Social Exclusion, Transport Decision-Making and the Role of Local Government: What Happens when the 'Socially Excluded' Request Changes to Bus Services?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the involvement of the 'socially excluded' in transport decision-making. Based upon case study research conducted consecutively in three local authorities between 1999 and 2000, it addresses the issue of what happened when the 'socially excluded' requested changes in bus provision. In doing this, it addresses four key objectives. These were, to explain how bus provision is relevant to social exclusion; to investigate the extent to which current decision-making processes promote the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making; to conduct case study research in three local authorities in order to examine examples of where the socially excluded requested changes to bus provision; and to identify the key factors that influenced whether, and to what extent, these requested changes were met.

Case study research was conducted in the three authorities, using a grounded theory approach. In each case study authority, examples were identified of where those who were 'socially excluded' had asked for changes to bus provision. Investigation was undertaken through in-depth interviews and documentary analysis into the nature of these requests, their outcomes, and the processes that led to these outcomes. Overall, it was found that the needs of the socially excluded were not adequately met, and various contributing factors were identified.

The findings that emerged contribute toward the social exclusion debate in four main areas. Firstly, through illustrating the tensions between deregulated bus provision and

social exclusion. Secondly, through showing the ambiguous nature of the roles of

officers. Thirdly, by highlighting the difficulties surrounding the role of councillors

as advocate; and fourthly, by revealing the dynamics of the decision-making process

around bus provision and social exclusion and the way in which these work against

the interests of the socially excluded through a consumerist discourse stemming from

a deregulated bus system.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Term	Definition (where applicable)
BV	Best Value	Councils are required to run services by the most effective and efficient means available, balancing quality and cost. Replaced Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), which more explicitly focused on the cost, rather than quality of services.
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering	Method and practice of tendering local government services to external bids.
CT	Community Transport	Transport services provided on a not-for-profit basis.
CIT	Commission for Integrated Transport	Body offering independent advice to Government on the implementation of integrated transport policy.
DETR	Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions	See DfT.
DfT	Department for Transport	Oversees policy on roads, buses, rail, cars, taxis, the London Underground, and community and voluntary transport. It was part of the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) between June 2001 and May 2002, and before that part of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)
DTLR	Department for Transport, London and the Regions	See DfT.
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council	
GLA	Greater London Authority	London-wide local authority. Can be seen to have replaced the GLC.
GLC	Greater London Council	London-wide local authority. Abolished in 1986.
LA	Local Authority	Administrative body providing designated services to local population.
LSP	Local Strategic Partnerships	Overarching partnership at the local level involving the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The LSP develops ways to involve local people in shaping how the public services are provided in their neighbourhood.

LTB	London Transport Buses	Part of Transport for London. In London, specifications are drawn up for buses by LTB and then private operators tender for bus routes.
LTPs	Local Transport Plans	LTPs set out policies for the promotion of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport in their area and develop a bus strategy for carrying out their bus functions. They provide the basis for allocating to local authorities the transport capital resources they need to deliver their plans.
MUD	Moral Underclass Discourse	Discourse of social exclusion that focuses on the culture and morals of the socially excluded (see Levitas , 1999).
NPM	New Public Management	Academic discourse on the renewal agenda for public administration in the 1990s
NTS	National Travel Survey	A survey carried out at a household level. It has been running since 1998 on an annual basis.
PTAs	Passenger Transport Authorities	Joint statutory bodies of local authorities that exist in six Metropolitan Areas.
QPs	Quality Partnerships	Quality Partnerships are envisaged as formal contracts between a bus operator and an authority primarily concerning with capital-investment. Currently no statutory QPs have been instigated but there are over 130 less formalised partnerships.
RBC	Rural Bus Challenge	Since 1998 money has been made available to support innovative and cost-effective ways to provide or promote rural bus transport. This is one of those sources of funding.
RED	Radical Redistributive Discourse	Discourse of social exclusion focusing on poverty and the income aspects of exclusion (see Levitas, 1999).
SID	Social Integrationist Discourse	Discourse of social exclusion that focuses on integration into social networks and employment (see Levitas, 1999)

SEU	Social Exclusion Unit	Set up by the Government in 2001 to explore, and make recommendations to overcome, the problems experienced by people facing social exclusion in reaching work and key services.
SSA	Standard Spending Assessment	Formula whereby the spending level for each service within a local authority is calculated.
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council	
TfL	Transport for London	An executive body of the Greater London Authority reporting to the Mayor of London. It is responsible for delivering the Mayor's integrated transport strategy, in partnership with the London boroughs.
TPPs	Transport Policies and Programme documents	Replaced by LTPs (see above)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the involvement of the 'socially excluded' in transport decision-making. Based upon case study research conducted consecutively in three local authorities between 1999 and 2000, it addresses the issue of what happened when people who could be considered to be 'socially excluded' requested changes in bus provision to better meet their needs. In doing this, consideration is given to the current system of transport planning in the context of deregulated and privatised bus services, and the more general attention that has recently been given by both central and local government to increased public involvement in decision-making.

'Social exclusion' is a contestable term, and various attempts have been made to understand the nature of 'social exclusion' and the processes that lead to it. Nevertheless, it has recently been acknowledged that transport, and particularly the level of bus provision, could be a key lever in alleviating social exclusion and that, in order for transport to address the needs of the socially excluded, they should be more involved in determining the nature of that provision.

This recognition has been evident in Government commissioned research such as that conducted by the Transport Research Centre (TRaC, 2000), which examined public transport and social exclusion; in the Social Exclusion Unit's recent report on transport and social exclusion (2003); in legislation such as the Transport Act 2000;

and in the giving of grants to local authorities for new initiatives on bus provision.

Motivation for Undertaking this Research

The motivation for this study stemmed largely from previous research experience and the findings that emerged from two particular research projects. The first of these studies was conducted from 1996-7 and involved over 200 qualitative interviews with those living in rural Somerset, many of whom (85%) were on a low income and could be described as 'socially excluded'. The research, which was jointly funded by Somerset County Council, the Rural Development Commission and the local Training and Enterprise Council, aimed to shed light on the experiences of those who were living in poverty, and, in particular, to understand their concerns about the provision of local services. The research highlighted the need for improvements to health facilities and educational and employment opportunities (Dibben, 1997). It also showed, however, that there were two issues that impacted upon all of the others. These were the need for adequate bus provision, and the desire of those who felt 'socially excluded' to be consulted on how local services should be provided (Dibben, 2001a).

The second piece of research that influenced this undertaking was an Economic and Social Research Committee (ESRC) funded study of user led innovation in local government. This study involved a grounded theory approach to case study research in twelve local authorities, using a range of methods, including in-depth interviews and focus groups. The field research for this study, which was undertaken in 1997-8,

sought to shed light on the processes surrounding cases where the public took the lead in asking for changes to various aspects of service provision. A central finding of the study was that, in each of the case study authorities, there was a limited and constrained involvement of the public in local government decision-making (Dibben and Bartlett, 2001).

Taken together, the findings of the two research projects indicated that bus provision was a key issue for the 'socially excluded', and that those who are socially excluded would like to be more involved in determining how services should be provided. In addition, it also appeared that even where the public were involved in local government decision-making, this involvement tended to be limited. This led to the general research question, ' What happens when the 'socially excluded' ask for changes to bus provision?'

In order to address this overall aim, four research objectives were developed. These were, to examine how bus provision is relevant to social exclusion; to investigate the extent to which current decision-making processes promote the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making; to conduct case study research in three local authorities in order to examine examples of where the socially excluded requested changes to bus provision; and to identify the key factors that influenced whether, and to what extent, these requests were met.

Structure

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. Following the Introduction, Chapter Two addresses the first research objective by briefly exploring what is understood by the term 'social exclusion', and examining its relationship to transport, particularly bus provision. Subsequently, recent Government initiatives that might make bus provision more inclusive are considered. Chapter Three takes this forward through an examination of the current decision-making processes around bus provision. It does this initially through evaluating the context for decision-making, particularly in relation to the impact of bus deregulation. It then turns to examine the general prescriptions for the involvement of the public advocated by recent Government reforms in order to provide a more general insight into the way in which decision-making processes and the roles of key actors within these, impact on the socially excluded. The likelihood of these reforms leading to increased involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making on bus provision is then critically evaluated.

Chapter Four outlines the underlying methodological approach taken in the thesis, and explains how the research was carried out in practice. In explaining the methodology, it outlines why the research was undertaken from an interpretivist, but also realist perspective. It also explains why it was appropriate to use grounded theory and explains how the findings were developed through an iterative process using qualitative data collection and analysis, together with ongoing reflection, in three consecutive case study authorities.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven detail the findings and subsequent analysis within each of the three consecutive case study authorities. As a result of the analysis of current decision-making processes in Chapter Three, each chapter commences by examining relevant contextual factors. These include: the relationship between the local authority and the bus providers, and the way in which bus services are provided; the authority's administrative and political background and the roles of officers and councillors; and the authority's attitude toward consultation and public involvement, together with the mechanisms in place for this, especially in relation to bus decision-making. The findings of the case study examples are then detailed. The final part of each of the chapters then concludes with a discussion of the outcomes of the requests made, and the factors that appear to have impacted on these outcomes.

Chapter Eight goes on to compare the findings from the case studies. This comparison, initially, focuses attention on the similarities and differences between the outcomes of the requests made. It then examines the factors that seemed to have led to these similarities and differences. Three sets of such factors are identified. First, the unequal distribution of power between those involved in decision-making. Second, the problematic attitudes and behaviours of key actors in respect of social exclusion, and their lack of willingness to engage meaningfully with the socially excluded. Third, the lack of a supportive context, particularly in terms of the deregulatory framework and system of bus provision.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Nine, outlines the key findings of the study and through reflection on the literature analysed in Chapters Two and Three, discusses

how these contribute toward the social exclusion debate in four main areas. First, in .terms of the relationship that exists between deregulated bus provision and social exclusion. Second, through shedding light on the ambiguous nature of the role of officers as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded. Third, through discussing the role of councillors as advocates for the socially excluded. Fourthly, through revealing the dynamics of the decision-making processes around bus provision and social exclusion. The final section of this chapter then reflects on the weight of these findings, and explores how remaining gaps in knowledge might be addressed by further research.

In Chapter Ten, the concerns that were raised in Chapter Nine are addressed through an examination of how changes might be made to policy and practice at both local government and central government level. At the local government level, these reforms relate to the need to address departmentalism and accountability, while at the central government level, they relate to the possibility for additional funding for bus provision, actions to further support the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making, and the need for the increased monitoring and regulation of bus operators.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND BUS PROVISION

The primary purpose of this chapter is to explain why bus provision is important to

social exclusion. To do this, the chapter begins by examining what has more

generally been understood by the term 'social exclusion', recognising that this is a

complex term. It then turns to focus more carefully on social exclusion and bus

provision. This is done by considering and evaluating, in turn, the following three

issues. First, the relevance of adequate bus provision to social exclusion, and the

implications that this has for an understanding of how 'social exclusion' might be

conceptualised. Second, the modernisation initiatives that aim to improve bus

provision. Third, the need for the more effective involvement of the 'socially

excluded' in decision-making on bus services.

Social Exclusion: A Contestable Term

Social exclusion is a relatively new concept, but one that has generated a lot of

debate. It was originally coined in 1974, and first used by the European Commission

in 1989 when the Council of Ministers requested the European Commission to study

policies to combat social exclusion. Early reference to social exclusion by the

European Union was said to be an attempt to avoid discussions of poverty, in order to

move the discussion away from levels of income and the need to redistribute wealth

(Spicker, 1997). Other concepts of social exclusion which do not emphasise income

focus instead on the integrational and cultural aspects of exclusion (Levitas, 1998). Integrational explanations focus on inclusion in social networks and paid work, while cultural aspects of exclusion tend to blame the poor for their situation. Nevertheless, even though these two latter explanations sometimes appear to be predominant as discourses around social exclusion, it is generally agreed that income is at least a contributing factor toward social exclusion (Burchardt *et al*, 1997).

The analysis of what is, or indeed what should be, meant by the term 'social exclusion' has been widely contested (Burchardt *et al*, 1999). This is not least because the term 'social exclusion' is used interchangeably to refer to the causes, state of being, and effects of such exclusion. This confusion can be illustrated by considering how each of these approaches to the meaning of social exclusion can be used in relation to the three factors referred to above that are often identified as being central to it: low income, integration and culture. Low income can cause social exclusion, but at the same time social exclusion could mean being on a low income, or certain aspects of social exclusion could contribute toward being on a low income. Similarly, a lack of social integration could cause social exclusion, social exclusion might essentially mean not being integrated in society, and social exclusion could result in a lack of integration. Thirdly, a certain cultural outlook (with, for example, short term aspirations) could cause social exclusion, social exclusion might mean that one has a certain cultural outlook, and social exclusion could cause a certain cultural outlook.

While it is beyond the remit of this thesis to discuss in any depth why the term is

used in these differing ways, it would be useful to explore each of these concepts in a little more detail in relation to how they might cause social exclusion, since it has been suggested that the perception of what causes 'social exclusion' can lead to certain courses of action (Levitas, 1999; Deakin, 2002). The following section therefore begins by exploring the economic, social and cultural causes of exclusion and briefly indicates the action that each of these might presuppose.

Economic, Integrationist and Cultural Causes of Exclusion

The first perspective focuses on poverty or low income as the key cause of social exclusion. Indeed, various studies have shown that the level of income that a person or household is in receipt of can impact on all aspects of their lives (see for example Kempson, 1996), and can lead to debt related problems (Drakeford and Sachdev, 2001). In early discussions, such as those by Booth (1889) and Rowntree (1941), poverty was generally described in absolute terms, based on the notion of subsistence, or the minimum needed to sustain life (Alcock, 1997). Subsequently, an alternative approach, that of relative poverty, came to be used. For example, Townsend has argued that such poverty exists when people,

"...lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely acknowledged or approved, in the societies to which they belong"
(Townsend, 1979, p31).

As was suggested above, the focus on poverty and the economic causes of social exclusion, which Levitas has referred to as a more radical redistributive discourse (RED), has to some extent been played down in recent years. This is arguably because such explanations tend to attribute poverty to the inequality inherent in a capitalist society, which is itself tied to political solutions (for example, redistribution) that have fallen out of favour in recent years (Levitas, 1999). Some have argued, however, that poverty can be alleviated by supply-side solutions which seek to alter the behaviour of financial institutions, and encourage initiatives such as credit unions (Drakeford and Sachdev, 2001; Hayton, 2001).

Social exclusion has also been described as relational, implying a lack of integration, participation, and power (Room, 1995). This lack of integration has been applied more specifically to social networks and to employment. The importance of social networks has been widely recognised (see for example Heikkinen, 2000; Young and Wilmott, 1986; Dennis *et al*, 1969). As with economic causes of exclusion, the need for integration into social networks also implies action. In this case, social exclusion is considered to be the result of weaknesses in institutions in not providing the services to enable integration (Healey, 1998; Edwards, 1998; Schucksmith and Chapman, 1998) or in adequately supporting existing social networks (Wenger, 1997). The idea of integration has also, however, been linked specifically to employment (see for example Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). Levitas calls this the Social Integrationist Discourse (SID), which emphasises the idea of citizenship and the role of paid work.

The assumption that unemployment is a key contributor to social exclusion has explicitly informed Labour's strategy since coming into power (Oppenheim, 1998a; Levitas, 1999; Sumaza, 2001). Moreover, in the Social Exclusion Unit's most recent annual report, it is suggested that "...*work is the best form of insurance against poverty and social exclusion*" (SEU, 2002b, p2). However, Alcock (1997) cautions against focusing too heavily on employment as a key issue. This is due to the way in which it can be redressed through forcing people into low paid jobs.[1] But, in addition, Alcock (1997) suggests that this can lead to ideas of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, where some cannot work, but others choose not to work although they are able. As Squires comments,

"...*the 'genuine claimant' is no more and no less than a modern counterpart of that paradigm of Victorian virtue, the 'deserving poor'*" (Squires, 1990, p193).

Alcock adds that this assumption has been reinforced over time by numerous laws and Government policies, and moreover, that it has led to the specific targeting of groups such as lone parents (Sumaza, 2001).

A further discourse of social exclusion, and arguably the most contentious, is one that more explicitly places the blame on the culture of the poor. This is derived from a conservative tradition, and has been described as becoming detached from the 'moral order' (Room, 1995). As such, it can be seen to echo earlier 'underclass' debates (Gans, 1991). In common with the integrationist discourse, this discourse has also been linked with arguments distinguishing between those who are deserving and

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[1] See also McNight (2002).

undeserving poor (Flynn, 2002), and has more recently been applied by the Labour

Government to particular groups such as asylum seekers (Sales, 2002). In common

with Oscar Lewis' (1961) 'culture of poverty' argument, this concept similarly

implies that there are specific cultural factors that keep the poor poor, developed as a

way to cope with the lack of opportunity and the inability to achieve aspirations.

These cultural factors are essentially the product of the environment in which people

live (Buck, 2001), leading to the possibility that community cohesion in a

disadvantaged neighbourhood could reinforce its exclusion from mainstream society

(Healey, 1998; Lupton and Power, 2002).

It has, however, been suggested that although appearing to be due to cultural factors,

exclusion could be either caused or exacerbated by the attitudes or actions of policy

makers (Bauder, 2002; Nolan and Whelan, 2000). Bauder, for example, refers to how

it is the negative stereotypes held by local employers and institutions that result in

exclusion (Bauder, 2002). Alternatively, in terms of action taken, it has been

suggested that exclusion could, for example, be the result of planning issues, where

those living in housing estates, or an outer urban area might be effectively cut off

from others living nearby (Power, 1997; Perri 6, 1997; Local Transport Today, 1998;

Coles *et al*, 2000; TRaC, 2001). This can result in restricted employment

opportunities (McGregor and McConnachie, 1995), or could, arguably, be an implicit

strategy to reduce the visibility of low income groups and lessen their power (Bartley,

1998).[2]

Levitas (1999) suggests that this 'cultural' or 'moral' model is one that the Labour

Government has been increasingly moving towards - that of a Moral Underclass

Discourse (MUD). This has led to a focus on the culture and morals of the

underclass, rather than redistribution, and the linked idea of a culture of dependency.

Thus, it has been suggested that little has been done in terms of taking action to offer

practical remedies for exclusion, while any redistribution arranged by the

Government has been small-scale and aimed at the 'deserving poor' (Benn, 2000).

In short, discussions of social exclusion have generally seemed to fall within one of

three areas: firstly, they can be based around the link to poverty; secondly, they may

relate to the concept of integration, particularly into the labour market; and thirdly,

they can tend to centre around moral and cultural attitudes. There are, however,

further complications with using the term 'social exclusion'. These are outlined

below.

Social Exclusion as a Multidimensional Concept: Issues Arising

As indicated above, there has been much debate about the causes of social exclusion.

At the same time, however, Levitas (1998) who developed the three concepts

highlighted above, admits that these are overlapping. Indeed, there is now general

agreement that the causes, experiences and effects of social exclusion are

multidimensional (Room, 1995; Byrne, 1999; Schucksmith and Chapman, 1998;

Kenyon *et al*, 2002). It is also widely accepted that social exclusion and people's

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[2] The separation of certain areas is, incidentally, expected to be worsened by the government's recent abolition of structure plans, which separates transport and land use planning (Local Transport Today,

experience of social exclusion can change over time (Madanipour, 1998; Jenkins and

Rigg, 2001; Burchardt *et al*, 2002). Moving into the experience of inclusion /

exclusion should therefore be seen as a dynamic process, which engenders the

recommendation that action should be taken to ensure that those who are

marginalised, and on the borderline, should be made less marginal (Goodin, 1996).

Thus, it could be argued that the focus of attention should centre around those who

are at risk of social exclusion, rather than more simplistically refer to those who are

'socially excluded'.

Although it is generally recognised that social exclusion is multidimensional, there

are difficulties around this. One such difficulty is in determining those people who

might be at risk of 'social exclusion', and another is to do with how 'social

exclusion' should be measured.

There are difficulties in stating definitively who is at risk of 'social exclusion'.

Nevertheless, in trying to determine those who are at risk, various different groups of

people have been identified. For example, Oppenheim (1998a), in drawing up the

Government's indicators for social exclusion, identified the groups who were at high

risk of experiencing social exclusion as lone parents, single pensioners, the

unemployed, the economically inactive, and children. More recently, the Social

Exclusion Unit (2002b) suggests that the following groups are more often at a

particular disadvantage: women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, those in

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2002b).

large families, and pensioners.[3] More generally, however, it has been suggested that all of those who are on a low income are at risk of 'social exclusion'. At the same time, there can be variation within groups of people, and exclusion might be related to other reasons such as the local context, and also to the level of and access to local services, so that experiences might, for example, be different in urban compared to rural areas (McLaughlin, 1985; Cloke *et al*, 1994; Cloke, 1997; Schucksmith and Chapman, 1998; Matthews *et al*, 2000).

A further complication in addressing 'social exclusion' is the debate around how it should be measured. In order to measure and record differences between people and also over time, various studies have been based around the measurement of poverty and social exclusion. There has been much discussion about the usefulness of such indicators (see for example Golding, 1979; Alcock, 1997; O'Reilly, 2002). In particular, it has been suggested that they might not reflect the real experiences of the people concerned, with the result that indicators such as the Indicators of Local Deprivation (ILD), which have been used by various UK governments over the years, have been criticised for hiding pockets of poverty.

Indicators of social exclusion have also been criticised for not including relevant measures such as the provision of public transport and the reasons for not using it (Church *et al*, 2000). Indeed, the Social Exclusion Unit's forty-six indicators did not include a reference to transport (Local Transport Today, 2001), and the service

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[3] Specific attention has been paid in various studies to the needs of all older people (Help the Aged, date); those with disabilities and their carers (Leonard Cheshire, 1998), and ethnic minority groups (Modood *et al*, 1997; Phillips, 1998; Sly *et al*, 1999; Platt and Noble, 1999; Chau and Yu, 2001).

delivery Best Value Performance Indicators for transport do not address social, economic and geographical disadvantage, nor 'fair access', meaning the ease and equality of access to services (Boyne, 2000). This is likely to be a serious omission, given the potential importance that transport has to social exclusion, as will now be shown.

Social Exclusion and the Importance of Bus Provision

The above section discussed the complicated nature of social exclusion, and drew attention to the need for a more careful consideration of transport in this. This section now explains the link between social exclusion and bus provision. It begins by demonstrating the relevance of adequate bus provision to social exclusion, especially in the light of differing levels of access to the use of a car and the differing degrees of reliance on bus provision. It then goes on to determine how 'social exclusion' should be conceptualised for the purpose of this thesis.

It was indicated above that the link between transport and social exclusion has received a relatively limited amount of Government attention over the years. Nevertheless, the lack of choice in relation to travel can lead to 'travel poverty' (Root, 1998). This lack of choice can be largely the result of not owning, or having use of a car. The lack of availability of a car can, for example, be a particular issue for mothers of young children when the husband or partner is at work during the day. As such, the lack of a car can be a factor in determining social integration and the level of access to key services. For example, data from the National Travel Survey

(DETR, 2001) showed that people in households with cars made 28 per cent more trips to visit family and friends, and 45 per cent made more trips for other leisure purposes. For those who rely on public transport, it has also been suggested that certain trips are particularly difficult, such as those to hospitals or supermarkets (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002a).

Levels of car ownership have been found to vary for certain groups of people, with the lowest levels of car ownership being found among single pensioner households and single parent families. The numbers also vary according to income. In the National Travel Survey outlined above, sixty-five per cent of households in the lowest income quintile did not have a car, compared with only 5 per cent in the highest income quintile households (DETR, 2001). It has also been found that in council estate areas with high unemployment, 68% did not own a car (DETR, 2001). At the same time, car ownership has been found to be lower among women and people from ethnic minorities (Lu and Pas, 1998; Green, 1998) and high where people live in rural areas. This latter finding can be seen to reflect the distance that people live from basic shops and services, and their lack of access to public transport (Survey of Rural Services, 1997).

Difficulties due to the lack of car ownership are experienced particularly by those people who are on a low income. For example, a recent survey carried out by the DTLR (Department for Transport, London and the Regions) on behalf of the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) found that more of those who had decided not to apply for a particular job in the last 12 months because of transport problems were living in low-

income areas (18%) than in more prosperous areas (8-12%). Another study has also

pointed to differences in travel patterns based on income, showing that travel poor,

non car-owning residents went to only a third of the places visited by car-owners

(Root et al, 1996). The lack of transport combined with a low income can lead to

missed leisure and social opportunities for young people (Davis and Ridge, 1997;

Philip, 2001; Storey and Brannen, 2000) or indeed difficulties in seeking work

(Pavis et al, 2001; DTLR, 2002; Meadows, 2001; Millar, 2000). A number of further

studies draw attention to the experiences of those living in rural areas, highlighting

exclusion from education, employment, and social interaction (see for example

Mosely, 1979; Cloke, et al, 1994; Root et al, 1996; Dibben, 1997; Matthews et al,

2000; TRaC, 2000). Indeed, it has been suggested that transport is the single most

important concern of people living in rural areas (Countryside Agency, 2000). This

finding needs to be set against the background of declining services such as shops

and post offices in rural areas (Matson, 1998). At the same time, transport has been

seen as relevant to social exclusion for particular groups of people in urban areas,

with implications for land use planning (Hine and Mitchell, 2001b).

Studies have also been carried out which point to particular categories of people who

are at risk of travel poverty. These include women (Hamilton et al, 1991; Hamilton

and Jenkins, 1992), older people (Help the Aged, 1993), and those with disabilities

(Meltzer et al, 1989; Heiser, 1995; Parry, 1995; OECD Transport, 2000; Barrett et al,

2002). In addition to drawing attention to social and health aspects (see also Lovett et

al, 2002; Atkins, 2001), these latter studies have paid particular attention to mobility

issues (see for example Metz, 2000; DaRT, 1998). It has been suggested that the lack

of mobility can impact on the quality of life in various ways such as the psychological benefits of movement, the exercise benefits, and involvement in the local community (Metz, 2000).

The findings reviewed above therefore indicate that inadequate bus provision can itself be considered to be a cause of social exclusion. In addition, it can compound other forms of social exclusion. As a result, for the purpose of this thesis, social exclusion, as it relates to bus provision, will be defined as where people are excluded from adequate transport provision due to a combination of factors such as low income, geographical isolation, and mobility problems. The next section therefore examines various possible options that might address transport exclusion as defined here, and then turns to examine the relevance of the adequate involvement of the 'socially excluded' in decision-making on bus provision.

Possible Options for the Improvement of Bus Services

Against the background of a more general recognition of the importance of bus provision to social exclusion, since buses are disproportionately used by the socially excluded, possible options have been put forward for the improvement of bus services that might address social needs. For example, a report by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2001 stated that a lack of mobility and adequate transport for older people could prevent them from participating in social activities and *"lead to low morale, depression and loneliness"* (SEU, 2001). Similarly, in the Social Exclusion Unit's (2002c) work on neighbourhood renewal, transport problems were frequently

highlighted as important barriers to improving work, learning and health outcomes in deprived areas. More generally, it was recently stated in the Department for Transport's (2002) Annual Progress Report Good Practice Guide that.

"Transport has an important role to play in tackling social exclusion by ensuring that groups or communities at risk of social exclusion have sufficient access to work and to key services and facilities."
(Department for Transport, 2002)

In order to address social exclusion, it is not sufficient only to provide 'special provision' for particular groups of people defined as 'socially excluded', since as was shown above, social exclusion is multidimensional and can vary over time. Therefore, it is necessary to provide inclusive mainstream bus services which might address the varying different needs of different groups of people (CIT, 2002; Atkins, 2001). If people owned cars then they could vary their journeys, depending on their needs; while targeted provision would address certain needs it is often exclusive to particular groups.

A number of different suggestions have been put forward that might facilitate adequate bus provision for those who are 'socially excluded'. One of these relates to the better use of new technology. Another is aimed at increasing the funding for bus provision. A third aims to address the relationships between those involved in decision-making on bus provision, through the introduction of Quality Partnerships between Local Government and bus operators.

New Technology

There are various ways in which new technology might possibly address transport exclusion. These relate to the virtual delivery of services, and telematics that might help in areas such as scheduling.

In relation to the first of these, the Commission for Integrated Transport (2001) has recently attempted to compare bus provision in the UK with that in other parts of Europe in order to identify best practice on bus provision. One approach that the report indicates is the need for proactive land-use planning policies and the use of outreach, home and the virtual delivery of services in order to reduce travel. It could, however, be argued that this virtual delivery of services is not enough in itself since it will not adequately address the social benefits of transport in terms of enabling social integration (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

The second way in which exclusion might be addressed is through the use of information systems, used, for example, for Demand Responsive Transport. The use of information systems has been a recurrent theme in recent years, so that, while such developments can also be useful for urban areas, the VIRGIL partners, a consortium of 10 European partners with specialist knowledge of European transport, have pointed in particular to the application of telematics - the use of information and communication technologies to enhance booking, use, scheduling and management of rural transport services (Armitage, 2000). Various other studies have been carried out that similarly point to the benefits possible from the use of new technology,

especially in respect of the need for an integrated transport policy (Kenyon *et al*, 2002; Turner *et al*, 2000; Turner and Grieco, 1998). However, at the same time, it has been recognised that access to technology is generally lower among people of lower incomes, or in lower occupational classes (Lyons, 2002). In addition, although information on bus usage might help in some respects, it does not in itself adequately address the issue of a lack of bus provision.

Increased Funding for Bus Provision

Another option is to increase the funding for bus services in order to increase the level of provision. This could be done through concessionary fares, as illustrated by what has happened in Wales where full concessionary fares are being provided to pensioners and people with disabilities (NAfW, 2003). Another method is the use of increased subsidy. Compared with most EU States, the UK has the least financially supported bus network. For example, the UK Government provides a 32 per cent subsidy for bus services' running costs compared with subsidy levels as high as 70 per cent in other EU countries, although it should be noted that the issue of bus subsidy is currently under consideration (Local Transport Today, 2002a). On the other hand, a number of new initiatives have been developed in order to address the lack of bus provision in the UK, particularly in rural areas. These include the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, the Rural Bus Challenge, the Rural Transport Partnership Scheme, and the Rural Parishes Transport Fund. The Rural Bus Subsidy Grant was initially aimed at new or enhanced bus services, although from April 2001 local authorities have been able to use up to 20% on supporting existing services. After

one year, the grant had paid for 1,845 new or improved services. However a study of more than 1,000 local authority bus contracts suggests that,

"...there is little evidence of new bus services being established based on a clear understanding of the accessibility needs of the local population" (Local Transport Today, October 26, 2000)[4].

Another initiative is the Rural Bus Challenge, which emphasises innovative schemes (Local Transport Today, 2000b). Those funded in this way include the Winslow Community Bus (Community Transport, March/April 1999). A third is the Rural Transport Partnership, intended to encourage working with the voluntary sector and community transport, but involving both local authorities and parish councils. An explicit objective of such partnerships is to promote social inclusion through accessibility to jobs, services and social activity (RDC, 1998). The scheme allows for initiatives such as car brokerage schemes or car-sharing. Yet another initiative aimed at improving transport in the countryside is the Rural Parishes Transport Fund, administered by the Countryside Agency, whereby parish councils can apply for £10,000 each to start local initiatives. There seem, however, to have been problems with this scheme since it has arguably been inflexible, applying only to bus services not in existence before 1 May, 1998 (Local Transport Today, October, 2000). These schemes, however, require local authorities to bid for extra money, and are not easily available to all authorities.

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[4] It has been further suggested that the scheme was not flexible enough for local authorities in terms of how they could spend their money, and on what they could spend it (Gray, 2001).

The Government has, more generally, expressed a desire to increase the flexibility of bus services. This is against the background of criticisms that the current rules and regulations prevent more responsive uses of buses. In August of 2002, a consultation document was produced on this theme, with views sought by 1 November 2002 (DfT, 2002). This document mentioned the Wiltshire Wigglybus as an example of a flexible service, but did point out that this is only acceptable since it has a fixed core route including principal starting and finishing points which operate irrespective of demand. In order to address this inflexibility, one suggestion has been to relax the registration system for new buses. However a problem with relaxing the registration system is that operators might try to re-register existing services with less defined particulars, so weakening their accountability to Traffic Commissioners. It is also difficult to reconcile service quality with a decrease in the control of Traffic Commissioners. In summary, increased flexibility might result in gains for operators as much as for the socially excluded. Moreover, although increased funding might help to address the lack of buses, this is not necessarily going to address the needs of the most vulnerable.

Quality Partnerships

The Transport Act 2000 includes the prescription for Quality Partnerships to be established between Local Government and private bus operators. These are intended to address some of the issues raised around the quality of bus services in the context of the deregulation and privatisation of bus services, such as a less stable bus network and many small route changes (Social Exclusion Unit 2000).

Quality partnerships between bus operators and local authorities are where local authorities provide traffic management schemes that assist bus services, and the bus operator, in turn, provides better quality buses, improved marketing, better integration and more reliable services (DETR, 1998). There have been cited examples of this working well in practice, at least in as far as they benefit bus operators. These include First Group's work in Greater Manchester, and signs of increased profits in Ipswich and Leeds (Murray, 1998). Although these examples suggest a positive outcome of Quality Partnerships, at the same time, various criticisms have been made of this policy. One is with regard to which partners the local authority can easily work with, so that although there might be a need for demand-responsive services, local authorities have generally not seemed, for example, to be able to integrate taxis into their passenger transport strategies. This has reportedly been at least partly due to barriers relating to legislation and the operators themselves (Local Transport Today, 2000a). Another issue that has been highlighted by the Commission for Integrated Transport (2001), and is particularly relevant to this thesis, is in relation to the behaviour of the private operators. Operators are not legally bound by the partnerships and there have been instances of where routes have been withdrawn after local authorities have invested in local infrastructure. Due to the interesting issues that this raises, a more detailed discussion, and critique, of the impact of deregulation and privatisation of bus services is undertaken in the next Chapter.

The Need to Involve the 'Socially Excluded' in Decision-Making on Bus Provision

Irrespective of the changes outlined above, what is arguably of prime importance, and yet has not been examined in detail in previous studies, is the involvement of the 'socially excluded' in decision-making on bus provision. This is despite the fact that studies have indicated how the involvement in decision-making of those at risk of social exclusion can lead to benefits for both them and for their local communities (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2000; OECD, 2001). More generally, it has been argued that it is important to ask people about their needs (Arnstein, 1969; Beresford and Croft, 1993; Lister, 2001), and debates have taken place around political exclusion, with particular attention paid to the marginalisation of women (Razavi, 2001) young people (Davis and Ridge, 1997; Matthews, 2001) and those with disabilities (Morris, 2001). Through participation in decision-making, it might be possible for those who are 'socially excluded' to influence the way in which services are provided so that they more effectively address their needs. However, it is not enough to provide eligibility to individuals to participate, since this does not necessarily imply active participation (Goodin, 1996). More therefore needs to be done to ensure that there is both active participation (Goodin, 1996) and a wide level of participation that includes all groups of people (see for example, Schuster and Solomos, 2001). More specifically, in relation to this thesis, various research studies have, more specifically, drawn attention for the need for public involvement in transport decision-making. These have included studies of elderly people (Atkins, 2001), studies carried out in rural areas (Mosely, 1979) and of excluded council estates (Power, 1997). Similarly,

the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) has pointed to the need for the involvement of local people in transport decision-making.

Public participation in decision-making has officially been encouraged, especially in town and country planning, since the Skeffington Report, 'People and Planning', published in 1969. More recently, the Transport Act 2000, referred to above, requires Local Authorities to involve the public in the development of Local Transport Plans (LTPs). The aim of LTPs is to increase partnership working and consultation of the public, while setting out priorities and acting as a bidding document to obtain funds from central government. In doing this, they replace Transport Policies and Programme documents (TPPs), which did not have to be subject to public consultation and were in a number of cases not well publicised (Hamblin, 1997). LTPs are intended to create a partnership between local councils, businesses, operators and users, revitalise local democracy and bring power closer to people (DETR, 1999). In connection with this, the Department for Transport (2002b) has stated that there is a desire for local people and business to have a *"real say"* and *"real influence"* over transport, including measures to reduce social exclusion and address the needs of different groups in society, and in recent guidance has referred to how local authorities should *"consult widely"* in preparing their annual progress reports on Local Transport Plans. Thus, it might appear that there is a degree of political will from central government to increase public participation in decision making in order to address issues related to transport and social exclusion.

Criticisms have, however, been made about the use of Local Transport Plans. An

early examination of transport plans has found that the majority are *"unwieldy and impenetrable"* and are also *"not a good way to better public involvement"* (Local Transport Today, March 2001, p6). In addition to this, Booth and Richardson (2001) point out that the Transport Act 2000 does not contain a clear statement of how public involvement should be integrated into the new LTP framework, nor does it deal with what happens where there are irreconcilable differences between interests. At the same time, they note barriers including the prevailing culture of transport planning as a top-down process that is expert driven and technocentric. More specifically, it has been argued that there has been relatively little engagement with the socially excluded in the development of Local Transport Plans. For example, a review of the Scottish Local Transport Strategies suggests that although two-thirds of strategies include evidence that consultation has taken place involving all social groups and the community transport sector, only a third state whether the methods chosen were effective in achieving maximum participation of excluded groups (Sinclair, 2001).

In England, too, similar concerns have been raised about the extent to which the 'socially excluded' have been involved in the Local Transport Planning process (Bickerstaff *et al*, 2002). These authors found that only 16% of local authorities had made major efforts to include hard to reach or disadvantaged groups, and only 6% of LTPs showed an active discourse with disadvantaged groups. They suggest, moreover, that there was little engagement with different sectors of the public, few deliberative forums for interaction, and low policy transparency. Taken together these findings suggest that improvements could be made to public participation. Their

conclusions also lead them to suggest that government guidance does not go far enough in conceptualising the role of participation in planning policy, and that there is a need for a substantial cultural shift in how local authorities approach the process of transport planning.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that bus provision is very relevant to social exclusion, and is an important factor for those on a low income, the elderly, those in excluded council housing estates, and those living in rural areas. As far as this thesis is concerned, a useful definition of social exclusion, as it relates to bus provision, is therefore the risk of exclusion from adequate transport provision due to a combination of factors such as low income, geographical isolation and mobility problems.

At the same time, however, it was shown that in the context of a lack of consensus on what is meant by the term 'social exclusion', Government policy seems to have focused on employment, while influenced by discourses that divide people into those who are 'deserving' and those who are 'non-deserving'. Less attention appears to have been paid in Government policy to income and the social aspects of integration, nor, until recently, to the relevance of bus provision to social exclusion.

Against this background, recent initiatives for addressing social exclusion, as defined in this thesis, were explored. These included the provision of increased concessionary

fares or bus subsidy, new initiatives on bus provision, and quality partnerships between local government and the private sector. Some potential problems were raised, however, about the likely effectiveness of such partnerships in changing the behaviour of operators, and in particular whether they were leading to improved bus provision for the socially excluded. Moreover, it was argued that in addressing transport exclusion, of prime importance is the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making on bus provision. Through participation in decision-making, it might be possible for those who are 'socially excluded' to influence the way in which bus services are provided so that they more effectively address their needs. In order to take this forward, the next chapter therefore investigates the extent to which current decision-making processes promote the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making on bus provision.

CHAPTER 3

CURRENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND SOCIAL

INCLUSION

In the previous chapter it was shown that bus provision is important for those who might be at risk of 'social exclusion', and it was also shown that in order to ensure effective bus provision, the 'socially excluded' should have a say on which bus services are provided. However, doubts were cast on the current adequacy of bus provision in the UK and the extent to which the 'socially excluded' have been included in decision-making, at least in as far as it relates to the development of Local Transport Plans. Consequently, this chapter explores in more depth why both of these issues are problematic.

The structure of the chapter reflects this agenda. Initially, two issues that are of central importance to the relationship between bus provision and social exclusion are critically examined: the relationship between a privatised and deregulated bus system and the addressing of social needs; and the way in which aspects of local authority decision-making structures and finance influence bus provision and social exclusion. Following this, recent government reforms aimed at enhancing public involvement are outlined, and a critical evaluation of these is then used to provide a more general insight into the way in which decision-making processes and the roles of key actors within these can raise problems with regard to addressing the concerns of those who are socially excluded.

A Deregulated Bus System and the Addressing of Social Needs

In order to consider the relationship between deregulated and privatised bus provision and social exclusion, this section begins by briefly outlining the context for the current system, through examining the reasons for deregulation and discussing the introduction of the Transport Act 1985. It then turns to focus more specifically on the implications of deregulation for social needs.

Reasons for Deregulation

In the previous pre-privatisation system of bus provision, the public sector provided most of the bus services. This enabled the public sector to plan and regulate the network, and local authorities to subsidise fares (SEU, 2003).

The system was largely determined by the Transport Act 1968, under which the National Bus Company and the Scottish bus group owned the operating companies and county councils were given powers to enforce coordination between bus services through the use of Transport Coordination Officers. In London, the situation was different in that bus services were provided by London Transport, which was answerable to the Greater London Council. [1]

There were various criticisms of the system as it existed. One of these was related to restricted competition. In order to introduce a new bus, or cut a bus route, operators

had, firstly, to gain approval from the Traffic Commissioner, but the licensing system

through the Traffic Commissioner allowed regulatory capture, whereby the holders of

the road service licences were able to object to new applicants, with support from the

Regional Traffic Commissioners, on the grounds that they needed to be able to

practice cross-subsidy (Hibbs and Bradley, 1997). Quite controversially, according to

Hibbs and Bradley there was a need for change since the system, as it existed prior to

deregulation, was one of *"gross inefficiency, resource waste, and minimal attention*

to the customer" (Hibbs and Bradley, 1997, p5).[2] On the other hand, Tyson (1998)

argues that there was a need for change, but this was since patronage was falling,

fares were rising faster than inflation, the level of service was deteriorating, and

subsidies were rising.

Against the background of these criticisms, the Government introduced the Transport

Act 1985, the key features of which are outlined in Appendix 3.1. This was intended

to remove or weaken various existing legislative controls in order to permit the freer

exercise of market forces.[3] In broad terms, this deregulatory move can be seen to

have had a number of inter-related objectives: to increase efficiency, reduce the

power of trade unions, and increase competition and responsiveness (Bell and Cloke,

1990). In respect of bus services, it meant a number of outcomes. These included

reducing subsidies so that the user paid a more economic or 'market' rate, the

increased use of small operators at a cheaper price, the sale of the National Bus

Company subsidiaries to the private sector, and the relaxation of entry controls into

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[1] See Appendix 3.1 for fuller details of the pre-deregulation and pre-privatisation system.
[2] It should be noted, however, that in arguing against subsidy adequate account might not have been taken of social needs (Pickup, 1992).
[3] It can be noted that the deregulation and privatisation of bus services has often been viewed as part of the Conservative Government's broader aim to decrease the power of the state (Hutton, 1995).

the bus market. The result of this was that, in 1999, Department for Transport figures showed that the vast majority of bus mileage was operated commercially, with tendered services accounting for only 16% of the total local bus mileage (DfT, 1999).

These changes impacted upon the role of local authorities and, outside of London, they moved from being in the position of providing and coordinating services to one of enabling this to happen - taking the role of mediator and advocate rather than the co-ordinator of public transport (Booth and Richardson, 2001). In general, this has meant more freedom for operators, since they can now provide the commercial services that they wish to. They can now also, however, tender for other 'subsidised' services on routes that they previously did not consider to be commercially viable. In the case of London, the situation is somewhat different, since here, specifications are drawn up by LTB and then private sector bus operators tender for routes. However, the London boroughs still do not have overall responsibility for which routes within their area should be provided.

The Implications of Deregulation for Social Needs

Various criticisms have been made about the impact of privatisation and the deregulation of bus services. These are captured well by the following quote:

"Deregulation has led to the emergence of private bus monopolies, a patchier network, higher fares, older buses, lower wages, poorly trained workforces, and

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[3] It can be noted that the deregulation and privatisation of bus services has often been viewed as part of the Conservative Government's broader aim to decrease the power of the state (Hutton, 1995).

chaotic timetables...In rural areas the poor find themselves cut off from the town; the

non-consuming classes find themselves excluded from the city centre. The already

marginalised and disaffected become more marginalised still."

(Hutton, 1995)

More particularly, a number of more specific problems have been identified. One

concerns the way in which operators have apparently taken advantage of their

increased power in relation to local authorities. For example, Hibbs and Bradley

(1997, p23), although defending deregulation, admit that some bus operators have

"played the system". Stanley (1990), meanwhile, points to examples of where large

and entrenched operators have been able to deregister in the expectation that they will

win routes back with a local authority subsidy, and also describes cases of where

contracts have not been honoured. One example that Stanley (1990) refers to is where

a county council took the bus operator to the Traffic Commissioner, presenting

details of 330 specific failings on ten routes based on their own monitoring of

services and public complaints. The only penalty for the bus operator was that they

could not register any new services in the next six months.

Other key areas of concern have focused around the limited extent of competition,

the way in which cost effectiveness has been achieved through cutting wage costs,

and the impact on service quality. With regard to the first of these issues, concerns

have been raised about the extent to which deregulation has in fact led to increased

competition (see for example Vickers, 1991), especially since, by 1990, a large

number of mergers and buyouts of bus companies had taken place (Pickup, 1992). A

report by the Department for Transport also shows the concern that has been raised about the issue of competition (DfT, 1999). The Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee produced a report on tendered bus services. One of the conclusions of the Committee was that,

"...*We are very concerned that the market dominance of the major transport groups and the existence of monopolies, possible cartels and other anti-competitive practices are diminishing competition and are also driving prices higher*" (DfT, 1999).

Another indicated the need for the appointment of an economic regulator for cases where one operator was dominant. The Government's response to this second statement was, however:

"*The possible case for an economic regulator for the bus industry was carefully considered in the context of developing our policy proposals for buses and integrated transport. We were not persuaded that the establishment of an economic regulator would be justified, especially in view of the resources that would necessarily be involved...*".

This suggests that there is some reluctance, at Government level, to address these issues. Another suggested feature of deregulation was cost savings. There is some evidence that this has occurred. Kennedy (1996), for example, has provided various estimates of the net benefits of deregulation for London bus operators: the highest

figure being £380 million and the lowest, where wage reductions are extracted from cost savings, being £80 million. Tyson (1988) similarly has concluded that costs have been saved, but in contrast to Kennedy (1996) suggests that this can largely be accounted for through reduced wages and redundancies.[4] At the same time, preliminary findings from the Department for Transport suggest that the costs to local authorities are now rising, since tender prices charged by operators have risen in real terms by around 20% in two to three years (Local Transport Today, 2002d).

A third perceived benefit of deregulation and privatisation was a higher quality of service for customers. One of the main arguments for bus deregulation was that it would do away with the cross-subsidy of routes, and in this way support a reduction in fares for the most heavily used routes. This implied a socially equitable distribution of benefits in favour of less well-off households who were more reliant on the bus (Donald and Pickup, 1990). In fact, there is some evidence that there has been a higher volume of service and a rising number of passenger journeys. However, this has been obtained in London, where the new bus service contracts under Transport for London contain a quality incentive component, under which operators can be penalised for unreliability as well as for a failure to deliver the specified volume of service (LTUC, 2002). In contrast, in areas outside of London, where, as was explained above, there are not such strong controls on bus operators, evidence points to rising fares and lower service frequencies, and higher levels of changes in timings and routes (Tyson, 1988; White, 1997; White and Farrington, 1998).

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[4] In relation to the reduction in costs through deregulation, Bell and Cloke (1990) suggest, however, that any reduction in costs should be weighed against the disadvantages that different social groups

Such falls in the quality of bus services have obvious potential implications for the socially excluded, especially since, according to the definition advanced in Chapter Two, those who are 'socially excluded' might live in locations that are geographically difficult to serve. Indeed, evidence has been put forward that indicates a reduced standard of services to outlying areas (Hamilton and Jenkins, 1992; Stanley, 1990) and in outer public housing estates (Donald and Pickup, 1990). For example, in Stevenage and Basildon, routes serving main hospitals were lost, reflecting their eccentric positions relative to the main passenger flows in the town and the fragmented nature of their passenger demand (Stanley, 1990). Similarly, in Merseyside, a study of local community workers and lower income families living in outer public housing estates showed how bus deregulation had contributed to social isolation (Donald and Pickup, 1990), and in Wales, it was found that operators simply decided not to run services in non-profitable non-urban areas as they could not easily make profits in the same way that they could in urban areas (Bell and Cloke, 1990).

The above studies therefore appear to show a direct link between deregulation and a decline in service quality. Alternative explanations have, however been put forward for this decline. For example, some have argued that there has been a long-term decline in passenger journeys since the 1950s, and that the negative outcomes on service quality are the result of operators responding to falling ridership (White and Farrington, 1998). Other reasons that have been put forward for the reduction in passenger numbers and the increase in fares are that it is not deregulation but a

might face through a decline in service quality.

reduction in subsidy that is to blame (Romilly, 2001). This has recently led to the suggestion by the Commission for Integrated Transport (2002) that Government subsidy should be increased.

The Impact of Local Authority Decision-making Structures and Finance on Bus Provision to the Socially Excluded

This section firstly examines decision-making structures in local government, as it relates to bus provision, and the division of responsibilities between departments, since the complexity of structures might impact upon the process of decision-making. It then turns to highlight two of the problems that this complexity can cause. These are, in relation to how the socially excluded might wish to influence decision-making, and with regard to departmentalism. The difficulty of dealing effectively with transport and social exclusion can, however, be further compounded by financial constraints. The third part of this section therefore examines the adequacy of current funding mechanisms.

Local Government Decision-making Structures

In England, there are different types of councils with different responsibilities and electoral arrangements (see Appendix 3.2). With regard to transport, there are differences between local authorities in terms of how complicated the decision-making process is. It is relatively uncomplicated where there is a single layer of government, such as in unitary authorities, or within Metropolitan authorities.

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However, in London and the county councils, the situation is not as straight forward, due to the presence of more than one layer of government.[5] In London, the key decision-making body is London Transport Buses, as part of Transport for London, while London Boroughs have limited responsibilities.

In the counties, responsibilities are divided between different layers of local government, a situation that has led to the suggestion that *"Highways and traffic management is perhaps the most shared of all public services"* (Wilson and Game, 1998). Thus, the county council is responsible for main highways and strategic planning, and the districts for local highways and local planning, while parish and town councils have limited jurisdictions in respect of such activities as parking, minor planning applications, street lighting and the management of the local environment (McNaughton, 1998).[6] This situation is, moreover, further complicated, by the ability of county councils to devolve other responsibilities down to the districts where they feel that this is appropriate, so that districts can have other responsibilities in addition to those that were outlined above.

Notwithstanding the above, local authorities have responsibilities that include strategic and local planning, housing, social services, education and libraries, fire services, tourism, leisure services and parks, cemeteries, refuse disposal, consumer protection and environmental health. Logically, the decisions of the majority of these

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[5] It can be noted that in six of the Metropolitan areas there is another layer of authority in the form of Passenger Transport Executives.

[6] Under the 1972 Local Government Act, parish councils can deliver any service for other tiers of government, and under the Local Government and Rating Act 1998, may: set up, maintain and grant car sharing schemes; provide concessionary fare schemes for local services; make grants for

departments will have particular implications for social exclusion and, in addition,

for transport issues. In the recent social exclusion report (Social Exclusion Unit,

2003), particular attention was drawn, for example, to how those dealing with land-

use planning, education, healthcare and social services should work together to deal

with transport and social exclusion.

The Complexity of Local Government Decision-making Structures and the Implications for the Socially Excluded

With regard to addressing the concerns of the socially excluded, two main issues

arise in relation to the complexity of local government. The above discussion

suggests a bewildering array of structures, and from the point of view of someone

who is socially excluded this might present barriers to entry. Secondly, this

complexity also suggests a high degree of departmentalism, but with various

departments potentially responsible for transport and social exclusion.

With regard to the first of these concerns, in order to request changes to bus services,

the 'socially excluded' would need to contact the relevant people within the relevant

organisation. As explained above, the situation in some areas of the country might be

more complicated than in others. This can be illustrated by drawing out the key

participants in bus decision-making and their interrelationships (Scott, 1991). Figure

3.1 below shows a relatively simple example where 'socially excluded' local

residents wish to request a change to a bus service in London, and where there is only

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community bus services and bus services for elderly /disabled; fund traffic calming; survey the need for public transport; and provide information and publicity about public transport (Clark, 1998).

one operator. In Figure 3.2 the situation is more complex. Here, local residents living

in a District Borough request a change to a bus service, and there are two operators

who currently provide services in the area.

Figure 3.1   London: Requesting Changes to Bus Services
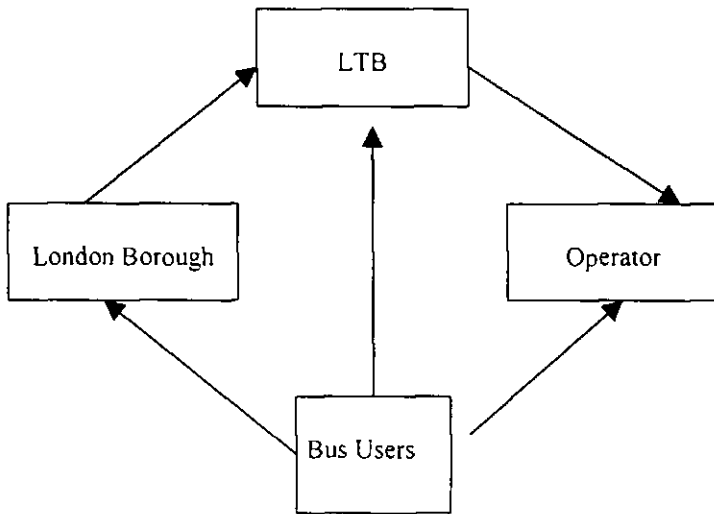
Figure 3.2   District Borough: Requesting Changes to Bus Services
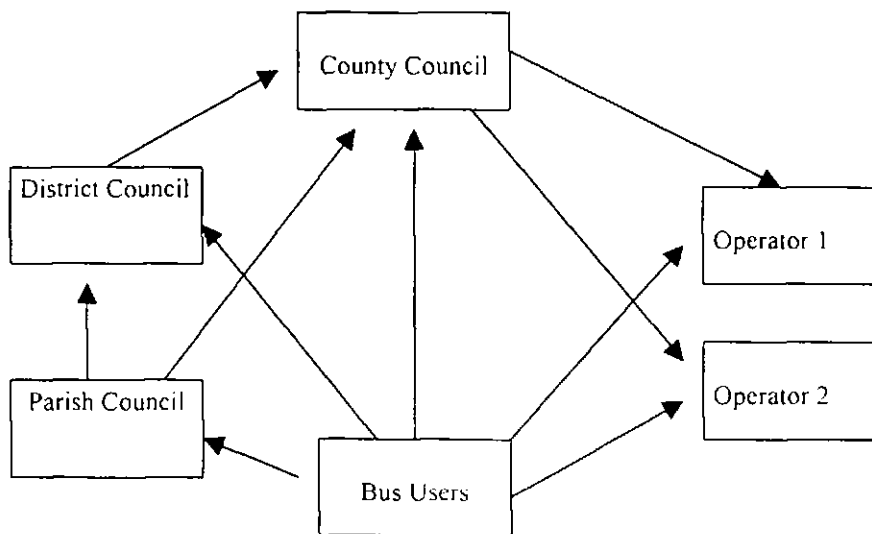
Assuming that they know who to contact, and also assuming that they are both articulate and organised, residents in a London Borough might first of all contact LTB to ask them to change a route, or failing this contact either a local authority councillor or the public transport officer to ask them to persuade LTB to provide a route, or for the council to pay for a subsidised route. They might also put their case through a transport user group, if this was available. If LTB agreed to change the route, LTB would, in turn, approach the bus operators.

In a county, this process becomes much more complicated. Residents might first of all contact one of the operators, assuming that there might be more than one of these and they knew which one might provide the route. Failing this, they might then contact the transport officer at county level and request a subsidised route, or in order to put their case more strongly, they might contact either the councillor at county level, the public transport officer at district level, a district councillor, a parish councillor, or a transport user group to lobby on their behalf. All of this, however, assumes that the residents are organised, that they know how the system works, and that they are aware of whom they should contact. It also assumes that those they contact respond to them. However, this is a key issue since if people are socially excluded then they are arguably not as likely to have this information.

With regard to the second of the concerns raised above, the division of responsibilities within local government also raises the potential for departmentalism. It is generally accepted that there has been an historical lack of cooperation between land use and transport planning (SEU, 2003). As a result, while there has been a

growth in the number of large urban areas stretching around large cities, transport

planning has not taken sufficient account of these changes. This has often led to

inadequate bus provision in these areas (Byrne, 1994).

In addition, it can be noted that although a number of initiatives have been introduced

by Central Government that aim to address social exclusion, not least of which is the

Social Exclusion Unit itself (SEU, 2003), local authorities might more generally find

it difficult to embrace the social exclusion agenda (Geddes and Root, 2000). At the

same time, there has tended in the past to be a lack of close working together by the

various departments that deal with transport and social exclusion (SEU, 2003).

However, in order for social exclusion to be dealt with effectively, transport

departments will arguably need to work well with the more cross-cutting social

exclusion departments.

A further factor that might be expected to compound the difficulty of providing bus

services for the socially excluded is that of finance. Central Government has had an

impact on local government through various rounds of restructuring.[7] However, as

shown below, it has also had a major, and arguably more important impact in terms

of the financing of local government.

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[7] In relation to restructuring, under the Labour Government's Local Government Act 1972 the number
of County Councils was reduced from 58 to 47 and there was the creation of six Metropolitan
Counties, under the Labour Government in the Local Government Act 1972. Under the Conservative
Government's Local Government Act 1985, there was the abolition of the Metropolitan Counties and

Financial Constraints and Bus Provision for the Socially Excluded

Local authority spending is strongly influenced by central government. Central government finances local government through using a formula (the Standard Spending Assessment or SSA) whereby the spending level for each service in each local authority is calculated according to the amount which the government says would provide a standard level of service. This level is then used to distribute the business rate, which is aggregated nationally and redistributed according to population size, the revenue support grants dedicated to particular services, and the amount of council tax which authorities are expected to raise. Financial constraints placed on local authorities have resulted in them cutting costs, although local authorities could arguably do more to lessen the effects of such acts. Research evidence has, for example, suggested that when local authorities try to cut costs they do not do this in a strategic way, and do not carry out careful evaluation (Bovaird and Davis, 1999).

Within such financial constraints, transport officers within local authorities make decisions on which socially necessary services will be provided. A number of different methods have been used to assess transport need. One measure is a generalised cost concept which takes into account both the time and money costs of providing services, while a more common method has been the rule of operating to set standards, so that, for example, everyone should be within five minutes walk of a bus stop. A more holistic approach has, however, been taken by some authorities,

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the Greater London Council. More recently, under the current Labour Government there has been a move toward more Unitary Authorities and the introduction of the Greater London Authority in 1999.

where factors such as various indicators of deprivation, access to services, levels of car ownership, and current trends in usage and potential ridership have been used to predict future trends and needs (e.g. Somerset Rural Needs Analysis, 1997).

It should be noted that although local authorities face restrictions in the amount of money available for transport, there are, however, ways in which local authorities can receive extra money from central government. They are now allowed up to an extra 2.5% of their budget if they achieve Best Value targets, and can bid for money to develop new initiatives. For example, as explained in the previous chapter, new sources of funding specifically aimed at transport provision have included the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, the Rural Bus Challenge, the Rural Transport Partnership Scheme, and the Rural Parishes Transport Fund. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this is only available to those authorities that make successful bids. Moreover, although the NAfW (2003) initiative mentioned in Chapter Two provides improved concessionary fares, it can be noted that the elderly in particular are well represented by Age Concern who have a seat on the Wales Transport Forum, and that providing free travel to some does not address the remaining need for better bus provision in rural areas.

In summary, although the deregulation and privatisation of bus services means that local authorities have a limited role, this role appears to be potentially further constrained by the complicated, and even unclear, divisions of responsibilities between the different layers of local government, and within local authorities, and by the availability of Central Government funding. In such circumstances, some doubt

might be cast on the ability of the socially excluded to have a voice.

Against this background, the following discussion examines recent government reforms aimed at enhancing public involvement. This is then followed by a critical evaluation of these reforms in order to provide a more general insight into the way in which decision-making processes and the roles of key actors within these can raise problems with regard to addressing the concerns of those who are socially excluded.

The Likely Involvement of the 'Socially Excluded' in Bus Decision-making

In Chapter Two, reference was made to the vital importance of involving the socially excluded in decision-making on bus provision, but doubts were cast on the extent to which this occurs. In the light of this, the following discussion considers the Government's broader reforms on the involvement of the public in decision-making.

It was shown in the previous chapter that the Transport Act 2000 required both increased partnership working with the private sector, and at the same time, increased public involvement in Local Transport Plans (LTPs). However, issues were raised about the extent to which the 'socially excluded' have been involved in their preparation (Booth and Richardson, 2001; Sinclair and Sinclair, 2001; Bickerstaff *et al*, 2002). In particular, Bickerstaff *et al* (2002) have concluded that government guidance does not go far enough in conceptualising the role of participation in planning policy, and that there is a need for a substantial cultural shift in how local

authorities approach the process of transport planning.

In addition to the Transport Act 2000, two other recent reforms have emphasised public involvement in decision-making. These are the Local Government Act 1999, which emphasises 'Best Value' in service provision, and the second Local Government Act 2000, which points to the increased role of the public in local government decision making.

Recent Government Reforms with Potential Implications for Public Involvement

The Local Government Act 1999 specifies that Best Value aims to secure continuous improvement with regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness and also that this involves the use of two key tools. Firstly, benchmarking externally against other service providers, and secondly the involvement of various relevant stakeholders, including the public, in regular service performance reviews. In addition, and more specifically, the Act makes clear that Best Value reviews aim to:

- challenge why and how a service was being provided;
- compare the service with the performance that others are achieving;
- consult with local taxpayers, service users and the wider business community on how the service can be improved; and
- embrace fair competition as a means of securing efficient and effective services.

Within this structure, a good deal of emphasis is placed on including those who are socially excluded in the Best Value process, both in terms of reviewing existing services and suggesting future changes (Martin and Boaz, 2000). For example, local authorities have been told that they should *"enhance public participation"*, and involve those who are *"socially, economically or geographically disadvantaged"* (DETR, 1999).

In the Local Government Act 2000, there are also prescriptions for the involvement of the public in decision-making. Local Authorities are required to develop Community Strategies. These strategies should give local people a *"powerful voice"* and provide opportunities for strategic partnerships involving all levels of local government, councillors, other public agencies, community and voluntary groups, central government, and business (DETR, 2000b). It is further required that this 'community involvement' should include those who are less often involved, such as ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people and women (DETR, 2000).

In addition to this community leadership role, the Local Government Act 2000 also specifies that local authorities should adapt their political management structures in order to promote democracy and accountability. The smallest (with populations of less than 85,000) have been able to retain a revamped committee system if, following consultation, this was desired by the local population. London, meanwhile, held a referendum for mayor, and elected a 25-member Greater London Assembly. Local authorities more generally have been required to choose between a directly elected Mayor with a cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and a

council manager.

A number of councils have since changed their structures so that councillors are now generally divided between those in the cabinet, or executive, and others who are part of a scrutiny commission. Each one of the cabinet councillors is responsible for an area of policy, and the cabinet sets policy and also considers strategic issues. The rest of the councillors are then responsible for scrutinising the policy edicts and also for reviewing current service provision. According to the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, as was, these arrangements will avoid a situation where councillors could be *"excluded from the real decision making and yet have no power to challenge and scrutinise these decisions"* (DETR, 1998). Consequently, it may be argued that they might then achieve what has been described as an ideal role for councillors as brokers in the community, in building alliances, creating networks and building relationships, and supporting and strengthening community organisations, as well as seeking to understand the different and conflicting experiences in their community and taking care that all relevant voices have been heard (Leach et al, 1994; Goss, 2001). However doubts have been cast on whether this might happen in practice.

Will Recent Reforms Increase the Involvement of the 'Socially Excluded' in Bus Decision-Making?

The new reforms, on the face of it, promise increased involvement of the public, and particularly of those who might be 'socially excluded'. However, there are possible

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limitations in the reforms. One of these relates, more broadly, to whether reforms

which aim to address public involvement through the involvement of various

stakeholders can be consistent with those, such as the deregulation of bus provision,

that place an emphasis on the market. A second, is the concern that such reforms

might not effectively encourage officers and councillors to act as voice mechanisms

for the 'socially excluded'. The third relates more directly to the decision-making

process, and the extent to which the socially excluded will have a meaningful voice

within a commercialised setting such as that of bus provision.

Public Involvement and the Market

The first line of criticism of the Government reforms, as outlined above, relates to the

tension between public involvement and an emphasis on the market. The

deregulation of bus services has led to an overly powerful, and independent role for

private sector operators, which has had negative implications for both the adequacy

of bus provision for the socially excluded, and the ability of local government to

address social needs. In this context, there might be a limited ability for the socially

excluded to be able to influence decision-making. However, the potential

consequences do not appear to have been accorded much recognition either in the

Government reforms, or, for that matter, in the discourse around New Public

Management.

It was shown above that the Local Government Act 1999, through the establishment

of Best Value, emphasises the involvement of the public in local government

decision-making. However, at the same time, councils are required to run their services by the most effective and efficient means available, balancing quality and cost (Wilson, 2001), and to ask fundamental questions about whether their services are necessary and how they should be delivered. As such, Best Value appears to echo the discourse of 'New Public Management' (Martin, 2002), which has generally been seen as characterising the movement in the public sector toward efficiency and accountability, and as such implies that the public sector should be more like the private sector (Dawson and Dargie, 2002). However, this fails to recognise the implicit tensions between responding to the demands of the market and addressing social needs.

'Best Value' does admittedly appear to place more emphasis on service quality and less emphasis on the market than its predecessor Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), which more explicitly focused on cost (Flynn, 2002). Insofar as this is the case, it can be seen as an attempt to embody a recognition of social need. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that competition in local government has been strengthened under Best Value since it involves all services rather than the restricted list covered by CCT legislation (Wilson, 2001), albeit that this competition initially tended to revolve around a comparison with other local authorities (Bovaird, 2000). For this reason, it cannot be assumed that Best Value heralds a new and more positive balance in terms of its implications for reducing social exclusion.

In a similar vein, the Local Government Act 2000 emphasises the involvement of the public in decision-making, but at the same time incorporates reference to working with the private sector. For example, as mentioned above, under this Act, local

authorities are required to work, in their community leadership role, with various partners including both business and the public (2000b). However, there appears to be no explicit recognition within the reforms of the possible difficulties that can arise in establishing socially oriented partnerships with the private sector.

The debate that has been developed around local governance presents a useful illustration of the tension between the private sector and the public, and the danger of assuming an idealistic form of 'partnership working'. [8] Local governance implies a reduced role for local authorities as direct providers. Thus, local government is no longer seen as the sole provider of services but works in partnership with others to ensure service provision (Lowndes, 1997). Indeed, Wilson and Game suggest that,

"we have entered an era of alternative service delivery systems incorporating local authority, voluntary sector and private sector provision"
(Wilson and Game, 1998, p83).

Local governance implies that this partnership should be based on co-ordination. reciprocity and trust (King and Stoker. 1997). However, as was shown above in the critical evaluation of deregulation. bus operators have in the past taken advantage of their more powerful position. The tensions in this relationship between bus operators and local government has, moreover. been recently acknowledged in the report on transport and social exclusion that was recently published by the Social Exclusion

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[8] It can be noted that prior to the debate around local governance. discussions on the participation of various different interests in local government decision-making have in the past centred around the idea of policy networks (Rhodes, 1981; 1996; 1997: Thompson, 1992, Frances *et al*, 1991). Moreover, it should be noted that rather than simply seeing Best Value as an NPM reform, others have viewed it as the intersection between NPM and community and local governance (Bovaird and Halachmi, 2001).

Unit (2003).

Recognising such tensions within 'partnerships', both Smith and Beazley (2000) and

Lowndes (1998) point to the need to incorporate 'power' into discussions of them.

Indeed, Goss (2001) describes local governance as a site of struggle with different

people and different relationships, with some having more power than others.[9]

This can have implications for the socially excluded. Geddes (2000), for example,

examined local partnerships concerned with tackling problems of localized poverty,

deprivation and social exclusion. His findings point to the tendency for excluded

groups to be marginalised within partnership processes.[10] Part of the reason for this is

that their experiential knowledge of poverty and exclusion is often not valued by

partners who recognize only the " *'expert' codified knowledge of formal*

organizations " (Geddes, 2000, p793). Thus, implementing local governance might

appear to be straight forward, but, as various research studies have shown, this can be

complicated in practice by imbalances in power relations (see also Bartlett and

Twineham, 2002; Wilkinson and Applebee, 1999).

In summary, then there appear to be tensions between involving the public, while at

the same time emphasising the role of the market. Key to this dichotomy is the

objective of public service but also efficient provision. These tensions appear to have

been neglected in recent Government reforms, as well as in the discourse around

New Public Management. In the context of the above discussion about the unequal

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[9] Rhodes (1996) makes a similar point in his earlier discussion of policy networks, referring to the formal or informal bargaining between elite organisations but the lack of real influence for members of the public.

power implicit in local governance, doubts therefore start to appear as to whether the 'socially excluded' may be able to make their voices heard when asking for changes to bus provision.

Voice Mechanisms for the 'Socially Excluded'

A second line of criticism that can be raised in relation to the Government reforms concerns the likelihood that current decision-making processes will address the concerns of the socially excluded, and particularly whether officers and councillors can act as effective voice mechanisms for the socially excluded. This is of particular importance in the light of the above discussions that relate to the power of private sector operators, and the possible implications that this has for how far the socially excluded will be able to make their voices heard.

Officers

There has been some debate about the role of officers, especially within the context of the discourse around New Public Management. In the past there has been a common perception that officers are self-interested and bureau-shaping, a perception that has been linked to public choice theory (Harrow, 2002). This has led to 'managerialist' reforms intended to constrain officers' roles. Byrne (1994), for example, argues that 'managerialism' introduces disguised forms of discrimination or worker exploitation through, for example, performance measurement, and flexible arrangements for pay and conditions. Thus, 'managerialism' includes 'neo-Taylorian'

practices that lead to new forms of control (Sanderson, 2001; Brooks, 2000; Pollitt, 1993). Indeed, it has been argued that through Best Value, and the government's modernisation agenda more generally, the development of evaluative systems and performance management have been strengthened (Brooks, 2000; Sanderson, 2001; Martin, 2002),[11] not least via the growing number of inspections and performance indicators.

At the same time, the reforms indicated above imply that officers should be entrepreneurial in taking forward the needs of the public, and in particular those of the socially excluded. There have been various interpretations of what this entrepreneurial role might entail. Osborne and Gaebler (1993), for example, suggest that in taking an entrepreneurial role, officers should seek opportunities and focus on outcomes rather than outputs or inputs. Newman (1994) goes further, and suggests that while placing an emphasis on people, communication, culture and empowerment, officers play the role of champion and hero (Newman, 1994)[12]. More recently, meanwhile, Leadbeater and Goss (1998) have explained how officers should become 'civic entrepreneurs'. As such, they should combine varied resources and people to deliver better social outcomes, higher social value and more social capital.

Logically, however, there seems to be a contradiction between, on the one hand, the encouragement of officers to be entrepreneurial, and, on the other hand, the constraints that have been put on officers in order to make them accountable. This

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[11] As such, managerialism can be linked to the New Public Management agenda, outlined above (Pollitt, 2002).

[12] See also Bartlett and Dibben (2002).

view, moreover, is echoed by others such as Du Gay (1996), Goss (2001), and

Newman (2002). Newman (2002), for example, refers to this tension in the following

way:

"The tension between these different agendas reflects some of the tensions within

NPM. However the implications are different: a narrow focus on organisational

performance linked to neo-Taylorist styles of management is likely to undermine

attempts to address other parts of the modernisation agenda, especially the theme of

'joined up' government and enhanced user and citizen involvement in decision-

making." (Newman, 2002, p85)

It has been argued, however, that, irrespective of these new reforms, officers are still

largely self-interested. Thus, managerialism has effectively promoted the career

interests of an elite group of 'new managerialists' (Hood, 1991). If this argument

holds, then the role of officers has not essentially changed, in that rather than carrying

out councillors' orders, they still independently make decisions based on their

technical expertise (Woodman, 1998), and use information as a source of power

(Kaye, 1995). This specialised technical and professional knowledge, it has relatedly

been argued, leads to high public esteem and a degree of autonomy (Elcock, 1991;

Cochrane, 1994) that is not possessed by part-time, amateur, generalist councillors

(Wilson and Game, 1998). [13]

What is arguably of particular interest in relation to bus services is that in using

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[13] The use of such power has also been demonstrated by Crozier (1964) and Pettigrew (1973).

technical information in this way, officers might effectively act as gatekeepers to services (Bolzan and Gale, 2002). In their determination of which socially necessary bus routes should be provided, transport officers will necessarily play some sort of gatekeeper role since there will ultimately be some need to ration services. Different methods have been used to assess which services should be provided, as already discussed, some of which take a more rounded view of social exclusion than others and hence are more likely to take account of the needs of the socially excluded. However, other factors might influence these decisions, which have obvious implications for the extent to which the needs of the socially excluded will be taken into account. One of these might be purely down to the personal interests or values of the transport officer, or their perception of who is deserving. Alternatively, even if the reforms do curb self-interest, it does not necessarily follow that officers will act in the interest of the public. This is since market constraints, such as those imposed by the deregulation of bus services, may lead them to act instead in a way that reflects private sector attitudes, and thus does not threaten the power of bus operators.

Councillors

A number of concerns can be raised about the ability of councillors to act as advocates. Two of these are more traditional and long-standing concerns, and centre on the way in which councillors are influenced by party politics, party manifestos and mandates[14], and the extent to which they are representative of the broader population

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[14] As well as appearing as a constraint, party politics can more generally be seen to explain motivations. However, this point will not be emphasised further here.

(Page, 1996; Wilson and Game, 1998; McNaughton, 1998; Goss, 1999). [15]

Further concerns have, however, been raised, that are related to the impact of the new reforms, and the ability of councillors to influence decision-making. The first of these relates to the tension between advocacy and taking a broader policy or scrutiny role, as specified in the Local Government Act 2000. Previous research studies have drawn attention to the tendency for councillors to specialise in one or the other of these roles (Newton, 1976), and more often, councillors prefer to focus on ward issues (Rao, 1999). However, in the new system, they are expected to effectively manage each of these roles.

A second possible concern is more specifically related to those councillors who are excluded from the cabinet, but take a 'backbencher' role in the new political management structure. As advocates, councillors still need to be able to influence decision-making (Rao, 1999), but those who take a scrutiny role might not have a sufficient degree of influence to be able to do this, and indeed, recent research has indicated that backbenchers often feel a sense of exclusion from decision-making (Davis and Geddes, 2000). This can be exacerbated by the tendency toward secrecy in the cabinet that acts to exclude backbenchers from decision-making (Goss, 2001; Kerley, 2002). Indeed, as a result of this latter problem, the Government has introduced revisions to its policy so that cabinets should meet in public to debate key decisions and publish a forward plan of key decisions. However, 'key decisions' are defined to only encompass those that entail significant expenditure or are likely to

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[15] Initiatives aimed to address the lack of voting include the Representation of the People Act 2000 that allowed 32 local authorities to experiment with new voting arrangements in order to raise voter

have a significant impact on communities in two or more wards. Therefore, they do not include all issues (Snape, 2000).

Another issue that concerns the ability of councillors to act as voice mechanisms is related to the requirement for them to take a policy or scrutiny role under the Local Government Act 2000, but at the same time taking a dual role in both representative and direct democracy (Hoggett & Hambleton, 1987). Representative democracy implies the more traditional role of councillors as advocates, while taking a role in direct democracy implies that they should be encouraging the public to have a direct input into how services should be provided.[16] This dual role may lead to overload for councillors, especially when taking account of their wider policy roles. Arguably, this has always been a potential problem. However, their new responsibilities could possibly accentuate, and are certainly unlikely to alleviate this problem.

In summary, the recent reforms that emphasise public involvement appear to lead to some confusion in terms of how officers and councillors might interpret their roles, and therefore the extent to which they might act as effective voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded'. Officers are encouraged to become entrepreneurial, but at the same time need to be accountable to transparent processes. Moreover, they might still be primarily motivated by departmental or individual interests, or influenced by their position in a deregulated environment. There similarly appears to be some inherent tension in councillors' roles, which might affect their ability to act as voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded'.

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turnout.

[16] Hoggett and Hambleton (1987) suggest that representative democracy might be paternalistic, passive and minimalist, and that direct democracy could be sectional and parochial. Therefore, it would seem

The third line of criticism is that current decision-making processes might not address the concerns of the socially excluded, due to the political nature of decision-making. In the recent reforms, this does not appear to have been adequately addressed.

Advice to local authorities on how to involve the public has, as noted earlier, tended to be general rather than specific, and Martin and Boaz (2000) point out that the Local Government Act 1999 casts the new duty to consult in *"very broad terms"*. Thus, although it states that all sectors of the community should be involved, it does not state how these people should be involved. Nor, for that matter, do the reforms address the way in which the public are treated by other public sector bodies (Clarke and Stewart, 2000), or, indeed by the private sector.

The earlier discussion drew attention to how the socially excluded might struggle to have a voice in the context of local government structures and the power relationship between the public and private sector. More generally, however, concerns can be raised about the process by which the public might be involved in decision-making. These have broadly centred on three issues: the limited ability of individual decision-makers to take rational decisions; the potential divergence of interests among the public; and the possible tendency to treat the socially excluded as consumers rather than as citizens with rights.

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that councillors need to engage in both of these types of role.

Rational Decision-making

With regard to the first of these concerns, it has generally been accepted that even when decisions are taken by one person, this process cannot be described as rational since individual decision-makers are likely to be influenced by their own perceptions of the divergent risks involved in taking particular decisions (Janis and Mann, 1979; March and Gardner, 1988), and by the authority of others (Simon, 1957). [17] Simon (1957), for example, characterises administrative decision-making as intended and bounded rationality, where the decision maker finds it necessary to "satisfice", taking into account only those factors that are regarded as the most relevant and crucial. He further suggests that attempting to make rational decisions is more difficult in public than private organisations since in the former the decision-maker also has to take into account public and community values. More wholescale criticisms of the idea of rationality include that by Cohen *et al* (1972) who argue that a "garbage can" model of decision making is more realistic, whereby an end decision is the outcome of various factors such as other problems to be solved and other demands on the decision maker's time. In either case, it appears that doubts can be cast on the likelihood that decision-making will be undertaken in a purely 'rational' way.

In addition to these concerns, there are two, arguably more important factors that might influence whether the requests of the socially excluded for changes to bus provision are met, neither of which appears to have been dealt with adequately in the

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[17] Such authority might rely on reference to rules, as in Weber's legal-rational model of authority (Gerth and Mills,1991).

new reforms. The first is the fact that there may be competing interests between different members of the public: a concern that can be illustrated by considering the ability of user groups that represent socially excluded to act as an effective voice, and how they might be challenged by other voices. The second is the tension between simultaneously perceiving the public as citizens with rights, but also as consumers of services.

User Groups and Competing Interests

On the face of it, the ability of user groups to influence decision-making in local government might seem to be relatively straightforward. For example, such groups might approach the council through a letter or petition, lobby individual councillors, or negotiate directly with local authority departments and their officers, seek the support of other groups (coalition building), call on the local MP to intervene, appeal to the law, or seek publicity (Byrne, 1994). However, local authorities vary in the locus and diffusion of power, and groups vary in their knowledge and understanding of who is powerful, and thus may approach the most accessible or visible points in the system. Unfortunately, the earlier discussion on the divisions of responsibilities within local government suggests that this most visible point might not necessarily be the most appropriate person to contact.

Moreover, there are a number of features that user groups might need to possess in order to be able to influence decision-making. One of these relates to the nature of their membership, and in particular, whether it would be useful for members to have

'insider' knowledge of who is powerful. Others relate to the social standing of their membership, or at least of their leaders (Lowndes *et al*, 2001b), the cause they are trying to promote and how they promote it, and whether they represent all of the interests that they claim to (Liddle and Townsend, 2002). The ability of user groups to influence decision-making might also be affected by the way in which the local authority perceives them. It has been suggested, for example, that the extent to which an outside organisation is 'established' or held to be respectable will help to determine the attitude and receptiveness of the authority towards them, in other words whether they are seen as cohesive (Lispky, 1970), whether they are regarded as 'in-groups' or 'out-groups' (Byrne, 1994), and whether they have links to the local authority (Schlappa, 2002).

It is not sufficient, however, for user groups simply to possess these attributes, since in attempting to be an effective voice for the socially excluded they might be challenged by other voices. This challenge appears to have received limited attention in the recent reforms. For example, in developing Local Transport Plans, as required by the Transport Act 2000, it is simply stated that local authorities should involve a broad range of different people and interests in decision-making, including both the private sector and members of the public (Bickerstaff et al, 2002). Similarly, within the Local Government Act 2000, it was explained above that community strategies should give local people a "powerful voice" and provide opportunities for strategic partnerships involving all levels of local government, councillors, other public agencies, community and voluntary groups, central government, and business. However, decision-making is often the outcome of complex processes by which

people exert power or influence over each other, often through a process of negotiation and bargaining (Lindblom, 1968).

In interpreting why some people are more powerful than others, some would emphasise the power of business elites or business and political elites (see for example, Poulantzas, 1978), latent forms of power (Lukes, 1974) or the use of power through forms of discourse (Foucault, 1977; Olsen and Marger, 1993; Clegg, 1989). In the latter case, it might be posited that although the public are explicitly invited to participate in decision making in local government, participation is merely a way of incorporating marginalised people more effectively within a decentred, subjectless system of power, which works invisibly without their knowledge (Nelson and Wright, 1995).

Alternatively, a form of power that quite explicitly focuses on poverty is that by Bachrach and Baratz (1970). This form of power involves the marginalisation of certain members of the public through nondecision-making processes (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970; Bachrach, 1971). The basis of this argument is that certain issues are kept out of the public domain, through either decision-making (Bachrach,1971) or nondecision-making (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970):

"Nondecision-making is a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena, or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the

decision-making stage of the policy process. "

(Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p44).

In addition, it is suggested that nondecision-making can occur through the exercise of power so that the threat of sanctions can intimidate people; through cooptation ('participatory democracy'), where people have the illusion of a voice without in practice having any influence; through reference to rules or procedures; or where issues are taken through a long, drawn out process. It has been argued that this latter form is particularly useful when employed against impermanent or weakly organised groups such as the poor who have difficulty withstanding delay (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970).

Various criticisms have been made of this concept over the years. Most of them focus on how it is empirically difficult to test (Polsby, 1963; Wolfinger, 1971; Debnam, 1972). However, the concept has also received some support. For example, although he has some reservations about Bachrach and Baratz' propositions, Hay (1997) similarly suggests that power can be indirect and context-shaping, and that structures, institutions and organisations are shaped in such a way that they alter the parameters of subsequent action. Further, Headey and Muller (1996) suggest that although agenda-setting is not as widespread as Bachrach and Baratz (1970) purport, there are cases in which exclusionary agenda-setting does act to limit the influence of the poor.

More specifically, however, it is accepted that there are competing interests among members of the public, and that some might have more power than others. Even Dahl

(1961), who originally suggested that there were dispersed, not cumulative

inequalities in New Haven and that therefore it was a pluralist democracy, has more

recently acknowledged that market capitalism results in inequalities in political

resources such as wealth, information, status, organisation and knowledge (Dahl,

1998).

It can also be noted that the difference in interests does not just apply to members of

the public more generally, but can also be applied to differences in interests between

those who might be 'socially excluded'. Arnstein, for example, refers to how the

group of 'have-nots' encompasses, *"a host of divergent points of view, significant*

cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups" (1969, p217). This

inequality in resources among members of the public can result in some groups in the

community having more influence over government's policies, decisions and actions

than others (see also Lipsky, 1970; Clarke and Stewart, 2000; Brookes, 2000). This

casts some doubt on the idea of the New Public Service, where the 'shared interests'

of the public are assumed (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000).

One example of competing interest groups has been found in a study of consultation

in East Sussex around a new bypass, where findings showed that two villages wanted

two different routes for a bypass. This resulted in the formation of two residents

groups and an environmental group, and in addition there were anti-roads pressure

groups from outside of the local area. The end result, which was at least partly due to

later funding restrictions within the Department of Transport, was that most of the

road was not built (Seargant and Steele, 1998). As indicated above, the relevance of

counter-groups can also be particularly relevant where the other group has economic power. Thus, according to Byrne (1994), the uneven coverage of pressure groups is related to the distribution of wealth and resources in society. An illustration of the power of groups with economic, and indeed veto power, is provided in a series of studies of which groups influence government (Marsh, 1983). Most of the economic groups studied, including those that related to road building, exercised negative or veto power, constraining the alternatives considered by government.[18]

Involving the Public as Citizens or Consumers

In addition to concerns about the rationality of decision-making and the existence of competing interests, another factor that might impact on whether the requests of the socially excluded are met is related to whether they are perceived as citizens or consumers. It has been found that while the recent local government reforms often use the word citizen, the emphasis tends to be on the role of the public as consumers of services. This is arguably not surprising in the context of a commercialised environment such as bus provision. However, insofar as the socially excluded public are treated as consumers this might have problematic consequences. Firstly, it may result in their marginalisation compared to other members of the public since they may not be able to compete as effectively for services. and secondly, it might mean that they will not be treated as citizens with attendant rights and influence.

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[18] The influence of the road lobby can, however, be seen as a unique case in that the British Road Federation has breadth of support, is a political lobby group at national level, and commissions its own research into transport (Holley, 1990).

Sanderson (2001) describes the new relationship with the public as 'consumerism',

and one that implies providing users of services with more choice and more influence

on decisions about policies and services as a spur to improved quality and value for

money (see also Brown, 1997). However, an important issue with the idea of the

public as consumer, that is relevant to this study, is that those who are 'socially

excluded' may find it difficult to actually access those services. Consequently, it has

been argued that a market model cannot meet the needs of disadvantaged groups,

especially since it implies an individualistic approach to service provision (Bolzan

and Gale, 2002). Moreover, the customer analogy can result in competition between

customers for services, which runs the risk of prioritizing different groups of need as

more or less worthy (Clarke et al, 1994).

It has also been argued that in treating the socially excluded as consumers this

prevents their more active participation in decision-making as citizens (Hoggett and

Hambleton, 1987). As citizens, members of the public should have the right to be

involved in decision-making (Clarke and Stewart, 1992; Van Huyssten, 2002). This

goes further than the idea of the public as consumers, where they are consulted on

services at the point of use, and services are provided according to the numbers of

those requesting them. As citizens, they are therefore in a potentially more powerful

position to influence decision-making (Leach et al, 1994).[19] Following this line of

argument, Arnstein (1969) has argued that citizen participation is,

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[19] In implying that local leaders and managers should pay particular attention to those citizens who are least able to exercise fully their citizenship rights, social exclusion is perhaps the *"most radical element of the modernization agenda"* (Geddes and Root, 2000, p59).

"...the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future." (Arnstein, 1969, p216).

Notwithstanding these claims, it has been argued that there is a place for seeing the public as consumers, as long as they are treated as citizens where issues matter to them. Rather than seeing public involvement as necessarily one of the types outlined above, it has been suggested that the role of the public might be multi-faceted (Stoker, 1996). On the one hand, they might wish to contribute in respect of the consumption of a particular service, in which case their intervention might be short term, of low cost, and bring forth a rapid response from the appropriate service organisation. But in addition there might also be opportunities for a *"deeper, more sustained level of public intervention and debate"*, enabling more *"deliberative"* engagement in decision-making (Stoker, 1996, p200). In other words, it is not necessarily wrong for the public to be involved as customers, as long as this does not prohibit their more active involvement in decision-making as citizens where issues are important to them.

It appears, however, that within the currently commercialised environment, there is a continuing tendency to view the public as consumers, rather than as citizens with rights. Indeed, although it has been suggested that the recent government reforms outlined above imply that there will be a movement toward *"citizen-centred governance"* (Benington, 2000. p5), the main emphasis in the reforms is on service provision, echoing the customer orientation that has been followed by local

authorities since 1992 (Leach and Wingfield, 1999). This is further supported by empirical evidence from studies which examine public involvement within local authorities (Lowndes *et al*, 2001a; Martin and Boaz, 2000).

Conclusion

This chapter evaluated firstly the implications of the privatised and deregulated bus system and the way in which aspects of local authority decision-making structures and finance influence bus provision and social exclusion. It then turned to outline and critically evaluate recent government reforms aimed at enhancing public involvement in order to provide an insight into the implications of current local government decision-making processes for the socially excluded.

In the context of questions raised in the previous chapter about the adequacy of bus provision, this chapter has suggested that the deregulation and privatisation of bus services has allowed private operators to use certain tactics to obtain increased subsidies, at times withdrawing services for those who might be socially excluded, with the expectation that local authorities would pick up the bill. Thus, the current system appears to have led to a reduction in service quality, particularly for those who can be defined as 'socially excluded'. In addition, although the deregulation and privatisation of bus services has reduced local authorities' role in bus provision, the ability of local authorities to respond to the needs of the socially excluded appears to be potentially further constrained by the complicated and unclear divisions of responsibilities between the different layers of local government and the departments

within local authorities themselves, and by the availability of Central Government funding.

Against this background, and the recognition in the previous chapter that there is a need for the 'socially excluded' to be involved in decision-making, the Government has brought in reforms which might be expected to encourage the involvement of the socially excluded, and in this way lead to improved bus provision. However, the previous chapter questioned the extent to which the Transport Act 2000 would lead to such increased public involvement, particularly of those who are socially excluded, and several issues have been raised in this chapter which reinforce these concerns.

Firstly, there appears to be some tension inherent within the reforms, that is also evident within the discourse of New Public Management. In both there is an emphasis on the priority of the market while at the same time encouragement of 'local governance' through the involvement of various stakeholders, including those who are socially excluded.

Secondly, the chapter raises questions about the prescribed and actual roles of officers and councillors within the reforms, and whether either of these they will be able to act as effective voice mechanisms for the socially excluded. Officers are encouraged to become entrepreneurial, but at the same time attempts have been made to make them more accountable. This raises the probability that there will be tensions within officers' roles. Conversely, it has been suggested that officers might still be primarily motivated by departmental or individual interests, or ultimately be

influenced by the deregulated environment. In respect of councillors, attention has been drawn, in particular, to potential difficulties in combining an advocacy role with a broader policy or scrutiny role, whilst at the same time trying to fulfil both a representative role, but also actively encourage direct democracy.

Thirdly, the reforms seem to assume an idealised process of decision-making, and do not seem to deal adequately with what happens when there are differing levels of political resources and different interests among different members of the public. In such circumstances, it seems possible that people who are already socially excluded might be further marginalised since groups representing them may not effectively compete with other, more influential, members of the public. Moreover, the reforms do not appear to be clear on how the socially excluded should be involved in decision-making, with some emphasis in the new reforms on their role as citizens, but an implicit understanding that they should be treated as consumers.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH IN ACTION

This chapter begins by outlining the methodology behind the research undertaken, explaining why an interpretivist, but at the same time realist approach was necessary in order to understand what happens when the socially excluded request changes to bus provision. It then moves on to identify why and how grounded theory was used as a research strategy, and how this was enabled through the use of qualitative methods and case study research. The second part of the chapter explores in some detail how the research was undertaken, and explains how issues were developed through an iterative process of data collection and analysis.

Undertaking Research from an Interpretivist and Realist Perspective

The research for this study was undertaken from an interpretivist perspective: the research was undertaken with an understanding that the social world is actively constructed by the people within it, and therefore that it should be understood from their perspective (Bryman, 1989). In examining what happens when the socially excluded request changes to bus provision, an interpretivist perspective is necessary since it implies a recognition that both the bus providers and the socially excluded might have different interpretations of what 'reality' might mean.

There have been various analyses of 'interpretivism'. One such suggestion is that it can apply to all forms of research, since all research is guided by a set of beliefs and

feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Another is that it is only one aspect of a broader interactionist approach (Denzin, 1992). In this latter view, interactionism has been observed as attempting to combine the *"interpretive, subjective study of human experience"* with *"an objective science of human conduct"* (Denzin, 1992, p2).

As implied by the description of interactionism as a combination of two 'opposites', interpretivism has more commonly been seen as not including, but in being in contrast to a 'positivist' perspective. A purely 'positivist' perspective might assume that there is an 'objective truth' existing in the world, and that this 'objective truth' can be studied in a 'scientific' way (Cassell and Symon, 1994). However, this approach to the study of people, which assumes the applicability of the methods used in the natural sciences, has largely been discredited, and because of this, it has been noted that positivists do not usually define themselves as such (Craig-Smith and Dainty, 1991). For example, in criticising positivism, the same authors question whether it is possible to know the human world objectively, explaining that if a researcher tried to artificially distance him or herself from the researched they would not be close enough to the phenomena to understand it. Indeed, if taking a positivist perspective, it would not have been possible to have gained an in-depth understanding of the context and process of decision-making on bus provision.

Nevertheless, although not attempting to view the world objectively, this research was also undertaken from a 'realist' perspective (Layder, 1993; Partington, 2000). This is because it is not sufficient simply to examine how people interpret their own situation, but it is also necessary to take into account 'social facts' such as power

relationships and belief systems. In the following discussion it is therefore explained how grounded theory was used in this research to explore the research aims and objectives from both an interpretivist, but also to some extent a realist perspective.

The Use of Grounded Theory

'Grounded theory' was used for the purpose of this research since it was considered to be the most appropriate research strategy for collecting and analysing data to show what happens when the socially excluded request changes to bus provision. It has been described as an *"interpretivist mode of enquiry"* that has been used to *"generate theory where little is known, or to provide a fresh slant on existing knowledge"* (Goulding, 1998, 51-2). Grounded Theory was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a way to generate theory that was substantively grounded in data, in contrast to using data to test theory that had already been developed. In focusing on emergent theory from the data, it was arguably a reaction against the more abstract 'grand theory' (Goulding, 1998).

There are two main debates around the use of grounded theory. One relates to inductivism/ deductivism and what is meant by 'theoretical sensitivity' and the other relates to whether grounded theory should necessarily be seen as an interpretivist methodology, or can also be used in a more 'positivist' way.

The emphasis in the original text on grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is on developing theory inductively, although mention is made of the need for theoretical sensitivity. Subsequently, there has been much debate about the degree to

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which grounded theory is, and can be inductive, and around what is meant by being 'theoretically sensitised' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; 1998; Glaser, 1992; 1998). It seems that Glaser's (1998) 'orthodox' and arguably extreme, view is that theory should emerge solely from the data, and that there should not be any prior reading that is directly relevant to the topic area. 'Theoretical sensitivity', is therefore not meant to signify prior reading but implies that new data should be analysed in the context of previous data that has already been collected. In this model, then, even the research problem or question should be developed entirely through early data collection. The end result is that the resulting theory is true to those involved in the research, but that there is very limited ability, if any, to generalise from this to wider situations. Strauss and Corbin (1998), on the other hand, suggest that any researcher will be influenced by their prior knowledge, and that this knowledge can help to define the broad research question. Subsequent data collection and analysis can similarly benefit from further reading, which can help in interrogating the data, and determining what it might mean.

As explained in the Introduction, applying grounded theory for the purpose of this research was against the background of prior reading in the area, and also previous research experience. It is not feasible, therefore, to suggest that this did not influence the choice of topic area, and indeed this prior information assisted in the subsequent interrogation of data. At the outset of this research there was an overall research aim, which was to understand what happens when the socially excluded request changes to bus provision. More specifically, the research aimed to address four key objectives: to examine how bus provision is relevant to social exclusion; to investigate the extent to which current decision-making processes promote the

involvement of the socially excluded; to conduct case study research in three local authorities in order to examine examples of where the socially excluded requested changes to bus provision; and to identify the key factors that influence the extent to which these changes were met. Thus, this research cannot be described as totally inductive. In fact, as the research progressed and data was analysed, it could be argued that there were elements of both deductiveness and inductiveness. The research was inductive in that it sought to generate new theory around the overall aim and objectives, but deductive in that as the research progressed certain developing themes were refined. This was done by using constant comparative analysis (using memos and comparing new data against previous findings) and also by relating general emerging concepts to existing literature, as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Theoretical sensitivity was thus obtained both through immersion in the data, but also through an awareness of existing work in the area.

The second area of debate is around whether or not grounded theory might be seen as a positivist or interpretivist strategy. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest that it can be seen as post-positivist and 'scientific' since it implies rigour and an element of quantification, and as such it was used by Rouse and Dick (1994) in their study of the introduction of information systems. However it would not have been possible to fully meet the research aim and objectives of this research if taking a positivist standpoint since it was necessary to interpret the various perspectives of those researched. Grounded theory was more appropriately used as an interpretivist mode of enquiry, because this took into account the fact that among those involved in the decision-making process there were multiple realities (Goulding, 1998). At the same time, however, a realist approach was used to develop theory that was valid,

rigorous and applicable to a wider context (Layder, 1993). This accords more closely

to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) application of grounded theory. Glaser (1998) would

argue that this is not 'pure' grounded theory, but it does offer a more holistic

approach to research, and more sensibly takes into account wider contextual issues.

The process by which grounded theory was used is explained below.

Applying grounded theory

In using grounded theory, the research progressed through an iterative process of

data collection and analysis. More specifically, the table below, which is adapted

from Bartlett and Payne (1997) shows how this occurred in practice.

Table 4.1 "The processes of a grounded theory study" (adapted from Bartlett and Payne, 1997)

Process	Activity	Details
1	Theoretical sensitivity	Used prior knowledge and reading to develop the overall aim and objectives. This broadly set the parameters for the research.
2	Collect Data	Awareness that any source of textual data could be used, however the main source was semi-structured interviews, in addition to some observation and use of relevant documents. Full transcriptions of interviews were undertaken.
3	Develop Categories	Categories were developed from the data by open coding of the transcripts. This was, however, guided to some extent by prior knowledge and reading.
4	Saturate categories	Further examples were gathered from the transcripts until no new examples of a particular category emerged.
5	Abstract definitions	As the categories became saturated, formal definitions in terms of the properties and dimensions of each category were generated. Again, this was informed by awareness of relevant literature.
7	Axial coding	Using the method of axial coding, possible relationships between categories were noted.
8	Theoretical Integration	Categories were related to each other, and linked to existing theory. This led to the development of themes.

The above process was used for the purpose of developing theory from the data in an ongoing and iterative process. It can be seen as a cycle, so that once element (8) was reached it was then necessary to go back to (1) again in the light of this knowledge until date collection was sufficient to be confident of the findings.

Activities

The table highlights the key processes that took place, however each process

involved specific action. The first of the eight processes refers to 'theoretical sensitivity'. As explained above, in the course of the research this was taken to mean previous knowledge and reading. Data collection for this research was primarily through semi-structured interviews, which were then analysed to produce clearly defined categories, or concepts. The use of semi-structured interviews was recommended by Bartlett and Payne (1997) as the most appropriate type of data collection method for grounded theory, and is explained in more detail in the section on data collection methods below. The process of determining categories during the analysis of interview transcripts can be termed as 'open coding'. Data was coded into categories, but it was then possible to select a piece of coded text and to see it in the context of the transcript. Each piece of text was carefully examined, and there was careful consideration of how it should be coded. Categories were linked in a hierarchical way with the more abstract categories at higher levels and more concrete categories lower in the coding scheme, and in developing links between categories, axial coding was used to clarify thinking about what the data was saying in relation to other concepts. Strauss and Corbin suggest that axial coding is necessary as without it grounded theory analysis lacks *"density and precision"* (1990, p99). As suggested in their axial coding model, data was grouped into categories. These categories included those that related to causal conditions (factors influencing decision-making), to action/interaction strategies (how people responded to issues), and consequences (of, for example, a decision made), including those that may be unintended. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend, when these dimensions were identified, they were then compared with other instances. Thus *"constant comparative analysis"* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used. This entailed not only coding data into categories, but also comparing new data to old data, and writing

memos to capture conceptual thinking (1967, p112). The above process of data

collection and analysis was continued until there was *"theoretical saturation"* of the

core theoretical categories (those with the most explanatory power).

Thus, grounded theory was employed from an interpretivist perspective, but at the

same time taking a realist approach to research. Interviews were used to gather

information from various appropriate interviewees, and analysed through reference

to previous data and also relevant literature. In addition, attempts were made to

ensure that the research was rigorous.

The Use of Qualitative Methods

As indicated above, the main research method that was used was semi-structured

interviews, in addition to detailed documentary analysis and some observation. There

has been some disagreement as to whether qualitative methods are the most

appropriate choice for grounded theory. Glaser (1998) has suggested that grounded

theory should not necessarily employ qualitative methods, but that quantitative

methods can also be used to gather data. Similarly, both Bryman (1984) and

Silverman (1993) have argued that it is not always necessary to choose between

qualitative and quantitative methods:

"there are no principled grounds to be either qualitative or quantitative in

approach. It all depends upon what you are trying to do" (Silverman, 1993, p22).

"each design and method should be taken on its merits as a means of facilitating (or

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obscuring) the understanding of particular research problems...a fetishistic espousal

of favoured designs or methods and an excessive preoccupation with their

epistemological underpinnings can only stand in the way of developing such an

understanding"

(Bryman, 1984, p255)

In fact it has been argued more generally that there should not be exclusive use of

one method rather than another, regardless of how useful either might be. Indeed

such a reliance on one method has been described disparagingly in terms such as

'methodolatry' (Bell & Newby, 1977; Janesick, 1998). In such cases, the research

itself might be compromised by sticking to the strict prescriptions of one particular

approach.

Nevertheless, it is generally thought that qualitative methods are the most appropriate

choice for studies using grounded theory (Bartlett and Payne, 1997). More

importantly, they are the most appropriate choice for this research, because it

requires an understanding of not only why people act as they do, but also what

influences the decisions they make. It is, moreover, suggested that qualitative

methods can usefully shed light on both context and processes (Cassell and Symon,

1994) at the macro and micro level, and can therefore give better access to hidden

aspects of organisations (Bryman, 1989). Thus the research used qualitative methods,

although for pragmatic reasons. For example, following the first case study, the use

of questionnaires either in a survey of possible participants in decision making on

transport, or in a wider survey of local government officers was considered (De

Vaus, 1996). This might have led to a comparison of what had occurred in the first

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case study with what happened in other authorities. It was decided, however, that this method would not yield a satisfactory understanding of the meanings behind what people stated and thus not yield internal validity (Robson, 1993). Nor would it provide an adequate understanding of the context within which decisions were made, and the factors influencing decision making.

Employing Case Study Research

In employing qualitative methods, a case study approach was selected, since this is widely considered to be the most appropriate strategy in order to contextualise data and understand the complex series of inter-relationships that take place within and around organisations (Silverman, 1993; Yin, 1984). Burgoyne, for example, has suggested that case studies can,

"shed light on the fine-grain detail of social processes in their appropriate context" (Burgoyne, 1994, p208).

He goes on to list examples of where case studies have been used to understand innovation and change, contextual pressures and the dynamics of stakeholder groups, and refers to an interesting study of a steel strike and the usefulness of case studies as a means of generating hypotheses and building theory (Burgoyne, 1994). Another useful example of where case study research has been successfully employed is in an examination of the power relationships between a manufacturing organisation and its customers (Roper, 1998). Moreover, the use of case studies is also appropriate for comparative work across more than one organisation. This is illustrated by other

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examples of case study research which have employed grounded theory (see for example, Castells' (1983) work on social movements), and also by previous research experience of decision making in local government which shed light on the processes that occurred around user led innovation in local government (Bartlett *et al*, 1999; Dibben and Bartlett, 2001; Bartlett and Dibben, 2002). Thus, in this study, multiple case studies were used in order to enable an understanding of contextual factors and influences, and to facilitate comparison.

The Selection of Case Studies

The point of access for the case study selection was a local authority, as opposed, for example, to a bus company. Within the local authority, individual cases would be then be identified. It did not matter which local authority was selected as the first authority, since all authorities deal with bus provision and also with social exclusion. The first local authority was therefore selected due to some prior knowledge of the authority, and prior research experience within it.[1] After research in the first authority, research was conducted in two further authorities. The first case study thus formed a key part of the research, but the case studies moved from being 'exploratory' to 'confirmatory' as theory was developed and then tested (Robson, 1993).

The selection of both the second and third authorities was carried out on a sequential basis, and to some extent relied on *"conceptually driven sampling"* , since the development of themes in the first local authority helped to inform the selection of

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[1] See later discussion in this chapter on the selection of this authority

the second, and similarly the further development of themes after the second then helped in the selection of the third (Miles and Hubmeran, 1994, p27).

Although the overall unit was the local authority, the focused unit of analysis was the process leading to a decisional outcome (or outcomes) that occurred within the authority. This has been described by Yin (1984) as a single embedded or multiple embedded case study approach. Since a relevant example of where the socially excluded had requested changes to bus provision emerged in the course of one of the early interviews in each authority, it was possible to progress the research in each case. In addition to finding out more information about the case study examples, these were also contextualised. Thus, in response to the observations raised in Chapter Three, questions were also asked about the relationship between the local authority and the transport providers, the roles of officers and councillors, and the nature of public consultation, particularly in relation to transport provision.

Data Collection Methods

The case study examples were explored in detail through qualitative data collection methods that included interviews, documentary analysis and observation, in order to explore events from different angles.

Semi-structured Interviews

The main method used was semi-structured interviews. This has been recognised as the most common method used in grounded theory (Bartlett and Payne, 1997),

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enabling information to be gathered on both contextual data and more specific

themes, and allowing for the probing of new and unexpected issues (King, 1994). In

each case study authority eight in-depth interviews were carried out with a range of

people selected through purposeful sampling.

Each interview was carefully selected and conducted. Interviews generally lasted

between one hour and two-and-a-half hours. They began with more general questions

in order to put the interviewee at their ease, and then developed into more insightful

questions. Care was taken to ensure that the questions posed were not long, double-

barrelled, biased, or leading the interviewee toward an answer (Robson, 1993). The

questions used for the interviews were developed as the research progressed,

however included in each case questions around relevant issues raised in Chapter

Three such as the political and administrative structure and culture of the local

authority, public consultation, and the relationship between the local authority and

the transport providers. As case study examples were identified, questioning then

moved on to a more specific focus on the context and process of decision-making. In

the second and third authority questioning was adapted to probe more carefully

around the themes that had emerged in the previous case study authorities.

Various measures were undertaken to ensure that the interviews were rigorous and

valid. Individuals were interviewed in sufficient detail for the results to be taken as

true, correct, complete and believable reports of their views and experiences, so

ensuring the validity of the data obtained (Hakim, 1987). All interviews, except one

that was conducted by telephone, were tape-recorded and in each case the whole

interview was transcribed. Tape recording ensured that all of the data was captured,

allowed concentration on the issues of concern, and enabled a rapport to develop more easily. Transcribing is a lengthy process, but enabled a closeness to the data, and reconsideration of the issues emerging (Craig-Smith and Dainty, 1991).

Observation

Observation was used selectively, so that in the first case study covert participant observation was used during a council meeting to explore the apparent relationship between local government officers and local residents, as a way of seeking to understand the local authority's approach to consultation. As a local resident, it was possible to attend the open meeting, but also to take notes of the content and process. Although covert observation has admittedly been criticised on ethical grounds, it has also been described as enabling the researcher to get directly to *"the heat of human experience"* (Waddington, 1994, p121). Notes were taken not just of words spoken, but also on the use of space, and involved looking as well as listening (Silverman, 1993). However there was not a conscious attempt to record everything. Rather, it was a 'focused observation'(Robson, 1993). Fieldnotes were written up immediately after the event in order to enable the more accurate recording of what had occurred (Okley, 1994).

Documentary Analysis

The third source of data was relevant documents relating both to the three local authorities and to the specific case study examples of the decision making process around a request for a change to service. There has been some concern over the use

of particular documents such as public records, and it has been acknowledged that they can be fragmentary, political and subjective (Forster, 1994; Hakim, 1987). Nevertheless, it has also been suggested that they can reveal the way in which agendas are set, and thus might reveal the use of power (Silverman, 1993). Furthermore, use of documentary evidence can help in tracking historical processes and developments in organisations and can help in interpreting informants' 'rewriting' of history in later verbal accounts (Forster, 1994, p148). Indeed, in the research undertaken, the careful tracking of events was enabled through an extensive variety of documents, including policy and bidding documents, minutes from council meetings, and letters sent between council officers, councillors and local residents.

In the first and also the second authorities, it was fortuitous that the local residents had carefully kept files of all of the letters that had been sent to and from the local authority and transport providers, and allowed these to be photocopied for use in the research. In addition, in the first authority a local councillor had similarly kept a file of documents. Some of these added a different dimension in that, for example, they recorded the interaction between councillors and officers. In the third authority, documentation relating to the bidding for the Taxibus, and also relating to relevant communication between officers and councillors at county, district and parish level was provided. Through the analysis of such documents it was possible to gain a further insight into the perspectives of those involved in the decision making process, and at the same time to complement and test findings from the interview data.

Summary

The research used a variety of methods and data sources, including semi-structured interviews, observation and analysis of relevant documents, and theory was developed in a rigorous way through investigation within three consecutive case study authorities. In this way, it could be argued that there was triangulation of data (Jick, 1979) although not in the strict sense implied by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), which implies not only the use of multiple data sources and methods, but also multiple interviewers.

An interpretivist but also realist approach to grounded theory meant that there were conscious attempts for rigour, but also that the research drew on the real experiences of those involved in the decision-making process. In order to obtain rigour in the research, careful accounting procedures were used (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These included showing an 'audit trail' of how conclusions were derived and keeping whole transcripts of interviews, so that data could be checked after developing new themes (Silverman, 1993). In addition, since 'authenticity' rather than reliability is arguably the key issue in qualitative research (Silverman, 1993) the aim was to gather an 'authentic' understanding of people's experiences, and one that was internally valid (Kirk and Miller, 1986). A way that this was dealt with in the study was through going back to the data to reassess it in the light of new evidence, and also by using a variety of methods and data sources. The process by which this was done in practice is explained in more detail below.

Research Process

The process by which the research was carried out entailed ongoing data collection

and analysis. Figure 4.1 (below) gives an overview of this process, and the following

discussion provides more detail as to how the research was carried out.

Figure 4.1: The Research Process
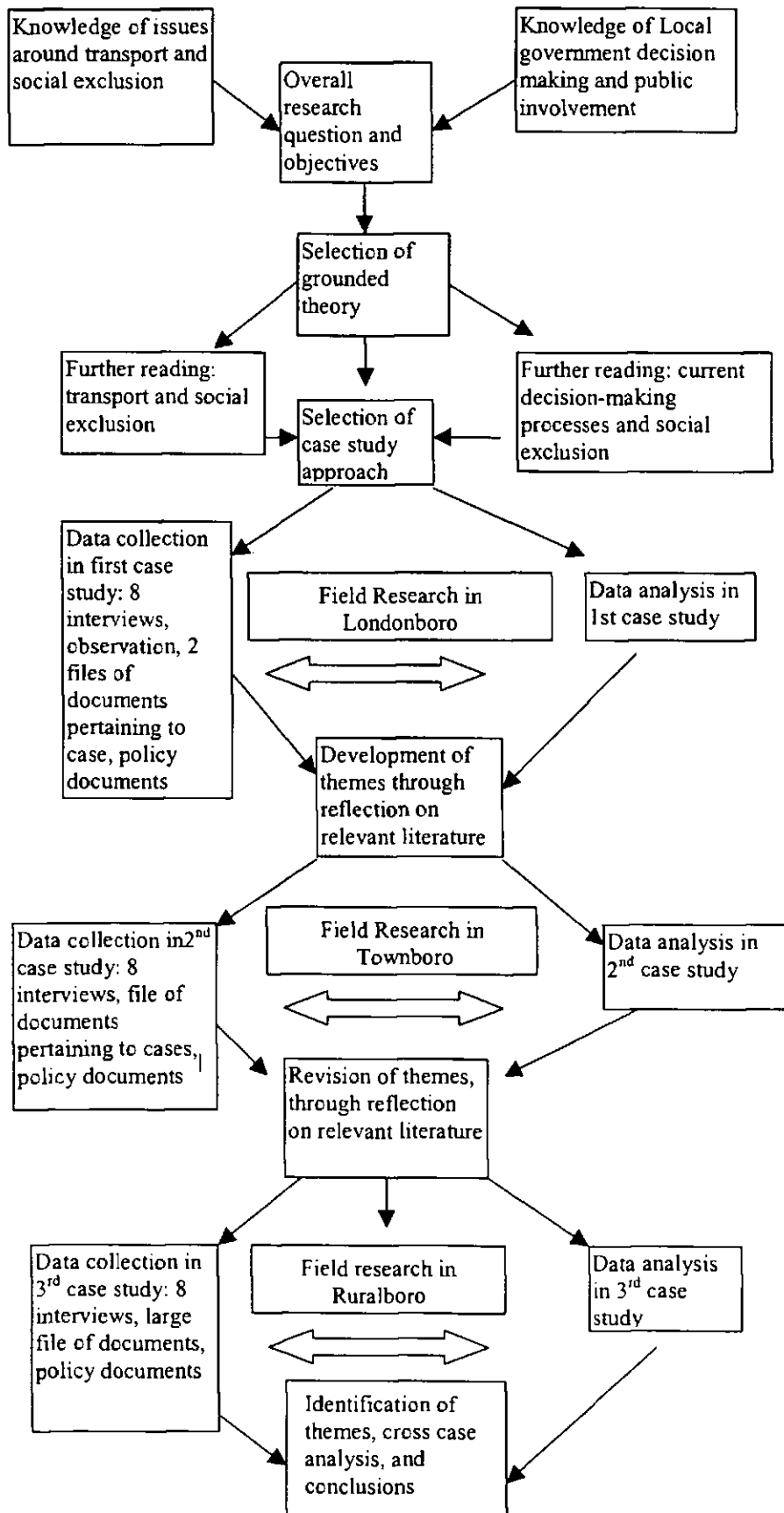
Londonboro: Selection of Case Study, Fieldwork and Analysis of Findings

The first case study authority, referred to here as Londonboro, was selected as a

result of previous research that had been undertaken in the local authority. Since the

main objective was to find examples of where the 'socially excluded' had requested

changes to bus provision, it would have been sufficient to have undertaken research

in any local authority as long as account was taken of the context. Nevertheless, it

was shown in Chapter Three that there might be differences between a London

Borough and one outside of London in relation to transport planning, and therefore it

was useful that the first authority was a London Borough. In addition, it was

considered useful that this first authority was one that prided itself on its public

consultation.

The previous research that had been undertaken in the authority had included

interviews with twelve people and a follow-up focus group based around the issue of

'user led innovation'. Choosing an authority where previous research had taken place

could be criticised in that the research might be influenced by preconceptions.

However, it was felt that any such danger was more than compensated by the

benefits of starting in this authority which included a prior awareness of its

hierarchical structure and recent history, and thus enabled informed probing (King,

1994). In addition, interviews took place with an entirely different set of people, and

therefore they would not have been influenced by how the previous study was

conducted.

The first interviewee was a senior Consultation Officer, and the interview included

contextual issues such as the impact of changes in the political and administrative structure, and public consultation. Following the interview, a short discussion around the general aims and objectives of the research led to the determination of other key people to interview: the Director of the new Social Exclusion Unit, the Senior Transport Engineer, and the Public Transport Officer. This process of selecting interviewees can be described as 'snowball' sampling (Hornby & Symon, 1994), where one interviewee suggests further contacts and this then leads to further interviewees.

After the initial interview, analysis was carried out of the full transcript using the NUD*IST data package for the analysis of non-numerical data. The NUD*IST computer package helps to facilitate the retention of context and multiple meanings. This is done through a database that enables multiple coding of the same piece of text, a data display that appears in the form of hierarchical trees, enabling the researcher to link relevant categories, and a system which allows memos to be attached to coding (Richards and Richards, 1994). The process used to analyse the data involved 'open coding', and linking categories in a hierarchical way with more abstract categories at higher levels and more concrete categories lower in the coding scheme. In addition, 'axial coding' was used whereby data was coded according to whether it related to causal conditions, interaction, or consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p99). Memos were used to capture conceptual thinking (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Subsequently, the questioning of the next three interviewees was informed by this prior analysis.

The second interview was with the Director of the newly formed Social Exclusion

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Unit, and explored attitudes in the authority toward social exclusion, the role of the unit, public involvement, and issues around the promotion of a social exclusion agenda. The third was with the Senior Transport Engineer in traffic and transportation and focused on the nature of the relationship with London Transport Buses (LTB), the work of the transport section and the extent of formal public consultation on transport provision. Fourthly, an interview was held with the Public Transport Officer, in order to cover areas such as transport provision, public consultation, and the relationship with London Transport but also to seek examples of where changes to bus provision had been made as a result of requests from the 'socially excluded'. In order to assess whether a case study example should be selected, the case had to be one where the interviewee considered that those requesting the service were 'socially excluded', as defined in Chapter Two. In other words, they were excluded from bus services due to having a low income, or since they were experiencing mobility problems, or geographical isolation.

During the last discussion, a potentially useful case study example was mentioned, where the 'socially excluded' had requested a change to the 321 bus route to include their estate. According to the Public Transport Officer, this had taken many years to implement. He further explained that various people had been involved in the decision-making process: the officer questioned, two councillors, the residents living on the estate, and London Transport Buses. Therefore, later interviewees were selected through purposive sampling, where the people interviewed were selected on the basis of their involvement with this example. The two Councillors were questioned about more general issues around transport planning and public involvement, the political structure and culture of the local authority, and the specific

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case study example. LTB was contacted, but declined to be interviewed, offering

instead a written interpretation of the case study history. Two of the residents most

actively involved in requesting a change to service were interviewed.

In addition to the above interviews, the research also included attendance at an area

forum which was the authority's new mechanism for consultation; examination of a

file of documents kept by the first councillor pertaining to the case; and the

examination of various documents kept by the local residents who had been involved

in trying to change the bus route to include their estate. These documents were in

many cases additional to the ones kept by the councillor.

Subsequent analysis of the specific case study example, together with consideration

of the issues raised in Chapters Two and Three helped to develop an understanding

around four main areas: the role of the transport provider compared to the local

authority; the complexity of the roles of officers; the constraints faced by councillors

in acting as voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded'; and the process of

decision-making relating to bus provision. These are outlined in more detail after the

relevant findings chapter (Chapter Five), and discussed more carefully in relation to

the other case studies in the analysis of findings in Chapter Eight.

The original proposal for this study had suggested the use of a questionnaire to test

emergent findings, and to explore whether they were applicable to a wider sample.

However, on consideration it was decided that this method would not enable an

adequate exploration of the process by which decisions were made, the influences on

decision making, or the complexity of the involvement of the various stakeholders.

Therefore, it was determined that the next stage should be to test the emergent

themes through further case study work, and to assess the extent to which the new findings either confirmed, contradicted or developed the existing findings.

Townboro: Selection of Case Study, Fieldwork and Analysis of Findings

Since it had been decided that it would be useful to examine examples within an authority outside of London, the second case study authority was a District Borough, with a different system of transport planning. It was also under firm Labour control, and had an established bus user group, and therefore offered a different context for decision-making. The selected authority was one where an academic colleague had close involvement, and therefore it was possible to gain some background information on the authority before embarking on the case study.

A similar approach was taken to that in the previous case study in that the core method used was in-depth interviews with key people inside and outside of the authority, in addition to the analysis of documents pertaining to the cases. The first interview was with the Labour Councillor who chaired the Environment committee, and was a member of the new cabinet, in order to gain an understanding of broader issues about the local authority, specifically in relation to transport. The discussion focused on areas such as the political structure and culture of the authority, partnership working, public consultation and transport issues. The next interview was with the Director for Environment Services, and again covered various strategic issues related to transport provision, public consultation on transport provision, and the relationships between different departments. For a perspective on how the authority was tackling social exclusion, and attitudes within the authority toward it,

the third interview was with a Director whose responsibilities included this remit.

As with Londonboro, the intention in Townboro was to explore in detail case study examples of where the 'socially excluded' had requested changes to bus provision. As in Londonboro, the 'socially excluded' were defined as such by the interviewee, but also had to fit with the definition developed in Chapter Two. A group engineer (and effectively the public transport officer) was the next person to be interviewed. During the course of this interview, there was discussion of three interesting examples that might merit possible future exploration. Requests had been made in three cases for changes to bus services, to Melket Home, a Circular route, and the Pelican Estate, and these had been met with varying degrees of response. In each case, there had been involvement from a bus users' group.

Following this interview, it was decided that each of the three case study examples should be investigated in more detail. Since the case study authority was a District Council, the County Council had a key role in decisions on transport provision, and therefore an interview was carried out with the County Transport Officer. He was questioned about the specific examples but also about the relationship between the County and District, and the County and the bus operators. The bus user group had appeared to play a key role in the translation of user demands, so the next stage involved an interview with the Secretary of the group, who was also a Councillor for Townboro. Her views and experience of the political structure and culture of the council were sought, in addition to the extent of her role in the bus user group and her knowledge about the specific case study examples.

The following two interviews were with the two bus operators responsible for providing bus services within the area of the case study authority. Firstly, a larger provider, who had altered services to the Melket Home and the Circular route, and secondly, the second operator who was reportedly the most likely to introduce the requested changes to the Pelican Estate. Both of these interviewees spoke quite openly about their relationship with the Borough and the County, and gave their perspective on the three case study examples. The final interview was with a bus user who was the Chair, and also a long-term member of the group. He spoke about the changing role of the bus user group more generally, and, in addition to providing detailed verbal information on each of the three examples, also provided a file of relevant papers. These included past minutes of council committees and bus user group meetings and correspondence with both the bus operators and Townboro.

In aiming to develop or refine the themes, data from the second case study examples and the authority context were coded and analysed, again using NUD*IST, in conjunction with a further review of the literature. The findings from Townboro broadly confirmed a majority of the previous findings in relation to the use of bus subsidy, the constraints on, and the roles of, officers and councillors, and the reluctance of the operators to engage with the 'socially excluded'. They also drew attention to the distinctive behaviour of the operators toward those who were perceived as 'deserving' and those who were not, and further developed issues around the role of user groups. These issues are outlined in more detail in Chapter Six, and then discussed in relation to the other authorities in Chapter Eight.

Ruralboro: Selection of Case Study, Fieldwork and Analysis of Findings

During the course of the research, the case studies moved from a continuum of being more exploratory to more explanatory. Therefore, the third case study was intended to be primarily explanatory, and enable sufficient data collection to lead to 'theoretical saturation', but at the same time there was also the intention to adapt themes where necessary in the light of new evidence (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

In approaching the choice of the third authority, it was decided that because of the interesting issues raised in the previous authority around the role of transport operators in a County / District scenario, this authority should again be a District authority. The authority ultimately chosen was, in common with the previous two, in the proximity of London. However in contrast to the others, it was decided that this authority should be Conservative led, and primarily rural rather than urban.

The first contact was made through a letter to the Chief Executive, who passed the request for information on to the Community Development Officer, who was primarily responsible for dealing with social exclusion. This first interview was used to draw out information on the nature of public consultation in the authority, and the general attitudes toward social exclusion, and joint working on transport and social exclusion. He was also asked about examples of where the 'socially excluded' had asked for changes to bus services, using the same criteria as before. He mentioned the introduction of a Taxibus, resulting from the requests of young people in rural areas.

The second interview was with a transport officer. He spoke about his involvement with the social exclusion department, and also discussed the complicated relationship with the County and the relationship with the bus operators. When prompted, this interviewee also referred to the example of the Taxibus for young people, and in addition, pointed to an example of the Partridge Estate at the edge of the town where a bus route had been cut and new services were not satisfying local residents. From his knowledge of this example he was able to indicate two more appropriate interviewees. The next two interviews were therefore with local Councillors who had been reportedly involved in campaigning on behalf of the residents to get better bus services restored to the Pelican Estate. Usefully, it transpired that the latter of these was also able to talk about the Taxibus project.

In order to pursue both the Pelican Estate case study example, and the Taxibus example in more detail, the next two people interviewed were the County Transport Officer and the Rural Transport Officer, who according to previous interviewees had knowledge of these issues. The County Transport Officer explained the differences between the two Districts in terms of their relationship to the transport operators and the County, but also provided information relating to the Pelican Estate and the Taxibus case study examples. The Rural Transport Officer gave detailed information on how he had needed to work with Districts, Parishes and the Rural Development Commission in trying to set up rural routes, including the Taxibus that served young people.

In order to gather information from the users' perspective on the Pelican estate, an interview was then carried out with the Secretary of the local Residents' Association.

She explained how residents had tried unsuccessfully to campaign for restored services, and suggested that the estate had a long history of being marginalised. Finally, an interview was arranged with the Community Development Officer who had been actively involved in consulting the public on rural routes, and had reportedly been involved with the Taxibus. This further interview led to interesting information on both the Taxibus, and also on successful work undertaken on mobilising rural communities on transport issues.

The next stage was then to analyse data from the case study examples in Ruralboro, and also to carry out within-case and cross-case comparisons. To a large extent, the findings from this third authority confirmed those in the previous two. Further issues did emerge, however, in relation to the extent of the Borough's role in transport decision-making; conflict between layers of government; the nature of the roles of officers and councillors; the transport provider's relationship with the public; and the indirect as well as direct opposition of other members of the public. Chapter Eight draws together the findings from this, and the previous authorities and examines the dynamics underlying the general picture of negativity.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the rationale for both the methodology and the methods used, and shown why it was appropriate to undertake this research from an interpretivist / realist perspective. In addition, it has indicated the value of grounded theory and case study research as research strategies. This methodology and research

strategy enabled the exploration of interesting case study examples in each of three consecutive local authorities, highlighting issues around what happens when the 'socially excluded' request changes to bus provision. In doing so, the research addressed both its overall aim and more specific objectives. The following three chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) explain in more detail how the research was taken forward through an ongoing process of data collection and analysis, and detail the key findings that emerged as the research progressed.

CHAPTER 5

FIRST CASE STUDY AUTHORITY: LONDONBORO

The previous chapter explained how the research for this thesis was undertaken through a grounded theory approach, and it was shown how this entailed the use of sequential case study research in three local authorities with ongoing data analysis and the development of theory. The structure of both this and the next two chapters reflects this process, so that each includes both findings and preliminary analysis.

Londonboro was selected as the first case study authority, primarily on the basis of previous research experience, and due to its possession of three attributes. First, it was a Greater London Borough, and therefore presented an opportunity to examine the decision-making process within the system where transport planning came within the remit of London Transport Buses. Secondly, the authority had an apparently positive attitude toward public consultation. Thirdly, although it covered a relatively prosperous area, with high car ownership (70%), there were pockets of deprivation, which presented the possibility of cases where the socially excluded might have requested changes to bus services.

In presenting the findings of the first case study, attention is first paid to the contextual factors identified as relevant in the literature, namely, the relationship between the local authority and the transport providers, and the way in which bus services were provided; the authority's administrative and political structure and the roles of officers and councillors; and the authority's attitude toward consultation and public involvement, together with the mechanisms in place for this, especially in relation to bus decision-making.

Following this, the chapter moves on to explore in more detail a specific example of where the 'socially excluded' requested a change to a bus service. This example was identified through asking initial interviewees in the local authority to identify an example of where the 'socially excluded' public requested a change to bus provision. In seeking to find such an example, further probing was carried out, where necessary, to check that the interviewee's understanding of 'social exclusion' broadly fitted with the understanding used for this thesis. In other words, where those who requested a change to bus services were excluded from adequate transport provision due to a combination of factors such as low income, geographical isolation and mobility problems. The final section of this chapter involves a discussion of the findings that emerged.

Local Authority Context

This first section begins by examining contextual issues relating to the local authority. It begins by examining bus provision, and more specifically the relationship between the local authority and the transport provider. It then moves on to examine the adminstrative and political structure and the roles of officers and councillors. The section concludes by examining public and transport consultation.

Bus Provision, and the Relationship between Londonboro and LTB

In relation to bus provision, Londonboro had to work with London Transport. London Transport (LT) had a statutory duty to provide or secure the provision of public transport services for Greater London, and bus services were provided by London Transport Buses (LTB). Bus operators provided buses and drivers. The Public Transport Officer explained how the situation was comparatively different to outside of London, where local authorities were much more involved in the provision

of bus services. Outside of London, if the local authority wanted to provide extra bus routes they would put services out to tender. In London, it was LTB rather than the local authorities that would do this. This led to two problems. Firstly, it meant that local authorities in London were not really aware of the cost of running bus services, and secondly, if they wanted a permanent change in a service, they would have to persuade LTB to do this.

Transport had reportedly not been seen as a priority in the Council in recent years. However, it was suggested that with the change from a Conservative to Labour run administration more money had been spent on traffic, public transport, and cycle lanes. It also appeared that the authority was aiming to become more inclusive:

"... being pro-active in seeking improvements to bus, rail and tube services while pressing operators to make the public transport system more accessible."
(Transport Strategy, Londonboro)

In terms of formal routes of communication between the local authority and London Transport (LT), a representative from LT attended the council's Transport Liaison Panel, which was also attended by councillors and bus operators. The Panel did not, however, have any executive powers. In addition, a representative from LTB attended the traffic management liaison meeting, where other participants included council transport officers, bus operators, the police and fire brigade and ambulance services.

Within the Council, bus services were within the remit of the Public Transport Officer. According to this officer, London Transport Buses (LTB) was under a duty to consult the Council on any route change, withdrawal of a service, or any movement of a bus stop. However, he explained that,

"consultation is interpreted by LT more in the form of information rather than consultation...so what they say is, in effect, we would like to do this, you have six weeks to respond".

(Public Transport Officer, Londonboro)

He did add that since his relationship with LTB was good, he would know what was going to be done well in advance of that six weeks. This might, however, lead to an awkward situation where he had information that he could not share with the public:

"some of the ideas that are thrown around early on may or not be ideas that are adopted. And therefore, you can't really go out publicly and say, 'LT want to do this', because they might not".

(Public Transport Officer, Londonboro)

Another potentially difficult situation was where the public might request a service from LTB:

"Sometimes you will get an individual saying, 'Well we want a bus route here', and then we go to LT. LT look at the idea and they often say, 'Well we can't do this', and of course, then people get very frustrated."

(Public Transport Officer, Londonboro)

On the whole, however, the Public Transport Officer considered that the local authority worked well with London Transport. On a day-to-day basis it appeared that there was frequent informal communication between the Public Transport Officer and LTB. This situation, in part, appeared to reflect the fact that the Public Transport Officer had formerly worked for LTB and that this had helped him to forge a working relationship with them. He suggested that he had a dual role. His highest priority was

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the letters or complaints coming from the public or councillors, but he also liaised with LTB on day to day issues and strategic matters.

At the same time, while the Public Transport Officer emphasised close working with LTB, it did nevertheless appear that LTB was the dominant partner:

"I think we do quite well in Londonboro, although not as well as possibly LT would like. But then, you know, you could say that about virtually every borough"
(Public Transport Officer, Londonboro)

Councillor Edwins similarly indicated the power that LTB had in relation to the provision of buses services. She suggested that LTB listened to a councillor more than they listened to a private individual, but that,

"...the bus people have the right to run a bus down any road, and nobody can stop them running it except the police. And the police can only stop them on the grounds of public safety."
(Councillor Edwins, Londonboro)

Councillor Marchant similarly commented that LTB was *"not obliged to take any notice of councils"*, and that councils were in effect *"powerless"*, although they could *"make representations"* or *"put pressure to bear"*, again illustrating the perception that the Local Authority had relatively little influence on bus decision-making.

Political and Administrative Structure, and the Roles of Councillors and Officers

In relation to its political structure, Londonboro was a hung council, and as the Liberal Democrats supported Labour, together they formed the ruling majority. The Conservative Councillors and the Consultation Officer explained how since Labour were the party in government, the Leader was keen to pilot the cabinet system before it became law. Therefore, in 1998 the authority had introduced a new political management structure with cabinet style working in line with the prescriptions from central government. Some concerns were raised about the impact of this reform on new role for councillors. The Consultation Officer referred to how there were now,

"...two classes of councillor. There's the inner circle and there's the rest",
(Consultation Officer, Londonboro)

Similarly, the Lead Opposition Councillor (Councillor Marchant) referred to the new system as *"divisive"*, adding,

"...you know, backbenchers, which is all we are, who just think they're going to do scrutiny, they weren't elected just to do that".
(Councillor Marchant, Londonboro)

She also suggested that *"democracy has really been stifled"*, and that there was centralised control and secrecy. Giving an example of this, Councillor Edwins explained how the Policy and Implementation (P&I) committee had the power to select what the scrutiny commission should investigate, and all reports from the scrutiny commission had to first go through this committee. According to Councillor Marchant, this meant that not all issues were considered:

"They like to emphasise all this policy, but the detail which affects people's lives,

you can't just sweep the detail under the carpet."

(Councillor Marchant, Londonboro)

Councillor Marchant further illustrated this point by explaining how some issues

were decided through *"delegated powers"*, and gave an example of where the chair

of a committee and a senior officer had made the decision to introduce a cycle route.

They had attempted to push this through even though they knew, through the receipt

of a petition, that the vast majority of residents were against the cycle route since it

would allow bicycles to speed down a path in a recreation ground that had a steep

incline.

When asked if there was a partnership between councillors and officers it was

suggested by the Consultation Officer that the formal position was that the

councillors took decisions and ran the council, and that, if it came to a formal

confrontation, the councillors would hold sway unless the officers were able to point

to a legal problem. However, in practice, he argued that sometimes the officers,

"...get above ourselves, I suppose. And we say, 'We ought to be doing this. The

council ought to be getting into social exclusion in a big way', for example. And you

could argue that's not our job to say things like that, but to sit there and wait for the

council to come up with it, which they don't. So no, it isn't a partnership in any real

sense".

(Consultation Officer, Londonboro)

He went on to explain that there could be problems in determining the relative roles

of councillors and officers. Officers tried to do the councillors' job and suggest

strategic direction. Meanwhile, councillors, who should have been taking a strategic

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overview, often preferred to get involved with casework as it was *"easier"*.

The administrative structure was described by the Consultation Officer as *"definitely hierarchical"*. Following the approval of the new political management structure (outlined above) a new officer structure had been implemented, with five new strategic directors, and 25 service heads. According to a report by the Chief Executive, the new structure was intended to mean a move away from a corporate centre with *"strong policy lines"*, and *"parochialism"*, toward an emphasis on *"communication, openness, consultation and involvement at all levels"*. The impetus for this change included the Government's Modernisation Agenda, the need to address themes from the corporate plan, Best Value's emphasis on co-operation and partnership, and the "inertia" of the former directorate system.

As part of the new officer structure, a Social Exclusion Unit was in the process of being set up to help in the co-ordination of policy initiatives that included joint working with other Boroughs. This was seen by the Social Exclusion Officer as a direct response to the Labour policy agenda and he described it as the *"most radical"* of the service units. The unit included departments on welfare rights, anti poverty, housing needs and resources, housing benefits, social services assessment, education and homelessness. According to the Social Exclusion Officer, its brief was to take,

"a more proactive, lobbying, campaigning stance for the council on these issues"
(Social Exclusion officer, Londonboro)

The remit of the Social Exclusion Unit appeared to be one of moderation. It was not to start up any new services, but to promote existing services differently. A related issue was therefore the extent to which the Social Exclusion Unit would work with other departments. The Social Exclusion Officer was cautious, commenting that,

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"...it's one thing restructuring and having the intentions, but...cultures don't change overnight",

(Social Exclusion Officer, Londonboro)

He explained, for example, that those working in the Transport department considered social exclusion to be an issue for Social Services. At the same time, the Senior Transport Engineer, when asked whether he would be working with the Social Exclusion Unit said that he had not as yet. He also added that,

"In the White Paper it talks about social inclusion. But the definition of it seems to me to be, still to be slightly unclear. And its role is unclear so, you know, that's something that will evolve. But because I'm just involved in a fairly narrow sphere of transport, it's not clear to me yet exactly what the Government wants in terms of a more inclusive society..."

(Senior Transport Engineer, Londonboro)

This points firstly to lack of clarity in terms of how the Local Authority had chosen to interpret what was meant by 'social exclusion', and secondly the reluctance for those working within the Transport department to move beyond the more narrow remit of their department.

Public Consultation

The local authority prided itself on its public consultation. For example, in the current Corporate Plan it was stated that the Council would,

"...make sure that where we ask for people's views, we will tell them about our

findings and how we have acted on them ".

(Corporate Plan, Londonboro)

In addition, the Senior Transport Engineer considered that,

"Londonboro carries out widespread consultation far more than the vast majority of boroughs and local authorities "

(Senior Transport Engineer, Londonboro)

However, he also added that,

"Of course there's a cost involved in consultation. So we're very inclusive in that way...But at the same time there are difficulties. One of those is around who are those people who are more likely to take part in the democratic process. The Council is very good in the way that it presents itself, but there are problems and issues related to involving all of those people "

(Senior Transport Engineer, Londonboro)

In addition to the problems of trying to involve different members of the public, the Consultation Officer explained how a lot of the decision-making process was *"shrouded in secrecy"* and illustrated this by reference to recent consultation on the council budget. The draft budget was announced on the 28 January, went out for public consultation, and was finalised by the 17 February. He did not know whether the budget had been changed as a result of the consultation but suspected that it had not been:

"Just suppose there had been an overwhelming call to spend more money on the Youth Service...I don't think the officers would have had time to cost that out, (and)

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DISSERTATION REQUEST
(Please complete all sections)

Borrower Surname: _DIBBERE_

Date: _29/10/07_   Time: _11:45_

ID Number: _M0000515-3_

Author: _PAULINE DIBBEN_

Title: _SOCIAL EXCLUSION_

_____

Barcode: _____   Year: _2003_

find somewhere else to take the money from - because we have to produce a balanced budget - and take the money out from elsewhere, redo the calculations, reprint the papers, and so on and so forth. It's just the practical stuff. You can't do it".
(Consultation Officer, Londonboro)

Another example of a consultation mechanism used by the council was the recent introduction of a citizen's panel consisting of a thousand people, divided into various panels and consulted for the use of the scrutiny commission. However, the Consultation Officer explained how panel information tended to be used only for *"background information"*, and that it had not in reality influenced strategic policy. Similarly, Councillor Edwins suggested that only *"very very minor"* changes had been made to proposals as a result of the Citizens Panels.

The key voice mechanisms could be categorised as officers, councillors and user groups. In relation to the first of these, the Consultation Officer referred to how officers did not like to be challenged:

"People's jobs and careers are at stake...and if you have spent some years being trained in a particular discipline, and quite a few years advancing your career, suddenly you're in a situation where a pig ignorant member of the public is told... 'You're just as good an engineer as he is'. And you think, 'Oh no he isn't'. And however much you believe in participation, and all that, it can get very hard. How dare that so and so criticise my professional judgement!..."
(Consultation Officer, Londonboro)

He went on to explain how most of the time a particular Chief Engineer was very good with members of the public but, *"every now and then he just loses his rag, and you can't blame him".*

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Another voice mechanism for those who were 'socially excluded' was local councillors. Councillor Edwins explained that she tended to pick up the views of those who were less articulate through the leaders of voluntary groups such as Residents' Associations, and explained how,

"..If the councillor works with the residents committee, you can find out an awful lot that way for consultation, and you can help...I get deeply involved with some of them...And in actual fact, while they are pressure groups which can make life uncomfortable for us, you know on occasion, I do encourage the formation of groups from different areas."
(Councillor Edwins, Londonboro)

Those who contacted her tended, however, to be elderly ladies of *"more mature years"*. This led her to suggest that it was important to have councillors of different ages and genders. When asked how young people would get their views across, however, she considered that this was *"more of a problem"*.

A key dimension of a councillor's role, according to Councillor Marchant, was the ability to network:

"There's one thing about being a councillor, actually. It's not what you yourself know, it's the people you know, and knowing where to go to ask for help...and of course the MP is very useful. I've known Stanley and helped select him"
(Councillor Marchant, Londonboro)

In terms of user groups, one of the key planks of the new council structure was the recent introduction of six Area Forums. Each met five times a year, and was fronted

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by a leading member and a strategic director. The Consultation Officer explained how most of the issues raised were around transport, planning or the environment, and the intention was that the forums would be used to set up informal partnerships to work through specific issues. He did, however, comment that most people would not want to get actively involved in this:

"They don't want to know, apart from a small minority, and the trouble is they tend to become hooked, and they become - well some of them do anyway - they become real groupies... they're worse, they really are, even worse than the councillors because they don't have to, like councillors do, they don't have to balance different points of view"
(Consultation Officer, Londonboro)

Councillor Edwins similarly commented that those who attended the area forums were the *"articulate bunch"*. Participant observation of one of the meetings confirmed that those who spoke appeared to be quite articulate. It was also noted that council officers were able, in effect, to dismiss contrary views from residents by saying that they did not have all the information, or by saying that the residents had changed their request. Where issues became difficult, residents were told to speak to individual officers or the Chair individually after the meeting, or told that the forum was not for individual but for group issues.

The authority also carried out some consultation on transport issues. For example, it was suggested in the Corporate Plan for 1998/ 2002 that residents' surveys showed that traffic and transport, and their impacts, were among the most important issues to people in the local authority. Specific consultation on transport included the yearly transport strategy, and in the most recent one it was written that,

"...over two thousand people and groups responded to our request for comments, with around 80% supporting the general approach we outlined",

(Transport Strategy, Londonboro)

In order to encourage responses, the council advertised a phone line in a local paper, put displays in all of the Borough libraries, and produced a leaflet setting out the key issues. In addition, the Senior Transport Engineer explained how the Council consulted the groups who *"usually get involved with the Council".* These included the AA, the highways agency, London Transport and the pedestrians association. They were asked to consider the strategy and to write back to the council. In addition to consultation with these more specific interest groups, the Council also sent out a copy of the strategy to all of the households in the area. However, the lead opposition councillor, Councillor Marchant, pointed out that that there was a relatively low percentage rate return of two thousand returns out of a population of 300,000. This would equal about seven per cent. In addition, it appears that the process of consultation was largely a case of outlining the strategy and then receiving comments rather than a more deliberative process.

When asked about disadvantaged groups and whether they had reached out into the community, the Senior Transport Engineer stated that the department held local meetings and translated leaflets into different languages, when this was requested. However, he also added that the extent to which a wide range of people was involved in decision-making was limited:

"We tend to respond as politicians do to consultation. And inevitably I suspect that people who consult us more are people who have got a vested interest and are naturally interested...Therefore it is difficult, because if you think about a leafy suburban street, and there's an increase in traffic, then the people who live there are

more likely to consult us on traffic calming...Someone on one of our more run down

council estates who is on benefit, you know, children etc., looking for

employment...they have more pressing needs than to pester the council about a traffic

issue. "

(Senior Transport Engineer, Londonboro)

Public Involvement in Londonboro in Context

The above discussion draws attention to a number of key issues that might arguably

impact upon the way in which the requests of 'socially excluded' residents might be

taken into account in transport decision-making in Londonboro. Firstly, the local

authority was a relatively affluent London Borough, and this might have impacted on

the relative ignorance of the transport department in relation to social exclusion,

since this issue did not appear to have been a priority. Secondly, the Local Authority

seemed to have quite a long history of being 'good' at public consultation, although it

can be noted that more recently there had been stronger attempts to reinforce this.

Thirdly, transport provision was under LTB and therefore, as outlined in Chapter

Three, this meant that the Local Authority had a relatively limited level of influence

on which bus routes would be provided.

In raising these issues, it should be noted that the contextual issues outlined in the

first section of this chapter were relevant at the time that the field research was

carried out in 1999/2000, while the case study history that is outlined below took

place over the years from 1986 through to 1998. At the end of this time, the new

cabinet structure and administrative system were therefore not in place, nor had the

Council introduced its key consultation mechanism of the area forums. Nevertheless,

it was explained above that the local authority did pride itself on its history of public

consultation.

Another issue that should be taken into consideration is that political changes occured over the period of time that the residents were requesting a change to the bus route. These included the change in central government from a Conservative to a Labour administration in 1997, and the change in political party control within the Local Authority from a Conservative run, to a Liberal / Labour run administration in 1994. As the following case study example shows, however, the response from LTB to the residents did not appear to be altered by these changes.

Case Study Example: Diversion of the 321 Bus Route

During the course of an early interview, the Public Transport Officer drew attention to where a request for a change to the 321 bus service had resulted, after a lengthy process of over 12 years, in the introduction of a 'loop' around a council housing estate. Residents on the estate included older people, those with disabilities, and parents of young children, many of whom were reportedly on a low income. It can also be noted that there was both a secondary and a primary school on the estate. Those who were identified by early interviewees as primarily involved in the decision-making process included three residents: Mrs Potter, Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper, the Conservative Councillor for the ward, Councillor Edwins, Councillor Marchant who was the (Conservative) lead opposition councillor, the Public Transport Officer, Councillor Severs, the local MP and Mr Level from London Transport Buses (LTB). The case study history draws on interviews with most of these, and over 50 documents relating to the case. These include minutes of committee meetings and the letters exchanged between those involved. The following discussion explains the process by which it was eventually decided to divert the 321 bus route.

The Residents on the Waterbridge Estate Request a Diversion to the 321 Bus Route

In 1986, when buses went out to tender under deregulation, the bus operator offered to introduce a new route, number 321. Councillor Edwins put an advert in the local paper to inform the public of this and, in response to public demand, she requested that the 321 route include the Waterbridge council estate. However, this did not happen. In 1993 Mrs Potter, who was an older resident on the estate, sent a petition to council officers requesting that the 321 route be diverted around the estate. Again, this request was denied.

In 1994, there was a new Labour administration. During that year, two residents, Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper, took up the campaign. Mrs Darwin, who was close to retirement age, worked in the council, and was on the committee of a Residents' Association. The older people on the estate felt that they needed a bus since they needed to cross a badly lit park to reach the nearest shops. In addition, those trying to cross the park had experienced mugging and intimidation. However, they had been trying to secure a change in the bus service since 1993, without success. Mrs Darwin explained how,

"That park there, you're walking along open ground, and then you go down over a bridge. And it's muggers alley, they call it there. If you did get attacked there's nobody about so you couldn't shout"
(Mrs Darwin, bus user)

Mrs Darwin agreed to do the administrative work necessary, while Mrs Dapper, who also lived on the estate, agreed to organise a petition. The two ladies went round to every house on the estate and obtained 140 signatures for the petition. They then sent

this to council officers. By this time, there had been an election and Councillor Edwins had not been re-elected. Consequently the ladies approached the new Councillor, Mr Severs. They wrote to him, stating that the residents currently had to walk through the park to the shops, and that a bus route ran nearby. In addition, it was pointed out that,

"Recently there have been two muggings in the park. And many elderly residents have complained about children accosting them whilst they are walking through the park with their shopping, asking for money."
(Letter from Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper to Councillor Severs, 6.10.94)

An additional letter that Mrs Darwin sent to the councillor on the same date raised similar issues, but also requested that buses should not come around the estate between 12.00pm and 1.00pm since *"school children...would fill the buses up"*. This illustrates the interesting point that she was initially requiring the bus for pensioners, but not for young people.

The councillor responded with a letter in which he wrote that,

"The new Labour administration have made clear their intention to forge an ongoing dialogue with the local community in an attempt to tackle the sort of problems you have highlighted and I will, as a matter of urgency, explore the proposals you have forwarded"
(Councillor Severs, Londonboro, 11 October, 1994)

He suggested that they come to his surgery in 11 days' time. However in the event, the Councillor was not in an appropriate frame of mind due to personal reasons, so the ladies were reluctant to pursue the matter with him.

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LTB Refuse to Divert the 321 Bus

Meanwhile, the Public Transport Officer, who had received the petition, had sent a letter to both LTB and to the Chief Executive of Londonboro and had also brought the issue up at the Transport Liaison Panel on 24 October and at the Public Works Committee on 22 November 1994. Subsequently, in February 1995, he wrote to the two ladies. He explained that at the Public Works committee meeting, officers were instructed to liaise with LTB on bus re-routing possibilities and then to inform the bus users of the outcome of these discussions. In his letter he added that LTB had refused to divert the 321 bus:

"LTB...could not justify the cost of this extra bus in the present circumstances"
(Letter from Public Transport Officer to bus users, 23 February, 1995)

The reasons given by LTB for not diverting the bus were firstly that *"most"* of the Waterbridge estate was within 400 metres of the 321 bus route. Secondly, diverting the 321 bus would add an extra three minutes' running time in each direction, and given the need to maintain a fifteen minute frequency, this would mean adding another bus to the schedule. He added that *"members and officers sympathise with your concerns"*, and also that,

"...members have asked that officers explore with LTB other options to see if there is an alternative, practical and economic way of improving bus access in your immediate area"
(Letter from Public Transport Officer to bus users, 23 February, 1995)

This reference to the three minutes extra running time was explained by the Public Transport Officer, at interview, as problematic due to the need to maintain a 15

minute (or 'clockface') frequency. This was so that the public could easily work out when the buses would arrive, since this would be at the same time after each hour.

In June 1995, the residents received a letter from Mr Level (LTB) stating that he had received copies of letters that they had sent to the bus operator, and that LTB had spoken *"at some length"* to the Council:

"Whilst we fully appreciate your desire for a more direct service to Waterbridge estate, there are at this stage a number of reasons why this cannot be easily achieved"
(Letter from LTB to bus users, 15 June 1995)

The reasons given were:

1. *"The diversion could not be achieved within the current timetable...LTB would have to find additional funds to increase the number of buses and drivers employed on the route.*
2. *As a general rule LTB does not like to introduce small loop routings to existing routes. This is because of the inconvenience caused to passengers who are making longer journeys, passing through an area. Having said this, there are always exceptions to rules, and I accept that there are sound reasons for serving Waterbridge estate*
3. *Under the Bus Passenger's Charter, LTB aim to provide a bus service to all areas of London within 400 metres. Route 123 already operates within 400 metres of the Waterbridge estate area"*
(Letter from LTB to bus users, 15 June 1995)

Mr Level (LTB) added that he intended to look at route 321 later in the year, and also

added that the Waterbridge estate would be *"one of the primary considerations"*. He hoped that the issues would be resolved *"sometime in the late Autumn"*. He also pointed out that since LTB had overall responsibility for the bus network in London, further comments should be addressed directly to them, rather than to the bus operators.

Mrs Darwin replied to Mr Level, emphasising *"safety for elderly pensioners, general public and children"*. She also pointed out that the bus diversion would only add five minutes to the timetable, that when the bus came towards the estate it was often *"nearly empty"*, and that she did not fully understand the 400 metre rule. In conclusion, she pointed out that Waterbridge residents were

"...annoyed, angry that we have not got this bus in our service"
(Letter from Mrs Darwin to Mr Level, LTB, 17 July, 1995)

In response, Mr Level, LTB wrote back to the bus users:

"I am sorry that you were not satisfied with my previous letter....As the LTB representative, I am having regular discussions with the Public Transport Officer at Londonboro over any plans we may have...Between us we are working towards a sensible and cost effective solution. Both LTB and Londonboro have to justify expenditure on any project. Route 321 will require extra resource to operate a loop via the Waterbridge estate. This cost cannot be justified at present... The review of route 321 will involve generation of data about expected passenger numbers and associated revenue changes. From this information I can make an objective decision about the value of any rerouteing. I have taken note of the comments made in your letter, and also have your original petition... This all adds weight to the argument to serve Waterbridge estate."

(Letter from Mr Level, LTB to bus users, 1 August, 1995)

Mr Level also explained in the letter that both he and the Public Transport Officer had spent an hour that morning walking and driving around the estate and nearby roads. This had *"cleared in my mind any uncertainties about the difficulties LTB faces in providing a service to Waterbridge estate"*, and had also *"emphasised the need"* to find a way to serve the area. The Public Transport Officer similarly explained how he had taken Mr Level around the estate and had persuaded him that there was a need to serve the area.

Six months later, the issue was discussed again at the next meeting of the Transport Liaison Panel. The minutes of this meeting included the following points:

"LTB outlined the difficulties of diverting the 321 bus route to serve the Waterbridge estate and stated they were unable to find a way to serve the route economically. Because of the geographical reasons, the route would have to be split, requiring an additional bus. They would now like to close discussion on diverting the 321 through the Waterbridge estate route.

The Director of Environmental Services reported that one of the reasons the bus service was recommended was that the recreation ground had a footpath connecting the estate with the shops where there had been a few incidents. LTB suggested that increased lighting might reduce the need for the additional service. The committee noted the council's policy concerning lighting footpaths"
(Minutes of Transport Liaison Panel, 27 February, 1996)

It appeared, therefore, that the matter was closed.

The Residents Request Assistance

Six months later the residents sent a letter to Mr Level, and also to the Public

Transport Officer, and to a local Councillor, Councillor Chadrey. This Councillor

was chosen due to the ladies' previously unsatisfactory response from Councillor

Severs. The letters stated that they were,

"...*appealing against decisions being made, without our consultation, rerouting the*
321 bus route to our estate"
(Letter from Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper to LTB, the Public Transport Officer and
Councillor Chadrey, 25 June, 1996)

In their letter they raised a number of points. One of these was that residents on the

estate had *"poor mobility"*, that they had to carry heavy shopping, and that some of

them had *"severe medical problems"*. They also suggested that the increased revenue

would counterbalance the 3 minutes extra that the 321 route would take. In addition,

they referred to residents in another area who *"fought for two years to get a bus*

down that area". They also added that they wished to meet with Councillor Chadrey,

LTB and the Public Transport Officer, and stated that if they did not get a meeting

they would take their case to the local and national press.

On 28 June 1996, a letter was sent from Mr Level, stating that LTB had informally

tested the route and had *"had a look at the area a couple of times"*. It continued,

"Following my letters of June and August 1995, I have little more of a positive vein
to add. We have evaluated the possibilities for serving this area and conclude that
we cannot justify a service via Waterbridge estate. Whilst we still recognise your
needs, I must close this proposal, until route 321 is retendered. The planning

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process of the route retender will take place during the summer of 1997. It is at that

stage that we will seriously reconsider how we can effectively restructure services in

the area to serve Waterbridge estate, if at all possible. "

(Letter from Mr Level, LTB to bus users, 28 June, 1996)

He added that *"on a more positive note"*, the highways section of Londonboro were

looking at the lighting for the footpath.

At about this time, the ladies changed their mind as to which Councillor should

represent them, since Mrs Darwin's colleagues in the council had informed her that

Councillor Marchant had a better reputation for getting results:

"I think you had to have somebody with her calibre, I think...she came highly

recommended"

(Mrs Darwin, bus user)

Councillor Marchant was not responsible for the ward that the Waterbridge estate

was in, but was involved in a residents association that straddled both the ward that

the estate was in and her own ward. The Public Transport Officer meanwhile

commented that Councillor Marchant,

"... took an interest, obviously, in that because she was electioneering in it ".

(Public Transport Officer, Londonboro)

At the same time, another resident, whose daughter was disabled and used a

wheelchair, sent a letter to the local MP about the 321 bus route. The MP contacted

LTB, and Mr Level, LTB, replied as follows:

"Thank you for your letter of 25 June 1996...we are currently reviewing the possibility of a service to the estate".

(Letter from LTB to MP, 4 July 1996)

The local MP had apparently also received a letter from Mrs Darwin, since he replied to her on 5 July 1996, thanking her for copying him in to a letter sent *"to various people"* about the re-routing of the 321. The response from Mr Level implies that the MP's letter might have had some effect, since prior to this the issue of the 321 bus route had been 'closed'.

Request for a Public Meeting

On 6 July 1996 Councillor Marchant sent a letter to the Public Transport Officer, mentioning her involvement with the Residents Association, and requesting a public meeting that both the Public Transport Officer and LTB should attend. She also asked him to persuade the operator to at least try a pilot scheme for six months. She added,

"My involvement with the Residents' Association (part of which covers my ward) has alerted me to this very real need so I hope that you will take up the cudgels, please"

(Letter from Councillor Marchant to the Public Transport Officer, 6 July, 1996)

However the residents did not gain a response from Mr Level, LTB, as to whether or not he would attend the meeting, and so Mrs Darwin wrote to him suggesting three possible dates for a meeting and stating,

"I have phoned your office repeatedly and have never had a reply"

(Letter from Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper to LTB, 12 July, 1996)

On the same date, the Public Transport Officer wrote to Councillor Marchant agreeing to attend the meeting. He also mentioned that the diversion had been on the agenda of the Transport Liaison Panel since 1994, and added,

"LTB and council officers have considered all the possible options, sadly without success to date. The sticking point is the justification of the extra bus which would be required, given the extra use of the service which the bus company expects...There is sympathy with the residents' case, and it may be that the projected meeting will throw up fresh ideas that can be acted on"
(Letter from the Public Transport Officer to Councillor Marchant, 12 July, 1996)

However, on the following day Mrs Darwin wrote a letter the local MP, in which she referred to a recent telephone conversation with the Public Transport Officer. The Public Transport Officer had suggested that a Hoppa bus might be used to serve the estate. However, LTB would have to fund the route since there was no money available for this in the current council budget, and there would probably not be any available in the following year. The local MP wrote back on 17 July 1996, thanking her for keeping him informed. On the same date, Mrs Darwin wrote to the MP again, informing him that Mr Level, LTB had contacted her by 'phone and had agreed to attend the public meeting. He had also said that he would be writing to her soon, and that *"maybe the meeting would not be necessary, as it was being discussed at the moment"*.

On 20 July, Councillor Marchant sent two letters to Mrs Darwin. In the first she suggested that they ask LTB if a pilot scheme might be possible, since *"they should be less deterred by the cost of full and final implementation if this step-by-step approach is adopted"*. In the second, she suggested that she would be happy to represent the residents at the public meeting. Subsequently, Councillor Marchant met

with both Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper on 2 August, and wrote to the Public

Transport Officer on 3 August asking him to confirm that the public meeting would

take place on 25 September. On 13 and 14 August, Mr Level, LTB and the Public

Transport Officer confirmed that they would attend on that date. Councillor Marchant

later suggested at interview that LTB had agreed to attend the public meeting because

they *"do wish to have a good public relations image."*

Councillor Marchant followed this letter with a letter to the residents in which she

confirmed that she would represent them at the meeting. She also added the reasons

why the diversion should happen:

"I shall do my best to persuade LT to run buses round your area. The need is there,

given the distance from the main route and the shops. The somewhat inadequate

lighting in the recreation ground discourages people from using it. There is a density

of population in the whole locality who would also use the service in the daytime.

The schoolchildren could also benefit. I am happy to "have a go" for you!"

(Letter from Councillor Marchant to Mrs Darwin, 17 August, 1998)

Councillor Marchant also suggested that they should invite the local newspaper to

"add weight to your case" and copied the letter to the local MP and to the editor of

the newspaper.

Before the public meeting occurred, a letter was sent from LTB head office, rather

than through Mr Levels, to the local MP. The letter outlined the case from the LTB

perspective. The LTB representative referred firstly to the five minutes stand time at

each end of the route, and how the diversion would increase the journey time by

about four and a half minutes in each direction.

"In view of the quoted stand times above, you can see that the proposal is not workable within the existing resources"

(Letter from LTB head officer to local MP, 2 September, 1996, part a)

Secondly, the LTB representative suggested that the profit would not be sufficient:

"...we would need to provide an additional bus and driver. The cost of this would be in the region of £60,000 to £70,000 per annum. Our route modelling techniques show that the revenue generated by serving this road would be about £12,000 per annum. The shortfall of over £45,000 is clearly excessive, and could not be justified"

(Letter from LTB to local MP, 2 September, 1996, part b)

Thirdly, she pointed to the inconvenience to other passengers:

"We feel that the disbenefit to these passengers would be greater than the benefits brought to the residents of Waterbridge estate. Again, our data shows that some 640 passengers would be inconvenienced by this diversion - this equates to some 40% of the route's users each day".

(Letter from LTB to local MP, 2 September, 1996, part c)

She did, however, add that they were trying to develop a new route that was currently *"at an embryonic stage"*, and also added more positively that,

"...due to the representation that we have had from this area, we will ensure that everything that can be done, will be done, to find a way of providing a cost effective link...a public meeting is to take place on 25 September...given the level of feeling on the subject of the 321 rerouting, we feel that this ought to be a good opportunity to

understand the needs and hindrances on both sides. "

(Letter from LTB head office to local MP, 2 September, 1996, part d)

Before the meeting, Mrs Darwin wrote to Councillor Marchant questioning the cost of providing the service and the numbers inconvenienced, and outlining the needs of residents on the estate. In addition, she suggested that another bus route would be *"ridiculous"* as residents including the elderly and those with learning difficulties would get confused.

The meeting was held in the Residents' Association daycentre, and over forty people attended, as well as two local papers. Write-ups of the story were produced, with a picture of the residents in one paper. Mrs Dapper had visited all of the people on the estate to inform them about the meeting.

LTB Propose a Different Route

According to Mrs Darwin the meeting was *"the turning point"*, because until then LTB had not realised the strength of feeling about the diversion. Councillor Marchant further added that the public meeting was *"quite stormy"*. LTB, however, refused to change the 321 route, but suggested that they might introduce a completely new route. Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper felt that their wishes had been ignored:

"We were just the ignorant public, weren't we. The ignorant public...You know. I mean he just stood up and said, 'No', you know, we can't have the bus. 'You can't have it'. So they were gonna do another route completely. Well, I mean another route is more than one driver isn't it....We said all of this at the meeting but, you know, it's like talking to the wall, isn't it"

(Mrs Darwin, bus user)

Two months later, Councillor Marchant asked LTB to update her on progress, and a month afterwards, Mr Levels wrote back to her, explaining that they had decided to divert another route through the estate. The new route would take the residents to another local centre, but away from the local shops. In addition, the route would not include the hospital. Mrs Darwin wrote to Councillor Marchant to explain that residents did not want to go in that direction, and would have to change buses to reach nearby shops.

Minutes from the Transport Liaison Panel held on 2 January 1997 showed that LTB had established that a service could be provided and *"would be holding a further meeting with residents to discuss the route"* (Transport Liaison Panel, 9 January, 1997). After the meeting, Councillor Marchant wrote to Mr Levels, LTB asking for clarification on the route. Mr Levels, LTB wrote back outlining the new proposals.

"In designing this route, we have taken into account the needs of a larger group of residents from a much wider area. Clearly, if we are to create a new route, it must be financially worthwhile and sustainable"
(Letter from LTB to Councillor Marchant, 23 January, 1997)

The letter further added that a link between the estate and the shops would be of *"minimum overall benefit to the Borough"* because the journey could already be completed by bus. The new route would, however, mean that people on the estate would have to change buses to reach the shops.

A letter from the Public Transport Officer, sent four days later seemed to contradict this, however, stating that,

"The point to emphasise is that both in the original petition and on the phone, the

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organisers stressed the prime requirement to link Waterbridge with Sainsbury's.

This need is respected by LTB and by council officers. The exact routing has yet to

be agreed."

(Letter from Public Transport Officer to Councillor Marchant, 27 January, 1997)

He also wrote to the residents, suggesting that the new route would link the estate to

Sainsbury's, but at the same time serve an area that had not been served since 1990.

Mrs Darwin wrote back to the Public Transport Officer and to Councillor Marchant

to say that the new route would be acceptable.

Protests from other Residents

At the next Transport Liaison Panel, a paper was submitted by the Director of

Environment which outlined issues around the proposed route. It was explained how

the new route was intended to address the needs of residents on Waterbridge estate

and also the Local Agenda 21 group, who had wanted a new route to link two areas.

By linking the two areas of demand, LTB could justify the new service, whereas

individually, *"each area was not strong enough to support the extra resources*

required".

However, the Agenda 21 transport group did not support the proposed route. In

addition, a local residents association had conducted a survey which showed that

there was a *"strong objection to any sort of bus service in the environmental area".*

An article sent into a local paper at the same time from a local residents' association

showed that they, also, were against the new route:

"All new routes should use main roads not residential roads, residents of which are

entitled to the quiet enjoyment of their homes"

(Local newspaper, July 1997)

In a subsequent paper presented to the Transport Liaison Panel, it was noted that since the LA21 group rejected the proposals, the route would have to be considered as *"premature"*. Subsequently, the minutes from the Transport Liaison Panel (12 May, 1997) revealed that LTB had asked for external funding for the proposed new route and further showed that LTB has been asked to meet with local groups to discuss alternative bus routes.

On 3 June, 1997 the Public Transport Officer wrote to Mr Level, LTB to inform him that a Public Works committee had approved money for adjusting the width restriction along the proposed route. Authorisation for the new route would be given, subject to three conditions.

"a. that the Local Agenda group in the area of the proposed route are persuaded that your proposal to serve Postern Park is preferable to their own ideas. I think you do need to come and address them; I have primed them but it needs LTB to help them in their decision

b. members have insisted on a consultation exercise along the route as a whole.

c. LTB should make clear if they require financial support for the service and if so to what extent. I suspect the Council would be willing to participate on a "pump priming" project, but not an open ended commitment. Associated publicity benefits to the Council would be a positive factor"

(Letter from Public Transport Officer to LTB, 3 June, 1997)

Taken together the two meetings raised three key issues. Firstly, that a pressure

group might still be able to prevent the bus route, second that the residents along the route might prevent the new route, and third that the Council might offer LTB money to go ahead with it.

On 6 June, the Public Transport Officer wrote to Councillor Marchant. In the letter, he suggested that if the new route was not possible, then it might then be necessary to look again at the diversion of the 321 route. He added that if this was the case, some other roads might have to lose a service. He further added that although the other route *"would seem to be the best option"*, he was not sure that this would gain *"wholescale approval"* within the 'required timescale' since all of the local buses were due to be retendered by LTB shortly.

Councillor Marchant wrote to the Public Transport Officer again on 17 August to ask for an update on the situation. On 26 August he wrote back to say that LTB would give their official response at the Transport Liaison Panel meeting in September, but that,

"(LTB) intend to honour their promise to provide the link, within their financial ability to do so"
(Letter from the Public Transport Officer to Councillor Marchant, 26 August, 1997)

Councillor Marchant wrote back to urge action:

"Although the LA21 group does not favour the proposed bus link, officers should tell LTB to press ahead at once with the development of a service for the Waterbridge estate, especially as contingency plans have already been made. Residents first raised the issue in 1994, so it is high time for action, especially as the company attended a residents' meeting on 25/9/96, so the case is well known"

(Letter from Councillor Marchant to Public Transport Officer, 30 August, 1997)

In September, the Director of Environment wrote to Councillor Marchant explaining that the Transport Liaison Panel had advised officers to carry out a full public consultation across the whole of the route and catchment area. It was hoped that this would be undertaken by Christmas. However they would not start the consultation until they received confirmation from LTB that they would be able to allocate finances to the project. This would be known in November. He did note, however, that the proposal would *"not be financially viable as gauged by fare box cash receipts alone"*. LTB had not yet decided whether they would use the alternative route or the 321 route. He added, *"That will depend in part, but only in part, on the results of the consultation exercise"*.

LTB Divert the 321 Route around the Waterbridge Estate

In February, however, Councillor Marchant received a letter from the acting Director of Environment.

"I am pleased to report that LTB will be proposing to serve this estate, by diverting bus 321 from mid to late September 1998"
(Letter from Acting Director of Environment to Councillor Marchant, 14 February, 1998)

On the same day, Councillor Marchant write to Mrs Darwin the following letter:

"You will undoubtedly be pleased to see the attached letter from the public transport officer. After all, route 321 will be diverted! Persistance pays! Obviously, we shall remain vigilant on this to ensure that the words are translated into reality! I am sure

that you will tell Mrs Dapper and your interested neighbours!"

(Letter from Councillor Marchant to Mrs Darwin, 14 February, 1998)

In the summer of 1998, the 321 route was diverted around the Waterbridge estate. According to the Public Transport Officer, *"the timing was right"* since the contracts on each of three bus routes were coming to an end. Money would be saved through cutting out another route. Part of the old route, and also the diversion to the Waterbridge estate would be added to the 321 route. The remainder of the route that had been cut would be added to another route.

Both of the revised routes had low floor buses, and one resident on the Waterbridge estate told Councillor Edwins that when they introduced the low floor buses it was the first time that he was able to take his daughter in a wheelchair to the shopping centre. However, after the routes were revised the Public Transport Officer explained that he was *"constantly"* having to answer complaints from those living along the bus routes. He commented that,

"...People don't like to have buses round their road...So sometimes when you're sending a bus service into a residential area, it doesn't only produce satisfied customers, it produces unsatisfied residents as well".

(Public Transport Officer, Londonboro)

Similarly, Councillor Edwins explained how she had received complaints from residents living in the streets where the new bus ran:

"...the bus comes down Montague Drive...nice houses, affluent area. And they have several people that make the comment that they didn't buy their houses to live on a bus route. They've got cars, and they weren't in the least concerned about those who

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didn't have"

(Councillor Edwins, Londonboro)

Londonboro: Summary of Case Study Example

In summary, the diversion to the 321 route was eventually made after a long, drawn out process. The story began when the bus operator introduced the 321 route in 1986 but did not divert it around the Waterbridge estate. An initial petition raised by one of the residents on the estate was ignored. Two other residents took up the issue in 1994, but the request was again refused. The residents made a further appeal in 1996, and in doing this were supported by Councillor Marchant. They also received some support from the local MP.

In 1996 the residents organised a public meeting, at which LTB proposed a different route, and this was accepted by the residents. Londonboro had agreed to subsidise this route. However, protests emerged from a Local Agenda 21 group and by a group of residents living in roads along the route, which suggests that this was not a sensible idea. The protests resulted in the plans for route being shelved. In 1997, LTB proposed instead to divert the 321 route around the Waterbridge estate as requested, explaining that this would take place in 1998.

There were various interpretations as to why the bus route was eventually diverted. The Public Transport Officer said that the route was changed after he had managed to persuade LTB, and Councillor Marchant did comment that,

"...because he has got very useful links in LT, obviously he spoke to them as well".
(Councillor Marchant, Londonboro)

However, Councillor Marchant also said that the successful outcome was due to *"real people power from all generations"*. Mrs Darwin and Mrs Dapper, on the other hand, said that this was achieved by Councillor Marchant. During the course of the interview, Councillor Marchant commented that she was *"being irritating"*, *"nagging"*, *"keeping on and on"* and *"chasing and chasing"*. She explained that this included bringing the issue up at *"every possible opportunity"* including Transport Liaison Panel meetings. She also commented that LTB *"do try to make it difficult unless it's an idea which they generate"*, and referred to a diversion in another area which she had failed to persuade them to make, but also to another route which people did not particularly want, but that LTB introduced because they received a subsidy. More generally, she observed that,

"...it's worth going if you've got a lot of residents behind you. Then it has added weight, definitely has added weight, and their persistence and numbers".
(Councillor Marchant, Londonboro)

When asked about the route, LTB explained that,

"Firstly, it is one of LTB' prime objectives to provide bus services within 400 metres of most homes in the Greater London area. Secondly...there were requests from both local Councillors and the local MP to provide a service along this previously unserved estate. In response to both of these points, the opportunity presented itself to introduce route 321 along these roads because there was a planned major structural change to this route anyway (withdrawal of route 333 and re-routing of route 344). Previously, the cost of providing this service would have significantly outweighed any passenger benefits."
(Letter from LTB, 15 September 1999)

This response suggests that the key reason why LTB did not make the change before was because the costs of the new service outweighed the potential benefits to new passengers. The main reasons why they did change the route were due to the new contracts, and also as a result of pressure from the local councillors and the MP. From this letter it appears that the needs and requests of passengers, and petitioning from council officers were not, however, motivating factors.

Discussion

In short, the above findings reveal that the residents on the Waterbridge estate had to wait twelve years for the bus route to be diverted. In reflecting on the reasons for this, four key factors emerge. These are, broadly speaking: the relationship between the transport provider and the local authority, in this case LTB and Londonboro; the role of officers; the role of councillors; and the broader dynamics of decision-making.

The Transport Provider and the Local Authority

Since this was a London Borough, London Transport Buses (LTB) was the overall body responsible for providing bus services, and contracted these out to the local operator. However, LTB had a duty to 'consult' the local authority on changes to service provision, and could receive a subsidy from the local authority for 'socially necessary' services that were not commercially viable.

According to the Londonboro transport strategy, the authority took a 'proactive' role in pressing for improvements. However, in practice it appeared that the authority was relatively powerless. This was illustrated by the way in which LTB was able to prevent a change to the 321 bus route for so many years, even though both councillors, officers and the local MP wished it to be changed.

The case study findings therefore confirmed the issue raised in Chapter Three around the powerful role of the transport provider in relation to the local authority. In doing so, they also confirmed how under deregulation it was possible for transport providers to 'play the system' (Hibbs and Bradley, 1997), through not providing or diverting routes unless they received a local authority subsidy (Stanley, 1990). However it should be noted that in this case, it was LTB that asked for a subsidy, and it was in order to divert an existing route. Moreover, in the end a subsidy was not given since a different route was diverted.

The Roles of Officers

Officer attitudes toward public consultation seemed on the face of it to be positive, and Londonboro was generally proud of its record on consultation and public involvement. However, in practice, genuine consultation appeared to be limited, as shown in the example of public consultation on the budget, and there was a tendency to consult certain groups. In addition, there seemed to be a lack of understanding in the Transport department about what was meant by social exclusion, and how the Transport department should address this. Thus, the Senior Transport Engineer had done little in the way of ensuring that consultation on public transport addressed 'social exclusion', beyond the translation of documents from English into different languages. More specifically, however, it appeared that there could be tension within the officer role between serving the public and addressing the concerns of the transport provider.

In the case study example of the 321 route, the Public Transport Officer could be characterised as a broker of various interests. He, nevertheless, appeared to have divided loyalties. On the one hand, he said that he had a duty to maintain the good relationship with LTB that he had built up over a number of years; on the other hand,

he was also required to consult the public, and to serve their needs. In this latter role, he did act as a voice of the socially excluded in that he put forward the views of the residents to both the Public Works committee and the Transport Liaison Panel, and at interview stated that his first priority was the public and the councillors. At the same time, however, he seemed to be heavily influenced by the arguments put forward by LTB, and worked closely with them. For example, a letter from LTB to the residents referred to how LTB and the Public Transport Officer were working together on a cost effective solution, since both shared the need to justify expenditure.

The Role of Councillors

Both Councillor Marchant and the local MP appeared to take an advocacy role on behalf of the socially excluded. This involvement seemed to have had some impact in that the response from LTB to the residents seemed to be more positive immediately after letters were sent. In taking an advocacy role, the key councillor in this case, Councillor Marchant, put forward the cause of the residents at each session of the Transport Liaison Panel, and at the same time encouraged the local residents to play an active role in contacting the media, and in organising the public meeting. This appears to reflect the 'ideal role' of councillors outlined in Chapter Three (Goss, 2001).

At the same time, her role as advocate did seem to be relatively limited. In large part, this was due to the context of transport planning, whereby LTB was ultimately in a powerful role compared to the local authority. In addition, it can be seen as partly due to the ambiguous role of the transport officer, as outlined above. As a result, irrespective of her strong advocacy role, this meant that she was not able to present a sufficient counterweight to more commercial concerns.

Another factor that might also have impacted upon her role was the problematic status of the residents association with which she worked to achieve a change in service, and the competition that this group faced from other interests, as will be explained in more detail below. Furthermore, in reflecting on the future, Councillor Marchant also raised issues concerning her position as 'backbencher' in the cabinet system. She held some reservations about this new system, and moreover raised concerns that her lack of input into decision-making might affect her ability to be an advocate for the 'socially excluded' in the future.

Another point that should be noted is that although Councillor Marchant did act as advocate for the residents on the Waterbridge estate, she was the fourth Councillor that they had approached. The other councillors that the residents had previously approached had not effectively taken forward their requests.

The Dynamics of Decision-making

In examining the process of decision-making, it was found that commercial arguments prevailed, and social arguments had limited impact, and this dominance of commercial rhetoric took place through a process that might be described as nondecision-making. Rules and procedures were used to justify not providing a service, with a general lack of deliberative engagement. This was irrespective of the roles of officers, councillors, and user groups as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded. The above discussion has drawn attention to the roles of officers and councillors, and therefore this part of the discussion examines in more detail to process of (non)decision-making and the role of user groups.

In Chapter Three, it was explained that, according to Bachrach and Baratz (1970), demands for change can be suffocated before they are voiced, kept covert, killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena, or "maimed or destroyed" in the decision-making stage of the policy process. The same authors also suggest that nondecision-making can occur in a number of ways. This can be through 'participatory democracy', where those in power give people the illusion of a voice but no real influence. Secondly, where those in power challenge requests by using reference to rules or procedures. Thirdly, where they take issues through a long and drawn out process. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that this latter form is particularly useful when employed against impermanent or weakly organised groups such as the poor who have difficulty withstanding delay.

In the case study example outlined above, it was shown that although the residents did eventually receive the service that they requested, the diversion of the 321 route took over twelve years to happen. There was, over that period of time, a clear process of different pressures and vested interests. When that change did happen, it was when contracts were renewed, and thus LTB did not have to try to persuade the operators to change routes. In addition, it can be noted that requests for a change to the service were initially refused, but then when further attempts were made to request a change in service, LTB used references to rules and procedures as the basis for its arguments for not altering the route.

In addition, and developing the suggestions put forward by Bachrach and Baratz (1970) in this case study there is evidence to suggest that nondecision-making occurred as a result of the different arguments used. LTB emphasised the need to minimise costs, using factual and 'objective' information relating to technical and contractual issues. For example, they referred to the technical problem of the three-minute stand time, and the need to run those buses that were not running frequently at

clockface frequencies.[1] Since the diversion would extend the time the route would take by three minutes, LTB argued that the existing route could not run. Instead, they would therefore have to run the bus around the route more frequently, requiring the employment of another driver and the buying of another bus. However, in 1997 the Public Transport Officer suggested that there was another option, which was to cut out other roads. This option did not ever seem to be properly considered by LTB.

LTB also appear to have used the 400 metre rule to their advantage. In 1995, they claimed that since the majority of the estate was within 400 metres of a route, they were under no obligation to divert the route round the estate. At the time, the residents disputed this. However, in a letter sent in 1999, after the bus was diverted, one of the reasons put forward by LTB for diverting the route was that it was one of LTB's *"prime objectives"* to provide bus services within 400 metres of most homes in the Greater London area. The use of the word 'most' acknowledges that they could have provided a service where another service was already running within 400 metres.

The residents did not ever really seem to fully understand the implications of these technical difficulties, and therefore could not engage with them. Instead, they relied on 'subjective' arguments that emphasised social needs such as their fear of crime, their physical limitations, and their need to have easy access to the local shops. At the same time, it appears that LTB did not fully appreciate the varied nature of the residents' needs. Evidence of this is that LTB at one time suggested that the way to solve the residents' concerns would be to provide lighting across the park. In addition, at one point they suggested a route that meant people having to catch two buses to access the shops.

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[1] The argument for the use of clockface frequencies is that unless this is done, those waiting for a bus find it difficult to calculate when the next bus is due. This does, however, seem slightly odd since there are a number of bus routes on each route, and it is unlikely that buses will reach each stop on the quarter hour.

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More generally, there appeared to be a general lack of deliberative engagement with the residents. As stated above, LTB did not pay attention to the more 'subjective' arguments put forward by the residents, and made offers that they would not wish to accept. In referring to the anticipated inconvenience to other passengers they similarly had not carried out consultation to inform this assumption. They simply assumed that none of the existing passengers would want to travel directly to either of the schools or to visit friends or relations on the estate.

User Groups Representing the 'Socially Excluded' and Competing Interests

In general, as stated above, the authority seemed proud of its record of consultation. However in the area of transport, this appeared to be limited to consultation on the transport strategy, which itself received a rather low response. A Transport Liaison Panel existed, but this was for transport providers, officers and councillors and did not include members of the public. In addition, and more generally, it was suggested that there was variation in terms of which members of the public were able to put their views across, with the reported dominance of the interests of those living in 'leafy suburban streets'. This tendency for competition between members of the public can also be illustrated by the case study example of the 321 route. In this case, the user group that represented the socially excluded did possess various attributes. However, this was not, itself enough to gain influence, due to the countervailing influence of other various other members of the public.

Against the background of competition, there were related problems around the representativeness and hence the power of the user group. This issue of representativeness emerged during one of the letters that Mrs Darwin sent regarding the 321 route, when she suggested that the bus should not run at times when it would

be used by schoolchildren, and also emphasised youth crime. This was notwithstanding the fact that the user group was led by a proactive resident who had a history of playing the role of community activist. In playing the role of community activist, Mrs Darwin worked with Mrs Dapper, an older resident, to put together a petition, arrange a public meeting, and lobby local councillors, LTB and the Public Transport Officer. She worked for the council, and it was her contacts in the council who advised her to contact Councillor Marchant. As indicated in Chapter Three, this 'insider' knowledge and contacts might have helped to make the group appear respectable (Byrne, 1994).

At the same time, however, the influence of the group was threatened by competing interests. As outlined in Chapter Three, opposing groups can result in changes to transport provision not going ahead (Seargant and Steel, 1998; Marsh, 1983). In the 321 case study example, there were two other main groups who had an impact on the case study history. These were the Local Agenda 21 group, and the residents association in another area.

In 1997, LTB proposed a new route that they thought would take into account the requirements of the Local Agenda 21 group who wanted a route across the Borough, the residents on the Waterbridge estate, and the residents in another area who were also campaigning for a new route. The new route would, in effect, replace a route that had been previously cut in 1990. Although the proposed route would not have taken the residents on the Waterbridge estate to the original destination that they had wanted, it would have taken them to the local shops. Therefore they accepted this proposal. However both of the other groups protested against it, lobbying their local councillors and involving the media. The result was that the council called for a full consultation before the route could be introduced. Since the route was due to be tendered, the Council felt that this delay would not be possible, and so the route was

shelved.

In addition to the different concerns of other user groups, there were, in addition, two other groups of users who formed an implicit threat to the route. Firstly, the existing passengers who LTB anticipated would be inconvenienced by the route diversion, and secondly, those living on the route who protested against it after it was introduced since they *"didn't buy their houses to live on a bus route"* and did not want a bus running along their road.

Conclusion

This case study has raised some interesting issues in relation to the original aim and objectives. In relation to the context of decision-making, the findings firstly illustrated the powerful role of the provider compared to the local authority. LTB were effectively able to stop a route being diverted from 1986 until 1998, when new contracts were put out to tender. This was irrespective of the fact that the provider in this case was effectively LTB, rather than private operators. Indeed, the 'partnership' between the local authority and LTB seemed to be a very unequal one.

Another way in which the findings shed light on the context of decision-making was in the complexity of the roles of officers and councillors, and the constraints that they faced in acting as voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded'. In particular, it was noted that the Public Transport Officer seemed to be torn between his perceived duty to act on behalf of the public, and his allegiance to LTB, where he formerly worked. There also seemed to be some ignorance more generally in the Authority about how 'social exclusion' was relevant to the Transport department. With respect to the councillor role, Councillor Marchant, who was most active in trying to translate the requests of the 'socially excluded' quite clearly acted in an advocacy role, albeit that

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this was within the context of various constraints, including the deregulated environment of bus provision, and the consequently ambiguous role of transport officers.

A further finding, that was particularly interesting since it drew together various themes highlighted in Chapter Three was in respect of the process of decision-making. It was found that commercial arguments prevailed, and social arguments had limited impact, and this dominance of commercial rhetoric took place through a process that might be described as nondecision-making. Rules and procedures were used to justify not providing a service, with a general lack of deliberative engagement. This was irrespective of the roles of officers, councillors, and user groups as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded.

The transport providers used objective arguments based on issues such as costs, technicality, and levels of demand which did not take into account the more subjective needs of the 'socially excluded', and at the same time showed some reluctance to engage with them in a deliberative way. A further insight into the dynamics of decision-making was in relation to the role of user groups representing the 'socially excluded', and particularly interesting here was the extent of competition from other user groups, from the anticipated needs of existing bus users, and from local residents. This competition was also used by the transport providers to justify not diverting the route.

CHAPTER 6

SECOND CASE STUDY AUTHORITY: TOWNBORO

The analysis of findings from the first case study authority highlighted the powerful role of the provider compared to the local authority, and the complexity of the roles of officers and councillors and the constraints that they faced as voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded'. In addition, they provided an interesting insight into the dynamics of decision-making, demonstrating the interaction between nondecision-making and consumerism, and the role of user groups in the context of competing interests.

In the light of these findings, this chapter examines case studies in a second local authority. The research carried out in Londonboro showed the power relationship between the local authority and LTB as the transport provider. In order to assess whether similar issues would arise in a different context of transport planning, it was decided that the second authority should be a District Council.

Townboro was a designated 'New Town', and located in a predominantly rural county. Of relevance to the role of officers and councillors was the fact that the authority was under strong Labour control, and was in the process of moving toward a cabinet system of government. In respect of public consultation, it was similar to Londonboro, in that it appeared to have quite developed public consultation mechanisms. In addition, and also like Londonboro, the population was generally affluent, with high car ownership of over 80%, although there were recognised pockets of poverty which had attracted Single Regeneration Budget funding.

In common with Chapter Five, the findings presented here begin by examining the

contextual factors within the authority in terms of bus provision, the administrative and political culture, and public consultation. The chapter then moves on to explore in more detail three specific examples of where the 'socially excluded' requested a change to a bus service. These case study examples were identified, as in the previous authority, through asking interviewees in the local authority to identify examples of where the 'socially excluded' had requested a change to bus provision. Again, further probing was used to check that the interviewee's understanding of 'social exclusion' broadly fitted with the understanding used for this thesis. The third part of the chapter then analyses the findings in relation to how they confirm, contradict, or develop those in the previous chapter.

Local Authority Context

The following section begins by examining the nature of bus provision. There is more detail on this issue in this Chapter than in that of Londonboro due to the more complex system in a District authority. It then moves on to examine the political and administrative structure and the roles of officers and councillors. Similar issues are covered as in the previous Chapter, however in the light of issues raised about the attitudes toward social exclusion in Londonboro, more attention is paid to this issue here. The last part of this section examines the attitudes toward, and mechanisms for, public consultation, and particular attention is paid to the mechanisms in place in relation to transport, which were more developed in this Authority.

Bus Provision, and the Relationship between Local Government and the Bus Operators

The system for providing bus provision was quite different in Townboro to that in Londonboro. Countyboro was the transportation authority. This meant that it was

responsible for overall planning through the structure plan, transport planning through the local transport plan, and statutory passenger transport policies. The County Transport Officer, who had worked in Countyboro for about 26 years, suggested that this work could only be justified on a county wide basis:

"...it would be difficult for a District or a Borough to get involved in that degree of detail, and there would be a lot of cross boundary problems"
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

Services were either provided commercially, or on a subsidised basis. All tendering went through the County Transport Officer, and bids for contracts were submitted by the operators. The Senior Transport Officer of Townboro explained how, where the operators would not provide a service, the County decided, in consultation with the Districts, which "socially necessary" services to run. On the socially necessary bus service contracts, the county paid 75% and the district paid 25%, although deducted from this was the income received through fares. The County Transport Officer suggested that this joint funding was slightly unusual.

Another issue in relation to subsidy was that rural services could be subsidised, unless they were 'en route' to another town. The larger operator suggested that in such cases, there was often in effect a cross subsidy, where a non profit-making diversion would be counterbalanced by more profitable parts of the route. However operators had to be careful that such a diversion was not seen as a loss leader.

In order to judge whether a bus route was 'socially necessary' the County Transport Officer carried out a cost-benefit analysis, based on the amount of money that was put into a service compared to the costs of the nearest alternative. However, in difficult cases, he admitted that it was necessary to make a *"professional*

judgement".

Since Countyboro made decisions on which socially necessary services should be provided, it appeared that, at least to some extent, the District abbrogated responsibility. For example the Senior Transport Officer in Townboro commented,

"...they tend to come at us through councillors, and councillors then start lobbying for it, and we then take it up with the County Council and say this is a big issue, we think it needs to be looked at. What the process for dealing with it from then on is, and whether we have had any that have been successful, I don't know enough of the detail"
(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

This suggests firstly that councillors tended to be proactive in putting forward requests on behalf of local people, and secondly that once these requests were passed on to Countyboro there was little interest in Townboro, at least at the senior level in the Transport department, in what happened as a result. Contrary to this latter comment, the Public Transport Officer for Townboro, did, however, suggest that Townboro did have some interest and influence in the provision of bus services:

"We-have quite an important input into what happens to the transport infrastructure and indeed what happens with passenger transport services. So although our role is not in delivering those kind of services, we do promote ideas, initiatives etc. "
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

Similarly, the County Transport Officer explained that although Countyboro determined bus services, it had liaison meetings with all of the Boroughs on a quarterly basis, and then individual discussions *"as and when"*. He added,

"Under our system we're saying to them, 'Well we're going to give you a real say in the decisions'"

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

However, it was suggested by both the Public Transport Officer, and by Councillor Beeches, a Labour Councillor who was also Secretary to the bus user group, that Townboro had limited involvement:

"The Borough Council is not of itself deeply involved in the buses. Only in a sort of overview kind of way. It doesn't subsidise them except in the way that it pays the bus pass and the contribution it makes to the Countyboro subsidy for the non-social hours services."

(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

"We're more of a lobbying authority. At the end of the day the decision makers are either the County Councils or the bus companies. But we have, we do try and work in partnership rather than never meeting and just sort of firing off, whatever."

(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

It appeared that there was some friction between Countyboro and Townboro. A recent issue causing concern was that Countyboro had made a decision to reduce their budget for subsidised services in the county by a hundred thousand pounds, a decision taken by the Environment Committee against the recommendations of officers. This had resulted in an article appearing in the local newspaper, within which the Conservative lead councillor described how there was *"...considerable scope to make efficiency savings"*. The article was headed:

"Anger over threat to buses: 'We have a duty to give good value for money'"

(Townboro local newspaper, 3 February, 2000)

Another contentious issue was in relation to the funding of Dial-a-Ride. The Senior Transport Officer in Townboro referred to how there had been a "falling out" with Countyboro over the Dial-a-Ride provision. Townboro and Countyboro had a joint contract to run Dial-a Ride in-house. Countyboro then restructured the contract so that they could not bid for it, and Townboro was reportedly *"very upset"* about this:

" So we are paying somebody else to do it, whereas before we were paying ourselves to do it"

(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

The friction between Countyboro and Townboro had also been noted from outside of the Councils, and the larger operator made the observation that Townboro did not always seem to have the same agenda as Countyboro:

"The Borough have an agenda that doesn't always agree with the County's agenda...The Borough tends to be more minded on keeping their own budget under control, and the County tends to be more minded on getting the right thing in terms of the road network, (and) the buses for all users "

(Larger operator)

He suggested that the County and Borough had almost a parent-child relationship so that when the Borough was late in advising operators of changes in land developments, the County could be involved in putting things right. Similarly, the County Transport Officer also pointed to difficulties arising from the Borough not taking a strategic view on planning.

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Transport provision within the town was primarily through two main transport operators, with the larger of the two running about 60% of total mileage. The Public Transport Officer suggested that the smaller operator had less resources than the larger operator, but that the larger operator was worse in terms of punctuality, and reliability. Similarly, the Chair of the bus users group suggested that although the larger operator ran a lot of routes, they were not as *"reliable with their timings"* as the smaller operator.

Various interviewees pointed to the powerful role of the operators. For example, the County Transport Officer explained that since the bus companies ran commercial services and others were subsidised through the County, the operators would sometimes deliberately shed marginal services (giving the statutory six weeks notice) and hope that the County would pay for these as subsidised services. Due to the short timescale, he explained that this situation would favour the existing operator in that area. At the same time, it was suggested by the Public Transport Officer that Townboro did have some, albeit limited, influence due to their contribution toward concessionary fares. The operators received this money in advance, and therefore received a guaranteed income. Similarly, the County Transport Officer commented,

"So that's a big element of money into the network which is reimbursing operators for lost revenue...That gives the Borough some say as well in the bus services... I think operators want to keep good working relationships with the borough to keep them on board with their free fare scheme"
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

However, he did suggest that there could be problems in that more than half of the money that the operator received was not directly affected by how many people they

carried. More generally, the following quotes illustrate how the Local Authority was, in fact, relatively powerless in relation to the operators:

"...under our legislation we can't tell an operator what to do, and our hands are tied in how we react with, how we interface with commercial operators. 'Cause we can't actually duplicate their commercial provision, or impact on their business to a great extent...so we get caught in the middle all the time between the users on the one hand, and the legislation and the operators on the other hand"
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

"...it is very difficult because, as you know, bus services are run partly commercially and partly subsidised. We have very little influence on the commercial network. You know, the levels of service will be driven by demand. Where we have a little bit of influence is on those services that we believe to be socially necessary."
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

"The private bus companies are more or less allowed to operate how they want. So the County Council have their franchises but they more or less give them a free rein to operate how they like. And even if we complain about what they've done, they don't seem to affect their franchise"
(Mr Kelder, Chair of the bus users group)

This was similarly reflected in a comment made by the larger operator. When asked whether councillors, the MP, officers or user groups had influence on their decisions, he replied that,

"It's down to the practicality of the situation. That determines whether we can or can't do something...But no, I don't think there's any pressure from that point of

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view, but it is always nice to please people."

(Larger bus operator)

Although there were two operators, it appeared that there was relatively little competition between them. When asked whether there was ever a problem with operators not wanting to provide a service, the Senior Transport Officer suggested that the operators could not be seen to be colluding, but that in practice this was what seemed to happen:

"Well I think what tends to happen is they divvy things out between themselves... we've got two main companies operating in the town, and one tends to do the internal trips round town and one tend to do the links to other towns...whether they do it by agreement, I don't know."

(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

The smaller operator, however, indicated that there was some tension between the two operators:

"We've got quite a, we have quite a good relationship with them...the fact that they've won our contract on a Sunday has niggled us quite a bit. But when you've got a company as big as they are...right next door to you, you don't want to run them up the wrong way anyway because they're liable to just walk all over you. And the amount of resources they've got..."

(Smaller operator)

This comment suggests that although there were two operators running services, in effect it could be argued that either the larger operator was in a monopoly position, or was the leader in a duopoly. The above discussion also indicates that Townboro had

very limited influence on the bus services that were provided. This was largely due to its position in relation to the bus operators, but also attributable to its relatively weak position in relation to Countyboro.

Political and Administrative Structure, and the Roles of Councillors and Officers

Politically, the authority was under strong Labour control, and had been for many years. It should be noted, however, that the County Council (Countyboro) was currently, and had traditionally, been under Conservative control. Since Townboro was under Labour control it was reportedly keen to embrace new initiatives from the government such as 'Best Value', and had recently (nine months ago) introduced a cabinet style of working, a year ahead of the Government timetable. In common with Londonboro, the cabinet system was, however, receiving mixed reactions. Some of these related to the ability of councillors to undertake their new roles:

"...members will be well equipped to do the service reviews but they won't be very good at policy review. The policy development process, I think, will still be very officer led, which I think is a shame"
(Councillor Stillman, Townboro)

"...getting members to focus on policy and say leave us to worry about the money and sort that, leave us to make the management decision...we actually struggle with that quite a lot in a place like Townboro...members want detail, and it's the itsy bitsy things on the street".
(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

Other concerns related to the impact of the new system on officers' roles. For

example, the Senior Transport Officer was concerned that there might be extra work involved for officers if members became more proactive in their scrutiny role.

A more general issue, and one that also appeared to be the case in Londonboro, related to officers roles, compared to councillors, and the amount of influence that officers tended to have in the decision-making process. For example, when asked if the steer tended to come from the political leadership or from the Chief Executive, the Senior Transport Officer suggested that,

"I would say that on the majority of issues, particularly transportation issues and things like that, I would say the majority of them were driven by officers...But when the big political issues are that big they are normally discussed in government, and officers tend to know about them before members anyway"
(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

Similarly, Councillor Stillman pointed out,

"...some people would say Townboro is a member led authority but that's the impression you get. But actually most work, and all the drive has to come from officers"
(Councillor Stillman, Townboro)

Officers, therefore, appeared to have a large amount of influence. However, in using this influence, they did not appear to necessarily work together. Indeed, there seemed to be some reluctance to work with others within the council, as illustrated by the following two quotes:

"We need to be less precious about this department does that and that department

does that, and there's a lot of that around...We need to get rid of the jobsworth

culture at the bottom"

(Councillor Stillman, Townboro)

"I do think the inclusive issues are very important... I think the whole joining up

issue...I think that we struggle with that. We're still in transport strategy, social

exclusion strategy, community safety strategy, house improvement strategy...

sometimes looking at the same problem and not seeing the connections. "

(Community Services Officer, Townboro)

The Senior Transport Officer, on the other hand, seemed to have a rather different

view. He suggested that cross-departmental working was as good in Townboro as in

other authorities

"...the Community Services people do a lot of work with my Transportation people

and Planning people, so there are certain parts of the organisation that talk to each

other all the time "

(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

However, he did recognise that there were limitations, especially around social

exclusion:

"...we have a very big social exclusion agenda, of which I suspect the transportation

issues are very small...I don't think we've done a great deal other than for small

target groups like the disabled, and things like that... "

(Senior Transport Officer, Townboro)

Social exclusion was dealt with primarily by the Community Development

department within Community Services. Community Services was responsible for housing, leisure, and community development. The last of these areas of activity included voluntary sector development and community transport, and according to the Community Services Officer, *"social exclusion in all its aspects"*. Until recently, this work had been issue based, including for example teenage pregnancy and benefits take up. However the department was currently being strengthened with the addition of four new members of staff and it was intended that one of the new members of staff would be responsible for carrying out an audit of all services and developing a strategic framework for social exclusion. The Community Services Officer commented that this was necessary because otherwise 'social exclusion' could be marginalised:

"I have seen in other local authorities social exclusion regarded almost as a kind of service area, and it's not, it's everything we do"
(Community Services Officer, Townboro)

The Community Services Officer considered that the recent development of this department was due to an increased focus on community development at the level of national government, for example in its emphasis on neighbourhood renewal. He added that it was hoped to drive through the work under the remit of 'Best Value'. However he expected that there would be problems in working with other departments. The earlier comments made by those concerned with the operational and strategic side of transport provision in relation to attitudes toward social exclusion, do, moreover, suggest that the perspective of the Transport department on social exclusion might, at best, be ambiguous.

Public Consultation

Councillor Stillman explained how a key mechanism for consultation was the six Joint Local Committees which covered each of the neighbourhoods and met four or five times a year. These appeared to be a similar mechanism to the area forums recently established in Londonboro. It was suggested in the guide to local services that each Joint Local Committee meeting had a budget which was to be used *"to improve the quality of life in all areas"* (Townboro,1999, p18). The guide further stated that,

"The meetings are open to everyone, and the people who have attended have already made a significant contribution to local decision-making"
(Townboro, 1999, p18)

Councillor Stillman added that,

"(the joint local committees) allow people to raise issues of the day, but they're also a vehicle for small local projects including transport, like bus shelters"
(Councillor Stillman, Townboro)

The Joint Local Committees were a corporate initiative, but their ongoing development came within the remit of the Community Development department, and the stated intention of the Community Service Officer was for them to become *"less formal"* and more *"community focused"*. Meetings were held within the ward in venues such as a local community centre. A local councillor chaired the meeting, and about thirty to forty members of the public generally attended. The County Council was also represented. The agenda for meetings was set by the lead councillor, but the councillors on the committee met separately to confirm the agenda. People were

asked at the end of the meeting about what they would like to discuss the next time. In terms of the process of the meetings, they seemed to be very like the area forums of Londonboro, but allowed less freedom for the public to influence the agenda. Councillor Stillman commented that the Joint Local Committees had *"bags of potential, not really living up to their promise"*.

In addition to these mechanisms for consultation, the recently secured Single Regeneration Budget money, achieved through bidding for money from Central Government, was expected to result in the development of neighbourhood forums, operating initially in a similar way to joint local committees, but eventually becoming community development trusts. According to the Community Services Officer, this would mean *"pushing responsibility and accountability out into the community"*. Nevertheless, in common with Londonboro, the most common ways of interacting with the public appeared to be through informative means, or with relatively little deliberative engagement. These methods included the use of the local media, a free council magazine delivered to all households in the Borough, and a MORI poll which ran every two years. A recent attempt had, however, been made to engage more carefully with the public in the area of community safety. This had involved sending a newsletter to each household, circulating the strategy to local organisations and putting it on the website, and raising the issue at each of the Joint Local Committees. In addition, ten focus groups had been used with 'hard to reach' groups such as young people, and a youth forum had been held. Another, separate, example of consultation was a community planning exercise including two visioning conferences. This had been used for the development of the West side of the town, and according to the Community Services Officer, reflected the "two way participation" required under Best Value.

Further attempts to involve the public had also been made in the area of transport

provision. In 1996 the Borough had set up a Transport Forum, involving the County
Council and various bodies such as cyclist, railway and ramblers associations, bus
companies and user groups, in addition to local businesses and voluntary
organisations. The outcome of this was a transport strategy published in 1999, with a
series of action plans. The aims of the strategy were as follows:

"To reduce the need to travel; to promote and support the use of travel methods
other than the private car; and to promote a better quality of life in the town through
transport initiatives"
(Townboro Transport Strategy, 1998)

In relation to bus services, the strategy suggested that there needed to be better
communication between operators and service users:

"In Townboro there are currently a number of issues which need to be addressed to
encourage more people to take the bus rather than use their cars. These include
more effective communication between bus operators and customers on changes to
routes and service levels"
(Townboro Transport Strategy, 1998)

At the current time, communication between operators and customers appeared to be
minimal, and on the part of operators consisted of responding to complaints from
customers, and a limited amount of market research.

The transport strategy had since been followed up by small working groups focusing
on specific issues, so that there were cycling, employer, and bus sub-groups which
examined bottlenecks on existing road networks and bus priority measures. The bus
sub-group invited people representing disabled people and age concern to attend in

order to consult them on what they wanted to be done.

The bus user group was another group that developed out of the Transport Forum. The inaugural meeting was held in June, 1997, and it was set up as an independent body. Members paid a £2 subscription per year. They tended to organise a public meeting twice a year which any bus user could attend, and they tried to encourage the bus operators to attend these. Councillor Beeches, who was the group's secretary, explained that the group had been set up as a formalised way of dealing with complaints sent to Townboro councillors and officers, Countyboro councillors and officers, the press, the Department of Transport and the operators. She suggested that the complaints tended to be based around a breakdown in communication between the bus companies and the members of the public:

"...members of the public were totally confused as to what was happening because the bus companies were changing timetables and changing routes. They were changing the cost of fares, and they seemed to be doing it without proper information, without proper advertising...certainly without consultation"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

Councillor Beeches explained how people now tended to write to her, and if the letter was clearly written she would then forward it to the appropriate person.

The group had, however, lost credibility over the years. One reason appeared to be due to a lack of enthusiasm since it was no longer seen as a 'new' project. Initially, there was great enthusiasm, and both Friends of the Earth and Councillor Black from Townboro council helped with the publicity. The Chair of the bus user group explained how originally Councillor Black was *"very active"*, but had now become heavily involved with the community safety project so *"couldn't give us so much*

help". In addition, although the Public Transport Officer attended the group, he said that this was in a limited role:

"...not as an executive member of the group, more as an observer and adviser and just kind of listening to some of the ideas they have"
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

A second reason was due to the fact that Countyboro wished the group to become more independent.

"We're trying to wheedle them off dependence on us as officers, to have a life of their own...they've been in existence properly for two years now, and I think they're maturing...they should be a lobby on the local authorities and the operators in their own right. They shouldn't be dealing through us necessarily"
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

However, Mr Kelder, the Chair of the bus users group, felt that this meant that the group was being marginalised:

"The County Council seems to take the side of the buses and not the bus users group...the bus companies don't seem to be taking much notice of us and also the County Council's transport service don't seem to be taking much notice of us either. So we don't seem to be getting information of new changes in buses that are happening"
(Mr Kelder, Chairman of the bus users group)

Another reason for the group's loss of credibility might have been that it was more confrontational than had originally been expected. Thus, Councillor Beeches

considered that attitudes toward the bus users group had changed since the time when it started due to the fact that the public meetings had often disintegrated into complaints sessions. The operators had consequently become *"fed up with coming to our meetings only to be shouted down when they were trying to explain themselves"*.

Both Councilllors felt, however, that the bus user group had both limited resources and limited power:

"I think our worst problem is that we don't have any regulatory control. We are literally a lobbying group, and an independent one at that. We don't have the MP on board. We run on the money that we get from our members, which is only two pound a year"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

"In transport there are a number of user groups that could almost be described as voluntary bodies and there's a railway users group, there's a bus users group, there's a transport forum. But they're really talking shops, and they are really customer moaning opportunities"
(Councillor Stillman, Townboro)

This had an impact on how the group was viewed by both bus users and the operators:

"We are very much the meat in the sandwich, I think. Because the bus users think that we have control, and the bus operators know that we haven't. And trying to convince the user that we haven't, and the operators that they ought to listen to us because we represent their users, their customers...we're getting there, but, oh, does it take time!"

(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

A further issue was the extent to which the group was representative of all bus users in the borough. After the first eighteen months, a lot of committee members had left, and currently it consisted of mainly elderly people, while most of the people who contacted the group to complain about buses were also elderly. Indeed, Mr Kelder, the Chair of the group, who had been a community activist for many years, was also an elderly man. Councillor Beeches thought that the age of those interested in the group was due to the fact that this group of people used the buses most since they received free bus passes. Consequently, she was trying to recruit a broader base of members so that the group was more representative of the general public.

These concerns about the representativeness of the group were echoed externally. For example, the larger transport operator suggested that this limited membership was a concern:

"In some ways it's a great shame, it's been quite effective but for a particular part of the local market and mostly retired people...so it's not a balanced user view"
(Larger operator)

Similarly, the County Transport Officer pointed to how the bus user group did not have a common focal point of interest, and added that,

"...bus users are a very widely dispersed sort of lot of interests. People want to go to all sorts of local movements, and I think the problem with the bus users group is getting a representative communal interest together...some of the meetings have tended to be hijacked by little splinter groups...We weren't getting many young people. Many workers, mums with kids, are not attending bus user group meetings in

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the evening"

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

In summary, although the council was making attempts to improve its record on consultation, these seem to have been limited. In the area of transport, the bus users group was the key voice mechanism, but appeared to have limited influence. One of the reasons for this was apparently due to a lack of sustained enthusiasm by both Countyboro and Townboro. A second appeared to be that the operators seemed to consider it to be too confrontational, and a third was that it was not considered to be representative of the broader population. Another interesting issue in relation to this was that Councillor Beeches only forwarded letters of complaint on to the relevant bodies if they were clearly written. This, in itself, suggests that the concerns that were raised would come from those who were articulate.

Case Study Examples

Against the background detailed above, three case study examples were explored. Each related to a change in a bus service requested by service users who were identified by interviewees as 'socially excluded'. All three came about as a result of cuts to services made by the larger operator. The first was a request for a diversion to an existing route to include an old people's home, Melket Home. The second was the request to restore parts of a two-way Circular Route around the town that had linked two neighbourhoods, and had also linked people to a hospital and a supermarket. The third was the request to restore a route that originally went to Pelican Estate at the end of a lane. Councillors and officers within the council explained that the key participants in decision-making in these cases were the local residents, including one who was the Chair of the bus users group. They also included Councillor Beeches, the secretary of the bus user group who was also the local Councillor, the Borough

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Public Transport officer, the County Transport officer and two bus operators.

First Case Study: Melket Home

The first request, for a route diversion, was related to an old people's home, Melket
Home. The case had arisen out of a decision by the larger operator to cut a route that
linked the home to the hospital, since it performed poorly during off peak times and
at the weekend. The route was replaced by another service that did not include the
home. Residents of the home consequently wanted this route to be diverted since they
had to change buses in order to reach the hospital.

The issue was raised forcefully at bus user group meetings, and Councillor Beeches
raised the issue with both the County Transport Officer and the bus operators. In
addition, the Public Transport Officer, who also attended the group, spoke to the bus
operator and the County Transport Officer on the residents' behalf. Therefore, there
was a combination of people involved. The result was that the bus route was
diverted:

"There were members here who obviously represented that ward. There was the bus
user group, there was the residents of Melket Home themselves, there were officers
here who were listening... collectively we brought the people from the County
Council in on the discussions and sort of outlined the problems to them. Asked them
to take it away, to look at, and investigate to see what the possibility was. We also
involved the bus company and, you know, sort of asked them to look at their route to
see if it could be accommodated, and yes it was. So that was very good."
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

The County Transport Officer agreed to change the route on Sundays, and the

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operator agreed to divert the route during the rest of the week, having been given a 'small' subsidy by the County Council:

"So usage of two or three people a day, but if that's justification for the service then fine. What the County have to do is decide whether it's good value for money, and if they're paying us. They paid us quite a small amount of money. We did it largely as a gesture of goodwill."

(Larger operator)

The Public Transport Officer suggested a number of reasons why the bus company diverted the route around the home. Firstly, it was relatively easy to accommodate since it was focused on one block rather than an area. Secondly, he believed that the major operator had spare capacity in their timetable. Thirdly, in changing the service the bus company no longer had *"all the aggro"*. Similarly, the County Transport Officer commented,

"...operators do think tactically. I mean I think they've probably taken a view that in strict financial terms Melket Home might not give them enough to support a half hourly service. But it's far better that they do it that way, don't have all the aggro, don't leave an opportunity for someone who's probably going to make a business"

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

The last of these reasons, that of reducing the 'aggro' does seem to have been a major reason for diverting the bus route. The County Transport Officer, for example, suggested that the route diversion had been secured since it had been strongly promoted by the bus user group. The reason for this was due to the membership of the group:

"...it is largely the elderly that dominate that group. So I'm not saying that's wrong but that's the way it is. And that's why Melket Home comes up as high on their list of profiles ".

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

He added that, *"...although they've got valid concerns my feeling is some of the other things were not coming through "*

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

In other words, the views of the elderly were emerging very strongly, but this meant that the concerns of other groups of people were not being voiced. It also transpired during the course of the interview with the secretary of the bus user group that two of the people who would use the new route were on the bus user group committee, and one of these was a councillor, who was also treasurer for the group.

There were still, however, problems with the service. At interview the larger operator recognised that *"usage is probably not very good ".* In addition, due to altering the timetables, the service was now less frequent than it had been and so the residents were still not satisfied. This was being raised at the bus user group, and with the County Transport Officer. The larger operator had recently carried out a survey of bus users in the area, and intended to carry out a door to door survey to inform future service provision.

Councillor Beeches suggested, however, that it was unlikely that the operator would do anything:

"As the bus operator keeps saying, you know, 'There's only so much we can do, otherwise we're going to find ourselves in a position where we're going to have to

put on extra services, extra drivers etc. And that costs money, and unless we can guarantee that it's going to be used frequently, this particular service, it's not going to be economically viable. Therefore we can't do it', which is fair enough"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

For the County Transport Officer, however, the situation had improved:

"...so the pressure, the heat's been taken off the situation. And I think for the last six months or so I'm not getting too much flack about that".
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

In summary, this was a relatively successful case for the local residents, since the operator diverted the route to include Melket Home, having been given a small subsidy by the County. It can be noted, however, that in this case firstly, all of those involved in requesting the diversion were all elderly, and secondly, many of the bus users group committee would use the bus once it was diverted.

Second Case Study: The Circular Route

The second case study example was based around the restoration of parts of a Circular Route which had originally served two areas of the town on a fairly high frequency going in both directions. The Public Transport Officer suggested that it was cut *"for commercial reasons"*, and according to the larger bus operator, the service had been cut since it was performing poorly during off peak times and at the weekend. The cut meant that there was now one bus travelling to one area, and another bus going to the other, but they did not link. In common with the previous case study of Melket Home, the bus user group voiced their concerns about the restoration of the Circular Route quite strongly:

" (the route was) pushed for quite a bit by the bus user group as well, primarily

because a lot of their members were from those areas I think".

(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

The cut in early January 1998 meant that some people had difficulties in reaching the hospital, others could not reach the shopping centre, and a link between two neighbourhoods was severed. The cuts were apparently carried out without prior consultation or publicity.

In January 1998 the bus user group held a public meeting. Seventy-one people attended the meeting, but although the bus operators were invited, neither of them attended.

"This meeting was arranged in light of the changes in the larger operator's bus

service...No representative from the larger operator was present, although they knew

of the meeting"

(Minutes from the bus user group meeting, 15 January, 1998)

At the meeting it should be noted that both the cuts to the Circular Route, and the cut to the Pelican Estate at the end of the lane (the third case study example) were discussed. Points raised at the meeting included the following:

" Some parts of the town now have little or no service. Pelican Estate was found to

be affected here...according to the new timetable, many services seem to have

completely vanished...how can services possibly improve if there are 23

redundancies in driving staff? Where do the Council feature in the running of

buses?"

(Minutes from bus users group meeting, 15 January, 1998)

There were therefore a number of points raised, including the following: some parts of the town had a limited service, including the Pelican Estate; the timetable showed that many services had been cut; and it was not clear what role the council played in bus provision. The minutes also recorded the responses to these. Firstly, it was noted that there was no reply to the first of these points. The reply from the County Council to the second was that the timetable for only one of the operators was on the bus stop, so that services appeared worse than they were. The response to the last of these points was as follows:

"As routes are not regulated and most are run on a commercial basis, routes cannot be forced onto the operators. Therefore, the companies have total control of services and fares, and Townboro and Countyboro must react to the companies' decisions"
(Minutes from bus users group meeting, 15 January, 1998)

This suggests firstly that the County apparently felt powerless in relation to the operators, and secondly that the County did not wish to mention that they could ask the operator to provide a subsidised service.

A further public meeting was held in February, and this time the larger bus operator was in attendance. At the meeting it was stated that 12 medical staff were having difficulty in getting to work in the hospital and that as a consequence six of them might have to give up work. The operator stated that he was,

"very concerned about problems in travelling to work, so these complaints will be looked at"
(Minutes from bus user group meeting, 3 February, 1998)

At the same time as these meetings were taking place, the Public Transport Officer commented that those affected were also *"very vociferous"* at the Joint Local Committee which covered the area, and that therefore pressure was applied to the bus company on a *"continuous basis"*. He noted that,

"...on occasion the bus company representative would attend these local committees and gauge the feeling, and at the end of the day it seems to have paid dividends".
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

The result of this pressure was that certain parts of the route were restored, although as the Public Transport Officer commented, this had taken nearly three years to achieve:

"There was immense pressure from the residents to improve that. It took a while... I'm sure it's taken two or three years of kind of pressure to get the bus company to actually look again at the viability of going back to the previous high frequency sort of linked service. And finally we've persuaded them to go for it. And it seems, touch wood, it seems to be operating ok and it's not receiving any public money. It's being done on a commercial basis"
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

Not all of the parts of the route were, however, restored. The route to the hospital was restored, and this meant that the nurses were able to get to and from work. However the part of the route that linked residents to the supermarket was not restored. In addition, other parts of the route that had linked the two neighbourhoods were not at the level of frequency that they formerly had been.

Third Case Study: The Pelican Estate

The third case study example was the restoration of a route to the Pelican Estate,
which lay at the end of a road at the edge of the town. At the top of the road was a
superstore, a doctor's surgery, a nursing home and sheltered housing. In addition,
also at the top of the road was an executive estate with quite highly priced private
sector housing. The Pelican Estate was a development which included a social
housing single person's project, a council development and some sheltered housing
for the elderly. The area on that side of the town had been developed in the early
1980s. It was, according to the County Transport Officer, almost the demarcation of
the greenbelt and the Borough, and operators had always found it a difficult
development to serve effectively and economically because it was necessary to go a
long distance for a relatively small population. He suggested, therefore, that the
difficulty in providing public transport stemmed from ineffective planning:

*"It's a failure of proper planning. It's a planning problem not a transport problem.
You've got a road that goes right down the edge of town with completely green fields
one side. It's not on the logical way to anywhere really".*
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

He added that usually a spine road would go through the middle of a development
and not on the edge of it, as was the case with the Pelican Estate. The road alongside
it had become almost like a bypass around the town. At the same time, the larger
operator pointed to the Government's new policies on rural bus services, and
suggested that whereas rural routes could be justified *"politically"* even where
customer numbers were small, this was not the case for places like the Pelican Estate
that were *"on the edge"*.

With deregulation in 1986, the area had been serviced on a part 'social' contract, and part commercial basis. It later became wholly commercial and at the same the frequency of its service had been reduced. In January 1998, along with other cuts to services, the larger operator cut the service to the end of the lane. At interview, the larger bus operator explained that they would make a loss on running a service to the estate, and did not any longer have commercial buses in that area. In order to cover it they would need an extra bus and driver. The only way that they would provide a service was if there was *"financial assistance"*. In addition, he added that in that area there was above average car ownership for the town, and a below average elderly population,

"So it's very difficult in terms of not just commercially but ridership as well."
(Larger bus operator)

Interestingly, at almost the same time as the bus operator cut the route to Pelican Estate, Countyboro cut the equivalent evening, subsidised, service in order to bring it in line with the service that the larger operator ran during the day. The smaller operator knew of this, since his company had previously run the subsidised evening service, and questioned the decision. The reason that he was given was the need for *"standardisation"*. He added,

"...so I imagine the people on the Pelican Estate were getting onto the larger operator and saying, 'Why don't your services do it during the day like they (the county's subsidised service) do in the evening?' I mean I'm only surmising here, which could get me into hot water here, but perhaps then... the larger operator got onto the council and said, 'Any chance you can run your contract in the evening like we do during the day, same route?'. But...it did take us by surprise, cause it's cutting the link for no reason."

(Smaller operator)

The issue was raised forcefully at the two bus user group public meetings held in January and February, as mentioned above in the description of the Circular Route case study example. At the meeting in February, the larger bus operator began by explaining that the changes were needed from a *"business point of view"*. He added that,

"Now that the changes have been implemented, they can be reviewed and some alterations may be possible in light of problems. However, changes to the Pelican Estate service are not possible"
(Minutes from bus user group meeting, 3 February, 1998)

The above discussion relates to the larger operator's reluctance to restore the route. At the same time, the smaller operator had also refused to extend a route that ran to the top of the lane leading to the Pelican Estate. This reluctance to extend the route is illustrated by a letter sent from the smaller operator to a resident living in Pelican Estate, following the meeting in February. The letter began by explaining how a previous attempt to serve the estate had not been successful since the extra diversion had led to the route as a whole being unreliable. The letter continued:

"If we now extended the service to the Pelican Estate we would, we feel, be creating the potential for unreliability again, as recovery times would be reduced. We do not wish to do that as this potential disbenefit to our existing customers outweighs any benefit from additional income. For reliability not to be compromised we would need to introduce an additional bus, and again the potential additional revenue does not justify that."
(Letter from smaller operator to resident of Pelican estate, 19 February, 1998)

As a result of the reluctance of both of the operators to serve the estate, the issue was therefore raised again at another public meeting in September of 1999. Councillor Beeches explained how the intention had been for the meeting to explain the partnership between the local authorities and the bus companies, how they worked together, and what role the bus user group could play in that:

"We thought if people who used buses came along and understood a bit better about how the whole thing worked it might be easier for them to understand what we could and couldn't do, what the bus companies could or couldn't do, and what the local authorities could and couldn't do"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

However, although the larger operator attended, the smaller one did not. Councillor Beeches explained how, in practice, the meeting did not run as expected:

"This all blew up quite badly... We had a lot of people from the Pelican Estate and a lot of people who were sad, distressed, angry, bewildered, confused, worried. And this is the occasion when one of the gentlemen shouted at us that we were liars when we told him that the buses were owned privately now and nothing to do with the council"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

In addition, members of the public were angry with the larger bus operator who was present at the meeting, and did not understand why the Council claimed that they were not responsible for the bus route.

The issue was also raised at Joint Local Committee meetings, and further

representations were made by the Public Transport Officer to the bus operators and the County. The County replied to the Public Transport Officer's letters stating that they had put a potential route to the Pelican Estate through a cost benefit analysis, but that since the route would not generate many additional passengers it would not meet the County Council's criteria for being "socially necessary". The Public Transport officer commented that,

" I don't exactly know how they do it, but they do apply that, and obviously they require a certain ration, you know, before it becomes if you like a priority. "
(Public Transport Officer, Townboro)

The route was not fully restored, and the smaller operator continued to run an hourly service to a retail outlet at the top of the lane, but not as far as the Pelican Estate, and then turned back. The County Council, meanwhile, diverted a *"fairly infrequent, rural service "* to the estate during off peak times, amounting to one or two buses a day. The smaller bus operator explained that running the route down to the Pelican Estate would mean that the route would not break even, and it would inconvenience other passengers. In addition, an extra two minutes each way would mean that the service would have to run hourly rather than half hourly. At the same time, however, he said that if the route as a whole had been making a larger profit, then it might have been possible to extend it:

"...obviously if the route was very viable and looked like it was going to be worth us doing then it would be done, you know, but unfortunately with that route at the moment, although it's doing quite well, it's not doing well enough to cover that part as well "
(Smaller operator)

He also explained that he had expected the County to offer a subsidy to run the service, but this had not happened. Since the County Council had recently withdrawn a lot of their subsidy, Councillor Beeches thought it unlikely that they would spend any of it on a service that would be used by a small number of people. She was currently trying to persuade the bus operators by referring to the doctor's surgery and also pointing to difficulties with access:

"otherwise they have to walk up hill in what is not necessarily nice conditions because it's a dark leafy lane"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

She added that,

"We keep writing to them (the smaller operator) and they keep writing back saying, 'No', or 'We'll think about it some time in the future'. We want them to think about it now"
(Councillor Beeches, Townboro)

In summary, in contrast to the previous two case study examples this case study resulted in almost no improvement for the residents of the Pelican Estate. The only improvement that was made was the infrequent rural service that the County diverted to the Pelican Estate out of peak hours. Neither of the operators were prepared to run a service to the estate, unless they received a subsidy. Concerns were raised through the bus user group and at the relevant Joint Local Committees, but this time the voices of the local residents were not responded to.

Townboro: Summary of Case Study Examples

In the first case study example the large operator cut a commercial bus route to a hospital. This meant that the residents living in Melket Home could not access the hospital. After receiving a small subsidy from the County, the operator diverted a new route to include the home, largely as a 'gesture of goodwill'. However, the service was less frequent than it had been formerly. In the second case study example, the larger operator cut the commercial Circular Route that linked two neighbourhoods to each other and to the supermarket and hospital. The residents campaigned to have the link restored using the bus user group and Joint Local Committee meetings. After a period about three years, the operator restored some links, but not all of them. Those routes that were restored enabled nurses to access the hospital for work. In the third case study example, the larger operator cut the commercial part of the route that included the Pelican Estate, and the Local Authority also cut the subsidised part of the route in order to achieve 'standardisation'. The residents vocalised their concerns through the bus user group and the Joint Local Committee meetings, but the routes were not restored either by the larger operator or by the County. At the same time, a route that the smaller operator ran to the top of the lane was not extended to include the estate. A fairly infrequent route was, however, provided by the County during off peak times.

Discussion

Following the field research, there was careful reflection on how the findings from the case studies in this authority developed those found in the previous case study. As explained at the end of Chapter Five, these related to the powerful role of the transport providers in relation to the Local Authority, the constrained roles of officers and councillors, and the dynamics of decision-making. The key findings relating to

each of these are outlined below.

The Transport Providers and the Local Authority

In Londonboro, attention was drawn to the powerful role of LTB, and in addition, reference was made to how the transport provider sought to obtain a subsidy from the local authority in order to provide an alternative route to the one that the residents had originally requested, but which would take in their estate. Since this route was shelved, a subsidy was, in the end, not given by the local authority to LTB in order for this to happen.

In a similar vein, in Townboro it was found that the two bus operators were largely able to determine which bus routes should be provided, and in this way, they appeared to take a similarly powerful role to that of LTB. However, in Townboro a subsidy was actually given after cuts were made to various routes. For example, a route was cut to the Melket Home, and the operator diverted the route as a 'gesture of goodwill', having been given a small subsidy, while the County diverted a subsidised route on Sundays. With the Pelican Estate, the larger operator refused to restore the route, and the smaller operator refused to extend a nearby route, however both of the operators said that they might be prepared to change if they received a subsidy. In effect, they therefore acted as a duopoly, and effectively vetoed the route.

The Role of Officers

The roles of officers as voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded' can be seen within the context of Townboro's more general public consultation. Public consultation in Townboro tended to be informative, but there was evidence of deliberative initiatives, for example, around community safety, and community

planning. In addition, there were six area based Joint Local Committees. These seemed to be similar to the area forums more recently introduced by Londonboro. However, whereas in Londonboro the public seemed to largely set the agenda, in Townboro's Joint Local Committees the agenda was set by the lead councillor.

As regards public consultation on transport, Townboro had a Transport Forum for transport providers, county and district officers and councillors, user groups, and local business. This appeared to be similar in focus to the Transport Liaison Panel in Londonboro. In addition, however, in Townboro there had been the introduction of a bus user group. Thus, it appears that public consultation was in some respects more advanced in Townboro. Nevertheless, as the following discussion shows, there were limitations in the extent to which officers acted as effective voice mechanisms for the socially excluded.

It was pointed out earlier that both Townboro and Londonboro had a similarly limited role in determining bus provision of public transport. However, the roles of those who acted as Public Transport Officers seemed to be rather different. In Londonboro the Public Transport Officer had previously worked for LTB and played a brokerage role, brokering the interests of both the public and LTB. Nevertheless, he had apparently similar aims to LTB in respect of cost savings and efficiency, and effectively acted as a gatekeeper to services. In contrast, the Public Transport Officer from Townboro did not have such connections, and appeared to take a lobbying role with both the County and the Operators. There were certainly not similar examples to those in Londonboro of him doing such things as walking or driving around streets with either the County Transport Officer or either of the bus operators in order to test out the bus routes.

At the same time, however, as the Public Transport Officer at District level was

taking an active role on behalf of the 'socially excluded', the County Transport

Officer was in effect acting as a gatekeeper to services. He was in the position of

being able to determine which 'socially necessary' services to provide, using his

technical knowledge of what was meant by a cost/benefit analysis, or his

'professional judgment'. This procedure did not appear to have been fully understood

by the Public Transport Officer in Townboro. In addition, the County Transport

Officer seemed to work quite closely with the operators, as evidenced by the cut in

the subsidised route to the Pelican Estate in order to 'standardise' services in line

with the larger operator.

The study of Townboro did, furthermore, reflect the findings from Londonboro

relating to the lack of joined-up working between the officers working in Transport

departments, and those in departments that were responsible for social exclusion,

with some apparent ambiguity within the Transport Department as to how social

exclusion should be addressed. In Townboro, attempts were being made to strengthen

Community Services, the department that dealt with social exclusion, through the

addition of new staff and a more strategic focus. Nevertheless, it appeared that there

was a lack of communication between the transport and social exclusion

departments, with a lack of clarity in terms of which department should take

responsibility for aspects of transport that related to social exclusion. This joint

responsibility appeared to have resulted in confusion for one of the Councillors in the

case study examples, when attempts were made to contact the appropriate person in

order to suggest changes to bus services.

In respect of joined-up working, there also appeared to be an historical lack of

coordination between those in the transport and land use planning departments. The

Pelican Estate was on the edge of town, and therefore was reportedly more difficult

to serve than the Melket Home that was within the town. This was further

compounded by its position on the edge of town, rather than outside it, since it therefore fared badly compared to rural areas. This was since there was increased political will to serve rural areas, and they were therefore more likely to be subsidised through various grants or funding mechanisms.

The Role of Councillors

The findings from Townboro also shed further light on different aspects of the role of councillors. In common with Councillor Marchant in Londonboro, Councillor Beeches acted as an advocate on behalf of the local residents. Another similarity was the way in which she used a user group to put forward requests. In acting as a representative of the residents, but also through the bus users group, the Councillor arguably acted to promote both representative and direct democracy: representative democracy, through acting as a spokesperson, and direct democracy through also encouraging the local residents to vocalise their concerns via public meetings.

The councillor's use of a user group was much more obvious in Townboro, where she acted as secretary to the group, and campaigned through it. However, the value of the user group to her was questionable, due to the 'limited' remit of the bus users group, and its growing distance from the council. As a result, it is arguable whether this provided Councillor Beeches with an effective vehicle for persuasion.

The Dynamics of Decision-Making

The findings from Townboro showed similarities to those in Londonboro in terms of the dynamics of decision-making, where again there appeared to be a dominance of commercial rhetoric. Commercial arguments prevailed and social arguments had limited impact, and moreover, rules and procedures were again used to justify not

providing a service. The process as a whole was characterised by a general lack of deliberative engagement, and again, user groups representing the socially excluded appeared to effectively compete with other groups of interests.

The Use of Nondecision-making

In Londonboro, although the diversion to the Waterbridge estate was eventually carried out, this took twelve years to happen, and in the meantime various other 'solutions' were suggested that did not fully address the residents' needs. In effect, in none of the cases in Townboro was the request for a change to a service fulfilled in full, and in the case of Pelican Estate not made at all. In both authorities there therefore seemed to be a lack of 'understanding' or willingness on behalf of the transport providers to provide what the residents requested.

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that LTB treated the residents as 'consumers', and that this was not necessarily relevant for those who are socially excluded. In Townboro, although there was some evidence of engagement between the operators and the local residents, in common with Londonboro there appeared to be a lack of what could be called 'deliberative' engagement. For example, the first public meeting held by the bus user group to discuss the circular route was not attended by the relevant (larger) bus operator, and similarly, the public meeting during which the Pelican Estate was discussed was not attended by the smaller operator. It can also be noted that Councillor Beeches considered that this non-attendance by the operators was because the bus user group was too confrontational, casting doubt on the operators' willingness to fully engage with them.

In addition, and also in common with the findings from Londonboro, references to rules and procedures acted as inhibitors of change, and transport providers used

different arguments to the residents. The operators used factual and 'objective' arguments relating to technical and contractual issues and costs, while the arguments used by the residents tended to be 'subjective', emphasising needs and vulnerability, and drawing on 'social' knowledge such as the need to access the hospital directly, visit friends and family in another neighbourhood, and access the supermarket.

A further issue was that while the bus user group could be seen as mechanism for the public to engage in 'participatory democracy' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970), the group did not appear to have assisted all of its members equally. This can be illustrated by the fact that the same level of success was not apparent for the Circular Route and the Pelican Estate as was the case for the Melket Home. This might have been due to membership of the group, since the majority of members were older people. However, it might also have been linked to the attitudes of the bus providers to different groups of people.

In Chapter Two, reference was made to the way in which attitudes toward those who were socially excluded varied, depending on how whether or not they were regarded as the 'deserving poor', and attention was drawn to the different discourses of social exclusion (Levitas, 1999). In the case study examples within Townboro, the operators diverted a route to enable the nurses to access the hospital, saying that they were more inclined to respond to work issues. They also appeared to be willing to adapt services for the elderly, as illustrated by the diversion to the Melket Home that was made as a 'gesture of goodwill'. However those on the Pelican Estate, who did not neatly fit into either of these categories, did not receive a change to service. A tentative conclusion from this is that employment might have been seen as worthy, and that the elderly were seen as 'deserving' members of society, whereas those living on the Pelican Estate might not have been perceived as worthy of equivalent attention.

User Groups Representing the 'Socially Excluded' and Competing Groups

As with Londonboro, the study of Townboro also drew attention to the role of user groups. Firstly, in relation to the role of community activists. In this respect, the evidence from Townboro cast doubt on the extent to which the community activist leading the user group was able to represent all of those that he claimed to represent, since the members of the bus user group were predominantly older people. Secondly, new issues arose around the status of the user group that had been set up by Townboro to address complaints that were sent to the local authority or to the bus operators. The group did not have any formal regulatory power, and over time, the authority had tried to withdraw from the group, leading to members of the group feeling marginalised. Thirdly, the findings indicated the limited influence of the tactics used by the bus user group, such as the raising of concerns at other forums, public meetings, and the use of the media, since there was not clear evidence to suggest that any of these had made a difference to the response of the bus providers.

More specifically, the findings in Townboro shed more light on the relevance of other groups of interests. In addition to those residents who wanted a change in service, in both Townboro and Londonboro other residents also had some influence, albeit indirectly in their capacity as existing users of services. In Londonboro, LTB went as far as to calculate the numbers of these passengers, and made assumptions about the level of their inconvenience. In the case of the Pelican Estate, the operators were similarly influenced by the assumed "inconvenience" of existing passengers. Interestingly, in the case of the Pelican estate, the smaller operator did, however, become willing to inconvenience these passengers when a subsidy was provided. Apparently, therefore, the service to customers was relevant only insofar as it included compensation for lost passengers, and potentially led to increased profits,

and was not an aim in itself.

Conclusion

Irrespective of certain differences between the authorities, particularly in relation to the level of consultation on transport and the nature of bus provision, the findings from Townboro generally acted to confirm and develop issues from the Londonboro in four main areas: the relationship between the local authority and the transport provider; the role of officers; the role of councillors; and the process of (non)decision-making.

In relation to the role of the bus providers and the local authority, it was again found that the transport providers (in this case the operators) played a powerful role. This can be illustrated by the fact that they effectively vetoed services unless they received subsidies. There were also similar findings in relation to the inherent contradictions in the roles of officers and councillors. The ability of officers to act as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded seemed to vary according to whether they interpreted their role as broker, advocate or gatekeeper, but in each authority there seemed to be a lack of joined up working around transport and social exclusion. Councillors, meanwhile, appeared to play a role in representative and also direct democracy. However, this was constrained by the deregulated context within which they were working, and the ultimate power of the bus providers.

Thirdly, similar findings appeared in relation to the dynamics of decision-making. In both authorities, the transport providers used nondecision-making to treat the socially excluded as consumers, while in Townboro, the 'socially excluded' also appeared to be treated as either deserving or non-deserving. In both authorities, however, issues arose around the limited role of user groups for the socially excluded and the

competition that they faced from competing interests, although in Townboro it was more explicitly shown that these competing interests might also come from within a user group.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THIRD CASE STUDY AUTHORITY: RURALBORO

In order to develop the findings from the first two case study authorities, further research was undertaken in a third authority, referred to here as Ruralboro. Three considerations informed the selection of this third authority. Firstly, it was decided that the authority should again be a District Borough, since, as shown in Townboro, there was a potentially more complex process of transport decision-making in authorities of this type due to the three layers of local government: County, District and Parish. Secondly, it was decided that since the previous two authorities had been in urban areas, the third should cover a predominantly rural area, given the issues raised in Chapter Three around social exclusion in such areas. Thirdly, it was decided that it would be useful to examine an authority that was, and had, traditionally been under Conservative control, since this had not been the case in the previous two authorities and might arguably have an impact on the roles of councillors and officers as voice mechanisms for the 'socially excluded'. At the same time, Ruralboro did have one marked similarity. This was that in common with the previous two authorities, the population was considered to be quite affluent, with car ownership of about 90%, but with perceived pockets of deprivation, particularly in wards in the two largest towns.

The case study examples emerged during the course of early interviews, and fulfilled the criteria set out before in that they were identified as examples of where the 'socially excluded' had requested changes to bus provision. The first case study example relates to the request for a bus route to a former council housing estate at the edge of a small town, which followed a cut to the bus route by the operator. The second relates to a request for rural buses from young people living in outlying villages which resulted in a bid for Rural Challenge money.

The structure of this chapter broadly follows that in the previous chapters, since it begins by examining contextual issues relating to the local authority, and then moves on to detail the findings from the two case study examples. The chapter then includes a discussion of these findings. Following this chapter, Chapter Eight then analyses the key findings from each of the case study examples.

Local Authority Context

In common with the previous case studies, this section begins by examining the nature of bus provision, and the relationship between the local authority and the transport providers. Some particular attention is paid in this respect, firstly to the nature of the area's 'rurality' in terms of settlements and transport links, and secondly to the relationship between the transport operators and both Countyboro and Ruralboro, since this relationship was raised as an issue in the previous chapter. The section then moves on to examine the political and administrative structure within the authority and the roles of councillors and officers, again paying some attention to attitudes toward social exclusion within the authority. Thirdly, attitudes toward both public and transport consultation are examined. In the previous authorities it was found that irrespective of the authority's apparent expertise in consultation, there were still problems around how this was carried out in practice. Therefore it would be interesting to assess this again in this third authority.

Bus Provision, and the Relationship between Local Government and the Bus Operators

Major transport routes were mainly North-South due to the Borough's proximity to London, while the links between the East and the West of the Borough were not as good. It was also the case that there was not any real centre, and none of the five key

towns were *"self- sustaining entities"*, with many still lacking certain services. This meant that a person might live in one town, work in another, and take children to school in a third, all having implications for transport. Many services, for example hospitals and leisure facilities, were outside of the Borough. Rural links were not perceived to be very good, and there were issues related to the lack of commercial bus routes and the cost of providing rural services. Although it had a high rural area, the County as a whole was not technically defined as a rural county by the Countryside Agency in terms of indices of accessibility. This was because there was reasonable access to rail, main roads and infrastructure, and because none of the villages were much more than five miles away from a major settlement.

There were at least four local operators, although the main operator was the same one as in Townboro. It was suggested by the County Transport Officer that the operators did work quite well with the County:

"I think we've been lucky in having willing operators. But I think they're aware that in Countyboro they can't go it alone...I mean we are one of their major customers because we're buying services from them. We're both dependent on each other... Whereas, if you think of some other bits of the country where someone could say, 'Well I'm gonna run this route and I don't care what you think, I can make money out of it, I'm gonna carry on'"
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

However, the County Rural Transport Officer suggested that *"partnership is too strong a word"* for the relationship.

As with Townboro, the County had primary responsibility for the coordination of public transport, at least as far as socially necessary services were concerned, and Ruralboro contributed 25% of the money toward their cost. The same County

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Transport Officer as for Townboro determined what would be 'socially necessary'. A Labour Councillor from Ruralboro, Councillor Bard, explained how it was therefore sometimes necessary to lobby the County:

"...(you have to) get the transport coordinator to back your case. If they don't, you're done. You get them to back your case. And this is the problem. The problem comes 'cause they got a transport budget in the County, and this is spent half way through the year"

(Councillor Bard, Ruralboro)

The County Transport Officer explained how Ruralboro was different, however, in some respects, to Townboro. As indicated in the previous chapter, money that the District Council paid toward concessionary fares acted as an advance payment to the operators. In Ruralboro, the money paid toward concessionary fares was, however, much lower than that paid in Townboro:

"Townboro and Ruralboro have got, they're almost the extremes in Countyboro of the concessionary spectrum"

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

In relation to the provision of public transport, as with Townboro, the County Transport Officer had primary responsibility for this role. There was some divergence of opinion, however, as to whether it was good that the County took overall responsibility. On the one hand, the lead councillor for the Borough stated that the current arrangement worked effectively, with the County taking primary responsibility for public transport, while those within Community Services at the Borough level *"fiddle around the edges"* with community and voluntary transport. Moreover, when asked if the Borough would like more say in the provision of bus services, the Highways Partnership Officer considered that this would not be a good

thing, since it would imply *'knowing what you're talking about'* and spending more on staff time. This seemed to reflect the view given by a Liberal Democrat Councillor that public transport, in this authority, was a *' Cinderella service '*, not a big priority, and an *'add on'* to other agendas.

On the other hand, there were those who thought that the Borough should have a· larger say in transport provision. For example, the Labour Councillor commented, that:

"The County Council run the transport. They send it down to us and say, 'What do you think?' And it's 'Ooh, we can say whatever we like". And it can go back to them and they go, 'Oh '. They go 'Oh, we don't care, we're doing it anyway'. And they just go and do it".
(Councillor Bard, Ruralboro)

Similarly, the Borough Engineer explained how new policies were developed at County level with which Districts had to comply, and that this had led to the County now having more control over how money was spent in Ruralboro. The Highways Partnership Officer further explained how officers had requested a new post of a transportation officer to be responsible for bus services and the local transport plan at the Borough level in order to have more say in bus provision, but that councillors had not wished to fund this.

It therefore appears that although there were certain similarities between Ruralboro and Townboro in terms of the relationship to the County, there were also certain differences. One related to the amount of money that the authority contributed toward concessionary fares, which was then forwarded to the operator. The second related to how interested the authority was in having a say on bus provision.

Political and Administrative Structure, and the Roles of Councillors and Officers

Politically, there was a large Conservative majority, and this had been the case since 1974. As mentioned above, Ruralboro was within the same Conservative controlled County Council as Townboro. Although Countyboro had already adopted a cabinet system, Ruralboro were still considering this, and a Liberal Democrat Councillor commented that there was a preference within Townboro for maintaining the *'status quo'*. In common with the other two authorities, it was suggested that councillors tended to focus on ward level issues rather than policy issues. The Community Development Officer illustrated this by referring to how one of the councillors had not liked a 'planning for real' exercise that had recently been carried out. This had involved a visioning conference within one of the more deprived wards of a larger town. The Councillor's view had been that officers should not become involved in consultation since this was the responsibility of councillors:

"...he takes the view that this is, you know, he doesn't like this methodology because he says, actually, you know, you're hostage to fortune, you've got a tiger by the tail. And all you really need in terms of local democracy, not all, but the main important thing, is that local councillors go round, hear what people say, and bring it back in."
(Community Development Officer, Ruralboro)

The Community Development Officer did admit that this did not represent the majority view of councillors, but that it was, nevertheless, an *"influential"* view. This focus on ward issues, was moreover, considered by both the County Transport Officer and the Community Development Officer to be a potential problem in terms of an unwilingness to pay adequate attention to strategic issues:

"You can quickly get a politician or a member saying, 'Can't you do something

about it?', having just voted through a budget cut. "

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

"...there are pockets of innovation. There is a willingness to take on change etc. But there is very little kind of thoughtful strategic direction... in terms of management principles and sort of vision and objectives and service planning, it's, it still hasn't quite come together, you know. "

(Community Development Officer, Ruralboro)

More generally, the relationship between councillors and officers seemed to be quite close and informal, and councillors were said to have 'no hesitation coming into the offices'. This was evident when, during the course of an interview with a transport officer, the leader of the council popped in to have a chat.

In terms of the administrative structure and culture, the Community Development Officer suggested that departments tended to be *"inward looking"*, and that this could cause problems when more than one department was responsible for a particular issue. This dual responsibility was the case for social exclusion, since the social exclusion aspects of transport came within the remit of both the Transport department and Community Services, with the latter department taking responsibility for community transport, dial-a-ride and the bus grant. At the same time, Community Services was also responsible for housing, local health improvement programmes, and for partnerships between social services, the health agencies, primary care groups and the voluntary sector.

More generally, there was apparently a lack of willingness to accord respect to the idea of social exclusion. As a result of the findings in the previous case studies, the Community Development Officer was directly asked what the attitudes of other departments were toward social exclusion, and he replied in the following way:

"I think uh, may I be brutally frank?...I don't think they like it very much, you know....I think Finance don't like it very much...The culture there is, to a certain extent, is one of guarding the council tax payers' money. And, you know, they don't want to have people like me rattling into committees that they spend it on the socially excluded, or you know, the community."

(Community Development Officer, Ruralboro)

He also added that other departments took a similar attitude, referring to officers in the Planning department who felt that they were already addressing everything that needed to be addressed, and therefore considered that further efforts to address social exclusion were unnecessary.

Public Consultation

The council as a whole drew on information from a MORI poll, but it largely seemed to be left up to individual departments to carry out their own consultation. The Community Services department seemed to be particularly keen to carry out both larger scale and more deliberative consultation, and this had included community consultation and a 'planning for real' exercise. The planning for real exercise had involved 52 local people from a deprived ward taking part in focus groups, and documentation showed that there were over 600 comments from 135 people who attended a follow-up visioning exercise. Two hundred and twenty-four of these comments related to transport, and in particular, mention was made of the need for public transport to a local hospital and a shopping centre (Update on Planning for Real, August 2000). The event was followed by an action planning meeting which thirty residents attended (Planning for Real Stakeholders and Residents' Meeting, August 2000).

Issues arose that again point to the lack of cooperation between the departments responsible for social exclusion and transport. The County and Borough transport officers had not been invited to be involved in the original exercise, and the County Transport Officer did not appear to have been informed about the action point related to the route to the hospital which had again emerged in the follow-up meeting. The Rural Transport Officer commented that,

" (The Community Development Officer is) not a transport person, so he's happy doing this process. But following through might not be the logical thing to do".
(Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro)

Issues also emerged around the level of consultation on transport provision. In the above section it was suggested that the Community Services department did not wish to cooperate with the Transport department. However, according to the Community Services Officer the issue was more about the Transport department's general reluctance to consult the public:

" Perhaps more so than any other department or section, I'm not sure they want to, you know, um, engage under a community sort of coordinated banner. You know, their policy is different... I think some of them, quite a lot of people there thought it was pretty daft doing a planning for real... it's sticking your head above the parapet and saying, you know, 'Do you want transport?', and they'll say, 'Yes', and then you've got to provide it. "
(Community Development Officer, Ruralboro)

At the same time, however, he did explain how his department was trying to *"nail"* the highways people into delivering some of the improvements raised by this exercise.

More generally, the Liberal Democrat councillor, Councillor Daniels, suggested that there was no public consultation on transport at the Borough level, since there was no political commitment, it was not clear who would take responsibility, and transport was not a high priority.

There were transportation forums, whose representatives included various societies such as the disabled, schools and young people. These were non-executive bodies, and therefore, as the Highways Partnership Officer commented, *"all they can do is pass views"*. These forums had recently been discredited, however, when a bus priority route that they had proposed resulted in public opposition from those living along the route. The route was a *"daytime shopping bus"* rather than a commuter bus, and came into the town from rural areas. The proposal had been presented in the form of a public exhibition at the local school. Local residents raised a petition with two and a half thousand signatures on it and also used the local media. The plan went to County Council committee for a decision, and was shelved:

"...they didn't feel there was enough support to actually implement the scheme and the benefits were not large enough. And because they didn't like the public opposition, it got scrapped."
(Highways Partnership Officer, Countyboro)

The Highways Partnership Officer reported that as a result the forums had *"lost any credibility"*. This has implications, both for the representativeness of council run groups and the way in which their input was taken into account in decision-making.

At the County level, a Sustainable Transport in Rural Areas project co-funded by the County Council and the countryside agency relied heavily on *"community engagement and ownership"*, using household surveys and detailed travel diaries, a conference and focus groups with young and families. According to the document

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providing the overview of the plan, this consultation was used to develop the Local Transport Plan, which had as one of its objectives the aim to address social exclusion. It was noted, however, that the overview of the Borough's Local Transport Plan, as advertised on the website, did not refer to social exclusion or accessibility.

In summary, it appears that there were some examples of good practice in terms of public consultation in Ruralboro. However, this seemed to be largely due to the enthusiasm of the Community Services department. The Transport department, on the other hand, appeared to be far less proactive, and the current mechanism that was in use had recently been discredited.

Case study examples

The first case study example relates to the request for a bus route to a former council housing estate, the Partridge Estate, at the edge of a small town, while the second relates to the provision of a Taxibus as a result of a request for rural buses from young people living in outlying villages. The key participants in the first example were the local residents, and particularly Mrs Colling, a community activist who was the secretary of the Residents' Association, Councillor Daniels, who was a Liberal Democrat councillor, the County Transport Officer, and the major operator. In the second example the major participants were the Rural Transport Officer, the County Transport Officer, and a Community Development Worker, in addition to the Rural Development Commission, the Districts and the Parishes, and young people and their parents. In common with the previous case studies, in addition to interviews with those involved in the decision-making process, relevant documentary evidence was also used.

The Partridge Estate

The Partridge Estate was built over thirty years before on a former golf course. It contained mostly social housing and was built as an over-spill from London, and most of the original inhabitants had been Londoners. According to residents living on the estate, there remained some considerable resentment from the town's residents:

"A lot of people in the town didn't want this estate to be built. They were very anti. 'Cause it was a golf course, you see, so they lost half of their golf course. And there was a lot of Londoners, mainly I think, 90% when the estate was first built..And the people from the town, there was petitions and everything to try and stop it being built...but they were very anti against this estate, very, very, very. And unfortunately, that stigma is still there... "

(Mrs Colling, Secretary of Residents' Association)

It had also meant that over the years the estate had tended to receive bad press, with an exaggerated picture of crime levels on the estate. This exaggeration had been proven when a local policewoman carried out an analysis of crime levels, and found that the estate generally had lower crime levels than the rest of the town. The former secretary had sent reports of fundraising and charity work to the newspaper, but it had not chosen to print this. The situation was, however, considered to have changed somewhat after residents sent a letter to the newspaper explaining that they thought that they had been treated unfairly. In addition to bad press, local organisations and the nearby school had refused to join with the residents in fundraising events. Mrs Colling believed that they had generally *"missed out"* and received a lower level of service, including transport provision:

"I think that's why, you know, we do, you know, probably one of the reasons why we lost the bus route. I don't know. I mean a lot of people do still think and feel that that

stigma's still there"

(Mrs Colling, Secretary of Residents' Association)

Due to the limited links between the towns, she explained that in order to reach the local hospital it was necessary to travel from the estate into the town and catch a bus which ran once very hour to the nearby town, and then to catch another bus from the town centre to the hospital. Due to this travelling time, and the time spent waiting for the links between buses, it could take five hours to travel a distance of about ten miles. This meant that those people who did not own, or have use of, a car often had to use taxis. According to the Liberal Democrat councillor, Councillor Daniels, this was,

"...an example of how the poor enjoy a worse standard of living, as the services they buy are far more expensive than those who are better off".

(Councillor Daniels, Ruralboro)

However Councillor Bard, who was a Labour councillor and also a bus driver, commented,

"They all came from London where they just stood beside the road and a bus came along"

(Councillor Bard, Ruralboro)

In the past, a dedicated bus route had run from the town to the hospital, and had included the Partridge Estate, but due to a lack of take up this route was cut. In addition, a commercial minibus route had run from the Partridge Estate, through two other estates, and then across the town. The operator suggested that this route was no longer commercially viable, and the route had therefore been halved during the previous summer so that it still included one of the other estates but did not serve the

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Partridge Estate. The County Transport Officer explained how, due to the notice that the operator had to give of the proposed cut, he had six weeks in which to make a decision. There was not time to consult locally before the cut was made.

Mrs Colling, the Secretary of the Residents' Association, referred to strange behaviour by the operator in the months preceding the time that the service was cut. Although the route did not appear to be oversubscribed, about four months prior to the cut in the service, the operator had increased the service from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was not a higher take up. Mrs Colling was concerned that this had happened in order that the service ran at a loss, and that therefore when the operator cut the service it would seem to be justified:

"I mean we said we think it was done deliberately. 'Cause obviously it ran at a loss then, 'cause it wasn't needed at all, you know. But they obviously denied that, and we never got a really good reason as to why they did it. I think it's just crazy, absolutely crazy, you know. "
(Mrs Colling, Secretary of Residents' Association)

She further explained the impact that the cut to the bus had on the residents:

"It's particularly very difficult for the elderly, 'cause they have to go down into town to get their pension, go to the doctors, and do their bit of shopping also. And quite often during the day there's sometimes, there's a two hour gap between the bus taking them down and the bus coming back. So, you know, they could be waiting down there in the cold and wet for quite a long time"
(Mrs Colling, Secretary of the Residents' Association)

The residents were informed of the cut about a month before it was implemented, and a local Councillor had tried to contact the Borough Council. He suggested at

interview that his role was a lobbying one: *"knowing all the sensitive points"*. However, he was not sure who he should contact (the transport department or community services), and the Borough Engineer commented at interview that since the Councillor had contacted the wrong department little had been done. Two Borough Councillors had also placed a request for financial support for the bus route through the Borough's Policy and Resources committee, but the request had been refused. The Liberal Democrat councillor considered that this was firstly due to the tight financial constraints within the Council, and secondly due to the fact that public transport was *"not an issue"* with Conservative councillors.

Councillor Daniels, the Liberal Democrat councillor responsible for the ward, said that he had managed to 'swing ' a two and a half hourly service. In effect, in the peak period, the County modified a minibus contract to incorporate some journeys, and also extended a rural route to provide four shopping journeys a day, a service that had recently been extended through the Rural Bus Grant. According to the County Transport Officer this was, however, a minimal service, and, *"the locals are not happy with it "*. The residents wanted at least one bus an hour, and particularly wanted a bus to run in the mornings for schoolchildren and for those who needed to travel to work. In addition, the new routes were confusing for residents since each route ran in different parts of the estate.

Mrs Colling, the secretary of the Residents' Association, had been involved for over 23 years with various projects on the Partridge estate, had run a play group and a youth group and currently ran a women's group. She said that since she had *'been involved'* for so long she had come to know the Councillors, mainly through various meetings and events. However, she said that she had not attended any council run consultation events, and tended to contact councillors rather than officers. Apart from the local councillor and a representative from the local Church, all of the committee members of the Residents' Association were women aged from their late forties to

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seventies. Together with about twelve others from the Residents' Association, she organised a public meeting in the local hall, advertising it though putting leaflets through doors and putting posters up. About 150 people attended the public meeting, including mothers of young children, older people, those who worked in nearby towns, and those who worked locally. Mrs Colling commented that at the Residents' Association AGM they were usually *"lucky to get a dozen people there"*. She considered that the large number of people who attended the public meeting was due to the fact that,

"...it was because they were gonna lose, you know, something that obviously is well used and very much needed".
(Mrs Colling, Secretary, Residents Association)

In attendance were the Town and District Councillors from each party, and the County Transport Officer. The bus operator had been invited but did not attend. Mrs Colling had also asked the local paper to send a reporter. However, although they had said that they would, none attended. The local paper suggested instead that she wrote a report, and, although she phoned them afterwards, there was only a very small write up in the paper. The County Transport Officer explained how the meeting proceeded:

"So we went through all the ins and outs and they were quite reasonable about it. But they were trying to make their case, and the outcome of that... I suppose it was sort of a Resident's Association becoming a lobby group"
(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

However, Mrs Colling commented that the meeting had not gone smoothly:

"...a couple of residents got really really upset, you know, really voices raised you

know, and one or two of them had to be calmed down, really very cross".

(Mrs Colling, Secretary of Residents' Association)

They wanted to know why their bus route had been cut rather than other bus routes:

"It was just, it just seemed very unfair at the time...why they should pick us out of all the other routes in the area, when it was quite well supported, you know."

(Mrs Colling, Secretary of Residents' Association)

After the public meeting, Mrs Colling raised a petition with about 400 names on it and sent copies to both Ruralboro and Countyboro. However, both of these were passed on to the County Transport Officer for a reply:

"So I ended up having done the original decision on the service, then attended the public meeting. They decided to petition those authorities, and both the petitions come back to me. So there's one person, if you like, who's doing it all, and writing all the letters to everyone else"

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

He explained that now the *"official view"* was that they would look at the budget in the following year to see if it was possible to do anything more. *"In reality"*, however, this would be unlikely, since there were additional areas where commercial services were due to be withdrawn. He explained that this was since fuel costs as well as driver wages had risen. Asked if 'political pressure' would make any difference as to whether the bus service to the Partridge Estate would be improved, he replied:

"In the Partridge Estate, if we'd done nothing that would have been a real political issue. Now that might be one end of the spectrum. But if we'd provided everything

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they'd wanted, and tried to manage with it, it wouldn't then be seen as an issue. (District councillors) would think it's all very easy. So in a sense, we try to do the minimum we think is just as well. We try and, try and leave an issue there somehow. I mean it's difficult to explain that..."

(County Transport Officer, Countyboro)

Mrs Colling noted, however, that although a nearby estate that contained larger numbers of older people had also been threatened with cuts at the same time, the route was not cut. When that estate had been threatened, there had been *"such an outcry"*, and a large piece had been written on the front page of the local newspaper. A further example of an estate that had received bus services was a larger estate that had a high rating on a deprivation index. In this case, the operator had asked the County for a subsidy. The County had provided a grant to the operator for low floor buses, and, in turn, the operator reduced fares in order to gain higher usage. This had resulted in an 18% increase in passengers. The County Transport Officer explained how the decision to improve the services *"wasn't political, it was purely technical"* in that both the County Transport Officer and the operator had been to bus shows and had wanted to introduce the new low floor buses. He added that it was *"once the decisions had been taken and the deal is struck, then the political process takes over"*. Illustrating this, the Labour Councillor explained how the Town Council Mayor had his picture taken on the new bus.

This case study example reflects, in many ways, the issues emerging in the previous case study examples. These include the attitude of the bus operators and the behaviour of the County Transport Officer, who again used his 'professional judgment'. This case does, however also point to issues around the limited role of the District authority and marginalised estates.

The Taxibus

The second case study had arisen as a result of consultation that had been carried out as part of the social services locality planning in the Northern District of Countyboro and in Ruralboro. This had shown that young people wished to have transport out of the villages in the evening. As a result, the County Rural Transport Officer, with the support of the County Transport Officer, decided to bid for money from the Rural Development Commission (now known as the Countryside Agency). The bid defined the problem as follows:

"The lack of evening services is considered to be a serious deficiency to be rectified...One of the main demands is from young people. They form a group with little or no access to a car, but with a desire for independence with safety."
(Rural Challenge Bid: Evening Services in Rural Areas using Dial-A-Ride)

The bid was successful, and was carried out as part of a larger rural transport project, whereby a Community Development Worker was funded to develop community initiatives. Many of these were very successful in drawing together local people within different parishes, using what the Community Development Worker described as a *"cluster approach"*. This entailed working with parish councils and local groups to provide community transport. In total, 23 action groups were set up, and bids were made for Rural Challenge and Rural Transport Partnership funds. In the Ruralboro Local Transport Plan it was explained how communities had been involved:

"The consultation process engages the rural communities, encourages ownership of the issue and potential solutions and contributes to the County policy of making best use of / extending existing resources before developing new schemes"
(Ruralboro Local Transport Plan, 2001/2, p104).

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The generally successful nature of the work led to recognition in the Rural White Paper, and the County was awarded centre of excellence status for rural transport.

The project had started just after the Local Government Rating Act, 1997, which gave Parish Councils new powers and duties. However, the County Rural Transport Officer had already determined that Parish Councils might not wish to actively participate:

"...communication with Parish Councils was fairly weak. They either weren't interested, weren't capable...or there was a conscious decision it wasn't their duty."
(Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro)

Therefore, the officers decided to try and target local groups other than Parish Councils:

"(this was) to see if we could actually target groups that in theory we suspected the Parish Councils weren't representing...And I'm not being rude to Parish Councils, the amount of work they do. They're volunteers; their range of experience is limited"
(Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro)

At the same time, however, they wished to involve Parish Councils where possible, and therefore, according to the County Rural Transport Officer, part of the Community Development Worker's remit was to *"contact Parish Councils and get them empowered to work"*. Various initiatives were developed, but the key one was to provide a Taxibus for 12 to 16 year olds, taking them to cinemas, leisure centres and youth clubs, and then take them back to their own homes before pub closing hours, thus addressing security issues for parents.

A number of issues arose, however, in developing the initiative. The Rural Development Commission accepted the bid on the condition that it was open to everyone, and therefore this compromised the security aspects of the project. Secondly, Parish Councils were asked to respond if they were interested in the buses running through their villages, but although they were given three months to reply less than a third did. The letter sent out to Parish Councils, however, might give some indication as to the low response, since the wording seemed merely to be seeking approval for a planned scheme:

"The new service is to commence in April 1999 and the intention is to serve your Parish Council area. Outline timetables will be provided in the New Year, as they are developed. These are not yet fixed, so any points your Council may have would be welcomed".

(Letter to Parish Councils from County Transport Officer, Countyboro, 18 December, 1998)

The County Rural Transport Officer explained that the reason behind the lack of consultation before the initiative was decided upon was as a result of the tight timescale in the bidding process, and also due to the lack of staff available to carry out the consultation:

"At the same time as we were bidding. you're not going out to these Parishes to say, 'We're making a bid, we want your input.' You go out when you actually know you've been successful... Basically, you haven't got the manpower."
(Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro)

Thirdly, the officers wished to run a regular route outward from the villages but drop the young people back at their homes, and therefore thought that they would be able to run a Taxibus under taxi licensing. This had been mentioned as an option in a

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previous edition of Croner's Bus and Coach Operations where it was stated that,

"Some enlightened local Licensing Authorities were prepared to issue restricted hackney licences (prohibiting plying for hire or standing on ranks) to enable the operator to obtain a "Special Restricted PSV 0 Licence" from their Traffic Commissioner".
(Croner's Bus and Coach Operations, 13 July1998, p3)

However the Districts objected to this. For example one stated that,

"This Authority could not issue a taxi vehicle licence knowing that, that vehicle would not be used to ply for hire..."
(Licensing Supervisor Districtboro to County Rural Transport Officer, 2 March, 1999)

Similarly, the relevant officer from Ruralboro wrote,

"My first thoughts are that this Council strongly objects to the growth of taxi services operating under PSV legislation. This is seen as a threat to the licensed taxi trade".
(Letter from Car Park Manager, Ruralboro to County Rural Transport Officer, 1 March, 1999)

This meant that it was necessary for the officers to purchase a more expensive operator's licence.

Fourthly, the Taxibus service initially ran using Dial-a Ride vehicles. However, young people did not want to be seen using these:

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"One of the bright little persons down there said, 'I'm not getting on that. It's for old farts'. So we had a branding image. So that whole work flew out of the window."
(County Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro)

The service ran, but usage was very low. The vehicles seated eight people, and the officers had carried out cost calculations on four passengers. To do this, they had calculated the cost of four taxis, which was the alternative means of transport, against the cost of running the bus. They did not even achieve an average of four passengers an evening. After two years the project finished. On reflection, the officers considered that this was due to inflexibility. They found that the young people and others using the service did not necessarily want to return home by 11pm. For example, there were instances of where adults were going to the cinema and having to leave before the film ended in order to catch the Taxibus. In addition, young people did not wish to go to the same place each week, nor book a seat in advance. The local councillors had not been in favour of the scheme, and one of them had complained about the project to the local newspaper:

"...he didn't like it, 'cause I wrote about it to our local newspaper about it, saying you could use the money better than trundling this bus around. He didn't like it. But it was actually, seemed to be a waste of money..."
(Councillor Board, Ruralboro)

On reflection, the County Rural Transport Officer commented:

"So we were going in with a new bid, trying to bring something in. Not certain of the rules; not certain of what we were trying to do. The legislation didn't really help, and the costing side came out at more than we expected. And I think we'd agreed, I mean we'd loosely agreed, it's not worth doing something like this. It's probably, you're probably better off extending the bus service than trying to be creative"

(County Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro)

He went on to explain how deregulation and privatisation prevented effective service provision:

"We've got a 1985 Transport Act, and the basis of most of the current legislation on it's related to introduce competition, and we're actually trying to talk integration. And the two don't, in the bigger structure, they don't necessarily work very well together. And then you've got this on top where they're looking to say, stretch the boundaries, but as a Council we have to stretch boundaries and still be legal... We've found it sort of frustrating."

(County Rural Transport Officer, Countyboro).

Ruralboro: Summary of Case Study Examples

Overall, the findings from the case studies in Ruralboro reflect those in Londonboro and Townboro in that the services provided for the socially excluded did not address their expressed needs. In the first case study example, that of the Partridge Estate, the bus operator cut the route to an estate that had already been stigmatised over the years and excluded from the rest of the town. This cut to the service came after an increased frequency that the residents on the estate could not understand, since the bus service had previously been adequate. The residents organised a petition and a public meeting, but the operator did not restore the route to the estate. Against this background, the County did provide a minimal service, but this did not address residents' needs. The second case study example was somewhat different to the previous examples in that in this case, although the Taxibus was set up in response to requests from young people, it was largely driven through by council officers. This was in order to gain Challenge funding. However, the project was set up with a lack of support from Parishes, and resistance from the Districts. The Taxibus received a

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low take up since it did not address the needs of the young people, and was subsequently stopped.

Discussion

In common with the way in which the research was conducted in the previous research authorities, following the field research in Ruralboro there was an examination of the extent to which the emergent themes were developed, contradicted or confirmed. These themes were based around the following: the role of the transport providers and the local authority; the roles of officers and councillors, and the dynamics of decision-making. The development of each of these themes is outlined below.

Transport Providers and the Local Authority

While in Townboro, the larger bus operator was in a duopoly position with the smaller operator, in Ruralboro the larger operator had effectively secured a monopoly position. However, similar issues occurred in that, in the case of the Partridge Estate, the bus operator withdrew bus services to those who were 'socially excluded'. Moreover it did so with no consultation of the residents concerned, and with only the statutory six weeks notification to the local authority. As a result, the residents were only informed, but not consulted, a month before the bus was withdrawn. In this case, however, the situation was arguably more contentious than those in other cases since, prior to cutting the service, the bus operator had increased its frequency from every thirty minutes to every twenty minutes. According to the residents on the estate, this appeared to be with the aim of demonstrating that the bus service was not commercially viable.

In this case study, however, it should be noted that although there was no evidence of

the bus operator requesting a subsidy from the local authority, the local authority did provide a minimal, subsidised service.

Role of Officers

In common with the findings in both Londonboro and Townboro, there was evidence in Ruralboro of a transport officer acting as a gatekeeper to socially necessary services. However, whereas in the previous case studies it appeared that decisions were primarily taken on the basis of a cost benefit analysis, in the case of the Partridge Estate the decision was made on the basis of 'professional judgement'.

The findings from Ruralboro, in contrast to those in Townboro and Londonboro, did not, however, demonstrate the role of district transport officers as advocate for the socially excluded. This was since there was not a public transport officer position within Ruralboro. Similar issues did, however, arise in relation to the lack of coordination between departments. Transport issues seemed to be dealt with by both the transport and social exclusion departments, and the example of the outlying Partridge estate again points to the need for better coordination between land use and transport planning.

Although there was no evidence of district transport officers acting as advocates, the Taxibus example revealed evidence of where county level transport officers acted in what could be described as an 'entrepreneurial' way in promoting the concerns of the socially excluded. In this case, they strove to bring about improved transport provision for young people in rural areas, even though they faced considerable obstacles in doing so. These obstacles related to the requirements for the bid by the Rural Development Commission, the lack of interest by Parish Councils, the campaign against the new initiative by a local councillor, and the refusal of the districts to grant a taxi licence due to the perceived threat to the commercial interests

of existing taxi operators. In the end, however, the initiative was not successful, which the officers largely attributed to the lack of flexibility in the service and consequently its inability to address the needs of the young people.

Role of Councillors

In the case of the Partridge Estate, Councillor Daniels appeared to play a very similar role to that of Councillor Marchant in Londonboro, and Councillor Beeches in Townboro. He took part in a user group, which in this case was a residents' association, encouraged the residents to draw up a petition and to hold a public meeting, and also attempted to contact relevant people within the council on behalf of the residents. However, he did not seem to know who within the council to contact in order to influence decision-making. This might have been due to the lack of an obvious person such as a public transport officer in Ruralboro, or due to his lack of networking skills. In addition, in common with Councillor Beeches, he did not appear to have any influence with the local media.

In the findings from the previous two authorities, issues arose around the exclusion of the councillors from decision-making due to their position outside of the cabinet. However, in Ruralboro a new political management structure had not as yet been introduced and therefore this was not raised as an issue.

The Dynamics of the Decision-making Process

In common with the findings from Londonboro and Townboro, the case study examples in Ruralboro pointed to the way in which the socially excluded were prevented from having their needs met. The residents on the Partridge Estate were members of a recognised residents' association, and the young people had been consulted by the local authority. However, this merely appeared to have given them

the illusion of being able to change bus provision in the way that they wanted. In particular, a commercial rhetoric, and references to rules and procedures again outweighed the social arguments put forward by the residents. These social arguments were similar to those raised in previous case studies, and related to the need to access health facilities, shops and social networks. In addition, a lack of deliberative engagement by the larger bus operator was again evident, with a lack of willingness to consider the residents' wishes, and a lack of attendance at a public meeting.

The Partridge Estate example also further confirmed the existence of competing interests among other residents. Moreover, although the residents on the estate were, in common with the examples cited in previous chapters, similarly led by a community activist who had experience in promoting the requests of local residents, the interests of other groups of residents seemed to prevail. In the case of the Partridge Estate, this meant that while their bus service was cut, that of a nearby estate was not, and moreover, another, more celebrated, estate received improved bus provision. This draws attention to an issue that came across strongly in this case study example, which was the stigma attached to not just a group of people but to the whole of an estate, and the consequent implications of this for service provision.

The Taxibus example also raised issues related to the role of competing interests in that whilst the transport officers wished the service to be used only by young people, the Rural Development Commission insisted that the initiative was opened up to other groups of people. Thus, in common with the examples from the other authorities, there was, in effect, an implicit threat to the socially excluded due to the way in which the anticipated needs of other people were used to alter a service.

Conclusion

The investigation of two specific case study examples in the context of a rural authority has led to the further development of the four themes that emerged in the course of the earlier data collection and analysis. Firstly, similar issues emerged around the role of transport providers and their relationship to the local authority, confirming the powerful position of the bus operators in a district authority, and the relative inability of district councils to influence decision-making. However, in this case study authority the lack of a public transport officer meant that there was no key person who could effectively lobby the operators or the County Council on behalf of the local residents. This is a reminder that the relationship between the bus operators and the council should be viewed in the context of Ruralboro's Conservative political make-up and its tight reign on finances.

The exploration of the role of officers revealed that where officers take an entrepreneurial role on behalf of the socially excluded, context is again important. In the case of the Taxibus initiative, the County Transport Officers attempted to drive through a scheme which failed, at least partly due to the constraints placed upon it by the bidding process, but also because of a lack of cooperation from the districts. This should be seen within the context of a district authority that had pockets of innovation but lacked authority-wide mechanisms for consultation. In addition to this more proactive role of officers, the Partridge Estate example also confirmed the key role of officers as gatekeepers to socially necessary services, and developed this to show how professional judgment might be used to prevent services being provided.

Councillors again appeared as advocates, and as agents of direct democracy, and the Partridge Estate case study example showed again how they could work through user groups. Moreover, the need for Councillors to network effectively was confirmed.

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Since a cabinet system had not yet been introduced, there was no evidence to indicate how the potential roles of councillors as advocates for the socially excluded was affected by their exclusion from a Policy Unit.

Finally, the concept of nondecision-making was further developed, to show not just the dynamics between commercial versus social arguments, but also to indicate how an estate, as opposed to particular groups of people, might be stigmatised as non-deserving. The findings similarly highlighted the role of community activists in acting on behalf of local residents, but also pointed, in common with the findings from previous authorities, to the implicit and explicit threats of competing interests.

In Chapter Eight, the issues from this and the previous two chapters are analysed in more detail, in order to question why the situations described in this and the previous two chapters developed in the way that they did.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In the previous three chapters, it was shown that in each of the case study examples, the outcomes for the socially excluded were essentially negative, in that it either took a long time for bus routes to be diverted, or the result was unmet needs. However, there were variations in the type of cases, and in the extent to which needs were unmet.

Most cases related to situations where the bus provider had withdrawn services (the Circular Route, Melket Home, the Pelican Estate, and the Partridge Estate), and did not restore an equivalent service. However, another concerned a request made for a diversion of an existing route (the 321 bus route), and a further one related to a case where young people living in rural areas had requested bus provision in the evenings (the Taxibus example).

In terms of meeting needs, the case of the 321 route was arguably the most successful since residents on the Waterbridge Estate did eventually benefit from a bus diversion, albeit that this was after twelve years. In other cases, those of Melket Home and the Circular route, bus routes were restored in a way that addressed certain aspects of residents' requests. However, residents on the Partridge Estate and the Pelican Estate received a minimal service that did not go far in addressing their requests, and the

Taxibus initiative was withdrawn due to a lack of take-up since it did not address the needs of the young people concerned.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the dynamics underlying this picture of negativity. In addition, where appropriate, these dynamics are also used to explain the relatively minor variations that existed between the cases.

Three crucial dynamics are put forward as contributing toward what happened. The first of these is the unbalanced distribution of power between actors in the decision-making process, and the impact that this had on the roles of the various actors, and the interactions between them. The problem of the differential distribution of power, was, however, also compounded by the problematic attitudes and behaviours of key actors regarding social exclusion, and their lack of willingness to engage meaningfully with the socially excluded. Thirdly, all of the above dynamics did not happen in a vacuum, and these factors were themselves shaped by the lack of a supportive context, particularly in terms of the deregulatory framework and system of bus provision. Each of these dynamics are explained, in turn, below. A concluding section then draws together the key points from the preceding sections, and explains how in a deregulated bus system the dynamics of decision-making around bus provision were characterised by a commercial imperative and the use of non-decisionmaking.

Unbalanced Distribution of Power between Key Actors in the Decision-making Process

The outcomes of decision-making were influenced by what actors did, and the dynamics of the relationships between them. It was found, moreover, that the way that they interacted together was determined by their differing levels of ability to influence others who were also involved in decision-making around bus provision.

It was shown earlier in this thesis that the nature of decision-making around bus provision is complicated, and in Chapter Three, Figures 3.1 and 3.2 were used to show the possible difficulty that members of the public might have in trying to get their voices heard. The evidence from the case study examples has shown that, in practice, the situation was even more complicated than these diagrams suggested, owing to the dynamics of the relationships between the various parties, and their different levels of power. In Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 the diagrams are reproduced, with some adaptation to show the situations that arose in Londonboro, Townboro and Ruralboro.

In Figure 8.1, which illustrates the situation in Londonboro, there are thus separate boxes for Councillor Marchant and the Public Transport Officer, since these took slightly different approaches to assisting the socially excluded, as will be explained below. In addition, Mrs Dapper and Mrs Darwin are inserted inside the box marked 'Residents' Association', but in addition, other groups of residents are noted, including the LA 21 group, another residents' association, and existing passengers. In

Figure 8.2, which shows the situation in Townboro, separate boxes are again

provided for the Councillors and Borough Transport Officer, and as with the figure

for Londonboro, various groups of residents are identified. Thirdly, in Figure 8.3

there has been some adaptation to show the lack of a public transport officer in

Ruralboro, the existence of only one main bus operator, and the relevance to the

Taxibus initiative of parish councils and taxi drivers. Again, a distinction is drawn

between various groups of residents.

Figure 8.1   Londonboro: Requesting Changes to Bus Services
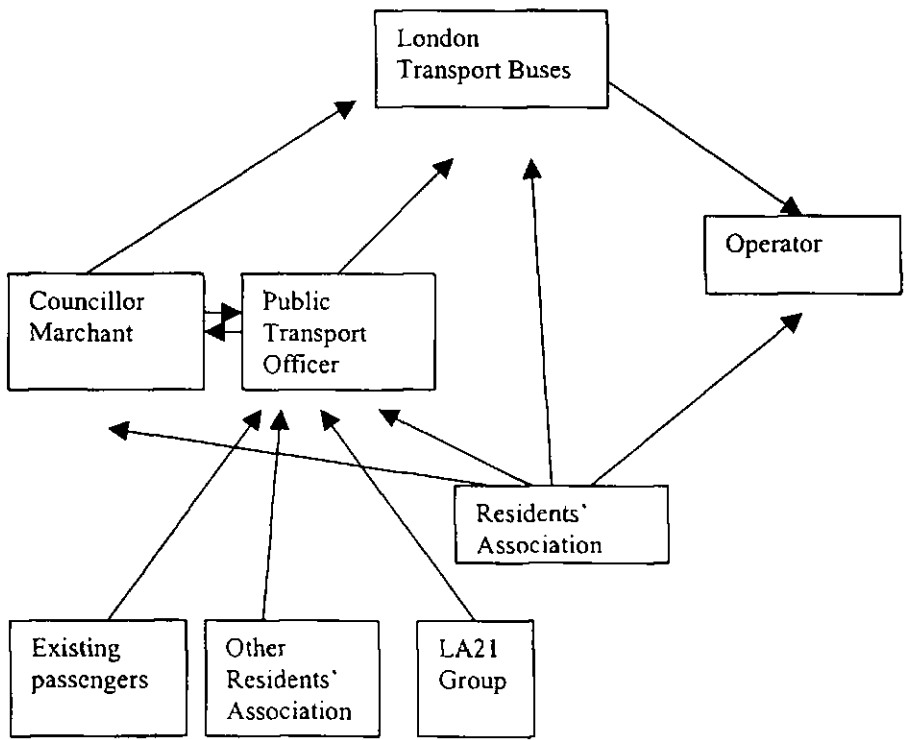
Figure 8.2   Townboro: Requesting Changes to Bus Services
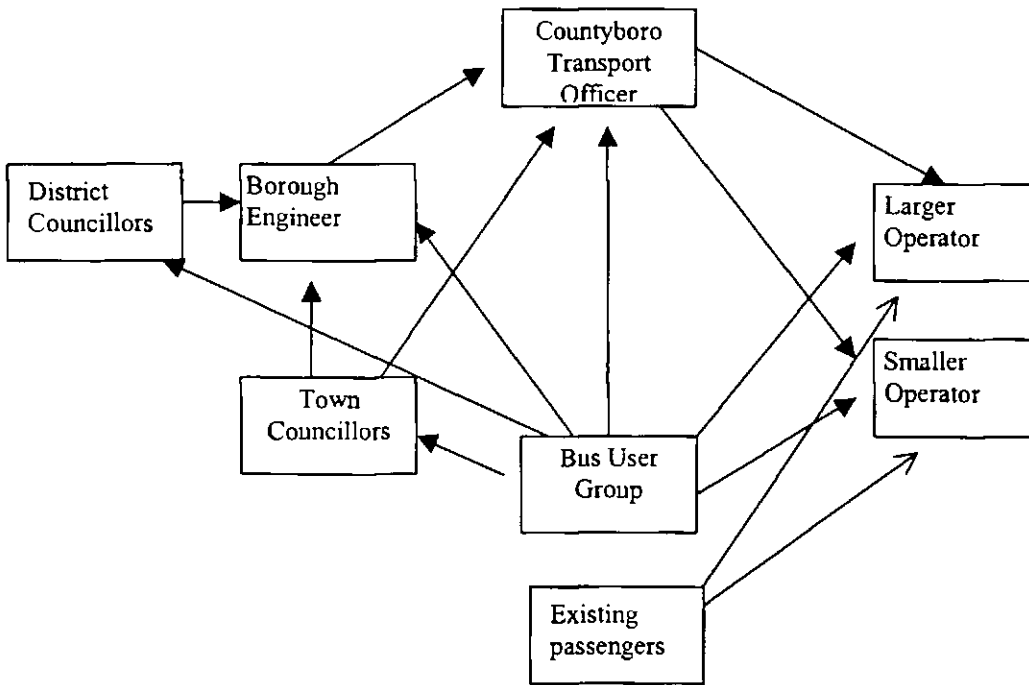
Figure 8.3   Ruralboro: Requesting Changes to Bus Services
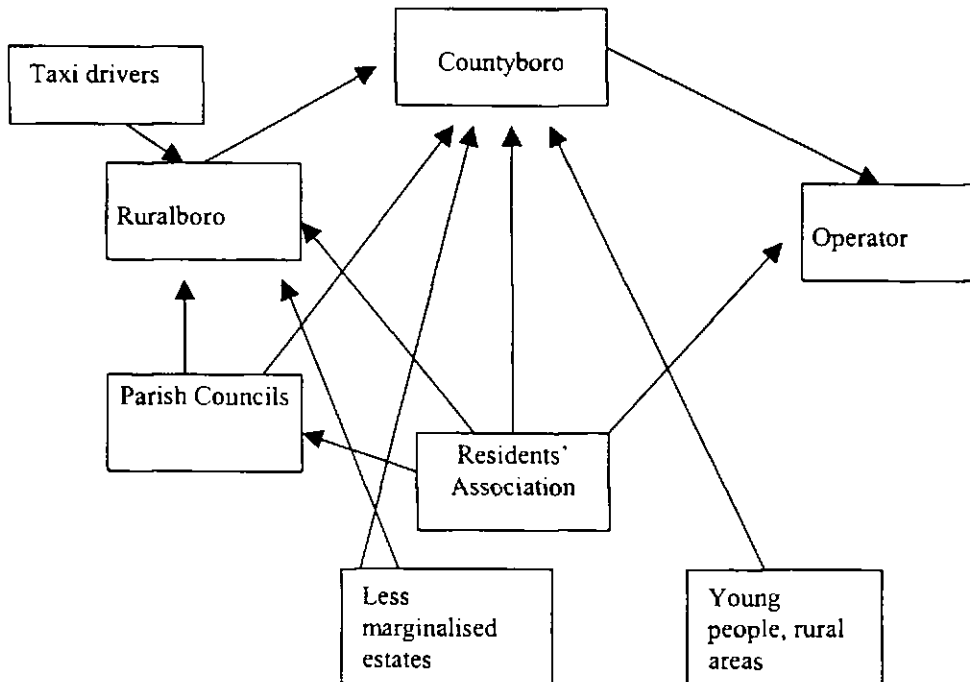
These figures do not, however, give a full picture of the way in which the key actors involved related to each other, and in particular the way in which the negative outcomes were at least partially the result of the way in which different levels of power were used to influence decision-making. Primarily, it was found that the bus providers were able to determine bus provision, irrespective of the attempts to influence them by both the local authority and the user groups, both of whom should have been in a position to act on behalf of the socially excluded.

Ability of the Local Authority to Influence Bus Provision

One of the relationships that was relevant to the decision-making process was, therefore, that between the local authority and the bus provider. Of key importance here was the inability of transport officers to influence the bus providers in respect of commercial provision of bus services, and conversely, the ability of the bus providers to influence the transport officers around the provision of socially necessary services. This can be best understood through viewing the relevant detail of the three cases.

The key proponent within Londonboro was the Public Transport Officer, who liaised with LTB and was able to determine which socially necessary services should be provided. He had built up a relationship with LTB when he was previously employed there. However, in the case study examples of the 321 route, this did not seem to have improved his ability to sway LTB decisions. This was notwithstanding his attempts to persuade LTB of the value of extending the 321 route by taking the relevant manager around the route by foot and by car.

In the three cases in Townboro, the Borough Engineer, who also acted as public transport officer, did seek to influence the operators to provide bus services. However, he seemed to have had relatively little influence on the final result in each case, this being most notably illustrated by the way in which both of the operators refused to provide a service to the Pelican Estate. If examining the Figures (8.1, 8.2) above, it might be expected that the Public Transport Officer in Londonboro would have had more influence over LTB than the Borough Transport officer would over the operators due to the more direct link between the Public Transport Officer in Londonboro and LTB, compared to that between the Borough officer and the operators, where the County was the transportation authority. Nevertheless, this did not appear to be the case in practice. In Ruralboro, meanwhile, there was no Public Transport Officer, and no available officers to seek to influence the operators.

This predominant position of the bus providers was further illustrated by the way in which they were able to influence the public transport officers to offer council money to subsidise socially necessary services. For example, the Public Transport Officer in Londonboro was prepared to grant the requested subsidy to LTB to provide an alternative route to the 321 bus. It is not clear why he wished to do this, but his relationship with LTB might arguably have been a factor. Similarly, the County Transport Officer also appeared to have considered providing a subsidy to the operator in Townboro after commercial routes were withdrawn, since a small subsidy was given to the operator to provide the route to the Melket Home, and a subsidised service was eventually provided for the Partridge Estate. Thus, the bus providers appear to have been a more powerful position than the public transport officers.

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Ability of the User Groups to Influence Bus Provision

The figures presented above also have relevance to the ability of the user groups to influence decision-making. One dimension that was found to impact upon this was their relationship with the local authority. Although all of the user groups examined were established by the local authority (Residents Associations in Londonboro and Ruralboro, and a Bus User Group in Townboro), they had no formal influence in the local authority's decision-making process. Consequently, it can be postulated that if there had been a more formal mechanism by which their concerns could be promoted, this would have raised the profile of these concerns both in the local authority and as a result, possibly, in the opinions of the bus providers (see also the discussion on the role of structures below).

The user groups attempted to influence the bus providers directly. However, the way in which they attempted to influence the providers was, in at least one of the cases, felt to have been too confrontational, with the result that the bus operators ignored the requests of the bus user group in Townboro. On the one hand, this might suggest that the user groups did not negotiate effectively. However, on the other hand, it could be argued that if the user groups wished to change a service, then the bus providers would necessarily see them as confrontational.

The way in which the user groups acted might also have been influenced by the way in which the bus providers responded. In each of the five cases relating to bus provision, their response was found to be characterised by the use of commercial

arguments, and reference to rules and procedures to justify not providing a service, or to ensure that services were only provided after a long, drawn out process. Residents were not treated as citizens or involved in a deliberative way. Furthermore, social arguments raised by the potential bus users excluded, such as those that related to visits to family and friends, access to local shops, or fear of crime, had limited impact. Scenarios in which social arguments might have prevailed would, arguably, have included those where the bus providers were either persuaded to alter bus routes because of public relations, or through some sort of enforcement by the local authority. However, as is shown above, the local authority did not appear to be in a powerful enough position to do this, and the bus providers did not appear to wish to adapt behaviour in order to improve public relations.

Problematic Attitudes and Behaviours

The concerns identified above in respect of the differential ability to influence which bus services would be provided was compounded by the problematic attitudes and behaviours of key actors toward social exclusion, and their lack of willingness to engage meaningfully with the socially excluded. These attitudes varied across the cases, as will be shown below. However, there were similarities in terms of the way in which negative attitudes impacted on the outcomes of the case study examples.

It was explained above that bus providers were in the most influential position in determining bus provision, and therefore, their attitudes and behaviours were crucial

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to the final outcomes. However, also relevant to the outcomes were the attitudes and behaviours of those within the local authority and the user groups.

Attitudes and Behaviour of the Bus Providers

In all cases, the bus providers took relatively little notice of the views of the local authority and the public. This was particularly evident in the lack of consultation in Townboro and Ruralboro before routes were withdrawn. However, in saying this, there was some evidence of a willingness to be involved in certain types of consultation, with some dialogue taking place between the bus providers and the local authorities, and some attempts by bus operators to conduct market research. Nevertheless, the case study examples reveal a general lack of engagement of both the authority and the public on the part of the bus providers. For example, the revision and withdrawal of routes in each case was carried out without consultation. Moreover, there was a lack of willingness shown by bus providers to attend public meetings called by user groups to discuss possible route changes. In addition, a lack of listening to members of the public was evident in that, in those cases where the restoration of routes did occur, they did not fully address residents' needs.

The bus providers also displayed problematic attitudes and behaviour in relation to social exclusion. It could be argued that neither LTB nor the operators should have felt responsible for addressing social exclusion. However, it is arguably their moral responsibility, if not useful for public relations, for them to take this on board. Yet, little attention appeared to be paid to such issues. The only cases where they did

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appear to have been influenced by members of the public seemed to be where people were either perceived to be 'deserving', in that they were either elderly or seeking work, or were more articulate and better able to express their needs. In acting in this way, the bus providers might have been second guessing what they thought the local authority would see as deserving. Whether this was the case or not is unclear, but the outcome was that some people received services whereas others did not, and this did not appear to be based simply on apparent need.

The aim of the study was to examine cases where the 'socially excluded' had received requested changes to bus services, or in other words where people were at risk of exclusion as a result of being on a low income, through geographical isolation, or a lack of mobility. Therefore, the study did not include examples of where non 'socially excluded' residents requested changes. As a result, notwithstanding the above observations, it is not possible to say whether the bus providers behaved any differently with those who were not socially excluded.

Attitudes and Behaviour of the Local Authority

In examining the attitudes and behaviour of the local authority, attention is paid firstly to that of officers, and secondly to councillors, since there were differences between how each of these engaged with the socially excluded.

In all of the case studies, officers seemed to be in favour of engagement with the socially excluded. This can be illustrated by their attempts to consult different

of the public and their involvement in user groups. The most obvious case of this was

the attempt by officers to address the requests of young people in the Taxibus case

study example. However, the way in which consultation was carried out by transport

officers was affected by the context within which they were working, and the general

attitude within the authority toward consultation (see, also, further below). In each

authority, there were weaknesses in the nature and scope of public consultation, in

terms of both their lack of 'deliberative engagement', and also the extent to which

user groups were involved in the decision-making process.

With regard to social exclusion, the attitudes of officers varied. Thus, those working

in Social Exclusion Units obviously saw the addressing of this as part of their remit.

In contrast, the attitudes of those working in Transport Departments were more

variable.

While transport officers at an operational level appeared to take the issue of social

exclusion seriously, this was less evident for Senior Engineers. More generally,

although each authority dealt with social exclusion somewhat differently, similar

issues arose with regard to resistance within the authorities. In both Londonboro and

Townboro, social exclusion had received increased attention over recent years in

response to the Labour Government's new agenda, but some resistance was noted

from other departments to a broadening remit around social exclusion. In Ruralboro,

on the other hand, there was a more notable lack of priority attached to social

exclusion issues, and resistance was evident from various parts of the authority,

related to the constraints on finance. The attitudes toward social exclusion were

therefore not consistent within the authorities. One possible explanation for this might have been the fact that each of the authorities had relatively affluent populations, at least according to indices of deprivation. Nevertheless, there were, in each of the authorities, recognised pockets of poverty.

Councillors operated in different ways, but those working on behalf of the socially excluded took an advocacy role, and also directly engaged with local residents. Their attitude toward both consultation and social exclusion was to proactively seek to address unmet needs. However, each of the councillors who became actively involved in trying to work with, and on behalf, of the residents were opposition councillors, irrespective of which party they belonged to. This may have been coincidental. However, another interpretation is that councillors in opposition are more likely to be proactive on behalf of the socially excluded than those who are not, since they wish to appear proactive in order to achieve greater numbers of votes in the next election. If this is the case, then the councillors might arguably have been using these concerns to raise their profile. There was no evidence, as such, to either prove or disprove this, although, from the perspective of the residents concerned, in each of the cases outlined above, the view seemed to be that the Councillors were motivated by their desire to help, and not by party political reasons or reasons of self-interest. Moreover, interviews with the Councillors concerned did suggest a genuine desire to promote the needs of those residents who had been marginalised.

Although the majority of Councillors therefore acted as advocates for the socially excluded, as was noted above, not all Councillors did proactively campaign on their

behalf, and in Ruralboro, although there was evidence of Councillors actively engaging with residents on the Partridge Estate, others were against the introduction of the Taxibus initiative. A proviso ought, however, to be added here, and this is that the Taxibus did not appear to be the best means to address the needs of the young people concerned, as the officers involved in the initiative recognised in hindsight.

Attitudes and Behaviour of User Groups

Irrespective of whether they were a Residents' Association or a bus user group, each of the user groups proactively sought to make their voice heard, and engage in council decision-making in areas where they had immediate concerns. This action was assisted by the role that was taken, in each case, by a community activist. Thus, the community activist took a leading role in, at least trying, to persuade those 'in power' to either restore or change bus routes. In respect of the activists concerned, one question that might be raised is related to their behaviour and motivations, and whether they were more obsessed by the cause that they were trying to promote, than by addressing the needs of the socially excluded. To some extent, it arguably does not matter if they were obsessed by a particular cause, since this motivated them to persist against what must have seemed like insuperable odds. At the same time, however, interviews with these people in each case suggested that they were quite genuinely attempting to persuade those in power of the needs of the people who they were representing, and therefore of the importance of responding to their requests.

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The effectiveness of the user groups in being able to achieve the requests of the socially excluded was, however, limited, and the tactics that user groups employed, such as petitions and public meetings, did not appear to be adequately persuasive. The most effective tactic appeared to be the use of a councillor to act on their behalf, but, councillors' ability to act as advocates varied. In respect of social exclusion, moreover, the extent to which all of the socially excluded were represented by the groups was under question, with the requests of the elderly apparently taking precedence over other groups.

In addition to the limited ability of the user groups, the socially excluded also faced competition from other members of the public, who wanted different outcomes, and it appeared easier to get needs met if the request did not impinge on the needs of others. Thus, some wealthy residents became actively organised to protest against a bus running along their street, and other groups of residents wanted a different route. In addition, the socially excluded faced implicit competition from the conflicting demands that the bus providers anticipated from other passengers. Those members of the public who effectively competed with the socially excluded therefore included some who might be considered to be socially excluded, but also encompassed wealthier residents who were presumably not.

Lack of a Supportive Context

The differential power relationships between those involved in decision-making, and their attitudes toward engaging with the socially excluded, were themselves shaped

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How to Login to...

THE COMPUTER NETWORK

Your **IT User ID** is printed on the back of your student card, consisting of your initials and three or more digits, e.g. SO807

Your **Initial Password** is set to: Mdx+Student Number+Date of Birth

For example if your:
Student Number = M00123456
Date of Birth = 27/06/89

Then your Password will be:
MdxM00123456270689

You will be forced to change your password at first login. Your old password will be as above.

Your new password MUST include the following:

- at least 8 characters
- at least one letter in UPPERCASE
- at least one letter in lowercase
- at least one number

e.g. Sunsh1ne or Monday63

UNIVERSITY EMAIL

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Access your email at:
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User ID and password will be the same as that used for the computer network.

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by the lack of a supportive context in relation to the processes and structures of decision-making. As will be shown below, these broader contextual factors had a less direct, but nevertheless significant, influence on the outcomes of decision-making.

The variations between the processes and structures in each of the authorities can be seen in Table 8.1, which summarises the key findings from the case studies. The way in which these impacted on the case study outcomes is more carefully discussed in the separate sections below, which outline, in turn, the way in which consultation was dealt with, the way in which the interaction between social exclusion and bus provision was addressed, and the structures relating to the deregulatory framework and system of bus provision.

In the political situation of local government, it might have been expected that other issues such as political control would be an important factor. However, this did not appear to have been the case. As Table 8.1 shows, at the time of interview, Londonboro was run by both the Conservatives and Labour / Liberal Democrats over a period of twelve years, Townboro was Labour run. and had been for a large number of years, while Ruralboro was, and had historically been, Conservative run. Nevertheless, in all of the case study examples. the needs of the socially excluded were either not met. or only met after a long period of time.

A further issue that relates to the political context is the introduction of new political management structures. The use of a cabinet system only happened after the case study examples had taken place. but should be mentioned since it was considered by

interviewees to have a potentially negative impact on the ability of Councillors to act as advocates for the socially excluded. As explained in Chapter Three, the impetus for modernising local authorities through new political management structures came about, at least partly, through the desire to decrease the professional power of officers, and conversely to centralise decision-making and increase the power of key Councillors. In both Londonboro and Townboro, a cabinet system had been introduced, but was causing concern to opposition councillors who, although having had a limited amount of influence in the previous system, felt that this lack of influence was being exacerbated by the new system, particularly because their exclusion from the Policy Unit meant that they did not have access to higher levels of decision-making.[1] Nevertheless, since the new structures had not been introduced before or during the case study examples took place, this was not a factor that can have contributed toward the negative outcomes.

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[1] Their concerns were partly based on a lack of access to information, and this might have been due to the way in which the new structures were introduced. Moreover, in Ruralboro, the cabinet system had not yet been introduced and therefore the differential role of councillors in the new system had not yet been experienced. Thus, the suggestion that Councillors' position in the council might impact upon their ability to act as advocates for the socially excluded is a tentative one.

Table 8.1 Case Study Examples and Local Authority Contexts

Context	Londonboro	Townboro	Ruralboro
Bus provision	LTB tendered to operators. 'Socially necessary' services subsidised by the local authority.	Countyboro – transportation authority, making specifications for commercial contracts. Townboro –planning authority, lobbying role. Countyboro cost/benefit analysis. Two bus operators: larger had 60% of mileage. Cooperation but effective duopoly.	Countyboro – transportation authority, making specifications for commercial contracts. Ruralboro- planning authority. Countyboro cost/benefit analysis for socially necessary services. One main bus operator.
Type of authority	Greater London Borough. Relatively affluent, pockets of deprivation	District borough – an 'old new town'. Relatively affluent, pockets of deprivation.	District borough covering rural area Relatively affluent, pockets of deprivation.
Political background	Conservative history. Currently Labour and Liberal Democrat Moving to cabinet system.	Strong Labour control. County council under Conservative control. Moving toward cabinet system.	Conservative control, conservative history. County council under Conservative control. Considering move toward a cabinet system.
Public transport	Public transport officer within Environment Department	Public transport officer within Environment Department.	Not clear. Divided between transport and community services departments
Social exclusion	New social exclusion unit.	Community services.	Community services.
Transport and social exclusion	Relationship weak between departments	Some connections but also departmentalism.	Some links between departments, but community services to some extent marginalised within authority.
Public consultation	In theory strong; in practice weak.	Tended to be informative. Evidence of deliberative initiatives, for example around community safety and community planning.	Departmental. Community Services strong on consultation.
Public consultation on transport	Generally limited to transport strategy. Transport Liaison Panel for transport providers, officers, councillors.	Transport forum for transport providers, county and district officers and councillors, user groups, and local business.	Weak. Tended to rely on the county.
User groups	Residents associations. Local Agenda 21. Area forums (recent).	Six area-based Joint Local Committees. Bus user group –now felt marginalised and dominated by older people.	Residents associations. Transport forum discredited

Case Studies	321 Londonboro	Melket Townboro	Circular Townboro	Pelican Townboro	Partridge Ruralboro	Taxibus Ruralboro
Type of request	Diversion of bus route around a council estate	Restore link between home and hospital following cuts by larger operator.	Restore links between two neighbourhoods and to supermarket and hospital after cuts by larger operator.	Restore route cut by larger operator and county or extend route run by smaller operator.	Restore services to estate after cuts made by operator.	Introduce bus services to rural villages
Outcome	After 12 yrs, bus route was diverted	Route diverted to include the home. Service less frequent than formerly.	Took two years to restore link to hospital. Other links not restored.	Route not restored nor extended. Fairly infrequent route in off peak times.	Residents left with minimal service	Unsuccessful attempt to introduce taxibus service for young people
Role of bus provider	LTB reluctant to divert route due to technical points, cost, other passengers.	Operator diverted commercial route after subsidy. County diverted subsidised route on Sundays.	Operator reluctant but restored some commercial links that allowed nurses to access work.	Operator would not restore / extend routes unless received subsidy.	Larger operator increased then cut service. Countyboro provided a minimal service.	Tried to secure funds and work with districts and parishes. Lack of effective support from them.
Role of public transport officer	Advocate, broker, and gatekeeper. Previously worked for LTB.	Advocate. Lobbied county and operator	Advocate.	Advocate. Attended bus user group meetings and lobbied county and operators.	No public transport officer.	Lack of support from Ruralboro; County officers lacked support.
Role of councillor(s)	Lack of action from first three. Councillor advocate and encouraged residents.	Councillor advocate and in bus user group.	Councillor advocate and in bus user group.	Councillor advocate and in bus user group.	Councillor advocate and in residents association.	Councillor opposed scheme. No evidence of councillor support.
Role of user groups involved	Res Assn. Community activist. Public meeting. Petition.	Bus user group. Community activist. Public meeting.	Bus user group. Community activist. Public meetings. JLC meetings.	Bus user group. Community activist. Public meetings. JLC meetings.	Res Assn. Community activist. Used petition and public meeting.	None- survey of young people
Competing interests	LA21 group. Other Res assn. Existing passengers.		Other members of user group.	Inconvenience to other passengers.	Other estates.	Anticipated concerns of parents.

Consultation

Across the authorities there were some differences in how consultation was dealt with. In general terms, Londonboro appeared to be strongest in this respect, while Townboro and Ruralboro showed very little evidence of corporate consultation. However, as the second part of Table 8.1 shows, weaknesses appeared in each of the case study examples, which suggest a limited ability in each authority to take forward the views of the socially excluded.

Of more direct relevance to the case study examples were, however, the way in which the processes around consultation were carried out by both officers and councillors. In respect of officers, in each of the authorities, consultation was ineffective throughout the whole process. For example, there was an apparent lack of initial understanding of needs, most clearly seen in the inaccurate interpretation of what was needed by young people in rural areas in Ruralboro. There were also difficulties in translating these needs. For example, user groups were not kept fully informed of developments in relation to the requests that they had made. In addition, the final outcomes did not satisfactorily address the expressed needs.

In contrast, the mechanisms that councillors used appeared to be more successful. These included working with user groups and employing networking skills to act as advocates. However, the ability to successfully work with user groups was affected by the actual status of the user groups themselves. Where residents' associations were used, there seemed to be a greater ability to put forward concerns. However, in Townboro, where a bus user group was employed, this appeared to be less

successful, since it was marginalised in the decision-making process, with no real authority, yet at the same time no independent voice.

The use of networking was most strongly evident in Councillor Marchant's behaviour regarding the 321 bus route, and her persistent 'badgering' of both LTB and the Public Transport Officer. The Councillors in both Townboro and Ruralboro appeared, however, to be far less effective since they did not appear to know the relevant pressure points. Thus, they were unable to work out who they should try to influence, and how.

Bus Provision and Social Exclusion

Attitudes toward social exclusion, and especially those of people working in Transport Departments, were influenced by the way in which social exclusion and bus provision were dealt with within the council. In both Londonboro and Townboro the responsibility for bus provision and social exclusion was held by two different departments, while in Ruralboro the Community Services department took responsibility for the social exclusion aspects of public transport. Other aspects of public transport were dealt with by the Transport Department. Irrespective of these differences between the authorities, in each authority the issues of public transport and social exclusion tended to be dealt with separately.

This separation, and the resulting lack of co-ordination between the departments, appeared to have had some influence on the ability of officers to translate the views of the socially excluded in respect of bus provision. Thus, transport engineers

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referred to how social exclusion was more a matter for social or community services, and did not consequently adequately take on board the idea that social exclusion should be addressed as part of bus provision.

Further issues also emerged around the more longstanding issue of a lack of co-ordination between bus provision and land use planning, and in particular the provision of bus services to outlying estates. The provision of a bus service to the Waterbridge Estate, the Pelican Estate and the Partridge Estate would presumably not have been as problematic, were it not for the planning policies that had been previously adopted, which meant that certain estates were effectively marginalised on the edge of the urban areas.[1]

The separation of social exclusion from bus provision, and bus provision from land use planning, reflected a more general tendency within the authorities toward departmentalism, and the tendency to pigeon-hole responsibilities. One illustration of this was the fact that in the cases concerned, none of the transport officers mentioned consideration of special needs transport that would be targeted at those requesting changes to bus routes. Arguably, this lack of consideration might have been because the routes desired included both hospitals, shopping facilities and visits to friends and family and, in addition, those requesting the changes generally included a variety of people with presumably diverse needs. Thus, it would have been difficult to provide transport from, for example, solely a health budget, a social services budget, or a community and leisure budget, and by its nature would have

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[1] Although admittedly, the planning of the Partridge Estate was carried out in a much earlier time period, and the introduction of PG13 (recent planning guidance) might have gone some way toward addressing this situation.

meant excluding some residents from provision. However, some consideration of 'joined-up' alternatives, which might have addressed the needs of the socially excluded, might have been expected, if departments were more used to working together to solve issues.

The Deregulatory Framework and the System of Bus Provision

The deregulation of bus provision meant that in each of the case study authorities, the bus providers were able to unilaterally determine the nature of bus provision. This was irrespective of the differences between the cases, as shown in Table 8.1, such that in Londonboro commercial bus provision was determined by LTB, while in the two districts, it was by the bus operators themselves. In the case study examples, this dominant position meant that it was possible for bus operators to withdraw services, or refuse to provide adequate adjustments to existing services.

This power to withdraw services was further compounded by the restrictions on cross-subsidy between routes. In each of the cases, subject to the balance between profits on the profitable parts of the route and the loss made through diverting it, the use of cross-subsidy might have enabled the bus diversions to have taken place. As a result of the restrictions, even if they wanted to cross-subsidise routes, this was generally not a viable option.

In the deregulated system of bus provision, bus providers were, however, able to seek a subsidy from the local authority. This was since the local authority (which in the case of the districts was a county-level decision) was, in theory, able to ensure

that a subsidised service existed where the service was deemed to be 'socially necessary'. It is, then, not surprising that a subsidy was requested, in the case studies, since it was in their interests to gain extra money from the authority, where possible. At the same time, however, it is interesting to note that although there were differences in each case study, where a subsidy was requested, the bus providers waited until there was a public outcry and until the local authority was under some pressure. Thus, bus providers appeared to be 'playing the system'.

The way in which the bus providers 'played the system' reinforces the point made in the earlier section which explained how they were in a powerful position in relation to both the local authority and the members of the public. Subsidy could, in theory, be seen as an incentive to allow the bus provider to collude with potential users to increase the level of service. Instead, it seems that in practice providers did on occasion use the request for subsidy as a means to deter the Council from backing the socially excluded users' requests. Thus, in the case of the 321 route, a subsidy was requested in order to provide an alternative route that would not address the needs of the residents on the Waterbridge Estate.

Notwithstanding the privileged position of the bus providers in each case, there were some differences between the situation in Londonboro and in the districts. In Londonboro, LTB had a duty to consult the local authority on changes to bus provision, whereas this was not the same for the districts, where the operators were able to provide whichever services that they deemed to be commercially necessary. This might, then, help to explain why the residents requesting the 321 route did, eventually, obtain the service that they desired.

In relation to the issue of competition, in each of the cases the bus providers were in a slightly different position in relation to the local authority, so that, for example, the bus operators in Townboro were in a duopoly position, whereas the larger operator in Ruralboro was effectively in a monopoly position. This did appear to have some implications for what happened in the different authorities. Thus, it was noticeable that in Ruralboro, where the operator was in a monopoly position, there was no restoration of service, which suggests that this situation was potentially worse for the socially excluded than in Townboro where the operators were in a duopoly position, or in Londonboro where LTB determined commercial provision. However, this observation is put forward tentatively, and might usefully be investigated through further research.

Further differences relate to the position of transport officer within the system. In the context of a deregulated and privatised bus system, transport officers had almost no influence on the provision of commercial services. Therefore, the most influential position for transport officers in terms of bus provision was held by those who determined whether socially necessary bus services should be provided. In Londonboro, this role fell to the Public Transport Officer, and in the districts to the County Transport Officer. In this role, officers were in a position to be able to either allow services to be provided for the socially excluded, or to prevent them from being provided. Cost benefit analysis, or 'professional judgement' was used to do this. This meant that, compared to the transport officers in the districts, they were in a relatively powerful position. District level officers were able to 'lobby' councillors and officers within the County and the bus operators, but the only (indirect) influence

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that they had was through paying the operators for concessionary fares in advance, and paying the County a contribution toward the cost of socially necessary services. Although district officers might have wished to assist the socially excluded to achieve desired outcomes, in the context of the existing structures their limited power meant that they had limited ability, in practice, to influence decisions on bus provision.

Conclusion: the Relevance of Nondecision-making

In summary, there were negative outcomes in each case study example in that the requests of the socially excluded for changes to bus provision were not adequately met. This chapter has built on the findings raised in the previous chapters to show that it was not merely the roles of the different actors involved that helped to determine these outcomes, but more specifically the nature of the relationships between them, and their attitudes and behaviours that were important, along with the broader processes and structures within which they operated. In combination, these factors acted to prevent the socially excluded from receiving the services that would address their needs. Moreover, in a situation of deregulated bus provision, the dynamics of decision-making around bus provision were characterised by a commercial imperative and the use of 'nondecision-making'.

The term 'nondecision-making' is a concept of power that encapsulates the way in which the socially excluded are prevented from having their needs met. Thus, it has been used in the past to explain how those in poverty can have the illusion of participatory power, but effectively be excluded from decision-making (Bachrach

and Baratz, 1970). In this chapter it was explained how the socially excluded appeared to be represented by various means within the local authority, and have a voice through participation in user groups, but were not able to influence decisions. This exclusion happened through the iteration of commercial arguments, and was reinforced by the processes and structures existing within a deregulated bus environment.

More generally, the chapter has also identified the problems existing in the attitudes and behaviour of the bus providers, councillors, officers and user groups toward the engagement of members of the public, and the socially excluded in particular. In doing this, it has also, however, drawn attention to weaknesses in the processes that surround them. The processes within local authorities in relation to consultation and social exclusion should have helped to ensure that social needs were addressed, but weaknesses in these meant that in effect they were of little help. A lack of co-ordination meant that it was difficult to serve marginalised estates, and work together to achieve solutions. More generally, alternative solutions appear not to have been considered due to departmentalism, thus leaving the bus providers in a privileged position in that they were able to pursue commercial ends with virtually no consideration for wider social responsibilities.

Finally, attention has been drawn to the need to re-examine the structures of decision-making. The current system of deregulated bus provision creates the opportunity for non-decisionmaking and enables bus providers to run the bus routes that they wish to, irrespective of the wishes of socially excluded members of the public and those within the local authority who try to address social needs.

Individually, most of the factors identified, except for the issue of deregulation, might not inhibit the delivery of transport needs for the socially excluded. If combined together, however, the analysis of these findings suggests that the factors identified are likely to inhibit the meeting of such needs in any similar situation.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has sought to shed light on the issue of social exclusion and bus transport provision, through showing what happens when the socially excluded request changes to bus services. In doing this, it addressed four key objectives: to examine how bus provision is relevant to social exclusion; to investigate the extent to which current decision-making processes promote the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making; to conduct case study research in three local authorities in order to examine examples of where the socially excluded requested changes to bus provision; and to identify the key factors that influenced whether, and the extent to which, these requested changes were met.

This concluding chapter draws together the research outcomes obtained in relation to these four objectives, and examines how the findings from the case study research move knowledge forward in relation to four key areas: the relationship between deregulated bus provision and social needs; the role of officers and social exclusion; the role of councillors as advocates for the socially excluded; and the dynamics of the decision-making process. It then reflects on the research process and the implications for future research. Chapter Ten considers the implications of these conclusions for both policy and practice.

Research Outcomes

The first objective, outlined at the outset of this research, was to highlight the relevance of bus provision to the issue of social exclusion. This objective was essentially addressed in Chapter Two, where it was demonstrated that bus provision is very relevant to social exclusion, and is an important factor for those on a low income, the elderly, those in excluded council housing estates, and those living in rural areas. As a result of the discussion around social exclusion, and the recognition that it is very difficult to define, a working definition of social exclusion was determined which takes into account issues relevant to bus provision. As such, social exclusion, as it relates to bus provision, was defined for the purposes of this thesis as the risk of lacking adequate transport provision due to a combination of factors such as low income, geographical isolation and mobility problems.

At the same time, however, it was shown that, in policy terms, there is a distinct lack of consensus on what is meant by the term 'social exclusion'. Government policy to address it seems to have focused on the need to integrate people into employment, at the expense of other aspects of social exclusion, and the needs of other groups of 'socially excluded' people for whom this might not be an appropriate response. Moreover, the initiatives undertaken by Government seem to have been influenced by discourses that divide people into those who are 'deserving' and those who are 'non-deserving'. As a result, less attention appears to have been paid to either the income or social integration aspects of social exclusion, or, until recently, to spatial exclusion, and in particular, the relationship between bus services and social

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exclusion.

Against this background of the growth of interest in the relationship between bus provision and social exclusion, attention was drawn to recent and relevant policy developments. These included the provision of additional funding for bus provision, the development of Quality Partnerships between local government and private sector bus operators, and the requirements for consultation within Local Transport Plans. Some potential problems emerged, however, in relation to the last two of these developments. Thus, concerns were raised about the likely effectiveness of Quality Partnerships in changing the behaviour of operators and hence in altering the power relationship between bus providers and local authorities in a way that would enable greater attention to be paid to the needs of the socially excluded. In addition, in relation to Local Transport Plans, doubts were cast on the extent to which meaningful consultation of the socially excluded has occurred.

These issues, both of which relate to decision-making, were taken forward in Chapter Three which provided a more general examination of the extent to which current processes promote the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making on bus provision. The chapter commenced with an exploration of the relationship between a privatised and deregulated bus system and the addressing of social needs, and also an examination of the way in which aspects of local authority decision-making structures and finance influence bus provision to those who are socially excluded. It then went on to critically evaluate the recent Government reforms aimed at enhancing public involvement. This second element was intended

to provide a more general insight into the way in which decision-making processes, and the roles of key actors within these, can raise problems with regard to addressing the concerns of those who are socially excluded.

In relation to the first of the above foci of interest, it was found that, in the context of the deregulation and privatisation on bus services, private operators have withdrawn services on commercial grounds, using certain tactics to obtain increased subsidies from local authorities. Of particular importance in this regard was the fact that the current system appeared to have had negative implications for service quality, particularly for those who could be defined as 'socially excluded'. In addition, the ability of local authorities to respond to the needs of the socially excluded appeared to be potentially further constrained by the complicated, and even unclear, divisions of responsibilities both between and within the different layers of local government, and by the availability of Central Government funding.

Nevertheless, the chapter did note that the Government had introduced reforms that might potentially lead to the better involvement of the socially excluded. Consequently, the chapter went on to critically evaluate the potential impact of both the Local Government Act 1999 and the Local Government Act 2000. This examination noted that the reforms offered some potential in terms of the more general involvement of members of the public in decision-making. However, a number of concerns were raised about their likely impact. These concerns centred around three broad issues.

First, in common with the discourse around New Public Management (NPM) and the more recent emphasis on local governance, there appeared to be some tension inherent within the reforms between emphasising the priority of the market and at the same time trying to involve the socially excluded in decision-making. Secondly, questions were raised about the prescribed and actual roles of officers and councillors within the reforms, and consequent doubts were raised about their ability to act as effective voice mechanisms for the socially excluded. In the case of officers, these doubts concerned the tension between their prescribed 'entrepreneurial role' and managerialist controls, which seem particularly evident in the increasing growth in the number of performance indicators to which officers are subjected. At the same time, however, issues were raised concerning the nature of their gatekeeping role in determining which 'socially necessary' services should be provided, and also whether the present commercialised environment would inhibit the willingness or ability of officers to voice the concerns of the socially excluded. In the case of councillors, concerns were raised around three issues: their ability to balance their role as advocates with their scrutiny or policy role within local government; the limited influence of those councillors who are effectively 'backbenchers' in the new system; and the ability of councillors to fulfil their traditional roles in representative democracy and at the same time to encourage direct democracy.

Thirdly, it was found that the reforms seem to assume an idealised process of decision-making. and do not deal adequately with what happens when there are differing levels of political resources and different interests among members of the public. In such circumstances. it seems possible that people who are already socially

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excluded might be further marginalised. Moreover, the reforms do not appear to be clear on how the socially excluded should be involved in decision-making, with some emphasis in the new reforms on the role of the public as citizens with rights, but also an implicit understanding that they should be treated as consumers.

The subsequent examination of the findings in three consecutive local authorities detailed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, largely confirmed the relevance of the above concerns. In particular, this was in terms of the relationship that exists between deregulated bus provision and social exclusion, the ambiguous nature of the role of officers as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded, and the role of councillors as advocates for such people. The findings also shed light on the dynamics of the decision-making processes around bus provision for the socially excluded, showing the dominance of a commercial rhetoric in how the transport providers interacted with the socially excluded, and the way in which the socially excluded were both directly and indirectly challenged by the competing interests of other members of the public.

In Chapter Eight, there was a more detailed analysis of the findings, in order to examine in more detail why the negative outcomes might have occurred, and also to seek to understand why there was some variation between the cases. In broad terms, it was found that there were three sets of dynamics that contributed towards the negative outcomes. Firstly, there was an unbalanced distribution of power between actors in the decision-making process. This had an impact on the roles of the various actors, and the interactions between them. Secondly, the attitudes and behaviours of

key actors regarding social exclusion were problematic, particularly in their lack of willingness to engage meaningfully with the socially excluded. Thirdly, there was a lack of supportive context, particularly in terms of the deregulated framework and system of bus provision.

With regard to the unequal distribution of power, it was found that the outcomes of decision-making were influenced by what actors did, and the dynamics of the relationships between them. It was found, moreover, that the way in which different people interacted together was determined by their different levels of ability to influence others who were also involved in decision-making around bus provision. Primarily, it was found that the bus providers were able to determine bus provision, irrespective of the attempts to influence them by both the local authority and the user groups who were both in a position to act on behalf of the socially excluded.

As regards the attitudes of the key actors, a generally negative picture emerged. In terms of bus providers, there was a general lack of engagement with the socially excluded. With regard to officers there were weaknesses that appeared to be at least partly due to broader authority attitudes. Among councillors there did appear to be a genuine desire to address the needs of the socially excluded, but this was not apparent in all cases. At the same time, concerns also appeared in terms of user groups, and in particular their willingness to represent all members of the socially excluded.

Finally, in relation to the broader processes and structures of decision-making, although the processes within local authorities in relation to consultation and social exclusion should have helped to ensure that social needs were addressed, weaknesses in these processes meant that in effect they were of little help. In particular, attention was drawn to the lack of understanding on the part of officers of the real issues of the socially excluded, and variations in the extent to which councillors were able to use networking skills and work well with user groups. In addition, the lack of co-ordination between the departments responsible for bus provision and social exclusion meant that these issues were not dealt with consistently. This meant that bus providers were able to pursue commercial ends with virtually no consideration of wider social responsibilities.

Meanwhile, in terms of the structures of decision-making, while the nature of political control was identified as a potentially relevant factor, the most important driver for decision-making appeared to be the deregulated framework and system of bus provision. Here, it was found that, irrespective of differences between the authorities, a deregulated bus system left bus providers with the ability to decide which services to provide, and the ability to apply for and win bus subsidy.

Individually, most of the factors identified, except for the issue of deregulation, might not have inhibited the delivery of transport needs for the socially excluded. In combination, however, these factors acted to prevent the socially excluded from receiving the services that would address their needs. Moreover, in a situation of deregulated bus provision, the dynamics of decision-making around bus provision

were characterised by a commercial imperative and the use of 'non-decisionmaking' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970).

In the following sections, it is shown how the findings that emerged in respect of relationships, attitudes, processes and structures move knowledge forward in four areas: with regard to the relationship between deregulated bus provision and social needs, in relation to the role of officers and social exclusion, regarding the role of councillors as advocates for the socially excluded, and concerning the dynamics of the decision-making process around bus provision and social exclusion.

The Relationship between Deregulated Bus Provision and Social Needs

The analysis of the findings from the case study examples tended to confirm many of the problematic issues raised in Chapter Three around the impact of deregulation on service quality, the powerful role of bus operators, and the limitations on the ability of local authorities to address the concerns of the socially excluded due to the complexity of local government structures, departmentalism, and finance.

In the case study examples, it was found that where there was a dispute about the level of service provision between operators and bus users, operators withdrew services at will, or did not provide services that were requested. Operators were willing to provide an unprofitable service if they were given a subsidy, but the local authority did not always have money available in their budget. This was irrespective of the fact that those who had requested a new, or restored service, were defined by

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those within the local authority as 'socially excluded'.

Against the background of this powerful role of private operators, the case study findings shed some new empirical light on the relationship between local authorities and bus operators. It was found in the case studies that the bus operators (and LTB) did not restore routes, or did not introduce a new route, even when they were asked to do so by the local authority. This was irrespective of the relatively good relationships that apparently existed between the transport providers and the local authorities in all cases. It has been suggested elsewhere that operators have not behaved appropriately, irrespective of being within a Quality Partnership (Local Transport Today, 2000a; Commission for Integrated Transport, 2001; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). This casts some doubt on whether Quality Partnerships, on which the Government places much faith, will work, unless they are very carefully underpinned by more than 'goodwill'.

A further issue that emerged from the research, that has not been widely reported in the literature, was the lack of time that the authority had to make decisions. A local authority is required to be informed six weeks before cuts were made, but where this happened in the case studies, this time period did not leave enough time for the local authority to find 'new money', nor, indeed, to consult those who would lose services. At the same time, the service cuts had been made without any consultation having been carried out by the operator to assess what impact they would have on the public.

The case study findings also develop previous findings on the use of subsidy. Although nationally about 74% of routes are provided commercially, local authorities

are able to tender for subsidised routes where they are deemed to be 'socially necessary' (DfT, 1999). In common with the examples provided in Chapter Three (see for example Stanley, 1990), in the cases studied for this thesis, the bus operators similarly seemed to be withdrawing, or not providing, services in the hope of receiving a subsidy. This behaviour arguably demonstrates the ability of transport operators to exercise veto power. The existence of bus subsidy might, in theory, offset the negative impact of removing the obligation of the bus operator to cross-subsidise in order to meet a social obligation. However, in practice, the operator is now able to effectively veto non-commercially viable routes by passing the cost onto the council, who will need to consider such costs in relation to their budget. This incentivises the withdrawal of non-commercially viable routes.

The Role of Officers and Social Exclusion

Emerging from the case studies, there were contradictions between entrepreneurialism and managerialism, manifested in constraints on the role of officers as advocates for the socially excluded. In addition, issues were raised around the way in which 'professionalism' affected the role of officers as gatekeeper of socially necessary services.

In Chapter Three, attention was drawn to an apparent tension, that can more generally be seen within NPM reforms, for the role of officers. Within NPM reforms it is implied that the officers' role should be 'entrepreneurial' (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993; Newman, 1994; Leadbeater and Goss, 1998; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000)

which, in this context, might entail taking an active role on behalf of the socially excluded. On the other hand, the reforms also appear to potentially limit officers' ability to behave in an entrepreneurial way, through the use of managerialist controls (Flynn, 2002; Sanderson, 2001). This leads to role ambiguity. In the case study examples, there was evidence of officers taking a proactive, entrepreneurial or advocacy role on behalf of the socially excluded, in line with NPM. At the same time, evidence was also obtained which indicated that this entrepreneurialism was constrained by their need to be held accountable to targets and budgets (also consistent with NPM), and also by several aspects of the broader decision-making context in which officers worked. One of these related to transport officers' limited role in the context of a deregulated bus system, as outlined above. Others were found to relate to attitudes toward social exclusion and consultation within departments, and more generally within the authority and the linked issue of departmentalism, financial constraints, the division of responsibilities between layers of government, and to professionalism.

In terms of both consultation and social exclusion, general concerns emerged around a lack of adequate attention to these issues. Consultation in each of the authorities was characterised by weaknesses in terms of either a lack of council-wide consultation (as in the case of Townboro and Ruralboro) or a limited level of deliberative consultation (in Londonboro), irrespective of the fact that those officers interviewed who were responsible for consultation were making concerted attempts to address this. This lack of deliberative consultation to a large extent confirms the issues raised in Chapter Three in regard to the limited extent of public involvement

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within local government (see for example Martin and Boaz, 2000). Drivers toward addressing social exclusion were similarly shown to be inadequate within the three authorities, and focused in particular areas, and although the directors of social exclusion units or community services units were keen to instil concerns for social inclusion across the authority, so far this appeared to be having a limited effect.

Linked to both of these issues, however, was the familiar issue of departmentalism, which NPM reforms might have been expected to eradicate. Both consultation and social exclusion require cooperation between departments. However, the findings from this study suggested a lack of understanding and cooperation between departments, in respect of dealing with consultation and social exclusion, but also in terms of coordination between transport planning and land use planning, and transport and social exclusion. Thus, it appears that departmentalism and the tendency to pigeon-hole responsibilities militates against working together on multi-dimensional issues such as social exclusion

Financial constraints were relevant in terms of compounding the limited ability of authorities to provide bus subsidies. Even where either the Public Transport Officer (in the case of Londonboro) or the County Transport Officer (in the case of the two districts) decided that it was appropriate to subsidise a service, the availability of funding did, as might be expected, determine whether or not a service could be provided. The issue of funding appeared to be particularly relevant in the case study authority where neither social exclusion. nor more specifically the transport aspects of social exclusion, were perceived to be a priority, and where it appeared to have a

major impact on the decision to provide only a minimal service. More generally, however, the lack of willingness to work together in budget sharing activities had apparently prevented the consideration of joint initiatives that might have addressed social exclusion.

The division of responsibilities between the layers of local government was a further constraint. As discussed in some detail in the previous chapter, in the districts, officers were relatively powerless compared to the County, in terms of influencing bus provision. While the districts were left with a lobbying role, it was the County Transport Officer who decided which services should be subsidised. Conversely, in the Taxibus case, which most clearly illustrated the attempt by officers to be entrepreneurial, the County officers were inhibited by the districts' reluctance to upset existing taxi operators, but also by the lack of engagement from Parishes. However, it should also be noted that the County Transport Officers had not involved or consulted officers at the level of both district and parish in developing the bid. Not only does this point toward a lack of meaningful consultation between levels of government, but also, in relation to taxi operator, the dominance of private sector interests.

What also emerged from the case study examples was, however, the issue of professionalism and the role of officers as gatekeepers. More generally this suggests that irrespective of 'managerialist' reforms, certain officers, such as the Public Transport Officer in Londonboro, and the County Transport Officer still necessarily have a degree of power, at least in relation to the provision of 'socially necessary'

services. At the same time, the District Transport Officers had very limited influence on which services would be provided. More specifically, questions were raised about the nature of this 'gatekeeper' role. In Chapter Three it was acknowledged that in the context of budgetary constraints, officers are in the position of effectively 'rationing' socially necessary bus routes. However, it was also suggested that such 'rationing' might be influenced by the technical expertise or personal interests of the transport officer, their perception of who is 'deserving', or their desire to follow the lead of transport providers who were pursuing commercial interests. In the case study examples, there was no evidence to suggest that decisions were made on the basis of personal interests as such. Instead, officers referred to the use of a cost benefit analysis. It should be noted, however, that where this did not give a clear indication of whether services should be provided, it was admitted that 'professional judgment' was used. More generally, this suggests that in the current privatised and deregulated environment of bus provision, those district officers who might be closest to members of the public do not have any significant influence over decision-making, while at the County level, there is a tendency to fall in with the commercial concerns of private sector operators.

The Role of Councillors as Advocates for the Socially Excluded

The findings from this study have clearly indicated examples of where councillors proactively took an advocacy role on behalf of the socially excluded and also encouraged direct democracy through their involvement in user groups, thus seeming to fulfil what Goss (2001) describes as an 'ideal role' for councillors. However, from

the evidence raised in the case study findings, a number of observations can be made about possible limitations to this role.

One of these observations relates to how councillors encouraged direct democracy. In each of the case study examples studied, councillors were members of user groups. It might be expected that this dual role would enhance both the group's and the councillor's status. However, this did not appear to necessarily have happened in practice. This might have been because the groups in questions themselves had limited influence, and were not necessarily representative of a range of people.

Another relates to the individual councillor's ability to network. Councillor Marchant appeared to have established contacts with the local MP, the Public Transport Officer and the local media, and these seem to have helped her, to some extent, in maintaining persistence and in furthering the cause of the socially excluded: although the change to the 321 route did take a very long time to materialise, it did happen in the end. Councillor Beeches from Townboro and Councillor Daniels from Ruralboro did not appear to be as adept at networking, and moreover, appeared to be more pessimistic about their ability to effect change which places some doubt on whether they would continue to campaign for those cases which had, at the time of interview, obtained very limited outcomes.

A further limitation could arguably have been Councillors' self interest or political motivation, if this stood in the way of their advocacy role. However, as discussed in the previous chapter there was no evidence to suggest this. There was, however, a

further issue that, while not directly relevant to the case study examples, could be a factor that might affect councillors' ability to act as advocates for the socially excluded in the future. In Chapter Three, issues were raised about the implications of Government reforms for the roles of councillors. In order to improve service provision, new political structures have been put in place in local authorities that imply new roles for councillors. However, concerns were raised in the case study research about whether, in this new role, it is possible for councillors to combine advocacy for the socially excluded with broader policy or scrutiny roles, especially when they were not within the Policy Unit. This accords with the observation in Chapter Three that those outside of the Policy Unit might experience a reduced level of influence over decision-making, leading to a sense of exclusion (Davis and Geddes, 2000; Goss, 2001; Kerley, 2002). However a number of issues also arose in the case studies that suggested that this exclusion might not be as serious as anticipated, since the new structures were in the early days of being introduced.

Bus Provision and Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of the Decision-Making Process

One of the most exciting findings of this research was the evidence that emerged in relation to the dynamics of decision-making. As shown in the earlier chapter, previous research studies have focused independently on issues such as nondecision-making (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970; Bachrach, 1971), consumerism (Hoggett and Hambleton, 1987; Clarke et al. 1994; Brown, 1997; Sanderson, 2001), the role of user groups or interest groups and competing interests (Byrne, 1994; Marsh, 1983;

Seargant and Steele, 1998), attitudes toward the socially excluded (Levitas, 1999),

the level of involvement of the socially excluded in local government (Arnstein,

1969; Martin and Boaz, 2000; Lowndes et al, 2001a; 2001b), and local transport

decision-making (Sinclair and Sinclair, 2001; Bickerstaff et al, 2002). However, up

to now, all of these have largely been treated as separate issues. This research, in

shedding light on the dynamics between the transport providers and the 'socially

excluded', suggests that these apparently disparate issues are linked.

Essentially, it was found that with bus provision, commercial arguments prevailed;

that social arguments had a limited impact when confronted with the dominance of a

commercial rhetoric; and that this all took place through a process that might be

described as nondecision-making. In all cases, rules and procedures were used to

either justify not providing a service, or to ensure that services were only provided

after a long, drawn out process, during which there was generally a lack of

deliberative engagement between bus operators and the socially excluded. This is

irrespective of the roles of officers, councillors, and user groups as voice mechanisms

for the socially excluded. This echoes Bachrach and Baratz's (1970) findings which

pointed toward merely the illusion of participatory democracy, and the tendency for

the concerns of the poor and marginalised to be either maimed, or taken through a

long and drawn out process.

One of the issues that this raises is the ability of user groups representing the socially

excluded to challenge the commercial logic. The case study findings largely echoed

the observations in Chapter Three which raised the possibility that user groups'

influence could be limited if the group was not sure about its remit, nor about how it fitted into the council's strategy on involving the public (see for example, Byrne, 1994; Schlappa, 2002). These findings were confirmed by the case study research. Although each of the groups studied were established by the local authority, they appeared to have no formal influence. This resulted in expressions of frustration by those involved in user groups that they were not party to relevant information, and that their concerns were not being taken seriously.

Two further important influences on how the socially excluded are treated also emerged from the case study findings. The first of these was that user groups faced opposition to their requests from other groups of residents, from those within their own group, from other user groups, and even from the anticipated demands of others. The second was that there was an apparent willingness of transport providers to respond more positively to those members of the 'socially excluded' (i.e. older people and those seeking work) who were either more articulate or who were perceived to be 'deserving' than to others who might be on a low income or living in excluded and stigmatised estates.

This second issue can be linked, as already mentioned, to the tendency to view the socially excluded as consumers. Treating the public as consumers implies responding to the highest apparent levels of demand, and the prioritising of groups of need as more or less worthy (Clarke et al. 1994). This, however, might mean that certain of those who are already at risk of social exclusion might have their needs marginalised. In addition, the prioritisation of some as more 'needy' than others also

echoes the 'deserving' element of two of the discourses of social exclusion that were outlined in Chapter Two. The 'moral underclass' discourse was linked to the notion of the 'deserving' and 'non-deserving' poor, while the 'social integrationist' discourse suggested that those actively seeking work were deserving of attention (Levitas, 1999). The evidence from the case studies, which shows how services appeared to be more readily provided to older groups of people and those seeking work suggests, that similar sorts of discourse might operate at the local level: those 'deserving' assistance, or who were more articulate and better able to vocalise their concerns gained bus services, while those who were less 'deserving', or less articulate did not. In taking these attitudes, as pointed out in Chapter Eight, the transport providers might have been influenced by the attitudes of the local authority. This, arguably, puts an onus on the local authority to be more careful in how it promotes social needs.

Reflection on Methodological Issues, and the Implications for Future Research

In general, it is claimed that the way in which this research was conducted is a useful example of how to move knowledge forward. Firstly, as explained in some detail in Chapter Four, an interpretivist perspective meant an in-depth examination of the perspectives, attitudes and justification for actions of various different participants in the decision-making processes studied. For an issue such as social exclusion, and one that examines public involvement, an approach where the research encourages people to interpret their views in their own way is arguably vital. At the same time, a realist

approach meant that social facts such as power were taken into account in the analysis of data. Secondly, the use of 'grounded theory' led to the gradual development of themes through primary research in each of three consecutive case studies. This provided more opportunity for unexpected findings to emerge than would have been the case with a strictly hypothetico-deductive form of research. Thirdly, case study research using multiple-embedded case units of analysis enabled exploration of not only the context of decision-making, where this was relevant to the research objectives, but also the process, therefore leading to a rich body of data, and a stimulating research experience.

One of the key findings of this research, that also has implications for future research in this area, was a 'rediscovery' of nondecision-making. It was explained in Chapter Three that criticisms have been made of this concept in the years since it was developed. In particular, these criticisms relate to methodology, and the difficulty in empirically testing a situation where decisions are not made (Polsby, 1963; Wolfinger, 1971; Debnam, 1972). However, it was also explained that the concept has more recently received some support (Headey and Muller, 1996; Hay, 1997). This study shows that it is possible to empirically examine a process of nondecision-making through comparing different people's accounts and analysing relevant documents where a requested outcome was not achieved. In addition, the study has developed the concept to show how, in the present context, nondecision-making manifests itself through a discourse of 'consumerism', which results in the deliberate or otherwise exclusion of people from decision-making through use of counter-arguments that are not fully understood by those who do not have the same degree of

technical knowledge. In addition, although local authority officers may have an equivalent level of technical knowledge to the bus providers, they do not possess an equivalent level of power.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that some aspects of the findings obtained can be open to challenge. Namely, the representativeness of the case study examples, the interpretation of the case study findings, and the relevance of the findings to current Government policies. On all counts, however, a defence can be made. As regards the first, it is evident from the findings that the case study examples illustrated cases of where the 'socially excluded' had problems in terms of both the process and outcome of decision-making. It could be argued that there might have been other examples within the authorities of where the socially excluded did more quickly receive the services that they requested, since they were considered to be a priority, and therefore these cases were not highlighted as a potential case study for research. This possibility, it must be admitted, cannot completely be discounted. It should, however, be noted that initial interviewees were simply asked for examples of where the socially excluded requested changes to bus provision, and that the case studies chosen for this study were those that they referred to. It is possible that they purposefully chose examples of where the socially excluded had difficulties, but this is unlikely. Conversely, there may also have been cases where requests were quickly suppressed. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter Three, with nondecision-making, requests can be 'maimed' either before or as soon as they are made, so there could conceivably have been many more examples of nondecision-making that officers had either dismissed or were not aware of.

The second issue relates to the interpretation of the case study findings. In one of the case studies examined, people do seem to have eventually achieved the bus service that they originally requested. Arguably, this suggests that it is indeed possible for the socially excluded to gain changes to bus services. However, it should be noted that in all cases the outcome was on balance negative. In the case where success was achieved, there was not an adequate system in place, since it took a very long period of time and a lot of perseverance for people to gain the service that they felt they needed. This implies that those people were either obsessive, or really needed the bus service. It also begs the question of how many other people, in similar circumstances, would have given up, left the area, or even died over a period of time that, in one case extended to twelve years.

A third issue is the relevance of the findings to current Government policies. This research examined case study examples that had occurred prior to many of the government's reforms in the area of local government. This means that although current policies are criticised, the findings relate to cases that occurred before the reforms had come into force. This is potentially a weakness in the research. However, it arguably does not matter that the research was conducted prior to the reforms, as the implications relate to decision-making processes that the Acts did not adequately address. In any case, any disadvantage in this respect is arguably outweighed by the advantage gained from being able to track not only the decisional processes, but also the outcomes arising from them. In addition, this now provides an opportunity for future research to be carried out to examine the longer-term impact of the new

reforms on bus decision-making.

Notwithstanding the caveats raised above, some significant contributions have been made through the research discussed in this thesis. In addition, there are some ways in which the research on bus provision and social exclusion could be taken further forward, in order to further examine the wider applicability of the findings.

One of these would be to conduct similar research in areas of the United Kingdom where there are higher levels of deprivation than in the case study authorities selected for this research. Or alternatively, research could be conducted outside of the UK, where there is a similar structure of local government, and where similar reforms have taken place in recent years in respect of the involvement of the private sector and consultation of the public, but where there is more widespread social exclusion and abject poverty. In this case, it would useful to see if systems are handled any better, and if the requests of the socially excluded are responded to any differently.

A further approach would be to carry out the study in the same authorities at a later time period. Since the time that the study was undertaken, changes have taken place in terms of the structure of transport planning in London. Under Transport for London, the situation might be quite different from how it was when this research was conducted, since transport has been given a much higher priority in terms of public policy, and increased funding has been made available for bus provision. It would be interesting to see whether this greater investment will lead to greater inclusion, or whether similar issues will arise in terms of how the requests of the

socially excluded are dealt with. Moreover, it would be interesting to see if the Local

Government reforms that were introduced to improve public involvement did, in fact,

impact on decision-making in local government in the longer term.

CHAPTER TEN

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

A number of problematic issues have been raised concerning the existing decision-making processes around bus provision and the extent to which they support the addressing of the needs of the socially excluded. In combination, these issues have a number of implications for policy and practice, some of which are relevant to local government, and others of which would realistically only be applicable to central government.

In general, the concerns relate to four key areas, as outlined and discussed in Chapter Nine. Firstly, the apparent conflict between the deregulation of bus provision and the meeting of social needs. Secondly, tensions within the roles of officers. Thirdly, the limited ability of councillors to act as advocates for the socially excluded. Fourthly, the way in which, within a deregulated environment, the dynamics of the interaction between the providers and prospective users of bus services were characterised by the use of nondecision-making, with limited influence for user groups, and the marginalisation of the socially excluded within the decision-making process. Rather than addressing each of these issues in turn, which might lead to a piecemeal approach, the following discussion tackles these more comprehensively through putting forward recommendations for policy and practice that might deal with these concerns at either local government or central government level.

Implications for Local Government

Of the various concerns raised, a number could be feasibly addressed by local government through taking a more proactive approach to tackling the important and related issues of departmentalism and accountability, as they relate to bus provision and social exclusion.

Departmentalism

A longstanding concern of local government has been the tendency for departments to act in isolation from each other, thus limiting the extent to which 'joined-up working' and 'holistic government' is possible in practice. To some extent, such departmentalism is inherent within local government, due to its range of roles, responsibilities and remits, and the regulatory functions that it has to fulfil. However, if departmentalism is excessive, then this has obvious implications for the ability of local government to effectively serve the interests of the socially excluded, since social exclusion is multi-dimensional and needs a multi-agency approach (SEU, 2003).

In the case study examples, evidence suggested that departmentalism was impacting on the ability to address social exclusion insofar as it related to bus provision. In particular, it appeared that transport officers tended to act in isolation from other departments. There were two specific examples of this. The first was linked to the historical separation between transport and land use planning, which led to situations where estates at the edge of towns had consequently not been adequately served. The other was linked to the separation between the transport and social exclusion departments, and the lack of awareness of social exclusion issues of those in transport planning departments.

This issue of departmentalism is one that is not likely to be 'solved' easily. Nevertheless, two possible suggestions might be worth considering. One of these is to encourage a clearer 'top down' emphasis on social exclusion from the leadership within the authority, so that the whole organisation is 'signed up' to the social exclusion agenda (Geddes and Root, 2000). This sounds easy in theory, but is not necessarily so in practice, at least partly because such an emphasis would need to be accompanied by both financial and time commitment.

A practical suggestion would be for the identification of key link officers within the transport department, as well as other departments within the authority, such as social exclusion, education, and housing, who might be seen as responsible for social exclusion issues. In the case of transport, these link people might also be able to help in addressing other linked concerns such as tensions between those working at different levels of government, and the need to work with other agencies through mechanisms such as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). It can be noted, in relation to this suggestion, that the recent Social Exclusion Unit (2003) report on transport and social exclusion has identified the possible role of accessibility officers, whose job it would be to promote accessibility planning. These people might, therefore, be those most appropriate to take the 'linking' role in Transport departments.

Another possible option would be for social exclusion departments within local authorities to have a stronger remit. This might include a statutory requirement for its monitoring of other departments, in order to ensure that social exclusion was a key priority across the council.

Accountability

Another key issue for local government is the need to ensure accountability to public

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service users. This was quite clearly recognised in the recent Local Government Acts 1999 and 2000, as explained in Chapter Three. However, concerns were raised in the case studies about the extent to which the socially excluded have been consulted in the local transport planning process in a deliberative way. As a result, during the process of conducting the research, attention was paid to the roles of both councillors and officers as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded, and also the degree to which influence was wielded through user groups.

A number of concerns were raised in relation to the role of councillors as advocates for the socially excluded. One of these related to councillors' varying levels of competence in networking. This could arguably be addressed through offering relevant training to councillors, or by encouraging a more formalised mentoring system whereby councillors are informed about who it might be advisable to contact, and also the various roles and degrees of influence of relevant officers. A second concern was around a councillor's role within user groups. It was found that this might not lead to a strengthening of their ability to influence decision-making, where those groups were not representative of a broader range of people, nor indeed of the potentially divergent interests of those who might be socially excluded. It may therefore be that councillors' roles within user groups could be addressed through taking action to make such groups more representative, and monitoring the outcomes that they achieve, where councillors are members of such groups and wish to promote direct democracy through them. A third, potential, concern was the ability of councillors to act effectively as advocates for the socially excluded when they were not part of the Policy Unit. This might require changes to existing mechanisms so that those councillors who are not members of the cabinet can put forward the views of their constituents at a higher level.

With regard to officers, concerns were identified around existing attitudes toward

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engaging the socially excluded within local authority decision-making processes. Attention was also drawn to the potentially ambiguous role of officers as voice mechanisms for the socially excluded, in that they were encouraged to be entrepreneurial, but also faced constraints due to their limited power in a deregulated environment. In order to deal with these concerns, one possible option might be to tackle attitudes toward consultation and social exclusion by more carefully emphasising these issues within human resource strategies, particularly, for example through mechanisms such as induction, training and development and performance appraisal. However, this might have a limited impact since, as was shown above, officers are constrained in their actions by the deregulated and commercialised context within which they are working.

Another way forward might therefore be for local authorities to attempt to tackle the context within which officers are working. This could include altering the way in which bidding processes are arranged in order to allow more time for consultation, or altering the contracts of bus operators, again to encourage more effective consultation. A further strategy, which might tackle the way that decisions are made on social exclusion within the authority, might be through formalising the use of a social audit as part of its broader decision-making processes. Indeed, the recent Social Exclusion report (2003) refers to how local authorities might work with other relevant bodies to incorporate accessibility planning, including an audit and action plan, into the second round of LTPs. This audit might conceivably be used to point out to transport operators the areas where there is the greatest need, and encourage them to provide bus services in the areas identified. Further, such accessibility planning could be extended to cover London. It should, however, be borne in mind that highlighting social need may not, in fact, impact on the decisions made by transport operators, since they are primarily motivated by the need to make profits. Addressing this is outside of the scope of the local authority, and would need to be

addressed by central government.

In addition to the need to consider the role of officers and councillors, as mentioned above, and highlighted in Chapter Nine, there is also a need to examine more carefully the degree of influence provided for local residents through user groups. Strategies for empowering user groups, once established and able to demonstrate rudimentary threshold criteria for representativeness, might include considering the way in which such groups are formally incorporated into the local authority's decision-making processes, and kept informed about ongoing developments. It was shown that without this more formal incorporation, members could feel marginalised and excluded. A second strategy might be to offer training in negotiation skills for those community activists who emerge as leaders of groups which seek to address the needs of the socially excluded. If they are taking this role, then they might already have some expertise in negotiation and the ability to network, but this expertise might be further strengthened by appropriate training.

In summary, then, it seems that changes could be made at the local government level to alleviate some of the concerns raised by this thesis. Changes in practice at this level, might not, however, be in themselves sufficient to make a substantial difference. Consequently, the following section considers further action that might be taken by Central Government.

Implications for Central Government Policy and the Regulatory Framework

The key concern raised in this thesis relates to the power of transport providers, and the behaviour of transport operators in a deregulated environment. One obvious way of addressing this is to take bus provision back into public ownership, and for the

local authority to directly control bus services. However, this is very unlikely in the current climate, where increasing emphasis is being placed on the involvement of the private sector in service provision.

Nevertheless, in a situation where the concerns of the market appear to take precedence over the concerns of the socially excluded, there are measures that might be taken to reduce the negative impact of market forces on service quality for the socially excluded. These relate broadly to three issues: the provision of additional funding for bus provision; the involvement of the socially excluded in decision-making; and the monitoring and regulation of private operators.

Additional Funding for Bus Provision

One possible option in this area is to further increase the money that has been made available to support bus provision. It has already been noted in Chapter Two that funding has been made to support initiatives in rural areas, and more recently, under Transport for London, significant injections of money have been put into bus provision within London. Moreover, although not a direct subsidy, concessionary fares can also be used, as in Wales, where full concessionary fares are being provided to pensioners and people with disabilities (NAfW, 2003). However, although such initiatives might lead to improvements in bus provision, it is of prime importance that the greatest beneficiaries of such subsidies do not become the bus operators rather than the socially excluded.

A further option is to review the amount of money available to local authorities for subsidies which can be given to bus operators for services which are not deemed to be commercially viable, or alternatively to ringfence the money available for bus subsidy. A potential problem, however, with increasing the use of subsidy is that this might merely encourage bus operators to "play the system" more often (Stanley,

1990). In other words they might see this as an additional incentive to withdraw services in the hope that they will receive a bus subsidy from the local authority.

Supporting the Involvement of the Socially Excluded in Decision-making

Since the above measures for providing additional finance might not adequately address social exclusion, a further area that could be examined is the current framework for involving the socially excluded in decision-making. The findings showed the dominance of a commercial rhetoric taking place through a process that might be described as nondecision-making, where rules and procedures are used to either justify not providing a service, or to ensure that services are only provided after a long, drawn out process, during which there is a lack of deliberative engagement.

One way of addressing this might be to review the requirement of current reforms which tackle the involvement of the public in decision-making. It was explained in Chapter Three that these requirements are currently very vague in relation to social exclusion (Martin and Boaz; 2000). Therefore, the prescriptions could be made more detailed, and address more specifically the issues around involving those who are socially excluded. The Government reforms are also unclear in terms of whether the public should be treated as either customers or citizens, with the two concepts at times seeming to be conflated. It is not necessarily sensible to see this as an either/or distinction, but it should, perhaps, be more carefully acknowledged that the current references to customers and consumers might lead to further exclusion for those who have little purchasing power and have already been marginalised in decision-making. In addition to changes in the wording of Government requirements on consultation, changes might also be made to the wording and conduct of the bidding process and also to the nature of bus contracts in order to allow more time for consultation. However, questions might be raised about whether changes in the wording will

translate into changes in practice. Therefore, what is essential is a more careful evaluation of not only the process, but also the outcomes of consultation. In addition, it might then be necessary for a more rigorous accounting process to be put in place to record the outcomes that result when the socially excluded proactively request changes to service provision.

All of this, however, may not be adequate, since, as explained above, in the current system, local authorities are limited in what they are ultimately able to do to address bus provision and social exclusion. Therefore, the logical solution for Central Government is to undertake measures that address the power of transport providers, or at least limit their worst excesses, as will be explained below.

The Monitoring and Regulation of Private Bus Operators

Within the deregulated environment, bus operators hold an overly powerful role, and as a result do not adequately meet the needs of the socially excluded. In order to address this, a range of measures might be considered to incentivise, or in some cases, restrict, bus operators' role.

Restricting the power of transport providers could feasibly be addressed through three different, but interrelated, strategies. The first of these could be to loosen the regulations on cross-subsidy to enable transport providers to cross-subsidise socially necessary routes. However this might not necessarily result in improved service provision, since operators might choose not to take up this opportunity. A second, more restrictive, option might therefore be to require transport providers to carry out a more formal consultation before changing routes that might impact on the socially excluded. Thirdly, however, if the needs of the socially excluded were still not being addressed, then another option might be to more carefully monitor the 'misbehaviour' of operators, and impose appropriate penalties for this.

The first issue referred to above is that of cross subsidy. The deregulated environment is supposed to reduce cross-subsidy, necessary since cross-subsidy is said to prevent competition. Arguably, however, in dealing with the issue of social exclusion, there might be a case for encouraging cross-subsidy. This is since cross-subsidy enables the least commercially viable routes to be able to run, and often these routes are the ones that address the greatest transport need, for example in rural areas or marginalised estates in outer urban areas. Therefore, in cases where a social need can be demonstrated, cross-subsidy might be a useful option. In the system before deregulation, operators were given a set amount of money to run the whole service, and they would have been able to show a 'social conscience' through cross subsidising less profitable, but socially necessary routes. In addition, local authorities had a much bigger say on which services should be run. Now, operators have to organise on a route by route basis, with a cost analysis on each route, and restrictions on cross-subsidy between routes. Consequently, one possible way forward would be to review whether the prohibition on cross-subsidy could be relaxed in order to better address the needs of the socially excluded. In order to determine where cross-subsidy would be applicable, local authorities might use the social exclusion audit referred to above, but in addition, listen carefully to the requests of those who are currently excluded from services in order to be better able to define their needs.

If this failed to have an impact, then, as suggested above, a further option might be to extend the requirement for consultation to transport providers. In other words, to make transport providers responsible for consulting existing users before withdrawing a route. In the case of London, the Transport for London website points out that "*TfL is committed to listening and responding to the transport needs of Londoners, the capital's communities and businesses*" (TfL, 2002). At least in London, this implies that consultation is on the agenda. However, it is questionable

whether bus operators will carry out effective consultation unless they are required to do so within their contracts, and there is likely to be some anticipated resistance to such a move since operators would not be able to withdraw routes as rapidly as is currently possible, and this might affect their profits.

A third option, and one that the findings raised in this thesis suggest might now be appropriate, would be for the local authority to keep careful records of when the operators seemed to be acting inappropriately, and for these records to be examined periodically by an external regulator. Indeed, the recent consultation paper on bus transport recognises that it is necessary to keep a check on operators (DfT, 2002). In order for this to be more than a paper exercise, the operator would then need to be faced with substantial penalties for 'misbehaviour'. As noted in Chapter Three, in London new bus service contracts now contain a quality incentive component, under which operators can be penalised for unreliability as well as for a failure to deliver the specified volume of service (LTUC, 2002). If a similar system to the London bus franchising system were to be used elsewhere in the country, this might go some way towards making a difference in operators' behaviour. However, it is not clear that the London system is, as yet, dealing appropriately with all aspects of social exclusion. For example, although a quality incentive component is incorporated this does not specifically address the needs of the socially excluded.

Possible objections could be made to the suggestion that operators should be more closely monitored. Firstly, it could be argued that this would not fit well with the new Quality Partnership discourse, whereby local government can work more effectively with the private sector, when enforced through carefully determined contracts.

Indeed, areas such as Cardiff are currently considering establishing public-private partnerships using extensive consultation (Cardiff County Council, 2003). The second objection is that local authorities might resent having to carry out further paperwork, since they are already exposed to ever larger numbers of performance indicators and greater degrees of inspection, which are potentially counterproductive. Nevertheless, on the basis of the findings presented in this thesis, it seems that further action is now required to encourage not only local authorities, but also bus providers to address social needs.

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APPENDIX 3.1: DEREGULATION OF BUS SERVICES 1986

Before 1986 the system had been largely determined by the Transport Act 1968. Under this Act the National Bus Company and the Scottish Bus Group owned the operating companies, and County Councils were given powers to enforce co-ordination between bus services through the use of Transport Co-ordination Officers. In four Metropolitan areas (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Tyneside and the West Midlands) Passenger Transport Authorities were set up. Each worked through a Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) that had powers of either enforced 'co-ordination' or compulsory purchase with regard to any other bus operators. The PTEs followed differing policies, some acquiring all businesses in their area, others arranging for companies to act, in effect, as their agent (Hibbs and Bradley, 1997). In London, the situation was different in that bus services were provided by London Transport which was answerable to the Greater London Council.

The main provisions of the Act which came into effect in October 1986 included the setting up of bus companies, more freedom for bus companies to run commercial services how they wished to, increased opportunities for taxis to compete with buses, and new rules on subsidies with the removal of cross-subsidy. The situation was, however, somewhat different in London where there was privatisation without deregulation.

The first key feature of the Transport Act 1985 was the setting up of bus companies. Powers for privatisation of the National Bus Company already existed and were exercised. Local authorities and PTAs were required to set up their bus undertakings

as wholly-owned companies, with a view to their sale in due course. They were renamed as Passenger Transport Companies, and expected to act as a commercial business by registering for 'commercially viable' routes and tendering for subsidised services in the same way as other bus operators. In 1986 this was through Compulsory Competitive Tendering, but since the Local Government Act 1999 this has been through Best Value which implies taking account of quality as well as the cost of the service.

The second was more freedom for bus operators. Bus operators no longer had to seek a road service licence from the relevant Traffic Commissioner system. Instead, bus operators outside of London were free to run 'commercial' bus services when and where they chose, without controls on routes, timetable, or fares, provided that they registered with the Traffic Commissioner, giving 42 days advance notice of introduction, withdrawal or modification of routes. When registering, the operator had to provide 'prescribed particulars' of the proposed route, which should include the starting point and finishing point, a map, stopping arrangements and a timetable. However where it was not possible to provide this information it could simply be a 'complete description'. An operator who, without reasonable excuse, failed to operate his local service as registered, could be penalised by the Traffic Commissioners. Either the Traffic Commissioner might attach a condition to the operator's licence prohibiting him from operating some or all services, or the Commissioner could impose a financial penalty not exceeding £550 per vehicle operated on the PSV Operator's Licence. Legislation was also amended to provide taxis with greater opportunities to compete with buses, and local authorities were discouraged from restricting the number of taxi licences.

The third was in relation to the rules on subsidy and cross-subsidy. Local authorities were enabled to support 'socially necessary' services that would not otherwise have been provided, through a process of competitive tendering. Subsidy was made open to all operators. Also, payments were made from the local authority to the operators to meet the cost of concessionary travel for eligible groups in the community. Cross-subsidy was prohibited where services were provided at less than marginal cost and restrictive practices legislation was applied, so that agreements between bus operators had to be registered with the office of fair trading.

Fourthly, it was noted above that London was somewhat different to the rest of the country. London had privatisation without deregulation, retaining a regulated system in which services were contracted in from private operators. In 1984 under the London Regional Transport Act, London Transport was transferred from the GLC to State control, and renamed as London Regional Transport. It was set up as a nationalised body with a duty to provide or secure provision of public transport services for Greater London. The subsidy to LRT was funded one third by central government and two-thirds by London ratepayers. LRT also had a statutory obligation to set up a company to provide public sector buses. This was formed as London Buses Limited (LBL), a wholly owned subsidiary. Thus, London Buses became a franchising authority with a duty to ensure the provision of services designed to its own specifications, on the basis of competitive tender. Since 1999, although the system of regulation has continued, it should be noted that buses come under London Transport Buses (LTB) within the remit of Transport for London and the Greater London Authority. It has been suggested that under the system used in

London, more control is maintained over the system through the full integration and publicity of services (Bannister and Pickup, 1990). It has therefore been recommended by some that a similar system might be usefully extended to areas other than London (Potter and Cole, 1992).

APPENDIX 3.2: DIFFERENT TYPES OF COUNCILS, THEIR KEY RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

In summary it can be noted that in England there are currently 34 County Councils, 33 London Boroughs, 36 Metropolitan Boroughs, 238 Districts and 46 Unitaries. The area of responsibility of each council is dependent on the type of authority so that London / Metropolitan / Unitary councils are all single-tier authorities and run all services in their area. They also have joint authorities to run wider services in their conurbation such as fire and civil defence. In other areas of the country, County Councils generally have responsibility for strategic planning, highways, traffic, social services, education, libraries, fire, refuse disposal and consumer protection. District councils run local planning, housing, environmental health, markets and fairs, refuse collection, cemeteries, crematoria, leisure services and parks, tourism and electoral registration, and in addition, within each of the districts there are Parish Councils. Members of Parish Councils are democratically elected, and serve a four-year term. They can influence planning applications, community strategies, and social housing schemes, and provide recreational facilities, crime prevention, tourism, allotments, footpaths and commons. Parish councils can, because of their population, size and impact in the area, by resolution of their council, take the style of a town council. It should also be noted that there are 24 Regional Development Agencies in the UK. These are responsible for co-ordinating regional economic development and regeneration.

Each council, except parish councils, is made up of elected representatives, who

usually carry out their duties on a voluntary or part-time basis, and permanently employed council officers consisting of professional, administrative and manual staff. Electoral arrangements differ so that in the Counties elections occur every four years for the whole council, and one councillor represents each ward. In London Boroughs, apart from the Corporation of London where elections are held for the whole council each year, the whole council is elected very four years, and most wards are multi-member. In Metropolitan boroughs, three councillors represent each ward. One third of seats are elected each year for three years out of four. In the fourth year there are no elections. In both Districts and Unitaries the whole council can be elected every four years, or one third of the seats can be elected each year for three years out of four.

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