

# Challenge of community empowerment

Diverse communities and places

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# Credits

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- ScotCERB – main proposals and themes
- Whose community are we empowering?
- Putting the community in planning
- All communities are equal but some are more equal than others
- Concluding thoughts

# ScotCERB

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- Renewing/reinvigorated (restarting?)  
Community Planning
- Reform of community councils
- Urban community right-to-buy
- Community right to challenge
- Miscellaneous

Tom Parnell: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/6200745928/sizes/o/in/set-72157627793156184/>



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Individuals	Percentage of whom live in bottom 15% SIMD areas
<b>All</b>	
Men	14.4%
Women	15.7%
<b>Health problems / disability</b>	
Disabled	22.0%
Long-term illness	22.5%
Disabled AND long-term ill	27.5%
Neither long-term ill nor disabled	12.8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	15.0%
All non-White ethnicities	22.9%
<b>Religion</b>	
No religion	14.8%
Church of Scotland	12.4%
Roman Catholic	26.3%
Other Christian	8.6%
Buddhist	9.3%
Muslim	27.1%
Other religions	14.4%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	
Heterosexual	13.4%
Gay / lesbian / bisexual / 'other'	17.0%
Refused	17.6%

# Community? Planning

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The Commission heard a consistent view that the potential benefits of a local partnership approach are far from being fully realised; that there are significant variations in the effectiveness of community planning partnerships; and that, *for the most part, the process of community planning has focussed on the relationships between organisations, rather than with communities...*

(Christie, 2011: 44; emphasis added)

# ScotCERB

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“It will be important to ensure that community empowerment takes account of diverse communities and reaches both more marginalised individuals within communities and more marginalised communities within society.”

(Scottish Government, CERB Consultation: 7)



# The influence of the middle classes

Theory name	Definition
<i>I'll stand as the parish council chair</i>	That the level or nature of middle class interest group formation allows for the collective articulation of their needs and demands, and that service providers respond to this.
<i>I'll write to my councillor and complain</i>	That the level and nature of middle-class engagement with public services on an individualised basis means that services are more likely to be provided according to their needs and demands.
<i>I'll just phone our doctor</i>	That the alignment in the cultural capital enjoyed by middle classes service users and service providers leads to engagement which is constructive and confers advantage .
<i>I'll vote for them</i>	That the needs of middle class service users, or their expectations of service quality, are 'normalised' in policy and practice or even that policy priorities can favour middle-class interests.

## Empowering the powerful

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“Many equality groups and individuals however feel disassociated and disenfranchised from community councils. They have expressed that they are often cliques who do not represent nor discuss anything of relevance to them, and only those with the loudest voices are acted upon.”

NHS Lothian

# Strategy of equality

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“Local control will result in a postcode lottery’ – Decentralisation will allow different communities to do different things in different ways to meet their different needs. This will certainly increase variety in service provision. But far from being random – as the word ‘lottery’ implies – such variation will reflect the conscious choices made by local people. The real lottery is what we have now, where one-size-fits-all policies are imposed by the centre whether or not they work locally.”

(Communities and Local Government, 2010: 5)

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“Under no circumstance should any management of spending be transferred to local area groups. Control of spending at local council and national level is essential to ensure fair and equitable distribution of spending for the entire population of Scotland, rather than for the benefit of individual community groups.”

(Arnprior Community Council)

## Concluding thoughts?

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- Marginalised individuals and communities as King Canute?
- Spaces for deliberation
- Role of representative democracy and political leadership
- You can't eat community engagement

# Role of voluntary sector

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- Community development
- As advocates for groups and communities
- As anchor organisations
- Capital ownership and assets



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*'Hard-to-Reach' or 'Easy-to-Ignore'? - A rapid review of place-based policies and equality*

Dr Peter Matthews, Dr Gina Netto and Dr Kirsten Besemer, Heriot-Watt University

<http://bit.ly/hardtoreach>

*"Sharp Elbows": Do the Middle-Classes have Advantages in Public Service Provision and if so how?*

Annette Hastings, University of Glasgow, Dr Peter Matthews, Heriot-Watt University

<http://bit.ly/sharpelbows>