

# Participatory democracy and transparent city-planning

Lessons from Haringey, London

Jenni Viitala

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The Finnish Institute in London  
Unit 1, 3 York Way,  
London N1C 4AE, UK

info@fininst.uk  
+44 (0)20 3764 5090

**Jenni Viitala** holds a MD in Social Sciences from the University of Tampere, Finland. She worked at the Institute's Society & Culture programme as an intern from September 2017 to February 2018.

Contact: [jennivee@gmail.com](mailto:jennivee@gmail.com)

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## **I. Introduction**

*'Londoners need to feel involved in decisions about homebuilding and their concerns about new development should be addressed.'*

**Mayor of London 2017: London Housing Strategy (draft), 14**

Since the 1960s, discussions over various forms of participatory democracy have been raised, re-raised and developed. In addition to political movements that wish to completely distance themselves from representative democracies, state-led participatory institutions have been widely established across the world to complement representative democracies. They are based on the idea that by itself, representative democracy is inadequate to allow for meaningful participation, empowerment and education of citizens. (Wampler 2012, 667; Paddison et al 2008; Pateman 2012.)

In this paper, I will discuss participatory practices within the housing sector in London, specifically in the borough of Haringey in North London. Haringey has drawn attention in recent months due to a large regeneration plan called Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV), which has sparked a heated debate about the democratic rights of the residents and the future of housing development in the borough. The HDV case provides an interesting insight into the debate on participatory practices in a local context. My focus is on the experiences of the local residents who have voiced their opposition to the project.

The primary source of material for this paper are interviews recorded in October-December 2017. Among the interviewees were about a dozen residents of Haringey, most of whom have been involved with opposing the HDV project. In addition, I interviewed a representative of the Haringey council to gain another perspective to the debate, and a representative of the Greater London Authority (GLA) to place the HDV case in the wider context of participatory practices in the capital's housing sector.

The aim of this paper is not to take sides on the debate or evaluate the HDV as a regeneration project. Instead, it is an analysis of the democratic process in this specific case. My intention is to make suggestions on what can be learnt from Haringey and inspire future discussion of participatory practices within representative democracies. Focusing on the role of the residents and participatory practices also provides a valuable perspective to the much-debated housing 'crisis' in London.

## 2. Context: Participatory practices and the housing crisis

### 2.1. Housing and resident participation in the UK

First tenant associations (TAs) started to emerge in the UK after 1919, alongside the introduction of first large council estates<sup>1</sup>. These first associations helped tenants settle down on the new estates and negotiate with the host communities. Although these early associations sometimes adopted quite ‘radical’ means, such as rent strikes (Simmons & Birchall 2007, 575), they did not properly challenge the paternalistic management model of council housing, which had been adopted from private landlord-tenant relationships. Before 1919, nearly 90 percent of the population lived in privately rented homes (NHBC Foundation 2015, 4). Private tenants had little to no influence on how their housing was managed, and proper maintenance was not the priority of many landlords. The shift to a local authority landlord did not initially bring any fundamental changes to rights, responsibilities or relationships between landlords and tenants (Hague 1990, 245).

In late 1960s, when a resurgence of interest in participatory governance appeared around the world (Paddison et al 2008, 129), council housing tenants in Britain also took interest and started to challenge the ways their homes were managed. By late 1960s, Britain was experiencing a peak in house-building<sup>2</sup> and about a quarter of the population lived in council housing (NHBC Foundation 2015, 22). Tenants had become increasingly critical towards the maintenance of their homes and frustrated at the lack of opportunities to take responsibility of managing their own homes. The situation began to change when some councils around London set up tenant consultation committees, which were initially forums to discuss rent increases, but quickly started to address management issues as well. (Hague 1990, 247.)

In the 1970s, important progress was made as tenant management organisations (TMOs) began to emerge alongside tenant associations. These organisations allowed for the tenants to take on budgets and the responsibility of various practical maintenance tasks, but landlords would still stay the same (Simmons & Birchall 2007, 576). TMOs are still an essential part of council housing management. Since 1970s, about 200 TMOs have been established, and they take on responsibilities ranging from day-to-day repairs, rubbish collection to nuisance, environmental and social problems (Power 2017). TMOs are either co-operatives, which have boards consisting entirely of residents, or estate management boards,

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<sup>1</sup> **Council housing** homes are owned and managed by local councils and rent on social rent, which is considerably lower than private market rents and guided by a national rent regime. Also other registered providers, usually non-profit housing associations, can provide social rent homes. The term **social housing** is regularly used in the UK to refer to both council housing and social rented housing provided by other registered providers. (Gov.uk: Council housing, no date; Shelter, no date.)

<sup>2</sup> In 1968, more homes (425,830) were built in a year than ever since (NHBC Foundation 2015, 21).

which have resident-majority boards and are usually focused on large estates (Simmons & Birchall 2007, 576).

In 1980s, the profile of council housing started to change quickly after Margaret Thatcher launched the 'Right to Buy' policy as a part of the new Housing Act in 1980. The Right to Buy policy offers council housing tenants a possibility to buy their own home with a discount. This appealed to many tenants who were enjoying the economic boom of the 1980s, and by the end of 1990s 1,9 million council homes had been sold (NHBC Foundation 2015, 23). The Right to Buy policy was suggested to diversify the tenure and shift wealth to the less well-off, but it also produced many negative side-effects. The remaining council housing stock was 'residualised', as the profile of the council housing tenants changed quickly. Middle-income families and working couples took advantage of the opportunity to buy their home, leaving behind the unemployed and elderly. Council rented housing essentially became reserved only for the poorest in society, which has resulted in stigmatisation of social housing and even 'postcode discrimination' in the labour market. (Clarke & Monk 2011, 418-420.) The Right to Buy policy is still in use, and the government is planning to even extend it to include housing association tenants, most of whom currently cannot participate in the scheme ([righttobuy.gov.uk](http://righttobuy.gov.uk), no date).

However, the 1980s also brought some positive development in tenant participation. The privatisation of public housing resulted in a rapid increase in tenant activism; in Scotland, for example, the number of tenant groups rose from 300 in 1980 to 1,800 in 1989 (Hague 1990, 252). New bodies emerged to ensure tenant involvement, such as the non-profit organisation Tenant Participation Advisory Services, Tpas (Simmons & Birchall 2007, 575). Tpas is dedicated to improving tenant engagement standards across the UK, and today it supports over 200 housing associations, local authorities, resident groups and contractors (Tpas: About Tpas, no date). Tenant involvement quickly became the norm around the UK. In Scotland, over a half of the councils with a housing stock had either adopted or were considering tenant participation policies by 1985 (Hague 1990, 242).

Tenants also gained new legal rights in 1980, such as the right to be consulted over major changes in housing. Tenant participation was very popular in government rhetoric, but it was used to the political and ideological advantage of the ruling Conservatives. In 1988, the remaining council tenants gained a controversial right to 'Tenants' Choice', which meant they could 'pick a landlord' out of housing associations, tenant cooperatives or private companies. Based on a written consent from the tenants, the new landlord would have the right to buy the council property. However, this choice of landlord was a one-time benefit; the tenants would not have the right to pick again, if the new landlord proved to be unsatisfactory, or move back to the public landlord. (Hague 1990, 250-253.)

The shift away from council landlords also led to rapid growth of the housing association sector. Housing associations are non-profit, independent organisations, who provide housing on social rent. Housing associations had been supported with public funding since 1974 to take on responsibility to build housing for rent, but their role was quite small before 1988 (Mullins 2010, 9). When the Tenants' Choice and other policy changes were introduced in 1988, housing associations were empowered to compete with private landlords for control of the housing stock. Both tenants and councils generally preferred housing associations over private landlords. In addition to Tenants' Choice, public housing stock was transferred to housing associations especially through 'Large Scale Voluntary Transfers'. This allowed the councils to transfer up to 4,000 housing units to either an existing housing association or one specifically created for the purpose – if this was accepted in a ballot of the tenants. (Harrison 1995, 72-73.)

Overall, tenant participation in the UK has been very diverse since 1960s, ranging from individual tenants choosing a type of heating system to tenant involvement in various issues on the neighbourhood or city level (Paddison et al 2008, 133). These calls for more tenant participation coincided with more general development of community action in Britain, and with much wider international demands for participatory democracy. The demands arose from a number of criticisms towards certain practices and qualities of representative democracies, such as the distance between the government and those governed, the upper and middle class bias in representation, the insensitivity and inflexibility of bureaucratic practices, weak accountability and the lack of political engagement of ordinary citizens. Paddison et al. (2008) identify two distinct views on participation that emerged from these critiques: 'participatory democracy' and 'responsible participation'. Participatory democracy is based on the view that problems within democracy are the result of a lack of community engagement, and they can be solved through community empowerment. Responsible participation, on the other hand, also aims for deeper community inclusion, but sees it as the obligation of the community rather than its right. (Paddison et al 2008, 129-133.)

Differing participatory measures have been adopted by governments in order to extend representative democracy and 'modernise' the welfare state (Paddison et al 2008, 130). In Western Europe, for example, many countries have experimented with collaborative governance, citizens' advisory committees, and participatory budgeting (Michels & De Graaf 2010, 477). Brian Wampler (2012) discusses state-led participatory governance, which gives citizens three different democratic roles: they are not only being represented, but they can also take part in participatory democratic processes, and act as official representatives in them. Wampler considers such participation important in empowering and educating citizens. However, the actual power given to citizens varies greatly between different cases and is affected by the local political environments. (Wampler 2012, 667-668.)

In the UK, the shift to more participatory democracy has been very pronounced. Kim McKee and Vickie Cooper argue (2008, 132-133) that the state has changed from a 'safety net' that sheltered its citizens and treated them as a reserve labour into a welfare state that promotes active citizenship, and that this shift is specifically visible in tenant participation. However, this 'empowerment' has been all but unproblematic. Tenant participation in the UK has been criticised for remaining more strongly supported in rhetoric than in practice and limited to state-approved forms of engagement. For example, the abovementioned tenant management organisations (TMOs) are often fully dependent on landlords, which limits their abilities to create political pressure and enables the landlords to influence decisions in a more indirect and subtle way (Simmons & Birchall 2007, 575-577). Therefore, as McKee and Cooper argue, empowerment is also a relation of power, and instead of reducing governance, it might simply disperse it (McKee & Cooper 2008, 144). I will discuss the benefits and problems of certain participatory practices in more detail in chapter 3.

## **2.2. Current housing situation in London**

Norman Ginsburg estimated in 2005 that council housing in the UK would disappear within the next two decades (Ginsburg 2005, 115). Although his estimate might have been too rushed, the direction of the development remains the same - less than eight percent of the population lives in council housing, and the number of council housing units is at a record low (Independent 16.11.2017). However, the demand for council homes is still very high in all the boroughs of London; in 2016, one council had up to 50 times more people on their waiting list than they had properties available (The Guardian 19.10.2016).

The housing association sector, however, has still grown steadily. By 2005, housing associations owned 45 percent of social housing in the UK (Mullins 2010, 10). Although housing associations are independent, they are regulated by the state and receive public funding, and local councils often channel applications to housing association apartments through their waiting lists. This places the housing associations in a position between the state and the private market. Their importance in providing affordable housing, positive social impact and contributions to neighbourhood improvement is generally recognised (Mullins 2010, 10). However, especially the larger housing associations have received a fair share of criticism, from gaining profit instead of building new social housing (The Spectator 25.7.2015) to serial neglect of the residents and the properties (The Guardian 11.4.2017). Critics have even called the housing associations a terrible combination of 'public sector lethargy and private sector greed' (The Spectator 25.7.2015).

Another type of social housing provider also emerged in early 2000s with the introduction of ALMOs, Arms Length Management Organisations. ALMOs are semi-autonomous and independently governed organisations, which take care of the management of publicly owned housing. ALMOs are governed by boards that usually consist of equal shares of tenants, council nominees (usually councillors), and 'independents'. ALMOs have so far been little researched, but early accounts suggest that they might have positive impacts on resident empowerment and local accountability. (Mullins 2010, 10-16.)

Many would prefer to own their home, but London is famous for its high property prices. In Camden, for example, an employee can expect to spend on average 19.6 times their annual earnings on buying a property (Office for National Statistics 2017a, 6). Also in less central locations buying a home is a distant dream for the vast majority of Londoners. Given these property prices and the shortage of social housing, the most common option is to go for privately rented homes. However, also the private rent levels have increased rapidly in recent years. In 2016, the median monthly private rent in London ranged from £1,275 for one bedroom to £2,593 for four or more bedrooms (Office for National Statistics 2016, 8). Although increases in private rents slowed down slightly in 2017, they are still increasing (Office for National Statistics 2017b, 2). Over 40 percent of the former council homes sold through Right to Buy are now rented privately, and the tenants living in them pay over twice the rent levels charged by local authorities (The Guardian 8.12.2017).

Most people with low incomes have no option but to rent privately and rely on local housing allowance, the housing benefit for private renters. However, the benefit is often far from enough to cover the actual rent, and the current housing allowance level has been frozen until 2020, regardless of how much the rents will go up (Shelter 2017, 2). Although the number has slightly decreased, 8 percent of households in London still live in overcrowded conditions (Mayor of London 2017: Housing in London, 86) - and the official statistics do not include people living in illegal 'beds in sheds' type of settings (Trust for London 2016). In addition, almost London 20 000 households are statutorily homeless<sup>3</sup>, and the number has increased in recent years (Mayor of London 2017: Housing in London, 81). The numbers of people sleeping rough on the streets has also more than doubled over the last five years, and nearly trebled over the last ten years (Streets of London 2017).

London's housing situation (and that of England in general) has been very difficult for years, and this is something everyone can agree with. However, views differ sharply on what is the root cause of the

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<sup>3</sup> Statutorily homeless refers to people who are legally defined as homeless, and the local authorities have an obligation to provide shelter for them. According to Crisis, a national homeless charity, the majority of people living without a home are 'hidden homeless', as they are dealing their situation informally and therefore not visible in the statistics. Those homeless persons who are living and sleeping on the streets are called "rough sleepers" by the charities. Most hidden homeless people have been rough sleepers for at least a short period of time. (Crisis 2018.)

problem and how to fix it. Many, such as Christian Hilber, a professor of economic geography at the London School of Economics, argue that there are simply not enough homes and that the planning regulations should be loosened to allow building more homes quickly (Hilber 2017). Others, like writer Anna Minton (2017), focus more on the type of new housing being built. Minton points out the extensive supply of expensive apartments often bought by overseas investors and claims that the number of affordable housing has not increased in recent years despite the numbers of housing projects undertaken all around the city (Minton 2017, 124).

The difficulty of the housing situation has resulted in a growth and diversifying of the housing movements London. Numerous demonstrations have been held against high rents, lack of affordable housing or specific regeneration plans. In addition to demonstrations, campaigns employ a range of strategies, from lobbying politicians, spreading information and pushing for legal reviews to designing architectural alternatives and pursuing direct action, such as squatting and blocking lorries at development sites (Watt & Minton 2016, 216). Some analysts like Anna Minton (2017, 111-130) suggest that major changes to the housing situation might arise from community pressure and growing support for participatory, inclusive models.

‘The paradigm shift which requires a new social contract to control foreign investment and fix the broken planning system, housing market and benefits system, is surely the long-term goal in the UK. But in the short term many, many communities are coming together, finding a voice and engaging politically to safeguard the idea that London is a place where people of all incomes and backgrounds can afford to live in mixed communities.’

Minton 2017, 130

### **2.3. Haringey and Haringey Development Vehicle**

To take the discussion to a local and case-specific level, I will now focus on Haringey, where the debate on participation and democratic inclusion was specifically heated in late 2017 and early 2018. Haringey is one of the 33 boroughs in London, situated in a well-connected area north of the city centre. It is home for over 260 000 people, and the population is growing consistently. According to the latest statistics, Haringey’s population is slightly younger than in London on average, and ethnically and socially very diverse. Over 100 languages are spoken among the borough’s residents. (Haringey London 2017: Facts and figures.)

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, Haringey is also one of the most deprived authorities nationally and the 6<sup>th</sup> most deprived borough in London. The index defines deprivation as more than just poverty, using the term to refer to ‘a general lack of resources and opportunities’ (Index

of Multiple Deprivation 2015, 3). However, the situations between different wards within Haringey differ significantly, with areas like Highgate, Crouch End and Muswell Hill in the west of the borough ranking considerably less deprived than the wards in the east. According to the index, the most deprived ward of the borough is Northumberland Park in Tottenham, the district in the north-eastern corner of Haringey. (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015.)

Northumberland Park is now Haringey's Labour council's 'priority regeneration area' (Tottenham London 2017). This regeneration is to be realised through something called Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV), a local housing company (LHC)<sup>4</sup> jointly owned (50:50) by the Haringey council and Lendlease, a large multinational property and construction group. HDV is based on partnership where the council will bring in public land to be developed, and Lendlease will provide cash and its development expertise. According to the council, the 50:50 partnership means that no decisions can be made without the council's approval, and that the two partners will share the returns. The process to develop the joint venture model started in 2015, and a final decision to establish the HDV was made by Haringey Council's Cabinet in July 2017. (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle.)

The regeneration of Northumberland Park estate is an essential part of the HDV plan, but there is more to the project. Other areas and estates included in the first stage of the plan are the former Cranwood care home in Muswell Hill, the council's Civic Centre, and Station Road offices and a library in Wood Green. Overall, the council's plan is to build 6400 new homes over the next 15-20 years. Over time, other parts of the borough will possibly be regenerated as well, in phase 2 of the HDV. (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle.)

The plan is by no means unique, as similar partnerships have been developed around England in recent years. A study conducted by the think tank The Smith Institute estimates that there might be up to 166 LHCs in England, and 38 of those jointly owned, including the HDV (The Smith Institute 2017, 15). Besides the HDV, another well-known example of a LHC is the Sheffield Housing Company. Established in 2011, it has been praised in the media for providing good-quality and low-cost housing (The Guardian 25.3.2017). Also, the number of jointly owned LHCs might increase, according to The Smith Institute's survey for 80 English councils. Sixty percent of the survey respondents said that their council was motivated to establish jointly owned LHCs (The Smith Institute 2017, 20).

Some councils, however, have also given up their plans for similar joint ventures. In a report issued before a committee meeting in September 2017, a HDV-style venture was ruled out of the Camden

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<sup>4</sup> Local housing companies (LHC) are independent commercial organisations that are either fully or partly owned by local councils. They can develop, buy and manage properties both within and outside the local council area. (The Smith Institute 2017.)

council's Community Investment Programme. This was largely due to risks that were seen in putting 'a large number of sites' under one private partnership deal. Instead, the report suggested opting for housing companies that are fully owned by the public authorities. (London Borough of Camden 2017.)

Although the model of the project is not new, HDV has gained a lot of public attention. The project has been a subject of a very heated debate, evoking opposition from residents and their supporters, journalists and politicians. Two local MPs, David Lammy and Catherine West, have raised concerns about the project and appealed to the council to pause it<sup>5</sup>, and Haringey councillors have also opposed the plan. In late 2017, some residents challenged the project in a judicial review. In chapter 3, I will discuss the debate around HDV in more detail, focusing on the disagreements resulting from conflicting perspectives on democratic agency of the locals.

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<sup>5</sup> The letter written by Lammy and West to Haringey council can be read at <https://www.davidlammy.co.uk/single-post/2017/07/03/Haringey-Development-Vehicle-letter> (Viewed 19.1.2018).

### **3. Participatory practices in Haringey**

*'What is happening in Haringey is basically the largest proposed sell-off of council housing in the UK. [...] We are in court today on a number of points of law. The main point is the lack of engagement and consultation with the community.'*

**- Phil Jackson**

I talked to Phil Jackson, quoted above, during a demonstration on 25th of October 2017. The demonstration took place outside the Royal Courts of Justice, where a two-day judicial review of the Haringey Development Vehicle was about to begin. The case for judicial review was initiated by Gordon Peters, a pensioner from Haringey, who successfully gathered £25,000 crowdfunding for the legal proceedings. Peters has started a campaign called *StopHDV*, and several other campaigns and groups have also voiced their opposition to the project.

Approximately 40-50 people stood in front of the building in the morning of the first day of the judicial review. The protesters were holding slogans like 'Stop Council £2 Billion Gamble', 'Our flats are homes NOT investment opportunities' and 'NO communication, NO consultation, NO consent'. The opponents claimed that the council had not followed legislation when establishing the HDV, because the locals had not been properly consulted.

In the following weeks, I interviewed some of the locals involved in the opposition. I also interviewed a representative of Haringey Council to gain another perspective on the debate. Here, I will analyse the material with an aim to provide an insight into Haringey residents' experiences of democratic involvement or exclusion. I do this by evaluating three factors: firstly, the availability and transparency of information on the HDV; secondly, the practices of including citizens in planning and decision-making; and thirdly, differing understandings about the reasons behind the HDV project and regeneration in the area in general. I would like to emphasise that my intention is not to evaluate the HDV project as such. Instead, I wish to explore how the debate could be understood by looking at citizen involvement, and what could be learnt from the events that have unfolded in Haringey.

#### **3.1. Regeneration plans and transparency**

*'Every week when we do the Northumberland Park meeting, every week we get someone coming in and going, "I've just heard my house is going to be demolished!" They [the residents of Northumberland Park] know nothing about it.'*

**- Imelda O'Brien, Haringey resident**

In September 2016, the Northumberland Park Resident Association, in cooperation with the Haringey Council, assigned a survey for all the residents in Northumberland Park to find out how much they know about the regeneration plans for the area they live in. The survey was completed by 379 respondents, which is 36 percent of the residents. 62 percent of those who responded said they knew either 'very little' or 'not much' about regeneration proposals in their area, and a stunning 34 percent said they knew 'nothing at all' (Northumberland Park Regeneration Survey 2016).

Although not based on a survey but personal experiences, Imelda O'Brien's comment from October 2017, above, suggests that a year later there were still many residents who had not been informed about the project. To spread the word among local residents, different campaigning groups had distributed leaflets about the project. Imelda O'Brien described the shock of the people when they saw the leaflets and the area maps including the buildings due for demolition. 'People go "oh my God, my house is on it!"', O'Brien described. She had recently met a resident who thought the leaflets had come from the council. He had thought that was the council consulting him on the project.

Jane Silverman, living in a building managed by a housing association, had reacted strongly to the news that her home might be demolished in a later phase of the HDV.

'I couldn't believe it, it took me two years to believe it was possible what was happening. When I found out that my councillors had voted for it, I was physically sick, I threw up. It has affected my health ever since, because of the stress.'

Silverman had contacted her housing association to ask about their policy in these kinds of situations. According to Silverman, the association replied they had not got any information about the plans from the council and considered Silverman's information to be false. Silverman, however, claimed to have seen a map with her building inside the red line that refers to regeneration in phase two of the project. 'I am left with absolutely no idea what is going to happen to me at all, and what to do', Silverman said.

Some interviewees were also under the impression that the cabinet had not been informed about the project in an adequate and timely manner. The council was publicly accused for not allowing the cabinet members enough time to get familiar with the project, as almost 1500 pages of documents were published only a week before the vote (see *The Guardian* 25.10.2017). Gordon Peters, the initiator of the judicial review, said that one of the main opposition points would be that the HDV was not discussed openly and thoroughly, and therefore the decision to go ahead with the project had not been based on informed and critical debate.

An interviewee from the Haringey council, who I interviewed in December 2017, disagreed with the opposing locals' view. According to this interviewee, cabinet members had held series of meetings, discussions and debates about the HDV well before the vote, which had allowed for them to reach a 'deep, full understanding of the project'. The interviewee pointed out that even if the details had not been available for the public to the same extent, the locals were able to follow the discussion around the project. The interviewee admitted, however, that some of the detailed plans could have been published earlier to give the public more time to familiarize with the details of the project.

In order to obtain more information about the project and the decision-making process, some Haringey residents have used Freedom of Information (Fol) requests. Fol is a legal tool for improving the transparency of public decision-making, introduced in the UK in 2000. Any person making a request of information to a public authority is entitled to know whether or not the authority holds the requested information, and if it does, entitled to receive it (Freedom of Information Act 2000, 1). Phil Jackson, a HDV opponent, said that over 100 Fol requests had been placed regarding the HDV project by the time of interview. Jackson said the responses had helped them find out some 'sickly details' about the project, but some requests had been rejected, and some responses from the council had been considered inadequate by the opponents.

Different models of Fol legislation have become very common around the world in the last decades. Ben Worthy evaluated in 2010 that the model had succeeded in improving transparency and, at least in some cases, accountability in the UK. However, Worthy considered (2010) that Fol legislation had not succeeded in some of its objectives, such as improving public understanding and trust in government. Also, the model allows for the authorities to refuse the Fol request for several reasons. For example, the authorities have the right not to release all details due to privacy reasons, and they are not required to comply with the request at all if the cost of doing so would exceed the 'appropriate limit'. This limit is currently set at £450 per request for local authorities. (Freedom of Information Act 2000, ch. 36, 12 & 69.) The Haringey council has referred to this cost limit with some of the Fol requests regarding the HDV, such as a request to obtain copies of correspondence between the cabinet members and representatives of Lendlease (Freedom of Information Act Request LBH/6230817, 2017).

However, following the pressure, the council has put more emphasis on providing easily accessible information for the public on their website. The efforts include a separate Haringey Development Vehicle FAQs section, where the council aims to correct what they consider to be misunderstandings of the project. However, even after this the locals consider the council to be providing not enough or even misleading information. Gordon Peters criticised the attitude of the council towards the requests of

more information through less formal ways than the FoI requests. He considered the council's attitude to be negative and defensive and focused on the view that all the action taken by the council in relation to the HDV has been done in compliance with legislation.

Whether or not the council was transparent enough about the plans in legal terms remains to be evaluated by a judge, as a result of the judicial review initiated by Peters and other locals. However, whatever the result of the legal process, the local perspective on a lack of transparency is likely to have profound political effects, as it effects the accountability of the local politicians. As noted by Hollyer et al. (2011, 1192) 'transparency may pertain to the very question of whether one can call a political regime "democratic"'. Hollyer et al. claim that although democratically elected governments are not always transparent and do regularly have motives to obfuscate their policy choices, the public pressure to release open data usually overcomes the motives to obfuscate. Voters in democratic societies tend to re-elect governments with transparent policies, especially since social welfare has been noted to increase in transparency. Therefore, transparency affects re-election probabilities and becomes the preferred option for democratic governments. (Hollyer et al. 2011, 1195.)

The availability of timely and adequate information is an essential part of the involvement of the public in policy-making. Although more information might have been available to those who knew where to look for it even before the vote in July 2017, little information was initially aimed at the public. This profoundly effects the local understanding of transparency, and the experiences of inclusion or exclusion in the decision-making process.

### **3.2. Public involvement in decision-making**

*'There was no consultation of all the residents of Haringey before they hand over £2 billion of public asset. And, it was not in the Labour party's manifesto at the elections. So we've never had a say in what's happening.'*

- Paul Nicolson, Haringey resident

The general objection of the HDV opponents is that the local communities have not been properly consulted on the project. Some of the interviewees mentioned that the only 'consultation' there had been was a 'fun day' event, which offered entertainment for the kids while the adults were asked to fill a form on how to improve the area. The consultation these interviewees referred to might have been a survey called Northumberland Strategic Framework Consultation, which was conducted in late 2014. However, the HDV opponents did not consider this to have been a proper consultation. Phil Jackson said the survey was a 'joke' and that the community has been 'taken for granted':

‘They have been asked about renewal in the area and, logically, people have said, we do want change in the area, we want improvement. But the conclusion that has been drawn from that is, we are in favour of demolition. That question was never asked in consultation sessions. It is in none of their documents, it’s in none of their cabinet materials.’

An interviewee from the Haringey council had a very different understanding of the consultation process. According to the interviewee, a ‘very thorough’ consultation had been made, including door-to-door questionnaires, posted questionnaires and a number of focus group meetings. This consultation had been made prior to the decision to establish the HDV, however, and was not a consultation specifically on the project.

The Northumberland Park Strategic Framework Consultation might not have been a consultation directly on the HDV project, and it also seems to have served poorly as a guidance for any regeneration project. According to a report published in early 2015, the consultation included vague statements such as ‘Northumberland Park should be made up of attractive places with a range of different buildings and open spaces’ and ‘Family housing should be in the heart of the area near to schools, improved health facilities and open space’. Also, very leading statements were made, such as ‘Delivering wide-ranging regeneration would help us to create safe, modern and high-quality places, with more opportunities to bring forward the benefits local people want to see’. The statements consistently emphasised the ‘local community’ and ‘local people’. The overwhelmingly optimistic tone of the statements resulted in highly agreeable response rate – almost all the statements were agreed with by over 70 percent of the respondents. Interestingly, one of the statements was ‘Residents should be engaged throughout the regeneration process’, which the respondents also agreed with. The survey did not include questions on specific models for delivering the development, such as jointly owned companies. (Northumberland Park Strategic Framework Consultation Report 2015.)

Leading and superficial questions are a common problem of surveys like the Strategic Framework Consultation. In addition, the respondents often have little to no relevant information available when surveyed, and they usually do not have the chance to prepare their answers by finding information beforehand. Graham Smith (2005) claims that while surveys enable a large number of people to participate, their ability to bring about detailed consultation and empowerment is limited. He therefore recommends other types of consultation and engagement, such as deliberate opinion polls, where citizens are surveyed twice: before and after hearing evidence from a number of specialists. This allows the people to provide considered judgements instead of ‘top-off-their head’ views. (Smith 2005, 28; 42-43.)

In addition to a lack of community consultation, opponents of the HDV claim that the council had failed to consult differing views within the council. The council's own scrutiny committee has twice evaluated the case and called for halting the plans due to numerous concerns. In their report in January 2017, among the principal issues the scrutiny committee identified were the 'democratic deficit', transparency issues and the absence of plans to mitigate the risks of the project (Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, Interim Report 2017). However, this report did not affect the council's plan. When asked about it, the interviewee from Haringey council emphasised the political nature of the report, regarding it simply as a reflection of differing political views between politicians in the scrutiny committee and politicians in the cabinet.

However, the opposing locals discussed the scrutiny report as a critical expert review instead of a political opinion. They were concerned that not enough attention had been paid to the report and that the cabinet did not provide adequate responses to the critical points brought up. The report's critical points are similar to those raised by the residents, and the cabinet's failure to address them was seen as another example of the lack of transparency and critical evaluation. Diana Shelley, a long-term housing activist from Haringey, described how she saw the cabinet's attitude:

'It's power, it's just power, and "we know best", you know. "We designed it, this is the only thing we can do, you're just ignorant pigs."

Many of the opponents have been calling for a ballot on the HDV project. While the interviewee from Haringey council agreed that there would definitely have to be a ballot at some point, they did not think there is anything to ballot until specific plans for certain areas, such as Northumberland Park, have been created. The interviewee also pointed out a number of problems with running a ballot. Firstly, the voters' decisions can be driven various factors, as was exemplified with the case of the Brexit referendum. Secondly, it would be difficult to decide who would be eligible to vote. Should it be only more permanent tenants or also temporary ones, leaseholders and representatives of local businesses? Thirdly, the timing for a ballot could prove difficult. Should the ballot be organised in very early stages of planning regeneration; or when the first plan has been made; or when the project is well planned and almost ready to start?

The informant also referred to the official response of the council in relation to ballots on regeneration schemes, which is originally from the Mayor's Good Practice Guide from 2016: 'Ballots 'can risk turning a complex set of issues that affects different people in different ways over many years into a simple yes/no decision at a single point in time' (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle FAQs). These problems with simple yes/no ballots are widely recognised. As pointed out by the Haringey

council representative, the Brexit referendum is a very important and recent example of how problematic and difficult yes/no votes can be.

However, the yes/no vote is not the only option for organising a ballot. Suggestions to make ballots more sensitive include, among others, multi-choice ballots and preferendums. In multi-choice ballots, voters can choose from a range of yes/no answers the one that best describes their stance, for example 'No with respect to this formulation – but not against the proposal in principle, suggest reformulation and resubmission'. A preferendum also includes several options but is slightly more complicated. For example, voters can have five different options to choose from, and they give each option points: 5 to their most preferred option, 4 to the second preferred option, and so on. (Smith 2005, 81.)

It also needs to be noted that the council also voted on the HDV in July on a yes/no basis. When pointed this out to, the interviewee from the Haringey council emphasised that the cabinet vote was not a simple vote because it was preceded by months or years of discussion, which enabled the cabinet to have 'a very detailed understanding of the issues' and the ability to 'make detailed and complex decisions.' It is not clear, however, why the public could not be included in debates before the vote and also obtain a detailed understanding of the issues before casting their vote. In fact, this approach is favoured by proponents of deliberative democratic practices.

Proponents of deliberative democracy suggest that citizen deliberation should be at the core of political decision-making, allowing for individuals to actively take part in discussing problems and possible solutions. A truly deliberate process would require that the participants are willing to change their preferences based on free public reasoning, inclusion of different interests and mutual respect (Michels & de Graaf 2010, 480). For example, Carole Pateman (2012) discusses 'mini-publics', which are deliberative forums typically commissioned by governments, government agencies or non-governmental organisations. She describes their common features:

- 'Participants are chosen by (almost) random selection to ensure not only that there is no systematic exclusion of any part of the population but also that individuals with certain characteristics are included.
- Deliberation is guided by facilitators and, to help them become informed and to aid their deliberation, the participants receive specially prepared information and hear evidence from, and question, expert witnesses.
- At the end of their deliberation, the participants come to a conclusion about the matter at hand and prepare a report and recommendations.'

Pateman 2012, 8

Although deliberation has been criticised for posing unrealistic demands for citizens, proponents believe that it can result in rational collective decisions (Michels & de Graaf 2010, 480). Deliberative democracy has been a very popular concept in recent years, both among political theorists, governments and civil society groups (Pateman 2012, 7-8). Pateman argues that both historical and contemporary evidence shows that moving towards more deliberate democratic practices is possible, but she questions the political will to do so (Pateman 2012, 15).

Pateman's remarks bring the discussion down to the motivations behind consultation processes. Haringey council might have followed legal requirements for consultation – again, this remains to be evaluated by a judge – but meeting the legal requirements does not necessarily result in a successful consultation. Taking examples from the US, Judith Innes and David Boother (2005) argue that legal requirements might result in 'consultation' that does not meet the basic requirements for a fair consultation and even causes more mistrust among the public. Innes and Boother name five common purposes of public consultation: finding out public preferences; improving decisions by incorporating citizens' knowledge; advancing fairness and justice; obtaining legitimacy for decisions made; and following legal requirements. They criticise the first three purposes for being inadequate and the last two for not being justified purposes at all. (Innes & Boother 2005, 423.)

Instead, Innes and Boother suggest that two new purposes are emerging to develop consultation practices: to build civil society and to 'create an adaptive, self-organizing polity capable of addressing wicked problems [Rittel & Webber, 1973] in an informed and effective way' (Innes & Boother 2005, 423). In the case of Haringey, the discussion on purposes of consultation brings us back to the purposes of the whole regeneration project. This is another point where the understandings of the opponents of the project and the council conflict.

### **3.3. Development for who?**

*'The HDV has not been able to demonstrate in any way how its establishment and operation will change things for the better, especially in such an unpredictable economic climate. The council putting all its development "eggs in the HDV basket" in such an untested way is being irresponsible with public money.'*

**- Gordon Peters, StopHDV**

The homes included in the HDV project area are mostly in brick buildings of different sizes. Most buildings are low-scale, but there are some taller ones, such as the Stellar House and the Kenneth Robbins House, which both have over 15 storeys. There is a workout area and a playground amongst the blocks. Many of the buildings are quite old, as the housing stock is in many parts of London. Some of

the buildings would need maintenance, while others are in a good condition. Some council buildings in the area have already been refurbished through the council's Decent Homes programme (Northumberland Park Strategic Framework Report 2015, 35).

On a rainy Sunday evening in January 2018, Northumberland Park was quiet, with very few people out in the rain. In front of Stellar House, I talked to a resident who was taking grocery bags out of his car with two children. He looked serious when I asked him about the regeneration plans and pointed out to the buildings that would be demolished under HDV. His family had lived there for about a year and a half, and he said they like the area and their home in Stellar House.

Interviews with the opponents of the HDV, on one hand, and with a Haringey council representative, on the other, reveal strikingly different understandings about what the HDV represents as a project and why it is being planned. The differences start with views on whether or not there is a need for such large-scale regeneration. All the people I talked to agreed that there is generally a need for development in Haringey, but the need for demolition was questioned by many. Jane Silverman's elderly friend had moved to Northumberland Park only a few years before and owns her home as a freeholder<sup>6</sup>. According to Silverman, the friend considers her apartment to be her 'dream home'. The interviewee from the Haringey council, in contrast, called Northumberland Park a 'terrible estate'. This informant described walking around the area at night as a very unpleasant experience, with severe visible damage and even faeces and urine 'everywhere'.

The area did not seem to match this description when I visited it in January 2018. However, Northumberland Park is a ward that suffers from high levels of income poverty, deprivation and unemployment, and it does have a relatively high crime level – although not the highest in Haringey (Haringey London 2018: Crime). Social problems exist, and also the opponents of the HDV have been clear about this. However, they question the possibility to improve the situation through the council's regeneration plan. Phil Jackson said:

'There are a lot of challenges within Tottenham, but there is also community cohesion. You are breaking that up and not even taking it into account.'

When asked if replacing the buildings with new ones would be an appropriate way to address the alleged social problems, the Haringey council representative said that regeneration plan goes much further than building new homes. According to the representative, the plan is to improve the whole

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<sup>6</sup> Freeholding means owning the apartment or house. In England and Wales, it is common to buy leasehold properties, which means that the tenant only owns their home for a set period of time. When the lease comes to an end, the property ownership returns to the freeholder (sometimes referred to as the landlord).

area, including schools and local shops, in order to tackle the problems faced by the residents on a larger scale. However, the council has not been very clear about such a plan. In fact, one of the points of debate has been whether the current tenants would even be given the opportunity to stay in the area. In the original agreement with Lendlease, it was stated that the plan would be to 'prioritise a single move for residents rather than Right of Return'<sup>7</sup> and to 'not allow for rehousing of housing association tenants' (Haringey London Public Appendices 2017, 108, sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2).

According to the council interviewee this plan has been changed, because the council's own Estate Renewal Rehousing and Payments Policy (Haringey London 2017: Estate Renewal Rehousing and Payments Policy) was updated in October 2017, and the original plan with Lendlease must therefore be revised as well. The guarantee for a right to return on similar terms has since been promoted by the council. The FAQ page designated for HDV on the council website declares:

'We have been clear in our guarantee that existing tenants will have a guaranteed right of return on equivalent terms.' (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle FAQs)

However, this guarantee was all but absent in the original plan made with Lendlease, and this fact understandably raises doubts about the targets set for the whole project. Some opponents have gone as far as calling the project 'social cleansing', saying that the purpose is to drive away the low-income and unemployed residents living in the area and attract wealthier ones. Gordon Peters said that it is a common strategy of councils to give some areas or buildings 'a bad name', and in this way, justify the need to demolish and rebuild. Silverman had a similar view:

'There are people who think that Northumberland park is full of unemployed coke dealers or something, I don't know... They always put it down as improving the area, not giving it to a developer.'

The doubts have been further emphasised by the confusion around how many social rented units will be built as a part of the HDV. In August 2017, the council's response to a Freedom of Information Request revealed that only about 30 percent of the new housing in Wood Green and Northumberland Park would be 'affordable', and no social rented units were mentioned (Freedom of Information Act Request LBH/6473317, 2017). Later, the council stated that the number of affordable housing built through the HDV would be 40 percent. It has highlighted that for Haringey, 'affordable' does not refer to the usual

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<sup>7</sup> The Right to Return refers to giving the existing residents the possibility to return to the estate after the regeneration process has been finished. The Mayor's draft Good Practice Guide to Regeneration recommends: "Landlords should offer tenants who have to move off the estate while works are underway a full right to return to a property of a suitable size, at the same or similar level of rent, the same level of security of tenure and with the appropriate design features." (Mayor of London 2016: Homes for Londoners, 28.)

80 percent of average local rents<sup>8</sup>, but to a ‘Haringey-specific definition’, which is defined ‘relative to their income rather than local prices or rents’ (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle FAQs).

At the time of writing, the council has remained unable to provide an official estimate on the number of social rented units to be built as a part of the HDV. In December 2017, the interviewee from Haringey council estimated that there would probably be slightly less social rented units than before, but the number of social rented rooms would be more or less the same. This would allow for some families currently living in very small apartments to move into bigger ones. According to this informant, instead of being council housing, these social rented units would most likely be rented through housing associations. The interviewee admitted that the council could have been clearer in stating the plans for social rented homes in the HDV plan, but also thought that opponents had been deliberately ignoring the council’s plans to build social rented units.

If the interviewee’s estimation above was realised, the current tenants would at least in theory have a right to return, and those families living in overcrowded apartments could have the needed opportunity to move into bigger homes. However, the number of social housing units would be less than before, and the striking queue of almost 10,000 people waiting for a social rented home in Haringey would not be affected. The Haringey council representative said that while there is definitely a need to build more social rented or at least affordable housing, this is not the aim of a regeneration plan like the HDV. This might generally be true about regeneration plans but, interestingly, the need to build new homes is one of the council’s key arguments for why the HDV project is needed. The web page devoted for HDV reads:

‘Our vision for Haringey is based on the principle that growth – in new homes, and new jobs – is essential to the future of our borough. Our residents need new homes to tackle the rising cost of housing and increased homelessness, and new jobs to improve their incomes and prospects. [...] The HDV will be an essential tool for us to deliver on our promise to residents to put new homes and new jobs at the centre of our ambition for the borough.’ (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle)

In addition, there is still the concern that the plans to build any number of social rented housing could be severely affected by a viability assessment. The controversial ‘viability assessment’ refers to a range of ways to evaluate development plan viability, which can be challenged by changes in the economic situation and a scale of ‘obligations and policy burdens’ (Gov.uk 2014: Viability). Lendlease has made

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<sup>8</sup> The term “affordable housing” has raised much controversy in the UK since 2011, when the government set its definition for the “Affordable Rent product”, which would be a form of social housing made available at a rent level up to 80% of gross market rents (Homes and Communities Agency 2011, 15). Considering the average rent levels especially in London, 80% of the market rate is not really “affordable” for most Londoners.

viability assessments in its controversial past. At the time of writing, Lendlease was working in Elephant and Castle on a regeneration project in cooperation with the Southwark council. The project includes demolishing Heygate Estate, which was a large council estate with about 3,000 homes of mostly social rent. After a controversial viability assessment, Lendlease reduced the number of social rented units to be built on the site down to a striking number of 82 units. The other apartments being built as a part of the project include only about 25% of 'affordable' rent (Lendlease: Elephant Park, no date). The residents who used to live in the almost 2,000 social rented homes of Heygate have been spread across not only London, but other parts of England as well, and many have reported that they are struggling with depression and social isolation after moving away from their former home area. (Minton 2017, 34-37.)

The Haringey council representative interviewed for this paper, however, was not concerned about possible viability assessments in the HDV case. The representative argued that while it is natural for a private business to seek as much profit as possible, it is the responsibility of the local authorities to make sure that the private developer will not find ways around the agreement that has been made with the local council.

'Private sector partners are not there to improve life of the public. Their job is to make money. Our job is to look after the local population.'

However, this exactly what the opponents of the HDV are worried about; the council getting involved with a private company whose only aim is to make profit. The protesters outside the Royal Courts on 25 October 2017 considered the joint venture to be practically the same as selling two billion worth of council land off to a private developer. Gordon Peters considered it misleading to talk about a joint venture as it masks the profit-oriented nature of the project. He thought the council would not have true power over the project, as they lack the expertise and resources of a company like Lendlease. All the opponents interviewed voiced similar concerns. Phil Jackson worried about losing control over the public land:

'Once it's sold, you preclude any other option. You preclude new council homes, you preclude renovation, you preclude a whole series of other options.'

The council has assured that with a joint venture, it can 'retain a share of control and a share in the future proceeds' (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle FAQs). The Haringey council interviewee pointed out that a 50:50 joint venture would actually be a better option than if the council owned a majority, because with a council majority the project would be subject to a number of government-imposed 'constraints'. Perhaps ironically, one of them is the Right to Buy scheme (see

section 2.1.). If Haringey owned a majority of the new company, it would be a public company and, according to the council representative, it would have to be included in the Right to Buy scheme. The council would then be required to offer the tenants a right to buy their home. Because of this, the Haringey council informant argued that owning only 50 percent would actually protect the public asset.

At the time of writing, the issue of who would actually own and manage the apartments under HDV was yet to be decided (Haringey London 2017: Haringey Development Vehicle FAQs). Whether or not they would actually be realised, the interviewee's point on government-imposed 'constraints' highlights the complexity of the councils' working environment and the control the central government might impose upon them. These constraints are something to consider also for the opponents.

In the Haringey council representative's view, a jointly owned housing company is the best option for development at the moment. Other options would be regenerating the area alone by the council, or giving a private company all the responsibility for the development. According to the informant, the first option is impossible in the current economic situation and under the current government, and the latter would be the worst option. The informant added that while deals with the private sector are never easy due to conflicting interests, they are a 'sensible' way forward – the only way of doing things 'if you want to make development to happen'.

Still, this interviewee would be open for other options, if the cabinet decided to reject the HDV project. According to the council informant, there are compelling arguments for the HDV, but also compelling arguments against it, and as someone working for the cabinet they would support the cabinet in whatever the course it decides to take. This course, in fact, might well change in the near future.

## **4. Towards more democratic city planning?**

### **4.1. Lessons learned from Haringey**

*'The council has not told me that they want to... they are not telling me anything, my councillor is not telling me anything, she says there is no way of knowing what is going to happen. And I said, if you didn't know what was going to happen, how could you vote for it? You're my councillor, you represent your constituency, that is the only point of you.'*

- **Jane Silverman**

Jane Silverman's comment, above, reflects one perspective to what lies at the core of the HDV debate. She thinks that representative democracy has failed in Haringey, and the public authorities have not fulfilled their duties. Silverman's view has been shared by many HDV opponents, who believe that the local authorities have failed to pursue development that would benefit the locals they represent. While the local authorities claim the local benefit is exactly what they are pursuing, they have failed to convince many locals with their methods and rhetoric. In the previous chapter, I discussed some main points of argument related to the HDV case. In this chapter, I wish to provide a brief summary of what could be learned from the events in Haringey.

Chapter 3.1. discussed the opponents' view of a lack of adequate and timely information on the HDV project. While more information might have been available to those who knew where and how to look for it, it was considered hard to reach by the locals. The example of publishing over 1,000 pages of technically detailed documents only a few days before a crucial vote illustrates that the material available was not meant for informing the public; and the survey for Northumberland Park residents revealed that the information had been slow to reach those who would be most affected by the project. Following public pressure, the local council has since devoted an area on their website for explaining the HDV project and tried to be more approachable about the plans. However, the information provided later partly conflicts with what the locals had already found out about earlier project plans, such as the Right to Return policy. The council seems to have underestimated the local demand for information in the early stages of planning. While they might have done what they were legally required to do, the political consequences of not appearing transparent (see Hollyer et al 2011) cannot be underestimated.

Chapter 3.2 looked into the involvement of the local residents in HDV decision-making. Basically, the opposing locals have pushed for more involvement in all stages of the regeneration project, while the council's approach has been to trust professionals with the planning and involve the locals only when

detailed proposals need to be consulted upon. Both approaches are technically possible in a representative democracy. However, as pointed out in the beginning of this paper, the latter view has long been challenged by proponents of participatory democracy as being inadequate. Brian Wampler examines how participatory institutions have emerged within representative democracies due to the perception that 'representative democracy is unable, on its own, to improve the quality of state performance, to allow citizens to exercise voice and vote in public arenas, to educate and empower citizens, and to make better use of scarce public resources' (Wampler 2012, 667). Wampler's focus is on Brazil, but the development of participatory practices has been a global phenomenon since 1960s and has also affected, as described in chapter 2.1, housing practices in the UK.

Citizen involvement has been noted to have many positive effects on democracy: it makes people feel more responsibility of public matters, increases public engagement, encourages people to listen to various opinions and contributes to the legitimacy of decisions (Michels & De Graaf 2010). Participatory institutions can promote social justice by involving people from all social backgrounds (Wampler 2012, 668). However, involving citizens in political processes is by no means simple. In reality, participatory practices can fail to represent all relevant groups and interests (Michels & De Graaf 2010), instead favouring 'the strongest' and excluding groups with few resources and low status (Paddison et al 2008, 132). In such settings, the 'community representation' differs very little from traditional representative democracy: they simply become 'substitute forums in which the voices of some of the people come to stand for the whole' (Hirst 2002 in Paddison et al 2008, 132). While different methods have been developed to include people from a variety of social backgrounds, for example through selecting participants for 'mini-publics' (Pateman 2012), as described in chapter 3.2, the problem of representation is often relevant.

However, the criticism for citizen involvement attempts often fails to fully comprehend the approach of deliberative practices. As discussed in chapter 3.2, 'deliberative democracy' is based on providing information and platforms for debate, which then serves as a basis for decision-making. This is a key aspect of citizen involvement: its aim is not only to include another group of people to vote for or against a certain issue, but to provide platforms to educate and discuss. Participatory democracy should be based on the idea that those most affected by certain policies or practices are also capable to comprehend and debate the issue that affects them, and bring into discussion their own knowledge, experience and ideas. Reaching such a setting might require a change of perspective, not only from the policymakers but also from the citizens, who need to also be ready to change their views based on an informed debate.

Participatory practices and institutions can increase the connection between citizens and government officials (Wampler 2012, 666). This is clearly needed in Haringey; as chapter 3.3 illustrated, the opposing locals and the council have become very distant in their views on how to pursue local development. This situation is one of deep distrust, and it has been caused by many issues related to communication, transparency and inclusion, some of which have been presented in this paper. The differences between the two sides eventually became difficult enough to be contested in legal terms, in the judicial review that took place in the end of 2017. Regardless of the result, the review itself symbolises need for reconsidering local democratic practices. In late 2017, it was already evident that the public pressure would result in some significant changes in the political make-up of the council, and possibly also the democratic practices. The councillors who had been in favour of the HDV have been overwhelmingly replaced with anti-HDV candidates for the local elections, which was to take place in May 2018.

However, it is important to notice that the locals also need to be conscious of the criticism towards participatory practices and ready to engage in a thorough debate about the alternatives for the future of Haringey. The view of the opposing locals has been very dominant, perhaps for good reasons, but it is hard to estimate how many locals disagree with the opponents. One of the interviewees, Imelda O'Brien, acknowledged that there are locals with differing views. She also thought that the council has done good work in other sectors, which might have been ignored amid the debate around the HDV.

'I suppose because we are in this group and we think, we feel the way we do, you are kind of used to talking to people with similar ideas.'

In addition, the opponents also need to consider the wider political and economic environment that the council operates in. There is a need for a more wider renewal in the field of housing and city planning than that of only one borough.

In December 2017, I got the chance to discuss with James Clark, who is a Senior Manager of Housing Strategy at the Greater London Authority (GLA), about how Londoners are involved in housing-related projects on the city level. While most of our discussion falls out of the scope of this paper, I wish to raise some points that might be relevant in the context of Haringey and its residents.

## **4.2. Future orientations for London**

*'Wherever works are being undertaken to improve or regenerate an estate, the affected residents must be closely involved in proposals from the very start.'*

**Mayor of London 2017: London Housing Strategy (draft), 159**

In September 2017, the Mayor Sadiq Khan published a new draft Housing Strategy to guide London housing development. The draft includes several points aimed for improving the inclusion of citizens, which, if realised, might also push for more inclusive and deliberative practices in the boroughs.

Firstly, the draft policy makes suggestions for transparency of housing projects. For instance, it reserves the Mayor a right to publish viability assessments, and he is 'strongly encouraging' that the councils publish them as well. The Mayor does not have the power to force councils to publish viability assessments, but Clark thought it only a matter of time when the councils would start to do so.

'I am not too concerned because eventually we are moving away from viability assessments [...]. Fewer schemes will have them, and any of the big schemes now come to the Mayor – anything over 150 units comes to the Mayor<sup>9</sup>, and we would routinely publish all the information now.'

Publishing all the viability assessments, and especially eventually giving up the whole scheme, would be an important victory for the transparency of housing schemes. A lot of the work to achieve this has been done by community groups, however. The group *35% campaign*, initiated by locals in Elephant & Castle, managed to obtain and publish the viability assessment of the Lendlease regeneration in Heygate estate. In addition, the group has published several other viability assessments on their website<sup>10</sup> and even a 'Viability for Dummies' handbook, which gives detailed instructions on how to obtain viability assessments. The campaign group has caused wide media pressure, and as a result, three boroughs (Islington, Greenwich and Southwark) made the process of viability testing more transparent. Arguably, the pressure has influenced the Mayor's policies as well.

The draft policy also emphasises including the residents in regeneration projects, although it also maintains a cautiously positive perspective to 'some examples of estate regeneration':

'Wherever works are being undertaken to improve or regenerate an estate, the affected residents must be closely involved in proposals from the very start. While the record of estate regeneration is, in general, a positive one, and schemes usually deliver high quality new homes, an improved public realm, and new or improved facilities, such as schools or community centres, the Mayor recognises the public concerns over some examples of estate regeneration and wants to use his position to help address them.'

Mayor of London 2017: London Housing Strategy (draft), 159-160

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<sup>9</sup> While the councils essentially have the power to decide on housing development in their area, the Mayor has to be consulted on all schemes that are of 'potential strategic importance'. This involves, for example, all housing schemes of 150 residential units or more. (Mayor of London [no date]: What powers does the Mayor have for planning applications?).

<sup>10</sup> <http://35percent.org> (Viewed 15.1.2018)

However, these are just recommendations. More Mayor's recommendations were published in late 2016 in Good Practice Guide for estate regeneration (Mayor of London 2016: Homes for Londoners). The draft guide emphasises that regeneration should never result in a loss of social housing units in projects that receive funding from the GLA, and even in the projects that do not receive such funding, loss of affordable units should be 'avoided' (Mayor of London 2016: Homes for Londoners, 11). The guide also sets principles for consultation engagement, stating it should be transparent, extensive, responsive and meaningful. The last two principles refer to the need for the consultation process to be taken into account and to be followed by direct, clear actions. When the landlord does not agree with the views presented in a consultation, it should give explanations 'for the course of action taken' (Mayor of London 2016: Homes for Londoners, 14).

Some of Mayor's recommendations have been adopted by the councils. As mentioned in chapter 3.2, the Haringey council has quoted the Good Practice Guide in their stance on organising a ballot on the HDV. The guide recommends using surveys and meetings instead of ballots, because the latter can 'risk turning a complex set of issues that affects different people in different ways over many years into a simple 'yes/no' decision at a single point in time' (Mayor of London 2016: Homes for Londoners, 19).

Some of the HDV opponents I interviewed also wondered if the Mayor would be capable to directly influence the council's plans in Haringey. The reality is, however, that the Mayor cannot halt regeneration plans made by the council, at least not until a development scheme of 150 units or more is presented to him for consultation. He could use his position create political pressure on the councils, but Khan has stayed largely aside of the HDV debate and other similar local debates. Instead, he seems to opt for a role as a mediator.

While Khan is not intervening with the local debates very often, he is suggesting for more measures to improve the inclusion of communities in other aspects. For example, he suggests creating a 'Community-led Housing Hub' to support communities who wish to take responsibility of building new homes. James Clark explained in the interview that the hub is based on the discovery that community-led housing projects are often initiated by amateur groups who do not have experience in how to navigate the planning system, get building permits and the like. The hub, Clark explained, would be an independent community-led space, where these groups and individuals could find technical advice on a range of issues related to house building. However, at the time of interview, the funding of the hub was yet to be defined.

The draft regeneration guide also mentions neighbourhood planning (Mayor of London 2016: Homes for Londoners, 16), which allows for the residents to develop their own plan for regeneration and development in their area. A neighbourhood plan has the official status of a planning application, and it is required to go through a local referendum. In addition, local communities can grant planning permission for the types of development they want to see in their area, or reject ones they do not want to see, through Neighbourhood Development Orders. (Gov.uk 2014: Neighbourhood Planning.) Also in Haringey, one neighbourhood plan was adopted in 2017, and it now has legal effect as a part of Haringey's statutory development plan (Haringey London 2017: Highgate Neighbourhood Plan Adoption Statement).

The neighbourhood planning system was only introduced in 2011, and it is still quite hard to evaluate the effects of the model. It has been fairly well welcomed, but early evaluations suggest the model entails a high risk of the plans being rescripted or downplayed due to a large number of parties involved in the process (Parker et al 2015). Also, James Clark saw a risk of encouraging 'nimbyism'<sup>11</sup> with the neighbourhood development orders. While most Londoners would agree that new housing is urgently needed, they are often eager to resist new housing projects in their own neighbourhood, and the development orders provide a tool for this type of resistance.

The neighbourhood planning system is, however, a tool that could provide a fresh perspective to community involvement in city-planning and encourage people to take part in creating new solutions. As such, Clark believes it could challenge the practices based on resisting and opposition.

'I think the frustration sometimes is that the UK system tends to force people into quite oppositional role. Communities tend to oppose things – they don't really have an opportunity to support or shape things.'

The right and power to oppose unwanted development remains important, even though the risk of some individuals and groups trying to abuse this power is not likely to disappear. However, expanding the potential role of the citizen beyond opposition is very important when considering future models of participatory democracy. In deliberate participation, individuals are seen as potential sources of information and ideas, not only as recipients of information and opponents of suggestions. In a deliberative setting, the citizens are also bound by the obligation to discuss and evaluate views different to their own, which might discourage 'nimbyism' and other misuse of power.

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<sup>11</sup> "Nimby" is an abbreviation of the words Not In My Back Yard. It refers to objecting "the siting of something perceived as unpleasant or hazardous in their own neighbourhood, especially while raising no such objections to similar developments elsewhere" (Oxford Dictionaries: Nimby, no date. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nimby>).

While various measures are experimented by the Mayor and the GLA for more community inclusion, Clark sees some challenges in discovering and implementing them. One challenge is getting people involved. The Housing Strategy draft itself was consulted upon, and the public consultation had just ended at the time of the interview with Clark. The consultation had been focused on online platforms including an online survey and 'Talk London' online discussion forums, where people were encouraged to take part in a discussion on a specific part of the housing strategy. The discussions were moderated by public advisors, who would occasionally step in to ask more questions from the public and clarify details.

Despite much effort put into this consultation, the public survey was completed by only around 2000 Londoners, and the discussion on the forums had also been quite slow. Interviewed shortly after the consultation had ended, Clark did not yet have an explanation to the lack of public interest.

Lack of political engagement is, however, a typical problem of representative democracies, and it often persists in deliberative practices as well. A common reason behind the reluctance to participate is the belief that the engagement will not have any impact on policies. This is often based on earlier disappointments regarding participation on personal, community or wider levels. Ank Michels and Laurens De Graaf (2010, 489) suggest that in order to encourage participation, governments and other authorities need to be clear on what kind of contribution is expected from the citizens and how their input will be used.

To consult organisations, local authorities and businesses on the same Housing Strategy Draft, the GLA had organised workshops and other discussions. These sessions were intended to give the participants a chance to learn more about the plans, question and debate them. These debates would serve as a basis for the organisations to help them to prepare their official written responses. At least from GLA's point of view, these sessions had been successful, as they had been attended by representatives from around 300 different organisations and managed to provoke critical discussion and debate. It is hard to evaluate the success of such events without interviewing any of the participating organisations. Nevertheless, the experience of organising such events could be used by the GLA to develop targeted 'mini-publics' for groups of citizens (see Pateman 2012; chapter 2.2. in this paper), in order to allow for anyone to take part in learning more about and contributing to different plans and projects.

Finally, though, experimenting with such projects often comes down to resources. While Clark was clearly interested in and experienced with discovering participatory methods, he regretted that the GLA has limited time for such a task. Naturally, new methods also need to be secured adequate funding, and the question of funding remained in GLA's plan to start a community hub.

In 2012, Carole Pateman concluded her discussion on participatory democracy with the following remarks. They illustrate the main obstacles in the way of developing participatory practices – which still remain relevant today.

‘[T]he problem is no longer whether participatory democracy is feasible; the empirical evidence, both from 40 years ago and today, shows that making substantive steps towards creating a participatory democracy is quite possible. The question I want to leave you with is whether, in the rich countries, there is any longer either the political culture or the political will to pursue genuine democratization.’

(Pateman 2012, 15)

## **5. Conclusions**

In this paper, I have illustrated the complexity of the Haringey case by discussing arguments made by both sides of the debate. Naturally, this discussion was far from exhaustive, and both sides would probably have wanted to add many more details. However, the point was not to focus on whether or not the Haringey Development Vehicle is a good idea or compete with arguments from the different sides of the debate. My point was to show some core issues that have led to the situation of a wide public debate, numerous protests and even a judicial review initiated by the locals and inspire discussion on how deliberative practices could be used in city-planning of the future.

The locals I interviewed for this paper share an experience of being excluded from the HDV project. They argue that the council has not published information about the project in a timely and adequate manner, and that they should have been consulted since the beginning of the project. The council, on the other hand, considers that enough information has been provided, and that the project is in such an early stage that the time for formal consultation has not come yet. The locals and the council also have very differing views of what the project is about and who it is aimed for; the council claims to be pursuing the best interest of the locals, while the opposing residents think that the council's approach is focused on gaining profit and changing the social structure of the area.

There surely exists misunderstanding, exaggeration and bitterness on both sides of the debate. However, my aim has been to indicate that a core problem lies in how resident participation is viewed by both the locals themselves, on the one hand, and the authorities, on the other. The locals consider that they should have been involved as active participants and contributors since the beginning, but the council did not initially aim much information to the public or organise proper consultation in the early stages of planning. The differing views on involving the locals, as well as specific details of the project and the decision-making process, have lead many locals disillusioned, distrustful and dissatisfied with their democratic representatives. The situation might well be difficult enough for the locals to push many of their opponents out of the debate through de-selecting them as political figures. While the debate between these two sides might therefore be soon over, it should continue to receive attention, as it is an example to be learnt from both for the future councils in Haringey, other councils and the city-level in London, and more widely in discussions related to participatory democracy.

I began this paper with a brief introduction on how various forms of participatory democracy have been discussed globally especially since the 1960s, and elaborated on how these discussions have affected the practices within the specific sphere of resident participation in the UK. Throughout my exploration into the HDV debate, I gave small examples of how proponents of more resident participation have thought

differently or developed different approaches to similar issues. These different approaches rely heavily on deliberation and the view that a member of the public can be a source of ideas, knowledge and commitment, instead of being simply a recipient of a service. The examples given in this paper are far from exhaustive and have been placed merely as an inspiration for discovering alternative practices. More extensive research would be needed to evaluate what specific participatory practices could work in Haringey and in other similar settings.

Undoubtedly, there are also various challenges to any participatory practice. Some important difficulties were raised in the interview with James Clark from the London Greater Authority, as we discussed the participatory practices the city has experience with. For example, it is often difficult to make participatory practices truly participatory and representative, as it might be hard to involve people in general or representatives from specific social groups. Some proponents of participatory practices have suggested ways of addressing these issues, such as focusing on clear links between the participatory practices and their impact on policies or practices. Clark also pointed out that a general problem with citizen participation in the UK housing sector is that it mostly places the residents in an oppositional role instead of viewing them as potential participants in the planning itself. Some new measures that have been or are being introduced in London were mentioned in this paper, such as neighbourhood planning or the Housing Hub. Further investigation into these practices might yield detailed insights into how these specific measures might or might not improve citizen participation and community involvement.

Overall, mapping and investigating these practices of participatory democracy are important due to their potential in making people feel more responsibility of public matters, encouraging people to listen to various opinions, and contributing to the legitimacy of decisions (Michels & De Graaf 2010). The perspectives of deliberative democracy might improve the decision-making process across a broad range of issues and on various levels of decision-making. In the context of city like London, where the housing situation might be described almost desperate, wider citizen involvement has been suggested to have the potential to change things drastically (see e.g. Minton 2017). This would require a change of perspective, most importantly from the policymakers on various levels but also from the citizens themselves, who need to be ready to participate and critically evaluate different sides to the given issue.

### **Epilogue: Recent developments in Haringey**

Since I conducted the interviews in late 2017, the debate around the HDV has taken some new turns. In November-December 2017, several pro-HDV councillors of the Labour party were either replaced or

stepped down as candidates for the next council elections, to be held in May. However, in January the sitting council still had the power to push the project forward before stepping down. Concerned with this, 22 Labour councillors opposed to the project contacted the Labour National Executive Committee, which took an unusual decision to intervene in local party politics and urge the council to halt the project (The Guardian 23.1.2018). Shortly after, the Labour council leader Claire Kober announced her decision to step down. She reported having been targeted with personal attacks, sexism and bullying by her own party members (The Guardian 30.1.2018).

On 8 February 2018, the High Court decision on the judicial review was declared. The judge refused the review on all counts presented by Gordon Peters and his fellow campaigners, who decided to appeal. In addition to opposing the HDV, the campaign group says it wants to 'establish the legal responsibility for councils to consult meaningfully about estate "regeneration"' (StopHDV.com 5.3.2018). In relation to the HDV, the opponents already are in a strong position. As she announced her resignation, councillor Kober declared that she 'does not intend to take the final decisions required for the setup of the HDV prior to the start of the pre-election', as she 'considers it appropriate that any such final decisions are taken post the local government elections in May' (Haringey London 30.1.2018). At the time of writing, it looks very likely that most of the new councillors elected in May will be opponents of the HDV project. The future course taken in Haringey remains to be seen, but the time might be very fruitful for experimenting with new participatory practices.

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