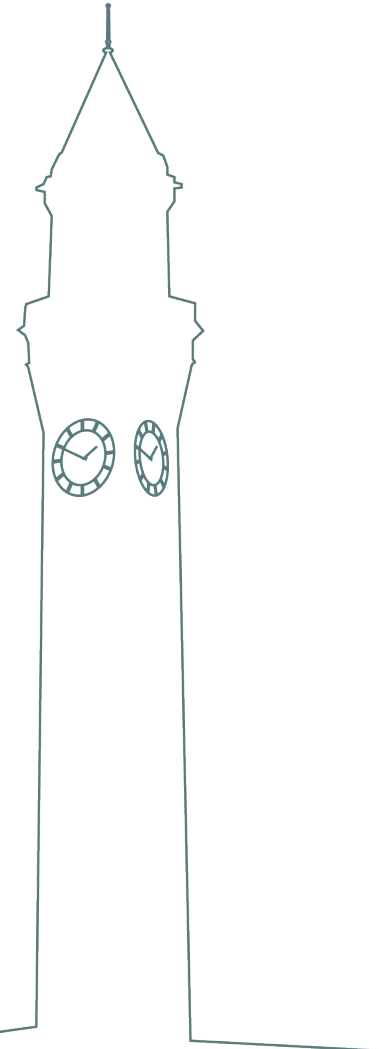




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Prospects for citizen participation under austerity: Retrenchment, continuity or innovation?

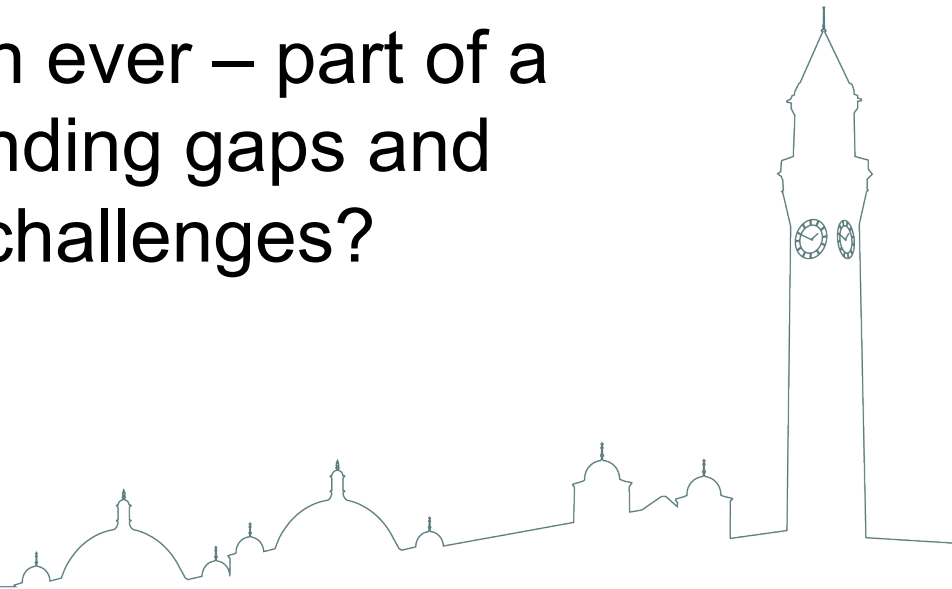


Professor Vivien Lowndes , INLOGOV

- Is citizen participation a luxury that cannot be afforded as local authorities confront budget cuts and reorganisation?

Or..

- Is it more important than ever – part of a response to meeting funding gaps and addressing new policy challenges?



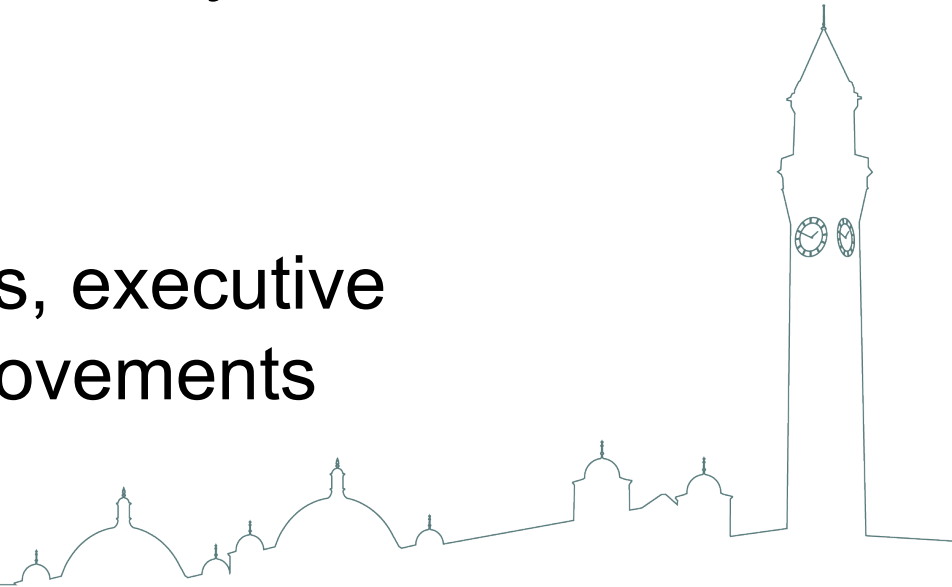
Plan of presentation

- Participation and austerity – 3 scenarios
- Research from Spain and England
- Institutionalist analysis
- Big Society narrative and experience
- Implications for practice
- CLEAR and getting CLEARER



Participation and Austerity

- Research in England and Spain covering 6 cities
- Variation within countries and between cities
- Severity and nature of austerity
- Historical legacies
- Locality effects
- Political contexts: parties, executive leadership and social movements

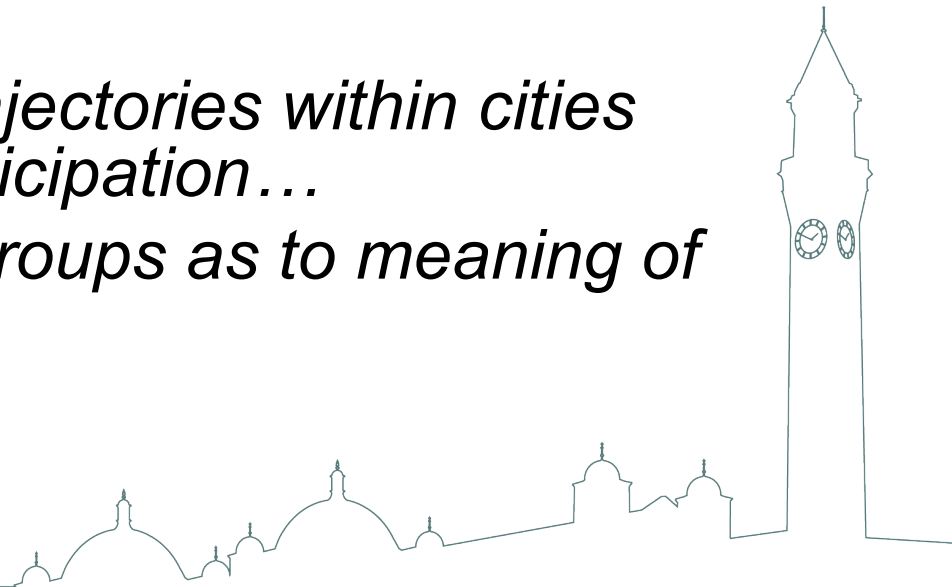


Three scenarios

- Retrenchment – reduce costs and secure elite closure in the face of austerity
- Continuity – rationale stronger than ever and effects of path dependency
- Innovation – shift to ‘governing beyond the state’

Discovered differentiated trajectories within cities and different aspects of participation...

And contestation between groups as to meaning of participation



Institutionalist analysis

- Participation arrangements put in place by the state enable, shape and constrain
- Institutions influence action via formal rules, informal practices, and narratives
- Institutions only 'live' through the actions of individuals and groups..
- Who interpret, adapt and contest rules, practices and narratives



Focus on Barcelona

A participation paradox: part of the problem or part of the solution?

- Continuity in formal mechanisms – policy paradigm deeply embedded
- Innovation in participative practices – community level experimentation
- Contestation over participation narratives – severity of crisis and emergence of new actors



Focus on Leicester

‘Austerian realism’: pragmatic and managerial approach to participation

- Formal mechanisms – upscaling away from community
- Practices – from deliberation and advocacy to commercialisation and coproduction
- Narratives – contested but depoliticised and ‘crisis deflected’



- Emphasis has been on the design of public participation initiatives – broad repertoire with wide take-up cross nationally

- But what about the...
 - Meanings associated with participation
 - Practices on the ground
 - Politics of participation: power and advantage
 - Contexts for participation: legacies and localities



The 'Big Society' narrative

- Cameron and Coalition's 'big idea' 2010-5
- Departure from Thatcherism and continuities with Labour's 'third way'
- Civil society as a political space between state and market - accommodation between neoliberalism and social democracy
- Underpinned by social capital theory - norms, networks and trust associated with good governance and service outcomes



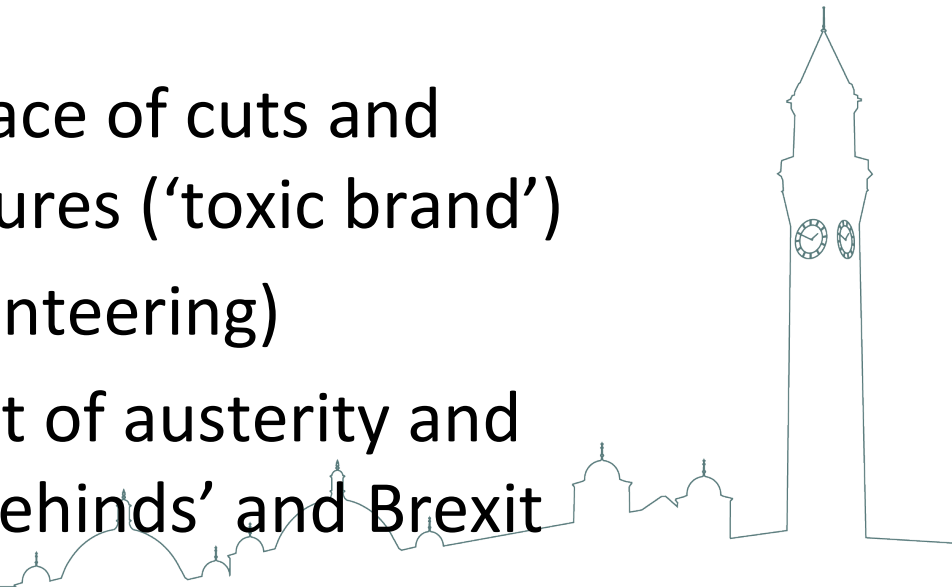
Principles and initiatives

- Give communities more power – rights to take over services
- Encourage active role in communities – Big Society Network, National Citizen Service
- Transfer power central to local government – localism and devolution
- Support coops, mutuels, charities and social enterprises – Big Society Bank
- Publish government data – open government



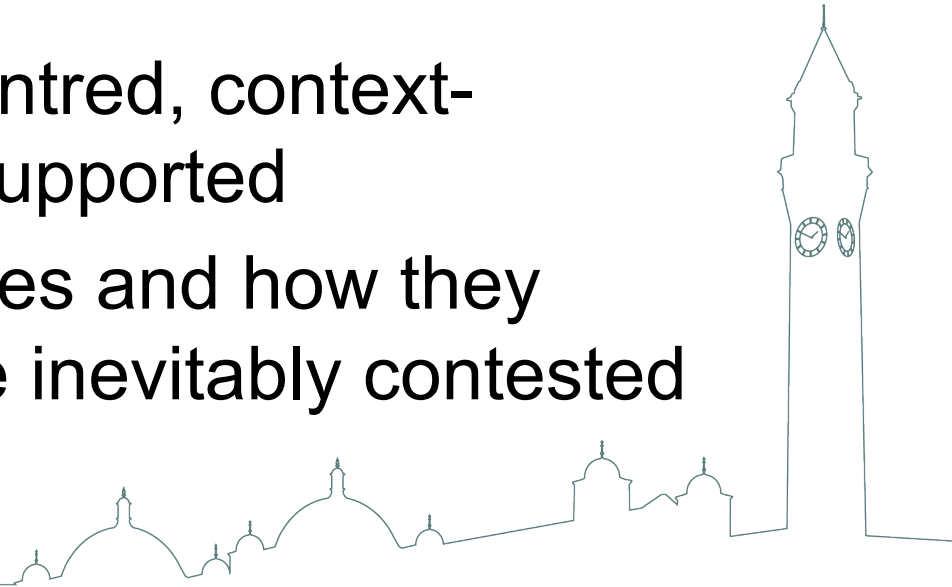
Rise and fall of the 'Big Society'

- Big Society assumed zero sum not positive sum state-society relationship
- Public scepticism – cover for cuts?
- Local government – nothing new, just less support (training, legal, standards), upscaling not devolution
- Collapse of narrative in face of cuts and programme drift and failures ('toxic brand')
- Decline in practices (volunteering)
- Failure to mitigate impact of austerity and globalisation – the 'left behinds' and Brexit



Implications for practice

- Narrative clarity reflecting purpose
 - Legitimacy of democracy
 - Governance effectiveness
 - Social justice
- Design that is citizen-centred, context-sensitive and properly supported
- Reflexivity about practices and how they distribute power and are inevitably contested



CLEAR tool

Participation is more likely when citizens:

- **C**an participate (*resources, skills and knowledge*)
- **L**ike to participate (*sense of attachment*)
- **E**nabled to participate (*civic infrastructure*)
- **A**sks to participate (*mobilised in diverse ways*)
- **R**esponds to (*outcomes/feedback*)

Diagnostic tool – what balance and what priority?

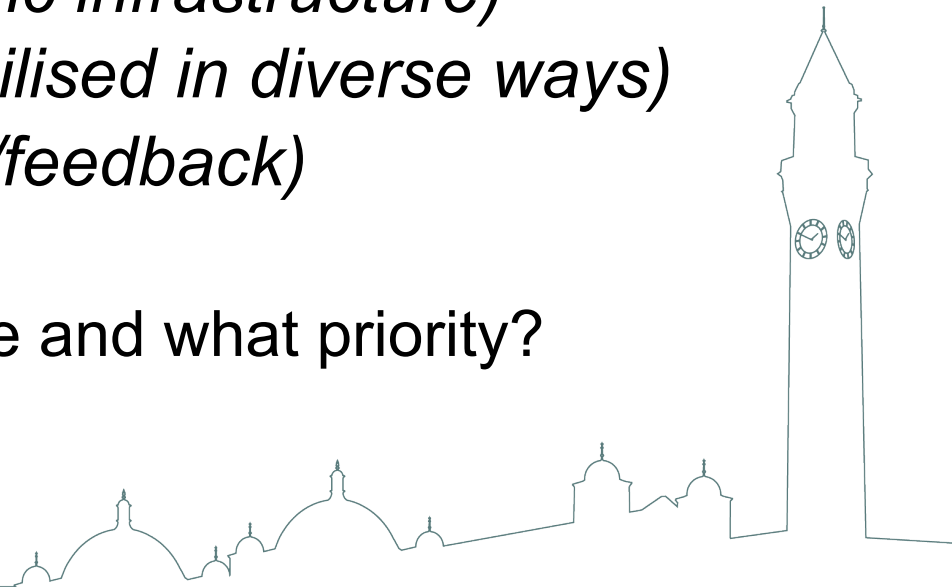
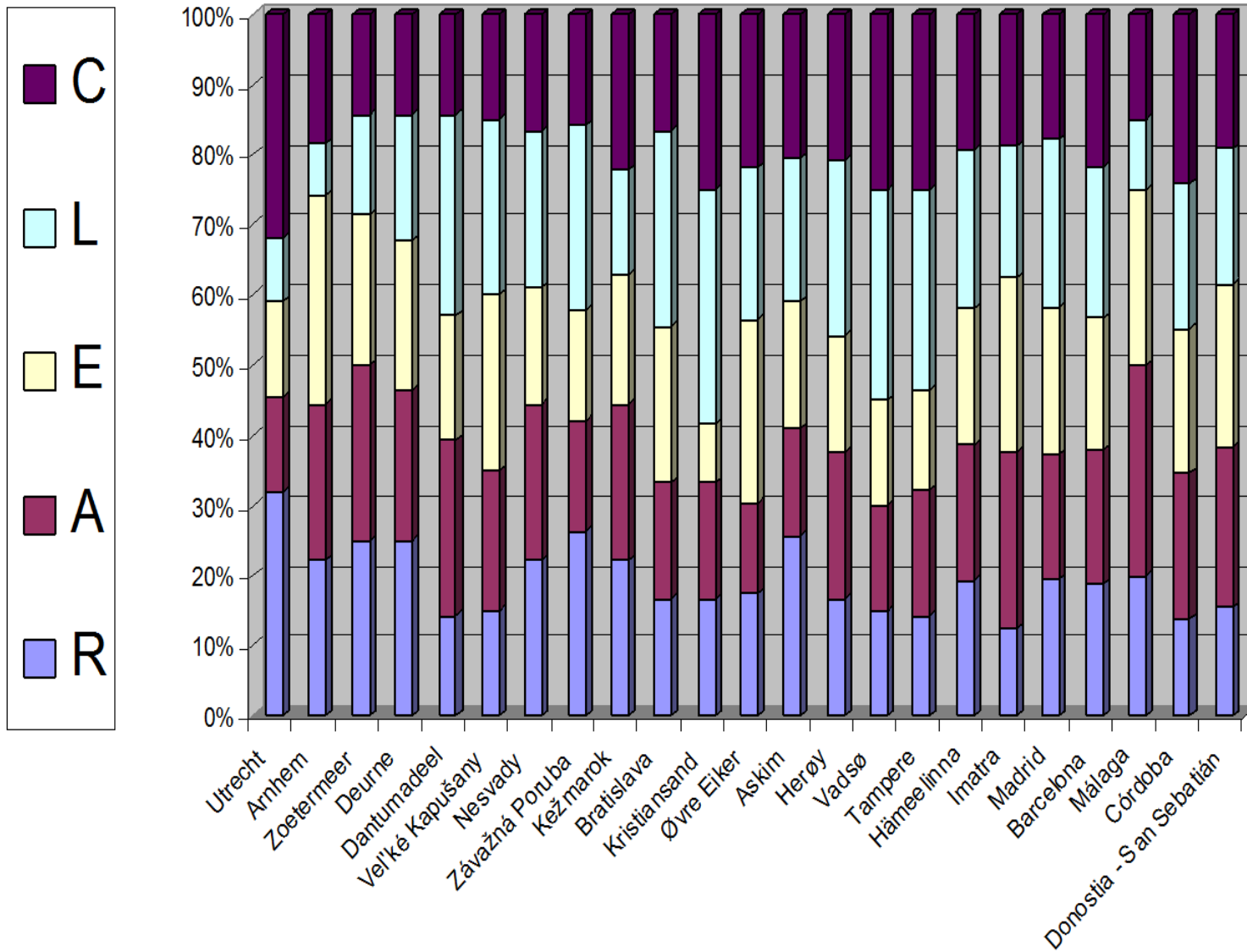


Chart 1 - Municipal variations on CLEAR



Getting CLEARER

- Do the profiles for Finnish cities still resonate?
- 'Response' – still the biggest issue?
- Being open to new approaches – e.g. co-production, co-design and citizen social science
- Getting CLEARER: learning from austerity experience
 - **C**an do
 - **L**ike to
 - **E**nabled to
 - **A**sks to
 - **R**esponded to
 - **E**qually...
 - **R**esourced and reflected on...

