British Governance beyond Neoliberalism

By Mark Bevir and Kim McKee

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mark Bevir, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-1950, USA. Email: mbevir@berkeley.edu, btkrupicka@berkeley.edu

Kim McKee, Department of Geography and Sustainable Development, University of St Andrews, The Observatory, Buchanan Gardens, St Andrews, Fife, Scotland KY16 9LZ. Email: km410@st-andrews.ac.uk

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Introduction

This chapter develops a genealogical account of contemporary British governance. In doing so, it adopts an historical approach to trace the variegated nature of governance beyond neoliberalism, drawing attention to the often competing modes of thought that co-exist in tension. Whilst public policy and public organization have moved from hierarchy and bureaucracy towards markets and networks, these governance shifts are underpinned by different rationalities, which do not necessarily replace each other in a linear fashion. Whilst neoliberal economic rationales have been influential since the 1970s, other forms of knowledge have also been significant and important to latter waves of reforms. These other forms of knowledge emphasize networks, partnerships, and active citizenship. Through de-centring governance and highlighting the competing and contingent governance narratives at play this chapter encourages a shift in analytical focus. Modes of governance are underpinned by a diversity of discursive narratives and techniques of rule. This chapter seeks to make these diverse beliefs, actions, and spaces of resistance visible, encouraging an analytical focus on the messy, contested, and contingent nature of governing practices.

To achieve these aims the chapter is organised into three main sections. First, the chapter advances a genealogy of British governance, drawing attention to the modernist forms of social science knowledge underpinning the perceived crisis of the state. Second, the chapter turns to tracing the narratives that have informed waves of public sector reform under both Conservative and Labour governments. Continuity and discontinuity in the underpinning governance rationales beyond neoliberalism are evident, with competing ideas co-existing in tension. Finally, the chapter draws on qualitative data on the Glasgow housing

stock transfer (2004-2008) to de-centre governing practices beyond neoliberalism. The example of social housing highlights only to clearly the contested and messy nature of governance, and the multiple narratives that co-exist and inform people's perspectives and actions.

A Genealogy of Governance

Many social scientists, especially those who work on public administration and local government, argue that the leading forms of public organization and action have shifted from hierarchic bureaucracies to markets and networks. Debates rage about the nature and extent of this shift. Yet, despite these doubts, there is a widespread consensus that "governance" captures a shift in theory and practice towards markets and networks. Moreover, it is clear that successive governments in Britain have introduced wave after wave of public sector reform in their attempt to promote markets, contracting-out, networks, and joined-up government in place of hierarchic bureaucracy. This section focuses on the intellectual sources of the transformation of the state and its relation to civil society. It highlights the role played in this transformation by modernist social science, with its reliance on formal explanations based on economic models or sociological correlations. Modernist social science informed the main narratives of crisis of the administrative and welfare state in the 1970s. And it also inspired the subsequent waves of public sector reform that responded to this crisis.

In the late nineteenth century, social science was dominated by a developmental historicism that inspired grand narratives centered on the nation, the state, and freedom. Developmental historicism appealed to narratives that situated events and institutions in a larger order of evolving continuity. The most significant feature of twentieth century social

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science was, in sharp contrast, the emergence of modernist modes of knowledge that atomize the flux of reality. Yet modernist social science was not a homogenous school of thought. It was dominated by two distinct strands, with differing concepts of rationality associated with different forms of explanation, and so different analyses of governance. On the one hand, the economic concept of rationality privileges utility maximization; it arose with neoclassical theory and spread to rational choice. On the other, the sociological concept of rationality privileges appropriateness in relation to social norms; it arose with functionalism and spread to network theory and communitarianism. Table 1 provides an over-view of these contrasts.

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The shift from developmental historicism to modernism altered the concept and nature of the state (Stears 2006; Runciman 2005; Gunnell 2004). As modernists rejected historical narratives, so too they challenged the concept of the state as arising out of a nation bound together by a common language, culture, and past. Modernists turned instead to formal patterns, regularities, or models of action and institutions across space and time. Again, when modernists turned away from a substantive focus on the state toward topics such as political parties, interest groups, and policy networks, these sub-state institutions were then studied in terms of laws or regularities derived, for example, from their functions in abstract systems. Even when modernists continued to study the state, they increasingly portrayed it as fragmented into factional interests associated with different classes or parties. However, modernist modes of knowledge also opened up new ways of making and legitimating public policy in representative democracies. Modernist social science inspired a new belief in formal expertise. Public policy could be legitimate if it were based on the formal knowledge of modernist social science. Elected representatives no longer need express a national character

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and common good. They could define policy goals and check the activity of experts. Social scientists, professionals, and generalist civil servants would use their expertise to devise rational scientific policies in accord with these goals. Modernist social science thus helped to create the conditions for the administrative state.

One important justification for the creation and expansion of increasingly insulated and centralized bureaucracies was that they cured the abuses and irrationalities in democratic processes. Many believed an insulated and centralized bureaucracy could preserve democracy while removing its worst features – instability, irrationality, and sectarianism – from the day-to-day activities of governing. Corporatism and the welfare state were meant to overcome factionalism and irrationality. Under corporatism, the bureaucracy reached out to organized interests (Schmitter and Lehmbruch 1982). The corporatist state gave particular associations a privileged status as the representatives of social and economic groups. The privileged associations were involved in the formulation of public policy, and in return those associations helped to ensure the effective implementation of the policies. The bureaucracy also reached out to individual citizens, assuming greater responsibility for their welfare (MacLeod 1988).

Governance arose out of a crisis in the modernist state (Bevir 2010). Over-simplifications will abound in any attempt to differentiate the plethora of ideas that fed into narratives about the crisis of the state in the late twentieth century. Nonetheless, one way of approaching these narratives is as the products of different modernist theories. Some narratives of the crisis of the state challenged bureaucracy, corporatism, and social welfare by drawing on the economic concept of rationality. Neoclassical micro-level assumptions informed, for example, narratives that tried to show fiscal crises were a pathology built into the welfare state. These narratives went as follows (King 1975). Citizens, being rational actors, try to maximize their short-term interests, privileging welfare policies that are of

benefit to them as individuals over the long-term, cumulative, and shared effects of rising state expenditure. Similarly, politicians, being rational actors, try to maximize their short-term electoral interests, promoting policies that will gain the votes of these rational citizens rather than pursuing fiscal responsibility. Narrow political considerations thereby trump economic imperatives. Groups of voters demand more and more welfare benefits, and politicians constantly pass welfare legislation on behalf of these voters. A growing proportion of the national product goes on welfare, making fiscal crises inevitable. These narratives of state overload and state crisis pointed to a clear solution – fiscal austerity, monetary control, and a rolling-back of the state.

Other narratives of the crisis of the state drew on more sociological analyses of changes in the world (Bevir 2005; Finlayson 1999). These narratives implied that the state had to change in response to international and domestic pressures. Internationally, the increased mobility of capital made it more difficult for states to direct economic activity. The state could not go it alone, but rather had to pursue coordination and regulation across borders. The increasing number and prominence of transnational corporations raised problems of coordination and questions of jurisdiction. There was a gap between the national operation of regulatory structures and an increasingly international economy. Domestically, the state confronted the rising demands of its citizens. These demands arose from popular discontent with the state's handling of the economy and its apparent unresponsiveness. Many states were saddled with large debts. Globalization provoked anxieties about competitiveness and wages. Sections of the public worried that the state had lost control. Equally, state-actors often found they were subject to varied and even contradictory demands from the public. They wanted a more effective state but also a more transparent and accountable one. They wanted decisive leaders and yet more popular participation.

Governance consists of the interconnected theories and reforms by which people conceived of the crisis of the state and responded to it. These theories and reforms rejected the expertise associated with the post-war state. However, instead of challenging the idea of applying modernist expertise to social life, policy actors turned to alternative modernist modes of knowing to sustain new forms of expertise. These narratives, and the waves of public sector reforms they inspired, will be explored in the next section.

Governing Beyond Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has had a significant impact on British public policy. Central to neoliberalism is a belief in the efficacy of the market. This belief inspired a wave of neoliberal reforms underpinned by economic rationales. However, public policy reforms have also drawn on non-market technologies working through the social connections and networks that bind people together in particular places. The New Labour governments, in particular, were influenced by Third Way and Communitarian ideas that placed a strong emphasis on devolved government, direct democracy, and the mobilization of the voluntary and community sector. These ideas have proved influential in the governance of low-income groups, such as social housing tenants, for whom traditional market-based approaches have seemed less appropriate (McIntyre and McKee 2008; Flint 2003).

Governance beyond neoliberalism can therefore be characterized into two distinct waves that drew on alternative forms of modernist expertise to transform the relationship between the state and its citizens. The first wave appealed to neoliberalism and rational choice theory to explain and legitimate public dissatisfaction with bureaucracy. Neoliberals compared the state's top-down, hierarchical mode of organization with the decentralized, competitive structure of the market. They argued that the market was superior. They

concluded that when possible markets or quasi-markets should replace bureaucracy. A quest for efficiency led them to call on the state to transfer organizations and activities to the private sector. Organizations could be transferred by privatization, that is, the transfer of state assets to the private sector through flotations or management buy-outs. Activities could be transferred by means of contracting-out, that is, the state could pay a private sector organization to undertake tasks on its behalf.

Most neoliberals combined their faith in markets with a faith that the discipline of the market must somehow validate the management practices of the private sector. They redefined public officials as managers or service-providers, and they redefined citizens as consumers or service-users. More specifically, neoliberal reforms of the public sector often reflected the formal analyses of rational choice theory. Neoclassical economists first developed principal-agent theory to analyze the problem of delegated discretion in the private sector (Stiglitz 1987). They argued that delegating decision-making from principals (shareholders) to agents (managers) is risky because the agents may act on their own interests. Economists proposed minimizing this risk by using incentives and market mechanisms to align the interests of the agents with those of the principals. In the public sector, the principals are the voters and their elected representatives while the agents are public officials. For rational choice theorists, therefore, as the basic problem of private sector corporations was to ensure managers acted on behalf of the shareholders, so the basic problem of public administration was to ensure public officials work on behalf of citizens. Neoliberals extended to the public sector the incentives and market mechanisms that economists had devised to bring the interests of agents into alignment with those of their principals. The result was the new public management (Barzelay 2001; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000).

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Popular and neoliberal narratives combined with more formal analyses to produce a paradigm shift within modernism. The new paradigm denounced bureaucracy and public officials, and championed markets and entrepreneurs. It turned away from what was now derided as big government, bloated bureaucracy, and uniform solutions, and toward a private sector that was now lauded as competitive, efficient, and flexible. This paradigm shift was also one from institutional definitions of good government, which emphasized clear-cut divisions of responsibility within hierarchical relationships, toward new definitions of efficient processes defined in terms of service-delivery and outputs with an attendant emphasis on transparency, user-friendliness, and incentive structures.

The marketization and managerial reforms of the 1980s gave way under the New Labour governments to reforms that were focused on institutional arrangements (especially networks and partnerships) and community values (including public service and social inclusion). This second wave of reform was initially highly critical of neoliberal public policy reforms. Whilst proponents usually accept neoliberal arguments about the inflexible and unresponsive nature of hierarchies, instead of promoting markets, they appeal to networks as a suitably flexible and responsive alternative based on recognition that social actors operate in structured relationships. They argue that efficiency and effectiveness derive from stable relationships characterized by trust, social participation, and voluntary associations. In their view, while hierarchies can provide a context for trust and stability, the time for hierarchies has passed. Hierarchies do not suit the new knowledge-driven global economy. This new world increasingly throws up wicked problems that require networks and joined-up governance. A new institutionalism, with its sociological concept of rationality, thus inspired a second wave of reforms, including not only many of New Labour's policies but also Australia's whole-of-government agenda, international attempts to deal with failed states, and post-9/11 security policy in the US (Bevir 2010). Some commentators even describe this

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second wave in contrast to neoliberal policy reforms as a "governance approach" (Bovaird 2005).

While the second wave of reforms was an attempt to solve problems associated with marketization and the new public management, it did not attempt to turn back the clock. New networks and partnerships were not meant to recreate the kind of hierarchic bureaucratic structures against which neoliberals had railed. On the contrary, advocates of the second wave of public sector reforms typically saw networks and partnerships as ways of solving both the problems created by the first wave of reforms, and the problems those earlier reforms had been intended to address (Clarke et al 2007; Newman 2001). In this sense, non-market mechanisms might be described as attempts to preserve the legacy of the earlier reforms while building state capacity and oversight. Over time, this second wave of reforms evolved further, with evidence-based policy-making and service delivery also being given a prominent place alongside joining-up. Neoliberal policy reforms were thus overlain with reforms underpinned by new institutionalist thinking.

We are arguing that the contemporary governance of Britain is beyond neoliberalism. It contains diverse social technologies, some of which are properly described as "neoliberal", but others of which draw on institutionalism and communitarianism. Our emphasis on the diversity of governing technologies contrasts with more monolithic and formal accounts that define governance or neoliberalism by reference to one or more essential property. These formal accounts imply that these properties are general ones that characterise all cases of governance. They also imply that these essential properties can explain at least the most significant other features of governance beyond neoliberalism. Surely, however, it is only modernist social science that makes these implications seem at all plausible. In reality practices of governance are the products of people's activity, and people's activity is not determined by institutional norms or a logic of modernisation but by people's situated

agency. Governance is constructed differently by numerous actors grappling with different issues in different contexts against the background of different traditions. In practice, therefore, the attempts by policymakers to introduce markets and networks have met with complex patterns of resistance from public servants, street level bureaucrats, and citizens all inspired by local traditions that challenge and transform understandings rooted in modernist social science. Policies do not always work as policy makers intend. Indeed, the world of hierarchies and bureaucratic norms has persisted even as it has been overlain by some features of markets and networks. From this perspective, governance beyond neoliberalism is far from monolithic. Instead of looking for formal accounts and explanations we might accept that governance beyond neoliberalism varies widely from case to case, with the influence of particular governing narratives contingent, shifting, and manifesting in different ways in different places.

To develop a more nuanced understanding of the dispersed, complex, and messy nature of governance beyond neoliberalism we need to "de-centre governance" (Bevir 2003; Bevir 2013). This requires us to explore empirically the diverse set of narratives, meaning, and actions that comprise governing practices. It necessitates a more diverse view of the state, for the state is never monolithic and it always negotiates with others (Bevir and Rhodes 2010). Indeed, the boundaries between the state, the market, and civil society are increasingly blurred. Crucially, our decentered approach shifts the analytical focus from institutions to meanings, narratives, and actions. It is micro-level in its focus, highlighting how governance is created, sustained, and modified through situated agency based on diverse webs of belief. Moreover, it illuminates the ability of actors to resist, challenge, and circumvent narratives advanced by others, thereby opening up an analytical space to interrogate how the gap between official discourse and local practice is managed. This

decentered approach will be developed in more detail in the remainder of this chapter through an empirical focus on social housing.

Reconfiguring Social Housing Governance

The two waves of reform that characterise governance beyond neoliberalism are highly visible within social housing governance in Britain. A genealogical analysis of policy shifts since the 1980s highlights only too clearly the influence of both neoliberal, economic rationales *and* Third Way modernization agendas that stress partnerships, devolved decision-making, and citizen participation.

Social housing has always been the "wobbly pillar" of the British welfare state (Torgersen 1987). It has never enjoyed the same level of public and political support as the National Health Service (NHS), state schooling, or social security. In part this reflects that it is public good largely enjoyed by low-income households. Only 17 % of people in the UK reside in social housing, although there are significant geographical variations with this figure rising to nearer 22% in Scotland (ONS 2013). Social housing has always been a more significant housing tenure north of the border, and policy divergence between Scotland and England has grown in the period since the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999 (McKee and Phillips 2012). Such differences underline the importance of spatial nuance and political geography in any analysis of governing practices. Housing policy, like many other areas of public policy making in Great Britain, is the preserve of the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, with the UK Government in Westminster continuing to legislate for England.

Nonetheless, across Britain there has been a questioning of the state's ability to know, plan, and steer from the centre for all of society's needs and problems. This critique of social

government and its collectivist solutions does not however consign public provision to a by-gone age; rather it signifies its fundamental transformation. As alluded to previously, these waves of reform take two main forms: what can be described as neoliberal policy reforms informed by an economic rationality, and new institutionalism which focuses on networks, partnership, active citizenship, and so forth. In reality however, these are not linear processes following after each other in a seamless fashion; rather they often work in and against each other simultaneously, with continuity as well as discontinuity evident between Conservative, New Labour, and more recently, Coalition governments (McKee 2015; Jacobs and Manzi 2013; Pawson and Jacobs 2010).

Under the Thatcher and Major governments there were strong echoes of economic rationalities within New Public Management reforms to social housing in the 1980s and 1990s, which also continued under the Blair era. In the earlier period the emphasis was on delivering "value for money" and ensuring the 3 E's of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. This neoliberal narrative was juxtaposed against a portrayal of local authority landlords as being "inefficient, producer-driven monopolies that are prone to empire building" (Mullins and Murie 2006: 220). To combat perceived "failings" of the welfare state, choice mechanisms were introduced to secure competition. These reforms tended to focus on choice by purchasing agencies as opposed to consumers of services, introducing a purchaser-provider split. Within housing, the prime example of this was Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) of local authority housing management (Harries and Vincent-Jones 2001). Local authorities were required to tender out services specified by central government. In addition, they were also subject to increased monitoring and audit, paralleling developments in other public service areas. The growing emphasis on managerialist discourses and the delivery of key performance indicators reflects changing patterns of governance in society, specifically the need to impose new forms of state control

in light of perceived failures of hierarchical government (Jacobs and Manzi 2010; McKee 2009).

Reforms to the management and ownership of local authority housing in the 1980s to maximise "choice" also had a significant impact on the governance of social housing. The two most notable pieces of legislation were the 1980 and 1988 Housing Acts, both of which were underpinned by neoliberal policy agendas that sought to encourage council tenants to "exit" the sector, thus reducing the power of local authorities (Ravetz 2001). The 1980 Act introduced the Right to Buy, which enabled sitting council tenants to purchase their home at a considerably discounted rate. The Right to Buy was a popular Thatcherite policy that resulted in the loss of millions of homes from the local authority sector and that contributed hugely to the growth of homeownership during the 1980s (Forrest and Murie 1988).

By contrast, the 1988 Act sought to encourage the growth of housing associations as the main providers of social housing. Housing associations are not-for-profit, third sector organisations managed and run like social businesses. Within Scotland, these organizations tended to be small and community-based with a strong communitarian ethos (McKee 2011; Clapham and Kintrea 1996). The growth of housing associations was encouraged through policy levers such as housing stock transfer and Tenant's Choice (Pawson and Mullins 2010). Underpinning these reforms was an inherent critique of local authority management, which depicted these landlords as remote and paternalistic. In England in particular, the expansion of the voluntary housing sector was therefore underpinned by a narrative that "tended to see the local authorities as part of the problem to be tackled" (Malpass 2005: 144). Both these Housing Acts of the 1980s served to accelerate the demunicipalization of council housing.

These economic rationales continued to have influence under the Blair era, and indeed performance management measures continued, although regulations became more targeted and risk-based (Pawson and Jacobs 2010; McKee 2009). In England there were also attempts

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to introduce performance based resource allocation through the Arms Length Management Organization model, which separated out ownership and management of local authority housing (Pawson and Mullins 2010). It is however through the consumerization of public services that economic rationales are most evident within social housing. At the heart of New Labour's modernization of the welfare state was the transformation of citizens from passive recipients of state assistance into active, responsible citizens.

Within housing, one of the main examples of this choice imperative was the promotion of Choice Based Lettings. It sought to replicate private market practices by encouraging tenants to make a rational choice about where they want to live based on the likelihood of successfully acquiring a tenancy, whilst also involving a marketing and bidding approach similar to the private estate agent. The aim of all of this is to transcend traditional, bureaucratic methods in which housing officers act as gatekeepers of scarce resources and to increase both the control and choice of tenants in the housing allocation process. It remains popular amongst English local authorities, but less so elsewhere in Britain. A second key dimension by which choice was evident was through New Labour's commitment to accelerate housing stock transfer – a policy vehicle which proposes transferring ownership and management of council housing out of the public and into the voluntary sector. Since its emergence in the 1980s the impact of stock transfer has been significant. It has transformed the size and characteristics of both public housing and the wider social rented sector, whose growth it has facilitated (Pawson and Mullins 2010).

Yet the corollary of this desire to address dependency and powerlessness is that the state is no longer conceived as a direct provider of services, but an enabler that supports individuals in helping themselves, with many local authorities now occupying a strategic as opposed to a landlord role. Moreover, introducing mechanisms of choice and responsibility within a sector that predominantly houses vulnerable and low-income groups is not

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unproblematic. As Clarke (2007) argues, consumerism within the public sector "is not like shopping". The degree to which social housing tenants really have a "choice" and the ability to "voice" their concerns and "exit" their current (housing) service is highly questionable.

A further distinct but interconnected feature of social housing governance under the Blair era was the turn to community. Influenced by Giddens' (1998) Third Way and Etzioni's (1995) communitarianism, New Labour introduced a number of reforms which sought to give citizens a more active role and empowered "voice", thus enabling them to take greater ownership and control of local assets at the community scale. New Labour demonstrated strong levels of support for the Third Sector. Not only did it have a dedicated Office for the Third Sector within cabinet, but it directed significant resources to encourage the community ownership of public assets. Within a housing context this led to an increased role for community empowerment in housing stock transfer, the growth of community land trusts, and area-based regeneration strategies such as the New Deal for Communities in England (Moore and McKee 2014). It resulted in new relationships and networks being formed between governmental and non-governmental actors, with a strong emphasis on active citizenship. A greater emphasis was also placed on tenants' rights to ensure their inclusion in local decision making processes. For example, in Scotland the 2001 Housing Act introduced a statutory right to tenant participation in the social rented sector. This legislation paralleled wider reforms across the public sector designed to encourage the devolution of power from central government, and more active public participation. Some critics derided these initiatives as further evidence of the "de-municipalization" of public assets, and a continuation of the rolling back of the state initiated by Thatcher in the 1980s (Mooney and Poole 2012; Cumbers 2012). In this sense, the mobilization of the voluntary and community sector can be interpreted as a continuation of privatization agendas that shift

responsibility for citizen's welfare away from the state towards private and voluntary sector agencies.

As this section has highlighted the narratives of neoliberal economic rationales and new institutionalism are clearly evident in reforms to social housing. It would however be foolish to assume 'elite' discourses always realise their effects. Developing a nuanced temporally and geographically sensitive understanding of governance beyond neoliberalism requires research that allows space for localised resistance, contestation, and counter-narratives to emerge. Projects of rule are messy, unstable and continually subject to challenge and contestation from above and below. So, the following section considers the extent to which official narratives underpinning social housing reforms realised their effects. It relies primarily on empirical data on the 2003 Glasgow housing stock transfer.

Community Ownership of Social Housing

"Community ownership" is the label that was applied to the national programme of housing stock transfers in Scotland in the early 2000s. Stock transfer involves the sale of council housing to the voluntary sector (i.e. housing association). Community ownership was not however a new idea. It originally emerged in Glasgow in the 1980s as a badge for small-scale neighbourhood level stock transfers from the city council to community based housing organisations (Clapham *et al* 1996). More laterally however, the term was used by the Scottish Executive to encompass stock transfers of different types and scale. As Kintrea (2006: 194) summarises whilst the thinking behind the Scottish Executive's revival of this label was not made "explicit", it served to emphasize the "people" as opposed to the "property" dimensions of housing stock transfer (2006: 194). Both definitions of community ownership make explicit reference to transforming housing governance by devolving ownership and control of the housing to residents in order that they can become more

involved in key decisions relating to their housing. It was a policy vehicle underpinned by Third Way ideals of democratic citizenship and also communitarian values.

The remainder of this section unpacks these official policy narratives through drawing on empirical data collected during 2004-8 on the Glasgow transfer. The reasons for this choice of case study are two-fold. Firstly, the explicit promises made within the 2003 Glasgow housing stock transfer agreement regarding tenant empowerment, coupled with the long legacy of community ownership of social housing within the city (Young 2013; McKee 2011, 2007; Clapham and Kintrea 1996) make it the "ideal case" to interrogate the narrative of community ownership. Secondly, as the local authority with the largest public sector housing stock, Glasgow became the site of Britain's largest ever housing stock transfer from the public to the voluntary sector (circa 80,000 homes). Whilst the case study of Glasgow is in many ways unique, the attempts to devolve social housing governance in the city nonetheless offer numerous policy and theoretical lessons for other places.

The drivers for the Glasgow stock transfer were poor condition of the housing stock and constrained public sector resources. Glasgow's de-industrialisation resulted in a decline in the fortunes of the city's public sector housing, which manifest itself in terms of disinvestment, and a remote and paternalistic approach to housing management. To fund a much needed refurbishment programme the city council proposed to sell off its housing to the newly created Glasgow Housing Association (GHA). Despite an active 'no' campaign, the sale was enacted in 2003 making GHA Europe's largest social landlord. It was highly significant in policy terms given the historical importance of council housing to the city council's power base.

Explicit in the pre-transfer campaign and statutory consultations issued was a strong commitment to local control via "community ownership" of the housing. Explicit in these governance arrangements was a faith in the presumed benefits of community empowerment

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and asset-ownership. In practical terms, whilst GHA was the landlord, rent-collector and owner of the housing, in accordance with the principles of the transfer agreement it devolved day-to-day management of its housing to a city-wide network of over sixty Local Housing Organisations (LHOs). These neighbourhood level organisations were in turn governed by committees of local residents, comprising of a tenant majority. They are responsible for local housing strategy, deciding for example, how to spend allocated resources and implement planned refurbishment programmes (for detailed discussion see, McKee 2007). The relationship between the GHA and the LHOs is governed by a two-way service contract with the performance of both parties measured by their ability to meet key performance indicators.

Critically, local control was presented as only the first step on the pathway to full "community ownership", as Glasgow's transfer was sold to tenants on the belief that these LHOs would eventually become the owners as well as the managers of the housing. LHOs would either become independent housing associations in their own right or they would be linked to existing community-based housing associations in their area (McKee 2011, 2007). Full 'community ownership' was to be achieved via further secondary, neighbourhood-level stock transfers in order to recreate the success of Scotland's community-based housing associations. This additional stage was referred to as Second Stage Transfer (SST). Glasgow thus represents a strong example of community ownership of social housing in practice:

"This Framework will allow the opportunity to develop new and radical forms of local housing management, ownership and community-based regeneration. Local people must be at the centre of change in realising better housing and better-equipped organisations to deliver improved housing management and repair services […] The proposition we have commended is one which allows that evolution to a local level to take place in accordance with community capacity and choice. Change must be

driven forward by communities at that local level" (Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Executive 2000: 2).

By emphasizing transformations in housing governance through active citizenship and the mobilization of local knowledge, activity and skills the Glasgow stock transfer clearly embodies the narratives at the heart of the Third Way and Communitarian narratives at the heart of New Labour modernizing agendas. Qualitative research with tenants however highlights that the way in which governable subjects navigate policy and political discourses of empowerment is highly variable and contingent. Perspectives are marked by both ambivalence and ambiguity, at the same time as interest and passion. For example, tenants spoke eagerly about positive changes that had occurred post-transfer, both in terms of improvements in the physical fabric of their homes and communities, as well as more general involvement in local decision making:

> "What aspects of being on the committee do you enjoy? (Interviewer)
>
> The fact we can say no we're no having that, we've now got some say in what we can do. In the past, when we went to the [Council] it was a case of this is the budget; this is what we've planned. And it didn't matter if you say 'oh no I think that should have been done' that was it" (LHO Committee Member).

Despite the dominant policy narrative of community ownership, local people, especially those involved in LHO governing bodies, stressed tensions in the delegated governance model. These tensions pertained largely to the LHO's limited financial autonomy and lack of ownership of the housing assets. It underlines the point that the devolution of decision-making is not always matched by the devolution of resources, as reflected in the following quote, which laments the use of standardised city-wide procurement practices that neglects perceived 'local' needs:

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"[the GHA] have still got a wee bit of the old Glasgow city council in them: one size fits all. So they're putting what it costs for one kitchen in the city that's the price for every kitchen in the city and it doesn't work" (LHO Committee Member).

Central-local tensions were a defining feature of the research, for the management agreement between the LHO and the GHA locked both parties into a mutually dependent relationship. LHOs were reliant on services provided centrally by the GHA such as IT systems, human resources, and legal advice, which in turn impacted on their ability to manage their housing at the local level. For example, local arrears management may be effected by centrally provided computer systems failings, or delays in the centrally based legal team processing requests for court action. These tensions manifest themselves in an "us versus them" mentality, with the LHOs perceiving themselves to be in a subservient relationship. The management agreement was a key source of frustration, because the functional responsibilities regarded as being at the core of "community ownership" such as ownership of the housing stock, and the setting and controlling of budgets were retained by the GHA.

This centralised control contributed to the perception amongst the LHOs that the GHA was "just the council with another name". Second stage transfer was therefore regarded as critical to aspirations for local autonomy and community ownership, as one staff member reflected:

"How will things change post Second Stage Transfer? (Interviewer)

I think obviously you'll be a stand-alone organisation; you are not dependent on GHA releasing this money, releasing that money […] At the end of the day that's what the transfer was all about wasn't it, it was about getting more local control for people in the area" (LHO Housing Officer, GHA)

If LHOs were frustrated by the devolved governance arrangements, the broader tenant body were even more sceptical and unconvinced. They demonstrated a very instrumental view towards their participation, articulating it as a means to an end: to secure investment in their homes and improve their housing, and were not necessarily attracted to the notion of community ownership or empowerment per se. Indeed, the majority who participated in focus groups on this topic expressed no demand for continual, formal involvement. They had little day-to-day contact with their landlord other than when they had a grievance to raise. Furthermore, when pushed on the practicalities of devolved decision-making several outright rejected the level of responsibility that community-ownership demanded of local people, retorting that this is what housing professionals were paid for:

> "You need the professionals to be quite honest with you […] there's no way I would make decisions for all these people (GHA Tenant, Focus Group 5)".

Such responses were in turn interpreted and problematized by housing professionals as "apathy", which they endeavoured to address through an array of initiatives designed to encourage their residents to engage with them, and to become more involved in local decision making. Yet such rescaling of policy interventions may lead to the "localization of policy failure" (Macmillan and Townsend 2006: 19-22), a point encapsulated in this interview with a member of an LHO governing body reflecting on their role:

> "[Community ownership] offers choice. It offers control, which is really important (and) with all this control and choice comes responsibility. It was dead easy years ago for committee members or community activists to say 'oh it was the council, but no we're great' but then suddenly it will be us and I think we'll need to learn to say 'wait a minute the buck stops here'. With all this choice comes an awful lot of responsibility" (LHO Committee Member).

The stock transfer was not however only about empowering democratic citizens. It also introduced market imperatives into former public sector housing. Tenants were imagined not only as active citizens, but also consumers, capable of, and expected to, exercise choice within the market. The introduction of consumerist principles within social housing have been heightened through the growth of the housing association movement through stock transfer. The quasi-private identity of transfer housing associations has required them to become more business-like and customer focused in order to protect their asset-base and income streams. As one prominent tenant committee member reflected:

> "It's only really since the stock transfer […] They never called the tenant a customer before. They didn't have a customer base it was just a tenant and they needed a house. [Going to the council housing department] was like going to the doctors or the dentists or going to a hospital appointment. Because they were the professionals and they knew better" (LHO Committee Member).

Social landlords can however only deliver this customer focus from a position of knowledge: this requires soliciting the active engagement, feedback and participation of their tenant customers, so services and policies can be tailored to local needs and priorities. Yet consumerism is highly constrained and contingent on material resources, with Glasgow's social housing neighbourhoods being areas of significant multiple deprivation. Consumerist rhetoric therefore opens up questions regarding the extent to which transformations in housing governance can really address the scale and complexity of the daily challenges faced by households living in the city's most fragile communities. Arguably community ownership (and tenant empowerment) simply becomes a policy panacea, deflecting attention from the root cause of the problem: enduring patterns of social and spatial inequalities.

Furthermore, if we consider those LHOs that did achieve second stage transfer, they are still subject to central-local tensions albeit in different ways. In reality, all housing

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associations are subject to some degree of constraint, for in return for public funding they must comply with statutory obligations - that is the laws, guidance and regulations that governs the social rented sector in Scotland (McKee 2009). Paradoxically, stock transfer may contribute to the recentralization of control, as opposed to a realization of greater autonomy at the local scale, as one committee member conceded:

> "To be fair every housing association out there although they are meant to be independent, they are also very, very constrained […] So some of the constraints in [the LHO] are also common to other housing associations" (LHO Committee Member).

Although LHO members recognised the need for, and importance of regulation, especially given the public funding they received, there was nonetheless a sense of frustration at what they perceived as sometimes being "dictated" to by government, and a belief that they were "over-regulated". It was regarded as being in direct opposition to their status as independent organisations, situated within the voluntary or third sector:

> "And whilst they [the management committee] can recognise [the Regulator's] position, they also will say but they're dictating to us and we're supposed to be in charge of this place" (Housing Association Senior Staff).

For those tenants who choose to become actively involved in their housing organisation the decisions they are able to influence are restricted to local level issues, with major policy decisions being shaped by legislation, national policy frameworks and good practice guidance. The paradox that emerges is that local people are prevented from making the very decisions which they perceive as important to their local communities, such as refusing the increasing number of homeless applicants they have to accept and house, or prevent those

individuals who have been evicted for anti-social behaviour or refusing to pay their rent from being rehoused back in the community under homeless legislation:

> "I mean the homeless legislation there is less choice that (housing association) people now have in terms of taking people on. (And) when you're on a committee and you're just told these cases are presented to us and we have to take them on board and there's no choice, particularly if you are a small organisation with a relatively low turnover [of housing]. You know, say a small organisation in a rural area … it would be kind of disheartening to people concerned" (Policy Officer, National Membership Organisation).

Yet the appropriateness of local residents making strategic management decisions may be questioned, especially given the desire of lay tenants to control the behaviour of other residents in their locality, as the example above highlights. Indeed, centralized control may alternatively be conceptualized as the state 'empowering' the most vulnerable in society, a group that local committees may deem 'undesirable' and therefore seek to exclude from their community, such as the homeless, asylum seekers, and so forth. Therefore, although a constraint on local autonomy national frameworks also ensure that the interests of all tenants are represented. This is critical given the role the sector now occupies in housing the most vulnerable sections of society.

Conclusion

By adopting a humanist and historical approach this chapter seeks to de-centre governance and draw attention to the multiple, shifting, and (often) competing narratives that have emerged beyond neoliberalism in Britain.

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The case study of the Glasgow housing stock transfer is used to advance these arguments. It is illustrative on a number of levels. First, the stock transfer clearly exhibits the narratives at the heart of governance beyond neoliberalism. No longer is the state expected to solve all of society's problems rather the public and the voluntary and community sectors are to work together with local people to transform former public housing. Glasgow's stock transfer was an early and striking example of this Third Way narrative within the housing field. Yet the Glasgow case also highlights how tenants were re-imagined as consumers as well as citizens, thus underlining the ways in which distinct governing narratives often co-exist in tension. It would be a mistake to see economic, new institutionalist, and communitarian rationales following on from each other in a historical, linear fashion. In practice, market-based policy agendas continued under the Blair administration, becoming entangled with other narratives that emphasized direct democracy, active citizenship and communitarian endeavour.

Second, the qualitative data on the stock transfer highlights a stark difference between elite policy narratives on 'community ownership' as articulated in key policy documents, and the subjective views expressed by local residents and front-line housing practitioners: in turn a product of their own experiences and social-spatial identities. The Glasgow stock transfer therefore illuminates how local people identified with, but simultaneously challenged, contested and questioned official discourses concerned with promoting democratic citizenship. In doing so it emphasizes how governing practices are created, sustained, and transformed through the interplay between meaning and action. Moreover, it clearly emphasizes the diversity of governing narratives at play: neoliberal, as well as intuitionalist and communitarian narratives. These bodies of knowledge are important because they provide a vital the backdrop to people's actions; actions that can often shift and change in unpredictable ways.

In conclusion, we argue there is much to be gained by 'decentring' governance and focusing the study of governance on situated agency, and the gap between governing rationales and actual practices at the micro-level. Such an approach offers a nuanced and rich understanding of the messy and contested nature of contemporary goverance. Moreover, it illuminates the breadth and diversity of policy narratives that have shaped British governance beyond neoliberalism.

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Table 1: The rise and varieties of modernism

	Developmental historicism	Modernism	
		Government	The new governance
Concept of rationality	Civilizational	Economic and sociological	New theories of governance - rational choice and new institutionalism
State formation	Nation and/or Imperial state	Corporate and/or welfare state	Neoliberal and/or network state
Public sector	Civil service	Bureaucracy	New worlds of governance – markets and networks
Mode of accountability	Responsible government	Procedural accountability	Performance accountability