of reference of the field, understood that they were engaged in market exchanges and negotiated to gain valued resources. Where volunteers have a strong commitment to a cohesive central mission (the specific logic of grassroots organisations), this can counterbalance the unilateral action of leaders and prevent damaging and possibly fatal development.

Keywords Power inequalities · Generic logics · Specific logics · Social capital

Small VCSEs are not isolated and autonomous social regions but are affected by their interactions with other organisations. The internal dynamics of two grassroots organisations for people with heart disease were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter looks at the effects of neoliberal orthodoxy on the cross-sector partnerships that the two organisations formed with other organisations in order to gain external funding and other resources.

MHHG and HoM partnered with a range of organisations in their searches for external funding. This included Midlancet PCT (now replaced by local GP consortia) and the local branch of CVS. They also partnered with a private consultant that worked exclusively with the VCSE sector and a research team within the local university.

The two small VCSEs and other organisations worked in partnership to achieve mutually agreed goals in a social environment with recognisable goals, tactics and norms of behaviour. In other words, the space of partnerships is a field. This is a social universe with norms of practice and shared assumptions about the mutual benefits to partners from the partnership and about the range of resources to employ to meet this goal (Bourdieu 1993, p. 162). The field of partnerships with small VCSEs can be viewed as a *higher-level* field, within which each organisation is, in Bourdieu's terms, a "subfield" (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 36).

In *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, Bourdieu uses the example of laboratories as subfields within the higher-level field of science to present a view of fields as existing in a hierarchy, like layers in an onion. Laboratories are situated with other laboratories in a hierarchized space in which the capitals they hold give them social positioning in relation to these other organisations in the field of science (Bourdieu 2001b, pp. 32, 66).

In a similar way, in the field of cross-sector partnerships, each organisation has "a determinate position within the field" yet has "relative autonomy with respect to the constraints associated with that position" – in other words, is itself a field (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 66). As social agents in the field of partnerships, partner organisations have differing weights and composition of resources (capitals) that they deploy in struggles to take profits from the partnership field (see Bourdieu 1993, p. 162, 1994, p. 77; 2001b, p. 34). The capacity of organisations to influence the development of small VCSEs in such partnerships is linked to the volume of resources that they offer that are valued by the VCSEs (whether grant funding, contracts, therapeutic support, support for organisational development or any other resource).

There is greater complexity in this multi-organisation field structure than in fields constituted by a single organisation, such as the small VCSEs that have a systematic integration of language, goals and orientation. As Babiak and Thibault suggest, the cultural differences between organisations – as shown by differences in language, specific goals and orientation – may be a challenge to the effectiveness of their cross-sector partnerships (Babiak and Thibault 2009, p. 121; see also Coulson 2005).

As fields, cross-sector partnerships may be sustained interactions that involve various alliances between organisational representatives or may be short-lived. Alliances with a specific goal and profits for partners can be seen as Bourdieusian *games*: “One can speak of a game in order to say that a group of people participate in a regulated activity, an activity which, without necessarily being the product of obedience to rules, *obeys certain regularities*” (Bourdieu 1986b, p. 113). Here, I will examine three funding games within an established partnership of cross-sector organisations.

THE PARTNERS

In the final years of Midlancet PCT (it ceased to exist in 2012) it planned to outsource 60 % of services to VCSEs and private companies. Not surprisingly, the ideal organisational structure, from the viewpoint of the local PCT, was a neoliberal, professionalised model with clear accountabilities, targets and evaluative structures. This is an organisational structure that many small VCSE organisations do not have. Elinor, a Midlancet PCT clinical manager, gave a talk to MHHG about the Midlancet Expert Patients Programme and explained that the PCT had problems with grass-roots organisations because they did not conform to being output-driven: “It’s because they have a wider definition of health.”

As part of its development plan, the PCT partnered with MHHG to provide secondary prevention activities that would fit with its public health remit. This initially included providing clinicians, subsidised therapies and short-term therapeutic projects to promote lifestyle change in members. The PCT Commissioner, Jo, commented that

The PCT funds [MHHG] at a very low level. . . . The only thing we’ve given them [in addition to speakers, and funding for projects] is this dietician to support them in the hope that these people, that have been with us in rehab, manage to maintain their healthy lifestyles by being part of a social group.

The PCT then began to engage in business development activities with MHHG to encourage it to expand and to become a social enterprise, to make it possible for the PCT to subcontract services to the organisation. Jo argued that this conversion would benefit MHHG because it would then be able to use its profits to sustain its mutual support activities for people with chronic disease as well as meet PCT targets by providing “cost neutral” secondary prevention in the city.

Midlancet CVS also worked with the two small VCSEs in business development activities. CVS workers support grassroots organisations in the range of activities that are preliminary to becoming a social enterprise and bidding for grants or contracts. This includes creating the constitution and committee structure, formalising policies and procedures and changing their legal status to an incorporated organisation.

Incorporation is an important legal step in business for VCSEs that intend to engage in substantial trading. It transfers financial responsibility from the trustees to the organisation so that when trading becomes the major source of income, the trustees will not be held personally responsible for any debts incurred. CVS also helps grassroots organisations to search and bid for contracts and grants. It is a charity that is funded through organisations that work to state policy, including the NHS and the local authority, but as Sam, the local CVS worker, said positions itself as “completely independent” of its funders although its orientation is clearly neoliberal.

MHHG also worked with a private consultant, Jane, who also supports grassroots organisations in trading and volunteer management activities. The aim of her consultancy is to develop their trading activities to the point where they can become independent of other organisations as Jane commented: “My focus is on the self-sustainability of VCSEs, with profits fed back into the organisation.” Jane worked with MHHG in development activities to enable it to convert to a social enterprise.

The other organisation that was involved with the two small VCSEs was the research team from the local university that created the online support group, HoM. Once the online group had become established as an independent VCSE, the PCT became interested in brokering a merger between it and MHHG, in order to be able to commission services from the new, larger VCSE that would result. The research team was involved in this process.

They had continued to support the online group after it became independent and had a particularly close relationship with John, the volunteer Administrator. John was encouraged to apply for grant funding by Paul, the team member who remained in closest contact: “I think you may well get a funding for something like that [the health portal]. It fits with the NHS’s agenda about self-care and about patients mutually supporting one another.” The research team was involved in discussions with the online group, MHHG and the PCT, about the merger of the two small VCSEs and this involvement influenced the future direction of both groups.

ALLIANCES

The first alliance led to the expansion of MHHG into branches throughout the city. From 2000 onwards, Jo, the PCT Commissioner, had been looking for opportunities to expand the PCT public health role in the city. Jed and Harry joined MHHG at this time, when its original Lottery funding was exhausted and the group was looking for new external funding. Their alliance with Jo led the group to expand from their main site into four additional branches. It also resulted in new staff posts, a financial subsidy for some group activities and in-kind support for therapeutic services. The PCT planned further expansion of MHHG in the near future, as Harry commented: “The PCT would like us to have 20 groups within the city, no idea [why]. It’s obviously something they’ve told. . . . I’ve read some of their plan where they mention us quite a lot.”

In return for this grant funding from the PCT, MHHG was required to meet PCT targets for the number of new members to enrol at each branch and this expansion shifted some responsibility for secondary prevention activities from the PCT to MHHG. Although the VCSE did expand into branches, grant funding was provided for expansion but not for core funding to maintain the new branches. This appeared to be a PCT strategy to encourage the group to work actively to become self-sustaining in its expanded form. Jed and Harry understood this PCT perspective, as Jed commented: “We’ve got to look for everything to be self-funding. . . you run out of funding sources.”

The shared habitus of the leaders of MHHG and the PCT Commissioner, Jo, was an important element in the success of the first alliance because both sets of partners had the same style of interaction and made the same assumptions (at least initially). Both sought the same goal (funding for the self-help group) and accepted that this required the organisation to expand into branches throughout the city.

In background, the PCT Commissioner, Jo, shared similarities of background with the leaders of MHHG (Jed and Harry), as a member of the same middle-class, public sector, managerial social grouping, Registrar General social class (RGII). The PCT Commissioner and the leaders did appear to be members of the same social grouping – they all dressed smartly and were articulate and familiar with the jargon of funding agencies. They also shared similarities of orientation to group development. The focus of Jed and Harry, like that of the PCT Commissioner, was “naturally” on the funding aspects of the organisation (Bourdieu 1997,

p. 11; see also Puncheva 2008, p. 274). With this similarity, it is not surprising that the leaders of MHHG came to be seen as the “acceptable” face of the group for Jo, in contrast to the previous chair and treasurer:

My first contact with the club was, to be honest, a surreal experience. I just thought I can't do this! I made my excuses and left quickly. They didn't have a chair that was . . . able to fulfil his role, had he had a role description – which he didn't – and was able to lead. (Jo, interview)

The founders of MHHG and the volunteers were successfully mobilised to set up the new branches because their goals were sufficiently similar to that of the PCT Commissioner. They believed that expansion contributed to the reach of the founding mission of MHHG – to provide an environment in which members with heart disease could mutually support each other. The criticisms of the founders and volunteers about expansion related to the speed at which it happened, rather than to the fact of expansion itself.

After this initial expansion that strengthened the links between the group leaders and the PCT, MHHG experienced financial problems exacerbated by their attempts to maintain the branches without further external funding. Jed and Harry believed that the PCT might be prepared to continue funding their branches and took a strategic view of what the PCT might be prepared to offer, as Harry explained: “I think to do what they want; we'd want £84,000. This year we got £10,000 off them.” The leaders accepted that the group would have to expand further in order to get more funding. Even so, they still retained an independent and practical view of the way the group would develop and of differences between their perspective and that of the PCT: “The future of this group is in expansion. But I think they [the PCT] were thinking we were going to go BOOM and be this marvellous thing” (Harry).

Where Harry and Jed wanted to establish yet more branches to gain additional funding from the PCT, Joanne, the founder's daughter went in a different direction and decided to go for more Lottery funding, after the founders' original successful bid in the late 1990s. With the PCT Commissioner, and Jane, the private consultant, she set up the Business Development (BD) Subcommittee. The BD Subcommittee sat below the Management Committee in the formal structure of MHHG and this gave a legitimacy to its agenda.

At this time, MHHG offered a wide range of therapeutic activities to members and the founders' new Lottery application proposed the creation of a main trading hub, selling expertise to other voluntary groups in how

to effectively expand and professionalise services. Under this strategy, the main site of MHHG would become one of the volunteer satellites that fulfilled the founding mission of mutual support, along with the other branches. The Subcommittee believed that the revenue gained from trading would support the volunteer satellites. They were influenced by the view of the private consultant, who had previous experience of setting up social enterprises and believed that the trading activities of MHHG needed to be kept separate from its voluntary activities:

The group needs a steering committee with a business development manager who is paid, at the helm. There is a conflict of interest where there are members who sit on the management committee as well. (Jane, interview)

This Subcommittee created a strategy document and Lottery application to restructure the group into a social enterprise: “We had, ermm . . . , a charity manager, we ‘ad a line manager, we’d learnt from all this and we had it all in place” (Joanne). This plan to restructure the organisation failed because when the development strategy and bid were presented to the Management Committee, they were rejected.

The leaders of MHHG set the frame of reference for access to the Management Committee meetings and were instrumental in blocking this bid. The partners in this second alliance were not successful because the recommendations of the BD Subcommittee were submitted to the committee by a member of the Management Committee, rather than by a member of the Subcommittee. This enabled the leaders to legitimately reject these recommendations as ill-thought out, as Harry commented: “They applied for £100,000 and we would not have been equipped to deal with it. It would have been open to abuse.”

It is telling that Harry and Jed created a new development plan to restructure the group into a social enterprise with a remarkably similar Lottery bid, immediately afterwards. The leaders were supported in this by Sam, the local CVS worker. The upshot was that the leaders of MHHG retained control over its development despite resistance from the founders and their partners.

It is notable that the partners in this failed alliance to restructure the group were, in contrast to the first alliance, mismatched. The partners did not have the same style of interaction – the founders had a less elaborated vocabulary with more local idioms and a more casual style of dress than

their partners. In addition, the underlying motivation of the three partners did not correspond. They did not “construct” the alliance in the same way.

For the founders, this alliance was a strategy to reduce the control of the leaders over group development, an attempt at “outflanking” (Clegg 1975, p. 207). The Lottery grant, had it been successful, would have reduced the power of the leaders by placing a paid business development manager in overall control. The founders did not express this motivation directly. Rather, they expressed doubts about the capacity of the leaders to lead effectively, as Joanne remarked: “Every time there’s a vote [in the Management Committee meeting], its ‘yeh’ and the people don’t know what they’re voting on, yeh know. And there’s no... I think on our Committee, it’s like we’ve gone wrong.”

The founders believed that the leaders rejected the restructure plan because they felt threatened: “There was definitely some fear. They didn’t want the strategic development to have the power. They wanted it. So it was taken back and it ended with nothin’. We had all those professionals then – you’d never get them back on.” (Joanne).

Jo, the Commissioner, had a different motivation in the alliance to that of the founders. For her, the aim of conversion to a social enterprise was to prepare the group for PCT commissioning. She believed that it was logical for the organisation to change its core mission in the Lottery application to gain a wider member base for commissioning:

And the problem with the last Lottery bid that went in was that it was still talking very insular about MHHG. My advice was that they change to a group for long-term conditions generally. And then they could get more members and the branches would have more scope and then they could look at providing more services. And then they would be in a better position to force the PCT’s hand in terms of commissioning. They would have more power in that relationship. (Jo, interview)

This change to the core mission of the organisation was not part of the Lottery bid because it was rejected by the founders and volunteers, who cherished the founding mission of their organisation. Jo, however, believed that the bid failed because the group as a whole was insular and unwilling to change.

The private consultant had a different motivation to that of the founders or the PCT Commissioner. Jane believed that grassroots organisations were likely to become subsumed under the control of organisations

that funded them, such as the PCT, and to be diverted from their central missions and, therefore, would benefit from becoming independent social enterprises. She also believed that close personal ties with funding organisation representatives was harmful in the long run because it builds up personal dependency:

The problem with personality-based links with the PCT is that funding disappears with the individual who can be sidelined. For this reason, third sector organisations should be independent not commissioned by the PCT. (Jane, interview)

It did happen that Jo was moved to another commissioning job in the PCT soon after and the benefits of this close working relationship were lost.

The private consultancy, unlike the PCT, was not a potential source of external funding for MHHG. Jane had less capacity to influence VCSE plans because she only provided business development support and was funded through the income they gained as a result. It was for this instrumental reason, that she formed an alliance with Jo despite her clear reservations about PCT partnership. Jane shared the view of the founders, that the development plan failed because the leaders were insular and fearful of losing control over the direction of MHHG development: “They want to control everything and do not have a broad view.”

This alliance failed because, without shared habitus, the partners had different assumptions about the purpose of the restructure and “read” the local context wrongly (Bourdieu 1997, p. 142). If the PCT Commissioner and private consultant had understood the power relations that underlay the interactions between founders and leaders, they would have been more able to assess the probable outcome when the Lottery application went to the Management Committee.

The partners in the second alliance could work together without the same motivations because they used a language that was “pragmatically ambiguous” (Giroux 2006, p. 1232). Their language bypassed the contradictory motivations of the PCT Commissioner, private consultant and founders and focussed on the goal of group survival through restructuring and social enterprise.

The BD Subcommittee did influence the direction of development of the group to the extent that restructuring to a social enterprise became an item on the agenda of the leaders. As Bourdieu says, “The forces of the field orient the

dominant towards strategies whose end is the perpetuation or reinforcement of their domination” and the leaders did, indeed, subvert the plan of the Subcommittee by using it to their own advantage in a new Lottery application, in which they retained control over MHHG development (2005, p. 202).

MHHG continued to struggle to make ends meet in its expanded and professionalised form. One solution that Jed and Harry came up with in discussions with Jo was to merge with another similar small VCSE organisation in the belief that they would be more likely to be commissioned by the PCT and other organisations as a larger and more diverse social enterprise. They already had links with HoM that derived from the early days of the research project when MHHG provided mentors for HoM members and some members had joined both organisations. Merging the groups seemed like an obvious solution. At the first AGM of HoM as an independent VCSE organisation in 2009, Jed, in partnership with the PCT Commissioner, Jo, and a PCT clinical manager attempted to persuade the online group to merge with MHHG.

At the heart of the plan for merger was the belief that the online group would provide an additional, online, therapeutic service that could be added to the existing services offered by MHHG. They reasoned that, with this additional, unusual service to offer to members, the merged VCSE organisation would be more likely to be commissioned. Jo believed that, if HoM stayed independent as a smaller and less diversified organisation than MHHG, it would be less likely to gain contracts for NHS services: “At least if they’re *with* MHHG, they have a chance of getting a chunk of that money. You get economies of scale.”

The online group as a whole were divided in their views about the merger. John, the Administrator, had a clear idea of how HoM should develop and this did not include a merger. He believed that, if the merger went ahead, the PCT would try to control the development of the larger merged VCSE:

It might make sense to merge at some point but, initially, what we’ve got to do is establish our identity. We are pretty unique. Both the online group and MHHG have a local profile but I think that, eventually, we will have a more *national* profile because it’s an open website. (John, interview)

In the online group AGM, Jo, the Commissioner, attempted to persuade the group to merge with MHHG, by focussing on its vulnerability to funding crises if it stayed independent. This was the wrong tactic. The

emphasis on funding problems was seen by John as a threat and reinforced his perception that this was an attempted takeover:

Then there was this thing with the PCT Commissioner and the chair of MHHG, uhhmmm . . . , where I felt the Commissioner was, in a way, saying to us, the online group, that really you need to join with other people to get the best benefit from funding. (John, field notes)

John understood the potential opportunities for external funding from the PCT that might ensue from the merger, but wanted to keep HoM's options for organisational development open: "The Primary Care Trust is not the only body that gives funding. There's lots of other sources of funding that we could go after." This view was shared by Irene, the HoM Treasurer. She felt that, when merged, the PCT would make the online group work to its own targets: "MHHG is under the, err . . . , supervision, aegis you might say, of the PCT and we're independent. They're not working to the same end as we are. We've got a brilliant idea and they want to take it from us" (Irene). In contrast, most of the other members of the online group were positive about the merger as in this comment from Derek:

. . . Jed seemingly knows what he's talking about and I think he should be more involved with both. I think the groups should merge. We haven't got a base, a room. We meet on the net. I think it would be beneficial if we get together. People on the site are falling away, we need more people. (Derek, interview)

Although he was personally against the merger, John seemed to feel the need to test the validity of his judgement, using the bellwether of the research team, as he explained:

It was the next day that I emailed Paul [research team member] because I thought I might have been picking up on things wrongly and he has said, and said all along that there could be value to us in doing things with MHHG . . . I don't think he thinks that we should actually merge. (John, field notes)

After the AGM, John, as Administrator of HoM, rejected the merger of HoM with MHHG despite the views of most members. He was firmly committed to gaining grant funding, encouraged by the research team. He started the process of registering the group with the Charity Commission

and writing applications for grant funding assisted by CVS and was successful in bids to the Lottery, the Neighbourhood Community Chest and the British Heart Foundation. In January 2010, the group held a launch at which they used the new laptops and distributed their publicity materials, paid for from the grant aid. This successful activity confirmed the independence of the online group from the PCT and from MHHG.

In this failed merger, assumptions made about the merger by the MHHG leaders and the PCT representatives were different from that of the university team and the Administrator and Treasurer of HoM. Here, the key element of difference was not a misrecognition of the power relations of the field but a more fundamental division in the “principles of classification” by which the partners constructed the alliance (Bourdieu 1994, p. 8). In other words, their assumptions about the merger were based on different principles.

The reason this happened is that these partners were located in different social domains. Bourdieu defines the domain as the most generalised level of a field system. The fields of a domain share the same general goals and an arsenal of methods and techniques to achieve these goals that are collectively accumulated and implemented without being entirely unitary (Bourdieu 1997, p. 113).¹ Within the “social universe” of a domain:

Common sense is a stock of self-evidences shared by all, which, within the limits of a social universe, ensures a primordial consensus on the meaning of the world, a set of tacitly accepted commonplaces . . . (Bourdieu 1997, p. 98)

Different domains, Bourdieu argues, may present competing definitions of the nature of reality. The PCT and MHHG interacted in a social space with public health goals located within the health domain and with resources, tactics and strategies to achieve this goal. For the leaders of MHHG and the PCT Commissioner, the strategy of merging the two VCSE organisations was orientated towards this goal through PCT commissioning.

In contrast, the research team was from the academic domain, an arena licensed to explore and objectify the truth of the social world (Bourdieu 1984, p. xii). They saw the merger in a different way. In their perspective, a larger organisation – MHHG – was attempting to absorb a smaller one that had unique and valuable characteristics that served a specific health need. The role of the PCT in the merger, in their perspective, was as a ringmaster with control over the future development of the merged group. For the

university team, the potential profits of commissioning (financial stability for the online group) came with costs that were too high.

The leaders of the online group followed the lead of the university team, because it was “natural” – the team had set up the group as a research project within a managed academic environment rather than as a community-led health initiative within the health domain. For John and Irene, independence from larger and more powerful organisations, like the PCT and MHHG, was of prime importance, as Irene commented:

I shouldn't say this but I feel that we should be just a further string to the bow of [MHHG] whereas, if we stay alone, we will get a different group of people with us. (Irene, field notes)

What resulted at the HoM AGM was a clash of “vocabularies” between domains and there was no meaningful communication between partners (Haugaard 2009, p. 21; see also Bourdieu 1986b, p. 241). Whilst the financial and scientific capital of the PCT gave it a high social positioning in relation to VCSEs within the health domain, it was less likely to be powerful at the boundary of the academic domain where there were different definitions of success for small VCSE organisations.

During the AGM, Jo became aware of the resistance of some members of the online group but she was deeply committed to the merger and convinced that if they understood the positive benefits, they would change their minds, as she explained, in some perplexity afterwards:

There was definitely a lot of reluctance, looking around the room. But I thought, you know, that I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't say, how has this come about? (Jo, field notes)

Jo believed that she had reached an implicit agreement with the research team about the best way for the online group to develop. She did not grasp the gulf between her perspective and that of the online group and the research team and was shocked, after the AGM, to discover that HoM had registered with the Charity Commission – which confirmed its independence from MHHG:

Hearts of Midlancet should not have been set up as a separate charity, no way never. From the very beginning, my advice to Sue, Paul and Nick [the research team] nine months ago was for it to be amalgamated into MHHG

to be a provider of services. Did Nick [the Principal Investigator] decide for them or were they given a choice? I thought Nick was arranging it with the PCT. (Jo, field notes)

The proposal to merge may have had greater chance of success if it had not been introduced at the first AGM of the online group. Jo did not have a “feel” for the way decisions were made in HoM (see Bourdieu 1980, p. 66). She assumed that, as in the PCT, the formal context of committee meetings was where decision-making in the group would happen. In contrast, for the online group, as a new and rapidly changing organisation with strong leadership from individuals and a history of informal decision-making, the first AGM of the group was a new and unfamiliar setting rather than a forum for decision-making. The decision about the merger was actually taken by John, the administrator of the online group, *after* the AGM as a result of consultation with the university team.

In conclusion, power relations between organisations in partnerships are not constant across the social space of the field but vary by social site and the context. In the three alliances here, the most effective was the first one in which partners from different organisations shared similarity of habitus – both in their style of interaction and in the assumptions that they made about its purpose.

Where partners did not share similarity of habitus, there was less likelihood of success. The second alliance, within the health domain, was an opportunistic mismatch of partners who did not share the same motivations. Without shared habitus, the PCT Commissioner and the Consultant misrecognised the power relations between founders and leaders that underpinned the dynamic of their interaction.

The last alliance failed for a different reason. It was located at the boundary between the academic and health domains where partners had different tacit assumptions about the purpose of the online VCSE group and about what constituted its successful development. Partners did not “talk the same language” and had no understanding of each other’s perspective.

PARTNERSHIP GAMES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR SMALL VCSES

Do these findings provide evidence that: “Inequalities of power, limited trust and collaborative capacity, and lack of legitimacy can give a dark side to partnerships [with VCSEs]” (Rees et al. 2012, p. 1)? They do provide

some evidence of this, but it is a nuanced and optimistic picture of the effects of cross-sector partnerships on grassroots organisations.

In the partnership field, the extent to which organisations have the capacity to structure the field and influence the way other organisations interact is a function of the volume and species of their capital (Bourdieu 1994, p. 15; 2001b, p. 34). Powerful agents that have a high weight of valued and scarce capitals, such as the PCT in this partnership, can influence the constraints on and opportunities open to other agents in the field (see Bourdieu 2005, p. 195). In relation to MHHG, the PCT was the most powerful partner in this local health field because it held the greatest weight of financial and medical capital of all the partner organisations. It was the only one to offer both funding and support from clinicians.

As a state agent, the PCT frame of reference reflected neoliberal orthodoxy - that a “successful” VCSE is enterprising and businesslike. Figure 5.1 illustrates this.

In the three alliances, the PCT Commissioner’s perspective *was* that a successful VCSE was one that was ready to be commissioned to meet PCT public health targets. In order to achieve this, the organisation had to be large enough to make commissioning cost-effective, professional in organisational form and to be pragmatic rather than idealistic about its social mission (for more discussion of the tensions between commitment to the core mission and pragmatism, see Jacklin-Jarvis 2015; Rochester 2013, p. 172).

As a relatively powerless organisation that valued the resources offered by the PCT, MHHG was influenced by this neoliberal frame of reference. At the same time that this PCT expanded its public health activities in the city of Midlancet, MHHG was becoming financially insecure as its original Lottery grant came to an end. This made it more likely that members who had skills to gain external funding would become influential in the organisation. It was at this time that Jed and Harry joined MHHG and rose rapidly to senior positions on the Management Committee. The PCT frame of reference for secondary prevention activities and the opportunities it offered to MHHG made it likely that these members would rise in MHHG because their rise made the group financially viable.

The strong neoliberal orientation in the habitus of these leaders was implicated in this process. The leaders recognised the local funding game being played (funding for grassroots organisations in exchange for expansion and professionalisation). Unlike the founders and volunteers, they understood the corporate world of networking and made opportunistic

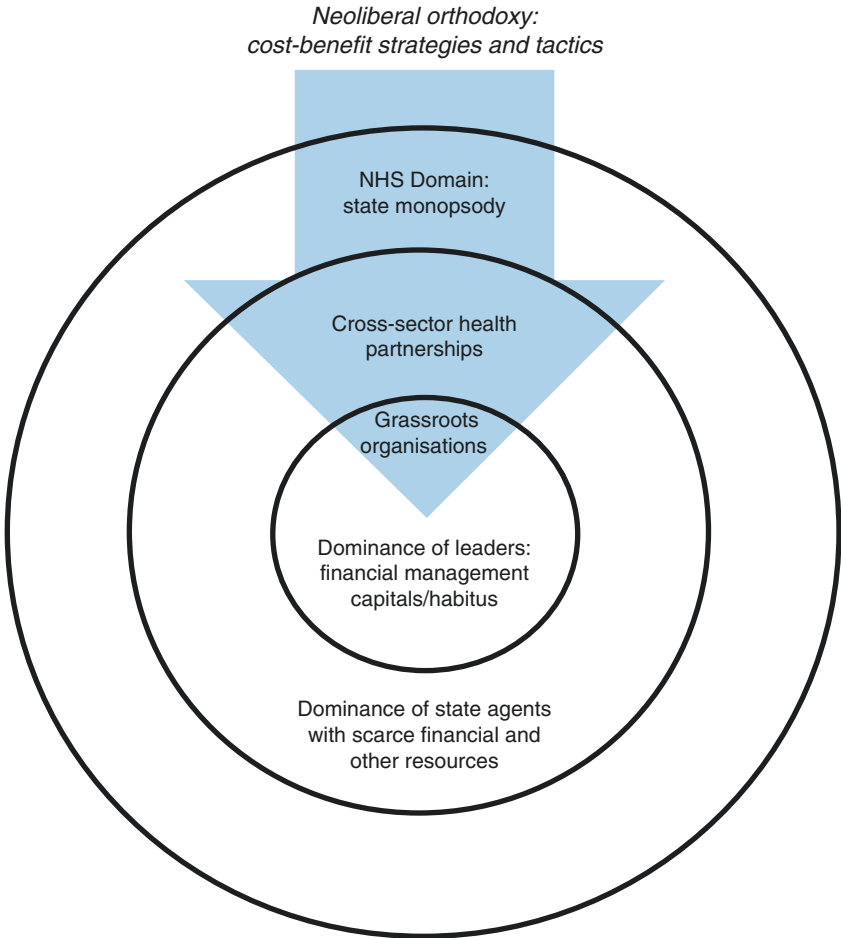


Fig. 5.1 The hierarchy of fields in the health domain for grassroots organisations

links with representatives from powerful organisations, including the PCT. For example, when Jo, the PCT Commissioner who had worked so intensively with the group, was moved to a new post, the new Commissioner came to visit MHHG. Jed chatted for a while to her then winked at me and whispered: “That’s where the money is”, rubbing his fingers in a gesture of “lots of money.”

Once in senior positions, the leaders were able to increase their autonomy in decision-making and to enhance their control over MHHG development. They also appeared to desire the personal capital of being the “face” of a successful grassroots organisation to other organisations, a process that Bourdieu calls “naming” (1985, p. 741).

The leaders understood what was required for success for small VCSEs in partnership working and it offered them a predictable and calculable set of outcomes. The PCT assumption that a successful voluntary organisation was one that it commissioned matched their own. Bourdieu calls this harmony between personal habitus and the terms of reference of the field, a “practical sense”:

Someone who has incorporated the structures of the field (or of a particular game) “finds his place” there immediately, without having to deliberate, and brings out, without even thinking about it, “things to be done” (business, *pragmata*) and to be done “the right way” ... (Bourdieu 1997, p. 143, author’s italics)

The PCT Commissioner offered inducements (both financial and non-financial) to MHHG in exchange for some control over its development in a direction that would enable the PCT to meet its own public health targets. Given this congruence between the habitus of the leaders and the structure of the field, to what extent was MHHG “saturated with the agenda” of the PCT and other agencies that worked to promote state policy, as many researchers suggest in relation to VCSEs in partnership (see Kuhn 2008, p. 1247; see also Deakin 2001, p. 42; Craig and Taylor 2002, p. 134)?

There is, of course, a tension between agency and dependency when public sector partners hold resources and set the agenda (Jacklin-Jarvis 2015). The leaders of MHHG used the promise of expansion as a negotiating tool in order to gain resources on their own terms. They understood that this was a market exchange in which the organisation met a PCT need in exchange for the valued resource of grant-aid, as Jed commented: “The PCT probably get a heck of a lot more funding off the government than they are pushing our way. But they are trying to get us to do it...”. They were willing to promise to expand the organisation into yet more branches in exchange for additional resources even though they knew that this was almost impossible to achieve because they knew that they were being used by the PCT. Effectively, despite the rhetoric, these *were* market exchanges.

The aim of the first alliance between MHHG and the PCT was to extend the role of the grassroots organisation so that it served a greater proportion of the population of the city. By providing grant funding for expansion, this allowed the PCT to meet its own targets for secondary prevention. By providing no funding for core administrative tasks associated with maintaining the new branches, the PCT laid the groundwork for future MHHG development as a cost-free supplier of services.

In the exchange of grant aid for some influence over development, MHHG complied with the Commissioner's targets for development to the extent that its members did make great efforts to set up new branches at the pace determined by her. The PCT Commissioner, Jo, believed that the voluntary organisation would "naturally" want to work altruistically for the good of city residents rather than just for its members and that they would maintain the branches, once set up, and be willing to expand further.

However, in setting the agenda within which the group expanded, Jo could not determine all aspects of decision-making. Whilst MHHG did expand into branches as required, the founders and volunteers, who did most of the practical work to keep the organisation operating, resisted her plan for the branches to be maintained without further PCT funding because they were at breaking point trying to keep the new branches going, as it was. They would not countenance further expansion. Jed and Harry were unable to push expansion further.

For her part, Jo, the Commissioner, quickly became aware that MHHG was not willing to maintain the branches: "We're being told by Jed that basically if the PCT doesn't provide funding, the branches won't continue." She did not understand their point of view and used the language of competition: "I feel that *fundamentally*, it's us and them." For Jo, it was "natural" to believe that MHHG would share PCT goals and she did not reflect on her attempt to instrumentalise this organisation to fulfil PCT targets (for a fuller discussion of this issue, see McGovern 2013, p. 234).

In this partnership, the funding provided by the PCT enabled it to influence the development of MHHG to some extent. However, MHHG retained some leverage in the negotiations over expansion. It was not powerless because it was perceived by Jo to be a vehicle through which the PCT could deliver its public health services in the city. For this reason, support for the voluntary group was *negotiated* by the Commissioner. Rather than being in a position to say "take it or leave it" to the group, Jo sought to get the best outcome possible from the partnership, in terms of PCT targets for secondary prevention activities.

The influence of the PCT was even more limited in the second and third alliances. In the second alliance, Jo and the private consultant, Jane, may have been able to influence MHHG towards becoming a social enterprise if the resources offered to the organisation had been greater. Instead of providing direct grant funding, the strategy of Jo and Jane was to support them in business development activities and a Lottery application. In this attempt to influence the development of the group, grant funding from the Lottery was only a potential profit. The private sector consultant had less influence than the PCT in this partnership. The consultancy was a “second rank” social agent that seized opportunities for gain as a result of support activities (see Bourdieu 2005, pp. 202, 203). It had a low social position in this partnership because it was the only one of the four professional organisations that interacted with the VCSEs that was dependent on these organisations for its own funding.

The final alliance between the leaders of MHHG and Jo to promote a merger with HoM in order to facilitate PCT commissioning, was unsuccessful because the PCT was a less powerful social agent at the boundary of the health and academic domains than in the centre of the health domain. The profits of the health domain that MHHG wanted were not valued to the same extent by HoM because it originated in the academic domain.

The most important factor in the extent to which small VCSEs can negotiate effectively with powerful organisations with which they partner, is that they are institutionally independent. They are democratic organisations with their own constitutions and management structures. As Sharp et al. argue, a powerful organisation can only achieve some control over the development of another independent organisation by offering in exchange resources (material or symbolic) that are desired by this organisation (2002, p. 3).

Jo, the PCT Commissioner acknowledged this in relation to the small VCSEs of this study: “They are independent organisations. There’s no *telling* to be done, only advice.” Because of its independence, MHHG chose to disregard potential resources that resulted from partnerships with other organisations where such gains threatened its founding mission and HoM chose not to merge with MHHG. Independence allows small VCSEs to “differentiate” without sacrificing their founding missions (Barman 2002, p. 1191). The founding mission of MHHG was mutual support for members with heart disease and their families. This remained the key focus of the organisation even when it entered into partnerships to

gain funding. When the PCT offered grant funding and therapeutic support to increase the locations and extent of therapeutic activities within the city, this was a direction of development that was approved throughout the group because it enhanced mutual support activities.

The PCT clinicians, who set up therapies connected with lifestyle change within the group (diet, exercise and stress-reduction activities), also trained volunteers to continue these activities after the clinicians withdrew. The leaders of MHHG were able to carve out a unique niche in the range of its support activities, when compared to other grassroots organisations, as a response to this competitive market for external resources.

Ironically, the greatest threat to the founding mission of small VCSEs may be the temporary nature of public funding regimes. When the PCT cut MHHG's subsidy for therapeutic activities and refused to pay core administrative costs for the branches it had funded the group to set up, this prompted further, desperate searches for funding and plans to convert it to a social enterprise. As the organisation had expanded and professionalised as a result of funding, it required *more* funding than before, just to maintain itself. Even in this difficult circumstance, the group did not move away from its founding mission of support for local people with heart disease because the leaders did not have the support of founders and volunteers for this change.

It is ironic that grassroots organisations such as MHHG and HoM may spend a great deal of time discussing, planning and applying for grants or contracts but that they are relatively unlikely to gain external funding as a major part of their income. Data from the *National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises 2010* (Cabinet Office 2010), a survey of 44,109 VCSE organisations, confirms that grassroots organisations are unlikely to generate much income from trading. The smaller VCSEs gain little income from trading whilst the largest organisations engage in a disproportionate amount of trading activities. Two-thirds of VCSEs have no present government contracts, local statutory grants or government grants despite government encouragement through tax benefits and social investment initiatives.

For most VCSE organisations, the main source of income is donations and fundraising (71.1 %) and membership fees/subscriptions (37.3 %). Government contracts account for only 14 % of income for this sector. When respondents were asked about which source of income is most important to the success of their organisations, one-third (32.9 %) cited

donations and fundraising and 17 % said that membership fees/subscriptions were most important. Only 5.6 % of the respondents considered that earned income from contracts was most important to their organisation's success. It is significant that more than one in ten respondents (12.6 %) did not know the answer to this question – a sign of widespread confusion about the future of the sector.

Jo, the PCT Commissioner, was correct in her view that larger VCSEs are more likely to be commissioned by public bodies. Milligan and Fyfe argue that there is a “bifurcation” of the VCSE sector in which the larger, more corporate organisations work increasingly with the state to deliver public services whilst smaller organisations are largely “under the radar” (2005, p. 419; see also Munoz 2009; HACT 2010; Rees et al. 2012, p. 8). The small VCSEs with income up to £20,000 (half the organisations in the sector) are funded mainly through the traditional activities of donations and fundraising and membership fees/subscriptions. Over 40 % (41.8 %) of these see donations and fundraising as their main source of income compared to only 20 % of the largest organisations. A similar, slightly weaker trend emerges in relation to membership fees and subscriptions.

In relation to the effects of partnership working on the goals of VCSEs, this survey shows that 94.9 % of respondents ranked their organisation as fairly or very successful in partnership, which shows an optimistic outlook, but does not indicate if the mission of the organisation has shifted over time from its original purpose. The results show that relationships with local statutory bodies vary. Nearly two-thirds of respondents from VCSEs (62.9 %) believed that local statutory organisations valued the work of their organisation. A similar proportion believed that the nature and role of their organisation was understood and also that their independence was respected. But of course that leaves one-third of VCSEs who feel unregarded, undervalued and/or misunderstood by statutory agencies.

It is noteworthy that, despite a government emphasis on partnership working, less than a quarter of respondents from VCSEs (22.5 %) believed that local statutory bodies involved their organisation appropriately in developing and carrying out policy. There appears to be a disconnect between the government emphasis on partnership and how it actually feels on the ground from the viewpoint of most small VCSEs. Table 5.1 indicates the relative advantages and costs to grass-roots organisations of engaging in cross-sector partnerships to gain resources.

Table 5.1 Small VCSEs in cross-sector partnerships

<i>Aspects of Small VCSEs</i>			
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>		<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored to local need • Committed volunteers • Democratic structure 	New VCSEs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission may be unclear • Roles may be ill-defined • Membership may be low 	Est'd VCSEs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power differential between leaders and members • Potential for oligarchy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining needed resources • Extending member base • Upskilling from partners
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverted mission • Fragmentation/failure • Time/energy costs • Maintenance costs of expanded organisation

PARTNERSHIPS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR SMALL VCSEs

Rampant competition between small VCSEs for public funding is, I believe, unlikely because they are the repository of social capital that is a safeguard against neoliberal forces. MHHG, like other established grassroots VCSEs, had volunteers who were loyal supporters of its founding mission of mutual support for local people with heart disease. Many of these volunteers who did all the day-to-day practical work in the organisation, had been members for many years and, as a result, shared an understanding of its genesis and social history. They made the organisation resilient in difficult times.

Grassroots organisations are not like businesses in the sense that volunteers are simply unpaid workers. Volunteering is a social role. Using the *Helping Out 2007* survey of English volunteers, Rochester et al. found that meeting people and making friends (“conviviality”) was an important benefit of voluntary action for 86 % of the respondents (2012, p. 162). Volunteers are also more likely to be active citizens who engage in the democratic processes of voting and have enhanced physical and mental health compared to non-volunteers.

The evidence suggests that whilst ambitious leaders of grassroots organisations may attempt to lead their organisations in directions dictated externally by the logic of short-term funding regimes rather than by member needs, without volunteer support this will fail (for full discussion of governance priorities and external funding, see O’Regan and Ostler 2002; Andreoni and Payne 2003; Brooks 2005). Without the help of

volunteers, based not on competition but on a mutually shared community goal, it is difficult for small VCSEs to change mission or client base in order to gain external funding. This is the saving grace, the anchor that preserves them from being enframed and used as a tool of state policy.

Small VCSEs need not sacrifice their own individual identities in the face of pressure from more powerful organisations. The potential opportunity within cross-sector partnerships is to achieve a synergy in which more is achieved collectively than could be done by any of the partner organisations, by playing to their distinctive differences (Jacklin-Jarvis 2015, p. 296). For grassroots organisations, the evidence suggests that this *must* include a focus on their core mission as non-negotiable.

The advantage for small local VCSEs in partnerships to gain public funding is that they can gain resources and expertise that can be used to serve their social mission. They can get immediate funding in times of financial insecurity. They can get support from clinicians with technical skills to help members directly and also to train volunteers in health promotion and other activities. They can take part in fun projects that extend the range of their own facilities and sometimes include equipment for members' personal use, such as pedometers. They may also have the services of paid staff (at least temporarily) to do their routine administration and leave space for members to focus on the central mission of the organisation.

The main challenge for small local VCSEs in partnerships is that this may precipitate fragmentation and failure. Crucially, this is related to communication and consultation with members. Where such organisations operate in a truly democratic way and members feel that they have a voice, the evidence suggests that the outcome is likely to be positive. Some organisations, especially those newly established, will inevitably fail through inertia or internal conflict but those that are strongly linked to their local community and its needs will, I believe, survive.

As a final thought, VCSEs are democratic organisations and the power relations within them can shift quickly as leaders are elected or voted out. For MHHG, the family of the founders of the group may regain overall control in the future or other members may become more influential than they are at present. In grassroots organisations, members can attain a high degree of influence through election to the management committee. Whoever leads MHHG in the future, statutory agencies (such as the consortia of GPs and other health professionals that have replaced the PCT as purchasers of primary healthcare), are likely to seek to make

partnerships with them because such organisations are important in state policy as potential providers of public health services. The greatest danger in offering the carrot of short-term external funding is to new small VCSEs, such as HoM, that have not yet stabilised with a clear core mission and a history of activity to which members and volunteers relate.

NOTE

1. The concept of the domain, as a demarcated and unified social space is not tightly defined by Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, what are considered to be domains (which, confusingly, Bourdieu also calls “fields”) depends on the nature of the social phenomena being investigated (Bourdieu 2001b, p. 66).

Small Voluntary Organisations in the ‘Age of Austerity’: Challenges and Opportunities

Abstract This final chapter explores the limitations of neoliberal orthodoxy and the scope for change. I argue that a wider perspective is possible through reflexivity. With reflection, grassroots organisations are more able to engage in tactical action to gain neoliberal profits or to withdraw if the costs of gaining external resources threaten the core mission of the organisation. Supportive coalitions can assist grassroots organisations and can build a groundswell of support for policy change. Critical intellectuals can provide a robust evidence base to underpin this counter-discourse.

Keywords Reflexivity · Coalition · Re-politicisation

This book has explored the extent to which neoliberal orthodoxy affects small VCSEs both internally and in their cross-sector partnerships to gain external resources. In this last chapter, I want to return to Bourdieu in order to reflect on the opportunities and challenges faced by grassroots organisations in the United Kingdom’s sometimes difficult funding environment. What is their “space of possibles”, what must be accepted and what can be changed for productive life?

THE NATURALISATION OF ORTHODOXY

Let us first return to how state power works. For theorists such as Sandel (2013) and Rochester (2013), state power is a resource owned *substantively* by agents of high social positioning such as media giants like Richard

Murdoch and successful business people like Phillip Green who, thereby, control government policy. Bourdieu (1994) and Foucault (1980) argue, in contrast, that there are struggles between competing dominant agents in the field of power. State power is the outcome of this struggle and is a *force* that dominates all. State domination is the immediate but not explicit submission of citizens to a value system that is a structured whole, to an orthodoxy that imposes itself powerfully on everyone.

In neoliberal orthodoxy, it is economic forces that dominate the state apparatus. This value framework goes deeper than laws and regulations because it is sedimented at a “pre-conscious” level as “incorporated coercion” (Bourdieu 2014, p. 173). Sandel calls this a “market society” where market values have “crowded out” nonmarket norms that are worth caring about. Applying a cost-benefit analysis to everyday life as well as in purely economic exchanges can lead people to buy themselves out of the social contract, the social obligations that lead people to go beyond self-interest. He uses the example of Israeli nursery nurses who were often left waiting for parents who were late picking up their children and decided to charge fines for lateness. The unexpected result was *increased* lateness because parents no longer felt guilty about making the nurses wait (Sandel 2013, p. 119).

Orthodoxy is pervasive and citizens of a country “if correctly socialised” have similar cognitive structures. They observe boundaries they may not even perceive such as automatically stopping at traffic lights (Bourdieu 2014, p. 167). The essential problem for small VCSEs when they plan their direction of development is that the state is not something “out there” that represents the interests of the powerful. Instead, it *constitutes* the social world, is inscribed in it. Orthodoxy “orchestrates” habitus so that people are predisposed to share the same boundaries of what is thinkable (Bourdieu 1997, p. 175). The state frames practices within common forms and categories of perception by its discourse and policy.

It affects not only mental processes but also dispositions of the body and results in “calls to order” that require certain kinds of mental and physical responses (Bourdieu 1994, p. 54). This is what we see in the responses of grassroots organisations to calls for them to be “enterprising” and business-like, most clearly in the mental classifications and bodily hexis of leaders. The issue for such organisations is that, without knowing it, they may accept state neoliberal framing of their social being as “natural” and how it has to be. As Jones suggests: “The mantra of ‘There Is No Alternative’ is pervasive” (2014, p. 313).

The legitimacy of orthodoxy does not arise except in crises because the outward face of the state is the vast world of officialdom, the “bureaucratic” field that represents its legitimate authority (Bourdieu 2014, p. 184). This makes state power appear neutral because it contains agents who are vested with a mission of general interest and transcend their own concerns in favour of universal propositions. This is the essence of the “official”. The “neutral” bureaucratic field actually represents the point of view of those who “dominate by dominating the state” (Bourdieu 1994, p. 59).

The legitimisation of state power in the bureaucratic field makes it likely that, for many grassroots groups, resistance to neoliberal orthodoxy may be beyond the thinkable. Neoliberal orthodoxy emphasises that VCSE organisations operate most effectively when they are competitive, as measured by “winning” grants and contracts for public service delivery. For grassroots organisations, this may result in a mindset that expansion and professionalisation is a price worth paying for gaining scarce and valuable external resources, and that when faced with hurdles to gaining these resources many will simply ask how high they should jump.

A crucial point, however, is that state power cannot *entirely* determine thought and action because social agents can reflect on what they do. It simply makes certain kinds of thought and action likely. Through reflection and discussion, orthodoxy can be re-politicised and grassroots organisations can use conscious strategies to benefit from neoliberal policies selectively and to resist those that may damage them.

REFLECTION AND RESISTANCE

A naturalised neoliberal perception is not inevitable for grassroots organisations. It is possible for social agents to step outside of orthodoxy because habitus has both phylogenetic and ontogenetic components (Bourdieu 1994, p. 55). Phylogenetic habitus is a product of *collective* history for agents and relates to their origin in specific socio-economic classes. Bourdieu calls this “class habitus, the internalised form of class condition and of the conditioning it entails” (1979, p. 101). The underlying shared values that unite social classes within a society derive from orthodoxy.

Ontogenetic habitus, in contrast, is a product of *individual* history. Ontogenesis allows social agents to have a “choice among possibilities” (Bourdieu 2005, p. 195). It is through ontogenesis that people from

similar backgrounds may have very different life courses. The ontogenetic aspect of habitus makes it possible to question established assumptions behind practice in a field and, therefore, to transform power relations (Lovell 2003, p. 3). Through reflection, it becomes possible for grassroots organisations to think outside the bounds of orthodoxy and to make informed choices about development.

A range of theorists suggest practical ways in which VCSE organisations can resist the potentially damaging consequences of neoliberal orthodoxy (Bourdieu 1998; Mathers and Novelli 2007; Woolford and Curran 2012; Jones 2014; Milbourne and Cushman 2015). Woolford and Curran (2012) emphasise the importance of habitus in resistance to orthodoxy in their qualitative study of VCSE social service providers in Canada and their struggle to adapt to public funding regimes. For Woolford and Curran, the key to resistance is reflexivity:

[I]n our usage, “reflexivity” is achieved when an actor moves beyond automatically exhibiting a feel for the game and instead reflects on existing social conditions and orients her or his practices in a more consciously strategic manner (see Adkin, 2003). (Woolford and Curran 2012, p. 50)

Reflexivity facilitates understanding of the wider context of the goals of state policy and enables grassroots organisations to *choose* whether to gain external funding through contracts or grants or to withdraw from the interference of state agents. Woolford and Curran argue that reflexivity can arise spontaneously when an individual’s habitus does not coincide with his or her field position, as for example for dominated minorities or through highly unequal struggles to gain profits within the field. In their research, they found that Canadian indigenous social service agencies had some success in using reason to challenge oppressive neoliberal practices.

One way that their indigenous respondents disrupted orthodoxy was by using neoliberal buzzwords consciously to gain resources, by framing local need within neoliberal funding targets. They give the example of using the words “safety” or “risk” in funding applications to gain resources to use for a wider range of needs of their client group, such as secure housing, having enough to eat or warm clothes. Woolford and Curran call this “tactical” resistance that does not challenge the neoliberal terms of reference of the field.

Another, more direct form of resistance was to use oppositional language and practices that confronted neoliberalism from a position of

“reflexive scepticism” (Woolford and Curran 2012, p. 58). Milbourne and Cushman (2015) provide a different account of resistance by withdrawal. They cite research on VCSEs that have resisted external pressures to change their core mission as a result of *recognising* the damaging internal tensions that are generated (Harris and Young 2009; Milbourne 2013).

From a Foucauldian perspective, Milbourne and Cushman argue that the harshness of state policy towards the VCSE sector also breeds resistance to orthodoxy. They assert that “the decline in state funding to VOs [voluntary organisations] for outsourced services and community projects suggests an unintended opportunity to reclaim independence: a freeing up from the influence and powers of the state” (Milbourne and Cushman 2015, p. 473).

Even with a range of strategies and tactics, there is no magic bullet that will radically improve the situation for grassroots organisations. They will continue to be tempted by external funding and other resources and some will fragment and fail in the process of seeking to gain these. As a result of my own research, I believe that such organisations must place their social mission at the centre of development planning. Other researchers agree. Using extensive evidence from expert witnesses, the Independence Panel concluded that the key elements in the independence of small VCSEs from the powerful organisations that provide funding and other resources are having a clear mission with a focus on the needs of those served and having strong governance (Singleton et al. 2015).

Milbourne and Cushman suggest that the kind of leaders that grassroots organisations have is of overriding importance when there are conflicts over the direction of development (2015, p. 468). As Rochester points out, such organisations are more likely to survive if they have strong leaders who take a “political” rather than a technical role (Rochester 2013, p. 174). Instead of a focus on managerial functions and unilateral alliances with more powerful organisations that can provide funding and other resources, Rochester suggests that a consensual, facilitative approach is best, with effective member consultation directing organisational change.

To have a truly consultative process, in which the members can be involved in the process of planning, demands good social skills in leaders. The TSRC (Third Sector Research Centre) argues that there are four bases of legitimacy for VCSE leaders (Buckingham et al. 2014, p. 16). These are legal, moral, political and technical legitimacy. Taylor and Warburton argue that the moral legitimacy of leaders in many VCSE organisations

rests on their commitment to the essential values that underpin the social mission of the organisation (2003, p. 324, cited in Buckingham et al. 2014, p. 19). In my research, the most important source of legitimacy *was* moral, based on the commitment of leaders to the social mission of their organisation. I also found that political legitimacy was important. Members wanted to see truly democratic processes of consultation.

There are grounds for optimism about the future of grassroots organisations because of their place in government discourse and the negotiating power that it gives them. By merely airing this debate, orthodoxy becomes politicised. It slips the veneer of a neutral inevitability and this makes reflexivity and a wider perspective possible. Conscious choice by grassroots organisations about whether to pursue external resources will affect their own development. By understanding the extent to which they have weight in state discourse, they can gain negotiating power in relation to powerful organisations that offer resources in exchange for some control over development. However, it is within supportive coalitions that small VCSEs can work *together* to counter powerful negative forces within neoliberalism.

SUPPORTIVE COALITIONS

Bourdieu (2002) argues that, in order to counter neoliberalism, collective action is required with as many voices raised against this value system as possible. His view is that the aim must be to restore a political debate. He placed the focus on social movements across Europe that reject neoliberalism and act together as a collectivity, a “concentration of already concentrated social forces” (Bourdieu 2002, p. 41; see also Jones 2014, p. 313).

It is clear that grassroots organisations in the United Kingdom would benefit from supportive (and non-competitive) alliances with other VCSE organisations. Buckingham et al. suggest that the answer lies in the VCSE sector “speaking with one voice” in order to influence public policy (2014, p. 16; see also Jacklin-Jarvis 2015). Woolford and Curran argue that such supportive alliances can form “micro-publics”, discursive arenas where grassroots organisations can “formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (2012, p. 60; see also Burrowoy 2004, p. 1607 on “counter-hegemonic publics”). Such arenas have the potential to be both safe places for organisations to regroup and focus on their central goals but also to be training grounds for activism.

This could include front line grassroots organisations as well as activist organisations that speak out on a range of issues such as the *People's Assembly*, *Keep Volunteering Voluntary*, the *National Community Activists Network* and *38 degrees*; and the activist organisations that speak out on specific issues such as *Keep Our NHS Public*, *Stop the Cuts* and the *Stop the War Coalition*. There are also international activist organisations such as the *Solidarity Federation* (UK and Ireland) and the *Transnational Institute* that could be involved.

This is not an easy task. As Mathers and Novelli suggest, there are difficulties in creating a unified voice from such a diverse sector, in which organisations have very different interests and ways of working. They suggest unity based on a common focus against policies that affect them all:

Santos has posed the problem of how different groups coming from varied geographical locations, with different histories, objectives, trajectories and protest repertoires can come together, explore their differences and conflicts through dialogue, and in doing so forge unity on certain common interests. (Mathers and Novelli 2007, p. 234)

Bourdieu also envisaged alliances with other kinds of sympathetic organisations (2002; see also Jones 2014). It might be possible to form links between grassroots consortia and trade union organisations that are visible on a range of issues relating to privatisation and the outsourcing of public services, such as the Trade Union Congress (TUC) itself and the *Unite* union and also to make connections with sympathetic news publications such as *Private Eye* and *Morning Star*. There is also potential to form links with local and national political parties that are known to be opposed to privatisation, such as the Green Party and also to sympathetic Labour local councillors and MPs (see also Milbourne and Cushman 2015, p. 484).

Such supportive alliances must be underpinned by a robust evidence base. Jones argues that it is important to build “a compelling intellectual case [against neoliberalism] that can resonate with people’s experiences and aspirations” and he uses the example of neoliberal, intellectual “out-riders”, such as Hayek and the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), that provided a coherent and rigorous rationale for neoliberal orthodoxy over many years before it became mainstreamed (2014, p. 303). There will always be dissenting intellectuals who support neoliberalism. In his book *Acts of resistance: against the new myths of our time* Bourdieu argues that intellectuals are not necessarily supporters of the dominated and many act

to defend neoliberal values (1998a). As “dominated members of the dominant class” many intellectuals share the neoliberal *illusio* that their professional location is *simply* the result of their own competence and that merit will be out in all areas of life.

For sociologists critical of some of the damaging effects of neoliberalism, there is scope to use the tools of sociology to support grassroots organisations in evidence-based discussions about their social mission and development plans and in exploring the true costs of seeking to gain short-term external funding and other resources. The ideal would be to create a head of steam such that it produces joined-up action by the academic community, policymakers, and strategic VCSE organisations.

ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL

As Bourdieu notes sociology, as a critical discipline, *can* be a resource against the assumption that business values are the only possible ones for the VCSE sector. It can uncover the “implicit schemata of thought and action” in neoliberalism and “unveil[s] the historical foundations and social determinants of principles of hierarchization and evaluation that owe their symbolic efficacy . . . to the fact that they assert themselves and are experienced as absolute, universal and eternal” (Bourdieu 1989, p. 6; see also 2001a, p. 12).

A key issue for academics who seek to assist grassroots organisations by providing evidence on alternative futures is how to communicate effectively. There are difficulties to be overcome in crossing the boundary between the academic and VCSE sectors. These are to some extent separate social worlds and there are different cultural assumptions about language and behaviour.

Rochester provides a good example of how difficult it is to achieve effective communication (2013). He discusses the problems that the activist group, the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA), encountered in attempting to work with grassroots organisations. NCIA provided rigorous information and analysis to these organisations and also campaigned against neoliberal policy but its members retained a nagging fear that the advice they gave might be resented and that outsiders from their organisation that worked with grassroots organisations might be seen to be “parachuted in”.

This is confirmed in other research. Schwabenland et al. did a pilot study of different ways of communicating academic findings to VCSE

practitioners, for the NCIA (2014). Three methods were chosen to reduce the technical complexity of articles created for an academic audience: a clear lay-based summary; a podcast; and a seminar with practitioners. The practitioners found all formats to be acceptable.

The most important obstacles to effective communication were: the mode of presentation in face-to-face interaction which came across as patronising; the complex language; and the lack of clear guidance for action. The sense that emerges from their unpublished research report is that practitioners view academics as existing in an ivory tower, remote from the day-to-day problems of working in a VCSE.

In terms of strategies for better communication, Bourdieu analyses the “ideal communication situation” in research in *Weight of the World* (1999, p. 607). At the heart of his methodology in research is “participant objectification”, in which the researcher assists the respondents to bring to light the social determinants of their opinions and practices that they may not have ever vocalised (1999, p. 616). This provides useful pointers on ways in which sociologists and grassroots organisations can work together effectively.

Bourdieu argues that there is always the potential for symbolic violence in encounters between agents from different social worlds. Interaction may be distorted where partners feel patronised because there are different norms of interaction or may feel excluded in some way by the language used. In academic/non-academic partnership, academics may use more elaborated, complex and technical language in interaction, as this is their stock-in-trade. This can be experienced by others as a coercive force that disturbs interactions by affecting the way participants respond, to the extent that it becomes difficult to communicate effectively.

Bourdieu’s solution is to suggest that academics should constantly monitor their interactions with participants and seek to *listen* actively and methodically. He suggests that this is easier where academics have social proximity to other participants because either they already know them or are personally familiar with the context from which participants come or because of other links. It is helpful if participants in such partnerships come from similar backgrounds. The aim, as Bourdieu suggests in relation to fieldwork, is to promote “social ease favourable to plain speaking... to offer indisputable guarantees of sympathetic comprehension” (Bourdieu et al. 1999, p. 612). Where all else fails and there is a great social divide, sociologists, by being reflective, may be able to impart to participants “a feeling that they may be legitimately themselves” and that they are capable of: “mentally putting

themselves in their place". Bourdieu uses the term "intellectual love" to describe the selflessness of this process for the academic (1999, p. 614).

It is clear that sociologists must start with an open attitude to the specific issues that members feel are important to their organisation, a linguistic approach that does not distance by the use of academic language and ideally, the involvement of academics who understand the context personally because they themselves volunteer in the same substantive area or have close family or friends who do. The real potential in academic/non-academic partnership is that it can become a forum in which grass-roots organisations can explore their own worldviews and reflect on them and, in the process, make conscious and democratic choices about whether to pursue neoliberal goals or to reject them.

Bourdieu provided a good example of effective communication in the documentary directed by Pierre Carles, who followed him during the last three years of his life: *Sociologie est un sport de combat* (2001c). Near the end of the documentary, Bourdieu attends a discussion in a community hall in a deprived urban area in France. He shows a quite remarkable affinity with local young people who attended. As a famous sociologist, he met with great hostility from his audience who viewed him as a remote and patronising authority figure. A heated debate ensued that divided his audience from each other as much as from him. By the end of the evening, Bourdieu, having listened quietly, acknowledged the justice of many things that were said and argued against those with which he disagreed without being patronising or using inaccessible language. He clearly united the room by the time he left. He showed them that he clearly valued their opinions and actually mobilised the young people to work to improve their own area and life chances by facilitating a debate between them.

The most hostile became, in their own words, "gutter sociologists" fired with enthusiasm to change their local area by working together. He showed them that they were not powerless or worthless and gave them good reasons to unite as a group. Clearly Bourdieu was a charismatic and unusual man but this is an exemplar of good practice for academics generally and is worlds away from the "dissemination activities" in which most academics engage.

In his later work, Bourdieu believed that intellectuals should become activists in "the collective work of political intervention" by providing a robust evidence base for the effects of neoliberal policies (2003, p. 21; see also 2001a, p. 43nn). He admits that there are barriers to overcome:

Though they are different in their training and social trajectories, researchers engaged in activist work and activists interested in research must learn to work together, overcoming all the prejudices they may harbour about each other. (Bourdieu 2002, p. 37)

This is echoed in Mathers and Novelli's work as "activist-researcher[s]" (2007, p. 230). Mathers and Novelli both spent extended periods of time working with social movements in Brazil and Europe and discuss the growth of mutual understanding:

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, his [Novelli's] personal involvement and presence within the union resulted in a process of bonding between himself and his colleagues, breaking down the barriers that existed between them. This trust was solidified when he joined the occupation and this was the moment at which he felt fully accepted as part of the movement. (Mathers and Novelli 2007, p. 238)

Bourdieu became politically active from the 1990s onwards and believed that the intellectual can, instead of providing legitimacy to state values, act as a revolutionary and use his or her position to help the dominated see the systems of domination and act collectively to use or change them (1989, p. 387). He came to believe that he had to be directly political in order to be effective as an intellectual (Swartz 2003). Swartz argues that Bourdieu's activism was a result of the view that intellectuals should be: "a moral force in society" (2003, p. 808).

This attracted criticism. It became common for the French Socialist party of the time (the government of Juppe then Jospin) to talk of opposition from those that were more politically leftwing as "la gauche bourdieusienne". Bourdieu's later work is also frequently criticised by social scientists. There is a common view that the post-1990 work is both polemical and of poor quality (Vandenberghe 1999; Hanchard 2003; Callewaert 2006). Vandenberghe asserts that Bourdieu's work became politicised rather than rigorous, that Bourdieu: "is tempted at times to totalise and close his own totalising scheme" (1999, p. 60).

Many social scientists would argue that intellectual rigour is incompatible with activism. Where respected political commentators such as Owen Jones may get involved in activism in the *People's Assembly* as a result of his deep conviction about the unfairness of government policy and still be taken seriously, to be both an academic and activist today may lead to

accusations of bias and partiality in a world in which academic “neutrality” is the basis for influencing policymakers.

Perhaps the way forward for sociologists is two-way and piecemeal: working with activist organisations such as the *People’s Assembly* to provide a rigorous evidence base for action; and also with grassroots organisations to facilitate discussions between members, to encourage a debate about their vision and options for the future. It really corresponds to Bourdieu’s active engagement *before* the 1995 French railway workers strike, after which his language became more extreme. Before 1995, his engagement was public and accessible but still balanced and academic. His comment on the role of intellectuals in 1992 resonates today, particularly after the recent, personalised and rather brutal public debates about Brexit¹:

I would like writers, artists, philosophers and scientists to be able to make their voice heard directly in all the areas of public life in which they are competent. I think that everyone would have a lot to gain if the logic of intellectual life, that of argument and refutation, were extended to public life. At present, it is often the logic of political life, that of denunciation and slander, “slogанизation” and falsification of the adversary’s thought, which extends into intellectual life. It would be a good thing if the “creators” could fulfil their function of public service and sometimes of public salvation.²

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The point of this book is not to suggest that the present neoliberal political climate is overwhelmingly negative to grassroots organisations but to discuss what can be done within it to give such small organisations a wider “space of possibles” for action and growth. These organisations do not sit well within the market economy. They do not fit the bureaucratic model of managed, specialist roles, outputs and targets but tend to adopt a more free-form and organic organisational structure because they are run largely by volunteer management committees and have volunteers as their mainstay.

Neoliberal public policy can have damaging consequences for grassroots organisations, taking them on a spiral of expansion and professionalisation that leads to fragmentation and possible failure. Volunteers give resilience to grassroots organisations because of their shared commitment

to the social mission of their organisation. They have power as a mass because they do most of the practical work and can leave the organisation at any time. In a democratic organisation, they also elect their leaders and there is a natural limit to the extent that leaders can control development unilaterally when they can be voted out. In a neoliberal policy environment, they can provide a counter-voice to the pursuit of external funding as a primary goal.

Many grassroots organisations need the help of supportive coalitions to navigate successfully through this policy environment. Such coalitions would make it more likely that VCSEs are exposed to messages and involved in action that opens up possibilities of alternative futures. There is potential to create a groundswell of change from the bottom up. It is clear that part of the solution is a numbers game. There is strength in collective action, underpinned by a robust evidence-base provided by academic researchers and by policy think-tanks.

The kind of evidence that is produced matters. Neoliberalism applies crude economic reasoning to social issues and, as Piketty, Jones and Wacquant argue, tends to favour the powerful and penalise the most disadvantaged in society. Bourdieu's plea is that intellectuals should provide a *full* economic costing of the wider social consequences of neoliberalism as the basis for a broader perspective on its true costs: "I think that, even if it may appear very cynical, we need to turn its own weapons against the dominant economy and point out that, in the logic of enlightened self-interest, a strictly economic policy is not necessarily economical" (1998a, p. 40).

For example, economic reasoning can be applied to the benefits of volunteer "labour". The true value of what volunteers do in grassroots organisations in the United Kingdom has not been assessed but is likely to be high. A study of Toronto hospitals by Handy and Srinivasen, for example, estimated that the financial return on volunteer labour was a massive 684%, equating to a return of £6.84 on every £1 spent (2004). There are also non-financial benefits, such as having time to spend with service users and providing a friendly and accessible presence. With robust evidence that small VCSEs are *not* businesses but provide essential services to the most disadvantaged in a qualitatively different yet economically viable way, it would be possible for them to gain negotiating power when they bid for service delivery. The weapons of neoliberalism can indeed be turned against neoliberal state policy.

With the UK's Brexit from the European Union, we have the biggest constitutional change in decades. This is a tumultuous time. Both Scotland

and Northern Ireland, that are pro-European, may choose to remain in the EU and split off from the United Kingdom. It is difficult to believe that, as a small country we will grow more prosperous with potentially higher tariff barriers to exports. It is probable that, if the markets plunge and the value of sterling goes down in the long term, we will have a recession and intensified austerity measures.

Public policy will change as a result of Brexit but it is unlikely to become less neoliberal. We are still European and, in this potentially more adverse and atomised environment, supportive European coalitions of like-minded organisations and individuals may be of increasing importance in providing counter-discourses to neoliberalism.

NOTES

1. The UK referendum on leaving the European Union, polling on 23rd June 2016.
2. Bourdieu (1992) *La main gauche et la main droite de l'état*, interview by R.P. Droit & T. Ferenczi for *Le Monde* 14th January.

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