Beyond the Boys' Club?

Women's Contribution to

Governance of Housing Associations

in Wales

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Abstract

This thesis explores women's contribution to governance through a study of two housing associations in Wales. Whilst housing policy has developed to enhance the role of housing associations, governance and accountability, women are still underrepresented in senior and executive management roles, and are underrepresented at the strategic decision making structures, boards of management.

The aims of the research were to: uncover the organisational typology and culture; the governance structures and prevailing board cultures of the housing associations; explore the motivations of board members' participation and uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation and empowerment.

The research used an in-depth case study format with interviews with key informants from the housing sector and Welsh Government; exploratory interviews with the executive teams and board members; discourse analysis of corporate documentation and direct observation of board meetings. The research process developed a unique theoretical framework which was wide ranging, to explore the research aims of governance; organisational typology and culture; empowerment; participation and power dynamics.

The research found that whilst housing associations are not inherently sexist, the governance structures, typologies, organisational cultures, routes to participation and power dynamics operated at board level inhibit female participation on boards of management. Housing associations failed to consider the lack of gender and wider diversity on their boards of management. Housing associations have failed to address the situations where dominant members on boards of management hold onto their power, and influence the majority of the decisions made, to the possible detriment of the tenants. Governance and recruitment arrangements are based on a need to preserve the strategic and policy focus on finance, risk, legal and governance issues, and as it is mainly men who are involved in these professions, it is ultimately their views which direct the organisations.

Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Signed …………………………………… (candidate)   Date 30th September 2014

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This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

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This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The views expressed are my own.

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Acknowledgements

Dedication

Dedicated to my wonderful supportive parents

Sandra Marina Oliver and Philip George Gareth Oliver

"You must make women count as much as men"

Emmeline Pankhurst

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Index of Abbreviations

CDA   Critical Discourse Analysis

CHC   Community Housing Cymru

LSVT   Large Scale Voluntary Transfer

LTPS   Local Tenant Participation Strategy

NHF   National Housing Federation

NTPS   National Tenant Participation Strategy

TPAS   Tenant Participation Advisory Service

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research focuses on female participation on boards of management of housing associations, considering the gendered nature of participation in high-level strategic decision making processes; the role of participation as a route of empowerment for women; the influence of the organisational culture on participation; the power relationships on boards of management between women and their peers; and the typology of governance structures on participation, and empowerment of women.

This introductory chapter explains the rationale behind the research and outlines the research aims and objectives to be investigated. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the structure and content of the thesis which follow.

1.2 Background and Rationale

Gender inequalities in housing are manifestations of wider inequalities in society; indeed, housing its self can create disadvantages or advantages for an individual. By focussing on the social housing sector, and more specifically the housing association service in Wales, which houses some of the most marginalised in society, this research identifies female participation on boards of management of housing associations as a forum to become empowered and to exercise some control and a position in the decision making processes that affect other women.

Top down approaches for increasing the equality of women as citizens, such as legislative interventions of the Equal Pay Act, 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act, 1979, have to some extent succeeded in combating, or at least increasing the awareness of the inequality of women. However, in spite of these policies and legislation for equality, substantive equality has yet to be achieved (Young, 1998), and is unlikely to be eradicated by the passing of mere legislation. Chapman (1995) and Edwards (1995), state that there is a need for women to fight from the bottom up.

There is a considerable body of literature addressing women's relationships with housing at the social, economic and political levels. Watson and Austerberry (1986), consider women and homelessness; Little, Richardson and Peake (1988) consider design and the environment; Morris and Winn (1990) consider the inequalities in housing access; Darke (1994) considers the meaning of home for women; and, Coatham and Hale (1994) address the careers of women in housing departments.

Whilst there have been numerous studies in the practice and implementation of tenant participation, in relation to men, there is very little comment on the issues of female participation with housing organisations – other than Hood and Woods (1994), who note that women play the initial role in initiating tenant associations, community involvement and regeneration initiatives, women are given very little comment. There is no research available on the participation of women at the higher strategic ends of participation – namely on boards of management of housing associations. This lack of attention to gender issues has resulted in a neglect of the important actors within the decision making processes of social housing organisation, which warrants further, deeper analysis.

As a qualitative research case study analysis, delving into the inner workings of boards of management of two housing associations in Wales, analysing the participation of females on housing association boards of management, organisational culture, power and governance, this piece of research will make a unique contribution to the existing knowledge in the field of social housing and the study of social housing organisations.

From a theoretical perspective, this research develops existing theory relating to participation, and linking it to the concept of organisational culture, power and governance to explore female participation on the boards of management of two housing associations. In this way, this research will link the theoretical framework in an empirically rich case study research project.

1.3   Research Aims and Objectives

The research aim is to: *"explore women's contribution to governance of housing associations in Wales"*.

For the researcher, inherent to this topic were specific questions about female participation in decision-making structures of housing associations, but broader, there were underlying questions about:

- If housing associations were providing the majority of accommodation to female headed households, because they were excluded from other forms of housing consumption, why are they underrepresented in the decision making structures of these organisations?
- What are the key barriers for female involvement in decision making processes, and conversely why are women motivated to join these decision making organisations?
- Whether the motivations for participatory activities within housing associations were conducive to increasing female participation in these decision making structures?
- Whether the culture of an organisation is fostering and inclusive for female participation?
- Whether the governance structures of boards of management put women off joining these decision making structures? and,
- Whether, once women are on boards of management they are involved in power struggles with other women and men?

Broadly the key issues addressed through this study are about governance, organisational culture, participation, and power. Specifically the research objectives of the thesis are:

Table 1.2 – Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Identify the organisational typology and culture of the case study organisations and how this facilitates female participation on boards of management
Identify the governance structures and prevailing board culture of the case study organisations and how they influence female participation
Uncover the board composition and diversity and how recruitment strategies influence female participation and barriers to involvement
Explore the motivations of board members' participation
Uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation and opportunities for empowerment.

In the original research remit, the questions referred to the plurality of housing associations across Wales, with the final research referring to two housing associations in Wales. This clarification occurred after a consideration of the some of the methodological parameters of the research, including the generalizability of specific case study findings (Bell, 2005; Flick, 2009; Yin, 2003 (a), 2003 (b)). This discussion can be found in chapter five of the thesis which considers opportunities for theoretical generalisation as a means by which to achieve external validity for case study research. Needless to say, this case study project was conceived as a contribution to the literature in the arena of social housing and third sector research in the UK.

1.4 Thesis Structure

Chapter two considers the issues of the female relationship to the home, locating women's consumption of housing, the relationship to the domestic sphere and how this can have a positive influence on their participation within the local community and neighbourhood. The chapter goes on to locate women's position as second class citizens without citizenship rights in the substantive sense (Prior, Stewart and Walsh, 1995). It is found therefore that the role of housing is an ideal arena in which to focus on the position of women as citizens in more detail.

Whilst the persistence of male dominance is evident, the potential for women to organise and challenge such a pervasive patriarchy is recognised.

The third chapter provides a background policy analysis of housing policy and legislation and how this has influenced women's over location in the social, and more specifically housing association tenure sector, with a discussion on the residualisation of the social housing sector in the past 40 years. The chapter looks at the growth and development of the housing association sector in the UK – looking at the changes and background profile of the sector historically through to its current policy context, and the move away from *"government"* to *"governance"*. The final section of the chapter looks at developments closer to home with the development of housing policy since devolution in Wales in terms of the promotion of a more equitable society, regulation of the housing association sector and governance arrangements.

Chapter four locates the research within a theoretical framework of analysis, which links the concepts of governance, organisational culture, participation and power as the academic foundation of the empirical investigation. The ontological positioning reflected in the study the methodological approaches adopted and the research design is discussed in chapter five of the thesis.

Chapter six introduces the two case study organisations, and provides a background to the case study organisations to help inform the empirical findings and analysis in the following three chapters. The chapter gives a history and profile of both case study organisations, and discusses the prevailing management cultures of the two organisations, in relation to the theoretical framework as outlined in Chapter four. In addition, the chapter highlights some of the policy and sectorial developments which took place during the fieldwork phase of the research.

Chapter seven looks at the empirical evidence collected in relation to the operation of governance within the two case studies, and addresses the issues of governance structures of the two housing associations – including the composition and diversity of the two housing association boards; roles of the boards; recruitment of board members and barriers to getting and staying involved.

Chapter eight details the empirical research of the motivations for participation by individuals on the board of management and power relations on the boards of management between the executive and the board, the constituent parts of the board and genders on the boards. Chapter nine, the concluding chapter draws out all of the main research themes, evidence and conclusions and looks at the limitations and challenges of the research and proposes thoughts for future areas of research.

Chapter 2 – The Female Relationship to Housing

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the position of women in relation to their consumption of housing, and the different meanings, interpretations and values of the home for men and women. The role of women in their consumption of housing and the meanings of home is an ideal arena in which to focus on the role of women as citizens more closely. The chapter considers the patriarchal origins of women's inequality in society and considers feminist criticisms that mainstream society, participation and consumption is founded on male values, the structure which continues to maintain and perpetuate male dominance.

The chapter also examines women's position in the management of social housing organisations, the patriarchal nature of these organisations and women's dominance in lower level management positions, and positions in relation to community and housing management. The chapter goes on to consider women's position in the public and private spheres of society in the wider context of women's *"second class citizenship",* the involvement of women in tenant participation activities, and wider involvement in local and neighbourhood groups and considers that such participation is located within the broader theoretical and political contexts of women's equality.

Whilst the concepts discussed here would demand more space that the thesis allows, they are addressed here, as an awareness of the patriarchy and the *"public / private"* debate is important to this study to understand the power dynamics of organisations, participation and participatory decision making within housing associations. In short this is fundamental in placing women's participation in to the context of housing association boards of management.

2.2   The Importance of Housing to Women

This section of the chapter focuses on housing as an area in which the persistence of male dominance is evident, highlighting constrained housing choices available to women, and the existence of patriarchy in the private sphere. This section of the chapter also explores the potential that women's position in the private sphere has for women to organise and challenge male dominance.

2.2.1   The Gendered Experience of Housing Consumption

Housing is a fundamental human need, which holds an importance beyond the concept of basic shelter. Indeed, *"houses...embody the dominant ideology of a society and reflect the way in which society is organised"* (Watson, 1986: 3). Housing circumstances affect relationships developed within the home and beyond, influencing experiences and opportunities in other areas of life such as employment, education or health, which is dependent on the type of accommodation lived in and its location. Housing is instrumental in an individual's life; without a place to live, it is difficult to function as a full member of society. Housing can represent relative success or failure in society, and is an identifier of social status - whether owning or renting, it carries with it certain labels and categorisations which influence society's perception of an individual and also an individual's self-perception and identification

One person's experience of housing can be very different from another person's depending on a variety of factors including: type of tenure, design, location and environment, gender, ethnicity, age, physical ability, class and occupation (Sykes, 1994; Birchall, 1992; Morris and Winn, 1990). These factors are not exclusive: the disabled, white male, owner-occupier experiences will differ from the Pakistani, male, owner-occupier, whose experiences will differ from the elderly female, owner-occupier. Whilst it is important to note this here, the thesis, will concentrate primarily on the issue of gender and the wider consumption of housing; their housing experiences; their access to opportunities to manage and take part in the decision making processes within housing associations.

That women and men experience housing differently has been widely documented (Madigan and Munro, 1997; Darke 1994; Green et al, 1990) and it has been argued that these differences are as a result of the dominant societal and economic patriarchal structures of society. Watson (1988) identified that there are gender differences in access and allocation of housing. The 2011 Census (ONS, 2011) reported that 40% of all households were headed by a female, compared to approximately 30.5% in 1991.

There are clear linkages between the labour market and the housing system. The ability or inability to pay affects not only tenure choice, but also location, quality and ease of access to housing options. The segmented labour market in Britain means that women experience disadvantage in the housing market due to their position in predominantly low-paid, part-time employment, and their lower earnings compared to their male counterparts. Despite the increase in women's participation in the labour market there are a disproportionate number of women in Britain in poverty.

Currently around 64% of the British population are owner-occupiers (ONS, 2011), with the remainder located within the rented sector (18% privately renting and 18% renting from a social landlord). Government policies over the last 50 years or so have sought to promote and champion the owner-occupation sector, through a myriad of policies, subsidies and rhetoric. Many of these policies have been at the expense of women, the introduction of the Right to Buy policies of the 1980s, saw tenants who shared similar characteristics; predominantly male, middle aged and living in semi-detached housing in popular suburban areas taking advantage of the policy developments (Morris and Winn, 1990). Although women have gained greater equality in their access to the owner-occupied sector, the 1991 Census reported that only 24% of Household Representative Persons were female compared to 36% in 2011, issues still remain for women to access the owner-occupied sector (ONS, 1991, ONS 2011).

Securing private rented accommodation can also be problematic for women. This is because women are less likely to possess the necessary initial payments required to cover a bond, a month's rent in advance and deposits, because of the disparity in earnings. The 2011 Census reports that women account for 41% of Household Reference Persons[1] in the private rented sector. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of private renters in poverty doubled from 2 million to 4 million), with over a third of privately rented homes fail to meet the Decent Homes criteria (Aldridge, 2013). The state has less ability to protect people from unscrupulous landlords in the private sector or substandard housing conditions. It has no ability to restrict rent levels and can only inflict punitive sanction via the Local Housing Allowance on private tenants who access more expensive housing. With a declining number of managed local authority rental properties the state has less information on the quality of housing that tenants are able to access in the sector (Ball, 2010; Davies and Turley, 2014).

Without the ability to secure a mortgage, or the economic power to access private rented accommodation, many women have become reliant on the residualised social housing sector within Britain. This is of prime concern to the thesis, that the female over representation in this tenure does not tally with the opportunities for management and participation within the decision making processes within board of management of housing associations. In 1996/7 it was noted that 30% of female headed households were located within the social housing sector, compared to 13% of male headed households, with similar figures reported for 2011 (29% and 14% respectively). In 2011, the Census reported that 53% of households in the social rented sector were headed by a female, compared to 47% headed by a male.

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[1] The concept of a Household Reference Person (HRP) was introduced in the 2001 Census (in common with other government surveys in 2001/2) to replace the traditional concept of the 'head of the household'. HRPs provide an individual person within a household to act as a reference point for producing further derived statistics and for characterising a whole household according to characteristics of the chosen reference person (ONS, 2010).

There is no difference in the percentage of female headed households between local authority managed homes and those managed by housing associations in the 2011 Census returns.

Table 2.1 The Number of Male and Females per Tenure (ONS, 2011)

Tenure	All Persons	Males	Females
All Tenures	23,364,168	14,004,733 (60%)	9,359,435 (40%)
Owner- Occupied: Total	15,031,447	9,589,570 (64%)	5,441,877 (36%)
Social Rented: Total	4,117,987	1,946,341 (47%)	2,171,646 (53%)
Private Rented: Total	4,214,734	2,468,822 (59%)	1,745,912 (41%)

Living arrangements and housing tenure are also closely linked to a woman's family status. Dutta and Taylor note; *"Many women depend on a man's earnings to get a roof over their heads"* (1989:48). They go on to contend that women suffer serious consequences in being able to maintain this position if that man dies, or leaves without making adequate provision for that woman and any dependents. Females are more likely than men to be in single person households (53% of all single households in the 2011 Census were female headed, with the percentage rising to 69% for households over the age of 65years.) The number of lone parents in Britain is also on the increase, and the number of lone parent families with a female head of household is also on the increase. Just over 90% of all lone parent families are headed by a female in the 2011 Census, compared to 14% females heading a traditional two parent family (ONS, 2011).

These lone parent female headed families are doubly discriminated against in society. Therefore the housing options of these groups are significantly curtailed. Clapham et al (1990) note that women are far more reliant on the public sector to meet their housing needs, than men, as a result of the combination of low incomes, insecure employment and their periodic absences from the workforce in order to care for children or the elderly.

2.2.2   The Gendered Experience of Housing Provision and Management

Not only is the consumption of housing gendered, but also the provision of housing and the management of this housing in the social sector are heavily influenced by gender.

Watson and Austerberry (1986), contend that women in housing organisations are disadvantaged because they have less economic and social power than men. They also emphasise the role of both housing organisations and housing legislation and policy in reinforcing this patriarchal power over women's housing position and choices. This lack of power and choice manifests itself in ensuring the reproduction and dominance of the nuclear family. Watson and Austerberry state that young, single and homeless women are particularly marginalised by patriarchal organisations and policies. This is due to the fact that there is little provision of specific accommodation for this group, and that the organisational policies and cultures do not seek to protect this doubly disadvantaged group.

However, Cramer (2005), in her work on the gendered nature of homelessness units, states that while the central premise that women are disadvantaged because of their position in relation to both economic and social power is of note, the work of Watson and Austerberry on single female homelessness is inaccurate. Cramer notes in her paper that homeless organisations are in fact sympathetic in their actions and reactions to female homelessness. She also states that the culture of the organisation seeks to protect these women within the framework of homelessness legislation and organisational policies.

Cramer notes that single homeless women are only disadvantaged in the level of provision of specialist and appropriate accommodation. Cramer's research points to the position that, in some circumstances, women have a significant advantage over their male homeless counterparts. This is particularly in relation to gaining access to accommodation. Specifically, Cramer notes:

> *"The amount of accommodation for single men, the tolerance shown to their bad behaviour and the suspicion of their roles as fathers, points to the situation where men were a marginalised group, and their homelessness anticipated and accepted in a way that was not for women".*

(Cramer, 2005:749)

One could contend that because women are perceived to be in need, need to be looked after in the big bad world, and sympathised with, in their homeless situation, whereas men are able to *"look after themselves"* and seek their own accommodation, can be seen as an organisational patriarchal response to women.

In addition to women being consumers of social housing, a large majority of social housing services are provided by women (Stockdale, 2011). A large number of commentators have written on the subject of women working in housing organisations. These commentators have stated that housing organisations differ little to other organisations, in that the organisations are inherently patriarchal in their nature, culture and the policies and power distribution.

Van Veilt (1989) and Gilroy and Woods (1995) state from their research of working with women in housing organisations, that women face the same pressures as women working within other organisations, especially in relation to the cultural patriarchy and the phenomena of the glass ceiling in women's career advancement.

Where women do make it into senior management positions, it has been contended that this is because they have assimilated male management roles and characteristics. Escott and Whitfield (2002) indicate that females in positions of management are more likely to describe themselves with male character traits than women in more female roles. Research conducted by the Housing Corporation (2004), found that women who occupied senior management positions in housing associations in England were more likely to be single, and have no dependent children, unlike their male counterparts.

Spence (1996) on her work on female managers in the youth and community service argues that because of the feminist struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, there have been great developments in the roles and opportunities for female managers. Spence contends that the beneficiaries of these developments are namely white, able-bodied women who have found a place within the organisations on their specific terms. Spence states that these terms are not too extreme, not pursuing a conflicting agenda to male managers and the service, and sometimes being invisible so that they can carry out their work without harassment. Spence also notes in her research the dual role that women occupy when working in terms of their professional careers and their domestic duties that they are expected to perform.

It is this relationship to the home, domestic duties and caring responsibilities that the chapter will now turn to, in order to understand the gendered experience of the domestic sphere.

2.3   The Gendered Experience of the Domestic Sphere

Despite the increasing presence of women in the labour market, it is the outcome of the sexual division of labour that gives housing and the home the perception of being the female domain, and as holding a special significance to a woman's life.

Saunders (1990) in the preeminent study on the meaning of home, asserted that there was little difference in the perception of the home by men and women, and that both genders saw the home in a positive light. There has been much research that conflicts with Saunders' findings, and suggests that gender differences are present in the interpretation and values placed on the home (see Madigan and Munro, 1997; Darke, 1994; Watson, 1986; Allan, 1985; Mackenzie and Rose, 1983; Mallett, 2004; Smart, 2007; Blunt, 2011; Mackie, Greegons and Bowlby, 2002; Hardhil, 2002; Tester and Wingfield, 2013; Barker, 2011).

Saunders highlights the division of household tasks, which seem to be based on heterosexual, stereotypical constructs of the female and male role. Women dominate in the cooking, cleaning, and laundry duties, whilst men are more likely to be found in the garden, or are involved in car maintenance, which one may contend are more likely to be hobbies and interests rather than daily domestic chores. It is clear than women, therefore are performing the most arduous and time-consuming domestic duties within the home environment.

Stockman et al (1995) and Jowell (1998) reached a similar conclusion in the division of domestic duties within the home based on gender roles. In 2012 the British Social Attitudes survey reported that there had been very little change over the past two decades in the percentage of couple households dividing household responsibilities along traditional gender lines. The biggest gender divides are in who does the laundry (women, in 70 per cent of couple households in 2012) and who makes small repairs around the house (men, in 75 per cent of couple households in 2012). Stockman et al and Jowell support this contention in their findings and contend that:

"The primary burden of domestic labour falls upon the wives"

(Stockman et al, 1995:67)

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"doing the laundry is so much a female task that anyone unfamiliar with the power of socialisation might assume that there must be 'whiter than white' gene"

(Jowell, 1998:31).

Even when men and women participated equally in paid employment, Jowell (1998) found that it was women who were primarily responsible for household duties and childcare. This position has changed little between 1998 and 2012. The British Social Attitudes Survey (Park et al, 2012) reported that there has been little change in the division of unpaid work across the past decade - with both men and women reporting that women spend more time each week on household duties and caring for family members (see table below).

It is also interesting to note the difference between the level of time spent on domestic duties which is self-reported and that reported by their partner. Male participants tended to inflate the amount of hours spent on domestic duties, compared to their female partners who under-reported their hours spent on domestic duties. This is consistent with other studies on self-reporting of domestic duties (Scott and Plagnol, 2012).

Table 2.2 Reported Hours on Domestic Duties (Park et al, 2012)

	Domestic Chores		Caring for Family	
	2002	2012	2002	2012
Male (self-reported)	7.8	8.3	n/a	10.4
Male (reported by partner)	5.9	5.7	n/a	12.1
Female (self-reported)	14.0	13.3	n/a	22.7
Female (reported by partner)	15.4	14.1	n/a	15.3

As with 1998, when the British Social Attitudes Survey, reported that *"practice has lagged behind the changes in attitude in this area"* (Jowell, 1998), the report in 2012, also observed that *"Gender equality in terms of who does the bulk of the chores and who is primarily responsible for looking after the children has made very little progress in terms of what happens in people's homes"* (Park et al, 2012:78).

Lister (1990) suggests that, by failing to extend their involvement *"men are reinforcing their privileged position in the public citizenship sphere in the face of increased female labour market participation"* (1990:132). She goes on to contend that any increase in the male participation in the domestic sphere is usually in the:

> *"more enjoyable tasks. Moreover, most importantly, women retain the overall responsibility for housework and childcare...thus, the time, responsibility and energy (physical and emotional) which women have to devote to the household is open ended in a way that is still rare for men, with implications for health and for their freedom to act as citizens in the public sphere"*

<div align="right">(Lister, 1990:132).</div>

The gender differences in perceptions and experience in the home appear to present women and men in stereotypical roles, confirming women's relative lack of power. However, these patriarchal mechanisms can and are being challenged, a subject that this chapter turns to next.

2.3.1   Positive Relationships to the Home

The home for women can be a place of sanctuary and comfort, a safe haven where it is possible to relax and be away from the pressures of outside forces. Research suggests that women have greater access to social support networks than men, as a result of their position in the private sphere.

This can be seen as a positive aspect of the private domestic environment (Phillips, 1996; Wadhams, 1996; Barry, 1991; Dominelli, 1990). Indeed many commentators have contended that the domestic, private sphere is where the very building blocks of social networks are generated.

Women also use the home as a base from which to conduct their foray into the public sphere of the local neighbourhood and community environment. Davies (1988) found in her study of working class women running a babysitting service on a local authority estate was just one example of women's positive experience of the private sphere. Davies found that the women involved, talked about how they passed each other's houses and looked to see if *"everything was alright".* The development and use of such support networks as babysitting clubs etc., could be considered as developing women's *"social capital",* defined by Putnam (1993) as; *"features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by co-facilitating coordinated action"* (Putnam, 1993: 167).

Lowndes (2000) in her comment on Hall's (1999) *"Social Capital in Britain"*, considers the importance of gender dynamics, arguing that childcare networks have been an important admission in the social capital debate. The admission reflects the traditional assumptions that women's activity falls within the private sphere rather than the public sphere. However, informal, neighbourhood networks offer support, care and solidarity which can lead to an increase in confidence, independence and self-esteem for many women. These skills have the ability to *"spill over"* into the formal public participative environment (Lowndes, 2000).

Despite women's position in the public sphere, paid employment and their low incomes, women play a very important part in the leadership of the community or neighbourhood, which have activities which can overcome some of the societal barriers that they face (Emmanuel, 1993; Dominelli, 1990).

The way in which women organise and become involved is often different from men (although there is some evidence that men are being organised into participatory action in a similar way – see the men's shed movement, The Guardian, 2013), usually less formal and less hierarchical (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993; Halford 1992).Whilst this is rather an essentialist view, this thesis is concerned with the potential of female participation in the management and decision making structures of housing associations to challenge and overcome the male oppression and to confirm citizenship rights. The next section of the chapter looks at the role of women in local involvement in relation to tenant participation, community development and regeneration projects and the wider location of women as second class citizens.

2.4   Women and Local Involvement

It has been widely documented that community and local level groups and organisations are the arenas in which women find it easier to participate (Dominelli, 1990; Gleb, 1988; Mies, 1986; Randall 1982). The reason advanced for this is two-fold; firstly, that some groups are usually found to be informally structured and flexible, allowing for domestic care and other responsibilities that are predominately the preserve of women can be maintained; and secondly, that the concerns of such groups are more relevant, or more pressing to women. Women are more likely than men to be employed in the local area, or close to home (Tivers, 1985). The experience of women in the domestic sphere (see earlier in this chapter) can give a greater sense of identity with their local community and in relation to their local environment. Women have a greater tendency than men;

> *"to be provoked to campaign in their communities for better and more equitably located services, for better home and estate maintenance, for housing construction and neighbourhood design that meets their needs"*
>
> (Mackenzie and Rose, 1983:185)

The focus of this study is to look at women's formal participation in the management and decision making processes of housing association boards. Therefore it is important to establish why women are involved in local and informal structures, rather than regional, organisational wide formal participation and management arrangements and structures. That women are more likely to participate in informal activities at the community level rather than formal arenas such as government, or political parties has been documented by a number of commentators including; Parry, Moser and Day, 1992; Brownhill and Darke 1998; Randall, 1982; Braithwaite, 1998; May,1997; McKinley, 2002; Staeheli, 2004; Dillock, 2011; Harell, 2009; Bamberger, 1990; Kirkby-Geddes et al, 2013; Caiazza and Gult, 2009; Wiles and Jayasinha, 2013; Mosley and Grogan, 2013.

Parry, Moser and Day (1992) in their research findings suggest that the greater accessibility and flexibility of informal organisations encourage women to voice their interests, problems and expectations. Randall (1982) contends that it is the *"result of both constraints and choices"* that women dominate in informal action and activities. The responsibilities that fall to women in the domestic sphere prevent or constrain them from participation in the formal environment. Oxfam (2004) looked at the participation structures available within organisations and found that formal structures attracted men and informal structures attracted more female participants. This is echoed in the research conducted by Brownhill and Darke (1998) where they identified that women took part in community groups, but the decision makers were mainly men.

Lister (1991) argues that many women are deficient in two fundamental resources: time and money. I would also contend that women are also constrained by a third resource - that of experience. As a result, women may *"prefer"* to be more active in the informal processes which *"represent a more accessible, fulfilling and enjoyable form of politics"* (Lister, 1991: 69). However, Blackman (1995) contends that the:

"dominance of male interests in society means that many women are not only confined to this sphere by being denied the same employment opportunities as men, but that women's concerns about the quality of the home and neighbourhood are seen as being of secondary importance in economic and social policy"

(Blackman, 1995:163)

Braithwaite (1998) contends that women's lack of participation is because of the fact that organisations have promoted gender-blind or gender neutral participation policies. That is to say that woman's issues in participation should be acknowledged by the organisation and processes put in place to promote the interests and concerns of women in participation. They contend that gender-blind and gender-neutral participation practices have an immense effect, as men gain an unequal benefit and women, therefore, become underrepresented in local management processes.

Whilst issues at this level may be seen to be secondary, women's involvement within these groups may empower and encourage them to become active in matters considered to be of primary importance to society, bringing with them an alternative perspective to these areas, and demanding a primary focus on *"women's issues"* previously considered as a secondary. Many women have access to local neighbourhood networks through which informal arrangements are made e.g. childcare. It has been argued that these networks are invaluable for women (Russell, 1999), and may contribute to the development of social capital (Lowndes, 2000). Staechelli (2004) notes that women are often sidelined by men into participating in issues relating to the community, childcare and the environment. Oxfam (2004) concluded that women were involved in softer areas of regeneration projects that looked at cultural activities, community development, the development of children's play areas and other family related matters.

However, Bronstein (2004) and Christie (1997) state in their independent research that the opportunities taken by organisations to get more women involved in participatory activities have been tokenistic. Many of the gestures used by organisations have simply included the provision of, or payment for childcare, therefore ignoring women's other caring, domestic and employment duties.

Bronstein contends that there are a number of occasions when women have to be at home, or are involved in other family related activities that cannot be bought. Bronstein and Christie also note that in their opinion, the formal participation structures of organisations are not flexible enough for women. They contend that the timing and location of community meetings need to be planned in order that there is the maximum amount of flexibility available.

With the call for the increased representation of socially excluded groups in government and delivery of social and welfare services, and in an effort to enhance public democracy and fill the democracy deficit, this is positive news for women, as the areas in which women are more active - the community and neighbourhood - have become higher in profile (Geddes, 1998). Scott (2004) states that the location of women's involvement in the private or immediate public sphere should be seen as positive, as this gives the women access to a greater plethora of resources and knowledge where men would be deficient.

Such movement towards the recognition of the merits of grassroots action can be understood as a positive move for women and their perspective and ways of working, infiltrating and further transposing onto the other areas of policy. It is likely that as grassroots networks flourish and are recognised for their positive contribution, their organisational structures may be applied to other public policy areas, and a more gender equal democracy may be envisaged.

This research concentrates on women as members of formal participation structures of housing association boards of management, whilst the concerns of these groups should be gender neutral, the concentration of female headed households managed by these organisations, means that the decisions and discussions that take place in these formal participation structures will have an unequal influence on these women. Analysing women within groups not specifically for women, or composed solely of women, is as important as analysing women only groups.

Randall (1991:527) states that *"the differentiation and interaction of women and men"* is a vital focus for research. It is also fundamental for the development of feminism for the future, and the development of an equal society. Cooper (1996) contends;

> *"Small scale initiatives may provide the seeds of a wider consciousness raising processes and future calls for wider participation in British social policy making"*
>
> (Cooper, 1996:31)

If this contention is correct, then the empowerment of women, through their involvement in formal participation structures on housing association boards of management, could contribute to, and perhaps, initiate, more equitable policy and decision making processes. Before analysing the potential for female participation in housing associations management and board structures, it is necessary to place women in the context of wider gender inequality in society that is a society where male dominance is prevalent in both the public and private sphere. The following section of this chapter looks at the issue of women's second class citizenship.

2.5   Women as Second Class Citizens

This section of the chapter examines citizenship rights both as official status, and in practice as a lived experience. It considers the existence of patriarchal dominance in British society and how it may oppress women. The section concludes by looking at the differences between men and women and the effects of these differences in achieving equal citizenship rights.

2.5.1   Citizenship Rights: Formal and Substantive

The position that women occupy in male dominated British society is central to this study and its feminist approach seeks to emphasise the gendered construction of social reality. It is argued that society is dominated by and ordered by mediating struggles and conflicts that arise within it. Patriarchy is perceived by many to be, if not the ultimate, then at least a major force within society, which the state may mediate (Eisenstein, 1992). However, it is also possible to see the state not as a mediator of this patriarchal force, but a protector of it, or even a counter-force. Millet (1993) and other feminist commentators believe that men's power over women is exercised through the state; all areas are male dominated through the government, the civil service, social services and the judiciary and beyond. The state provides and maintains the structure in which men's power is exercised over women; it could be said, then to be institutionally patriarchal. Radical feminists observe that patriarchal power of men over women is evident in all aspects of life (Millett, 1993). Such dominations are:

> *"So universal, so ubiquitous and so completed that it appears natural and hence becomes invisible, so that it is perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power"*
>
> (Millett, 1993: 185)

Despite the extension of *"official"* citizenships rights for all, women's oppression and lack of influence persists; it can be argued that equal citizenship is, in effect, denied to women (Pateman, 1970; Phillips, 1991). Prior, Stewart and Walsh (1995) distinguish between formal and substantive citizenship rights, that:

> *"Is between citizenship as a status which gives individuals formal possession of rights and entitlements, and citizenship as a status which provides individuals with the opportunity or capacity to realise those rights and entitlements."*
>
> (Prior, Stewart and Walsh, 1995: 11)

In essence it does not follow that the establishments of formal citizenship rights equates to meaningful citizenship status. Many factors exist which effectively prevent an individual in their ability to exercise their rights:

> *"Income, employment, housing, educational achievement, access to transport, and various forms of exclusion, for example discrimination based on race, gender, age or disability, or constraints arising from fear of crime and other threats to personal safety."*
>
> (Prior, Stewart and Walsh, 1995: 158)

From a feminist perspective the individual is male:

> *"The crucial building blocks of liberal democracy are individual, citizenship, rights and consent, and it has been argued by a growing number of feminists that these categories are male."*
>
> (Phillips, 1991:33)

Rousseau's work and that of social contract theorists such as Locke and Hobbes, established principles of a society in which men could be equal and free to determine their own fates. The individual, according to Pateman, is considered as a *"patriarchal category. The individual is masculine and his sexuality is understood accordingly"* (Pateman cited in Phillips 1991: 31).

It was on these male norms and values that the British system of government was founded and thus, these male norms and values which dominate in the political, economic and social life. Whilst the patriarchal democracy commends the universality of citizenship, that is, the right of all citizens to participate equally, the difference between formal and substantive rights means that in practice equal citizenship does not apply to all.

Women may be effectively excluded on the basis that they *"lack dispassionate rationality and independence required for good citizens"* (Young, 1998: 404). The exclusion of women is not a necessary, but contingent feature of citizenship: the perception of citizen as male persists, this perception is:

> *"Rooted in a public sphere derived from masculine values and the structural characteristics of the male gender role. Because identification of women within the private domestic sphere and the limitations that this places on their lives...it has always been difficult for them to qualify as citizens."*
>
> (Chapman, 1995: 107)

The practice where the private sphere of the home and family has been constructed as a woman's place, whilst the public sphere of employment is male has been questioned by many feminists (see Chapman, 1995; Millett, 1993; Meehan, 1991; Lister, 1997; 1997a; 1998; 2012, Savaey, 1998 etc.). These feminists contend that patriarchy extends to the private sphere of personal relations and calls for the recognition of male dominance in this sphere (see earlier in this chapter the discussion around the gendered experience of the domestic sphere).

As Lister argues; *"By treating as irrelevant for citizenship whatever occurs in the private sphere, the dominant public-private discourse erects a 'moral boundary' between the family and the political"* (Lister, 1997:120). Even in advanced industrial societies, caring for children and adults, and domestic work remain primarily a woman's responsibility.

To consider personal relations as being outside of politics or that politics is isolated from private concerns is *"a non-sense"* (Phillips, 1991: 95). Whilst some feminists call for the dissolution of the two spheres (see Millet 1993), most feminists (see Millett, 1993; Meehan, 1991; Lister, 1997; 1997a; 1998; 2012, Savaey, 1998 etc.) argue for a *"re-articulation of the public and private, and of the relationship between the two, as necessary to the understanding and achievement of women's citizenship"* (Lister, 1997:120). Lister identifies three elements of this re-articulation: firstly, the deconstruction of the sexualised values associated with public and private; second, the rejection of the rigid ideological separation between the two; and, thirdly, the recognition of the changing nature of the boundaries between the public and private (Lister, 1997:120).

A further obstacle in achieving equal citizenship rights for women lies in the belief held by many women, that equality has been attained and thus, there is no need to reconstruct society. Others believe that social inequality is the natural result of the biological differences between women and men (see Sayers, 1982).

That this belief is so prevalent in society is seen by some as a tribute to the success of male dominance in constructing the consciousness of women in all areas of society. Patriarchy, as a result, can be seen as an example of *"hegemonic control"*. Hegemonic control has been applied to gender issues, where the oppression and inequality of women is seen as *"common sense"* both to men and women (Cockburn, 1991; Showstack and Sasson, 1987).

Many women do not perceive themselves as oppressed, just as many members of the working class do not. The subordinate classes develop their thoughts in line with the framework of the dominant class. In this instance the *"dominant class"* is that of men.

Fundamental to the position of women's citizenship is the division of labour which extends male power beyond the public sphere of politics and economics into the private realm of sexuality and the family (Randall, 1987). The prevalence of male working patterns reinforces this importance of male paid employment over women's to the family. Equal citizenship, then is frustrated as; *"women are constructed as economic dependents of men, confined more or less to the private sphere, (thus) key aspects of their relationship to citizenship tend to be mediated through those men who enter the public sphere on their behalf"* (Lister, 1997:130). By reinforcing women's economic dependence and domestic role at home, and by marginilsing women from the labour force through the lack of childcare provision, ensures that men are perceived as the natural wage earners (Bryson, 1999). As a consequence paid employment is a significant route for women's citizenship.

Despite the advancement of policies and legislation to encourage the narrowing of the gender pay gap, there has been relative stagnation of women's pay. As well as the issues in the overall gender pay gap between men and women, there continues to be a difference between women themselves and their earnings. Women in full-time employment have seen gains in the narrowing of the pay gap, whilst women who are employed in part-time employments have only benefitted marginally.

Over the past 40 years there has been a rise in the percentage of women aged 16 to 64 in employment and a fall in the percentage of men. In 2013 around 67% of women aged 16 to 64 were in work, an increase from 53% in 1971. For men the percentage fell to 76% in 2013 from 92% in 1971.

For those who worked full-time there were differences in the average hours worked per week, full-time men worked on average 44 hours per week whilst full-time women worked 40 hours per week. While there have been increases in the number of women in work, the percentage of them doing a part- time role has fluctuated between 42-45% over the past 30 years. Most of the shift in more women and fewer men working happened between 1971 and 1991. Several factors may account for this; one possible factor is the rise of the service sector and decline of the manufacturing sector beginning in the 1960s.

Traditionally a higher proportion of women than men have worked in services, with a higher proportion of men working in manufacturing. The growing demand to employ people within the service sector and falling demand within the manufacturing sector may have resulted in more women and fewer men working (ONS, 2012).

Since 1991, increases in the percentage of women in work continued, but at a slower rate than before. More recently, during the 2008/09 recession the employment rates fell more for men than for women and have since leveled off in the last four years with men's employment rates remaining between 75% and 77% and women's at 65% to 67%. The rise in women in employment is partly due to an increase in the percentage of mothers in work. In 1996 (when comparable records began), 67% of married or cohabiting mothers with dependent children were in work and by 2013 this had increased to 72% (ONS, 2012).

There has also been an increase in the lone mother's employment rate from 43% to 60% over the same period. As more women have entered employment there has been a fall in those who are economically inactive, which are those people who are either not looking for work or not available to work, for example looking after the family. The percentage of women who were economically inactive gradually has fallen over the past 40 years to a low of 28% of women aged 16 to 64 in 2013 (ONS, 2013).

However, despite the increased levels of women in employment in the last two decades, salaries for such jobs are, generally, lower and as a result women's average earnings are lower than men's. The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) 2012 Gender Salary Survey found that the average pay gap between men and women stands at £10,060. This is a drop from 2011, when the difference was £10,546 (see table below). The CMI survey also suggests that a woman can earn £423,000 less than a man in her career.

The Fawcett Society (BBC, 2012) is concerned that the employment trend from public to private sector work is likely to push more women into insecure, part-time paid work. The Fawcett Society estimates that the private sector pay gap, at 20.4%, is higher than in the public sector.

Table 2.3 Gender Pay Gap (CMI, 2012)

	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Male	£42,427	£41,337	£42,441	£40,325
Female	£31,268	£31,306	£31,895	£30,265
Difference	£11,206	£10,031	£10,546	£10,060

As women are primarily concentrated in lower paid jobs the introduction of the national minimum wage has been seen as a valuable tool in improving gender equality in pay. The New Labour Government, responsible for the introduction of National Minimum Wages Act (HMSO, 1988) enacted in 1999, saw its introduction as evidence of its commitment to improving women's economic and employment positions. However, most commentators now agree (Newman, 2001) that the introduction of the national minimum wage was at too low a rate for it to have a real impact on women wanting to achieve financial independence.

2.5.2 Women's Lifecycle in Paid Employment

The lifecycle of women has an important effect on their career development. Burke and McKeen (1994) argue that most researchers have taken the position that career development is gender-neutral, because of the belief that men and women who are entering the same employment, with similar qualifications, will follow a similar career path. They maintain that issues of family and child rearing have been given little attention because it is assumed that successful women will follow the male model, and that the domestic duties of the home will be shared equally.

However, research by Hochschild (1989) indicates that women are spending far more time than their male counterparts in domestic chores; in addition, employment structures and processes often do not take account of the consideration of how a woman's life cycle can affect their paid employment opportunities.

Walby (1991) argues that there are three parallel debates on women's participation in paid employment which deal specifically with the significance of life-cycle. These debates centre on women's disadvantage in paid work. The first debate centres on whether this disadvantage is because women possess fewer skills than men, or whether there is discrimination in the workplace.

The second debate centres on women being primary carers in the family, possibly meaning that the women will need to take career breaks, and thus being disadvantaged in the labour market, which militates against women returning to work at the same positions after a career break. The third and final debate centres on whether it is the supply side or the demand side that creates the disparities in the workplace.

Allatt and Kiel (1987) maintain that the disparity between men and women's career paths originates from the acceptance by both men and women of women's responsibility for domestic arrangements and the care of dependents, which affects women's entry and re-entry into the world of work. Cunnison (1987) argues that a woman's sense of identity is located within three base areas - the family; the woman's own work; and the work of her husband. These three identities are not alternatives, but exist in an *"uneasy cohabitation"*. Bird and West (1987) found that women's careers were interrupted either for domestic duties or because of her husbands' career.

Walby (1987) argues that there is a developing polarisation between younger well-qualified women and older less well-qualified women. The different experiences of these age group cohorts may have implications for women as managers in social housing organisations, and also board members of housing associations. At the housing officer level, many women may have left full-time tertiary education, and have begun their working lives, over the next few years, they may acquire a partner, have a family; and it is at this time that women traditionally take a career break to care for children (Bird and West, 1987). However, it is also at this time that, after gaining experience in the field that a housing officer would begin to apply for management positions. By the time that the woman is able and ready to return to work, it may not necessarily be at the management level, because of the career break, lack of experience, lack of opportunity to job share or work in a part-time manner.

Walby (1997), notes that fewer women are now taking career breaks after the birth of their children, this may now lead to a situation where there will be more female managers in the housing associations sector, and more women applying for positions at board level, providing that these posts do not disappear due to restructuring and re-modelling of services. However, women may not be taking career breaks as the level of maternity rights in Britain has been extended (Newman, 2001).

Davidson and Burke (1994) argue that structural and systematic discrimination in organisational policies and procedures affect both the treatment within organisations and militate against women's prospects for promotion. Bennismon and Marshall (1997) are critical of equal opportunity policies that do not acknowledge gender;

> *"The lack of attention paid to gender both as a conceptual category and analytical lens, means the difference of both men and women...is attributed to individual differences rather than consequences of a male ordered world".*
>
> (Bennsimon and Marshall, 1997: 2)

A number of commentators suggest that gender-blind / gender-neutral organisational policies are written as a result of a gender-blind culture within an organisation, and what is actually called for within organisations are feminist critical policy analysis that holds gender as a fundamental category of analysis. Some commentators propose that organisational policies relating to equal opportunities are written, because the organisation believes that it is the *"right thing"* to do, or a statutory requirement by regulators. Cockburn (1991) supports this contention, and maintains that a policy, particularly an equal opportunities policy, is of no practical use unless it is put into practice, through training and rigorous monitoring.

Paid employment can lead to financial independence; however, the concentration of women in lower paid jobs means that few women are able to achieve such independence. Lister (1997) contends that *"poverty is corrosive of citizenship both as status and a practice, undermining rights and the ability to fulfil the potential of citizenship"* (Lister, 1997: 86).

2.5.3   Achieving Equality through Difference

Whether all women are always and everywhere oppressed is a moot point; is women's experience essentially the same everywhere because of their subordination to men? Whilst, in almost every culture and society world-wide, men hold the dominant power over women, the point must be emphasised that women are oppressed in different ways, at different times, and under different circumstances. Socio-economic class can cause divisions between women, it can be said that working-class women more fully experience the double oppression of the sexual division of labour at work, and in the home, than women located within the middle classes (Mies, 1998).

Moore (1988), in her work on women in the third world, speaks of the *"triple burden"* of domestic chores, unpaid and subsistence work and paid work. However, when women benefit, from their position in the middle class, they do not necessarily benefit as women, often they are more materially privileged.

Ethnicity, may also cause divisions between women, indeed, race has particularly been controversial in the feminist movement (Anthais and Yuval-Davies, 1982). The women's movement has been accused of racism and exclusivity to the extent that groups and organisations representing specific interests have been set up. Physical disability, learning difficulties and sexuality also adds to the diversity amongst women, as their experiences from each other differ, and their priority of issues, also differs from each other (Morris, 1990). Women may belong to more than one group, and thus find themselves with changing and conflicting priorities. Women as a group are oppressed, not because they are a homogenous group, but because they are defined collectively as different and unequal in respect to men.

However, can differences such as race, class, age, disability and sexuality hinder progress towards equal citizenship for women? Are the divisions too deep to effect any significant changes by working towards a common goal of equal citizenship?

Some commentators argue that specific groups will further their interests rather than considering the wider picture and thus some groups will become oppressed by others (Young, 1988). The promotion of the equality or universality of citizenship is a key problem here. That different groups should be treated the *"same"*, irrespective of their gender, class race etc. would appear at first glance to be a positive step. However, this patriarchal structure around which society is structured and organised undermines this equal treatment and perpetuates inequality.

It can be argued, then, that citizenship rights should acknowledge differences and recognise that some citizens are more disadvantaged than others. However, such differences should not be allowed to dominate to the extent that groups are only interested in them and only participate for their own gain. As such, a complex situation arises, in that in order to treat citizens equally, they must be treated differently. However, in contrast, Barber (1984) argues that differences should be overcome to avoid self-interest and to ensure that all participants work towards a common goal, despite group differences. This is perhaps a utopian notion, as not all citizens will act in a public spirited way, and will participate to advance their own interests. Hence, Young (1988) suggests that mechanisms should be provided for effective representation and recognition of the distant voices and perspectives of its constituent groups that are oppressed and disadvantaged within it. Thus, the differences need to be acknowledged and addressed if citizens are to participate equally on a level playing field.

To summarise it has been argued that women are disadvantaged in British society, that in effect, they are second class citizens. This inequality has its roots in history and tradition. Despite more recent, formal measures to secure equal citizenship rights, many substantive factors persist which limit gender equality. The relationships that women and men have to the public and private sphere differ, that is their experience is gendered.

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter has established that women face unequal barriers in being able to access housing through all tenures. The chapter has established that women headed households are over located within the social rented sector in Britain where this study is located. This chapter has established that a woman's relationship with the home has two sides, on the one hand it is a place of relaxation, sanctuary and security, whilst on the other hand it is also a place of work and potential abuse. However, through the informal networks that develop between women from this domestic sphere, and their participation within local initiatives, male dominance may be challenged and substantive equal citizenship rights can be achieved.

The chapter has also located female participation with housing organisations in the wider context of women's continuing inequality. The dominance of male values and the patriarchal hegemony in society has denied practical and substantive equal citizenship rights to women (Barnes, 1997: Prior, Steward and Walsh, 1995). Despite formal legal measures to achieve equal status, assumptions about a woman's place in the domestic sphere persist. Therefore social housing, and the location of women's involvement and participation in the formal decision making structures of management of and boards of management of housing associations presents an ideal arena in which to focus on the position of women as citizens in greater detail.

The next chapter in this thesis examines the development of housing policy and housing associations in the UK, and in more detail in Wales as a means of provision for subsidised housing.

Chapter 3 – The Changing Nature of Social Housing

3.1   Introduction

Having outlined the female relationship to social housing and the importance of this provision of housing to women in the previous chapter, this chapter examines the development of housing policy and housing associations in the UK as a means of provision for subsidised housing.

The purpose of this chapter is to locate this study in its broader context by providing a background to the housing association sector and to present key arguments from the sector analysis that were critical in constructing the core research questions for this research. The first part of this chapter provides context of the changing nature of housing provision in the UK from the zenith of social welfare and social housing provision to the residualised provision that we see today. The housing policy focus of the last 40 years has been on promoting the privatisation agenda through the promotion of home –ownership and the recent growth of the private rented sector in the UK at the expense of social housing provision. The second section of the chapter looks at the growth and development of the housing association sector in the UK – looking at the changes background profile of the sector historically and up to its current policy context.

The chapter goes on to look at the move away from *"government"* to *"governance"* of housing associations – highlighting the increasing focus on managerialism and participation and involvement opportunities for housing association tenants. The fourth and final section of the chapter looks at developments closer to home in the development of housing policy since devolution in Wales in terms of the promotion of a more equitable society, regulation of the housing association sector and governance arrangements.

3.2   Changing Nature of Housing in the UK

Housing policies in the last 40 years have not only dramatically altered housing tenure in the UK, but also served to reinforce inequalities in society. Successive governments have sought to increase the private sector in all aspects of state provision of services – (see development of health policy, education etc. during the 1980s). It is generally recognised that these policies have had the widest and biggest impact on those most dependent on social housing i.e. women, the disabled, the young and the very old (Cole and Furbey, 1994; Morris and Winn, 1990). Such a philosophy had a particularly detrimental effect on women who were less able to compete in the private sector than men, largely due to their lower incomes (Joshi et al, 1995).

> *"…..the owner-occupation sector catering for the affluent majority and a rented sector serving an `underclass' of poor, unemployed, elderly, ethnic or social minority households"*
>
> (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 208)

3.2.1   Increasing Privatisation

A key restructuring of the UK housing sector has been the promotion of home-ownership. Many of the policy developments relating to the promotion of home-ownership were during the Thatcher Governments of the 1980s and early 1990s, and during this time the Government sought to reimagine housing tenure in the UK with owner-occupation becoming the *"normalised"* form of housing consumption, and promoted in policy and political discourses as the *"natural"* and *"preferred"* tenure of choice (Gurney, 1999). Housing policies reflected a *"new right"* belief in free-market capitalism, evident in the main philosophy running throughout Conservative policy which emphasised *"the ideological premise that market solutions will maximise individual freedom and economic utility"* (Cooper, 1996: 13).

The introduction of the *"Right to Buy"* in the 1980 Housing Act was hailed as the flagship policy of the New Right Thatcherite Government which sought to break up the monopoly of public sector provision of services, and the creation of a *"property owning democracy"*. Several key reasons can be identified for the Conservatives' promotion of home ownership and their negative attitude towards local authority housing: the encouragement of consumer preference and consumer rights in the delivery of services; privatisation of services; and the emphasis on removing dependency on the state, replacing it with *"enterprise"*. The Thatcher governments;

> *"Consistently pursued a related set of policy objectives which both drew upon and reinforced processes of social restructuring, undermining working-class solidarities, and the "privatisation" of politics"*
>
> (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993: 30)

As a result of the introduction of this policy, between 1981 and 1997, the percentage of the UK population now living in the owner-occupier tenure had increased by 10%, whilst local authority occupation had dropped by 11%. In addition to the specific policies promoting home-ownership, other policy developments during this time amounted to a wide-ranging programme of privatisation, as it reduced state provision by limiting new building programmes, reducing subsidies to council house tenants while enhancing tax expenditures to owner occupiers and reducing state regulation by relaxing controls on rents in the private sector.

Whilst the Thatcherite Government of the 1980s are often seen as the main protagonists of the championing of the tenure of owner-occupation, successive Governments have continued to champion the privatisation of public sector housing through the continuation of these policies. Only the Labour and Scottish Nationalist administrations of the Welsh and Scottish Governments have recently sought to bring an end to the right to buy.

As well as the increasing agenda in privatisation of housing consumption to the owner-occupation sector, there has also been an increasing focus on the private rented sector as providing an alternative to social housing. The growth over the last decade of the private rented sector is in contrast to much of the 20th century, where on average the tenure accounted for accommodating between 9%-12% of the population. During this time, the tenure became focused on five main roles:

- *a 'traditional role', housing people who have rented privately for many years;*
- *flexible, easy access housing for young and mobile people;*
- *accommodation linked to employment;*
- *a 'residual role', in housing people who are unable to access owner occupation or social renting; and,*
- *as an 'escape route' from social rented housing*

(Rhodes, 2006:36).

This tenure was often very hard for women to access as a single person, or head of a family, as women, because of their economic position, are unable to access the necessary initial payments to access the tenure (i.e. rent in advance, administration fees or bond payments), and it is likely that this will be the situation in the future, as Central Government Spending cuts, have particularly affected those households located in this sector, who are in receipt of housing benefit payments.

The private rented sector has been categorised as the *"tenure of last resort"*, because of its poor reputation in relation to quality, low security of the tenure and low affordability. Landlords have had little incentive to improve their homes and many tenants are afraid of complaining of poor standards for fear of losing their home. There has also been an issue of poor management practice in relation to the sector, with little regulation or enforcement by local authorities (CIH, 2013).

Focus on the private rented sector in providing a solution to both the affordability and supply crisis is a current key debate in housing policy and legislation in 2014, with the Welsh Government seeking to require local authorities to utilise the private rented sector for the discharge of homeless duties through the Housing (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2014 (b)). The Renting Homes White Paper (Welsh Government, 2013 (b)) seeks to develop some form of much needed regulation and stewardship of the private rented sector in Wales.

Chapter two outlined that women have unequal access to the consumption of housing, particularly in relation to access the tenure of owner-occupation because of their (in relation to men) poor position in the labour market. The increasing privatisation agenda of Governments between 1979 and 2010 have sought to increase this inequality in access to housing tenures in the UK and has led to a reliance on the residualised social housing sector, which the chapter turns to next.

3.2.2   Residualisation of Social Housing

During the 1970s local authorities were the largest landlords in Britain, accounting for over 30% of the country's housing stock; however the position in 2014 is that the sector accommodates between 16-18% of the UK population (ONS, 2011). The local authority role as the provider of affordable rented housing has been undermined and redefined as a role of enabler to the development of other provisions of housing tenures, through the development of housing legislation, and, policies relating to large scale voluntary transfer, housing action trusts and tenants' choice.

The residualisation process seemed to help out those that were willing and capable to support themselves with minimal assistance from the state, which left only the disadvantaged to remain in the council sector, reducing the size of the sector whilst also stigmatising those that remained a part of this public assistance programme (Burrows, 1999).

Additionally, Forrest and Murie (1988) stated that, by 1984, more than half of households in council housing were headed by an economically inactive person and that nearly two-thirds of social housing head of households were not working.

The result has led to a long-term system that geographically contains and stigmatises those living in social housing as *"bad places"* in which those seeking public assistance are looked down upon and excluded by society (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The general perspective that social housing is only for those on benefits has been ingrained into the overall society, in large measure, by the residualisation processes that have occurred over the last forty years (Somerville, 2004).

The lines between poverty and crime have become so blurred that the Government now uses social housing estates as an example of how those within the bottom of society are *"responsible for their own wretched existence"* (Wheelan, 1999: 5), so that the rest of society takes the same negative viewpoint of social housing and those that live there. It is within this context that housing associations have become one of the dominate providers of affordable rented housing in the UK. The next section of this chapter looks at the growth and evolution of housing associations in the UK.

3.3   Growth and Evolution of Housing Associations

In a well cited definition, Cope (1999), characterises housing associations as independent, non-profit distributing organisations governed by voluntary boards to provide mainly rented housing at below market rents. Although aspects of this definition have altered over the years, an essential characteristic of housing associations has been their inclusion in the third sector by successive legislation and definitions.

Housing associations function in the not-for-profit sector within a dynamic housing market in the UK; *"Dynamic, expansionist and highly professional set of social businesses"* (Malpass 2000; 270).

While the size and nature of housing associations vary they have an underlying aim of providing affordable homes for the financially disadvantaged and for other vulnerable groups. This is achieved predominantly through affordable rented housing but also through a variety of tenures such as shared ownership, market renting and direct sales. Altogether they provide about 10% of the UK housing provision (ONS, 2011). The origins of the sector are in the form of medieval alms-houses to relatively more recent roots in Victorian philanthropic housing companies in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Malpass, 2000; Mullins, 2010).

Early housing associations had different models of finance, structure and regulation to their counterparts today. Organisational forms ranged from endowed charities with voluntary trustees to limited companies with investors and shareholders, to Industrial and Provident Societies (Malpass, 2000).

By the early 1970s, a significantly expanded sector included an array of different organisational models from philanthropic trusts to co-ownership societies to church-based housing associations addressing homelessness in communities. Two pieces of legislation that strongly influenced the character of the sector as is today were the Housing Acts of 1974 and 1988 respectively. The introduction of Housing Association Grants in the 1974 Housing Act (HMSO, 1974) increased levels of funding available for housing development, while accessing the grant meant registering with the Housing Corporation as a non- profit housing organisation. This emphasised the departure of these organisations from independent voluntary status and philanthropic roots and paved the way for new organisational forms with an increased financial capacity.

The Housing Act 1998 (HMSO, 1988) transformed the sector by allowing for large scale private funding to further increase financial capacity, which consequently led to a considerable expansion of the housing association sector (Mullins, 2010; Mullins and Murie, 2006; Malpass, 2000). This private finance was also leveraged to make possible the large scale transfer of council housing stock to housing associations and the improvement of that stock. Since then the expansion of the housing association sector has been largely accelerated by this Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of local authority stock. Indeed between the years of 1998 to 2008 around 1.3 million homes were transferred to the housing association sector in this way (Lupton and Leach, 2011). In this way the mixed economy of welfare was driven through social housing while the private funders became a key interest group and exposure to financial risk from the private sector became a new dimension in the sector.

In England the sector has been characterised by continued growth over the last 30 years with an increased pace of stock transfer and in particular poorer housing stock in urban areas (Malpass and Mullins, 2002; Mullins, Niner and Riseborough, 1995). The rise of housing associations in the last quarter of a century can be seen in the context of the declining strength of local government (Mullins and Murie, 2006; Malpass, 2000). Rather than being a grand plan, the gradual displacement of council housing by housing associations has been an incremental process of change with different drivers in different periods (Mullins, 2006) such as the impacts of housing policy described above. Today social housing in UK;

> *"Represents one of the largest single capital investments by the state.....billions of pounds have been invested by government to provide affordable homes, through capital subsidy and housing benefit. As a consequence, the largest housing associations now resemble big businesses in terms of scale and turnover, owning and managing around 8% of the nation's housing stock."*
>
> (Blond in Lupton and Leach, 2011:5)

3.3.1   Organisational Models

Because of the diversity of the sector, there is no single organisational model for housing associations, but usually several functional departments under a governing board of management and sub-committees; while a Chief Executive and various directors usually have strategic and operational control (Cope, 1999). Large housing associations, with a stock of greater than 50,000 homes, have the most complex staffing hierarchies (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000).

The constitution of a housing association determines the ownership or shareholding membership of organisation and the composition of its board. Rules are formulated by the National Housing Federation in England, and by Community Housing Cymru in Wales, and incorporate the statement of shareholders duties, roles of board, chair and Chief Executive (NHF, 2007).

Housing associations have become involved in a variety of inter-organisational arrangements and organisational models as a result of a government policy drives such as Investment Partnering and a desire to increase efficiency and scale of activity, spread overheads, mitigate risks, access specialist skills, increase influence and access better funding (Mullins and Craig, 2005). Structures range in a continuum from single independent organisations, partnerships, contracts, alliances, groups, amalgamations, voluntary and enforced transfer of engagements.

The growth in mergers of housing associations could be regarded as both a change driver and organisational response, in that mergers could be seen as driving efficiency in a newly formed organisation, while a quest for achieving efficiency and scales of economy could be considered as a driver of merger activity in the sector. The perceived advantages of a group structure include being able to retain organisational identity, preserving value brands, managing tax efficiently and accommodating cultural differences.

Looser arrangements with devolved group structures were also deemed to have disadvantages as they were expensive to maintain and cumbersome to operate (Davies et al, 2006).

At the same time shortcomings of mergers in housing associations included the danger of one organisational culture dominating, the length of time for integration to occur, and risk of loss of local accountability (Davies et al, 2006). Large housing association organisational models do not always reap the benefits they were supposed to. In an appropriately entitled report *"Is big really best?"*, Lupton and Davies (2005) found no evidence that organizational size; better quality services and lower costs are linked (Davies et al, 2006).

3.4   From Government to Governance

This section of the chapter charts the move away from *"government"* to *"governance"* in housing associations – highlighting the increasing focus on the repositioning of housing associations in the sector, an increasing focus on managerialism and accountability, participation and involvement opportunities for housing association tenants and consumers. The section concludes with a discussion on the governance of housing associations, boards of management and their roles and responsibilities.

3.4.1   Business Culture: Repositioning Housing Associations

The ENHR Comparative Study of housing associations in EU countries (Czischke and Gruis, 2007) provides a useful insight into change drivers and sector trends in a broader European social housing context. Evidence from the study suggested that housing was becoming more market orientated and competitive, parallel to the decline in the provision of public social housing and the transformation of welfare states in large parts of Europe.

Social housing in the EU, including the UK, faced the challenge of providing decent housing in the context of reduced capital funding, which was driving change towards more market-oriented or business approaches with self-financing models (Czischke and Gruis, 2007).

A general trend that the UK did not conform to at the time was the decentralisation of housing policy, although this could change as the new Conservative-led coalition government in the UK develops its policies according to a more localist agenda in the form of the Localism Bill in England (DCLG, 2010).

Czischke and Gruis (2007) also describe the increasing application of business principles and broadening of services by social housing organisations in Europe. Two types of business principles emerge in their comparative study: performance management (with regard to efficiency, accountability and financial performance) and market orientation (broadening the scope of activity). The former ties in to the idea of efficiency drives in the sector, while the latter refers to the increasing diversification of these housing associations.

In the English context, the introduction of private finance in the late 1980s has steadily increased the importance of private funders as stakeholders. The increased level of mixed funding has made banks and lending institutions powerful stakeholders influencing the direction and strategies of housing associations by increasing the emphasis on strategic and long term business planning and financial reporting (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000; Mullins and Murie, 2006).

> *"The impact of private finance and risks associated with it have changed the culture of even long-established associations, making them more business-like in outlook."*
>
> (Malpass, 2000: 218)

The continued focus on the processes of *"management"* has been one of the enshrining features of housing policy and legislation of both the 1980s and 1990s. These policies advocated the introduction of *"private sector"* management techniques and performance monitoring into the social sector for a more efficient and business like provision (Pollitt, 1990; Ferlie et al, 1996; Walker, 1998; Mullins, 1999 and Flynn, 2001).

The rhetoric associated with New Public Management values was to inject *"efficiency, effectiveness and excellence"* into the social sector, so as to reduce the inefficiency which was a perceived failure of many *"social"* services.

> *"Managerialism and modernisation have had a strong influence on the ways in which housing policy has been shaped and delivered"*
>
> (Mullins and Murie, 2006; 130).

This performance culture and managerialism stance was reinforced by the *"best value"* framework, which required housing associations to review their services and to ask why they are being provided as they are; to compare their performance with that of others; to consult local *"stakeholders"* (taxpayers, voluntary and community organisations, service users and business) on how the service might be improved; and to *"embrace fair competition as a means of securing efficient and effective services"* (DETR, 1998 (a): 9). The introduction of Best Value and Total Quality Management as measurements of continuous improvement and performance has ensured that there is a comprehensive ad standardised regime of management and performance measurement within the social housing sector (Catterick 1992, Walker 1998 and Walker 2000).

As part of the rebranding of the not-for-profit sector, there had been a move away from voluntary labels to descriptions of housing associations as social businesses, which has reflected to the increased level of investment activity in the sector and the strategic re-positioning of housing associations, with large scale providers and smaller more niche operators both operating in the sector (Malpass, 2000; Mullins and Murie, 2006). At the same time as housing associations were becoming more business-like, moving from public to market-based characteristics, in the EU and in the UK there were calls for an increase in the accountability of housing associations (Czischke, 2007; Mullins and Riseborough, 2000) which has led to a tension of competing change drivers and rival demands faced by housing associations (Czischke 2007; Mullins, 2006).

3.4.2   Partnerships and Diversification

Housing associations are responsible towards regulatory bodies and, since the financial deregulation described above, private funders too (Cope, 1999). Another perceived dimension of the responsibilities of housing associations is their public accountability, which is about the raised expectations of housing associations in relation to tenant participation (discussed below) as well as their accountability to local communities, including dealings with local service providers in health, social welfare, police and employment agencies. This has resulted in models of community partnerships being encouraged by a number of government and industry led initiatives such as Local Strategic Partnerships and the National Housing Federation's *"iN Business for Neighbourhoods"* respectively (NHF, 2007).

Part of this emphasis is related to the retreating welfare state and the increasing expectation for housing associations to fulfil wider community obligations in line with the public policy agenda. Czischke and Gruis (2007) contend that the one of the key challenges facing social housing organisations in a number of EU countries is the retreat of the state in social services provision at the same time as and the growing role of urban regeneration and neighbourhood management in social housing.

Apart from retreating welfare states, another argument behind the remit for housing associations to provide community and regeneration activities occurs because they are so well placed to do so (Mullins, 2006; Wadhams, 2006; Bacon et al, 2007). Wadhams (2006) examines the potential for housing associations to become more entrenched in, and a focal point for community based initiatives. His study considers evidence from 300 housing associations to investigate partnership structures that exist between housing associations and other stakeholder groups and voluntary organisations.

The nationwide presence of housing associations can be seen as an ideal opportunity for neighbourhood renewal and can provide access to funding and support for voluntary and community organisations (Wadhams, 2006). This view is reiterated by Mullins (2006) who proposes that the accumulated asset base of associations and their significant presence in the deprived neighbourhoods targeted by government regeneration and social inclusion programmes supports their involvement in neighbourhood programmes.

Because housing associations are providing an increased portfolio of services to the wider community, they are seen as having diversified from their core role as social housing landlords. This diversification can be regarded as both a change driver in that it requires new flexible organisational structures, but also as a consequence of change drivers in the sector. Brandsen et al (2006) examine the diversification of housing associations across Europe through the increasing occurrence of non-landlord activities, and find that housing associations are developing into delivery agents of various social services such as employment training or regeneration. In the English context, there has also been a diversification of activities beyond social housing into a wide range of community services and schemes (Housing Corporation 2005, NHF 2008).

This diversification has reflected the Labour government's public policy agenda, where housing has become part of a broader regeneration and social agenda (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000) as evident in one of the strategic aims of the NHF which is *"to lead the housing and neighbourhoods policy agenda nationally and locally"* (NHF, 2009). There has therefore been a drive in the sector encouraging housing associations to become key players in communities, not just as developers and landlords but through their social investment role.

It can be argued that the changes in emphasis in the provision of wider community development, community interest and regeneration agendas by housing association should lead to an increased role for female participation in the governance, and management of housing associations, as this is where traditionally women have been involved on a voluntary basis at a local level, and in a professional level, women are overrepresented in these roles.

3.4.3   Accountability, Participation and Involvement

The increasing public focus on housing associations as sole providers of new social housing has led to a demand for more transparency and accountability, as well as greater public expectation of more choice and consultation over decisions that affect them (Cope, 1999; Mullins, 2006). Accountability also therefore broadly includes the actions of housing associations in supporting residents to influence decisions made in neighbourhoods, as well as influencing other organisations working at neighbourhood level to focus on wider community priorities (Bacon et al 2007). These actions can be pursued through a variety of channels, from housing resident members of boards to more consumerist models of engagement, such as the use of surveys, focus groups and suggestion schemes, now popular with larger housing associations.

Indeed, consumerist approaches appear to be replacing formal representation of residents in governance as the main mechanisms for accountability (Mullins, 2006) and this ties in with earlier arguments in the previous section of the adoption of business models in the housing association sector, and the debate around citizenship in chapter two. The growing predominance of a consumerist approach is an important theme of this case study and will be explored in further detail in the empirical sections of this thesis, as a more consumerist approach will encourage enhanced levels of female participation with the housing association as tenants and board members, since women represent a significant percentage of consumers of social housing.

Though participation in social housing management has a much longer history, the involvement of the *"community"* has been a central feature of housing and social policy developments since the Labour administration of 1997-2010. The participation of tenants and residents has become a mainstream top-down policy through the introduction on all *"social"* housing providers to produce and implement Tenant Participation Compacts and tenants were seen as central to the development and the implementation of the managerial and performance agendas of the Best Value framework (Goodlad, 2001; Hickman, 2006).

Much of the promotional activities in relation to tenant participation have been in an attempt for housing associations to become, or be seen to become more open and accountable in their decision-making processes.

In addition to this, the Government (Social Exclusion Unit 1998, 2000 and 2002) documented the benefits of resident and tenant participation, which included the following:

- *Responsive and improved services*

- *Improved decision making*

- *Greater satisfaction levels amongst tenants and staff*

- *Development of skills and confidence amongst tenants*

- *Improved community spirit*

- *Improvement in environmental and health issues*

- *Reduction in the levels of Anti-Social Behaviour*

- *Sustainable neighbourhoods*

(Social Exclusion Unit, 1998:26)

The Audit Commission (2004: 18) identified that there were three purposes for tenant participation:

- *To improve services or housing stock*

- *To enhance accountability for users*

- *To build social capital and community capacity.*

The development of tenant participation policies came at a time when the delivery of housing services have been under increasing financial constraints, housing associations are increasingly seen as the main providers and saviours of social rented housing, with their increasing dominance a result of stock transfer from local authorities and their regeneration agendas. Whilst this is happening there have been a growing proportion of social housing tenants reliant on the state for their income – and their growing disempowerment to become involved in the functions of civic society. Those tenants who have shown a willingness to become involved with their landlord, and participate in training courses, have had a heavy burden of responsibility placed on them as the only legitimate tenants able to participate effectively.

The movement away from the traditional forms of tenant participation towards wider involvement and empowerment strategies through the use of community based housing organisations has developed as a result of the perception that housing associations, created as a result of Large Scale Voluntary Transfers were becoming increasingly unaccountable to their tenants and residents (Walker 2000).

However, *"community cooperative"* type housing organisations which have been advocated by academics, policy makers and the cooperative societies as an option for future stock transfer organisations may provide more opportunities for empowerment than the traditional type housing association. These community based housing organisations, such as Community Housing Mutual Organisations allow for and encourage full tenant membership, tenant majority boards of management, empowerment strategies and the potential for the devolution of housing management functions to local communities (Clapham and Kintrea 2000; Zitron 2004).

With tenants and residents taking a stronger role in the decision making process affecting their homes and the management of their homes, tenants and residents should become empowered to get more involved in the housing and community issues which affect them, with the resultant effect that the communities in which they live becoming more sustainable and cohesive. Rowlands (2009), highlights in his evidence report to the commission on co-operative housing, that as with all other performance indicators, these are higher for co-operative housing than the norm in other social housing providers. Rowlands notes that overall, tenant satisfaction is at 94% and their satisfaction with tenant participation is at a staggering level of 99%.

Choice has become a headline word in housing policy, featuring in Labour's green paper of 2000 (DETR, 2000). Clearly it is closely connected with the notion of tenant and resident involvement, for giving tenants and applicant's choices is a way of involving them in decisions about their housing.

But choices can be collective or individual, and although there are areas (such as stock transfer) where collective decisions are required, the thrust of policy is to promote and develop individual choices, in a way that is consistent with relating to tenants and applicants as customers in a market. Another feature of the growth of policy interest in choice for social housing tenants is that there are clear incentives to make certain choices rather than others and the choices available tend to be one-way only.

Despite the New Labour Governments premise of participation and involvement in the running of public services during their tenure, the issues of citizenship remained difficult for women to overcome. As with the Conservative Government administrations of the early 1990s, notions of citizenship were accorded to those in paid employment.

Policies such as the *"New Deal"* (DETR, 1998 (b)) stressed the importance of paid work not just as a route out of poverty and dependency on the state, but also as a badge of citizenship and fulfilment of obligations to society. Although policies and the developments of the public services valued and demanded the contribution of service users, those who were able to and had the time and the inclination to participate were in effect devalued due to their ability to commit time to these voluntary activities.

Bronstein (2004) and Christie (1997) state that the opportunities taken by organisations to get more women involved in participation have been tokenistic. Many of these gestures used by organisations to encourage participation have included the provision or payment for childcare. These have been criticised, as Bronstein contends, that there are a number of occasions when women have to be at home, or are involved in other family related activities where their time cannot be bought.

One could also contend that women's caring responsibilities are not just confined to caring for children as a large amount of women have other caring responsibilities either for an elderly or disabled relative and care arrangements for these individuals cannot be easily arranged or compensated for. Bronstein and Christie also note that the formal participation structures for organisations are not flexible enough for women. They contend that the timing and location of community meetings needs to be planned in order that there is the maximum amount of flexibility available.

Beresford and Hoban (2005) referred to the lack of female involvement in the community development activities they were studying, and how that might reinforce assumptions about the role of women at home and their exclusion from community involvement. This, however, would appear to run counter to the history of involvement, where women took part in rent strikes and supported a mobilised community, as outlined in Chapter Two.

This may indicate that some agency-led community development do not take account of women's needs and ways of working. It must be noted that social landlords have had specific duties to broaden their involvement approaches, and develop inclusive practices, in all the regulatory instruments published since 1992, yet involvement from these groups has remained marginal in both social housing and community development.

3.4.4   Governance of Housing Associations

Since the early 1980s successive governments in the UK introduced a variety of public sector reforms leading to a growth in the number of quangos and public bodies with appointed boards, particularly housing associations. The rationale for these changes was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public organisations by reducing the political nature of boards and bringing in people, particularly from the private sector, who it was assumed had the expertise and experience to run them well.

This move to non-elected, expert boards in many parts of the public sector was heavily criticised for being undemocratic and creating a new self-selected elite (Plummer, 1994; Skelcher, 1998). Responding to these criticisms recent Labour governments have modified some of these arrangements and introduced greater stakeholder involvement, although deep concerns over the democratic accountability of many of these boards remains (Robinson et al, 2000).

In the shift from traditional voluntary housing status to social businesses, housing associations have become managerialised through a performance and business culture and are overall more commercially driven (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000; Walker, 2000). This is reflected too in the changing governance of housing associations. Because of its charitable status, voluntary governance had been a long-standing feature of the housing association sector in the UK. However after much debate in 2003, board members were allowed to receive payment for their services to the housing associations in England. There has also been a shift from the strategic influence of board members to a more significant influence of executives in developing and implementing organisational strategies (Mullins and Murie 2006: 197).

So why do housing associations have boards of management? The National Housing Federation provides two answers to this question: first, it is a legal requirement – *"without a board, housing organisations do not have a legal existence"* (Rochester and Hutchinson, 2001: 1). Secondly, the same authors claim that boards add value to the organisation. Board members may bring a range of knowledge, thoughts and questions which are wider than the experience of staff, and effective board will perform a number of useful functions that contribute to the health of the organisation and its ability to achieve its aims (Rochester and Hutchinson, 2001).

The Federation's Code sets out what it describes as *"the essential functions of the Board"* (NHF, 2004: 12), of which the following duties are to be considered a minimum standard:

- *define and ensure compliance with the values and objectives of the association;*

- *establish a framework for approving policies and plans to achieve those objectives;*

- *approve each year's accounts prior to publication and approve each year's budget and business plan;*

- *establish and oversee a framework of delegation and systems of internal control;*

- *establish and oversee a framework for the identification and management of risk, ensuring that the board receives regular reports on these;*

- *agree or ratify policies and decisions on all matters that might create significant financial or other risk to the association, or which raise material issues of principle;*

- *monitor the association's performance in relation to these plans, budgets, controls and decisions and also in the light of customer feedback and the performance of comparable organisations;*

- *appoint (and, if necessary, dismiss) the Chief Executive and approve his or her salary, benefits and terms of employment;*

- *satisfy itself that the association's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards of performance and probity;*

- *assess how the association follows the recommendations of this Code of governance; and,*

- *Follow the organisation's constitution in appointing (and, if necessary, removing) the chair of the board.*

Individually, board members are expected to be independent and critical, process significant amounts of information, work as part of a team, represent the organisation, contribute to and share responsibility for board decisions, and uphold principles of good governance (Rochester & Hutchinson, 2001; NHF, 2004).

Independence and the need to leave any constituency base outside the board room is emphasised in the professional literature (Housing Corporation, 2002; NHF, 2004). Housing association board members, like their private sector colleagues, are expected to operate as a team. Effective boards are characterised as those where factions do not exist and decision-making is shared (Higgs, 2003).

The idea that board members should be diverse is shared across the voluntary, public and private sectors (Housing Corporation, 2002; ACEVO, 2003; Higgs, 2003). Kearns (1997) in his discussion of housing association committee composition argues that it is important for there to be a *"constituency mix"* on housing association boards for the associations' self-identity, reputation, legitimacy, effectiveness, security and reassurance. In stock transfer associations, where it has become the norm for one-third of board members to be tenants of the new association, the element of legitimacy is especially important. Pawson and Fancy (2003) note that tenant board members are valued in giving legitimacy to transfer associations and that this constituency mix plays a symbolic role.

 The Housing Corporation (2002) stresses the importance that boards reflect the communities they serve. Tenants and the wider community are conceived as stakeholders in housing associations alongside funders, local authorities and others. The take up of tenants on boards of management was slow in traditional housing associations, according to Cairncross (2004). She reports that in 1990, only 40% of associations had any tenant board members. According to Housing Corporation registry data (for 2000) the figure was still 40% of associations with 250 or more units having tenant board members. However, a survey by Aldbourne Associates in 1999/2000 of all housing associations with 250 or more units in management, found that nearly ¾ of housing associations had tenants on the board (Aldbourne Associates, 2001). There are no published figures on the levels of tenant board members in England since 2000.

The existence of tenant representatives on housing association boards is arguably an illustration of the citizenship approach to accountability, and can have an influence on the number of female tenant board members (see citizenship debates in chapter two). However, Kearns (1997) has drawn attention to the ambiguity of the role of tenant board members on housing association boards in terms of whether they are there as representatives or individuals.

Tickell (2003) considers that board members' accountability should not be confused with representativeness. This is an important distinction and forms part of the current debates in housing policy. While tenant board members may perceive themselves and be perceived as representatives, formally their accountability is to shareholders, funders and the regulator as individual and corporate members of the board, primarily an upward accountability. There is a lack of research evidence on how tenant board members themselves see their role and to whom they feel accountable. But it seems likely that as representatives, tenant board members will consult with tenants' groups before taking decisions at board meetings, voting as directed by their constituency, and reporting back, reflecting a downward sense of accountability (Cairncross, 2004).

As with private sector boards, little is known about the actual conduct and operation of housing association boards because of the difficulties of negotiating the required degree of access to what may be commercially (or otherwise) sensitive discussions; However, Pawson and Fancy (2003) found that tenant board members were often perceived as playing a limited role in board decision-making and as tending to focus on operational day to day matters. This research forms a key contribution to the knowledge of the sector.

There are a number of identified tensions within boards of management – between the different constituent parts of the boards, the boards and the executive management teams.

Some of these have been created as a result of the hybrid identities (Blessing, 2012) that housing associations perform, in that they are providers of community and welfare services, but the arena in which they are expected to operate is in the direction of private sector organisations, with a focus on performance management, and other developments which may ultimately disempower local communities.

3.5   Impact of Political Devolution

This section of the chapter looks at developments closer to home on the impact of devolved housing policy on the social rented sector, housing associations, regulation of the housing association sector and governance arrangements.

3.5.1   Impact on the Social Housing Sector

Housing policy developments in Wales have followed closely the housing policies of Central Government in England, albeit with a local spin. As with the remainder of the UK, the demand for affordable homes currently outstrips supply, and particularly in Wales the issue of access to affordable home ownership continues to put pressures on the social and privately rented sectors.

Sterling and Smith (2003) note that with the creation of devolved national governments, housing policy has risen on the political agenda. They also note that although housing policy has been revived, it has also become decentralised, with greater opportunities for variation on specific aspects of policy (Sterling and Smith, 2010). Whilst much of the post devolution period has been one of sustained economic growth, post 2007, the *"credit crunch"* has had a significant impact on the policy priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government[2]. Social rents in Wales have increased less rapidly than those in England over the last fifteen years.

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[2] Name changed to Welsh Government after to the referendum of 2012.

However, as the average level of earnings in Wales has not grown as quickly than in England, the result is an impact on the overall level of *"affordability"* for those households in employment and living in socially rented housing in Wales (McCormick and Harrop, 20110). The Essex Review in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) included the supply of affordable housing as one of the main housing policy priorities for Wales.

Wales took a divergent step to England in the policies and strategies for improvement of housing quality, particularly in the local authority sector. In pre-devolution times there were no large scale voluntary transfers of local authority stock to housing associations in Wales. Post-devolution, the Welsh Assembly Government took a cautious and circumspect approach to the development of this policy. To date half of all local authorities in Wales (11) have voted to transfer their housing stock to new social landlords. These eleven authorities have completed the transfer process, housing associations and community mutuals now provide around 136,635 homes and housing services to the people of Wales (Community Housing Cymru, 2013).

The policy of stock transfer in Wales was underpinned by a central government agreement that the HM Treasury would absorb all the costs of any outstanding debt on the council stock transferred to new housing associations and Community Housing Mutual Associations, leaving the Welsh Assembly Government with the need to meet only the costs of the *"dowry"* that might be required to ensure that the new organisation had the funds to undertake the required level of investment to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. Dowries apart, the transfers left the budget of the devolved administration intact and able to meet other housing policy priorities. Two of the Welsh transfers to new organisations followed the distinctive route in the adoption of the Community Housing Mutual model in which the housing stock is *"owned"* by a co-operative of which all of the tenants are members.

The Welsh Assembly Government also rejected the development of Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMO) in Wales. In England, the model was developed as a response to political pressures to provide local authorities with an alternative to stock transfer, and provided additional public borrowing permitted for stock improvements. In Wales, the ALMO model was not adopted due to the lack of additional resources, whilst the HM Treasury support for stock transfers made that option far more financially attractive.

The National Assembly for Wales published its first housing strategy for Wales, *"Better Homes for People in Wales"* (National Assembly for Wales, 2001) two years after the establishment of the Assembly Government, a review and action plan were subsequently published in 2006 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006). Support for the social housing sector was also included in the *"One Wales"* Coalition Agreement in 2007 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007). The second national housing strategy was published in 2010, *"Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales"* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010), and again saw the role of social housing in a whole-system approach to the stewardship of housing in Wales.

In 2007, the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned the Essex Review in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). The report made forty-three recommendations, many of which were underpinned by the need to work in partnership with all the housing stakeholders in Wales. The main thrust of the Essex Review report was that wide-ranging and urgent changes needed to be made to the way that the provision of affordable housing was regulated, funded, planned for, assessed and delivered in Wales. Five Work streams were identified to implement the recommendations of the Essex Review, each relating to a series of recommendations in the report, and the overall work programme was managed, shaped and delivered by housing professionals and experts, thus bringing a more integrated and participative approach to the development of housing policy in Wales, and a greater influence of women in the development and future direction of housing policy in Wales.

3.5.2 Impact on Housing Associations

The development of a distinct housing policy in Wales as seen increased support for the development of the housing association sector in Wales, particularly since 2009. In comparison to England, where there have been financial pressures to merge and form groups structures, the Welsh Assembly saw the attractiveness of having a locally based housing association sector in Wales.

The Community Housing Cymru *"Global Accounts"* for 2013 (Community Housing Cymru, 2013) note that there are 37 housing associations in Wales, 11 of which have been created in the last 8 years through the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer process. Collectively housing associations in Wales own and manage 158,259 homes, of which 136,635 are provided by newly formed housing associations.

Approximately 83% comprise general needs accommodation - supported housing, student accommodation and other accommodation make up the balance. Housing associations are involved in a wide range of activities, including (but not limited to) regeneration activities, working with health and social services and other statutory bodies, and community-based projects.

The impact and contribution of the welsh housing association sector to the wider welsh economy cannot be underestimated, the Welsh Economic Research Unit study, commissioned by Community Housing Cymru, shows that during 2013 housing associations supported an estimated total output of £1.97bn, gross value added of around £649m, and an estimated 21,360 full time equivalent jobs in Wales (Community Housing Cymru, 2013). Carl Sargent, Minister for Housing and Regeneration announced in a written statement that housing associations in Wales had developed nearly 8,000 new homes in Wales since 2007, and between 2007 and 2014 delivered around 8,000 new affordable homes in Wales.

In the written statement he outlined the Welsh Governments commitment to continuing the supply of affordable housing in partnership with the housing association sector;

> *"As Minister for Housing and Regeneration, I have made clear that my priority is increasing housing supply and I have asked all sectors to do as much as they can with the resources they have available."*
>
> (Welsh Government; 2014 (c)

3.5.3   Impact on Tenant Participation

The Welsh Assembly Government further advanced the cause of tenant participation through the introduction of Tenant Compacts (Welsh Assembly Government, 2000). Although the initial commitment only required local authorities to prepare Tenant Compacts, the requirement and standards were extended to housing associations in 2001. Landlords were expected to comply with seven core standards, within each standard a set of prescribed components were expressed.

In 2004, the Welsh Assembly evaluated the implementation of these tenant participation compacts (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004). The key findings found that the majority of Tenant Participation Compacts in Wales were single landlord agreements with all tenants within their organisation and the review found that there were serious limitations in the effectiveness of the compact process.

 As a result of the evaluation, the report recommended that the tenant compact guidance should be rewritten to develop a National Tenant Involvement Strategy. It was envisaged that the strategy should loosen the emphasis of the Tenant Compact requirements for landlords and tenants to follow traditional routes of tenant participation, and that the strategy should validate a range of ways of involvement, both informal and formal, to ensure that the views of all tenants can be heard (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004).

In 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced the National Tenant Participation Strategy (NTPS) (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) which outlined and solidified the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to boost the standard of participation to the best current levels and make it consistent across Wales, with the explicit aim to improve services and expand the opportunities of involvement and participation to all. The NTPS did not introduce any new ideas or practice in relation to tenant participation, but aimed to spread best practice across all social landlords within Wales. One of the main expectations contained within the document was that all social landlords should develop a Local Tenant Participation Strategy (LTPS) with their tenants, along with an action plan for future activities. The Welsh Government also established a number of key expectations for social landlords, which were to be included within the LTPS.

Both the NTPS and the development of LTPS's within social landlords required substantial demands, and a step change in the practice of delivering and developing tenant participation activities on all social landlords and increasing the diversity of those involved in participation and involvement activities.TPAS Cymru (2013) found that there had been significant development in extending tenant participation activities to traditionally hard to engage groups of tenants such as black and minority ethnic groups, young people and those with disabilities.

There was also a greater appreciation amongst landlords of the need to develop specific participation plans to involve these groups as *"communities of interest"* as well *"communities of place"*. There is also widespread recognition that different approaches are required for different cultural groups. The findings from the research also point to more tenant involvement since 2004 in key areas of the decision making processes within social landlords, and this was consistent with developments in tenant participation and regulation policy within Wales. All housing associations in Wales reported tenant involvement on boards of management, contractor selection, setting and reviewing of policies and setting standards for performance, which was an increase from the 2004 research.

There was also an increased amount of tenant involvement than reported in 2004 in other areas including business planning and the appointment of senior managers and the Chief Executive positions (TPAS Cymru, 2013).

One of the Essex recommendations was to set up an independent Regulatory Board for Wales and one of the key groups that feed into the regulatory board is the Tenants' Advisory Panel (TAP). The TAP is made up of representatives from housing associations across Wales, elected on a regional basis. The role of TAP is to link in with tenants groups across Wales, is to drawing on the knowledge and collective experience that tenants have as the end users of housing association services. The existence of this representative body at the heart of the regulation framework also highlights the development of tenant participation in Wales since devolution.

3.5.4   Regulation and Governance of Housing Associations

Whilst the regulations for ensuring governance and accountability for providers of affordable homes have been in flux in all devolved nations, the Welsh Assembly Government has made this one of the key housing policy priorities in Wales. The *"Essex Review"* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) made significant recommendations for the future of regulation of housing associations in Wales.

The development of the Housing Regulatory Framework in Wales (Welsh Government, 2013(c)) has brought in a regulatory framework essentially managed by the Welsh Government, with an independent regulatory board. The achievement of locally developed, but nationally defined outcomes ensures that housing associations in Wales are providing open, accountable and transparent high quality services. One of the key developments in the implementation of the regulatory framework in Wales is that tenants should be at the heart of the monitoring of service delivery at self-assessment level of regulation and governance. The Welsh Government's regulation team are responsible for Whole Association Assessments of the provision of services, governance and financial viability of the organisations.

The Regulatory Framework describes the principles, approach to regulation and its main features. It also explains how housing associations are assessed. This framework was introduced in 2012. The Regulatory Framework contains *"Delivery Outcomes"* to be met by housing associations in connection with their functions relating to the provision of housing, and matters relating to their governance and financial management.

The ultimate purpose of the Regulatory Framework is to ensure that housing associations provide good quality homes and services to tenants and others who use their services. It does this by ensuring that each association is:

> *"Well governed - led effectively and well managed by boards, executives, staff, tenants and partners, who work together to make and implement business decisions. Financially viable - has the money to meet current and future business commitments and effectively manages its finances. Delivering high quality services - providing services that meet people's needs and expectations and compare well with the quality of services delivered by their associations."*

(Welsh Government, 2012: 2)

The annual regulatory assessment report on each association provides:

> *"An assessment of the level of regulatory involvement required over the forthcoming year; that is: "low", "medium" or "high". A brief, robust, narrative evaluation of governance and service delivery focussed on outcomes for tenants, service users and communities, and tailored to local circumstances. "*

(Welsh Government, 2013 (c): 12)

Whilst the operation of the research looked at the implementation of the regulatory framework the report referred to governance in the context of housing regulatory activities.

> *"Good governance underpins the ability of housing associations to meet many of these changes and to drive the continued provision of additional affordable housing and high quality and improving services. This raises questions which are outside the scope of this study, in terms of whether housing association Boards have the appropriate skills and experience to discharge their responsibilities and whether the mechanisms are in place to ensure Board members are properly inducted, trained and appraised and that associations have policies to ensure Board membership renewal and succession planning. However, good governance is also about accountability; to tenants, residents and service users (and potential service users), to other stakeholders (local authorities, lenders etc.) to government (as the Regulator) and to the taxpayer, given the continued support of public funding for social housing activities".*
>
> (Welsh Government, 2013 (c): 31)

As with governance of housing associations in England, all housing associations have boards of management. In Wales, the CHC Board Members Handbook (Community Housing Cymru, 2011) and Good Practice Guidance on Governance (Community Housing Cymru, 2012) provide clear recommendations on how good governance should be exercised by housing associations in Wales. Additionally the Welsh Government Delivery Outcomes (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010 (b)) also form part of the guidance on the operation of boards of management for housing associations in Wales.

Boards of management for housing associations in Wales vary in size (between 12 and 15 members), and often have 2 constituent parts: independent and tenant members. In the case of LSVT organisations, there is typically a third constituent part – local authority representatives, in order that there is a link to the host local authority.

As in England, there are tensions as to how these boards of management operate, especially focusing on the roles of board members, tensions between constituent parts of boards, and tensions between the executive management teams and the boards. As in the English context there is a concern around the hybrid nature of housing associations and the tensions between the provision of welfare and community services in an increasingly competitive and private market framework.

The 2013 sector study into governance of housing associations in Wales (Miljevic et al, 2013), commissioned by the Welsh Government, looked at the effectiveness of governance practices of housing associations; support the future proofing of governance in housing associations in that they are fit for purpose to face future challenges; and to stimulate a greater focus on continuous improvement as a basis for a well-run sector.

The study was commissioned to research the following areas:

- *"Assess the effectiveness of the current governance practices of housing associations and community mutuals against the standards of governance set out in Community Housing Cymru's Charter for Good Governance and against key features of the Regulatory Framework*
- *Consider relevant matters about governance and debates in other related sectors to identify lessons for the housing association sector*
- *To help future proof and support fit-for-purpose governance among housing associations, identifying training, development and capacity building needs to strengthen the approach to and practice of governance to meet future challenges, which include an increasingly difficult financial environment and the impact of welfare reform*
- *To stimulate a greater focus on good governance and continuous improvement as the basis for a well-run sector".*

(Welsh Government, 2013 (c): 7)

The evidence gathered in the 2013 research suggests that many of the procedural elements of good governance were in place, and that the sector has undergone positive change in governance, with housing association boards understanding the theory of what they are there to do. However, as the research was a general sectorial overview the research was unable to understand each organisations position in relation to this in detail. The research found that there was some evidence to suggest that some housing associations displayed mediocrity or lack of alacrity in some organisations (for example, boards being reactive or appraisal not taking place), and the study uncovered that some boards and senior teams knew they were not yet at the standard they ought to be but were on the journey to get there and needed more time to do so. It was also found that in some there were barriers that hampered their wish to improve, for example in relation to recruiting key skills or addressing board diversity, having unplanned board change imposed on them, or sometimes simply feeling unsure as to the best way to implement a process (Miljevic et al, 2013).

The research found that in terms of housing associations fostering a governance culture which enabled constructive challenge, effective decision making and good outcomes, that challenge was sometimes very narrowly interpreted. The research found that it was difficult to judge from the evidence gathered how effectively boards were engaging in shaping strategy and orchestrating what they saw as the 'big questions' for discussion for their organisations (Miljevic et al, 2013).

In 2008, Griffiths undertook a review into housing association boards of management for Community Housing Cymru (Griffiths, 2008); his findings are summarised below.

3.5.4.1 Independent Board Members

Griffiths recorded the professional backgrounds of the 292 independent board members from 24 housing associations in Wales:

- 14% of board members had finance skills gained as accountants or through employment in finance organisations such as banks;
- 12 % had experience of senior management in fields other than finance;
- 14% had an employment background in housing organisations or in related local government functions;
- 11% had an employment background in health and social care;
- 7% had an employment background in property development;
- 3% had legal skills.

3.5.4.2 Tenant Board Members

The Griffiths Report found that approximately, 24% of board members were tenants with the range being between 1 and 5 tenants on the boards. Tenants on boards of management are now a common feature in housing associations in Wales, as in England, with LSVTs having a requirement in their rules for tenant representation on the boards of management.

The Griffiths Report found that there was some suspicion from Financial Institutions over the inclusion of service users/ stakeholders on boards of management. Some of the concerns highlighted in previous research on tenants on the boards of management of housing associations have been whether tenants are seen as representatives of the wider tenant body or whether they are there to direct the organisation. The Griffiths report (2008) highlighted this concern, and found that:

> *"Many of the tenant board members who were interviewed for this review showed a sophisticated ability to balance their responsibilities to the board with their commitment to represent the tenant experience. There were tenant board members who regularly reported back to tenants groups, explaining board decisions and gaining feedback for future board discussions. This is a challenging set of relationship which was often managed remarkably well. As with all board members, tenants require the opportunities for good quality training which is clearly relevant to the purposes of being a board member."*

<div align="right">(Griffiths, 2008: 19)</div>

3.5.4.3   Recruitment to Boards

Griffiths found that recruitment to boards of housing associations was underpinned by selection criteria, advertisement, interview, a period of observation and induction for independent members of boards of management. The most common way for tenants to be recruited to boards of management for housing associations is through competitive election. However, there were still a small number of organisations where tenants are selected from the higher levels of tenant participation activities within organisation.

3.5.4.4   Gender Diversity

Welsh Government in their commissioned research into the sector governance of Housing Associations Registered in Wales (Miljevic et al, 2013) found that there was a lack of diversity amongst housing association boards of management, not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of other characteristics including age and ethnicity. The research found that the monitoring of the protected characteristics (as specified in the Equality Act 2010) of board members was only in place in under half of the associations surveyed. Of those organisations that did monitor for protected characteristics, organisations reported that they either undertook this monitoring for all or some of the characteristics. The majority of organisations did not undertake this monitoring in any format.

The research found that generally, women were under-represented in non-executive roles in the sector, with one-third of the overall appointed board member roles being occupied by women. The research also found that in three cases, women were in the majority on the boards, and in fourteen cases, women accounted for less than 30% of board members. LSVT organisations were found to have a better balance of women on their boards of management by comparison with traditional housing associations. The EU *"gold standard"* sets a target of 40% female boardroom membership and so, while Welsh housing associations are not far off this, there is clearly room for improvement.

The research identified that in the majority of transfer boards, there was over 30% female representation on boards, compared to half of the traditional housing associations which had over 30% female board member representation (Miljevic et al, 2013). This may be because of LSVTs using more of a consumerist approach to participation than traditional housing organisations who are using more of a citizenship approach.

Secondary data collected as part of this research has identified that overall 35% of housing association board members were female and 65% were male. When looking at the difference between "traditional" housing associations and LSVT housing associations there were more females on boards of management than males which was nearer to the average than in the traditional housing association sector

Table 3.1 – Secondary Data Analysis of Housing Association Board Members (tenants, independents and local authority nominees) by gender in Wales (The Author, 2013)

	Male	Female
All housing associations	65%	35%
Traditional Housing Associations	75%	25%
LSVT Housing Associations	60%	40%

As per the Miljevic et al (2013) research discussed above, it was identified that in some transfer housing associations in Wales there was a majority female presence on the boards of management, this is contrast with some of the smaller traditional housing associations, where there was found to be a dominance of males on the board of management.

The issue of gender diversity on boards of housing associations has recently been championed by the Minister for Housing, Carl Sargeant (Donald, 2014) who has called for housing associations to ensure their boards are made up of equal numbers of women and men. At a Community Housing Cymru conference (Inside Housing, 2014), he demonstrated his commitment is more than just words and announced his plan to introduce a new code of governance for housing associations in Wales setting out the rules and procedures for housing association boards. One of the key effects of this code is a push towards gender equality at boardroom level.

"Housing associations need modern boards for a modern world" and asked for landlords to take 'practical action' to achieve better diversity on boards"

(Inside Housing, 2014: 25)

3.6   Conclusion

Housing policy under the Conservative Government of Thatcher and Major focused on owner-occupation, the application of market principles, reducing public expenditure, the *"Right to Buy"*, deregulation of private renting and finance, and compulsory competitive tendering. Home ownership increased significantly between 1979-1997. Many council stocks moved tenure to either home ownership or to the housing association sector. There was a diversification of social housing providers and increased performance management and regulation introduced into the social housing sector. There was a move from the public provision of housing to the social provision of housing.

The role of local authorities in the direct provision of housing has continued to decline since 1998. Their role as *"enablers"* in the housing market for other agencies and providers, mainly for the private sector and housing associations grew in the Labour Government administration. These trends continued under the Blair and Brown Labour Government administrations of 1997-2010, though the Labour Government followed a more comprehensive approach to the social housing sector, introducing Best Value, community based housing management and re-introduced strategic housing investment. During this time the increasing focus of the government formed around public participation in the delivery of welfare services, including housing and a movement to the delivery of housing through the third way - from social housing to not-for-profit housing.

During the whole time of housing policy from the mid-1960s, housing associations in England and Wales have experienced significant change – taking on more responsibility for the delivery of the Governments' housing policy for low-income households.

Not only have there been significant changes to the way that housing associations are financed – a mixed model of private and public sector funding, but changes include the amount of housing stock managed and the diversification of organisations in the provision of wider community and welfare services.

Housing policy over the last fifty years and particularly during Conservative Government term of 1979-1997 has differentially affected women and men, with women coming off worse in their access to housing tenures. By focusing on local authority housing the Conservative government demonstrated that radical incursions could be made into the heart of public provision without disastrous electoral consequences. Housing policies had a more negative affect upon those who were most dependent on social housing. As a consequence the local authority sector became a sector for those individuals with little choice to move elsewhere; an increasing proportion of whom were women. It is argued that women in this sector suffer a double disadvantage, first, by residing in marginalised accommodation and second, by being women in an unequal society which treats women as 'second class' citizens.

Whilst the Labour Government made significant attempts to engender both the mechanisms of government and policies, women still faced a significant uphill struggle to become equal to men during the period. Critical to the central issue is that the Labour Government tried to make a difference to women's lives rather than tackling the wider gender inequalities that they faced. For true gender inequality to be addressed, feminist commentators suggest that difference needs to be made to men's lives as well.

The previous two chapters have outlined the available literature on the female relationship to housing and the development of housing policy in Britain today. Chapter two identified that men and women experience housing differently due to their unequal position in society and discussed the concept of women's involvement in society through their relationship to the home.

Chapter three looked at the development of housing policy in Britain and linked women to their participation in tenant participation activities and boards of management of housing associations nationally.

The next chapter moves on to understand the theoretical frameworks that will be used in the analysis of female participation on the boards of management of the two case study organisations included within the primary research in this thesis.

Chapter 4 – Theoretical Perspectives

4.1　Introduction

The previous two chapters have outlined and critiqued the available literature on the female relationship to housing and the development of housing policy and its influences on women in Britain today. This chapter moves on to understand the theoretical frameworks that will be used in the analysis of female participation on housing association boards of management of the two case study organisations included within the primary research in this thesis. The twin objectives of this chapter therefore are, to introduce the conceptualised theoretical framework developed for the analysis of the primary research data discussed in chapters 7, 8 and 9; and to highlight and discuss the key theoretical frameworks in which female participation on boards of management of housing associations take place.

4.2　Theoretical Framework for Analysis

The theoretical frameworks chosen for the research will enable me to unpack both the macro and the micro dynamics involved in female representation on housing association boards of management, and generate greater understanding of the dynamic tensions of governance, organisations, power dynamics and individual motivations for participation on boards of management. In addition to this, the research will elucidate the opportunities available to both organisations and individuals to overcome the more obvious barriers to effective involvement, and enhance awareness of the more subtle pressures and barriers generated by governance models, organisations and individuals themselves. Depicting some of the academic reference points, Table 4.1 (below) outlines the critical components of the theoretical framework as related to the original research objectives defined in the introduction of this thesis.

Table 4.1 The Theoretical Framework and the Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims	Theoretical Frameworks
Identify the organisational typology and culture of the case study organisations and how this facilitates female participation on boards of management	Handy (1987) Schein (1985); Johnson (1992); Hofstede (1991); Newman (1995); Billis (2010); Mullins and Pawson (2010)
Identify the governance structures and prevailing board culture of the case study organisations and how they influence female participation	Jensen & Meckling (1976); Lynall et al. (2003); Daily et al. (2003); Berle and Means (1932); Cornforth (2009); Mullins (2014), Mullins and Pawson (2010); McDermond (2010), McKee et al (2008).
Uncover the board composition and diversity and how recruitment strategies influence female participation and barriers to involvement	Jensen & Meckling (1976); Lynall et al. (2003); Daily et al. (2003); Berle and Means (1932) Cornforth (2004)
Explore the motivations of board members' participation	Arnstein (1964); Somerville (1998); Cooper and Hawtin (1998), Cairncross et al (1997)
Uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation and opportunities for empowerment.	Schein (1985); Johnson (1992); Hofstede (1991); Newman (1995), Clegg (1989) Satori (1987); Barber (1984); Smith (1981); Hill (1974); Somerville (1998)

My perception, based on both the empirical evidence and my interpretivist point of view, is that female participation and representation on boards of management of housing associations is influenced by the structure of governance, the typology and the culture of the organisation, and opportunities for participation. The other influences on the participation of females on housing association boards of management are related to the power or group dynamics of the boards of management, and individual motivations for participation.

Figure 4.1 conceptualises the theoretical framework in relation to female participation on boards of housing association boards of management. An important caveat to reading these figures is that while the connecting arrows are depicted as one-directional, they do not intend to imply a causal relationship between the phenomena at hand.

Figure 4.1 Conceptualised Theoretical Framework for Analysis (The Author, 2014)
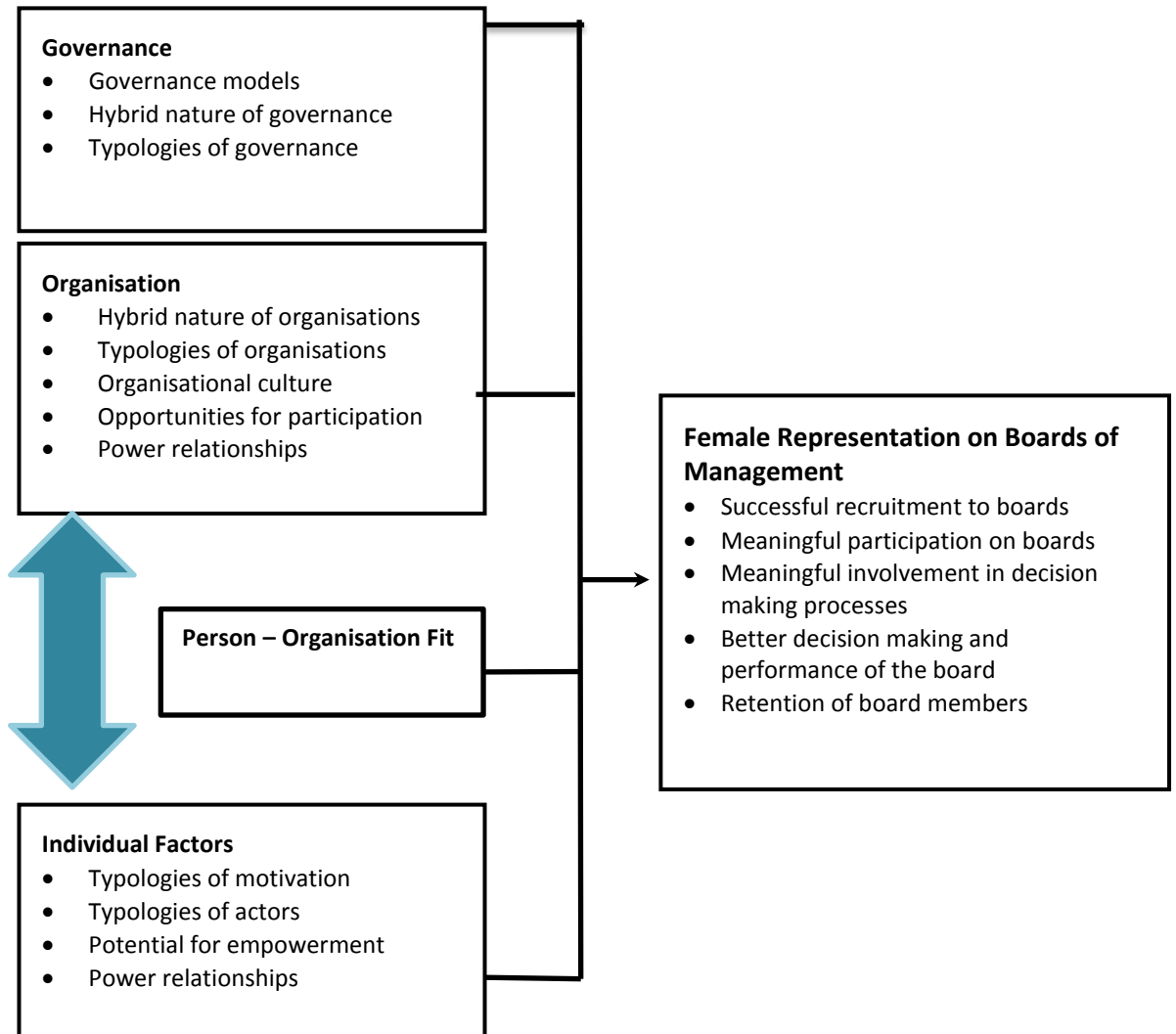
In the following section, I explore in some detail, the theories that I have selected as the framework for my research. I have based these choices principally on the need for a practical model with a sound theoretical base that takes account of governance, organisation typology/ culture, participation and power.

I have chosen four theoretical models that outline the main areas of investigation for analysis within this research. Firstly Cornforth's (2003) paradoxical perspectives of governance help to understand and identify the governance typologies in play at the two organisations and their influence of female participation on the boards of management. Secondly Billis' (2010) work on the hybrid nature of organisations helps to understand how housing associations operate in the quasi-public function, and Hofstede's (1991) typologies of organisational cultures provides a useful framework in which to categorise the cultures of housing associations. Thirdly, Somerville's (1998) typology helps to understand the nature of the transformation in terms of the longer term prospects for empowerment in involvement by women on boards of management. Finally, Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework enables me to explore specific dynamics of involvement in terms of the power relationships between the executive and boards of management, and power relationships on boards of management between genders, and the opportunities for transformation.

4.3   Theoretical Perspectives on Governance

To understand governance of housing associations as the primary context of research in this thesis, it is important to understand what *"governance"* means in the wider conceptualisation of societal governance, but more importantly for this research thesis at the corporate or organisational level of governance. There are three main areas of governance; societal (relates to the patterns of governance and governments), network (relates to the mechanism for governing society that contrasts with market mechanisms and the state) and organisational governance (Cornforth, 2014). In the context of this research on organisational governance, this can be defined as *"the systems by which companies are directed and controlled"* (Cadbury, 1992 in Cornforth 2014).

Cornforth notes that, however, the above definition does not take into account the need for organisations to meet external accountability required within the not-for-profit or quasi-public sectors such as housing associations, and Cornforth proposes a second definition that organisational governance is *"the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, control and accountability of an organisation"* (Cornforth, 2014: 5). This is the accepted definition from which this thesis views organisational governance.

Many commentators have pointed out that there is confusion between *"boards"* and *"governance"* (Cornforth, 2014). Studies of governing boards are different from that of governance of organisations; governance of organisations can be defined as looking at the studies of the organisation and its governance as the unit of analysis; studies of governing bodies are the study of the entities of the organisation that govern, and therefore the unit of analysis is the board itself (Cornforth, 2014). In this research, the board is the structure which delivers the function of governance for housing associations in Wales, and is therefore the legitimate site of enquiry.

Having defined what governance is and isn't, this section now turns to the substantive theories in relation to governance, before looking to the relevance of these theories to the research. The governance of non-profit organisations, including housing organisations is relatively under theorised in comparison with the governance of private business corporations, where there is a large literature on corporate governance (see Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Lynall et al., 2003, Daily et al., 2003; Ong and Lee, 2001; Denis and McConnell, 2003 etc.). In particular a variety of competing theories have been proposed to try to understand the role of boards in the private sector, including for example agency theory, stewardship theory, stakeholder theory, and managerial hegemony theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Lynall et al., 2003; Daily et al., 2003; Berle and Means, 1932). A premise of this research is that a number of these theories can be usefully extended to the not for profit sector, and in the case of this research, housing associations (Cornforth, 2003).

Principal-agent theory has been the dominant theory of corporation and corporate governance arrangements (see Keasey et al, 1997). It assumes that the owners/ board members of an enterprise (the principal) and those that manage it (the agent) will have different interests. Hence the owners or shareholders of any enterprise face a problem that managers are likely to act in their own interests rather than the shareholders. Agency theory sees governance arrangements as a means to ensure that management acts in the best interests of shareholders (Keasey et al, 1997). From this perspective the main function of the board is to control managers (Cornforth, 2014).

Stewardship theory (Muth and Donaldson, 1998) is grounded in a human relations perspective (Hung, 1998). Where agency theory positions the principles against the agents within an organisation, stewardship theory differs in that it assumes that the agent's interests generally are aligned to those of the principles. As a result senior management and board members are better seen as partners. Hence, the main function of the board is not to ensure managerial compliance with shareholders' interests, but to improve organisational performance. The role of the board is primarily strategic, to work with management to improve strategy and add value to top decisions. From this perspective board members should be selected on the basis of their expertise and contacts so that they are in a position to add value to the organisation's decisions (Cornforth, 2014).

A third defining theory of governance is that of stakeholder theory. This theory when applied to governing bodies is based on the premise that organisations should be responsible to a range of groups (or stakeholders) in society other than just an organisation's owners or membership (Hung, 1998: 106). By incorporating different stakeholders on boards it is expected that organisations will be more likely to respond to broader social interests than the narrow interests of one group.

This leads to a political role for boards negotiating and resolving the potentially conflicting interests of different stakeholder groups in order to determine the objectives of the organisation and set policy (Cornforth, 2014).

Resource dependency theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) views organisations as interdependent with their environment. Organisations depend crucially for their survival on other organisations and actors for resources. As a result they need to find ways of managing this dependence and ensuring they get the resources and information they need. From this perspective the board is seen as one means of reducing uncertainty by creating influential links between organisations through for example interlocking directorates. The main functions of the board are to maintain good relations with key external stakeholders in order to ensure the flow of resources into and from the organisation, and to help the organisation respond to external change (Cornforth, 2014).

In addition to these four main theoretical perspectives, there is also the Democratic or Association theory – where the role of board members is to represent the interests of members of the organisation. The role of the board is to resolve or choose between the interests of different groups and set the overall policy of the organisation, which can then be implemented by staff. Central to this view is the idea of a lay or non-professional board, where anyone can put themselves forward for election as a board member (Cornforth, 2004); and Management Hegemony theory relates back to the thesis of Berle and Means (1932) that although shareholders may legally own and control large corporations they no longer effectively control them. From this perspective the board ends up as little more than a *"rubber stamp"* for management's decisions (Cornforth, 2004)

Many commentators (Guo and Acar, 2005; Wellens and Jegers, 2011; Van Puyvelde et al, 2012; Cornforth, 2004) have argued for the combination of multiple theoretical perspectives, as the substantive theories outlined above are too simplistic in their singularity.

Within the context of this research I agree with these positions, as multiple perspectives will be more useful in engaging with the tensions of the not-for-profit sector, ambiguities and paradoxes that exist within a hybrid organisation such as a housing associations. For the purposes of this research the combined theory of most interest is that of Cornforth (2004) who proposes a *"Paradox Perspective"* of not-for-profit governance.

The paradox perspective conceptualises the three main areas of tensions and ambiguities on housing association boards of management, and has significant relevance to this research:

> *"The tension between board members acting as representatives for particular membership groups and "experts" charged with driving the performance of the organisation forward. The tension between the board roles of driving forward organisational performance and ensuring conformance. The tension between the contrasting board roles of controlling and supporting management."*

<div align="right">(Cornforth 2004; 3)</div>

The different theoretical perspectives have different implications for who should serve on boards. The opposition is clearest between the stewardship and democratic perspectives. Stewardship theory stresses that board members should have expertise and experience that can add value to the performance of the organisation. The implication is that board members should be selected for their professional expertise and skills. In contrast the democratic perspective stresses that board members are lay representatives, there to serve the constituency(s) or stakeholders they represent. In the context of housing associations there is a question as to whether *"lay"* board members can also be expected to have the necessary expertise to be effective board members

The governance of housing associations highlights this dilemma. Mullins (2014), drawing on his research found that tensions arise between representative and professional boards. Mullins notes that through the development of the housing association sector from 1988, and the continuing growth through stock transfer organisations, the issue of who serves on boards of management has become important. He notes that the 1996 Housing Act enabled a representative model of housing association governance to dispel the issues of democratic accountability (Mullins, 2014; Mullins and Pawson, 2010). Rochester and Hutchinson (2002) and McKee and Cooper (2008), note the influence of housing association board membership on local authority nominees and tenants respectively. Rochester and Hutchinson (2002) note that local authority nominees find that their roles are confined and defined. McKee and Cooper (2008) note that tenants have to accept a degree of responsibility and restrictions in order for them to participate in the decision making mechanisms of housing organisations.

This paradox is also observable when looking at the attributes of board members of housing associations particularly in relation to the gender balance of board members. With housing associations looking to have more representation from governance, legal, finance and development backgrounds (in ensuring there is expertise) this can preclude independent female board membership with these sets of skills, knowledge and expertise.

When looking at female tenant board membership, the need to have an understanding of these issues, can also lead to a female underrepresentation, as their skills and confidence are typically in the areas of community issues, and issues directly related to their housing experience (see chapter 2). McDermont (2010) found that governance of housing associations was dominated by *"accountants, finance managers and ratings agencies"* (McDermont 2010:123).

The different theories of governance put different emphasis on what are the main roles of the board. This is most apparent in the opposition between the agency and stewardship perspectives. This can be defined as the *"conformance"* versus *"performance"* roles of boards (Garratt, 1996). One of the problems for housing association boards is that these contrasting roles require board members to behave in very different ways. The conformance role is largely reactive and demands attention to detail, careful monitoring and scrutiny of the organisation's past performance and management, and is risk averse. The performance role is more proactive it demands forward vision, an understanding of the organisation and its environment and a greater willingness to take risks. Again, boards face an obvious tension concerning how much attention they should pay to these contrasting roles.

Board members may also experience role conflict in trying to combine such different roles. The way organisations' experience this tension is also shaped by wider contextual factors. In the public sector the conflicting pressures arising from government policy often heighten this paradox. As Greer et al. (2003) note, on the one hand public organisations are expected by government to be innovative and entrepreneurial. On the other hand they are often subject to centrally imposed initiatives, performance targets, close monitoring and audit, which effectively constrain their opportunities for strategic choice.

The sectorial review of governance of housing associations in Wales (Miljevic et al, 2013) found that boards needed to develop a good balance of challenge and support with the senior management teams. This balance relies on boards owning the purpose and the *"golden thread"* (the overarching objectives and direction that should cascade through directors and managers to the frontline staff), genuinely understanding the business, and being able to see the bigger picture rather than getting embroiled in the operational detail (Miljevic et al, 2013).

A number of commentators (Mullins, 2014; Mullins and Pawson, 2010, Mullins and Riseborough 2000) have stated that the development of housing association governance was to ensure that there was probity and accountability of public funding and regulation with a strong emphasis on conformance rather than performance. They also state that the development of the sector toward larger – more private sector models of organisations has sought to reinforce this trend has had limited the representativeness of board members in housing associations.

The relationship between boards and management is viewed very differently within the contrasting theoretical perspectives. The agency, democratic and stewardship perspectives stress the importance of the board monitoring and controlling the work of managers (the executive). In contrast stewardship theory stresses the role of the board as a partner to management, working in collaboration to improve top management decision-making. A paradox perspective suggests that a simple dichotomy between boards controlling or partnering management is too simplistic. Different forms of behaviour will be appropriate at different times in the relationship. In a similar vein Kramer (1985) suggests that the board relationship with management is constantly shifting between consensus, difference and *"dissensus"* depending on the issues being faced and the circumstances.

Mullins (2014) states that the nature of governance of housing associations inherently means that there will be an imbalance in power between the executive and the board. Regulators want to see that the boards control the organisations and make independent decisions, yet boards are controlled by the executives (in terms of agenda setting, time for discussion of issues and also control over information that is given to boards – See Edwards and Cornforth 2003) for fear that they will break regulatory codes and requirements.

The different theoretical perspectives outlined above have implications for how the boards of management in the two case study organisations contained within this research operate, the level of influence of board members, the gender dynamics of the boards of management and ultimately on the performance of the housing organisations. The theoretical positions also lead to research questions on how board members are selected (and elected), the type of professional background of the board members and also the relationships (in terms of power) between the different constituent parts of the board, and the executives. There are also questions as to the power relationships and tensions in those constituent parts, especially framed by gender.

Having examined the hybrid nature of governance within housing associations compared to private sector corporate governance, the next section of the chapter frames the research in the theoretical perspectives of organisations, looking at the hybrid nature of housing associations in the provision of services and how the nature of the form and operation of the organisational type and organisational culture can influence female participation in the governance of these organisations.

4.4   Theoretical Perspectives on Organisations

Cairncross et al (1997) developed a typology of housing departments in relation to the type of local authority. The research outlined how *"traditional"* authorities tended to display a certain set of characteristics in relation to their primary focus, view of tenants, information flows and issue focus, in comparison to *"consumerist"*, and *"citizenship".* In their analysis they make a distinction between *"traditional"*, *"consumerist"* and *"citizenship"* authorities, each of which displays distinctive characteristics, and are closely aligned to the discourse of traditional, consumerist and citizenship ideology. This approach has less relevance to this study because housing association cultures are different from those of local authority housing departments (Clapham and Kintrea, 2000).

A more recent study by the Audit Commission (2004) divided housing associations into two categories: consumerist and collectivist. This reflected, to some extent, the differences between traditional and LSVT housing associations, although this is not always the case, as the culture of an organisation can sometimes be determined more by its history than the effect of regulation and inspection. Housing associations, including many LSVT associations, are likely to be located towards the consumerist end of the spectrum of characteristics and philosophy.

Recent work in the social housing field (Gruis, 2009; Czischke 2009; Mullins, 2008; Mullins and Pawson, 2010; Mullins et al 2012, and Sacranie, 2012) has widened out the categorisation of housing association types from the simplistic view of consumerist or collectivist to encompass a number of hybrid types. The notion of hybrid organisations explores the contested influences of state, market and society drivers on the identities housing organisations (Brandsen et al 2006, Heino et al 2006; Gruis 2008; Czischke, Gruis and Mullins 2008).

Billis (2010) has identified nine *"zones of hybridity"* at the boundaries between the public, private and third sectors. He argues that hybrid organisations can be divided on the basis of their *"principal ownership",* which will usually lie within one of the three sectors e.g. whether they have started out as a public, third or private organisation. Hybridity may be shallow or entrenched and may be organic (as in the case of 'traditional' housing associations with civil society roots) or enacted (as in the case of stock transfer housing associations). Figure 4.2 (below) illustrates Billis' work on hybrid organisations and positioning between the third, private and public sectors:

Figure 4.2 Billis' Hybrid Zones (Billis, 2010: 57)
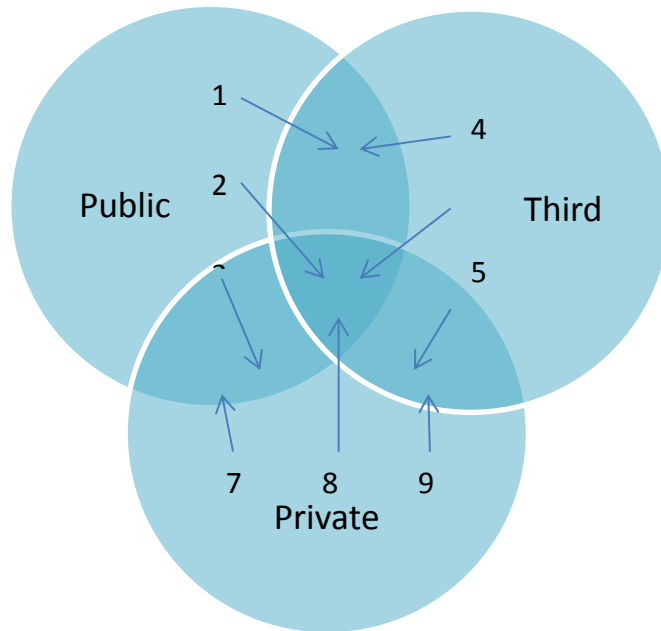
Hybrid Zones:

1 – Public / Third	4 – Third / Public	7 – Private / Public
2 – Public / Private/ Third	5 – Third / Public / Private	8 – Private / Public / Third
3 – Public / Private	6 – Third / Private	9 – Private / Third

Billis (2010) goes on to contend that as well as the 9 zones of hybridity, there are variations on the level of the hybridity of the organisation (shallow and entrenched), and how the hybridity has been introduced to that organisation (organic or enacted). Shallow hybrid organisations have moved into hybridity in a gentle fashion, without calling into question their basic foundations. This modest form of hybridity often arises from the desire to maintain or extend the range of activities that the organisation undertakes. In the entrenched hybrid organisation can come from the governance or the operational levels of the organisation. At the governance level, the board of management may feel compelled or under pressure to accept permanent government or private sector representatives in return for resources or influence.

However, more usually, entrenched hybridity begins as a result of the receipt of public or private sector funds through grants, contracts etc.

In the organisational level, entrenchment can occur when the organisation's day-to-day operations are wholly delivered by paid staff – with several hierarchies of management and therefore embed within the organisation the structure and features of a firm.

How the hybridity is introduced into the organisation is also a cause for analysis, is this an organic process by which the organisation organically grows (through a gentle accumulation of staff and external resources) or through the specific enacted creation of the hybrid organisation, established at day one of these organisations? Enacted hybrids arise for different reasons across all different sectors, however, the key features are that they are created (often by another organisation) with an independent legal structure, and framework. Billis (2010) notes that the enacted hybrid organisation can present complex issues of accountability and governance.

Billis (2010) went further in his interpretation of hybrid organisations, through the provision of a categorisation of hybrid organisations (see table 4.2). The organic shallow organisations have small numbers of paid staff, are locally based and have significant number of volunteer participation in their work. There is a high degree of overlap in the roles of governing bodies, operational management and volunteers. The organic entrenched organisation is likely to have grown steadily through the infusion of resources from public contracts and commercial initiatives. Enacted shallow hybrid organisations are established at the outset as independent organisations, but are unlikely to have their own independent resources to establish organisational structures for paid staff. The Enacted Entrenched organisation is set up with substantial resources and considerable staff and influence on organisations.

Table 4.2 Categorisation of Hybrid Third Sector Organisations (Billis, 2010; 241)

	Organic	Enacted
Shallow	Organic Shallow	Enacted Shallow
Entrenched	Organic Entrenched	Enacted Entrenched

Mullins and Pawson (2010) identify in their historical and current analysis of housing associations that housing associations encompass all of the categorisations of types of hybrid organisations. Housing associations have developed organically from shallow to enacted hybrid organisations, whilst some have been shallow enacted hybrid organisations as a result of the various housing acts that have influenced the sector. Finally, the development of the process of stock transfer has created enacted entrenched hybrid organisations.

A number of commentators (Billis, 2010; Gruis, 2009; Czischke 2009; Mullins, 2008; Mullins and Pawson, 2010; Mullins et al 2012, and Sacranie, 2012) have identified that hybrid organisations face several challenges in relation to the governance and accountability of these organisations. Cornforth and Spear identify that the main problem is in relation to the principal - agent dilemma: *"the difficulty of getting the employees (agents) to act in the best interests of the owners (principles)"* (Cornforth and Spear, 2010: 77), and that traditional theories of governance do not apply to hybrid organisations.

Another important area for hybrid organisations is to balance often competing social and commercial principles. Stull's (2003) work on decision making within hybrid organisations (such as social enterprises) sees this as a day-to-day dynamic process involving decision makers such as Chief Executives and board of management blending *"traditional"* with *"innovative"* approaches with an aim to balance the (core) social mission with constant drivers towards maximising economic efficiency.

Hence, in the management of every social enterprise decisions that have to be made will vary between bi-polar characteristics in a number of aspects of the company's operations, ranging from mission types to funding sources, etc.

Analysing the *"hybridity"* of the housing associations in the research is helpful in indicating the competing principles that may affect organisational positioning in the case study organisations. In relation to this research it is also important to understand the development of the hybrid nature of housing associations in relation to the governance and accountability of the case study housing associations. How far away are the organisations from the communities that they serve? What has been the cycle of development in these organisations organic or enacted? And therefore whether these organisations have different reasons for the levels of female representation on the boards of management of these organisations? Another important issue in relation to hybrid type of the case study organisations is in relation to how female board members interact with the decision making processes in relation to the social and commercial principles.

Billis and Rochester (2010) also recognise that as well as contested influences on the types of organisation and decision making processes; there are also contested influences on organisational cultures and strategies of third sector organisations:

> *"What we are now facing are fundamental changes in the nature of the organisations that are financing, planning and delivering welfare. It is not just the "economy", but the organisations themselves that have become "mixed!"*

> (Billis and Rochester, 2010:12)

The concept of culture has roots in the study of ethnic and national differences in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. According to Wilson (2001: 363):

"Organisational culture is multi-faceted and complicated, encompassing a variety of forms, and is determined by myriad influencing factors."

Brown (1995) suggests that organisational culture is both a departure from, and an elaboration of, contemporary organisational behaviour studies. While it is still concerned with the formal and rational aspects of organisations, it also develops an established theory relating to group dynamics, power and politics. As it became incorporated in management research, organisational culture was first considered as an internal element of the organisation i.e. something the *"organisation had"* which could be used as a managerial tool to affect performance (Wilson, 2001). From this conception of culture as a formal and objective entity, the understanding of culture has evolved to encompass socially constructed metaphors, where organisations are viewed as forums with socially constructed meanings, expressed through social interaction (Schwartz and Davis, 1981; Tunstell, 1983; Schein 1991). Thus culture has shifted theoretically from a rational entity to be managed, to a more abstract phenomenon to be understood.

Schein (1991) characterises organisational culture as having 3 layers: values, beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions or organisational paradigms. Values are seen as the most superficial layer, often encapsulated in mission statements, objectives and strategies/ strategic intent. Beliefs are less vague than values, but still identifiable and easily communicated. At the heart of an organisation's culture are taken for granted assumptions which are less easily explained and are reinforced by a number of elements illustrated in the cultural web (Johnson, 1992).

The different aspects of the cultural web capture the essence of inherent assumptions in the organisation. The routines in an organisation refer to *"the way things are done",* and behaviours of people within the organisation, while rituals are the events or activities that reinforce routines.

The stories told by members of an organisation fix the culture in the organisation's history, affirm certain types of behaviour, and highlight successes and failure symbols such as job titles; language or logos can represent the character of an organisation while power structures in the organisation lead to the beliefs and assumptions of dominant groups being adopted. Control and measurement systems, as well as the organisational structure highlight key foci and important relationships in the organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 2002).

In a paper advocating the adoption of *"native view"* paradigms in the study of organisational culture Gregory (1983) critically considers earlier research on organisational culture in industrial contexts (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Deal and Kennedy, 1982 among others). Illustrating this "*native view*" perspective, rooted in anthropological interpretations of organisational culture, in an empirical investigation of *"Silicon Valley"* professionals, the author proposes that:

> *"Societies, and many organisations, can more correctly be viewed in terms of multiple, cross-cutting cultural contexts changing through time, rather than as stable, bounded, homogenous cultures."*
>
> (Gregory, 1983:365)

Martin and Meyerson's (1998) widely adopted framework cites three perspectives on organisational culture and sub-cultures: the integration, differentiation and the fragmentation perspectives respectively. An integration perspective is indicative of a consensus or consistent culture, with values and formal practices aligned to beliefs, attitudes and norms. Inconsistencies, a lack of shared commitment or variations in sub-cultures reflect a weak culture according to this view. The differentiation perspective acknowledges the specific mix of sub-cultures as contributing to the uniqueness of an organisational culture. The final perspective of fragmentation proposes ambiguous rather than shared cultural or sub-cultural values or norms, with transient variations of consensus and disagreement occurring over specific issues or events.

On the basis of primary case study research, Martin and Meyerson (1998) also propose that organisational culture in practice includes aspects of all three perspective types.

Hofstede's (1980) commonly cited text on *"Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values"* may initially not seem the most relevant to this research. However extending (or reducing) the paradigm of cultural variances between organisations in different countries to the difference in cultures between two housing associations in one country could make Hofstede's work applicable on a different scale. Building on earlier work, subsequent research based on surveys of IBM employees around the world (Hofstede, 1991) provided the evidence for identifying five dimensions along which national cultures differ i.e. Power/ Distance; Individualism/ Collectivism; Masculinity/ Femininity; Uncertainty / Avoidance, and Confucian Dynamism.

Again, employing these national characteristics in a regional context provides the cultural adjectives to uncover and describe cultural variation or organisational cultures between the two organisations, and how board of management operate. For example, low power distance is symptomatic of lower inequalities in power, greater decentralisation, and a less hierarchical structure manifest with fewer status symbols. High power distance countries (hence organisations or companies) are more centralised with power concentrated at the top of management structures, and clearer boundaries expressed with salaries and status symbols.

Individualistic societies have a higher degree of individual independence, with a focus on skills and rules while cohesive, loyal groups are more indicative of collective societies. The masculinity/ femininity dimension indicates the extent to which social gender roles are clearly separated while uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which people feel threatened by unknown or uncertain conditions.

Finally, Confucian dynamism indicates how long or short-termist countries are in terms of a national outlook, or attitude, epitomised by the search for *"truth"* or *"virtue"*. Hofstede (1991) describes short-termism in an organisational context as being more closely related to western values concerned with social and status responsibilities, respecting traditions, conspicuous consumption and quick results. This is contrasted with the Confucian or long-term focus which is less concerned with status obligations while emphasising perseverance and adapting traditions to a modern context.

Finally since organisational positioning in terms of strategy and culture are both key concepts in this research enquiry, it is worth noting that there are also a number of well-cited theories linking strategy and culture (Miles and Snow, 1978; Schwartz and Davis, 1981). Miles and Snow's (1978) typology identifies 3 types of organisational culture or patterns: the Defender, Prospector and Analyser. The centralised defender organisation adopts a strategy of cost efficiency in a stable environment, emphasising efficiency to secure the market. The decentralised or flexible prospector operates a growth strategy to seek new opportunities in a dynamic environment. Finally the analyser type organisation uses a mixed or loose-tight structure to both expand and protect in order to achieve steady growth in a moderately dynamic environment.

Schwartz and Davis (1981) on the other hand illustrate the links between strategy and culture through a cultural risk framework, where levels of culture compatibility are plotted against importance to strategy to create high, medium and low acceptability of risk. While both these frameworks can be broadly applied to explore the cultural position of an organisation in relation to both its strategic positioning and as a management tool to identify risks to the effectiveness of strategy through cultural incompatibility, they have not been selected to uncover the multi-layered sub-cultures within an organisation as per the aims of this case study.

Itzin (1995) argues that although organisational cultural theory appears to be gender-neutral in its assumptions and conclusions, this has led to the establishment of masculine patterns of behaviour, values and style and being the *"norm"* against which women are judged.

Marshall (1992) contends that the most organisational research has traditionally ignored the gender differences and the gender/ power relationship. Marshall goes onto contend that groups of academics that have shaped organisational culture are men who see the world through *"selective lenses"* based on social roles and gender. Women who do not conform to traditional roles of support are seen as anomalous.

Newman (1995) describes the gendered culture of organisations as a traditional regime where women are assigned *"quasi- familial"* roles and identities around a core of male hierarchical privileges. The roles can be described as:

- *Mother – the kindly personnel officer or line manager who is concerned with the welfare of staff*
- *Aunt –often an older woman who may be single and is given status but no real power*
- *Wives – these are typically support staff such as secretaries, and,*
- *Daughters – usually young women who show potential, but pose no real threat to managers*

(Newman, 1995: 26)

Kanter (1977) describes the roles open to women as: bitches, witches, pets or dolls and Marshall (1984) as mother, seductress, pet, iron maiden or token. Newman maintains that the majority of women occupy an *"occupational sub-class"* in typing pools, canteens or post rooms etc. they are usually referred to as *"girls"* (whatever their age) and are called by their given names, with no titles such as Ms, Miss or Mrs used.

Mills (1992) contends that gender discrimination is embedded in organisational culture, with women themselves defined as problematic if they cannot *"fit in"*. The focus of this viewpoint is on how women can adapt to the existing structures, and it is the woman who is in question not the organisational stereotype.

Many commentators such as Maddock and Parkin (1994) state that masculine traditions and mythologies are embodied in the culture of many organisations.

- *Gentleman's club – a culture which reinforces women's role as mothers and homemakers, with the man's role as a breadwinner.*
- *Barrack yard – culture can be found in the hierarchical organisations where a chain of command exists from top to bottom.*
- *Locker room – in this culture men build relationships based on common agreement and common assumptions.*
- *Gender blind – this culture purports to believe in equality; it claims that there is no difference between men and women, everyone being treated equally.*
- *Smart macho culture is where employees are working under pressure to reach certain targets.*
- *Paying lip service can be found in the public sector where organisation have developed equal opportunities policies, which have been written by men who consider themselves to be non-sexist.*
- *Feminist pretender culture assumes that all women are right all of the time. This culture sees women as a homogenous oppressed group.*

Maddock and Parkin (1994) report that women fear that they will not be accepted in management unless they act like men. This refers to the fear of being seen as anomalous (Douglas, 1991) in that women feel that they must collude with the dominant culture in order to fit in. Spencer and Podmore (1987), argue that for women to be perceived as competent professionals they must adopt masculine attributes and values, and then risk being viewed as unnatural women.

This puts women in a double blind, as copying men's behaviour reinforces the prevailing culture and maintains the status quo.

Marshall (1984), Bennett (1986) and Cockburn (1991) all believe that men select women with masculine virtues, defeminise them and then criticise them for their mannish behaviour. Women are expected to mimic men as they climb the hierarchy *"hiding the plastic shopping bag"* (Cockburn, 1991: 238). Henning and Jardim (1979) explain that by virtue of their visibility and isolation, women are seen as too feminine and therefore not really managers or too masculine and thus not really women. Newman (1995) describes the vicious circle of cultural barriers through which she believes masculine culture is replicated and cultural patterns produced:

Figure 4.3 The Vicious Circle of Cultural Barriers (Newman 1995:24)
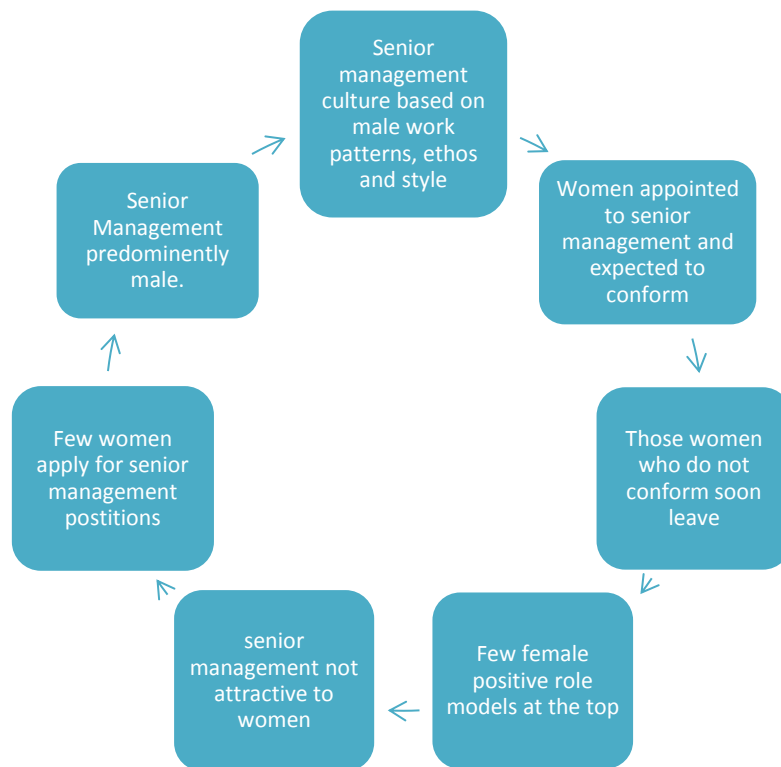
Schein (1976) states that, interpreted against male norms, women are perceived as inadequate, unpredictable or pushy. She argues that their mere presence is thought by some organisations to be disturbing to the status quo. Franks (1999) described the experiences of corporate women in terms of immigrant's arriving into a new country

> *"…she may strive to learn the language, observe the customs and fit in with the locals. Yet however hard she tries to integrate there is always a culture shock on both sides and ultimately the new arrival is always thought of as a foreigner"*

(Franks, 1999: 51)

These theories or characterisations of organisational culture, and gendered sub-cultures provides the necessary terminology and framework in which to explore and map the organisational and gendered sub-cultures of the case study organisations, in relation to exploring the capacity of women to effectively participate on boards of management and in management positions of housing associations.

4.5   Theoretical Perspectives on Participation

Much of the literature on participation and involvement written before 1999 uses a version of the *"ladder of participation"* (Figure 4.4), developed by Arnstein (1969). The ladder of participation is hierarchical, and is often depicted as follows (from the bottom up): providing information; seeking information; listening to the unsolicited views of service users; consulting; dialogue, negotiation and bargaining; joint management; choice; and control (TPAS, 1994). Most official documents prior to 2004 and literature designed to help individuals and communities to participate in organisations, have used this model as a starting point. Indeed, regulatory agencies use it to guide providers towards particular modes of participation.

Arnstein was very much aware of the limitations of the typology and points out that:

"The ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them. In actuality, neither the have-nots nor the power holders are homogeneous blocs. Each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups. The justification for using such simplistic abstractions is that in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic "system", and power holders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of "those people", with little comprehension of the class and caste differences among them"

(Arnstein, 1969: 219).

The model does not, however, address the blockages to successful participation and involvement or explain how these occur. Moreover, the characteristics of some rungs could be applied to other rungs, and there could therefore be as many as 100 rungs in a real life model.

Figure 4.4 Arnstein's Original Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969; 219)

level	level of control	degree of power
8	Citizen control	degrees of citizen power
7	delegated power	
6	partnership	
5	placation	degrees of tokenism
4	consultation	
3	information	
2	therapy	non-participation
1	manipulation	

A number of commentators (Cairncross et al, 1997; Audit Commission, 2004; and Cole, 2008) have, rejected Arnstein's model on the grounds that there should be a menu of opportunities for participation and involvement, and that different methods and approaches were needed to fit different circumstances. Indeed, the *"hierarchy"* approach implies that opportunities higher on the ladder are considered to be 'better' participation, but individuals can be poorly involved at any level on the ladder. Thus an individual could be a board member (situated towards the top of the ladder) and yet not feel fully involved, or could feel constrained by the accepted practices of governance within housing associations. He or she may feel that the board is unaware of the reality of life on the estates, and of the failures of staff to provide the service, but will have no voice because he or she cannot frame this information in an acceptable way, or cannot access the agenda to bring the topic to the attention of other board members.

Although this model is useful for outlining the different approaches to participation and involvement, and their positioning in relation to empowerment, or *"citizen power"* as Arnstein calls it, this model has been simplified, and too much emphasis has been placed on the type of activity depicted by the rungs of the ladder, with insufficient consideration of how these relate to the degree of power involved. What is of more interest to this research is the motivations of the individual to participate with the organisation (in this case the motivations to join the board of management of a housing association), which I will now turn to.

Citizens themselves have a choice as to whether participate with an organisation or not. Society comprises of a wide variety of citizens and in order to discuss the differences in participation a model of citizen participation (based on readings including Satori, 1987; Barber, 1984; Smith, 1981; Hill, 1974) has been developed for this research thesis. This can be seen as a useful compliment to the work of Arnstein (above) that it considers the issue of motivations for participation from the citizen rather the organisations perspective. This model does not seek to be exhaustive, but aims to illustrate the main approaches to participation.

Figure 4.5 Citizen's Model of Participation (based on the work of Satori, 1987; Barber, 1984; Smith, 1981; Hill, 1974)

Level of participation	Citizenship status	Citizenship sub-status
Citizen Control	active citizen	altruistic citizen
		selfish citizen
Citizen Participation	contented citizen	
	apathetic citizen	
	cynical citizen	
	anti-system citizen	
Citizen Non-Participation	ignorant citizen	
	bewildered citizen	

Citizens involved in participatory activities as a conscious decision can be described as active citizens, who participate beyond voting in elections, through protests, campaigns and demonstrations in an effort to broaden the democratic process as a whole generally or over a specific issue. The active citizen, can also be broken down into two distinct sub categories: the altruistic citizen, who participates in order to promote democracy; and the selfish citizen who has the desire to participate to further their own particular self-interests. Whilst both of these citizens have a conscious participation with an organisation, there are those citizens who do not participate at all - either through a conscious decision or non-consciousness of participatory activities.

The lack of participation by the ignorant or bewildered citizen may be as a result of the delivery of information, either too much or not enough. The lack of power that the bewildered and ignorant citizen has may be due to a lack of resources for effective participation.

It could be argued that some women find themselves in this position due to their location within the private sphere of society, or their marginalised position in the labour market; they may not be able to attend meetings etc. or they may have to provide domestic caring duties (see discussion in chapter two on the dominance of the private sphere in women's lives, and location as second class citizens).

The second type of non-participation is more complex, as it concerns a citizen's choice to consciously not participate with an organisation. The first of these is the contented citizen, who does not participate because they are satisfied with the situation or the environment. The second type is the apathetic citizen, who is aware of the political environment, but is uninterested, rarely considering political decisions and not bothering to vote. The cynical citizen is inactive in participatory action as they hold a belief that the agencies will not respond to their voice, and therefore there is little point in their active participation. The final type of conscious non-participating citizen is the anti-system citizen; these are closely aligned with the cynical citizen, but they believe that certain goals can be achieved, but see little point in participating, when the ultimate goal of changing the system is unachievable.

As with the discussion in chapter two, joining all women together in one group, it is very difficult to place an individual into one of these ideal types, as the individual may adopt different citizenship positions or stances, on different issues, at different times, with different organisations.

Birchall and Simmons (2004), in their work on user power in public services, identified five types of activist and related their various characteristics to the level and nature of their participation. They identified, from least active to most active, what they described as *"marginal participants", "scrutineers", "habitual participants", "foot soldiers"* and *"campaigners"*, with the largest group being *"habitual participants",* and the most active group (campaigners).

Their research looked at user involvement in a variety of contexts, and through identifying the various motivators and barriers to participation for the different types of activist, concluded that there were key points to consider from an organisational point of view when encouraging tenants to become involved in participation activities. This model is useful in that it creates a manageable framework within which the research can consider the characteristics of individual participants.

Stuart and Taylor (1995) have developed a model for investigating the empowerment process which divides empowerment into four dimensions, based on the strategic options available to individuals or groups dealing with powerful organisations. They can be *"active"; "destructive"; "passive";* and finally *"alienation and withdrawal"*.

Somerville (1998) comments that this looks more like a cycle of disempowerment. For instance, the passive approach could not be considered an empowerment process. He contends that Stuart and Taylor have not developed their concepts sufficiently to enable the researcher to break down the activities and understand the flow of power between them. Instead he maintains that typologies exploring the empowerment process could help the researcher to make sense of the conceptual and empirical variety involved in the study of participation and involvement. He points out that the majority of literature on empowerment tends to focus on a psychological approach rather than one of collective action, but also draws attention to the connection and overlap between psychological empowerment and the collectivist action associated with tenant involvement. Referring to Harrison (1995) Somerville points out that the literature, for the most part, has not gone beyond *"therapeutic"* strategies such as self-help, mutual aid and support as a means of enabling people to improve their quality of life.

Somerville and Steele (1996) contend that traditional models of representative democracy are flawed and that new institutional arrangements will be necessary to overcome what they term the *"collective action dilemma"* inherent in public services. They explored a range of involvement frameworks in Sweden and the UK in which they evaluated, in principle, the potential of different institutional arrangements.

These included marketised arrangements, forms of partnership with landlords, which they evaluated against a typology of effectiveness, representativeness and shift in power. Each involvement framework was found to have strengths and weaknesses across these three elements. They point out that for the outcome to be positive across the three elements; effective mechanisms are needed to ensure representativeness, competence and democratic selection: essentially board members need to be incentivised and appropriately supported to ensure that they are competent in their roles

Although the term *"empowerment"* itself can be seen as a concept with a constellation of meanings, for Somerville (1998) it is seen as a process whereby *"people's control over their lives is increased"* (Somerville,1998: 233). He maintains that this can be achieved through a range of activities, and that these activities can be explored by the researcher.

Looking at various involvement and participation activities, Somerville (1998) goes on to make a distinction between *"top down"* and *"bottom up"* initiatives, i.e. those taken by the landlord (top down) and those initiated by individuals themselves (bottom up). For instance, in any given example of involvement the researcher can apply four key questions to explore the outcome in terms of the longer term impact, which may on the one hand indicate the potential for empowerment, or alternatively, the reinforcement of the status quo.

These questions are concerned with the direction of action, whether *"top down"* or *"bottom up"*, and the dependency effect, whether it is increasing or decreasing. It is also important to establish the extent to which institutional change is achieved: is it radical, reformist, or reinforcing of the status quo? This depends on the way the interaction is mediated and most importantly, who are the beneficiaries: are they elites, groups or individuals? Not all activities are empowering, nor do people necessarily engage in activities to become empowered. Indeed as Somerville points out:

> *"Participation without empowerment is a confidence trick performed by the controllers of an activity on participants in that activity. To the extent to which the trick works it must be disempowering rather than empowering"*.
>
> (Somerville, 1998: 234)

Top down and bottom up descriptions have been used a great deal in good practice guides in relation to participation and involvement in housing organisations (see TPAS Cymru 2013; Social Exclusion Unit 1998 and Welsh Assembly Government 2007).

However, they have not illustrated the dependency effect that Somerville addresses in his model, which is a significant and under-explored issue when researching the engagement of tenants in the involvement and governance process. Exploring the question of who benefits from participation and involvement activities also allows the researcher to investigate further the motivations behind, and the impact of, involvement on housing association boards, both on the board members themselves and the organisation in question. In the view of the research question, the concept of empowerment is of central importance to involvement, both in the community and in the boardroom of housing associations. Crucially it is a useful test to establish who in the end benefits, or is empowered, and what the prospects are for this empowerment to be maintained or built upon in the longer term.

Cooper and Hawtin (1998) point out that Somerville's model is quite similar to their own. However, they consider their model to be an improvement on Somerville's because it highlights the *"'motor' driving the entire process - that is, the conceptual arena where different historical and ideological perspectives compete to dominate the policy aims and objectives for participation and involvement"* (Cooper and Hawtin, 1998: 85). Somerville's typology allows the difficulties inherent in the practice of involvement to be revealed. Importantly, it shows how organisations conceive and implement national policy based on their views of individuals and organisational values which may be counter to the spirit or ideology underpinning national policy at any given time.

Whether women are engaged in top down or bottom up initiatives, several key criteria or dimensions of power can be identified;

- The skills gained as a result of their participation and the extent to which these have led to activity beyond tenant participation and participation on the board of management
- The benefits experienced from activities both at a community and a personal level and their effective involvement in decision making.

Empowerment can be an outcome, or indeed an aim, of the involvement and participation process on boards of management of housing associations. This model allows the researcher to look at process in terms of whether the activity works towards empowering people or not. In Clegg's (1989) terminology this would be an activity that works towards a change in the standing conditions, rules and relationships of membership and meaning. This approach is useful for this research as it frames and explains what is going on in each individual case study and can help to establish outcomes in respect of these elements.

This approach will enable me to consider (a) what real outcomes for board member involvement there have been, (b) the extent that empowerment has been achieved for the parties involved, (c) which parties in particular have benefited.

This is achieved by looking at the activities of board members and asking a series of questions that relate, firstly to whether the direction of action is either *"top down"* or *"bottom up"*.

From a *"top down"* direction, it can then be determined how involvement on the board of management has been facilitated by the organisation through:

1. Recruitment processes to the board of management.
2. Level of access to information and training, and how this has been delivered.
3. The conferral of rights: how the organisation has designed/ operates the governance of the organisation and to what extent board members are involved in this process, and the areas of discussion in relation to the operation of the housing association at the board of management.

Looking at the *"bottom up"* direction of actions the three elements which are crucial to the determination of this are:

1. The type and level of female participation on boards of management through observed levels and range of involvement in board meetings.
2. Has on increasing exercise of rights been conferred, evidenced by female board members using the opportunities at board meetings to participate effectively at board meetings.
3. The levels of assertiveness in participating at board.

This allows the researcher to ask questions of both staff and board members about their level of involvement, both achieved and aspirational. Using this approach with my case studies, it should be possible to analyse much of the female board member experience around power. Ultimately these questions help to ascertain whether indeed power has been transformed, and whether the transformation will benefit the cause of female involvement on housing association boards of management.

There are practical limitations to using this model, in that it requires a number of subjective judgements to be made, which may have been affected by my positioning (see Chapter 5).

Issues such as conferral of rights are likely to be viewed very differently by the different parties involved (e.g. women vs. men, tenants vs. independent members, board members vs. the management team), and will also be utilised and implemented variously by different groups – this is more easily understood using Clegg (1989) (see discussion on power below). The model might work better where the period of study is longer and wider as this would allow sufficient time to enable the identification of permanent changes through the programme of gender balancing of boards of management as called for by the Welsh Government Minister of Housing (Welsh Government, 2014 (c)), the impact on the governance typologies and frameworks and the bedding in of the regulatory framework for housing associations in Wales. The chapter now turns to look at the concept of power in relation to participation and organisations, and how power can be gendered in its nature.

4.6   Theoretical Perspectives on Power

To participate effectively on the boards of management of housing associations, it is ultimately about the possession and distribution of power; how much those in charge of the decision-making process are prepared to relinquish and/or share power, and how much participants can acquire it through their involvement in decision-making. This is a vital issue in understanding and interpreting the relationships between: men and women; women and women; board members and the executive; the different board constituents; in relation to this research. This section is divided into two sub-sections. It begins with an analysis of the concept of power and a consideration of the gendered nature of power.

Many researchers exploring involvement and participation have used conceptions of power and ideology to enable them to explain the processes, structures and dynamics that shape participation and involvement. These approaches are shaped by the different views of what power is and how it works which is different depending on which theoretical standpoint is taken.

Lukes (1974), in his seminal work on the three dimensions of power, challenged previous pluralist views by unravelling, from a Marxist perspective, the ideology informing the structures behind the power in social groups especially opening up the idea of individuals not operating in their own best interests. This became a dominant theory for exploring power in the 1970s and early 1980s. Lowe (1986) investigated Castells' wide-ranging study of social movements in the 1970s, including tenant organisations, from a Marxist neo-structuralist perspective.

For Marxist and neo-Marxist theorists, power structures based on the relation between capital and labour shape people's interests, desires and beliefs in a way that may be contrary to their real interests, instead supporting the interests of capital. Lowe's application of this view, which was based on Castells' work in the 1950s and 60s, has been criticised for creating a theoretical proposition based on a narrow study, in which the framework emphasised the role of agitational activity over other forms of involvement and participation (Cairncross et al, 1997). Clegg (1989) points out that this represents an incorrect understanding of power which is concerned with what power is rather than what power does.

"Rational Choice Theory" uses a specific and narrower definition of *"rationality"* simply to mean that an individual acts as if balancing costs against benefits to arrive at action that maximizes personal advantage. In rational choice theory, all decisions, crazy or sane, are postulated as mimicking such a *"rational"* process. Thus rationality is seen as a property of patterns of choices, rather than of individual choices.

Although models used in rational choice theory are diverse, everyone assumes that individuals choose the best action according to personal functions, and constraint facing them (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008).

However, it can be contended that actors are not simply rational, utility-maximising individuals that have all the facts to hand to make the right decision at any given point. As Gamson (1992) and Klandermans (1992) point out, grievances, expectations and the costs and benefits of various activities and choices, are socially constructed within a collective context, and these need to be taken into account in any conceptualisation.

Rational choice theories have since been reframed within mobilisation theories, which are primarily concerned with why people get involved, rather than what happens after they get involved. However these theories have some interesting aspects which can be applied to groups once formed. One example is the contention that many people have grievances significant enough to motivate them collectively, and that the key obstacle is lack of resources. Collective action requires an aggregation of resources, which in turn requires a level of organisation.

How the actors or agents see themselves and the environment in which they operate is a key factor in this research. Here there are two groups (female and male board members) who may have different values, cultures and resources, who come together to achieve certain aims for the housing association. The dynamics of the discourse and structures are key components in the investigation. Each group may have different ideas about why they are participating, who they are, what they can do, what they seek to achieve, and even about the context in which they are operating. They may be largely unaware of the ideological base of their own actions and reasoning. This affects the context and creates boundaries in which women and men operate, interact and participate on housing association boards of management; importantly it continually shapes the construction of individual identities within groups and the focus of resources.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Clegg (1989, 2000), along with Goehler (1997) and Haugaard (1997) have developed theoretical frameworks that build on the work of Giddens (1977) and Foucault (1977). These aim to take account of both structure and discourse and show the processes whereby change, and transformation of structures and ideology, can take place, through unravelling the mechanics of strategy and interaction between groups in organisations. Building on the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Clegg (1989) developed a model that is aimed at expressing his idea of organised groups playing organised games set within the context of rules embedded within discourse and structure. Clegg's *three circuits of power framework"* shows the mechanics of strategy in a wider context of structure and meaning based on how structures and meanings are challenged or reproduced within a variety of settings. It is particularly useful for exploring group dynamics where there is a disparity of power between members of the group and where more complex strategies are employed by actors to attempt to achieve their ends. Important in this model are the three levels at which action can take place and the different impact these may have on the organisational field itself, and secondly, what Clegg terms the rules of the game. Issues such as resources, rules, membership and meaning construction are all taken into account in this model. This approach therefore has the potential to fit well with tenant involvement in panels and forums, and helps to explain why things do or don't change over time, as well as enabling the researcher to unpack micro-level initiatives.

Cairncross et al (1997) used Clegg's model to analyse the relationship between councillors, housing managers and tenants in three different types of local authority housing organisation, based on a typology of traditional, citizenship and consumerist cultures. This work brought the idea of the game of involvement into more mainstream thinking. The model was useful for microanalysis, from which generalisations and deeper understandings could be drawn.

It is particularly well suited to exploring governance or committees, panels and forums in action.

It can be argued that the experience women and men have of power is different and it is the socialisation process of women and men which is seen to contribute to this (Edwards, 1995; Dukes, 1993). For example, from childhood males are regarded and treated differently from females, given a sense of superiority (see Sayers, 1982; Sharpe, 1982). They suffer few limitations because of their sex, which actually becomes advantageous later in the sphere of employment and public life, where through the influence of societal values they learn dominance and power and how to wield it (see Van Nostrand, 1993, for a discussion on direct and indirect strategies concerning power use). As Phillips observes:

> *"Women only have to walk down the street to be reminded of physical vulnerability and lack of social power,... men earn more money ... and have greater physical power"*
>
> (Phillips, 1991: 97).

Feminists also argue that women and men differ in their perception, and consequent use, of power. Dukes (1993) argues that women see power as power-to, or empowerment whereas men see it as power-over others, or domination. It is argued that the *"power-over"* model which exists at present needs to be overthrown and replaced with *"power-to",* the problem arises however, of how this is to be achieved. In order to implement the *"power-to"* model, championed by feminists, Ferguson (1984) argues that it would be necessary to enforce the *"power-over"* measure first, thus placing feminists in a rather contradictory situation. They do not wish to place themselves in the very institutions which once housed their predecessors, however, the view is that there would be little alternative. They would have to employ the *"power-over"* initially to obtain control, allowing them to implement *"power to"*.

The fear here is that once in power they would not call for the construction of the power-to model (Ferguson, 1984). However, this does not necessarily have to be the case. It is true that *"as long as the male model of power is the only one accorded any legitimacy, women's co-operative vision of power is easily discounted"* (Jacquette 1993: 6). But it is the acceptance by society of the present system which has to be radically altered and the legitimacy of another established.

Two of the major theories in this debate over how equality is to be achieved are the *"bottom up",* gradualist approach and the strategy of direct revolution. By adopting the gradualist approach (i.e. participation within conventional structures), the achievement of equality could be a slow process. However, the gradualist approach may be more realistic and viable than outright revolution. The gradualist strategy filters female perceptions into the decision making processes stage by stage and, thus, onto the policy agenda with the aim of restructuring a society in which women lack any real influence. It can be argued that such a strategy is perhaps no less radical in a patriarchal society than the revolutionary approach, yet it aims to achieve its ends without advocating the complete overthrow of the system in a single major struggle (Hernes, 1988). An infiltration of the present system at any level in an effort to permeate all areas and to begin to challenge the system from the inside is not impossible (after all, institutions do have histories). To challenge the system whenever, wherever, and in whatever capacity can be seen as a far more realistic avenue to the eventual goal of equality.

The possibilities for participation to transform the distribution of power and decision making powers are great. Whilst it will not be immediate, and may prove a difficult process, which *"will involve a constant struggle to increase the range of issues on which it is possible to change rules by which decisions are taken"* (Smith, 1981: 13), the possibility for radical alteration does exist. The main criticism is that the bottom up approach will not achieve its initial aims because, as those who once had limited power learn to *"play the game"* and begin to possess increasing power and control, the new power holders will merely replace the old.

It may also be the case that the old power holders remain powerful, simply incorporating the less powerful into the *"system"*. From this perspective, if the current structures of society remain intact, then the distribution of power will remain unequal. Phillips suggests that it may *"prove intrinsic to liberal democracy that it cannot acknowledge women as citizens in the fullest sense of the word"* (1991: 31). If this is true, then what this thesis is advocating - the bottom up approach - may be inappropriate within a capitalist democracy and thus citizenship will remain unequal (or whilst it may occur, it will only be at a superficial level and in reality nothing alters).

However, in the absence of a mass movement likely to support revolution, a strategy must be advanced and the feasibility of the bottom up theory makes it supportable. Indeed, it is the case in the present political climate that, *"many feminist goals can only be met by state institutions, e. g. affordable childcare, abortion on demand, free contraception"* (Halford, 1992: 159). Decent and affordable housing should also be acknowledged here and the recognition of the participation of groups, organisations and institutions as a positive way forward for women's equal citizenship.

> *"As the proportion of women in legislative and other policy-making positions grows, so will their legitimacy in their own eyes and those of male politicians; they will feel able to act concertedly and as overt feminists who recognise women's interests, in a highly-gendered society, as being different from those of men. The critical point will come when women's presence in the system and their pursuit of women's interests are taken for granted by all concerned. Empowered by the state (instead of marginalised), they will be able to pursue the goal of a `woman friendly' social order, in which women will enjoy `a natural relationship to their children, their work and public life"*
>
> (Hernes, 1987: 15)

"And not have harder choices forced on them than society expects of men"

(Hernes, 1995: 109).

For such a *"social order"* to become a reality, a more participatory democracy is called for in which the distribution of power will enable its advantaged citizens to exert real influence in decision-making processes.

Clegg's (1989) *"Circuits of Power"* is a useful framework for examining instances from the case study associations where the primary group (board members) are involved in working in their corporate undertakings. The rules (policy, protocol and accepted practice) of this particular activity (involvement) are set by the housing association, and the board members may or may not have been consulted about these.

Clegg (1989) developed his *"circuits of power"* model to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of power relationships, both in organisations and in the study of the state and politics. A diagrammatic representation of his model is set out in Figure 4.6 (below), which should be referred to as the different levels of the circuit are described. Clegg argues that the dynamic, relative nature of power is not accounted for in many theoretical perspectives popular in the past, especially those that have their roots in the work of Hobbes (1960). Clegg maintains that power should be thought of as a phenomenon that can only be grasped relationally. In his view it does not exist as any concrete entity that can be owned, but is a product of relations. Power is possessed only in the way that the relational conditions that constitute power are produced, and is relatively fixed.

"Power is simply the effectiveness of strategies for achieving for oneself a greater scope of action than for others implicated in one's strategies. Power is not anything nor is it necessarily inherent in anyone: it is a tenuously produced and reproduced effect which is contingent upon the strategic competences of actors who would be powerful."

<div align="right">(Clegg, 1989:33)</div>

At the base of this theory of power are conceptions of organisations and how they operate. For Clegg, organisations are not expressions of a single rational principle but a location of decision making and action within a complex set of rules, identities and pressures. He thinks of organisations as:

"Locales in which negotiation, contestation and struggle between organisationally divided and linked agencies is a routine occurrence"

<div align="right">(Clegg, 1989: 198)</div>

His circuits of power model can be used to understand how organisations develop and transform through the conduit of *"the rules of the game"* idea. It shows how power cannot remain static within one set of rules and practices, and that power is subject to dynamic flux as a result of pressures from outside and within the various circuits of power. Therefore, Clegg maintains:

"power is best approached through a view of more or less complex organised agents engaged in more or less complex organised games"

<div align="right">(Clegg, 1989: 20).</div>

Figure 4.6 Clegg's Circuits of Power (1989: 214)
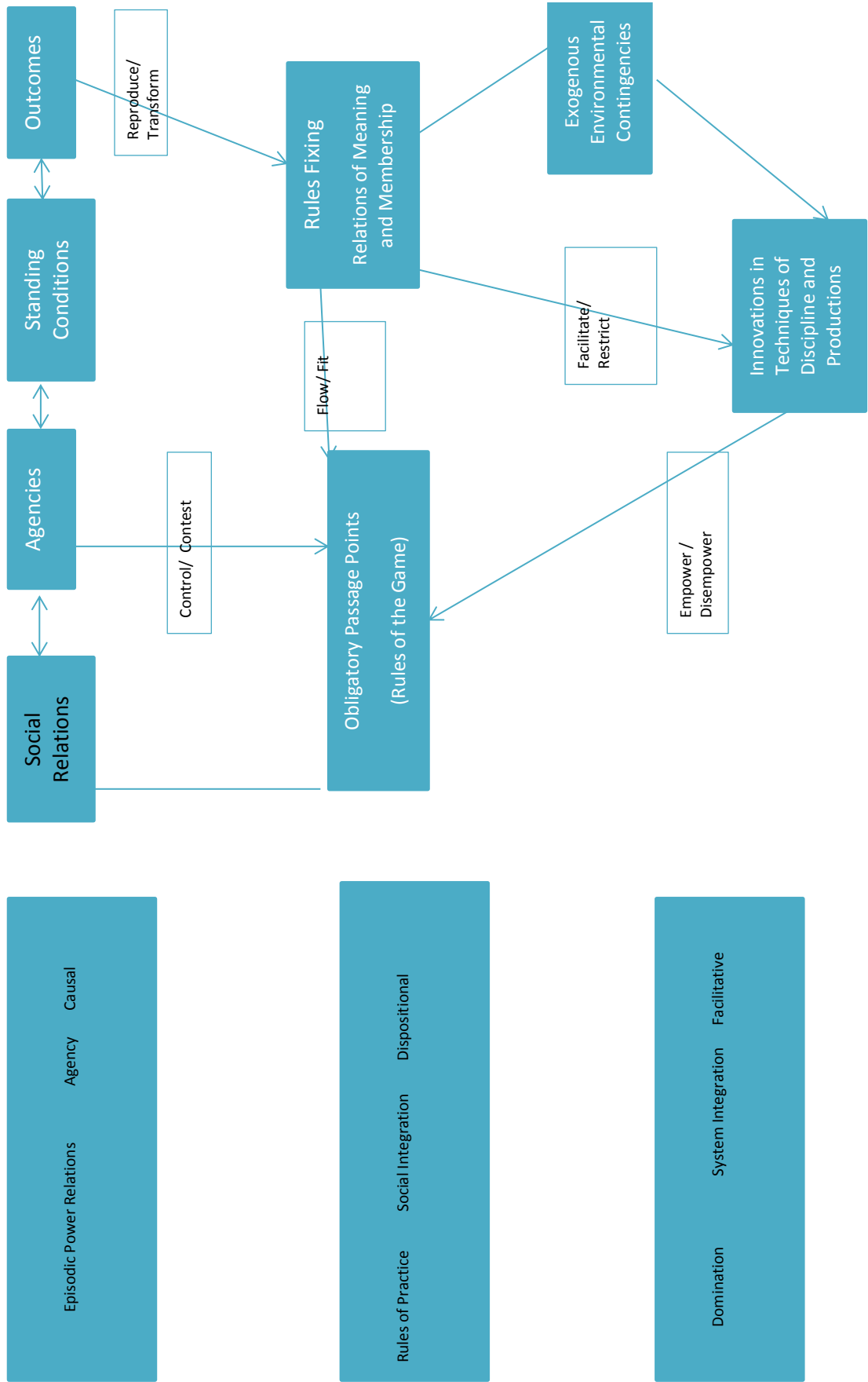
The circuits demonstrate the mechanics of organisational or social change, and the model serves to challenge taken-for-granted ideas about the nature of fixed power relationships such as those outlined by Lukes (1974). Clegg's theory of circuits of power has proved useful for investigating the dynamics of female involvement on boards of housing associations, as his framework lends itself well to discussing activities within arenas where there are two or more groups with different agendas and unequal access to resources, each trying to achieve their own aims.

This model is also useful for exploring power dynamics within the housing association boards of management, and between the board of management and the organisation. It is useful because any activity that takes place in the setting of the meetings can be accounted for through the model. For instance, In the case of female board membership, new members may join the board and influence the way that a particular activity or policy/ strategy is carried out by the organisation, by making friends with other board members and persuading them to help change the rules of practice or structure, or simply the way things are done. Finally, whether female board members are successful or not can also be shown in the model and therefore enable the researcher to make more sense of the barriers to involvement. Commentators such as Bengtsson and Clapham (1997) point out that this model works well for analysing changes over time, both in the activities, and in the context of involvement.

As with any model, however, it has its limitations. For example, it may be that, in certain circumstances and over a long period of time, there will be no appreciable change and hence power will not transform. This would be evidenced at the episodic level, and would render the rest of the model void. Although this would be apparent to the researcher without the use of the model, if there is at least some transformation of power, even if only for a short time, the complete framework can be used to advantage. A further limitation lies in the fact that the model is most suited to use in similar kinds of setting, with relatively few agencies involved.

Two or three agencies will allow the dynamics of specific instances over a period of time to be tracked, but any more would create too many complexities. Furthermore, some judgments are still required by the researcher, as there will be discrepancies between the levels of change regarding the different players in any given situation. Finally, this is not a model that can be used to predict outcomes, but it does enable the researcher to analyse and understand the way in which certain events and behaviours result in certain types of outcome. Moreover, it may help the researcher to recognise similar patterns in a number of housing associations, thus helping to identify generic barriers common to the struggles of all female board members in housing associations.

4.7 Conclusion

In attempting to define a theoretical framework, Figure 4.7 (below) indicates the main theoretical positions and the links between them, and constitutes a critical point of reference for the research methodology for this project and the detailed design of the empirical fieldwork plan as will be outlined in the next chapter.

Figure 4.7 Linking Theories (The Author, 2014)
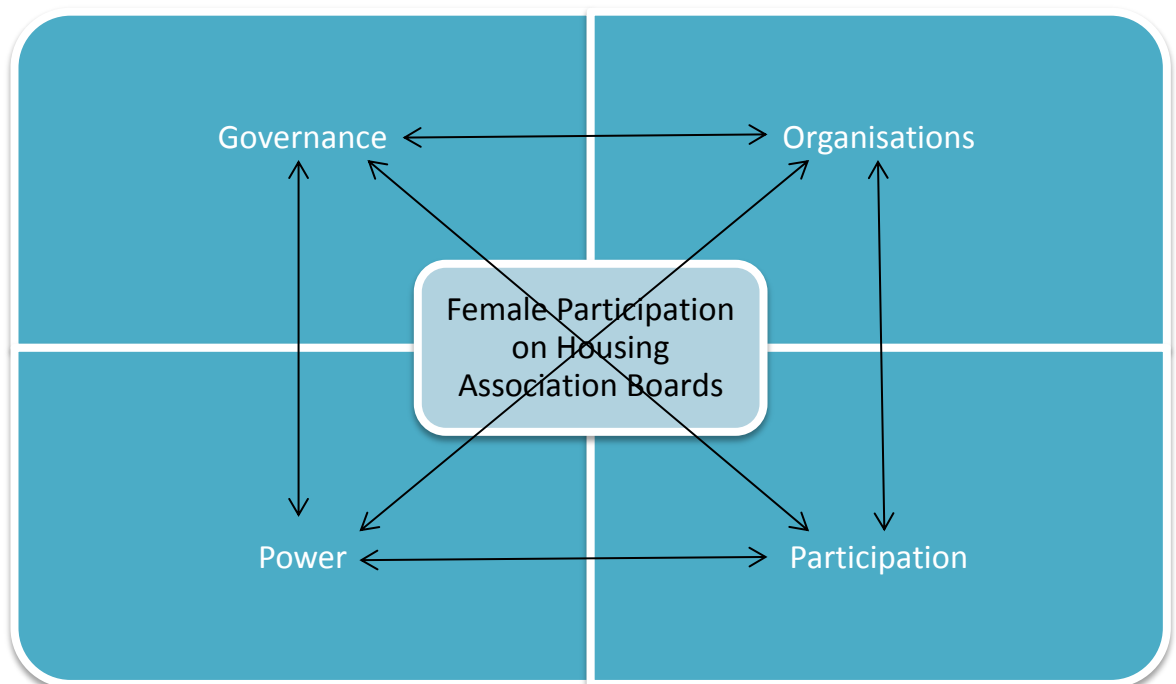
Through the use of the theories noted below, the chapter introduced a conceptual theoretical framework, the research will make an original academic contribution to understanding female representation on housing association boards of management in Wales.

Governance of the case study organisations is the primary focus of this research, and based on the work of Cornforth (2004) the *"Paradox Perspective"* was introduced as a way of analysing the governance frameworks for housing associations in the case study research; organisational typology was introduced through theoretical positioning of housing associations as hybrid organisations using the work of Billis (2010), and the theoretical framework of organisational cultures of Hofstede's (1991) work will prove useful in the analysis of cultures of the case study organisations. Thirdly, participation has been identified as being a useful concept in order to understand how people and more specifically women can become empowered as a result of their participation with organisations, seeking to identify the different motivations for participation both from an organisational point of view as well as a citizen model of participation. Finally the chapter introduced the conceptual theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis of power, in relation to Clegg's (1989) *"Circuits of power"*.

The thesis can now move forward to the detailed study of female representation on housing association boards of management in two case study organisations via an analysis of primary research data. The focus can be narrowed to examine more closely the specific ways in which females participate on two housing association boards of management in Wales; how the various actors function; how they interact with each other; how different tactics and strategies are used; and how obstacles are overcome. As a result of this analysis, the extent to which participation on boards of management is gendered, and the extent to which females can be empowered to become involved will be evaluated in the final chapter of the thesis.

Before proceeding to the more detailed study and by way of introducing it, the following chapter outlines the methodological process within which the research was conducted.

Chapter 5 – Methodological Approach to the Research

5.1   Introduction

This chapter identifies the methodological processes, which have been used in this research to collect the data required. This study is concerned with the issues of gender, and therefore it is important to state from the offset that this research will be conducted from a feminist methodological perspective. This is fundamental to understanding the methodological processes and techniques applied. The research aims of this thesis are as follows:

Table 5.1 Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Identify the organisational typology and culture of the case study organisations and how this facilitates female participation on boards of management
Identify the governance structures and prevailing board culture of the case study organisations and how they influence female participation
Uncover the board composition and diversity and how recruitment strategies influence female participation and barriers to involvement
Explore the motivations of board members' participation
Uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation and opportunities for empowerment.

5.2 Feminist Considerations in Research

This section of the chapter outlines the epistemological position that underpins this research. This position is adopted for the research, as it is assumed that the world is essentially patriarchal, the culture of masculinity and women's lived experience are consciously and unconsciously constructed and interpreted from this context. Feminist research is a *"critical perspective on social and political life, that draws attention to the ways which social, political and economic norms, and practices and structures, create injustices that are experience differently or uniquely by certain groups of women"* (Ackerly and True, 2010: 1).

There is no single feminist epistemology or *"unitary discourse"* (Briskin, 1989: 88), but the synergy in feminist research approaches is that it seeks to know the world through a gendered lens. Women's inherited view of themselves is situated within a patriarchal hegemony that constrains them. This makes it challenging to determine whether women know in a different way from men, or have different ways of knowing, based on their experience. Dorothy Smith wrote in 1975:

> *"Our means of knowing and speaking of ourselves and our world are written for us by men who occupy a special place in it... In learning to speak our experience and situation, we insist upon the right to begin where we are, to stand as subjects of our sentences, and to hear one another as the authoritative speakers of our experience."*
>
> (as cited in Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 1987: 103)

Riger (1992) reflecting on the work of Smith (1984), wrote that women are alienated by having to frame their experience in relation to men's conceptual framework (Riger, 1992: 733). Anderson et al. (1987) stated, *"when women speak for themselves, they reveal hidden identities: new experiences and new perspectives that challenge the "truths" of official accounts"* (Anderson et al, 1987: 104).

Feminist research remains important. *"Feminism as a mode of analysis leads us to respect experiences and differences, to respect people enough to believe they are in the best possible position to make their own revolution"* (Hekman, 1997: 343). Jaggar (2004) wrote that women suffer from exploitation and oppression because of the political economy. Anderson et al (1987) and Harstock (1983) have each written about how women's perspectives are distorted by the male-dominated structure of their lives and, as a result, women simultaneously conform to and oppose the conditions that construct their lives. The hegemony and material relations of the ruling class remains, and feminist political practice is needed to address women's on-going political concerns. Sawer, writing in 2014, stated that *"Feminist political science has changed greatly over the past 40 years, becoming more specialised, professionalised and internationalised,"* and that it continues to be *"useful to women's movements"* (Sawer, 2014: 144). Research from the standpoint of women can support an understanding of women's gendered experience, and provides a means of understanding the nature of women's being in the world. The reasons for discounting other feminist theories are set out below.

Postmodern feminism is the ultimate acceptor of diversity. There is a rejection of the essential nature of women in favour of multiple truths, multiple roles and the multiple realities of women. Postmodern feminism offers an opportunity to articulate the complex matrix of domination that relates to the specific and individualised experiences of women (Van der Tuin, 2011; Walby, 2011; Geerts and Van der Tuin, 2013). The feminist postmodern epistemology espouses that our version of reality may differ greatly from version of reality of another person.

Whilst one could contend that this view has resonance within the research as the viewpoints of the different actors in the governance of housing associations in Wales will be different to each other and from that of the researcher, it could be contended that the issue of intersectionality within feminist standpoint epistemology overcomes some of the postmodernist issues with the standpoint feminism epistemology - that of a single universal truth (Geerts and Van der Tuin, 2013).

The notion of intersectionality in relation to feminist standpoint epistemology positions subjects in multiple frameworks of oppression or privilege in relation to gender - including notions of race/ ethnicity/ class / religion and sexuality (Geerts and Van der Tuin, 2013). In relation to the research, the board members of housing associations as the subject of the research will experience multiple frameworks in relation to their experiences and contributions to the governance of housing associations in Wales. It is these relative positions of gender in relation to oppression and privilege in access to and within the governance arrangements of housing associations in Wales which form the main objectives of the research within this study.

Liberal feminism recognises equal opportunity as the primary focus of women's struggle. There is little emphasis on the structure of human relations, instead favouring approaches that level the playing field for women's societal participation as a basis for gender equality. Liberal feminism is individualistic in its approach, and did not offer enough opportunity to consider the relational elements of board members experiences or the impact that structural and institutional arrangements may have had on the board members perceptions of the operation of board meetings within housing associations.

Radical feminism has focussed on deeply entrenched male/female division. It has provided an opportunity to understand how male-dominated societies have forced women into oppressive gender roles. Radical feminist proposals for change are embedded in separation from the male-dominated system. There is little credence given to the interdependent nature of men and women. Men and women board members operate in a single operational system. Thus, the epistemological position did not offer enough opportunity to consider how women board members could operate equitably alongside male board members of housing associations.

The research is grounded in a feminist standpoint position; however, the journey to feminist standpoint originated from my affiliation with socialist feminism. Socialist feminism offers a critical way of locating women's experiences in the context of capitalism (Ehrenreich, 2005). Socialist feminists agree that there is something *"timeless and universal about women's oppression"* (Ehrenreich, 2005: 73) but emphasises the different forms it takes and insists on the recognition of differences amongst women's experiences (Briskin, 1989; Ehrenreich, 2005). The socialist feminist frame would have been useful for this research because it could bring awareness to the different experiences of women housing association board members within the social, political, and economic framework. Women's individual realities, and an acceptance that women's interpretations of their realities and social world contain and reflect important truths (Geiger, 2004), unite with a socialist feminist intentionality to account for women's different experiences. Whilst the study embraces a *"feminism of difference"* (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004: 19), attention to each individual's experiences and perceptions was not in itself sufficient. Standpoint theorist Hirschmarm (1998) wrote, *"it is not enough for feminists to theorise difference, or even marginality, for many differences are marginalised, rather we must understand how what is marginal is central to patriarchal power"* (Hirschman, 1998: 86). For this reason, feminist standpoint theory was adopted.

Standpoint feminism "*begins in the actualities of women's experience, and reflects the view that women occupy a social location that affords them privileged access to social phenomena*" (Longino, 1993: 201). The goal of standpoint theory is to consider women's experiences critically in order to support learning about women's responses to oppression, as well as understanding the nature of the oppression itself (Hirschmarm, 1998: 75).

Dorothy Smith is credited with founding feminist standpoint theory as she looked to develop *"sociology"* for women. The approach sought to look at the social world from the perspectives of women in their everyday worlds, and the ways in which women socially constructed their worlds. Standpoint feminism is founded in Marxist ideology. Harstock (1983) argued that a feminist standpoint could be built from Marx's understanding of experience and has been used to challenge patriarchal thinking and theory. Standpoint feminism makes the case that because women's lives and roles in almost all societies are significantly different from men's, women hold a different type of situational knowledge. Through this different experience and subordination, women can see and understand the world in ways that are different from and challenging to the existing male-biased conventional wisdom (Belenky et al., 1997; Collins, 2004; Gilligan, 1977, 1982; Harding, 2004a, 2004b; Harstock, 1983; Hekman, 1997; Hirschmarm, 1998; Hundleby, 1998; Jaggar, 2004; Longino, 1993; Smith, 1987, 1999). A Feminist Standpoint epistemology seeks to reveal the social, as it is experienced by women, in ways that have not already been defined within the ruling relations, and aims to highlight the consciousness of what being a woman means in the context of the ruling apparatus. A standpoint approach aims to *"explicitly and forthrightly"* incorporate *"women's ways of knowing"* that have been excluded (Hundleby, 1998: 27).

Jaggar (2004) wrote about the importance of research from the standpoint of women; research that has the potential to *"reconstruct reality"* and provide for a transformation of society that cannot possibly be dreamt of *"by a masculinist philosophy"* (Jaggar, 2004: 65) alone. Harding (2004a) wrote that standpoint theory is a way to demonstrate *"oppositional consciousness,"* and that standpoint theory is inquiry which is *"outside the realm of the true"* (Harding, 2004a: 2) or outside the ruling institutions and paradigms. A standpoint position seeks to look *"beneath or behind the dominant sexist and androcentric ideologies... that shape the actualities of women's lives"* (Harding, 2004a: 6). The distinctive social experiences of women generate insights that are incompatible with men's interpretations of reality. These insights provide clues to how reality might be interpreted from the standpoint of women (Jaggar, 2004). Under a *"situated" paradigm of knowledge,"* Jaggar wrote:

> *"The daily experience of oppressed groups provides them with an immediate awareness of their own suffering but they do not perceive immediately the underlying causes of this suffering nor even necessarily perceive its oppression. Their understanding is obscured by both the prevailing ideology and the very structure of their lives."*
>
> (Jaggar, 2004: 61)

Standpoint research can help to understand the ideological forces that support the maintenance of institutions and cultures of operation, by exploring the standpoint of the marginalised group. Viewing the world from the perspective of women as the 'other' provides an opportunity to examine and understand how disadvantage, suppression, or exclusion may be transformed into a different mode of knowing. Hekman (1997) quoted Harstock who wrote, *"Those of us who have been constituted as the other must insist on a world in which we are at the centre and not at the periphery"* (Hekman 1997: 351).

Jaggar (2004) wrote that a standpoint of women reveals more of the universe than does the standpoint of men. Conceptualising a world experienced and interpreted by women *"will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and the whole social order"* (Harding, 2004b: 128).This inquiry seeks to broaden understanding about one aspect of political women's worlds.

Feminist standpoint theory was the chosen theory for this inquiry because it is important for women housing association board members to represent their own experiences in their own words, and because of the political potential that feminist standpoint research offers to an understanding about women's presence in the governance of third sector organisations, and particularly housing associations. The representation of female board members' voices is important to the governance of housing associations, and other third sector organisations (particularly where the main recipients are female – see chapter 2 for a discussion on the female relationship to housing and the home), and can provide new understandings about the constraints that women face as representatives, and the opportunities that may arise from a recognition and respect for women's different voice. Research from the standpoint of women can enable us to look beyond the horizon.

Knowledge is based on experiences, and different experiences enable different perceptions of our environments and ourselves. Therefore, all knowledge is situated. The meaning that is ascribed to events and experiences depends on the ways of interpreting the world standpoint pluralism.

Feminist standpoint theory defines knowledge as situated, perspectival and particular, rather than universal, which leads to the existence of multiple standpoints, multiple realities and multiple truths (Hekman, 1997; Hirschmarm, 1998). With the potential for a multiplicity of standpoints, Longino (1993) made the case for *"standpoint pluralism"* achieved through *"polyphonic text that can represent layers of experience in complex social interactions"* (Longino, 1993:206).

Smith (1987) wrote of the *"potentially endless detailing of particulars"* (Smith, 1987: 6).

Women may share a standpoint because of their gendered experiences, but *"ultimately every woman is unique"* (Hekman, 1997: 359), because women occupy more than one experiential and identity location, and personal and political identities shift and change over time and according to context. *"Each standpoint [which gives rise to an identity] characterises oppression differently [consciously and subconsciously] because the understanding arises out of a different experience of oppression"* (Hundleby 1998: 35). The historicity and temporal location of each woman's being is therefore central to understanding their interpretations and perceptions about their lives. Hirschmarm (1998) highlighted the challenge of standpoint theories attending to and embracing difference, whilst being able to hold onto the concept of woman, and retain the aspects of commonality (Hirschmarm 1998): 79). Accommodating a plurality of standpoints recognises difference, specificity, and history. It recognises that processes of developing experiences may be similar (Hirschmarm, 1998; Lennon, 1995), enables reflexivity through awareness of personal and others standpoints (Lennon, 1995), and recognises the *"contingencies [of oppression] that can be changed"* (Hundleby, 1998: 32).

Smith (1987) wrote*, "Society has organised for women a different relation to the world"* (Smith, 1987: 68), and that *"women's lives have been outside or subordinate to the ruling apparatus"* (Smith, 1987:109). Women dominate occupation of the world of social relations, which, because of historically socialised divisions of labour, facilitate men's occupation of the ruling relations and the ruling apparatus (Harstock, 1983; Smith, 1987). According to Hundleby (1998: 29). *"Women's traditional work is more entrenched in nature... men's traditional work is concerned with the generalities of culture and only with people at a distance"*.

Harstock (1983) stated, *"men and women grow up with different personalities affected by different boundary experiences, differently constructed and experienced inner and outer worlds, and reoccupations with different relational issues"* (Hundleby, 1998: 295). The result is that women conceive the world differently (Jaggar, 2004).

According to Smith (1999), the ruling apparatus and relations, which are the domains of men, *"regulates, organises, governs and otherwise controls our societies... It is pervasive and pervasively interconnected. It is a mode of organising society"* (Smith, 1999: 49). Buker (1990) stated:

> *"Women often experience life as personal connections to other persons and to the fundamental processes of life –preparing food, writing books, maintaining shelter, caring for clothing, rearing the young and doing social analysis. These are, of course, the processes on which every society depends even though they may go unnoticed.*
>
> (Buker, 1990:30)

In this way, the experience of the woman board member of a housing association cannot be separated from history and tradition.

Smith (1987) contends that *"the biases beginning from the experience of men enter in all kinds of ways into our thinking"* (Smith, 1987: 21). Whether conscious of it or not, women's experience in the world and their interpretation of that experience have been influenced by male constructions of life.

"Men have authority, in the world of thought, as members of a social category and not as individuals. Authority is a form of power that is a distinctive capacity to get things done in words... When we speak of authority, we are speaking of what makes what one person says count. Men are invested with authority as individuals, not because they have individual special competencies or expertise, but because men appear as representative of the power and authority of the institutional structures that govern society. Their authority as individuals in actual situations of action is generated by social organisation. They do not appear as themselves alone. They are those whose words count, both for each other and for those who are not members of this category."

(Smith, 1987: 30)

A consequence is the female voice is not afforded with authority in making *"ideological forms"* (Smith, 1978: 31) of thought, and the influence of women's voices may not be heard in male-dominated environments. Smith (1987) and Harding (2004a) have written about the exclusion of women's voices from public arenas. Smith commented that where women have spoken, their voice has either been ignored or appropriated by men. Smith reflected on Strodtbeck and Mann's study of jury deliberations. The jury reports highlighted the men's domination of conversation, which resulted in women becoming members of the audience. Smith described it as a *"game in which there are more presences than layers"* (Smith, 1987: 32). Harding (2004a) questioned whether women as a group *could "produce knowledge that have their questions answered about nature and social relations"* (Harding, 2004a: 4) because of the limited attention given to their voice.

Satsangi (2013) notes that there is a history of feminist standpoint epistemologies and housing research - which has led to a rich vein of empirical evidence for the position of oppression and privilege of women in relation to access to housing, and their experiences of social housing, labour market processes and the meaning of the home, family and community.

Therefore the adoption of a feminist standpoint epistemology is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in understanding the processes, relationships and experiences of women and housing.

In summary, a feminist standpoint position recognises the complex and unique position of each woman. As an epistemological basis for this inquiry, it begins and ends in the reality of women's experiences and prior understandings. It recognises that women's experience and position in the world is political. It recognises that women are in a privileged position to reveal important truths about their experiences within a masculinist political world, and without listening to those voices there is little opportunity for the polity to change for the betterment of all. Feminist standpoint does not seek to compartmentalise the experience of women, and reduce them to an archetype, it embraces pluralism and diversity and the historical and temporal location of each women's experience.

5.2.1 A Feminist Standpoint Methodology

Traditional methodologies require the researcher to be objective and neutral – implying that the production of knowledge within society is neutral and free from subjectivity (Hallam and Marshall, 1993). Feminist standpoint researchers contend that there is no neutral standpoint, and that neutrality in the research context actually conceals differentiated power relations and structural inequalities that exist in society (Locher and Prugl, 2001). A further debate is that by claiming that objectivity can be achieved from a neutral standpoint in effect leaves *"significant subjectively based knowledge"* out of science and also keeps it out of analysis. Therefore the personal and the subjective have an inevitable impact on the various aspects of the research process and that they can be a significant source of the sexist bias in traditional research.

Fonow and Cook, and others contend that it is important to place the researcher and the researched on the same critical plane, since only then does it become possible to critically analyse and examine the whole research process – in relation to both the findings and also the role of the researcher in the interpretation of the data and ultimately the conclusions drawn from that research (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Harding, 1987; Harding ,1993; Jayaratne and Steward, 1991). A feminist standpoint research methodology seeks to allow the *"subject"* to become an equal *"participant"* in the study, indeed, to become a co-researcher (Olesen, 1994). It rejects the theory on *"non-emotional involvement"* with those being researched and that researchers should maintain a purely formal relationship. This reflexivity is important when looking at the transformative power of feminist standpoint research to empower the researched (Cornwall and Sardenberg, 2014).

All of this includes the consideration of the researcher's social positioning and their relationship to those being researched and the topic under study. It would be false to claim that the researcher is neutral, as if by distancing oneself from the site of the research makes us objective. It could be contended that only by recognising the researchers' subjectivities and positionality and the relationship to the field of research can the process truly be brought under scrutiny. It is important to note that the particular knowledge, experience, expectations and language a researcher brings to the process will influence what is observed. In this instance observers are considered to be active agents and not passive receptacles (Mullings, 1999).

The inclusion of the identity information (in table 5.2 above) allows the researcher to critically reflect on the power, hierarchy and interpretations that the researcher may have in relation to those involved in the research study. Positionality refers to the transitional spaces that are created by the researcher and the researched, where the situated knowledge of both parties generates trust and co-operation and this can lead to a greater understanding of the women lived realities (Nazeem and Sultan, 2014).

Whilst women will possess many insights into the lives of other women being researched, I disagree that this qualifies any female researcher to study any female subject. Shared gender does not necessarily lead to empathy with their situations, women after all are not an homogenous group – and neither are men (Gelsthorpe, 1992):

> "There are situations where one can study those whose standpoint the researcher shares, and who can share the theorisation of their experience, and others where the subjects' experience is divided from the researcher's by power relations, and subjects are theorised by feminists in ways in which they do not theorise themselves"

(Ramazanoglu 1993: 36)

Table 5.2 Researcher's positioning in Relation to Key Dimensions (The Author, 2014)

Key Dimensions	Researchers Positioning
Gender	I am female
Experience	I have worked within a local authority-housing department, a third sector organisation championing the development of tenant participation and I currently work in a supported housing organisation.
Ideology	My stance has always been against inequalities in society, and as a feminist in that women should have the same opportunities as men, but ignoring the sameness of women in terms of gender, social class, ethnicity and poverty.

The researcher experiences life as a woman, as do many of the participants in the study, and as such both the researcher and the researched will share some of the same experiences as a result of the shared gender.

However, there will be many other experiences which will not be shared as a result of the differences, both as a woman and as a researcher and researched, our position in society, our experience of social housing in Wales, ethnicity, race, sexuality and age. I believe that this experience and methodological position only adds to the research in this area.

In this study tenant board members, differ from independent members, who differ from local authority representatives – and all of these differ from the senior management officers and Chief Executives of the housing associations who were included within this study. In addition, the differences in gender, age, ethnicity, professional background, life experience and motivations for being board members also impact on the research being undertaken. These distinctions make for an interesting study, a project that ignores these differences would reveal little about the "world that produces these experiences" (Hammersley, 1992).

The research therefore is based on a methodological position that locates the researcher on the same footing as those who are being researched. Wolf (1996) states that our own knowledge and experiences are critical for creating knowledge and determining how fully they can understand a phenomenon. Through the adoption of a feminist standpoint methodology, the aim of the research is to be seen as part of the whole process in which women come to understand their own oppression in order to challenge and change it. In order to achieve this aim, the research cannot, therefore just solely focus on women.

5.2.2 Feminist Research Methods

Through conducting this research using a feminist standpoint methodology, the aim is to employ research methods that enhance the visibility of women and the gender inequalities that they experience.

Many feminist researchers have positioned themselves in using qualitative and informal methods, whereby the researcher is prepared to enter into a relaxed relationship with subjects (Finch, 1991; Mies, 1993; Oakley, 1981). Oakley (1999) argues that the language of *"qualitative"* and *"quantitative"* methods used currently is the outcome of a deeply gendered history across both the social and natural sciences (Oakley, 1998).

Oakley (1998) points out that the over-riding consideration for choosing a particular method for data generation is that it should fit the research design. Oakley argues that the audit trail through research question, methods, data collection, analysis and interpretation needs to be clear, systematic and explicit.

Far from selecting a method because of its capacity for service in the feminist research cause, it behests all researchers to contemplate the exploitative potential of interview method that remains; researchers benefit from a process that is based on some form of contract, and questions of power, advantage, reciprocation and recognition of time and effort are seemly. Also, research that recognises feminist precepts is not necessarily exclusively qualitative: some researchers argue that quantitative instruments, properly designed, could be potentially less harmful to respondents and more useful to policy makers (Cohen, Hughes and Lampard, 2011).

Letherby (2004) points out that the use of qualitative research is not the only legitimate feminist approach, and advocates variety and diversity in feminist methods. She calls for a mix of old and new: interviews and questionnaires; content analysis of public and private documents; action research; multi-method approaches; drama; autobiography; group diaries, etc. She also warns that the myth that feminists *"only do interviews"* persists, and compounds sexist views about women as good listeners and men alone having numerical skills, while the emotional work of both men and women is ignored.

This last point is important, because to get to the neglected aspects of social research (the private, the emotional and the subjective in women's social realities), in turn leads the reflexive practitioner to reflect on whether and when these aspects of social realities are investigated (Nencel, 2014).

Walby (2011) argues that a pluralist methodological position has developed within sociological investigation amongst feminist researchers, however, despite this move; there still remains a prioritisation of qualitative methods within feminist research. In the context of this study, the research methods employed are distinctly qualitative; this is due to the fact that the research seeks to understand the processes, motivations and personal experiences of women and their contribution to the governance of housing associations in Wales - and not a statistical collection of data. Whilst Oakley has argued that the choice of research method should be fit for the research design, she has argued for the value of the in-depth qualitative interview for feminist research (Oakley, 1981). In an article that remains important in current debates, Oakley wrote of the inadequacies of the social science methodology textbook proscriptions for the research interview as part of a survey. She cites a version in which the interviewer is a tool or an instrument, and that also extols the necessity for distance from the respondent in the interests of objectivity, to strike a rapport but remain aloof.

On the question of whether there are distinctively feminist research methods, specifically the interview, Letherby (2004) broadly draws from feminist research literature to argue that the qualitative research interview cannot be so claimed. Instead, she observes that a friendly interviewer encourages private revelations in the course of the dialogue. Moreover, she points to the possibility that respondents need to know how to protect themselves from interviewers and that it may be patronising to suggest that what respondents want in return is reciprocity for their engagement in the exercise.

She warns that it is important that assumptions about the nature of power in the research process are not taken for granted; for power passes between researcher and respondent during the process. Indeed the research respondent is arguably very powerful, for it is she who holds the data, although the balance shifts when the process of data generation is completed.

Fieldwork as a research method proposes many particular challenges for feminist researchers because of the power relations inherent in the process of gathering data implicit in the processes of ethnographic representation (Mason, 1996; Wolf, 1996) . Wolf contends that these power relations exist in 3 forms;

- Power differences resulting from the different personalities between the researcher and the researched,

- Power expressed during the research process through the establishment of the research relationship, and,

- Power exerted during the post fieldwork process – during the writing and representing.

Within the context of this piece of research efforts were made by the researcher to maintain an awareness of the power relationships prior to the interview stage, with the preparation of a brief profile of each interviewee, in an effort to identify potential bias in relation to gender, class, age, ethnicity and political affiliation (May, 1997). During the interview stage of the research there were some difficult interview moments. In such situations, the researcher was in a dilemma: to disagree and risk alienating the interviewee, to terminate the interview, or to agree in the hope of eliciting further information, which may ultimately jeopardise the integrity of the interviewer. The individual personality was an important factor in determining the relationship between the researcher and the researched. As with all other social situations, certain characters/personalities will always *"get on",* whilst others will not. It can be argued that experiences make us who we are and thus shared experiences will determine relationships – however the philosophical debates surrounding this contention are beyond the remit of this study.

The feminist approach to social research is associated with the idea that research should be conducted with freedom from oppression as its ultimate aim. Whilst I agree with the contention that feminist research must be *"brought to serve the interest of the dominated, exploited or oppressed groups",* indeed the study is intended to contribute to this, I disagree with some feminists, and their guidelines for research (Mies, 1993).

Through conducting this research using a feminist standpoint methodology, the aim is to employ research methods that enhance the visibility of women and the gender inequalities that they experience. In essence then, this study is feminist, in that it studies women's inequalities, whilst also promoting the interests of women. The next section of the chapter turns to look at the methods employed within the research.

5.3   The Case Study Approach

The case study approach is one of the best ways to deal with a full variety of events and evidence such as documents, artefacts, interviews and observations, all of which were undertaken as part of the proposed research methodology (Hakim 1987). The case study approach allows the investigation of the contextual conditions of a particular site of study (Hakim, 1987; Yin, 2003a; Yin, 2003b), and I believe that the contextual conditions of how these organisations operate are highly pertinent to the phenomena of study – female under representation in the decision-making processes within housing associations within Wales.

Case study research may adopt a single-case or multiple-case study design. Single case studies allow researchers to investigate phenomena in-depth and to provide rich description and understanding, whilst multiple case studies allow for cross analysis and comparison and for the investigator to observe particular social phenomena in diverse settings (Yin, 2003b).

The case study approach does have a number of disadvantages such as implementation and usage in the field, and there can be practical difficulties associated with attempting to undertake the case studies as a rigorous and effective method of research. Data collection for case study research can be time consuming and often amounts in the collection in the large quantity of data (Brownhill and Darke, 1998; Yin, 2003b). Added to this the reporting of this research data may be difficult as the validity of the research may be called into question. The availability of case study sites may also be restricted as organisations may be unwilling to participate in case study research.

A case study is "an enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident" (Hakim, 1987). The case study approach can be used as a positivist or interpretivist approach within social science. This research took an interpretivist approach, which is based on an ontology in which reality is subjective, a social product constructed and interpreted by humans as social actors according to their beliefs and value systems.

5.3.1   Case Study Organisations

The organisations forming the two case studies reported in this research are;

- A Community Housing Mutual organisation
- A small traditional housing association

Due to the time and travel constraints of the researcher, both case studies were located within South East Wales. These organisations were selected for their;

- size
- availability
- accessibility
- different characteristics in terms of board of management make-up
- historical development of the organisation
- gender of the Chief Executive, and, approach to recruitment

Table 5.3 Case Study Demographics (The Author, 2014)

	Case Study 1	Case Study 2
Type of housing association	Community housing mutual	Traditional industrial and provident society
History of development	LSVT	Traditional community
Location	1 local authority area, south east wales	1 local authority area, south east wales
Size of stock	4,000	1,500
Rural or urban	Rural	Urban
Board membership	12	14
Constituent parts of board membership	4 Independent, 4 local authority, 4 tenants	10 Independent and 4 tenants
Gender balance on board of management (female; male)	25:75	36:64
Gender of Chief Executive	Male	female
Gender balance on management team	1 female; 2 male	2 female, 1 male
Gender of CEO	Male	Female

These case study organisations could be described as an *"ideal site".*

> *"Where (1) entry is possible; (2) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, programs, interactions and structures of interest are present; (3) the researcher is likely to be able to build a trusting relations with the participants of the study; and (4) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured"*

> (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:28)

5.3.2 Gaining Access

Gaining access to participants may be a complex issue – especially where organisations are closed and anxious of external people – and that access can be described as a 2 stage process (Cassell, 1988; Hornsby-Smith, 1993). There is a distinction between *"getting in (achieving physical access to the group) and getting on (achieving social access)"*. In situations of open access, it is generally easier for an investigator to *"get in"* and reach potential respondents. Yet some organisations, although they protest to be formally *"open"*, may still be decidedly closed and react defensively, through erecting barriers against what they perceive as an external threat from hostile intruders.

Cassell (1988) notes that it is not only elite organisations, those with social power who are able to maintain situations of closed access to outsiders whilst those non elites with little or limited power are unable to prevent open access. Although, she notes that groups such as Black and Minority Ethnic groups and homeless individuals living on the street have little social power, but all of them in practice would be able to resist social access. Therefore we can note that *"in practice, therefore that the distinction between closed and open access, is useful for analytical purposes, is often blurred and may change during the course of research"*.

Both case study organisations were easy to access, due to the prior knowledge and contact that I had with these organisations through my professional work. Primary contact with the organisations was through email and telephone contact with both Chief Executives of the organisations, outlining the basis of the research and their interest to me as an ideal site of investigation for the research. Meetings were held initially with the Chief Executives and the Chairs of the boards of management, not only to outline the research, but also to create a sense of trust between me and the researched. Approval of the Chief Executives and Chair was sought, prior to agreement of the full boards of management. All participants were notified that information gathered from interviews and the observations of board meetings would be kept confidential to those involved in the research.

In order to have a background understanding of the issues discussed at the board meetings, and so as to ensure that the observations purely concentrated on the interactions of the board meetings, papers for discussion at the meetings and agendas were obtained before board meetings.

Secondary data, including reports, minutes of meetings and policy documents were obtained directly from the case study organisation. Although many of these documents were publically available, on websites and third party organisations, it was felt that gaining the information and documents directly from the case study organisations themselves added to the study. This was particularly the case for the minutes of board meetings, which, although were available in most instances in a sanitised version, may not accurately relate to the discussions which took place, or go into any great detail about how different individuals or groups within the meeting contributed to the discussion and ultimately the decision making process.

5.3.3   Reporting the Findings

One of the main issues which was significant consideration as part of the final thesis reporting was to decide whether the case studies are named or unidentified – anonymity of a case study can either relate to the entire case study, or the individual person within the case study (Yin, 2003b). The most desirable option is to disclose both the case study location and the individuals – as this will enable the reader to recall any previous information that they may have learned from the same organisation, and secondly, the research can be reviewed more readily by other researchers and can be revisited in the future for further sites of investigation. However, there are some occasions which will require that anonymity is necessary.

Many of the situations where anonymity should be applied include where the research has been conducted on a site which is considered controversial, or that the subsequent actions of an individual may be affected. In this research it was decided in discussion with the participants in the research that not only will the individuals included within the case studies be anonymised, but also the sites of investigation will also be anonymous. This decision has been taken because it was a requirement from those involved wanted for their inclusion in the research.

There are a number of drawbacks to the inclusion of anonymous case studies in the research – these include the fact that some important background information may be eliminated about the case, but also the mechanics of composing the information may be more problematic. A further way of ensuring the anonymity of the organisations and individuals under investigation is through the way that the final thesis is written. This strategy means that there is no inclusion of information relating only to one of the case study organisations, and only including cross case analysis within the data. This is a very similar strategy to the analysis of quantative survey data - where there is no inclusion of individual responses, and only aggregative data is included as evidence.

5.4   The Research Method

This section of the chapter identifies the selection of research methods used within the research process.

5.4.1   Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

The majority of research into issues connected with housing, tenant participation and the operation of housing organisations has used small scale case study approaches (see Craddock, 1975; Cairncross et al, 1989; Somerville, 1998; Kintrea, 1996; Tunstall, 2001; McKee, 2008; Gruis et al 2008; Bradley, 2008; Lawson and Kearns, 2010).

These research models examine the impacts of issues (in this case organisational culture, power and board membership) in a relatively small number of cases, in order to understand processes, influences and gain a better understanding of details – on the other hand, larger survey based quantative data collection methods, are used to produce generalisations concerning whole populations, which would lead to theoretical generalisations.

This research, with the exception of the initial quantative data analysis, to enumerate the gender split on boards of housing associations, was conducted in a qualitative manner. Qualitative research was the most appropriate choice of method selection in this context, as the research sought to identify the processes for identification of board member; the influence of the organisational culture on the appointment process for board members; the organisational culture influence on the dynamics of board interactions; the power dynamics between the executives; constituent parts of the boards and gendered power dynamics at the board level.

> *"Quality refers to the what, how, when and where of a thing – its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definition, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things. In contract, quantative research refers to counts and measures of things"*
>
> (Berg, 1995: 3)

Feminist researchers have often proposed the use of qualitative research methods over the use of quantative methods (Oakley 1981). Feminist researchers contend that the use of qualitative research methods better reflects the nature of human (and therefore female) interactions and experiences. It is argued that quantative methods cannot convey a deep understanding for the feeling of those who are being researched, and that gender differences are ignored through these methods.

Certainly there are a number of differences between these two methodological approaches, however discussions around the relative values of these approaches is dependent on the type of research which is to be conducted. It has been argued by Jayaratne (1983) that quantitative research methods can be useful for feminist investigation

> *"The appropriate use of both quantitative methods and qualitative methods in the social sciences can help the feminist community in achieving its goals more effectively that the use of either qualitative or quantative methods alone"*

(Jayaratne, 1983: 69)

In the study, both methods are used to complement each other. Whilst it can be argued that distinctive feminist methodologies have emerged, distinctive feminist methods have not emerged, although many qualitative methods have been commandeered by feminist researchers. In order to investigate the highly complex relationships and the interaction of those in the decision-making process within housing associations, i.e. tenants, officers and board members, a qualitative approach to this research is required – with an enquiry into the viewpoints of these individuals who take part in these processes. Indeed it is crucial to see these processes *"through the eyes of those most affected by them"* (Silverman, 1993) and form and understanding of the viewpoints of women board members to establish what the experience is like for them.

5.4.2   Method Selection

This section of the chapter identifies the research methods employed within the research and their contributions to the research. The research consists of both participatory and non-participatory approaches within a nested case study research design. Each technique of collecting information has its weaknesses, and no research technique exists in behavioural sciences that can be described as *"ideal"* (Sommer and Sommer, 1991).

Commentators within the social science field have stated that artificiality is the shortcoming of experimentation, observation is limited by unreliability and interviews suffer from interview bias. Therefore the aim of the researcher should not be the adoption of the *"single best method approach"* but instead use a multi-method approach, since for most research purposes; several procedures will be more useful than having one. This is because although each method has its shortcomings, they are unlikely to be the same ones. In the study of highly complex issues, such as gender imbalance in tenant participation, the use of multiple methods is critical *"to allow for a check on the validity of individual methods"* (Sommer and Sommer, 1991).

Triangulation of the data in this instance has be achieved through comparing observed, spoken and written forms of data – i.e. by observing the decision making forums and processes – housing association board meetings, interviews with key participants at the meetings, and comparing them to the discourse analysis of the minutes of meetings, official documentation of the organisation, interviews with key informants and a comparison to the literature review and secondary data analysis.

Non-Participatory Approaches included:

- Literature review
- Review of secondary data
- Key informant interviews
- Discourse analysis of housing association documentation, board meeting minutes and newsletters.

Participatory approaches included:

- Direct observation of board meetings, and,

- Exploratory interviews with participants.

Figure 5.1 Methodological Triangulation (The Author, 2014)
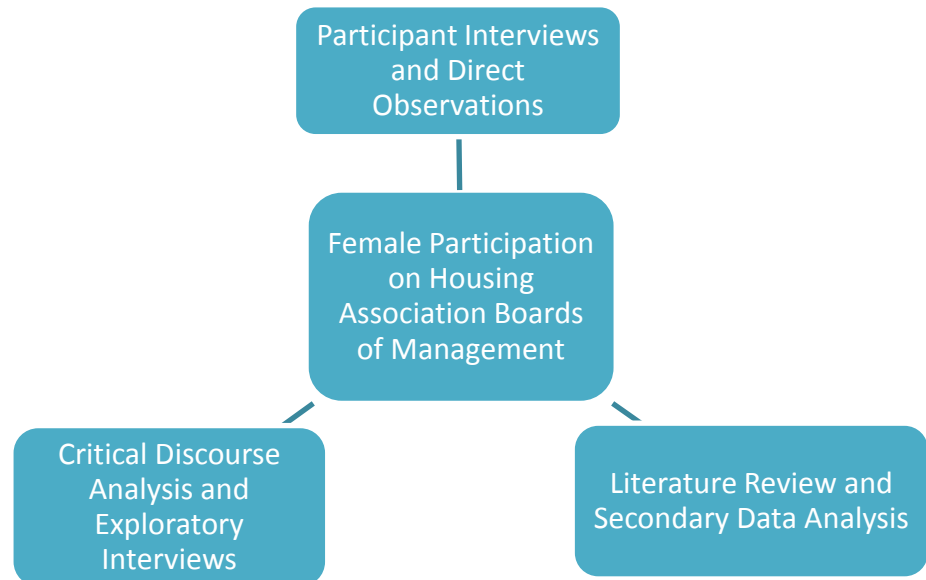
Table 5.4 Research Aims and Method Selection (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims	Method Selection
To enumerate the level of female participation on boards of management in Wales	Secondary data analysis of websites corporate documentation
Identify the organisational typology and culture of the case study organisations and how this facilitates female participation on boards of management	Key informant interviews Exploratory interviews with participants Discourse analysis of corporate documentation
Identify the governance structures and prevailing board culture of the case study organisations and how they influence female participation	Key informant interviews Exploratory interviews with participants Discourse analysis of corporate documentation
Uncover the board composition and diversity and how recruitment strategies influence female participation and barriers to involvement	Key informant interviews Exploratory interviews with participants Discourse analysis of corporate documentation Direct observation
Explore the motivations of board members' participation	Key informant interviews Exploratory interviews with participants Discourse analysis of corporate documentation Direct observation
Uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation	Key informant interviews Exploratory interviews with participants Direct observation

5.4.2.1 Literature Review

The literature review not only sought to identify the relevant information, but also to initially frame and reframe the research aims and questions within this thesis. This literature review summarised the available literature on the following areas: relationships between women and the home; the meaning of the home; women's access to housing; housing policy developments in the preceding 50 years; the impact of housing policy developments on women as professionals and policy influencers. The literature review also focused on the development of the theoretical framework for the research in terms of governance, organisational typology and culture, participation and empowerment and power.

5.4.2.2 Review of Secondary data

Initial secondary research was undertaken to establish a baseline of information on the gender balance of housing association board members in Wales. This secondary research comprised of the assessment of Housing Association Annual Reports, Corporate Plans and Websites to understand the gender make up of housing association boards in Wales.

Information on the housing associations selected for inclusion in this secondary research, was gained from a list of members of Community Housing Cymru. Community Housing Cymru is a registered charity and represents over 70 not-for-profit housing associations and community mutuals in Wales. The membership of this organisation provides over 127,000 homes and housing services throughout Wales (Community Housing Cymru, 2013). All of the organisations in the initial research are registered with the Welsh Government.

Analysis of the housing associations' annual reports, corporate plans and websites also provided information for 30% of the organisations on the make-up of the senior management teams. It is important to assess the structure of the senior management teams within these organisations as they set the culture and the strategic direction of the organisation.

5.4.2.3   Key Informant Interviews

Interviews were undertaken with representatives from the national tenant participation/ and housing association representative organisations such as the Welsh Tenants' Federation and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru and Community Housing Cymru and interviews with representatives from the Welsh Government (regulators and policy deciders) and Chwarae Teg (third sector organisation supporting women to enter the workplace, develop their skills and build rewarding careers).

The interviews were semi structured. Interview schedules, contained a combination of open and closed questions, and collected qualitative or attitudinal information (see appendix 1). The interviews contained questions relating to the development of tenant participation policy, general questions on the operation of housing association boards, gender balance on boards, recruitment to housing association boards and wider gender equality issues with housing. Substantial attention was paid to the nature and development housing associations' tenant participation policies, recruitment to the board and development of board member skills and abilities in order to participate effectively at the board level.

Questions were similar for the main types of interview respondent, to enable the triangulation of factual information, and comparison of attitudes. The first draft of the questionnaire was piloted with the management committee of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, but the principle adjustment of the questions was a reduction in the number of questions. Interviewees were approached by letter or telephone. All respondents were guaranteed personal anonymity.

5.4.2.4 Discourse Analysis

For each case study organisation, additional information was gathered in order to undertake a discourse analysis of policy and informational documentation. Information collected for each organisation included:

- Board of management reports and minutes of meetings
- Reports produced on the organisation prepared by the organisation or external consultants
- The organisation's own newsletters and annual reports.

Through the discourse analysis of policy documents we can understand how the culture of the organisation is created and how it is maintained by the housing organisation, as, discourse analysis provides the ideal mechanism to illuminate the cultural hegemony of housing organisation (Fischer and Forrester, 1990). Fairclough (1995) states that the use of critical discourse analysis provides researchers with details of voices and texts within local and institutional practices whilst connecting them to the broader understanding of the exercise of power within social formations (Fairclough, 1995).

The overall aim of the discourse analysis is to explain what is being done in the discourse, and how this is being accomplished – i.e. how the discourse is structured and organised to perform the various functions and achieve the various effects and consequences (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) takes a particular interest in the relationship between language and power.

"CDA sees discourse – language, speech and writing – as a form of social practice….discourse is socially constructive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constructive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the status quo and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may also have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women, men and ethnic/ cultural majorities and minorities through ways in which they represent things and position people."

(Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258)

Within the context of CDA, language is not just powerful on its own – the power of that language is determined by the use that those people with power make it. This explains why the majority of CDA studies come from the perspective of those who suffer and critically analyses the language use of those in power; those who are responsible for the existence of those inequalities and those who have the opportunity to improve conditions for the people who are unequal (Fairclough 1989; Fairclough 1992a; Fairclough 1995; Fairclough 2001).

Texts are not often the product of one author. Within the production of texts, discursive differences are negotiated, they are governed by differences in power, which are in part encoded in and determined by the discourse and the genre. Therefore one could argue that texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; O'Halloran 2004; Van Dijk 1997; Van Leeuwen 2008).

Power is about the relations of difference and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures. The constant unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is entwined within social power in a number of ways. Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge that power in both the long and short term. Language provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in power in hierarchical social structures. CDA takes an interest in ways in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations (Titscher, et al. 2000).

Similarly, an essential part of a critical approach to knowledge is also a study of the relations between knowledge and social groups and institutions: which groups or institutions have preferential access to various kinds of knowledge; which groups set the criteria for the very definition and legitimisation of knowledge or precisely the limitation of knowledge in society. This more sociological approach is often associated with the work of Bourdieu or Foucault (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Foucault 1990).

Fairclough's model of CDA consists of three interrelated processes of analysis, which are tied to three interrelated dimensions of discourse (Titscher, et al. 2000).

- The object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts)
- The processes by which the object is produced and received (writing/ speaking/ designing and reading/ listening/ viewing) by human subjects
- The socio-historical conditions that govern these processes

There are however, a number of limitations to discourse analysis as a method for fully understanding the culture of housing organisations. Many of the sites for discourse analysis are texts, and this means that other aspects of communication, such as conversation and non-verbal communications cannot be utilised and these may be of legitimate value to the research project. Marston (2002) states that the non-verbal communication aspects may include;

"…the way someone carries themselves, the softness of their voice and their dress sense are all non-verbal communication factors of interpersonal communication that escape the attention of a textually orientated discourse analysis"

(Marston, 2002: 56)

Many commentators have stated that the use of CDA is an ideological interpretation of text and therefore cannot be seen as an analysis. There is also a debate between protagonists around the use of the word *"discourse"*. Widdowson (1995) for examples states that *"discourse is something that everyone is talking about but without knowing with any certainty just what it is: in vogue and vague".* In addition, he goes on to contend that there is also a lack of demarcation between text and discourse (Titscher, et al. 2000; Widdowson 1995). Commentators have also commented that the process of CDA is a contradiction in terms because CDA is in a dual sense, a biased interpretation: as in the first place it is prejudiced on the basis of some ideological commitment, and then it selects for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation of the researcher. Analysis is not possible because of prior judgements, which have been made by the researcher (Widdowson 1995).

The aim of a feminist discourse analysis is to show up the complex, subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways in which taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively reproduced, sustained, negotiated and challenged in different contexts and communities (Lazar, 2010). The central concern of feminist discourse analysis, is with looking at discourses that sustain a patriarchal social order – by using a feminist perspective, this reminds us that many social practices are far from neutral, and are in fact gendered. Gender not only functions as an interpretive category, that enables participants in a community to make sense of and structure their social practices, but also, gender is a social relation that enters into and constitutes all other social relations and activities.

As with all issues of discussion on gender, account needs to be taken of the *"differences"* between women and their access to power, and social relations – gender interacts with other systems of power based on ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, culture and geography. In relation to this study a female tenant board member may not have the same access to language, culture and education as a female professional board member on the same board of management.

Data collection in a feminist discourse analysis includes the contextualised instances of spoken and written language, along with other forms of semosis, such as visual images, layout, gestures and actions in both texts and talk. Whilst analysis includes overtly expressed means of communication, it is also attentive to nuanced, implicit meanings to get at the subtle and complex renderings of ideological assumptions and power relations within a site of investigation.

Of concern to this research is the issue of reflexivity of the institutional setting – in terms of the advancement and of feminist and non-feminist goals. For example a reflexive approach in terms of feminist goals (pertinent to this study) on the inclusivity of participation in the public sphere through advancement of women through specialised pro-active programmes, targeted recruitment and training, selection of women based on upping quotas of membership of board of management. The use of reflexivity in relation to non-feminist goals within the sites of investigation may also link to a widening of opportunities for participation and engagement, and obliging to be progressive or being observed as an enlightened organisation, if only superficially.

The second concern is about the reflexivity of the researcher – and in terms of using a feminist discourse analysis approach; the ultimate goal is for a social transformation, based on a social justice that opens up unrestrictive possibilities for both women and men, and through a feminist discourse analysis of a site of enquiry is a step in this direction (Lazars, 2010).

Feminist discourse analysis offers a political perspective on gender, which is concerned with the interrelationships of gender, power and ideology in discourse, and of importance to this research focuses equally on texts as well as conversation (Lazar, 2005).Therefore a feminist approach to discourse analysis, which has a focus on social justice, transformation of gender is pertinent to this research.

5.4.2.5 Direct Observations

Because of the norms against the dissemination of information on board deliberations and legal constraints against dissemination of information about corporate actions affecting financial and corporate performance of a company, non-board members are seldom party to information about what happens in a boardroom. Furthermore it is difficult to gather data on group processes that occur inside board meetings because neither boardrooms nor board members are easily accessible to social researchers. Previous board studies highlighted in this research (see Chapter 4 discussion on corporate governance issues) have used retrospective interview data (Demb and Neubauer, 1992; Pettigrew and McNulty, 1999), a combination of retrospective interview data and questionnaire data (Lorsch & McIver, 1989) and archival data (Goodstein, Gautam & Boeker, 1994; Main, O'Reilly and Wade, 1995; Westphal & Zajac, 1997; Zajac and Westphal, 1996). However, Pettigrew (1992) has argued that director's retrospective accounts and archival data used to make inferences about the exercise of power inside the boardroom are too far removed from actual activity. Instead, he called for longitudinal studies to collect behavioural evidence of boardroom processes.

In order to meet the call of Pettigrew (1992), this research developed an observational method to examine what actually happened in the boardroom – how board members deliberated, how decisions were made and also to map the power relations between board member constituent parts, power relations between different genders of board members and also the type and level of contributions in relation to content of discussions of board members in the meetings.

The development of the direct observation method was unique to this research and comprised a number of stages in order to come to an *"ideal"* way of recording the behaviours, interactions and content of discussions of the boards of management within the case study organisations.

Prior to undertaking direct observation in the case study organisations, a series of experimental observations were undertaken at a Management Committee of a voluntary organisation in the housing sector that the researcher had access to in order to *"practice"* and develop the detailed requirements of observational recording. As a result of these trials, the researcher was able to amend the observation recording chart, and develop content and behavioural coding systems for the issues to be analysed as part of the research questions. The table below (5.5 - Observational and Coding Development) highlights the developmental stage of the coding and observational recording for this research study. Appendix 7 of this thesis outlines the final observational recording sheet used as part of the primary research.

Table 5.5 Observational and Coding Development (The Author, 2014)

Stages	Developments/ Actions undertaken
1	Participant observation of Management Committee Board meeting - Ideas in development of seating arrangements of board members and constituent parts - Ideas in development of content analysis - Ideas in development of behavioural analysis
2	- Development of seating arrangement recording sheet - Development of content analysis sheet - Development of behavioural analysis sheet
3	Non- Participant observation of Management Committee Board Meeting - Testing of recording of seating arrangements - Testing of content analysis scheme - Testing of behavioural analysis scheme
4	Review and refinement of - seating arrangement recording sheet - content analysis sheet - behavioural analysis sheet
5	Non- Participant observation of Management Committee Board Meeting - Testing of refined recording of seating arrangements - Testing of refined content analysis scheme - Testing of refined behavioural analysis scheme
6	Review and refinement of - seating arrangement recording sheet - content analysis sheet and combined with behavioural analysis
7	Non- Participant observation of Management Committee Board Meeting - Testing of refined recording of seating arrangements - Testing of refined combined content analysis & behavioural analysis scheme
8	Review and final refinement of - seating arrangement recording sheet for final use - content analysis sheet and combined with behavioural analysis for final use

As outlined above, care and attention was taken to ensure that the content analysis scheme reflected the topic under study, and was trialled and revised on a number of occasions. The central premise of any coding scheme is to act as a guide for the observer to record conversations which can then be evaluated (Larsson, 1993).

In the construction of the content analysis scheme, the research sought to find a trade-off between having a small number of coding categories which was manageable to record in the observations, whilst ensuring that it contained enough information to elicit quality data to inform the research findings (see Larsson, 1993, for a more detailed discussion of such trade-offs).

Using and consulting existing coding schemes (Bales and Cohen, 1979) and also referring to the earlier literature review on corporate boards (see Hammer et al, 1991; Lorsch & McIver, 1989, Pettigrew 1992) the coding used in the final recording sheets, included categories that captured interactions, group conflict and power dynamics. In addition, the development stage of the research also elicited information around types of behaviours of a Management Committee which was similar to those which would be under study in the final research case study organisations – this was elicited from the researchers' own knowledge of how Boards of Management operate. The content analysis scheme in its final form became a two-dimensional scheme – based on topics under discussion and verbal contributions. Information on the content analysis scheme for topics and verbal behaviours is included in Appendix 8 and 9 of this thesis. The resultant data set collected during the research consisted of counts of verbal behaviours within the coding table.

Recording of the coding elements was undertaken throughout the observations of the board meetings. Other recording methods were not used within the observational element of the research study; this was due to the fact that both case study organisations did not allow video or audio recordings to be allowed within the board meetings. In not being able to record the actual board meetings and a reliance on coding and field notes for interpretation after the meeting, this has meant that the validity of the research could be brought into question.

However, the researcher also took field notes at the board meetings which contained other non-verbal communications and specific quotes which were notable for their uniqueness to the meeting, or that were noteworthy because of the issue being discussed, and these were compared to the minutes of the meeting to ensure that some form of validity checking had been undertaken, and to ensure that the researcher had not missed any aspects of the board's deliberations. These field notes, in addition, gave a depth to the research process, as they allowed for the recording of whether a board member had succeeded or failed in their convincing of the board in their viewpoint. In addition, as a result of the researchers' understanding of the board processes, topics under discussion, further depth and richness was added to the process, rather than having a researcher who was unfamiliar with the environment.

Direct observations of Board Meetings were undertaken on 16 occasions (6 occasions in Case Study 1 and 10 occasions in Case Study 2) in the case study organisations over a period of one year, and for the duration of the study, the same method of collecting, organising and storing of field notes was used, this leads to a reliability of the data set collected as part of the research. Whilst this only provides a small snapshot of the case study organisations in relation to the topic of study, a future development of this research could contribute to an understanding of how the dynamics of strategic decision making changes over a longer period of time in relation to external pressures on the organisations through changes to government policy, governance arrangements and also change in terms of different board members joining and leaving the boards of management of these organisations. In addition, a more longitudinal study of these organisations could also elicit more information and understanding in terms of the requirement for the increase in diversity of boards of housing associations. In addition, a future topic of research using this observational methodology framework could lead to a better understanding of the notion of whether and how group think and group behaviour grows and is accepted within boards of management.

The use of a direct observation method within the research brought about a number of advantages to the research that would not have been available using another method selection for this topic of enquiry: the reality of the decision making processes within housing association board meetings; the differential power structures which exist between male and female board members and the different constituent parts of the board of management (tenants, councillors and independent members). In addition to observing the reality of the events in real time, the technique of direct observation brought about insight into the context of the strategic decision-making processes. Through the collection of observational data from inside two housing association boardrooms, rather than a reliance on retrospective interview, questionnaire, and archival data as has been relied on for other studies into corporate governance (see Demb and Neubauer, 1992; Pettigrew and McNulty, 1999; Lorsch & McIver, 1989; Goodstein, Gautam & Boeker, 1994; Main, O'Reilly and Wade, 1995; Westphal & Zajac, 1997; Zajac and Westphal, 1996), this gave the research a *"live"*, deep and textured understanding of strategic decision making processes within housing association boards. A future development of the research could include archival data on board discussions, to bring a deeper contextual understanding of the case study organisations. The research did however, include interview data (see discussions later in this chapter) to ensure that there was no one single approach to understanding and generating data on the gender issues in relation to the strategic decision making and power dynamics at play within housing association boards of management.

Although there are a number of advantages, many commentators also point out the number of disadvantages and weaknesses to the use of direct observation within the social research process. These perceived disadvantages and weaknesses of the observational method include: time consuming nature of observation, cost, selectivity, reflexivity, and possible bias of the observer.

Observation techniques are notoriously time consuming and costly in their use. Time is not only spent in negotiating access to the site of observation, but the meetings one wishes to investigate may also not take place on a regular and timely basis for the research timescale. In addition there are issues of attending the meeting also the time that is needed to record and translate the field notes that are taken during the observation process. However it is the contention of the researcher that this research could not have elicited the information on the power processes, strategic decision making processes and differential gendered contributions in another manner.

Commentators have also criticised the observation methodology as being selective i.e. the researcher only observes those meetings and sites of investigation which are of direct interest to the site of study, and therefore may miss opportunities for further sites of investigation which may be of more relevance to the investigation. However, given the tight focus of the research topic, developed research questions it is the contention of the researcher that this criticism is not valid in this case.

There is a perceived lack of reflexivity in direct observation methodologies, and the issues surround the fact that the events, may proceed differently because the observation is taking place. However it is contended that through undertaking a number of observations of various meetings, then the effect of reflexivity was lessened in this research as those taking part in the meeting become accustomed to the presence of the researcher. The researcher was positioned away from the meeting table, in order that it would not interfere in the actual process of the board meetings which were being observed. A number of board members did comment in breaks about the notes being recorded, and that this was *"unintelligible"* because of the coding system. However, the interest in the researcher being present in the boardroom faded quickly as the board members became involved in the normal board deliberations and discussions, requiring the boards complete attention.

The role of the researcher in relation to the direct observation was as Gold (1958) would termed as the *"The complete observer - the researcher does not take part in the social setting at all"* (Gold, 1958: 215).

Although the issue of bias in interpretation are mainly attributed to the use of participant observation techniques, bias may also still be a factor in the use of direct observation techniques. This is due to the fact that the researcher is closely connected to both the site of investigation and topic of investigation and therefore may interpret actions, and speech differently to those who have no direct relationship either to the site or topic of investigation. However, given the researcher's epistemological positioning (detailed earlier in this chapter) the researcher was known to the research participants, and was familiar with the issues, behaviours and dynamics of the setting of the sites under investigation, it could be contended that the research has a greater depth in its contribution to the field of study as the researcher did not have to get to know, and understand the intricacies and nuances of the sector, or that in fact the researcher had far more of a critical gaze over the issues being observed in relation to the economic and managerial assumptions that lay beneath the actions of the board members.

The research process identified above contributes to the development of the observational methodology as a tool for understanding strategic decision making, not only in the housing association sector, the third and voluntary sectors, but also relates to wider governance of commercial organisations. In addition to understanding how strategic decisions are made, the development of this methodology as a result of this research, shows that the use of observational qualitative methodology can also be used as a tool to uncovering the power dynamics at play between the board and executive and constituent parts of boards, and issues around (en-)gendered decision making processes.

As boards of management are hard to access the development of the non-participant observation methodology, and the development of the behavioural and interactional coding system within this thesis, could be (and should be) used by other researchers in the field to further evidence and understand the processes and the issues of strategic decision making and power dynamics, particularly in relation to corporate governance, within housing associations, third & Voluntary sector organisations, and commercial organisations.

5.4.2.6 Exploratory interviews with participants

In each of the sample case study organisations, I interviewed the following key respondents;

- all board members, including chairs and vice-chairs
- the Chief executive of the organisation, and,
- Senior management team members.

Thirty six key exploratory interviews were undertaken across both case study organisations (18 in both case study organisations). Interviews took place over a six month time period of the research.

The interviews were semi-structured. Interview schedules, contained a combination of open and closed questions, and collected qualitative or attitudinal information (see appendix 2). The interviews contained questions relating to the development of tenant participation policy; general questions on the operation of housing association boards; gender balance on boards, recruitment to housing association boards and wider gender equality issues with housing. Substantial attention was paid to the nature and development housing associations' tenant participation policies, recruitment to the board and development of board member skills and abilities in order to participate effectively at the board level. Interviewees were approached by letter or telephone. All respondents were assured personal anonymity and it was explained that the case study organisations would not be named.

In both of the case study organisations, all main interviewees were secured.

The interviews lasted between one and one and half hours. Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcriptions were produced as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the interviews in order that details were not forgotten. As the interviews were recorded using digital audio recording equipment, this allowed for the researcher to take field notes to describe circumstances and any body language, which was expressed when answering questions. Observational notes were also taken, and kept separately from the comments and ideas (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), by the convention of squared brackets in interview notes, and the use of separate notes for the development of ideas. Information from interviewees and direct quotations from interviewees are referred to in the text.

Using digital audio equipment to record the interviews proved to be invaluable in the final analysis, particularly when clarifying and emphasising specific points. In addition, the process of recording the interviews negated the need to take copious notes, and ensured that nothing was forgotten, will highlight the significance of voice intonation, pauses, stresses and irony which otherwise may not be recorded.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) describe qualitative in-depth interviews as *"much more like conversations than formal events with pre-determined response categories"* (1995:80). They explain that the investigator: *"explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses"* (1995:81). This is fundamental to the qualitative research agenda, in that the *"participant's perspective on the phenomena of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it"* (1995: 88).

The semi-structured interview has limitations and flaws (Marshall and Rossman 1995). They contend that interviews involve personal interactions and that the co-operation of the individual is critical to the interview being successful for the interviewer gaining to gain most from the process. However, they also point out that the respondents' reluctance to share all that the interviewer hopes to explore may be a problem to be overcome.

> *"The interviewer may not ask the questions that evoke long narratives from participants either because of a lack of experience or familiarity with local language or elements of the conversation may not have good reason to be truthful"*
>
> (Marshall and Rossman, 1995: 98)

Another weakness of the interviewing methodology is the large amount of data gathered as a result of the interview, and that very often, interviews are time consuming to undertake and to finally analyse. There are also a number of concerns raised about the quality of the data that is received – especially when the interview is the only method of gathering data, which is available for use.

> *"When interviews are used as the sole way of gathering data the researcher should have demonstrated through the conceptual framework that the purpose of the study is to uncover and describe what participants' perspective on events; that is, the subjective view is what matters. Studies making more objective assumptions would triangulate interview data with data gathered through other methods."*
>
> (Marshall and Rossman 1995: 100)

5.4.2.7 Analysis

Because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews, and the small number of cases studies within this research (Richards & Richards, 1994; Bryman & Burgess,1994), it was decided against using a qualitative data package such as NVivo 9. Analysis of the interviews, observations and texts were structured around the research aims. Analysis of information from the literature review and the enumeration of the Boards of Management were relatively straightforward. The greatest challenge was the analysis of the large amount of qualitative and quantative data amassed from the case study organisations.

In most cases distinctions and comparisons were drawn between information from the main types of respondents, and patterning of information from the information drawn from corporate documentation used in the discourse analysis.

5.5   Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are present in any kind of research undertaken, be they for organisations, industries or academic purposes. The research process can cause and create tension between the aims of the research, which could be used to generate policy and procedural guidance, which is for the general good of the population, whilst maintaining the rights of the participants, and maintaining their privacy. The notion of ethics pertains then to doing *"good"* and avoiding *"harm"*. This notion of *"harm"* can only be prevented or reduced through the appropriate use and application of ethical principles.

The nature of ethical problems in qualitative research studies is subtle and different compared to problems in quantative research. For example, potential ethical conflicts exist in regard to how a researcher gains access to a community group and in the effects that the researcher may have on the participants.

Punch (1994) has claimed that one hardly ever hears of ethical failures in qualitative research. However, Bachelor and Briggs (1994) have claimed that the failure of researchers to address ethical issues, has resulted in those researchers being ill prepared to cope with the unpredictable nature of qualitative research (Batchelor and Briggs, 1994; Punch, 1994).

Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining and describing people and their natural environments. Embedded in qualitative research are the concepts of relationships and power between researchers and their participants. The desire to participate in a research study depends on the participant's willingness to share their experience.

Qualitative studies are frequently conducted in settings involving the participation of people in their everyday environments. Therefore any research that includes people requires an awareness of the ethical issues that may be derived from such intentions.

Although the Ethical Research Committee at Cardiff University scrutinised the research proposal before the research was undertaken, ultimately it was for the researcher who was responsible for protecting the participants in the study. Field and Morse (1992), state however, that once access to the field has been granted, and the first steps of data collection have been taken, researchers undertaking qualitative research may experience ethical dilemmas that may not have been anticipated in the research plan (Field and Morse, 1992). Before the research commenced with both case study organisations, meetings were undertaken with the Chief Executive and Chair of each organisation to gain their approval for the research to take place within their organisations. Consent was also obtained from all participants in the research prior to the semi-structured interviews taking place (copy of a participant consent form is included at Appendix 6 of the thesis).

Ramos (1989) has identified that there are three types of problems that may affect qualitative studies. These include:

- The researcher / participant relationship
- The researcher's subjective interpretations of data
- The design of the research itself. (Ramos 1989).

However, it can be argued that the inherent qualitative research can be alleviated by the awareness and use of well-established ethical principles; autonomy, beneficence and justice. Autonomy within a qualitative social research study can be viewed as informed consent as the participant, which means making a reasonable balance between over-informing and under informing about the research study. But, autonomy also means that participants exercise their rights as autonomous persons to voluntarily accept or refuse to participate within the study. Consent has been referred to as a negotiation of trust, and requires continuous renegotiation (Batchelor and Briggs, 1994; Field and Morse, 1992; Punch, 1994; Ramos, 1989).

The second ethical principle which is closely linked with qualitative research is beneficence – which means doing good for others and preventing harm. However, in some situations, beneficence, taken to extreme can be seen as paternalism. A paternalistic approach may indicate the denial of autonomy and freedom of choice. If researchers are maintaining the principles of beneficence, overseeing the potential consequences of revealing participants' identities is a moral obligation. Many commentators recommend the use of pseudonyms, yet, in some circumstances where the research is located within a small and insular community, this strategy may not be sufficient, as participants could be easily recognised.

Protection of participant's identities also applies to publications in which the research findings are published. In addition, participants should be told of how the research is to be published. Care should be taken to ensure that quotations, if used could reveal the identity of the participants and participants should approve the use of all data referring to them within the study.

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Despite the need for confidentiality, in some circumstances, the qualitative research may require an element of confirmability, that is, documentation of all activities included within a research study. This will provide an audit trail for other researchers to follow. This, again may create an ethical dilemmas regarding the confidentiality and anonymity – and participants should know that other researchers many review the process and the data.

The principle of justice refers to equal share and fairness within the research process. One of the crucial and distinctive features of this principle is avoiding exploitation and abuse of participants. The researchers understanding and application of the principle of justice in qualitative research studies is through the demonstration of recognising vulnerability of the participants and their contributions to study. Another way of implementing the principle of justice is through listening to the voices of the minority and disadvantaged groups as well as protecting those who are most vulnerable such as children, prisoners, the mentally ill and the elderly. Some commentators state that the practical problems of qualitative research arise when researchers try to implement the principle of justice. For example, the implementation of the principle of justice should no further burden the already burdened vulnerable groups of participants.

One issue which arose in this piece of research, was the issue of conducting the qualitative research in an area where the researcher works and is already known. This raises several issues and ethical considerations. The researcher may get better results, because of knowing the situation and having the trust of the participants, however, a known researcher may get less information as the participants may feel coerced to participate and may limit the information that they give.

According to Field and Morse (1992) conducting the research in ones work place creates a problem related to validity, reliability and meaningfulness of the data. Conducting the research in another setting may mean that the researcher has to spend more time and effort establishing rapport, and learning the new setting. But, this change may result in more objective observations.

5.6   Limitations of the Research

Many of the limitations of the research have been highlighted throughout the previous sections of this chapter; however, this section of the chapter considers the limitations of the research in more detail. Every effort, during the research has been made to ensure that there is no bias arising from the researcher and researched, and the relationship between these two individuals.

The methodology combines key informant interviews, exploratory interviews with participants, non-participant observation, and discourse analysis of corporate and national policy documentation in an in-depth case study format. The empirical research took place over a period of one year. This can bring a richness and depth to the research, but it could also bring bias due to my own position, both as female and working within a national organisation supporting the development of participation and empowerment of individuals at a policy decision making level.

My initial analysis of secondary information illuminated the level of female participation on boards of management in housing associations in Wales. This information was set aside the in-depth empirical case study research into two housing associations in Wales. The case study format including key participant interviews with all board members of the case study organisations and the executive teams of the housing associations, combined with direct observation of 16 board meetings and an analysis of corporate and national policy information painted a picture of female participation on boards of management of two housing associations in Wales which can be considered as deep.

The limitations of the data relate to selection of the two housing associations as case studies, although care and attention was taken to ensure that the housing associations represented a number of key areas including; size of the organisation, location (rural or urban), availability and accessibility to me, the different characteristics in terms of board of management make-up, historical development of the organisation, gender of the Chief Executive, and approach to board member recruitment.

A central ingredient was my own position as an insider at the outset of the research employed by a national third sector organisation to support participation and empowerment of tenants in housing organisations. This position brought with it a range of considerations in relation to my own actions in the involvement environment and a need for self-awareness at all stages of the research process. However, as a female, a feminist and working within the housing profession, I am likely to bring a distinctive perspective to my narrative, and I feel that this is a refreshing contribution to the research literature in its own right, which will complement the work undertaken by practitioners and academics coming from a different position.

Whilst the research is primarily based in furthering academic research and theoretical knowledge in relation to the housing sector, the research also contributes to the policy dimension of the practical workings of housing association governance and indirectly to regulation of these housing associations. Wenger (1987), identifies that there are differences between academic and policy making research within organisation. It is highlighted that those who are involved in policy making research, often want to solve a problem, whilst this undertaking academic research are there to understand the processes involved within the particular site of study (Wenger, 1987).

This research, in my contention will not only contribute to the understanding of the *"problem"* of women's contribution to the governance in two housing associations in Wales, but will also provide some recommendations to policy makers and organisations in order to solve the issue of underrepresentation of women on housing association boards of management.

5.7   Conclusion

This chapter, then, has addressed the issues concerning feminist methodology and discussed the methodological processes, which have been used to conduct this research. Whilst this research has been conducted from a feminist methodological perspective, it argues that one single feminist method does not exist.
The empirical data for this study was collected using a variety of methods that have been outlined above. Whilst individually all can be criticised, together they allow for a triangulation to take place, this, therefore enables that that the information collected can be verified, the validity checked and the limitations of the methodology to be addressed.

The information collected from these case studies provides the empirical data to address the main research aims of this study, which were outlined at the beginning of this chapter and also referred to in the introduction of this thesis.

Chapter 6 – Introduction to Case study Organisations

6.1   Introduction

Having discussed the research methodology and fieldwork design in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to the case study organisations to inform the empirical findings and analysis in the following two chapters. Section one of this chapter gives a history and profile[3] of both case study organisations, and discusses the prevailing management cultures of the two organisations, in relation to the theoretical framework as outlined in Chapter 4. Section two highlights some of the policy and sectorial developments which took place during the fieldwork phase of the research.

6.2   Background

This section of the research denotes the following issues in relation to the two case study organisations; history; performance information; organisational and board structures, regulatory assessments, organisational positioning and prevailing management cultures.

6.2.1   History

Case study 1 was created through a voluntary transfer of the housing stock from the local authority in 2008. The organisation owns and manages a housing stock of approximately 4,000 homes throughout a rural local authority. In the first phase of its existence the organisation was solely committed to improving their housing stock to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2012.

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[3] In the interest of protecting the anonymity of the case study organisations, and the research participants in this study, the facts and figures provided in this chapter have been aggregated and blurred.

The organisation is now entering the next phase of development which is to reduce the amount of obsolete properties they own and manage through sale and demolition, and to rebuild modern homes at affordable rents. The organisation is also committed to building several hundred new homes on new sites over the next 5 years, throughout the local authority. In parallel to this commitment, the organisation has recently established a social enterprise which will provide a whole range of property and community benefits to the organisation, within and outside of the county. Case study 1 is a Community Housing Mutual registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 with charitable status.

Case study 2 was established in the mid-1970s to purchase and refurbish inner city homes that had fallen into poor condition. Today the organisation is a successful community based Housing Association with just under 1500 homes in a major city in the south east of Wales. In addition to their role as a social landlord, the organisation has a role as a major support provider across a number of local authorities in south east Wales. The organisation is committed to equality of opportunity, and is keen to promote diversity in employment and service delivery. Case study 2 is a traditional charitable housing association registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965.

6.2.3   Performance Information

Performance data from 2012-13 is useful in building a profile of the case study organisations. Key data is included in table 6.1 (below), which reveals the scale of the activity of case study 1 and 2, as well as revenue and operating surplus levels.

Table 6.1 Case Study Key Facts And Figures 2012-2013[4] (Case Study 1, 2013; Case Study 2, 2013)

	Case study 1	Case study 2
Net Surplus	Over £3 million	Over £1.5 million
Revenue	Over £20 million	Over £9 million
Community Investment	Over £2 million invested into communities	Over £1 million invested into communities
Repairs and Maintenance	Over £7 million spent on day to day repairs and capital maintenance. WHQS met before time.	Over £1 million spent on capital maintenance. 95% of properties meet WHQS.
New Developments	Commitment to developing 130 units of accommodation by 2017	Just under 40 new homes developed
Grant Funding	Over £2 million	Just under £100 thousand.

6.2.4   Organisational Structures

At the top of the governance structures of both case study organisations were the boards of management. Both of the boards monitor performance and hold both of the organisations to account on their financial performance. Both of the boards are headed by a chair, whilst the senior executive teams within both organisations are led by the Chief Executives. In both organisations, the day to day management of operations is led by a number of directors.

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[4] Figures based on information contained within the two case study Annual Accounts 2012-2013, are averaged to preserve the anonymity of the organisations

Figure 6.1 Management Structure of Case Study 1 (The Author, 2014)
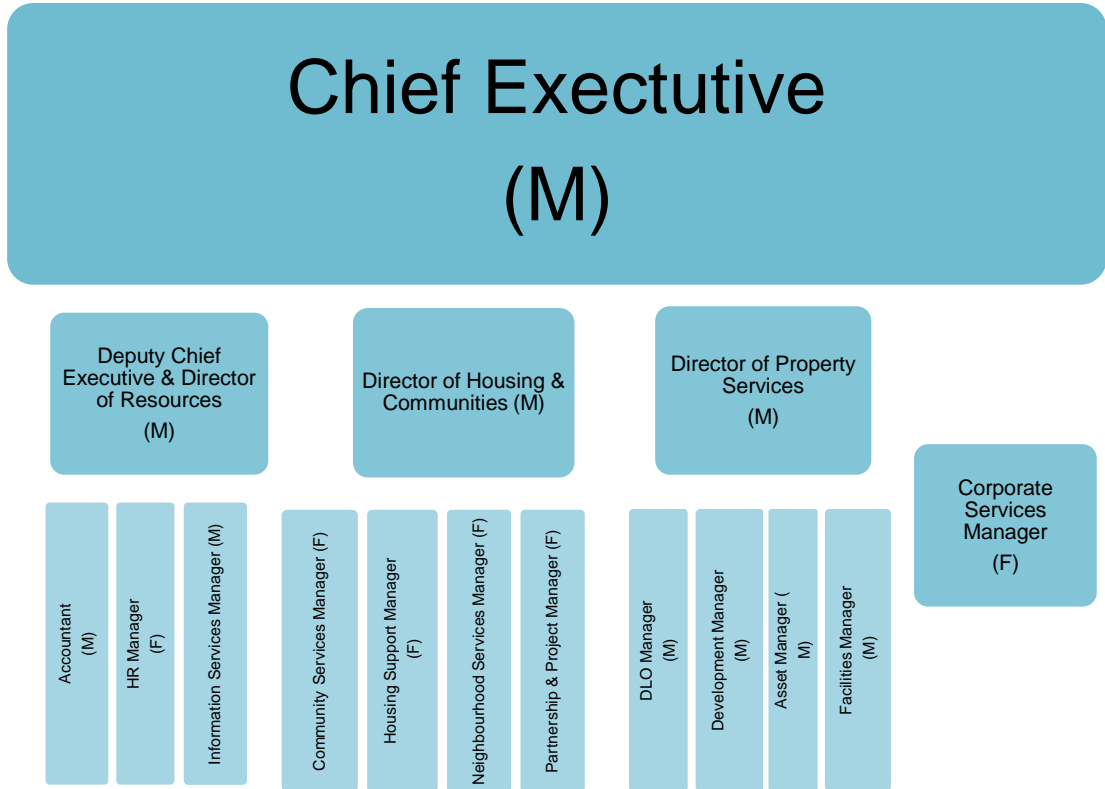
Figure 6.2 – Management Structure of Case Study 2 (The Author, 2014)
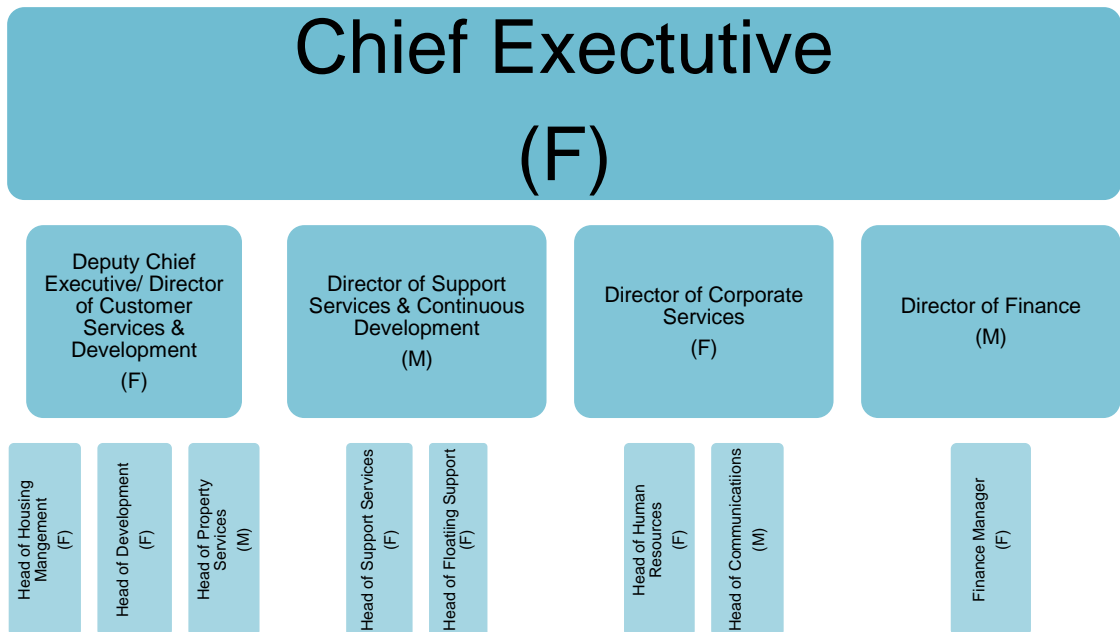
The Housing Corporation, in their research found that 70% of people working within the housing industry were women, whilst only 12% of the Chief Executive Officers and Senior Managers within the 200 largest housing associations were women (Housing Corporation 2004). By 2011, little had changed with 14% of the top 200 housing association Chief Executives were women (Inside Housing, 2011). Secondary data analysis found that in Wales of the 36 housing associations (registered as members of Community Housing Cymru) 30% of Chief Executives are female (The Author, 2014). Of the eleven newly created organisations through the LSVT process in Wales, 2 of the 11 Chief Executives are female (end of fieldwork stage). Within the two case study organisations selected for this research, there was an equal gender split of male and female Chief Executives.

McCabe (2014) in her article found that only twenty-two of the top one hundred chief executives are women when looking at pay. McCabe also found that the average basic salary was £158,111, which was lower than the average male Chief Executive pay by approximately £6,000 per annum. McCabe also revealed that the average pay bonus was lower than their male counterparts by approximately £4,000 per annum. Analysis of the difference in pay awarded for female Chief Executives may be because female Chief Executives lead smaller housing associations than their male counterparts.

At second tier management levels within housing associations in Wales (includes Deputy Chief Executive/ Directors of Housing/Neighbourhood Services, Directors of Finance and Corporate Services etc.) approximately 30% are female (The Author, 2014). At the second tier of management the two case study organisations 3 of the 8 Directors were female (37.5%). In the example of case study 1 (male Chief Executive) there are 3 male directors and 1 female member of the leadership team. Interestingly, the female member of the leadership team is accorded the title of manager and not director, and is directly responsible for officers rather than third tier managers. In case study 2 (female Chief Executive), there is an equal gender balance between male and female senior managers.

Whilst there is a perceptible gender imbalance in the first and second tiers of management, there is more gender neutrality at the third tier of management level 45%:55% female: male as a whole in Wales (The Author, 2014). This is reflected in the third tier management structures of both case study organisations, and in case study 1, there is an overrepresentation of female third tier managers (75%).

6.2.5   Board Structures

Both case study organisations have a board of 12 full time members[5]. The board structures of the two case study organisations were different, due to history of the development of the organisations. Case study 1 was created as community housing mutual through a LSVT from the local authority. As a result of this, there was a requirement for the organisation to have representation from the local authority on the board of management.

Case study 2 only had representatives from the tenant membership and independent board members. The organisation was registered as a Local Housing Company, and as such there is no requirement to have representation from the local authority on their board of management. The organisation had had tenant representation on their board of management since the late 1980s. The organisation had within the past year co-opted two more independent members on to the board of management to provide skills that the board membership did not previously have. It was expected that these board members would be elected as full board members at the following AGM by the board. The table below (6.2) shows the difference in the board make-up of the two organisations in terms of constituent parts, and also enumerates each constituent part of the board.

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[5] Case study 2 has an additional 2 co-optee's who do not possess full voting rights at the board.

Table 6.2 Board of Management Structure (The Author, 2014)

Constituent Part	Case study 1	Case study 2	Total
Independents	4	8	12
Tenants	4	4	8
LA Members	4	0	4
Co-opted Members	0	2	2
Total	12	14	26

A further discussion on the governance arrangements in relation to the case study organisations and the research aims can be found in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

6.2.6 Regulatory Assessments

The Regulatory Framework (Welsh Government, 2010 (b)) describes the principles, approach to regulation and its main features. The Regulatory Framework contains *"Delivery Outcomes"* to be met by housing associations in connection with their functions relating to the provision of housing, and matters relating to their governance and financial management. The ultimate purpose of the Regulatory Framework is to ensure that housing associations provide good quality homes and services to tenants and others who use their services. The annual regulatory assessment report on each association provides:

- *An assessment of the level of regulatory involvement required over the forthcoming year; that is: "low", "medium" or "high".*
- *A brief, robust, narrative evaluation of governance and service delivery focussed on outcomes for tenants, service users and communities, and tailored to local circumstances.*

(Welsh Government, 2012: 12)

Both organisations had a Housing Association Regulatory Assessment (HARA) carried out during the course of the fieldwork, with case study 1's HARA carried out in February 2013, and case study 2's HARA in March 2012. Both organisations taking part in the research were classed as *"low"* in terms of regulatory intervention required, and these were the only organisations in this category (at the time of writing). The outcome judgements for each case study are outlined below.

Case study 1 received a low level of regulatory assessment. Regulatory engagement will focus on the following areas:-

- *embedding an outcome focus in all the Association does, including measuring service standards and customer needs and preferences;*

- *ensuring the service is easy to access and responds effectively to customer enquiries and complaints, while minimising unnecessary contact;*

- *increasing accountability, by providing clearer trend and comparative performance information and further development of the scrutiny role;*

- *assessing fairness and equity in the outcomes achieved;*

- *maximising the Association's understanding of value for money and its approach to improve this across all it does;*

- *optimising the speed in which empty homes are relet, the standard of their repair and letting more adapted homes to those who most need them;*

- *analysing (case study 1's) contribution to preventing / alleviating homelessness in (case study 1) local authority;*

- *maximising the support available to tenants, while protecting the Association's income, by fully implementing its welfare reform strategy;*

- *delivering the Association's Neighbourhood Strategy to help ensure all its communities are attractive, well maintained and safe places, in which tenants want to settle and stay; and*

- *Increasing efficiency and effectiveness of repair and maintenance services.*

(Welsh Government, 2013 (a): 3)

Case study 2 also received an assessment requiring a low level of regulatory engagement in future. Regulatory engagement will focus on the following areas:-

- *Developing an outcome focus across the Association, to understand the outcomes expected when decisions are made and the impact and value for money achieved of work undertaken;*

- *Enhancing accountability and tenant/service user involvement in service design and scrutiny of performance;*

- *Analysing service delivery against equality and diversity data, to ensure fair service outcomes and to help target resources where they will have greatest impact; and*

- *Working with tenants to understand the improvements they wish to see, to increase their satisfaction with the value for money of service charges*

(Welsh Government, 2012: 3)

During the course of the fieldwork, it was clear that both organisations were working to address the issues highlighted in the regulatory assessment, with these issues being discussed at board level.

At the tail end of the fieldwork, research into the interim assessment of the regulatory framework was published (Smith et al, 2013). Both organisations to a varying level took part in the research. The outcomes of the research and its implications on the housing association sector were provided to board members of both case study organisations to be read outside of the board meeting environment.

6.3   Organisational Positioning

This section of the chapter looks at the operation of the two case study organisations in terms of organisational positioning in the delivery of affordable housing to rent in Wales.

During the fieldwork it was identified that case study 1 was changing the emphasis of the organisation, having achieved the organisation's original aim of meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard for existing homes under their management. This next phase was beginning to focus on the development of new affordable homes, extension of the operation of the organisation in terms of community development and also to establish a social enterprise. There was an increasing focus on efficiency and business like delivery of core housing services, such as wasting less and cutting out the duplication of processes. The organisation had also been investigating the principles of *"lean"* service delivery, and a number of the senior management team had been on training in this area.

The Chief Executive of the organisation, during an interview stated that case study 1 was a *"business for social purpose"*, with the driving motivation that as well as providing excellent customer service for its tenants, it was imperative to maintain a strong balance sheet, and focus on the things that mattered first; *"financial viability, governance and an excellent standard of service for residents"* (Chief Executive, case study 1).

Being enacted as a community housing mutual organisation, the relationship between the organisation and its tenants was established at the outset, tenants were seen as *"owners and members"* of the organisation; *"It is in our interest for our communities to be successful."* (Male Senior Management Team Member, case study 1)

The departure into the development of a social enterprise for the commercial provision of PV panels to other housing associations and the private sector was seen as a departure from the *"social business"* ethos. However, two of the Senior Management Team Members stated that in an environment where government funding was increasingly restricted, it was important for the organisation to grow and diversify to protect the core function of the business model.

Additionally during the fieldwork stage of the research, the organisation was involved in discussions with *a "failing"* [6] housing association in a neighbouring local authority. The senior management team were involved in the discussions with the other housing association about how they would be the most appropriate partner.

> *"Why wouldn't they want to partner with us, look at the journey we've been on since transfer, we've met WHQS, we've a very good understanding of the finance and we need to grow commercially"*
>
> (Chief Executive, Case study 1)

During the fieldwork it was identified that case study 2 was continuing its focus on developing new social homes for rent within the local authority area, and developing a social enterprise which would enable those people that they weren't able to accommodate through their lettings and allocations policies access to private sector accommodation which was rented in a social way. Whilst there was an increasing focus on ensuring that services were provided in an efficient manner and the continuing financial viability of the organisation, the core vision of the organisation was that the community and customers were at the heart of the organisation.

The Chief Executive of the organisation, during an interview stated that case study 2 *"needed to remain community focused"*, with the driving motivation that the organisation should continue to provide excellent customer service for its tenants. Having been established as a community charitable housing association, the organisation had organically grown into developing a range of specialist services supported housing and hostel services within the local authority area.

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[6] "Failing" was a term used by the Chief Executive case study 1 – in actual terms the housing association which is referred to had received a "high" regulatory intervention judgement in its HARA, however, was deemed as financially viable by the Welsh Government.

The departure into the development of a social enterprise which would provide a social lettings service within the city was seen as an organic development of the organisation to provide a complementary lettings service within the local authority area which would solve an issue of being able to provide accommodation for people outside of their lettings/ allocation policy. The development of this social enterprise was seen by the executive and the board as complementary to their *"social business"* ethos.

Additionally during the fieldwork stage of the research, case study 2, as with case study 1, was involved in discussions in partnering with a housing association in a neighbouring local authority. The senior management team were involved in the discussions with the other housing association about how they would be the most appropriate partner.

> *"It's a very good fit, they are small and community focused as are we, and it provides a service and a type of property that we and our tenants do not have access to"*

> (Chief Executive, Case study 2)

During the fieldwork, both the senior management team and the board of case study 2 expressed their displeasure in a housing association from a neighbouring local authority encroaching into their local authority area, and wanting to develop new homes for social rent and sale. This was seen as being *"not part of the game"* and *"not liking the increasing competitiveness of the sector"*. This is summed up neatly in a quote taken from the organisation's annual stakeholder survey:

"There may be an issue of ambition for (Case study1)–perhaps a reticence or nervousness about risking undermining what makes them special–and some may see them as not taking risks in development or diverse activity. Holding true to your values and not being fashionable is honourable but may be perceived as lacking ambition. They can still do stuff, be innovative, change, be proactive and at the same time remain authentic and retain their integrity"

(Case Study 2, 2012; 3)

The institutional field (Scott, 2001) for the case study organisations is the social housing sector in the UK with its peculiar sets of change drivers and organisational responses (See Chapter 3). Within the social housing sector itself housing associations display a distinct set of organisational qualities driven by certain economic, political and cultural change factors. To some extent these distinctive characteristics have been self–defined by the larger housing association sector (L&Q 2005; Housing Futures Network, 2009), yet organisational size is not the only basis for differential strategic positioning, but that an organisation's culture, values and identity also determine where it is located between public and private or commercial and social poles.

Analysing the *"hybridity"* of the housing associations in the research is helpful in indicating the competing principles that may affect organisational positioning in the case study organisations. In relation to this research it is also important to understand the development of the hybrid nature of housing associations in relation to the governance and accountability of the case study housing associations. How far away are the organisations from the communities that they serve, what has been the cycle of development in these organisations organic or enacted, and therefore whether these organisations have different reasons for the levels of female representation on the boards of management of these organisations.

Another important issue in relation to hybrid type of the case study organisations is in relation to how female board members interact with the decision making processes in relation to the social and commercial principles.

The theoretical framework (see Chapter 4) outlined that analysing the *"hybridity"* of the housing associations in the research was helpful in indicating the competing principles that affected the organisational positioning in the case study organisations. The figure below outlines Billis' (2010) work on hybridity of third sector organisations (see figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 – Location of Case Studies In Relation To Billis' Zones of Hybridity (Billis, 2010: 57; The Author, 2014)
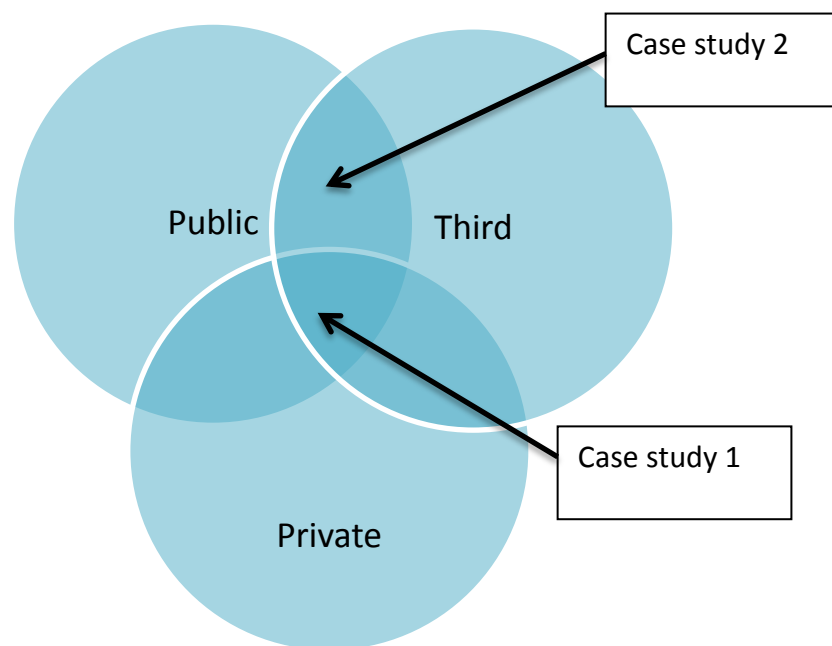
Case study 1 was an exceptional hybrid organisation in terms of the organisational positioning. The organisation operated in three zones of third, public and private. The third sector provision being the provision of social housing to tenants, the public sector provision being supporting people tenancy support, and the private sector provision being the provision of PV panels on a commercial basis.

Case study 1 was *"less hybrid"* in nature and operated in 2 zones of third and public, through the third sector provision of social hosing to tenants and public in its provision of supporting people specialist services and hostel accommodation. It is my contention that case study 1 was positioned in section 5 of the zones and case study 2 operated in zone 4.

In terms of the categorisation of the development of the housing associations hybrid activities, again it is useful to cite the work of Billis (2010) (see table 6.3 below).

Table 6.3 Categorisation of Hybrid Third Sector Organisations (Billis, 2010; 241)

	Organic	**Enacted**
Shallow	Organic Shallow	Enacted Shallow
Entrenched	Organic Entrenched	Enacted Entrenched

It is my contention that case study 1 is an *"Enacted Entrenched"* organisation this is because the organisation was established with immediate substantial resources from the government (in the form of a dowry from the Welsh Government) and considerable influence on the governance of the organisation through the prescribed model of the Community Housing Mutual. The organisation was established with a multiple stakeholder board of management. The organisation although focused on the needs of the tenants, has struggled with the accountability that it has to its tenants, the organisation is detached from its tenants geographically in terms of location of their head office on a business park away from the centres of service delivery. The development of the new social enterprise and the willingness to move into other forms of service provision only recently after its creation through the LSVT process shows that the organisation is entrenched in this model of service provision.

Case study 2 is an *"Organic Shallow"* organisation; this is because the organisation has grown steadily through the infusion of resources through public contracts and few commercial initiatives. The organisation has strong accountability to the local community and their tenants, and is geographically located in the community that they serve. The recent development of the social lettings agency as a social enterprise of the organisation has found the organisation moving away from the primary focus of the housing association to provide new services, through new forms of provision. The board membership is involved in the operational work of the organisation and there is a struggle to redefine the role of board members to become more strategic and business focussed in their work. Although the organisation has not moved away from the core aim of the provision of affordable homes to rent, they are working in the shadow of large dominant housing associations within the locality and outside of it.

It is my contention that females will be more inclined to join boards of management that are organic shallow/ organic entrenched third sector organisations, especially if they have a background in their employment/ career that fits with the board of the organisation that they are joining, and also because of the strong link that the organisation has to the community/ citizens that it serves. In addition it is my conclusion that more males will be attracted to joining boards that are enacted entrenched third sector organisations because of the visioning and position of the organisation, and the skills, knowledge and experience that they can bring to these organisations.

As well as the contested influences on the types of organisation and decision making processes; there are also contested influences on organisational cultures and strategies of third sector organisations, subjects to which the chapter turns to next.

6.4 Prevailing Management Cultures

In both case study organisations the Chief Executives and members of the Senior Management Teams stated that the concept of stable and accepted culture across the whole organisation was important to the successful operation of the housing association.

Case study 1 was led by a very strong business-orientated Chief Executive and Senior Management Team. Whilst the organisation was established as a result of an LSVT from the local authority, the organisation had a strong desire to operate outside of the remit of providing affordable social homes to rent in the local area. The organisation was in the process of establishing a social enterprise for the installation of PV panels, and there was a clear intention that this element of the business would compete commercially in the local area within the private sector arena. The organisation was also looking to be involved in the *"rescue"* of a failing housing association in a neighbouring local authority area.

Case study 1's corporate values are:

> *"Open -"We will act honestly and with integrity and our decisions will be made inclusively and transparently."*
>
> *Fair - "We are committed to delivering services with an even hand and ensuring equality of opportunity for everyone."*
>
> *Flexible - "We will be innovative and proactive and view change as opportunity."*
>
> *Achieving - "We will set and reach ambitious goals and targets."*

(Case study 1, 2012; 1)

The core and underlying values were related to the organisation through its mission statement. The mission statement of the organisation is: *"To provide high quality homes and services that put people first."* (Case study 1, 2012; 1).

In case study 1, it was the perception of the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team that a cultural fit across the organisation was in the process of being developed 5 years after the creation of the organisation. All members of the leadership team had been in post since the shadow phase of the organisation's history. The organisation had focussed a lot of time and attention on the development of the ideal organisational culture. The cultural vision was about performance and homogeneity across the organisation as it was: *"not acceptable to have separate cultures in the future"* (Chief Executive: Case study 1)

Culture was about managing organisational change and risk and creating a unity of purpose. The leadership team regarded itself as having a cohesive culture, with a mandate for strong leadership so as to leave behind an enduring legacy in case study 1. Internal communication with the rest of the organisation was about creating a single identity and trying to define what case study 1 was about. It was perceived that the staff and the board of the organisation understood the rationale behind key strategic decisions, but that the tenants were resistant to some of the progressive changes. The executive management felt that they were changing the organisational culture from one of confidentiality to a new culture of transparency.

Externally, according to members of the leadership team case study 1 was trying to move away from the still pervasive, *"old culture of entitlement and altruism"* (Male Senior Management Team Member, Case study 1) to a more action-based, faster-paced approach. There was a desire to move away from a more traditional paternalistic engagement with tenants - *"Everyone would like a service where staff are waiting for leaves to fall off trees to catch them"* (Male Senior Management Team Member, Case study 1)- to a more realistic and financially viable customer service model which was about both the rights and responsibilities of tenants, and managing expectations for customer satisfaction, which the organisation had a corporate goal to surpass industry and private sector standards.

Building a new unified identity was critical to the leadership team, who were trying to reinforce a sense of one organisation working together, and what case study 1 stood for, and building the momentum for one organisation. While there was good feedback on internal communication with staff, there was still an acknowledgment that *"management needs to win hearts and minds at [case study 1]"* (Male Senior Management Team Member, Case study 1). Internal communication took the form of staff newsletters and an online weekly forum.

The executive team also saw their role in the creation of a positive culture or mood within the organisation. The notion of control versus innovation was related to the balance between freedom and consistency (such as stability and common policy and procedure).

> *"Culturally we're an outwardly looking organisation, we're always looking for external verification, external challenge, external benchmarking, we don't do the normal; we're always looking to see who does it the best and how we compare and contrast to the best."*
>
> (Chief Executive: Case study1)

In case study 2, whilst there was a strong commitment to the achievement of the business objectives of the organisation; this was mitigated by the organisation's desire to remain grounded in the community where the organisation was established. The organisation was in the process of establishing a social lettings agency in the local area, and although this could be seen as diversification of the organisations' aims, and to establish a foothold in the commercial lettings market, there was a clear indication at discussions at board level that the social lettings agency should fit within the ethos of the organisation. There were also discussions at board level about the increasing competitiveness of other local housing association's and dislike that a housing association from out of the local area was considering developing on *"their patch"*.

Case study 2's corporate values are:

"Accountability – "There will be clear lines of accountability to our customers and we will consult with them on all key services"

Equality - "Each customer and employee will be treated fairly and with respect. Individual circumstances will govern the way we deliver customer service to eliminate any indirect discrimination"

Flexibility – "We will respond positively to change and find innovate ways to improve or service delivery"

Openness – "All activities will be conducted in an open and transparent way, whilst respecting the confidentiality of individuals"

Professionalism – "we will equip our staff to deliver an equitable and efficient service to our customers and we expect the highest standards at all times"

Quality – "We will listen to our customers and provide them with a high quality service we will embrace continuous improvement in our everyday work".

(Case study 2, 2014; 3)

The core and underlying values were related to the organisation through its mission statement. The mission statement of the organisation is: *"is for (case study 2) to be the provider, partner and employer of choice."* (Case study 2, 2014; 1).

In case study 2, it was the perception of the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team that there was an established cultural fit across the organisation. This was due to the fact that the organisation was long established and that there had been little turnover in the management team of the organisation or staff in the last 5 years. The Chief Executive had been in post for 15 years, and 2 members of the Senior Management Team had been in post for the last 11 years. Only one member of the Senior Management team had joined the organisation within the last three years.

The leadership did not spend time on creating the culture of the organisation, and there was a natural internal momentum to the culture of the organisation. The cultural vision of the organisation was about being person and community centred, *"The lead management style of culture is very open and transparent, and "empowering" as well."* (Chief Executive: Case study 2)

Culture was about maintaining the status quo of the organisation and ensuring that they were open and transparent in the decision making processes internally and externally. The organisation had created several staff and management working groups which had vertical integration across all levels of the organisation on a variety of topics and subjects. The leadership of the organisation were particularly proud of the range of issues that staff were consulted and had influence on. Internal communication took the form of staff newsletters and internal website. The main focus of the internal communication was to ensure that all staff and board members were able to understand what was going on across the whole organisation, and that all staff could have a say in the decisions or promote their ideas for service development. The organisation had created a system of *"champions"* within each team e.g. tenant participation, service, and communication, which gave a degree of accountability and sharing of information across the organisation.

> *"(we) have a cross section of what we call Business Planning Groups here, so people can, they have got their 'day job' if you like, but they've also got a business planning group which is aligned to where their interests lie; for example, we have an Equality and Diversity Business Planning Group; we've got diversity champions; we've got Customer Involvement Business Planning Groups; we've got Health and Wellbeing Business Planning Group; we have Digital Inclusion Business Planning Groups."*
>
> (Female Senior Management Team Member: Case study 2)

Openness and accountability of the organisation was a key feature of the way that the organisation interacted with their tenants and the local residents. The organisation was located at the centre of the community that they served and communication with tenants was based on the principles of good customer service. The enactment of a *"You Said, We did"* board prominently displayed within the reception area of the head office displayed this accountability to tenants, and how the organisation had acted on the suggestions of tenants.

> *"I think we're open and honest; I think we're customer focussed; and try and see people living holistically rather than just as the landlord and tenant role"*
>
> (Chief Executive: Case Study 2)

Maintaining the community focussed identity was critical to the senior team, who were trying to cement the role of the organisation in the local community, and whilst the senior management team recognised the increasing need for innovation and value for money provision of services, it was a central feature of the decision making process whether this was right for their organisation, rather than just because other organisations were doing it, or that they were expected to do it.

A key difference between the two organisations in terms of the cultures of the organisation was observed during the fieldwork element of the research. A local housing association had been identified as *"failing"*, and was seeking a parent organisation for their rescue. Both organisations in the research were interested in this development and taking over the failing housing association.

Case study 1 saw this as a commercial opportunity to develop the services outside of their current area of operation and why wouldn't the failing housing association not want to be part of the well performing housing association. The senior management team saw the opportunity to commercially increase the role and the profile of their organisation, and exploit the newly developed social enterprise. It was viewed as very much a take-over of the failing housing association.

Case study 2 took a more circumspect approach to discussions and decisions about being involved in merging with the other housing association, and were very much of the approach that whilst the merger between the two organisations, presented an opportunity to increase the scope of the services offered, discussions were centred on the *"fit"* between the two organisations. It was very much viewed as a merger rather than a take-over.

At the conclusion of the fieldwork stage, neither of the two case study organisations, although shortlisted for partnership, was successful in merging or partnering with the *"failing"* housing association, though this may have been because the *"failing"* association had other options which it considered more appropriate.

Organisational cultural theory provides the tools to uncover and describe cultural variation between the two case study organisations. Many of the themes discussed above such as structure, leadership, and values and organisational identity contribute towards building a picture of the organisational culture or the *"way things were done"* in the two case study organisations (Tunstall, 1983; Drennan, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Schein, 1991; Schwartz and Davis, 1981).

What is fascinating relating to the two case study organisations is the change and conformance in organisational paradigms or the taken for granted assumptions of the housing association sector (Schien, 1991). In case study 1 there was a clear expectation that the culture of the organisation needed and was undergoing change to become a more business orientated organisation, outwardly focused as a commercial organisation beyond the traditional remit of the organisation, promoting a unified corporate identity with clear beliefs and values focussed on growth, financial strength and meeting operational and regulatory targets. Whilst in case study 2, the cultural focus of the organisation was maintaining their links to the local community, empowerment and focusing on being the provider of choice within the local area.

The power structures in an organisation can lead to the beliefs and assumptions of dominant groups being adopted while the organisation's structure highlights key foci and important relationships in the organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). In case study 1, where a dominant executive business culture permeates a centralised structure with the emphasis on top down leadership, and extending the services beyond their traditional remit of the organisation. This can be seen in the establishment of the commercially focused social enterprise to provide services beyond the operation of the organisation and into the private sector. This is in contrast with case study 2, with a more inclusive approach to management and leadership, focusing on the extension of their services through the development of the social enterprise of the social lettings agency which complimented their existing services, for individuals and tenants which did not meet the lettings and allocation policies of the organisation.

The difference in cultural outlook of the organisations can also be seen in the way in which the two organisations approached the *"rescue"* of the failing neighbouring organisation – case study 1 saw this as a way in which to commercially increase the profile of the organisation, and case study 2 saw this as an extension of the services which fitted with elements that the organisation did not currently provide.

The theoretical framework for this study (outlined in Chapter 4), is a critical device for unpicking the organisational cultural variance between the two organisations (Hofstede, 1980). Of the number of dimensions which along cultural difference can be understood power/ distance and uncertainty and avoidance (Hofstede, 1991) aptly describes the cultural variance between the two organisations. Case study 1 has a high power/ distance cultural outlook, with clear boundaries between the management hierarchies, separation between management decision making processes and links to the local community. This is in comparison to case study 2 which has a low power/distance to the cultural operation of the organisation, which can be viewed in the high decentralisation of service delivery, empowerment of staff and close links to the community.

In terms of uncertainty and avoidance, case study 1 has a low rating, espoused by the organisation's forceful drive into exploring other commercial activities beyond the remit of the organisation and an attitude of the senior management team of driving the organisation forward. This is in comparison to the high rating for case study 2, where the senior management team was reluctant to extend the operation of the organisation outside of the traditional areas of operation, and service developments enacted in the time of the fieldwork, were to extensions of services which "fitted" in with the organisation.

Table 6.4 Cultural Variance between Case study Organisations (The Author, 2014)

	Case study 1	Case study 2
Organisational Cultural Descriptors	- Corporate focus - Commercial outlook - Commercial viability - Strategic accountability - Visionary - Centralised top-down management - Policy and Procedure - Promoting cultural homogeneity - Regional	- Empowerment focus - Accountability outlook - Financial stability and growth - Links and heritage - Practical - Decentralised "middle out" management - Policies and procedures - Encouraging customer focus - Local

Looking across both organisations, the descriptions attempt to capture the key aspects of organisational culture pertinent to this study namely values, power and organisational structures (Jonson and Scholes, 1992, Gregory, 1983, Schein, 1981).

Trying to find the appropriate terminology to capture the essence of the common cultural characteristics across the two case study organisations was a challenging part of the analysis. Words like *"corporate"* and *"commercial"* seemed to aptly describe the identity and values, the centralised structure and hierarchical management with its dominant executive leadership of case study 1. Whilst in case study 2, *"empowerment"* and *"accountability"* seem aptly to identify the values and more decentralised management and leadership structures. Whilst descriptors such as *"regional"* (such as case study 1) or *"local"* (case study 2), is more of geographical tem than a description of organisational culture, in this case it incorporated the community drivers and local responsiveness of both organisations, as illustrated in table 6.4 (above).

6.5   Policy and Sectorial Developments

During the course of the fieldwork there were a number of major policy and sectorial developments that had an impact on the key research themes of this thesis. These issues are now discussed in turn;

6.5.1   Sector Study on Governance of Housing Associations Registered in Wales

In 2012, the Welsh Government commissioned independent researchers to undertake a sector study on the governance of housing associations registered in Wales (Miljevic et al, 2013). Both case study organisations took part in the research to varying degrees. Both case study 1 and case study 2 reported the outcomes of the research to their boards of management and included the final full publication in board packs for members to read outside of the board meeting environment, and there was consideration by the Executive Leadership teams within both housing associations that it was appropriate to look at the operation of their board in relation to the findings of the research as board away days.

At the end of the fieldwork stage of the research Community Housing Cymru released a consultation document on a revised code of governance for housing association in Wales (Community Housing Cymru, 2014).

The consultation document focuses on the establishment of a code which encourages all housing associations in Wales to strive for the highest standards of governance and to set out the standards and practices that boards and their members must adhere to in order to ensure good quality governance is the norm in all community housing Cymru member organisations. The revised code focuses on the following:

- *"Welsh Government Citizen-centred governance principles*
- *Knowing who does what and why*
- *Engaging with others*
- *Living Public Service Values*
- *Fostering Innovative Delivery*
- *Being a Learning Organisation*
- *Achieving Value for Money"*

(Community Housing Cymru, 2014: 3)

The Welsh Government as a result of the Essex Review (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008 (b)) and the Sector Study on Governance (Miljevic et al, 2013), has released consultation on the remuneration of board members of housing associations in Wales (Welsh Government, 2014 (a). This consultation document consults in relation to two related areas. The Welsh Government are seeking views in two particular areas relating to the remuneration of board members; the draft guidance itself, and secondly; whether the Welsh Government should specify the maximum amount of remuneration that the can be paid to board members (Welsh Government, 2014 (a)).

6.5.2   Continuation of the "Credit Crunch" and Implementation of the "bedroom tax" welfare reforms

During the fieldwork stage of the research, the *"credit crunch"* and economic recession that grew from momentum of 2007 was a continuing dominant and emerging theme at board discussions.

The credit crunch and economic slowdown has had a profound effect on the operational and strategic management within both case study organisations. The changing economic conditions had additional general implications on the sector as a whole, within increasing demand for properties.

At the same time as the economic recession, central government implemented welfare reforms which will have a significant longer term impact on both organisations - especially the introduction of the *"Bedroom Tax"* (spare room subsidy). Case study 1 had approximately 1,100 tenants affected (approx. 27.5% of tenants) and case study 2 had approximately 150 tenants affected (approx. 10%). Both housing associations had implemented strategies to reduce the impact on tenants affected. These strategies included: financial inclusion work; applications for Discretionary Housing Payments from the local authority; encouraging tenants into work; encouraging tenants to take lodgers; encouraging tenants to downsize and visits to households in order to discuss options for tenants. In case study 2, the organisation was considering the use of Ground 8 to evict tenants[7].

In case study 2, households were also significantly affected hit by the benefit cap, which posed additional and different challenges to the organisation, this was as a result of the nature of the housing stock and larger ethnic households within their tenant profile. Both organisations took information to the board of management on the implications of the welfare reforms, and board members were specifically interested in the work of both organisations to support tenants out of the situation and operational policies introduced to reduce the impact of welfare reform.

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[7] This option was not available to case study 1 due to the secure nature of the enhanced tenancy agreement negotiated as part of the LSVT.

6.5.3   Increasing Focus on the Development of Affordable Housing

During the period of the case study research there was continuing pressure from the Welsh Government on housing associations to develop new affordable housing in Wales. In a written statement the Minister for Housing in the Welsh Government outlined his expectation of the provision of additional affordable housing in Wales. The statement outlined the Welsh Government's commitment to continuing the supply of affordable housing in partnership with the housing association sector;

> *"As Minister for Housing and Regeneration, I have made clear that my priority is increasing housing supply and I have asked all sectors to do as much as they can with the resources they have available."*

> (Welsh Government; 2014 (c))

During this time, the Welsh Government were looking for innovative models of financing for the additional provision of affordable homes in Wales, as there would be an increasing pressure on the public sector purse from other areas such as education and health which would need to be directly funded by the public purse.

The increasing focus has implications for both organisations and boards of management of the case study organisations and beyond, in terms of their attitudes to; risk, and the management of risk, financial viability of the organisations and innovation in accessing additional sources of capital and revenue funding, and where their development programmes focuses.

6.5.4   Statement of Support for Increasing Gender Diversity

The issue of gender diversity on boards of housing associations has recently been championed by the then Minister for Housing; Carl Sargeant (Douglas, 2014) who has called for housing associations to ensure their boards are made up of equal numbers of women and men.

At a Community Housing Cymru conference (Inside Housing, 2014) he demonstrated his commitment is more than just words and announced his plan to introduce a new code of governance for housing association in Wales setting out the rules and procedures for housing association boards, enacted by the consultation recently carried out by Community Housing Cymru (2014).

One of the key effects of this code is a push towards gender equality at boardroom level. *"Housing associations need modern boards for a modern world"* and asked for landlords to *"take 'practical action' to achieve better diversity on boards"* (Inside Housing, 2014). This was followed by a letter to all housing associations in Wales from the regulation unit expecting housing associations with a female representation of below 38% to take positive actions to improve the diversity of those boards of management (Welsh Government, 2014 (c)).

6.6   Conclusion

Having discussed the research methodology and fieldwork design in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter was to provide a background to the case study organisations to help inform the empirical findings and analysis in the following three chapters. Section one of this chapter gave a history and profile of both case study organisations, and discussed the prevailing management cultures of the two organisations, in relation to the theoretical framework as outlined in Chapter 4. Section two highlighted some of the policy and sectorial developments which took place during the fieldwork phase of the research.

In relation to the objectives of the research (outlined in Chapter 1), this chapter has drawn out the empirical research and findings in relation to one area, outlined below (table 6.5).

Table 6.5 Key Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Organisational Typologies and Culture
Identify the organisational typology and culture of the case study organisations and how this facilitates female participation on boards of management

There was a clear difference between the two organisations in terms of their organisational positioning as third sector organisations, and in relation to the hybridity of their work in the housing association sector, with case study 1 being more hybrid in nature than case study 2. There are also clear differences between the two organisations in relation to how the organisations were established as third sector hybrid organisations, with case study 1 being and *"enacted entrenched"* hybrid organisation and case study 2 being an *"organic shallow"* hybrid organisation. These different types of organisational positioning have not only implications for the governance issues faced by the organisations, but also contribute to issues of board diversity (see chapter 3).

It is my contention that organisational positioning is crucial to the recruitment and retention of female board members, it has been well documented in research from corporate governance (Burke, 1994,1996,1997,2000; Mangel and Singh, 1993 and Beckman and Phillps, 2005) that female board members are more risk adverse than their male board member counterparts, if a housing association is seen as too commercial or corporate in their positioning and away from the communities or people that they serve, then females are less likely to participate in these boards of management. In addition, because of the skills, knowledge and experience that these organisations require to steer the direction of the organisation, they are more likely to appoint males to the boards as they have the *"fit"* in terms of skills, knowledge and experience required (this is further discussed in Chapter 7).

In relation to the organisational culture of the two case study organisations, it is my contention that of the number of dimensions which along cultural difference can be understood power/ distance and uncertainty and avoidance (Hofstede, 1991) aptly described the cultural variance between the two organisations.

The focus of the organisations' leadership in relation to organisational culture was different between the two organisations, as case study 1 sought to redefine and shape the culture of the organisation away from the routes of the local authority, and into a more commercial operation, whilst the focus of case study 2 leadership was in the maintenance of the organisational culture already in existence within the organisation.

This focus and change in the leadership around the organisational culture could be an explanation of the clear differences of the organisational culture within the two case study organisations. Case study 1 has a high power/ distance cultural outlook whilst case study 2 had a low power/ distance outlook. Much of this again, can be attributed to the organisational positioning of the case study organisations, but also the history of the organisations. In terms of uncertainty and avoidance, case study 1 has a low rating, espoused by the organisations forceful drive into exploring other commercial activities beyond the remit of the organisation and an attitude of the senior management team of driving the organisation forward. This is in comparison to the high rating for case study 2, where the senior management team was reluctant to extend the operation of the organisation outside of the traditional areas of operation, and service developments enacted in the time of the fieldwork, were to extensions of services which *"fitted"* in with the organisation.

It is unclear whether the gender make-up of the leadership team has a significant impact on the culture of the organisation, and may be more to do with the leadership style of the executive and management team. It is my contention that the style of leadership of the executive and the senior management team is key in the development of the culture of the organisation, and that this permeates down the management hierarchy of the organisation, through recruitment and retention of key management staff, and also into the recruitment of board members which suit this executive management developed organisational culture. A further discussion on the prevailing cultures of the boards of management and how these relate to the organisational culture of the two housing associations is outlined in Chapter 7.

The following chapters in this thesis explore the empirical evidence collected as part of the research process and follow in the subsequent order in relation to the theoretical framework constructed for the purpose of the research; Chapter 7, looks at the empirical evidence collected in relation to the operation of governance within the two case studies, and addresses the issues of governance structures of the two housing associations – including the composition and diversity of the two housing association boards; roles of the boards; recruitment of board members and barriers to getting and staying involved.

Chapter 8 details the empirical research of the motivations for participation by individuals on the board of management and power relations on the boards of management between the executive and the board, the constituent parts of the board and genders on the boards. Chapter 9, the concluding chapter draws out all of the main research themes, evidence and conclusions and looks at the limitations and challenges of the research and proposes thoughts for future areas of research.

Chapter 7 – Governance and Board Cultures

7.1   Introduction

Chapter six outlined the background to the case study organisations to inform the empirical findings and analysis, the purpose of this chapter is to address the governance arrangements and board cultures of the two case study organisations. In particular the chapter aims to uncover the board composition and diversity of the boards of management of the two case study organisations and recruitment strategies, and the influence that this has on the levels of female participation on the boards of management. Secondly, the chapter analyses the prevailing governance structures of the organisation and the prevailing cultures of the boards of management are uncovered.

Details from the in-depth interviews with board members and members of the senior management team, as well as those from key informants in the housing and third sector community inform the empirical findings from the research. By taking all of these distinct elements of methodology together, this leads to a broader, more balanced and comprehensive picture of the governance and organisational typologies and organisational cultures which affect female participation on housing association boards of management.

7.2   Board Composition and Diversity

Both Case Study organisations displayed a gender imbalance in the membership of the Board of Management. Even more perceptible in the imbalance of diversity on the boards was that all but one member were white British, with the notable exception of one female tenant board member in Case Study 2 who had self-identified as Black British[8] .

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[8] The research study identified ethnic origin as per the ONS guidance for monitoring ethnic origin (ONS website, 2014)

Although one of the case study organisations (case study 1) was located in a rural area, where it might be expected that there would be low level of representation from minority ethnic backgrounds, the over prevalence of white members of the boards of management of case study 2, in a large metropolitan city is a concern for the representative nature of the boards of management.

In terms of age diversity, the majority of members were between the ages of 45 – 64, and over the age of 65 years, thus suggesting that boards of management do not reflect the diversity of the population of Wales as a whole or of the local communities that the organisations work in. In case study 2, two members of the board indicated that their age was between 35-45. Interestingly, this age profile is not representative of the housing association population as a whole. Information from the 2011 census, states that residents of housing associations were relatively spread across the age groups, though with relatively few under the age of 21 (5%), and few over the age of 87 (5%) (ONS, 2011).

In looking at the gender diversity of the tenant profile of the two case study organisations, both case studies reported that there were more female headed households in their tenant profile than male headed households. When related to national census data (2011), this is broadly comparable, and highlights the gender imbalance of the boards of management that are the strategic decision makers for these organisations. Both organisations boards had remained stable in terms of gender diversity in the 6 years prior to the case study research being undertaken. Tables 7.1 and 7.2, highlight the gender make up of both case study boards of management.

Table 7.1 Board of Management Structure – Case Study 1 (The Author; 2014)

Constituent Part	All	Male	Female
Independents	4	3 (75%) (Chair and Vice-Chair)	1 (25%)
Tenants	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
LA Members	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
Total	12	9 (75%)	3 (25%)

Table 7.2 Board of Management Structure – Case Study 2 (The Author; 2014)

Constituent Part	All	Male	Female
Independents	8	6 (75%)	2 (25%) (Chair)
Tenants	4	2 (50%) (Vice-Chair)	2 (50%)
Co-opted	2	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Total	14	9 (64%)	5 (36%)

Case study 2 had taken the decision to co-opt two independent members to the board of management in the interim to their board of management to increase the legal skills on the board within the last year, prior to the commencement of the research. These members were not full members of the board of management, but were able to vote at board meetings. The organisation's constitution only allowed for a maximum of 12 board members, and in order for the two co-optees to be elected by the board as full board members, two other board members would have to depart from their roles on the board. There was an expectation that both of these board members would become full board members in the future, when vacancies arose.

Both case study organisations stated that the way that board member diversity could be increased was through the recruitment of future independent board members initially, and through a longer term talent management strategy to encourage more female board members.

However, neither organisation was specifically doing anything to address these issues. Case Study 1, which had representatives from the Local Authority (through nominees) stated that this was outside of the control of the organisation and was at the behest of the Local Authority.

"Yeah I think there' s still that element of pale male and stale boards of management – but you know I think that's just the reality of people being of an age where they are retired and have got time to give."

(Male Director: 3rd Sector Organisation)

"In terms of boards, I still think there are more men than women"

(Male Director: 3rd Sector Organisation)

"There's definitely an imbalance in genders on housing association boards…I think that it's just a reflection of society…look at local authority councillors and an even worse representation in Westminster…the Senedd is better…but that's only because of the positive action that has been taken"

(Female Director: 3rd Sector Organisation)

Only when prompted by the research did case study organisations realise the imbalanced gendered nature of their boards of management. Although organisations undertook collection of data on board member diversity for statistical returns to the Welsh Government, neither organisation had looked at the data generated to monitor their own performance against their equality and diversity strategies or policies. At the time of the fieldwork research, whilst the Welsh Government undertook a collection of information on the make-up of boards of management of housing associations in Wales, this was not analysed or available in any published format.

"I think if we had all female or all male or you know, ten male and two female, then you would look to see why that had happened and look to see if you had made any wrong decisions at any time, look to see if your encouragement of applicants was inappropriate in anyway"

(Chief Executive, Case Study 1)

"Now I think about it we're not diverse, well compared to the makeup of our staff team"

(Chief Executive, Case Study 2)

One female board member in case study 2, stated that she felt she was "needed" by the organisation, and was exploiting her membership of the board of management for her own professional career development, and was using it to attend conferences and training events to broaden her experience and knowledge of the sector, and in tandem, the association also knew that it was good for their image to have a younger female board member attending national fora and events.

Both case study organisations reported that in order to get decision making right it was important to have a diverse board of management, which reflected the communities that they serve. Although gender and broader equality and diversity of the boards of both case study organisations were narrow, and little conscious effort had gone into strategically thinking about increasing board diversity, participants in the interviews responded well to questions as to how this could be improved in the future. Many of the suggestions and thoughts for increasing the diversity of the boards of management, and in particular in terms of narrowing the gender gap on boards, were similar to the strategies needed to increase the diversification and opportunities within the staff teams of the case study organisations, including; talent management and positive action, redesigning recruitment advertising and openly advertising opportunities.

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7.2.1 Professional Backgrounds of Board Members

There is perceptible gender imbalance in terms of professional background where independent (and in Case Study 1 including local government nominees) are drawn from. This reflects the gender difference in the wider professional sector in society, with males more likely to be in the professions relating to property development/ management and finance, and females likely to come from housing and local government professional backgrounds (see chapter 2).

The gender balance in these professional backgrounds on the boards of management for independents, local authority nominees and co-opted members of the two case study organisations is as follows (Table 7.3). There was no information on the employment background of tenants on the board of management in the two case study organisations.

Table 7.3 Gender and Professional Backgrounds of Independent, Local Authority Nominees and Co-optee's of Case Study Boards (The Author, 2014)

Professional Background	Case Study 1		Case Study 2		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Finance skills gained as accountants or through employment in finance organisations such as banks	2	0	3	0	5 (100%)	0
Senior management in fields other than finance	0	1	1	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Housing organisations or related local government functions[9]	1	2	1	2	2 (33%)	4 (66%)
Property development	2	0	1	0	3 (100%)	0
Legal skills.	0	0	1	1	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Totals	5	3	7	3	12	6

When specifically looking at gender; there was a clear difference between tenant board members and independent members and their educational achievement. The chance of an independent female tenant board member finding her way onto a board without a degree is substantially reduced, and the prevalence of female tenant board members without a degree may be due to the age range of the board members rather than educational background per se.

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[9] Includes health and social care

The exception of the gender differential in terms of professional backgrounds can be found within both case studies 1 and 2. In case study 1 a chief executive of a supported housing organisation and in case study 2, a senior housing consultant were both males, contradicting the typical sectorial representation, and a female legal professional sat on the board of case study 2 (although her position was currently as a co-optee and not full board member). All independent members on both case study boards had a senior or executive management role currently, or prior to retirement, either at first or second tier of management within their organisations. There was no information on the employment status of tenant board members in both case study organisations.

The professional backgrounds of independent board members also reflect the areas of the organisation that the case study organisation had a particular strategic focus on. Although both case study organisations realised that a broad set of skills and competencies were needed for a balanced and effective board of management, neither had a set of these written for inspection. Both Chief Executives indicated that the current set of board members that were in place were *"right for now"*, but both identified that as the futures of the business changed it was likely that the skills and competencies for the future would have to change. The Chairs of the organisation had no opinion on the make-up of professional backgrounds of their boards of management.

The Chief Executive of case study 1 identified that there was a need when setting the longer term business plan and vision for the organisation, and would require the organisation to strategically plan for a change in the professional backgrounds, skills knowledge and experience of independent board members in the future. It had been identified that the organisation would need independent board members with expertise and knowledge in areas of development, commercial activities and risk management, in order to complement the strategic vision of the organisation of the next business planning period from 2015-2018.

The Chief Executive of case study 2 identified that the organisation had the right fit of expertise on the board of management for the current business planning period (until 2015), again it was recognised that the organisation may have to look to recruit individuals with specific skills, knowledge and experience should the organisation develop into a different direction in the future i.e. recruitment of an independent board member with a commercial background.

Neither organisation had considered whether the recruitment for specific skills sets would prove to be a challenge in terms of recruiting the right board member with the right competencies on the future strategic direction of the organisations. I would however contend that the recruitment of specific board members with competencies of commerciality, private housing development, and risk management are likely to be detrimental to females due to their lack of visibility in these specific business areas. In addition, with boards wanting to recruit individuals from a management or director level, this further reduces the available pool of potential female board members in these job roles.

The theoretical framework for the analysis of governance (outlined in chapter 4) outlines that Cornforth's (2004) paradox perspective is most useful in the conceptualisation of the three main areas of tensions and ambiguities on housing association boards of management, and has significant relevance to this research.

- *"The tension between board members acting as representatives for particular membership groups and "experts" charged with driving the performance of the organisation forward.*
- *The tension between the board roles of driving forward organisational performance and ensuring conformance.*
- *The tension between the contrasting board roles of controlling and supporting management"*

(Cornforth 2004; 3)

Stewardship theory stresses that board members should have expertise and experience that can add value to the performance of the organisation. The implication is that board members should be selected for their professional expertise and skills. In contrast the democratic perspective stresses that board members are lay representatives, there to serve the constituencies or stakeholders they represent. In the context of housing associations there is a question as to whether *"lay"* board members also be expected to have the necessary expertise to be effective board members. This paradox is also observable when looking at the attributes of board members of the two case study organisations included in this research, and particularly in relation to the gender balance of board members. Both organisations adopted a stewardship position in relation to the selection and election of their independent board members this was done through the open recruitment and or use of personal and professional networks. This stewardship model of board recruitment is detrimental to the recruitment of independent female board members, particularly in relation to the skills and requirements that both case study organisations currently placed an emphasis on (finance, risk, legal and development).

When looking at the skills that the organisations may need in the future, again the stewardship model of recruitment of female board members will also be problematic.

Both case study organisations, either in an organic way or an enacted way sought to increase their business profile and extend outside of their traditional areas of operation; this was particularly the situation for case study 1, (see chapter 6). In order to combat this issue it is the contention of the author that housing associations need to be targeting specific female network organisations such as Chwaraeteg and Women on Boards, to increase the profile of their organisations and also recruit proficient females from professional backgrounds.

Case study 2 also used a democratic perspective in relation to the recruitment of independent board members, where they would have to be elected at the AGM to the board. However, because of the fact that there were no board vacancies, or there was no competition for board member vacancies, there had been no competitive elections in the recent past.

There is no evidence to suggest that in this case female board members would *"lose out"* to male board members in this process.

7.3   Role of the Boards

The role of any housing association board is to be strategic – to set the direction for the organisation, to ensure that the organisation is delivering on its purpose in an optimum way, to define policies and general frameworks of operation for the organisation, to set targets and ensure the resources to deliver on them (see chapter 3). There are always debates about what *"being strategic"* means in practice, but the three modes of governance (fiduciary, strategic and generative) offer a helpful way in identifying the roles of boards.

Both Community Housing Cymru (2011 and 2012) and the Welsh Assembly Government (2010 (b)) offer advice and guidance to housing associations on how good governance should be exercised by housing associations in Wales. Miljevic's (2013) research into housing association governance in Wales found the issues of housing associations fostering a governance culture which enabled constructive challenge, effective decision making and good outcomes, was sometimes very narrowly interpreted. The research found that it was difficult to judge from the evidence gathered how effectively boards were engaging in shaping strategy and orchestrating what they saw as the *"big questions"* for discussion for their organisations (Miljevic et al, 2013).

Case study 1 saw the role of the board to:

"The Board's role is to select, evaluate and approve policies, strategies, financial statements and the performance of the organisation. As well as this, they also have the ability to recommend or strongly discourage proposed direction of growth for the organisation."

(Case study 1, 2013; 1)

Case study 2 saw the role of the board to:

"Focus on strategic discussion, enabling Board Members to direct the organisation"

(Case Study 2: 2014; 1)

And that the role of board members was to act in the following ways:

- *"Fiduciary - ensuring the organisation is well run, financially sound, complies with laws and regulations, and is faithful to its mission*
- *Strategic -setting the organisation's priorities and course, deploying resources, monitoring delivery, developing and reviewing various strategies*
- *Generative (or Creative) -engaging in deeper enquiry, exploring root causes, probing assumptions and generating new ideas and courses of action"*

(Case Study 2: 2014; 3)

The different theories of governance (as outlined in the theoretical framework in chapter 4) put different emphasis on what are the main roles of the board. This is most apparent in the opposition between the agency and stewardship perspectives.

This can be defined as the *"conformance"* versus *"performance"* roles of boards (Garratt, 1996). One of the problems for housing association boards is that these contrasting roles require board members to behave in very different ways.

The conformance role is largely reactive and demands attention to detail, careful monitoring and scrutiny of the organisation's past performance and management, and is risk averse. The performance role is more proactive, it demands forward vision, an understanding of the organisation and its environment and a greater willingness to take risks.

It is my contention that the board of case study 1 was very much focused on the *"performance"* of the organisation, looking to shape and move the organisation forward within and outside of the current remit of the environment of the organisation. This can also be evidenced in the fact that issues around operations were devolved to a sub-committee of the full board of management, with only summary issues brought to the attention of the full board of management. There was also a recognition that the organisation needed to take risks in order to protect the interests of the core business of the organisation i.e. when looking at the development of the new PV social enterprise and the strategy for development and taking over a *"failing"* neighbouring housing association. There was a clear synergy between the executive management team of the organisation and the board.

Case study 2 displayed more of a *"conformance"* role. This was in the close monitoring of the day to day operations of the organisation through in depth monthly reports to the board of management, close monitoring of finances and risks to the board.

This conformance role can also be evidenced in the organisational positioning and cultures of the executive and management team when looking at the future developments for the organisation i.e. the development of the social lettings agency, the attitude of the organisation to the development by a rival housing association *"on their patch"* and the view of merging with a *"failing"* housing association. There was clear synergy between the executive and the board of management on terms of organisational culture.

Adams and Ferreira (2008) looked at the performance of corporate boards and gender diversity and found that those organisations with a higher gender diversity of women on their board performed more monitoring of their management than less diverse boards. It is my contention given the higher gender diversity of the board in case study 2, along with the organisational positioning and culture of the organisation, and the prevailing culture of the board of management (discussed below) has led to the *"conformance"* role of the board of management.

7.4   Board Member Recruitment

This next section of the chapter focuses on the different recruitment strategies that the two case studies employed in the recruitment of their board members at the time of the fieldwork. The section focuses on how each different constituent part (independent, local authority nominee and tenant board members) are recruited to the boards.

7.4.1   Independent Board Member Recruitment

Open advertisement and recruitment was exclusively used in case study 1. All independent board members responded to advertisements in local, national newspapers or through national professional publications. All independent board members had applied through a formal application process and interview selection. Short-listing of candidates was undertaken by the chair of the board and members of the senior management team, and in line with the role description and a core competency framework.

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Short-listed candidates were interviewed by the Chief Executive and the Chair of the board. There was no expectation within the recruitment of independent board members that they needed to be local to the area, or live within the boundaries of the local authority in which the organisation operated, in fact two independent members lived and worked in England (Bristol and Hereford). Recruitment of board members was about getting the right skills on board. Independent board members were not elected onto the board by the membership of the organisation, although their recruitment had to be formally ratified at the AGM of the organisation.

There was some evidence of senior management using informal and professional networks to increase the awareness that the organisation was recruiting for board members. However, it was noted that just because a person had been approached to apply for a position on the board that they were not a *"shoe in"* for that vacancy.

Whilst the use of open recruitment and advertising should be complementary to increasing the gender diversity of the board of management, it is dependent on these females feeling that they have the skills, knowledge and expertise to apply for these positions, as well as being aware of the opportunities available.

The most recent board member recruitment advert for case study 1 specifically requested candidates with customer care skills, thus targeting the typical skills, knowledge and experience that potential female board members may have. If the recruitment advert specifically was asking for skills relating to development, legal, risk management of financial skills, then this is likely to result in more male board members being attracted to the position, and ultimately being successful in their recruitment to the post.

> *"We are ideally looking for candidates who have a wealth of experience in customer care, however candidates with other skills will also be considered"*
>
> (Case Study1; 2013)

"I saw an advert that was placed in Inside Housing looking for board members, with an expertise in customer care, I applied, I was interviewed and I was selected. I have a 20 year career as a housing manager and manager of customer services for XX"

(Female Independent Board Member, Case Study 1)

Case study 2 used personal and professional networks for the recruitment of independent board members. All independent board members were ether initially co-opted onto the board, or directly elected to the board by the membership of the organisation. There was an expectation that the independent board members would live, or have a local connection to the area in which the organisation operated, and an interest in the issues of the local community, if they also happened to have the right skills and experience that the board was looking for then this was seen as a benefit.

Although board members had to be elected onto the board by the membership, there had been no competitive elections in the last 6 years, due to the lack of vacancies of available, or because of the low numbers of applications for positions on the board of management. Recruitment took place through investigation of potential candidates through business or other professional networks by the executive management team. The use of these informal networks is not complementary to increase the gender balance of housing association board membership due to several factors, including; females not being in positions of senior management being recruited, not knowing about the opportunities for board membership, being members of fewer professional or personal networking organisations.

"in fact that one of the people we got this last time, came the through our networks with [Third Sector Support Organisation], they had approached the [Third Sector Support Organisation], said they wanted to be on a board, they live in our area, so that gave us a bit – they said have we got any vacancies on our board, and funnily enough 'that's just what we need' –so yes we were just about setting up this, our own business stuff so yes it was fortuitous."

(Chief Executive: Case Study 2)

"I was initially recruited through co-option to the board of management. A colleague of mine introduced me to [case study 2 Chief Executive] and they mentioned that they had vacancies on the board. I was then co-opted for a year and then elected by the membership of the organisation"

(Male Independent Board Member: Case Study 2)

Neither organisation used female professional networks (Chwaraeteg, Women on Boards etc.) or housing networks, such as the *"come on board"* project to identify potential female board members, or other potential candidates that would increase the diversity of the boards of the organisations. There were some concerns by both of the case study organisations that the *"come on board"* project lacked candidates with the skills and capability to undertake role on board of management, and that there was a very small pool of candidates in this project that could be drawn upon.

"Yeah, we did once when we were looking for quite a few people we were looking for a range of different skills but we were really disappointed with the quality of the..; there didn't seem to be any kind of filtering one of the requirements is that somebody is quick enough to be able to read and understand board papers and one person clearly wasn't – and they were very poor candidates. I would use it in the future, we haven't needed to and I would have a chat before we did … if we did it again"

(Chief Executive; Case Study1)

By failing to publicise the routes to involvement on boards of management, particularly for underrepresented demographics, it is inevitable that some constituencies will be missed, and other will not see the point of becoming involved at all. Both organisations had newsletters to promote involvement at the tenant or customer level, but these tended to list the opportunities available, rather than to show the outcomes of involvement, particularly at board member level. By advertising the impact and outcomes of the board of management level it may be possible to increase the type of person attracted to the board, and alter the dynamics and increase the diversity of the boards of management of these organisations.

7.4.2   Tenant Board Member Recruitment

Tenant board members are now a common feature in housing associations in Wales. All stock transfer organisations created through the LSVT process have a requirement in their rules for tenant representation on the boards of management, and rules for Local Housing Companies have allowed for tenant board membership since 1988 (see chapter 3 for more discussion on this area). Both organisations had representatives from the tenant community on their boards of management, and this represented 1/3 of the board of management in case study 1 and 28.5% in case study 2.

In both case study organisations, recruitment of tenant board members was through election by the membership of the organisation, the tenants of the organisation in both cases. It was found that turn out for the board elections was at approximately 20% for case study 1, and 15% in case study 2. All tenant board members at the time of the research had long relationships with the case study organisations, and had been involved in a variety of tenant participation groups e.g. tenant inspectors, steering group members, strategy and policy groups with the housing associations prior to their interest in joining the boards.

Both case study organisations had a *"talent management strategy"* in place to not only identify potential tenant board members, but also to develop the skills and knowledge of those tenants to get them ready to become a member of the board of management. The organisations used this identification and development process of potential tenant board members to ensure that tenants were not only aware of the responsibilities of becoming a board member, but also ensured that the tenants had an understanding of the skills required for the board, reading of board paper, questioning of information, confidence in understanding complex issues in order to be able to perform the role effectively.

At the executive level, there was clear direction from both Chief Executives of the case study organisations that tenants were not seen as *"representatives"* or *"advocates"* of the tenant body, despite the fact that in both organisations, tenant board members had been elected to the membership by the wider membership of the organisation.

> *"We don't do any day to day personalised issues at board at all it is absolutely a no-no and even if the Chair doesn't remember to stop that conversation, as soon as the Chair accepts the comment, I will jump in straight away and say 'we are not going to deal with that' – so we are very strong about that."*
>
> (Chief Executive: Case Study 1)

> *"I don't think they feel that – I think they feel that they bring something valuable from the tenant's perspective but they don't - I have never heard any of our current board members, or several before them, kind of acting as a tenant advocate role or a tenant's representative, they don't, they would not presume to represent all tenants – it just doesn't enter their heads, to be that way –they will kind of give a view on how a service or a policy might impact on tenants and for us to think about but that's, that's it you know."*
>
> (Chief Executive, Case Study2)

"Sometimes they may use a personal example to emphasise a point – that's fine –, but you know they're not here to, to air their problems there are other mechanisms and they are fully aware of those mechanisms in place – you know 'we'll deal with it in a different way, let's take that out of the meeting, we don't want to discuss it here'; if it's relevant to what we're doing 'great', yeah, but I said they are very good at keeping to the point and having those, those discussions."

(Male Senior Management Team Member: Case Study 1)

"If it's truly representative then you have to have a constituency that you refer back to, to seek the views and that as well could become 'a huge beast that needs feeding'; but, but also why? but the sort of issues that people would want you to raise wouldn't come up through board level anyway so if there are personal difficult individual situations with, say the repairs system, there are different routes for that"

(Female Senior Management Team Member: Case Study 2)

Both case study organisations used a mixture of stewardship and democracy in the selection and election for their tenant board members. Tenants were coached, mentored and supported in their training and development through the tenant participation activities to apply for election to the membership of the boards of management. In this case this could be unfavourable to opportunities to increase the levels of female tenant board membership as it is likely that they women feel uncomfortable with issues of finance, risk and development, as this is outside of their *"comfort zone"*, and are more interested in issues of housing management, customer care, community and environmental development.

Although both organisations had in place a talent management strategy to identify potential board members through the tenant participation process, potential tenants were not exposed to the full rigours of issues confronting the boards of management through this process.

The talent management strategy looked at what a board meeting was, and how a board meeting was conducted and looked at the roles of the board. It is my contention that in order to increase the profile, confidence and ability of tenants and specifically female tenant board members to participate effectively as board members, specific training is required for potential board members on issues likely to be discussed at boards, such as the intricacies of housing finance, a risk profile of the organisation etc. in order to ensure that all potential board members have the skills and knowledge to participate effectively at board level.

In looking at the gender issues of election of tenant board members to the organisations' boards, there was no indication that women missed out on becoming board members due to the election process. Both organisations were strong in their defence that the model of governance did not promote tenants as being representatives of the tenant voice at board meetings. There was no indication that tenants themselves saw themselves as the tenant voice, although personal experiences could be used to support arguments about the general levels of service delivery or service failings.

7.4.3   Local Authority Representation

Only case study 1 had a requirement in their rules for local authority representation on their board of management. This came as a result of the organisation being created through a large scale voluntary transfer from the host local authority. The organisation had no influence on the nominees from the local authority, and this was a contentious issue for the Chief Executive of the organisation, who expressed a feeling that this element of the board was *"out of his control".* At the time of the fieldwork taking place all of the nominees from the local authority were elected members and it was the ruling administrations' role to suggest and nominate the local authorities' representatives on the board of management.

At the time of the research the representatives from the local authority characterised the political make-up of the local council with; 2 representatives from the leading conservative party, 1 representative from the labour party and 1 representative from the independent section of the council. There has been change over the time of the operation of the organisation, in terms of who was nominated by the local authority to sit on case study 1's on the board of management. However, there has been substantial *"churn"* in the last 6 years, in terms of the numbers and different people being nominated to the board of management, with over 10 local authority members serving on the board of management (sometimes serving more than one term period), with all but one of the local authority representatives changed on the board of management.

The gender imbalance of female local authority members on case study 1's board of management, is characteristic of the underrepresentation of women as elected members in the in the host local authority, where women represent 1/3 of the membership. In terms of appointment to committees, however, the 25% female representation on case study 1's board of management women are over represented when compared to local elected membership gender balance of other organisations such as the Local Health Board and School Governors, where female representation is 15% and 20% respectively (Case study 1 local authority, 2014). Interestingly the appointments committee is made up exclusively of 2 male local elected members.

7.4.4   Renewal of Board Members

Case study 1 has a board renewal policy that has a maximum term of service for board members; this is set at 9 years of service. The rules of the organisation also require 1/3 of each constituent part being required to stand down – or stand for re-election or selection to the board after each year, after the first three years of existence. Since case study 1 transferred into its new identity from the local authority, there has been a significant level of turnover in the membership of the board of management.

During the fieldwork stage of the research, three members of the board of management changed as a result of the 1/3 re-election rules. A male independent board member was replaced through application, interview and selection by a female independent board member, a male tenant board member (the chair at the initiation of the research) was replaced with a female tenant board member and two local authority representatives were replaced (one male and one female, and replaced by one female and one male). Thus the gender diversity of the board of management was increased.

In case study 1, the average length of service for independent board members was 4 years, with the longest serving members being part of the board of management since the organisation had been created, approximately 6 years previous to the research taking place. The average length of service for tenant board member was 4.5 years, with 1 tenant member being on the board since the inception of the organisation. For local authority members, the average length of service was 2.75 years. During the research, at the AGM, the chair of the board of management changed, with the previous chair holding the position for 3 years (maximum term of service for the organisation under the board constitution (Case study 1, 2007).

Case study 2 had no maximum term for board members, and the average length of service for current board members was 7 years. The two newest independent board members had been in position for just over 1 year (as co-optees). The longest serving independent member of the board of management was 11 years. At the close of the fieldwork stage of the research, the Chief Executive initiated discussions at the board about changing the memorandum and articles of the organisation to introduce a set maximum board term for board members; this issue was not resolved by the conclusion of the fieldwork phase of the research.

In case study 2, the average length of service for independent board members was 7.15 years. Serving as co-optees the two newest independent board members had been in position for just over 1 year.

The longest serving independent member of the board of management was 11 years. The average length of service for tenant board members was 2. 5 years, with the longest member serving 4 years on the board of management. The chair had been in position for 18 months at the commencement of the research, in a role that was expected to last for a 3 year cycle (Case Study 2, 2010). Table 7.4 (below), indicates the comparison of average length of service between the two case study organisations.

7.4 Length of Service for Board Members for Case Study 1 and 2 (The Author, 2014)

	Case study 1	Case study 2
Under 1 year	4 (1 Independent, 1 tenant and 2 LA members)	1 (Tenant)
Under 2 years	0	3 (2 co-optee's, 1 Tenant)
Under 3 years	2 (1 LA Members/ 1 independent)	1 (1 Tenant)
Under 4 years	3 (3 tenants)	2 (1 Tenant, 1 Independent)
Between 5-10 years	4 (1 tenant, 1LA, 2 Independents)	6 (Independents)
Between 11-15 years	0	1 (independent)

The renewal and replacement of board members is strategy that can increase the diversity of boards of management in terms of equality and diversity issues. Community Housing Cymru's (2012) good practice guidance recommends the regular review and recruitment of board membership. Representatives from both organisations recognised that renewing boards was or could be advantageous to the organisation in terms of widening the gender and wider diversity of the boards of management. If opportunities for board membership do not exist then there will be fewer opportunities for potential female board members to attain these positions.

The recent consultation document on the Code of Governance for Housing Associations in Wales (Community Housing Cymru, 2014) suggests that whilst there should be recognition of the experience that board members can bring to housing associations, it is also vital that board have new members, who can bring about independent thinking and challenge to housing associations. Therefore the consultation document introduces a maximum term of 9 years' service on a board of management, with maximum terms of office of between 2 and three terms (Community Housing Cymru, 2014).

7.5   Barriers to Getting Involved and Staying Involved

From the interviews with board members in the case study organisations it was possible to identify a number of barriers to female board member membership, these barriers included; timings of meetings, hidden costs, and payment of board members.

7.5.1   Operation of Board Meetings

Case study 1 met as a full board on a quarterly basis and there were sub-group meetings on finance, operations and governance in-between these meetings. The organisation also operated a remuneration and audit/ scrutiny sub-committee, with the remuneration committee meeting on an annual basis, and the audit/scrutiny committee meeting on a quarterly basis. Reports from these meetings were discussed in an overview format at each full board meeting. The main business of the full board meetings was on the strategic policy issues facing the organisation. There was little discussion at the full board meetings of in-detail operational issues affecting the organisation. The venue for the meeting was the organisation's head office. The average length of meeting was 3.5 hours.

Membership of the sub-committees was discussed and selected at the AGM of the board, with the Chair present in all sub-committee meetings. Other board members self-nominated themselves to sitting on these sub-committees dependent on the skills, knowledge and expertise that they thought that they could bring to the discussions. There was an expectation that all board members would sit on at least one sub-committee.

Case study 2 met as a full board on a monthly basis. The organisation operated a finance sub-committee, but this met on an annual basis prior to the AGM to discuss the annual accounts of the organisation, prior to full ratification of the annual accounts at the full board. The organisation also operation a remuneration and audit/ scrutiny sub-committee, which met on an ad hoc basis. The main business of the board meetings was a mixture of discussion of the operational issues of the organisation, with some discussion on the policy and strategic direction of the organisation. The venue for the meeting was the organisation's head office. The average length of board meeting was 2 hours.

Both organisations' board discussions were facilitated by the Chairs of the board, with input from the executive team, through report presentation and answering of detailed questions. Discussions in meetings of both case study organisations were wide ranging, inviting opinion and questions from all constituent parts of the organisation. The contribution of those members of the board with expert opinion was valued and sought openly by the chair and the Senior Management Team members. It is my contention that discussion was more wide ranging in a strategic and policy development in case study 1 than in case study 2, which was more operationally focused. A discussion on the direction and power relationships displayed on the boards of management of the case study organisations is found in chapter 8 of this thesis.

Agendas for meeting in both case study organisations were set between the Chief Executive (after Senior Management Team discussion) and the Chairs. Both Chief Executives and Chairs reported that full discussions took place before the board meeting to set the agendas for the next meeting. Many of the items on both board agendas were standing items e.g. Chief Executive report, finance report, operations report etc., however in case study 1 the reporting of performance against corporate objectives and business planning was also set as a distinct standing agenda item.

The majority of the reports presented in case study 1 were marked for *"information", "discussion"* or *"decision",* this was not the case in case study two, where on one occasion after a wide ranging discussion on an operational issue, the Chair of the board ceased discussion and asked the Chief Executive whether it the issue was information, discussion or a decision.

Board papers were in case study 1 prioritised on the agenda in terms of; information, decision and discussion. I observed no prioritisation in case study 2 for the presentation of papers to board. In one occasion at case study 1, I observed that agenda items were re-prioritised in order that a specific member of the board was present for a discussion (having indicated that they would need to leave early for an appointment). On case study 2, I noted that the agenda was reorganised when the Chair noted the time, and that they hadn't got to a specific item on the agenda where time was needed for discussion, and as a consequence another (discussed between the Chair and the Chief executive and considered of less importance) agenda item was noted to board members as for information and if there were any questions these should be directed to the report author after the meeting.

In both case study organisations, papers for board meetings were sent out at least one week in advance of the board meeting and were *"drop-boxed"* to board members, in order that they were able to view the papers electronically over their tablet/ laptop devices. Both case study organisations undertook business planning and strategy development days, events with their board members. No events of this kind took place during the fieldwork stage of the research; therefore no evidence is available as to how these days operated and the level of participation from different constituent parts or genders on the boards.

7.5.2 Timings of Meetings

A barrier to the involvement of women in boards of management was the timing and frequency of the meetings.

Case study 1 held their board meetings in the day time (generally starting with lunch at 1pm and concluding at approximately 4pm). Female board members commented that this could preclude the attendance of more women (particularly tenant board members, and women who were working (particularly if they were working in roles which did not allow for time off for them to fulfil their roles on the board). When discussing the timing of the board meetings with the Senior Management Team members, they stated that they were aware that the timing of the meetings could be a barrier to involvement of women on the board of management, but that as the organisation had always had board meetings in the day it was deemed as custom and practice and that any potential board members were made aware of the timings of meeting at the time of application. Meetings started with a buffet lunch, which was seen by the organisation as a way of promoting opportunities for networking and socialising between board members and the executive team.

In case study 2, board meetings and sub-committee meetings were held in the evening, between 6pm and 8pm. Meetings started with a buffet, which was seen by the organisation as a way of promoting opportunities for networking and socialising between board members and the executive team. Many of the board members (particularly female board members) stated that they preferred the meetings in the evening, as they were able to attend work during the day, and this meant that they did not have to take time out to attend meetings.

One male board member, however stated that having board meetings in the evenings meant that there was a heavier burden on his partner in child care responsibilities, and that monthly it meant that he was not able to undertake caring responsibilities for his children. In this organisation, the frequency of meetings (monthly) meant that there was more commitment required from all board members.

7.5.3 Hidden Costs

Both organisations paid board members out-of-pocket expenses for their attendance at board meetings. However, these expenses were primarily in relation to travel expenses for attending meetings. Other out of pocket expenses, such as for the provision of child care, or care for elderly or disabled relatives were not available to board members. The payment of out of pocket expenses for board members for this provision was not an explicit decision, but implied, and no board member had challenged this decision. This can be prohibitive for females wanting to participate on boards of management, and this could be seen as particularly prohibitive for young females who typically have responsibilities for child care or care for elderly relatives. The provision of caring costs could be seen as divisive between male and female board members, and also tenant and independent board members.

A number of female tenant board members stated that there were hidden costs to being a board member in the interviews undertaken. Particularly female board members stated that that attending conferences on behalf of the organisation could be costly in terms of making sure that they had clothes appropriate to the occasion, and the costs of attending training courses or conferences (often held in hotels), as refreshments outside of the main meetings were expensive. In addition to the financial costs, a number of females also stated that attending conferences away from home meant that they had to find child care or other caring costs for a number of days whilst they were representing the board.

Other members stated that they had lost income, or had had to take leave in order to attend these events on behalf of the organisation.

7.5.4   Payment of Board Members

Payment of board members for housing associations in Wales is not currently permitted, however, the Essex Review in 2008, considered the payment of board members and decided that separate consultation should be carried out by the Welsh Government on whether individual housing associations should have the freedom to make a payment to board members for time and commitment.
This is currently being considered as part of the Community Housing Cymru consultation onto the Code of Governance for Housing Associations in Wales (2014) (see chapter 3 and 6). In 2003, the Housing Corporation (in England) allowed for the payment of board members. It was intended that this would compensate for loss of earnings and any out of pocket expenses, attract board members with skills that were increasingly needed for more complex tasks that boards were facing. The Welsh Government is currently consulting on the remuneration of board members of housing associations (Welsh Government, 2014 (a)). The Welsh Government are seeking views in two particular areas relating to the remuneration of board members; the draft guidance itself, and secondly; whether the Welsh Government should specify the maximum amount of remuneration that the can be paid to board members (Welsh Government, 2014 (a)).

When both board members and executives were asked about the payment of board members, there was a split in opinion. The Chief Executive of case study 1 was in favour of the payment of board members, as it was thought that it would increase the availability of people who would not be interested in board membership without adequate compensation for their time and expertise, and interestingly, increase their competitiveness with housing associations from over the nearby boarder with England, some of which were paying board members. Some board members of case study 1 were in favour of payment to board members. The board members stated that the payment would ensure that they would be compensated for their time and commitment to being a board member.

However, the Chief Executive of case study 2, and the majority of board members stated that they were against the payment of board members as this would undermine the voluntary nature of the housing association sector, would have an unequal impact on tenants entitlement to benefits, and finally that it would attract the "wrong type" of person to the board.

Board members in case study 2 had mixed opinions on the payment of board members, in particular, one female board member reported that they were spending up to 46 days per year on board meetings and board related activities, with no remuneration for loss of earnings.

The differences in the attitude to the payment of board members in the two case study organisations closely relates to the findings of the sector study on governance (Miljevic et al, 2013), which found that there were variances in opinion on the payment of board members. Miljevic et al found that there were a range of views expressed about the desirability of payment of board members which on occasion was diametrically opposed across the sector.

Miljevic highlighted the concerns by some board members on the about the operation of the tax and benefit systems, and principled concerns on individuals' motivations to serve as board members out of selflessness as has traditionally been the case, rather than if payments were introduced, because of the actual payment. This concern also relates to the nature and positioning of housing associations as hybrid organisations, are they public, third or private sector organisations and the roles that they perform in the delivery of public and social policy (see chapter 4 and chapter 6) that operating within the public and third sectors, the values that the organisation displays to the local community and their tenants.

Miljevic also found that on the other hand, a number of board members said that the demands on them and their time were now well beyond what was reasonable for unpaid volunteers (and that this predisposed the role being more attractive to people who had retired). In the sector governance study, board members and executives in favour of having the choice argued that it would allow them more easily to recruit specialist skills to their boards. Those in favour also argued that it would allow those elements of the governance framework underpinning individual effectiveness – appraisal, and learning and development commitments – to be more robust.

7.6   Prevailing Board Cultures

Within the board of management of the two case study organisations different cultures were evident, reflecting the individual members and the organisation that they served on. In case study 1, board members felt that the organisation was commercially and business focussed, with the main culture of the board being *"challenging"* and *"debating"* the decisions of the executive team that were presented in board papers. Whilst there were tensions between the board and the executive team, these were minor in relation to issues of governance of the organisation. This is in contrast to case study 2, where it was noted by board members that the board was *"inclusive"* and *"cosy"* in the nature, with little challenge to the decisions of the executive presented in board papers.

In both organisations there was little evidence of clashes of personality on the boards of management, and there were few tensions in terms of governance in general or succession of board members.

The views of boards of management in both case study organisations are very closely aligned to the prevailing management cultures of the two organisations considered in chapter 6. It is my contention that the cultures of the boards were shaped by the prevailing organisational and management cultures of the organisation, as board members were recruited by the executive members of the case study organisations.

It is also my contention that the boards did little to challenge the prevailing cultures of the organisation, or the management culture. Whilst the culture of the board in case study 1 was challenging, it would also perceive that this was a more open culture, and could be seen as a more inviting to potential and new recruits to the board, whereas the tightknit inclusive cosy culture of case study 2 could be seen as daunting and exclusive to potential and new board members.

In case study 1 where there was a more business like focus, the board members felt that there was a lack of connection to the tenants and the communities that they served, this was also indicated in comments from some of the board members that the location of the head office of the organisation, located on a business park, was divorced from the communities that they served. However, board members did not feel that this was of detriment to the decisions made by the board, and the decision making processes.

> *"I think we're continually trying to focus on the commercial future of the organisation, not where we are now, but where the organisation will be in 3 or 5 years' time"*
>
> (Male Chair – Independent Board Member; Case Study 1)

In case study 2, where there was a more inclusive nature of the board, board members felt that there was a close connection the tenants and the communities that they served, and that the opportunity to visit estates and feel the impact of the decisions that they made on the tenants and communities was positive. Board members also commented that the location of the head office in the centre of the community that the organisation served also kept the board grounded in the local community.

> *"(it's the) whole ethos, 'respect; empowerment; openness; transparency; and we're all in this together' kind of ethos, so you know that's kind of culture."*
>
> (Female Chair – Independent Board Member: Case Study 2)

In both case study organisations, during the observational stage of the research, there were several agenda items relating to the extension of services beyond the remit of the organisations and the creation of social enterprises. The approach of case study 1 was that the creation of the social enterprise (subsidiary installing and maintaining PV panels) was on a commercial footing, with the provision of services to other housing associations and the private sector. The development of this new social enterprise had been taken prior to the commencement of the fieldwork; however, the decision to pursue this option was taken by the senior management of the organisation. In case study 2, the development of the social enterprise (a social lettings agency) was much more aligned to the provision of services within the local community, and an alternative lettings model, which would be of benefit to the local community and those individuals which they couldn't accommodate through their lettings / allocation policy. Again, the decision to pursue the creation of this social enterprise had been taken prior to the commencement of the research, but had been enacted by decisions of the senior management team rather than in discussions at board level.

In discussions at case study 1 board meetings, discussions on the creation of the social enterprise were aligned to the risk and financial viability of the subsidiary in relation to the impact that it could have on the housing association. These discussions were initiated by board members who wanted to ensure that the creation of the new organisation would not have a risk or financial implication on the housing associations core business remit. Board members questioned how the new entity would operate, how board members of the housing association would have an influence on the social enterprise and also whether the social enterprise would have any liabilities to the housing association.

The process of the creation, management and direction of the subsidiary were strongly directed by the executive team of the housing association and board members were informed in no uncertain terms that it would be the executive of the housing association that would direct the social enterprise. After negotiation with the board it was agreed that the board would receive reports on the operation of the social enterprise. In this case the board members reluctantly acknowledged that their roles were redundant in relation to the creation of this subsidiary social enterprise, although at the same time emphasising the point that it was still the responsibility of the board to look after the interest of the housing association.

In direct comparison, there were no discussions to the risk and financial viability of the social enterprise in case study 2, but deliberations concentrated on how the social enterprise would fit into the ethos of the housing association. The executive of the organisation were open and willing to inform the board on the operation of the social enterprise, which the board accepted would be fine.

So what does this say about the influence of the organisational culture and the prevailing board culture on the successful recruitment, retention and participation and involvement of female board members? It is my contention that the *"fit"* between personal beliefs and the beliefs, vision and values of the organisation will be the key to ensuring and increasing female representation on boards of management of housing associations. There was a clear synergy between the cultures of the organisation and the cultures of the board in both case study organisations in the research. If potential female board members feel *"comfortable"* with the organisation to which they are applying, selected or elected to join, then their participation will be meaningful and successful, if there is no *"fit"* then the relationship will break down.

Looking across both organisations, the descriptions attempt to capture the key aspects of the prevailing board culture pertinent to this study, are namely; values, power and organisational structures (Jonson and Scholes, 1992, Gregory, 1983, Schein, 1981). As with the prevailing management cultures considered in chapter 6, trying to find the appropriate terminology to capture the essence of the common cultural characteristics across the two case study organisations was challenging. Words like *"corporate"* and *"commercial"* seemed to aptly describe the identity and values of the board of management in case study 1, along with the dominant management culture of the organisation. The board also seemed to be *"challenging"* in their culture, ensuring that they got the information that they needed to make the right decisions from the executive management team. Whilst in case study 2, *"empowerment"* and *"accountability"* seem aptly to identify the values and the cultures of both the board of management and the board of management.

In addition, I would also categorise the board as *"comfortable"*, in that they did not actively challenge the executive in terms of information provided to them. Interpretations of the key descriptors in relation to the prevailing management and board cultures are illustrated in table 7.5 below.

Table 7.5 – Comparison of Cultural Variance between Prevailing Management and Board Cultures in Case Study Organisations (The Author, 2014)

Case Study 1 Management Cultures	Case Study 1 Board Cultures	Case Study 2 Management Cultures	Case Study 2 Board Cultures
• Corporate focus • Commercial outlook • Commercial viability • Strategic accountability • Visionary • Centralised top-down management • Policy and Procedure • Promoting cultural homogeneity • Regional	• Financial responsibility • Risk management • Commercial edge • Regional with local community links • Strategy • Paternalism • Challenging	• Empowerment focus • Accountability outlook • Financial stability and growth • Links and heritage • Practical • Decentralised "middle out" management • Policies and procedures • Encouraging customer focus • Local	• Functional management • Accountability • Local community roots and commercial viability • Partnership • Customer • Comfortable

7.7 Conclusions

Having discussed the background to the case study organisations to help inform the empirical findings and analysis in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter was to address the governance arrangements and board cultures of the two case study organisations.

In particular to uncover the board composition and diversity of the boards of management of the two case study organisations and recruitment strategies, and the influence that this has on the levels of female participation on the boards of management. Secondly, the chapter analyses the prevailing governance structures of the organisation and the prevailing cultures of the boards of management are uncovered.

In relation to the objectives of the research (considered in Chapter 1), this chapter has discussed the empirical research and findings in relation to two areas, outlined below (table 7.6).

Table 7.6 – Key Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Uncover the board composition and diversity and how recruitment strategies influence female participation and barriers to involvement
Identify the governance structures and prevailing board culture of the case study organisations and how they influence female participation

My research shows that boards of the two case study organisations included in the empirical research are not diverse in their membership in relation to gender, and other equality areas, and as such do not reflect the areas and communities that they serve. The research has also shown that the models for recruitment to boards of management can act against female membership, as organisations such as housing associations are increasingly focused on issues of finance, risk, legal issues and development – all areas where females are less likely to be employed or have the skills, knowledge and experience to be seen to be appropriate appointments for the organisation.

The recruitment processes of housing associations can also act against females being appointed to housing association boards of management, especially if the recruitment processes rely on informal and personal networks, as in the case of case study 2. The open recruitment and advertising of board member opportunities, in my opinion will lead to more balanced boards of housing associations in the future. The selecting and targeting of female professional networks for recruitment advertisements will also increase the opportunities for housing associations to increase the gender diversity of their boards of management.

The research also identified a number of barriers for female involvement in board membership particularly in relation to timings of meetings, hidden costs and payment of board members. Many of these barriers are at the directive of the housing associations themselves, especially the timings of meetings and also support to remove hidden costs, and whilst these were noted and acknowledged by the housing associations in the research, neither organisation had sought to remove these potential barriers to board membership. There was a difference between the two housing associations in their perception of payment of board members, with the executive and board members in case study 1 being more amenable to the issues, in light of the ability to attract high-flying and more professional board members in the future, whilst case study 2, both the executive and the board thought that this would be detrimental to attracting the right kind of person to the board. The issue of payment of board members is currently being consulted on with the membership of Community Housing Cymru (2014) and by Welsh Government (2014 (a)), and whilst this may encourage recruitment to housing association boards of management, this will also be at the discretion of individual housing associations.

The research also identified that board renewal policies can act against the inclusion of women on boards. If board vacancies do not become available, and then women will not have the opportunity to apply or be considered to these positions.

The current consultation by Community Housing Cymru on the Code of Governance for Housing Associations in Wales (2014) seeks to rectify this issue with the introduction of maximum terms of service for housing association board members, however, the introduction of this policy across housing associations in Wales will take time to embed and therefore it is likely that the membership of housing association boards will remain stable for some time to come. Case study 1, where there was a maximum term of service for board members has indicated that there is the potential for the maintenance of skills and knowledge within the board membership, but also has allowed opportunities for increased gender balance within the organisation. In case study 2, where there is no maximum service for board members, has meant that the organisation has had little turn over in board members in the last 5 years, which has resulted in a cosy and inclusive board culture. The organisation has increased the gender diversity of the board through the co-option of two board members, but they remain as co-optees until a board vacancy becomes available.

The research found that there was a clear difference between the two case study organisations in the roles of the board. In case study 1 there was a clearer board strategy in relation to the functions of the board as providing strategic and generative *"performance"* role, driving the organisation forward. Whilst in case study 2, a conformance, fiduciary and strategic role was more in evidence. The role of the boards on the research, clearly links to the organisational positioning and organisational culture (discussed in chapter 6), as well as the prevailing board cultures of the organisation (discussed in this chapter) as well as debates around motivations for board membership and power dynamics displayed at the board level (discussed in chapter 8).

There was a clear difference between the two organisations in terms of the prevailing board cultures in operation in the boards of management, with case study 1 showing a more challenging and strategic culture of the board of management, in contrast to the cosy and comfortable inclusive culture of the board of case study 2.

The research also shows that there is a clear fit between the prevailing management culture of the organisations (discussed in chapter 6) and that of the boards of management. It is my contention that due to the recruitment processes, the executive management are in control of the culture of the board of management within the two case study organisations, even when there is open recruitment and selection of new board members. It is also my contention that whilst the board culture of case study 2 is more cosy and inclusive, this could be detrimental to including new board members in wanting to join the board, especially as many of the board members have been in place for long periods of time and *"changing the rules of the game"* (discussed in more detail in power relationships in chapter 8 of this thesis).

The next chapter turns to the issues of motivations for participation of board members on the boards of management, and the power dynamics in action on these boards and their influence of female representation on the boards of management of these two case study organisations.

Chapter 8 – Motivations and Experience of Board Membership

8.1   Introduction

The previous chapter (seven) considered the governance arrangements of the two case study organisations the in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to address the issues of motivation, power dynamics and participation and empowerment of board members in the two case study organisations. In particular the chapter has two main themes around which the findings of the study are analysed. This first addresses the motivations of participation from the perspective of members of the boards of management of the two case study organisations, establishing the differences in motivations of male and female boards of management. Secondly the chapter analyses the power dynamics in relation to: power dynamics of the executive and the board, and power dynamics of the constituent parts of the board, and the opportunities for participation and empowerment of board members.

Details from the in-depth interviews with board members and members of the senior management team, as well as those from key informants in the housing and third sector community inform the empirical findings in the research. By taking all of these distinct elements of methodology together, this leads to a broader, more balanced and comprehensive picture of the motivations and the power dynamics which affect female participation on the two case study housing association boards of management.

8.2   Motivations for Involvement

The importance of housing to an individual was established in chapter two of this thesis, where it considered the position of women in relation to their consumption of housing, and the different meanings, interpretations and values of the home for men and women.

The role of women in their consumption of housing and the meanings of home is an ideal arena in which to focus on the role of women as citizens more closely. The chapter also considered the patriarchal origins of women's inequality in society and considered feminist criticisms that mainstream society, participation and consumption is founded on male values, the structure which continues to maintain and perpetuate male dominance.

The chapter also examined women's position in the management of social housing organisations, the patriarchal nature of these organisations and women's dominance in lower level management positions, and positions in relation to community and housing management. The chapter went on to consider women's position in the public and private spheres of society in the wider context of women's *"second class citizenship"*, the involvement of women in tenant participation activities, and wider involvement in local and neighbourhood groups and considers that such participation was located within the broader theoretical and political contexts of women's equality.

Research suggests that women's access to local networks are stronger for women than men (see Russell, 1999; Dominelli, 1990; Lovenduski and Randall, 1993; Halford 1992; Emmanuel, 1993; Lowndes, 2000; Gleb, 1988; Mies, 1986; Randall 1982). Dominelli on her work on community action states:

"Women's life in the community is immersed in social relationships aimed at meeting the needs of others and mediating with state agencies, on their behalf. Family life is central to those activities, so it's not surprising that women who undertake community action organise around issues such as day care facilities, housing, school closures road widening schemes, rights to incomes and rights to jobs, which facilitate their obligations as grandmothers, mothers, wives and daughters"

(Dominelli, 1990; 3)

From the empirical research conducted it was found that the majority of board members, senior management team members of the two case study organisations and key informants within the third sector housing support organisations and Welsh Government believed that there were differences in the way that women and men experience social housing, and as a consequence their opportunities for participation within the decision making structures (boards of management of these organisations).

"Women were organising themselves on the ground you know way before the men were, you know take (place) in education, they were are the forefront, they had a college just down the road but, you know, the men didn't want them to go to college, no, so they brought the college to the community and they were doing things like numeracy and stuff like that and women were talking about credit unions, borrowing money – they set up the credit union; and they used the men to do that because the men were in power at the time you know"

(Female Director, 3rd Sector Organisation);

"A lot of the drive and the emphasis and the policy change would be from women and women movements and like that, and it's still very much like that."

(Male Director, 3rd Sector Organisation);

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"but again if you look at tenants movements you know I think women have always played probably a more important role than men - a lot of some of the key people like (name), (name) and (name) - all of the leaders of the tenants movements people like (name)

(Male Director, 3rd Sector Organisation);

"a lot of the groups have been sustained by the role of women"

(Male Director, 3rd Sector Organisation).

Interviews with all board members contained a question about what had motivated them to become board members within their organisations. Interestingly, the comments gained from the interviews on these motivations had consistency in terms of gender and age of the board members. Typically motivations board member participation were categorised as:

• Women participated out of a concern for their local communities and inhabitants; they were thought to be more concerned with the domestic arena, the condition of the estates, women's safety issues;

• Men regarded participation as an opportunity to exercise a degree of power and consider it as an arena in which to command a certain status, to increase career opportunities.

An opinion was also expressed that men, once they are retired or become unemployed, had a desire to replace that activity and often saw board membership as a route to achieving that. Female retirees on the boards saw it as a chance to give something back and pass on their vast range of knowledge and expertise in the housing and community area.

A widespread perception amongst respondents was that women's participation was *"more genuine"* and *"less selfish"* in nature than men's participation on the boards of management. It was believed by both the board members themselves, members of the Senior Management Team, members of third sector housing support organisations and Welsh Government, that women had a greater interest in the social aspect, and in working collectively as a team as members of the boards of management. It was perceived on the other hand that male board members were considered to be far more self-oriented than women in their motivations for board membership;

> *"men get involved for much more selfish and self-centred position whilst women do what's best for them and their communities they are less selfish than men, although is selfishness to a degree in both cases. What I'm trying to say is that women see the wider picture which involves doing their best for the local community."*
>
> > (Male Senior Management Team Member: Case Study 2)

> *"Why did I become involved? Well I've always been involved in groups and the like and it gave me a chance to give something back to the local community"*
>
> > (Female Tenant Board Member, Case Study 2)

> *"I was asked by a college would I like to join the board of (Case Study1), they were advertising and I thought that it would look good on my CV"*
>
> > (Male Independent Board Member, Case Study 1)

I wanted to see what voluntary activities these board members undertook in addition to the engagement in the boards of management of the case study organisations. I looked therefore at their involvement in their local area, street and community; in other agencies and other committee work other than the case study housing associations, in order to develop a picture of where these board members were on the citizenship model of involvement.

Just under half of all of board members stated that they were involved in non-housing activity across a wider range of interests in the community including; school governors, social committees, disability groups, Credit Unions, Primary Care Trusts, Women's Institutes, Crime Concern or Charity Fundraising. The majority of these people involved in the *"other activities"* were male, with around one quarter of those involved in other activities being the female board members. In terms of tenants on the boards of management, the majority were still involved with their landlord at a local, panel, forum or area level.

Table 8.1 Different Non-Housing Board Activities Undertaken By Male and Female Board Members (The Author, 2014)

	Male	Female
School Governor	3	0
Disability Group	0	1
Charity Fundraising	1	2
Professional related Organisations[10]	3	2
Credit Unions	0	1
Primary Care Trusts	2	0
Crime Prevention/ Neighbourhood watch	3	2

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[10] (including WI, Soroptomists, Round Table, Lions International and Masons)

Citizens themselves have a choice as to whether participate with an organisation or not. Society comprises of a wide variety of citizens and in order to discuss the differences in participation a model of citizen participation (based on readings including Satori, 1987; Barber, 1984; Smith, 1981; Hill, 1974). This can be seen as a useful accompaniment to the work of Arnstein (1976) that it considers the issue of motivations for participation from the citizen rather the organisations perspective. This model does not seek to be exhaustive, but aims to illustrate the main approaches to participation.

Figure 8.1 Citizens Model of Participation (Satori, 1987; Barber, 1984; Smith, 1981; Hill, 1974)

	Citizenship status	Citizenship sub-status
Citizen Control	active citizen	altruistic citizen
		selfish citizen
Citizen Participation	contented citizen	
	apathetic citizen	
	cynical citizen	
	anti-system citizen	
Citizen Non-Participation	ignorant citizen	
	bewildered citizen	

It is my conclusion that all board members were at the citizen control level of participation, categorised as *"active citizens"*, and with analysis of interviews with male and female board members, there was a difference between whether they were an altruistic or selfish citizen. I would contend that the majority of the female board members would fall into the altruistic citizen and male board members would fall into the selfish citizen category.

8.3 Making a Difference

The research also looked at board members' experiences in relation to the outcomes of their participation in a personal, professional capacity and for the organisations. Again there was a strong correlation between gender and the outcomes noted, with female participants noting the outcomes for the organisation rather than in a personal or professional capacity. Many of the outcomes noted by the independent board members were in a personal professional capacity, or for the organisation, whilst tenant board members noted that there were a number of areas where they had brought issues to the attention of the board and organisation for the betterment of the community and the tenant body.

The categories of responses can be loosely divided into the following headings: personal qualities and actions; structural mechanisms that make a difference; activities in the community and policy issues.

8.3.1 Personal Qualities and Actions;

A number of board members noted that as a result of their participation on the board of management of the two case study organisation they had developed skills in relation to their personal qualities and skills. Many of these comments were gender neutral in their ascription; which included issues relating to;

- Developed professional networks and relationships
- Improved levels of confidence
- Improved softer skills such as negotiation
- Learning and development opportunities
- Better understanding of the third sector

> *"Persistence and believing that you can make a difference"*
>
> (Female Tenant Board Member, Case Study 1)

> *"Feeling that you have a voice that can be heard"*
>
> (Female Tenant Board Member Case Study 2)

"Putting pressure on the organisation to listen to you as a professional and having expertise in an area".

(Female Independent Board Member Case Study 1)

"Developing my softer skills in terms of negotiation etc. This has improved my confidence in a professional setting"

(Female Independent Board Member, Case Study 2)

"Getting to grips with other organisations governance and finance structures"

(Male Independent Board Member, Case Study 1)

"Learning about myself and the skills and knowledge I've built up here to take me into different career path"

(Male Independent Member, Case Study 1)

"Developing my leadership and negotiation skills"

(Male Independent Board Member, Case Study 2)

8.3.2 Structural Mechanisms That Make a Difference;

Many board members interpreted this in the way that the board and or the case study organisations were contributing to the housing sector in Wales. Many of these comments were gender neutral in their ascription; which included issues relating to;

- Estate and housing management issues
- Policy issues
- Practice issues
- Allocation of resources
- Change management
- Monitoring and continuous improvement:

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"Having a say in strategic decisions that affect people's lives"

(Male Independent Board Member, Case Study 1)

"Discussing the rents and allocations policy"

(Female Independent Board Member, Case Study 1)

"Having a say as an organisation on welfare reform and its implications on our tenants"

(Female Independent Board Member, Case Study 2)

8.3.3 Activities in the Community

A number of female board members and in particular tenant board members noted that they had developed and understood about other areas including:

- Community regeneration activities of the housing associations
- Meeting the tenants of the housing associations
- Making a difference outside of the formal business of the housing association

"We visited schemes that most of us didn't know about"

(Female Tenant Board Member, Case Study 2)

"Keeping tenants informed of their rights"

(Male Tenant Board Member, Case Study 1)

One female independent board member had a particular empowering experience:

"Having visited xx and yy on a board day out, we learned of a lot of issues at face value, and we saw different areas and problems, and where the money was needed to be spent to modernise those properties in poor repair".

(Female Independent Board Member, Case Study 1)

8.3.4 Policy Issues

Many female board members stated that they thought that they had made a difference in areas related to equality and diversity, not only by being on the board, but in policies adopted by the organisations. Two members specifically mentioned the complaints policy and also the standard of workmanship carried out by contractors. One other board member (female) stated that there had been a difference because of her interactions on how the organisation had dealt with welfare reform *"I've been part of the WG welfare reform working group – so I was specifically able to have my say on how we dealt with this going forward as an organisation, and the case study information and research that was coming from the assembly"*.

8.4 Power Relationships on the Boards

I will now turn to findings on power dynamics that operate within the boards of management of the two case study housing associations. Observations were undertaken primary to research the board dynamics displayed within both case study organisations and also the reveal the map the interactions between board members, in terms of levels of interactions and the types of interactions. There were three notable areas of interest which arose as a result of the observational research which includes:

- Power dynamics of the executive and the board
- Power dynamics of the constituent parts of the board, and,
- Gendered Power Dynamics

The chair of Case Study 2 summed up the views of power dynamics of board meetings;

> "I think power – is different, it depends on different subjects and different things and it, different aspects sit in different places and I think it moves around, it's a bit like a blob of mercury you know it's moving around on the table ..I think."

<div align="right">(Chair: Case Study2)</div>

8.4.1   Power Relationships between the Executive and The Board

Whilst chapter seven looked at the roles of the boards as a whole, this section now looks in detail at the role of the Chair within the management of board meetings. Both the Welsh Government (2010 (b)) and Community Housing Cymru (2012, 2014) see that the role of the Chair is to provide a driving role in how the board manages its work, how members of the board engage with each other and the quality and level of the debate had. The Chief Executives and Senior Management Team members of both case study organisations were of the opinion that the chairs very much led the board, rather than the executive team.

When looking at the issues of leadership of the board of management there was an interesting split between representatives from the Welsh Government and the third sector support organisations and the interviewees from the case study organisations in terms of who they thought had the control at board meetings. Interviewees from Welsh Government Regulation department very much stated that Chairs of the board should lead not only the discussions and the board meetings themselves, but that they should also take an active role in the leadership of the organisation. The views of the respondents from the third sector organisations were a little less sure about the accountability of the chair and board members played out in reality against the theory of boards, whilst respondents from the case study organisations very definitively stated that the chairs and the board led the organisations;

"We very much see that the role of the chair is key in the good governance of housing associations in Wales. Chairs should have a good relationship with both the executive team and the board that they are leading"

(Member of the Welsh Government Housing Regulation team)

"There is the potential for them [board members] to be led by the executive team rather than the actual board itself. So for me I think that, you know that raises a number of issues about whether or not they are in fact in a position to provide adequate governance and leadership and challenge to the executive team in terms of delivering the core strategy mission directive of the organisation."

(Male Director: 3rd Sector organisation)

"yes it is mixed I still think some things are tokenistic about how much control they [Board Members] actually have but it is sometimes about how much some of those people on the board want to have control as well and about how much time they can give to running an organisation or are they just keeping an oversight"

(Female Director: 3rd Sector organisation)

"The Chair – yeah – very much the Chair and then whoever's got reports to present will present those reports, and will get questioned on those reports, but the Chair is the one who kind of leads it – directs the business of the board and brings things together, and sums up and that sort of thing. We would jump in if there was sometimes it seemed, that perhaps people weren't getting it, but other than that we leave it to the Chair."

(Chief Executive: Case Study 1)

"Reports are presented by the executive team or a specific staff member and the chair and the board very much run the meetings and the discussion - so we are very strong about that."

<div align="right">(Chief Executive: Case Study 2)</div>

It is my contention that the role of the chair is critical to the effectiveness of the board. Although evidence from the interviews was that the Chair of the boards ran the meetings, my observation of board meetings within both case studies was that the chairs of both case study organisations facilitated the board meetings, rather than lead the board. There was very little evidence from my observations or interviews with the Chairs and the Executive Teams that the Chairs ran the meetings, in that they set the agendas for the meetings, the timings of the meetings and the order of agenda items to be discussed.

Whilst both Chief Executive's and Chairs met prior to the board meetings to set the agendas for the board meetings, on a number of occasions in my observations, I observed the Chair and the Chief Executives having very quick *"planning"* meetings to discuss the running orders of the agendas, where there had been last minute changes to reports being presented at the board meetings.

" I would say very definitely that the chair of the board leads the [board] meetings….and leads the organisation in terms of strategic direction….I [Chief Executive] am responsible for implementing the strategy and the operational elements of the organisation"

<div align="right">(Chief Executive: Case Study 1)</div>

"Apart from the initial meeting after the AGM, where we have to re-elect or elect new executive officers on the board, the chair very definitely runs the board meetings"

<div align="right">(Chief Executive: Case Study2)</div>

Case study 1 had a male chair of the board of management; however, during the observation the Chair of the Board changed half way through the primary research, which gave the research the opportunity to observe two different styles of chairing. In both instances in case study 1, the chair of the board was male, although changing from a tenant member to an independent member. Case study 2 had a female chair of the board of management, who had held the role for a period of two years prior to the research taking place.

In looking at the way that the chair facilitated the meetings, there was a clear difference between the two case study organisations, especially when there was a tenant board member as chair within case study 1.

The Chair displayed very masculine characteristics in terms of autocratic leadership of the board of management and also displayed sexist behaviours in referring to female officers and other members of the board often referring to them as *"love"* or *"the lovely [x] will now present the report on [y]"*. At no point did any member of the board or management or the executive team challenge this behaviour, although the Chief Executive of the case study organisation did state that he was hoping that with the change in chairship at the board, there would be a more professional attitude to the running of the board. I took this to mean that he was not happy with the way that the previous chair had led the board meetings. However, after the change in chair, there was more comparability between the styles of chairing between the two chairs of the organisations (both independent board members).

In the case of the independent board members chairing (in the second part of the research for case study 1) there was far more considered and inclusive management traits displayed by the chairs. With both of the chairs inviting additional comments from anyone who had not spoken on a topic or agenda item after the debate had finished.

Both Chairs also made sure that all members of the board who wanted to contribute were allowed to contribute on an equal footing in the meeting, often identifying behaviours with in board members who wanted to interact but could not interrupt the flow of the conversation. Both Chairs were also observed taking time to try to speak to all board members either prior or after the board meeting.

"I've a very open style to my chair-ship of the meetings – which I've just adapted from my professional background and management style"

(Chair: Case Study 1)

"that's the way I would manage my senior management team when I was a chief executive; I didn't like hierarchies – I try to have as close, as flatter structure as possible – so just hierarchies, power and authority, …that's my sort of personality, and that's the way I think you get the best out of people yes when I've chaired other things, that's the way I try to do to make sure that people will contribute and yeah."

(Chair: Case Study 2)

In mapping where Chairs and Chief Executive s of the Case Study organisations sat at the board meetings of both case study organisations there was clearly a *"team"* presence, with the Chief Executive and Chair of the board sitting at the head of the table. In case study 1 the executive team sat in one block at the other end of the table from the CEO/Chair *"team"*, and in case study 2 the remainder of the leadership team sat at various distributed locations around the table. The executive/ leadership officers did not actively choose these seats, as these were the only seats left after the other constituent parts of the board had seated themselves.

Figure 8.2 Executive/ Board Member Seating Locations (The Author 2014)
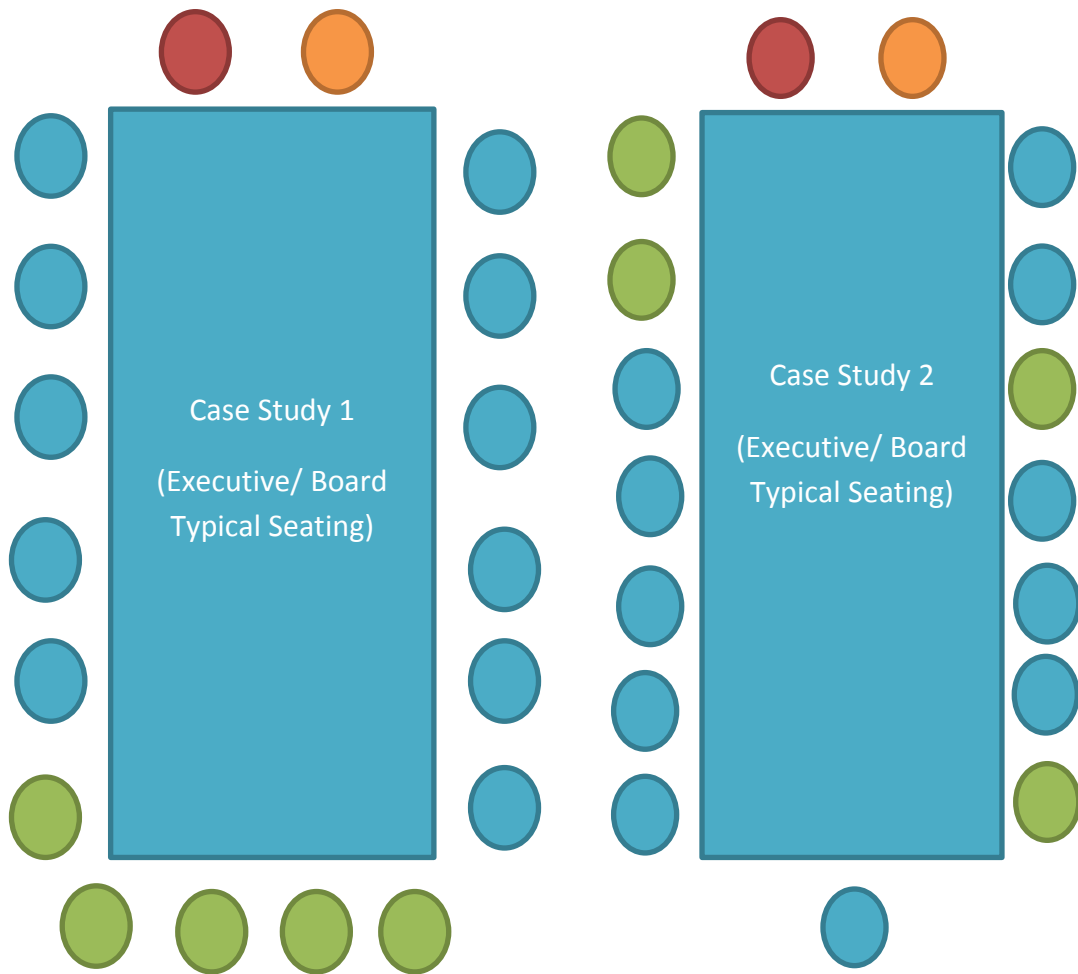
Key:	
Orange	Chair
Red	Chief Executive
Blue	Board Members
Green	Senior Management Team/ Executive Officers

In both case study organisations, members of the executive or leadership were one of the last of arrivals at the meeting, and the last to leave after the conclusion of business of the board meeting. In both case study organisations, members of the executive/ leadership teams spent time after the meeting networking with independent board members either prior to the meeting or at the conclusion of the meeting.

8.4.2 Power Relationships between the Constituent Parts of the Boards

Over the period of the research, I was able to observe the power dynamics between the different constituent parts of the boards in the two case study organisations. It is the common contention that independent board members are the power holders in terms of leading discussions at board level, and that many tenants either said very little or were prone to making contributions that were off the point and were too related to their own specific concerns. The Audit Commission Study (2004) and the Griffiths Report (2008) both stated that tenants were not clear about their roles and responsibilities as board members, and stated that senior staff felt that tenants did not conduct themselves appropriately and were prone to parochialism.

Both of the Senior Management Teams attending board meetings in the two case study organisations stated that there was a tendency for tenant board members to say very little from one meeting to the next, and that tenant board members were unable to or reluctant to comment on issues unless they related to their own estates/ areas, or housing management issues. Some staff also commented that tenants tended to use the board as an arena for raising concerns about the failings at an operational level, and were unable to convert these individual issues into general themes that could be addressed. It should be noted that from my observations at board level, that staff did not generally explain this to tenants to help them see how individual issues could be converted to issues of principle.

However at the executive level, there was clear direction from both Chief Executives of the case study organisations that tenants were not seen as *"representatives"* or *"advocates"* of the tenant body, despite the fact that in both organisations, tenant board members had been elected to the membership by the wider membership of the organisation. This was backed up by tenant board members themselves in the interviews.

"We don't so any day to day personalised issues at board at all it is absolutely, and even if the Chair doesn't remember to stop that conversation, as soon as the Chair accepts the comment and puts up for the answer, I will jump in straight away and say 'we are not going to deal with that' – so we are very strong about that."

(Chief Executive: Case Study 1)

"I don't think they feel that – I think they feel that they bring something valuable from the tenant's perspective but they don't - I have never heard any of our current board members, or several before them, kind of acting as a tenant advocate role or a tenant's representative, they don't, they would not presume to represent all tenants – it just doesn't enter their heads, to be that way –they will kind of give a view on how a service or a policy might impact on tenants and for us to think about but that's, that's it you know."

(Chief Executive: Case Study2)

"sometimes they may use a personal example to emphasise a point – that's fine –, but you know they're not here to, to air their problems there are other mechanisms and they are fully aware of those mechanisms in place – you know 'we'll deal with it in a different way, let's take that out of the meeting, we don't want to discuss it here'; if it's relevant to what we're doing 'great', yeah, but I said they are very good at keeping to the point and having those, those discussions."

(Female Senior Management Team Member: Case Study 1)

"if it's truly representative then you have to have a constituency that you refer back to, to seek the views and that as well could become 'a huge beast that needs feeding'; but, but also why? But the sort of issues that people would want you to raise wouldn't come up through board level anyway so if there are personal difficult individual situations with, say the repairs system, there are different routes for that"

(Male Senior Management Team Member: Case Study 2)

An issue raised by some lower level support staff and other involved tenants was that there was seen to be a tendency of tenant board members getting a better service than other tenants. Some were accused of using their position to influence the practices of staff for their own benefit, to for the benefits of other individuals, in contravention of policy. However, one tenant board member vehemently denied that this was the case:

"I've had where I live there's ten flats, actually I did a few weeks ago I, where one or two of the blokes who live in the flats by me, they tried getting the guttering fixed and they said somebody had been out and there's nothing been done about it, so they said 'you're on the board can you get it sorted'. I said 'well I can go and speak to somebody but, I said this is not as a board member you know, I'm not here for you to think – I've just go, you know I know who to speak to – the best person to speak to is [X] who's our housing officer – you can go and speak to him, but I'm, I'll do it if you want cause I am actually going up (case study2) this afternoon' otherwise I would have just told them, you know 'go and speak to [X], he's the one to talk to"

(Male Tenant Board Member: Case Study 2)

The research found that for each interaction between a tenant and the report presenter at the board meeting of case study 2 there were 10 times more interactions between an independent board member and a local authority board member with a report presenter.

In addition to this, the main area of interaction of a tenant board member related to the housing management functions of the organisation rather than risk, finance, legal or governance issues discussed. However, there were differences between the levels of interactions between the tenants in the two different case study organisations. It is my contention that because of the level of experience and length of service that the tenants had in case study 1 compared to case study 2, that these board members had more confidence to participate in board discussions (a discussion on the average length of service can be found in chapter 6).

Typically, in both case study board meetings, interactions from tenant board member were mainly based on operational issues rather than strategic issues being discussed in the board of management. Many interactions were based on tenant board members raising their hand to come into the discussion rather than interrupting or waiting to ask a question in the break in conversation and there was a reliance on the Chair to bring tenant board members into the discussion.

In case study 1 there was little difference in the interaction levels between independent board members and the local authority representatives. It is my contention that both of these constituent parts were well versed in these types of formal settings, and therefore able to contribute equally to the discussions that took place at board meetings. Again, there was little difference between Independent board members and local authority nominees in the level and type of interactions made at board meetings. Both constituent parts of case study 1, equally took part in strategic discussions rather than issues of operational management of the organisation, in direct comparison to the tenant board members.

Mapping the seating arrangements of tenant board members in relation to the independent and local authority board members at board meetings showed that there was a difference between the two organisations.

Tenant Board members in case study 1 were evenly dispersed amongst the other board members and were as equally likely to sit near to the Chief Executive / Chair location as the independent members and local authority members. Tenant Board Members did not sit together and there was at least one independent or local authority board member between each of the tenant board members. Tenant board members actively chose these seats at the beginning of the meeting, rather than these seats being the only places available at their time of arrival. Tenant Board Members in case study 2 sat away from the Chief Executive /Chair location and other independent members, and at least 3 tenant board members regularly sat together. There was also more interaction between these tenant board members outside of the formal business of the meeting – with aside conversations taking place. The one tenant board member, who regularly sat near to the Chief Executive /Chair team, was the most vocal in their interaction with the rest of the board and the meeting. The tenant board members who sat together chose these seats specifically at the beginning of the meeting, despite there being plenty of space and seats available nearer to the Chief Executive /Chair location. This could be due to the fact that these board members did not feel comfortable in sitting as part of the main board, compared to tenant board members in case study 1.

It is my contention and the contention of many of the interviewees in the research that there could be issues relating to confidence which would probably account for the lower levels contributions made by tenants at board meetings, and on the types of interactions of tenant board members in board meetings.

> *"But I think if you know, you are sitting the next to a Risk Director from Barclays Bank and you are a tenant who hasn't done anything formally until you come on this board, you are bound to feel a bit intimidated"*
>
> (Male Independent Board Member: Case Study 1)

"If there was something that they might, that they were really unhappy with, that they would bring it up, either personally with me or with, or at the board. I doubt that they would be able to say it at a board meeting, but it's like I have contact with them outside to make sure they, that they can say things, or that they are slowly developing that relationship really."

(Chair: Case Study 2)

Figure 8.3 Constituent Parts Seating Arrangements (The Author, 2014)
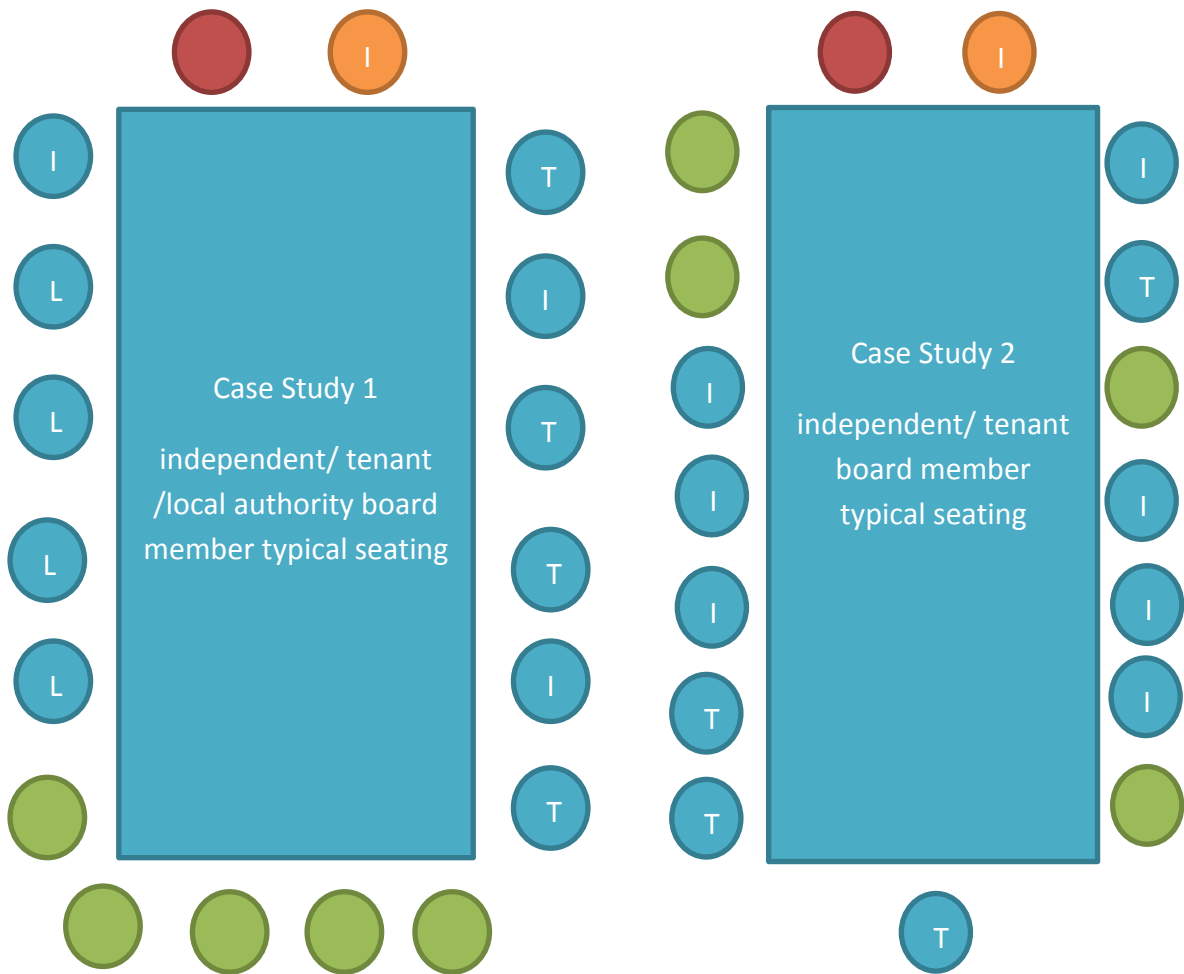
Key:	
Orange	Chair
Red	Chief Executive
Blue	Board Members (I- Independent/ T – Tenant/ L- Local Authority)
Green	Senior Management Team/ Executive Officers

In both case study organisations, tenant board members were one of the first of the constituent parts of the board to arrive at the meeting, and the first to leave after the conclusion of business of the board meeting. In the majority of cases, Independent board members were far more likely to network with other board members or the executive team either prior to the meeting or at the conclusion of the meeting, than tenant board members. It is my contention that this is due to the

fact that independent board members come from professional backgrounds, where they are used to networking with other professionals, and tenant board members in particularly may feel that they do not have the confidence to talk to other members outside the more formal operation of the board meetings. This also may be due to the fact that boards mainly operate in isolation as functionary meetings, and that there is little effort or recognition of the need for board members to *"get to know"* each other outside of the formal environment of board meetings.

> *"one thing that I think would improve board performance and tenant board member confidence in participating at board meetings is for board to have get to know you sessions across the year, rather than boards just meeting on a quarterly or monthly basis, with little integration outside of these meetings"*
>
> (Female Director, 3rd Sector Organisation)

In conclusion, it is my contention that at board meetings of the two housing association case studies that the two main power holders are the executive, and the independent members. The executive hold the power in terms of what reports are presented to the board members, in what format and in what order. Whilst there is evidence that chairs of the boards are involved in meetings to set the agenda, it is what is of interest of the executive to present to the board. It is also my contention that Chairs hold little power in the decision making processes of housing association boards, and I very much saw them as a facilitator in the role to bring board discussions together.

It is my contention that the dominant force at board meetings are the independent members who hold power over the remainder constituent parts, tenants and local authority board members. This is due to the fact that the independent board members have the skills, knowledge and experience to dominate the discussions at board meetings, to the detriment of other knowledge and experience of the other constituent parts.

It is also my contention that the executive teams within the housing associations reinforce this position, as the recruitment processes (discussed in chapter 7) select board members that have significant experience in areas that the boards need to concentrate on e.g. risk, finance etc.

8.4.3   Gendered Power Dynamics

Mapping the level and type of interactions during observations at both case study organisations supports the contention that female board members participate less in the meetings than their male colleagues, even when one adjusts the level of interaction for the level of female/male board membership. This is either whether they are a tenant, independent or local authority board member.

Mapping the seating arrangements of female members in relation to their male counterparts at board meetings showed that there was some difference between the two organisations. Female Board Members in case study 1 were evenly dispersed amongst the other board members and were as equally as likely to sit next to male board members as female board members. The female board members actively chose these seats at the beginning of the meeting, rather than these seats being the only places available at their time of arrival.

Female Board Members in case study 2 tended to sit together, or with the females members of the executive or leadership team. There was more interaction between these female board members outside of the formal business of the meeting – with aside conversations taking place. The female board members actively chose these seats at the beginning of the meeting, rather than these seats being the only places available at their time of arrival.

Figure 8.4- Male and Female Constituent Part Seating Arrangements – (The Author, 2014)

Key:	
Orange	Chair
Red	Chief Executive
Blue	Board Members
	IF _ Independent Female/ IM – Independent Male
	TF – Tenant Female/ TM – Tenant Male
	LF – Local Authority Female/ LM- Local Authority Male
Green	Senior Management Team/ Executive Officers

The two most vocal female board members in both case study organisations were the newest members of the boards of management, and also the youngest members of the boards of management. This raises issues in relation to Clegg's circuits of power and not *"knowing the rules of the game"*.

Female board members from the independent and local authority constituent of the boards were as likely as their male counterparts to network with other board members or the executive team either prior to the meeting or at the conclusion of the meeting. Female tenant board members were as likely as their male counterparts not to network with other board members or the executive/ leadership teams prior to or after the board meeting.

A number of the respondents from Case Study 2 talked about the confidence of women on the boards of management and the level of participation in meetings:

> *"you know we've got very confident women board members and very shy male board members and vice versa."*
>
> (Chief Executive: Case Study 2)

> *"We did, we did some training last week, with the CHC stuff, it was very good actually – and we had [female board member] there who is quite a new board member, and she said sometimes she does feel awkward about speaking up because she doesn't know how to phase questions or she doesn't know whether err she is kind of viewing things the same as other people err and she doesn't like to raise things in case she's got it wrong, kind of thing. So we talked to her about the number of ways in which we can overcome that, to give her more confidence and to reassure her that 'it wasn't a stupid question', and all those things"*
>
> (Female Senior Management Team Member: Case Study 2)

"I think that the women on the board to contribute less… I think that might be a confidence thing….especially when we're talking about finance issues….we have a few male finance experts and they just dominate the proceedings"

(Male Independent Board Member: Case Study 2)

The main area of interaction of female board member related to the housing management functions of the organisation and legal aspects of the organisation rather than development/ maintenance, finance/ risk or legal/ governance issues discussed – which reflects the professional backgrounds of the female independent board members on the boards of management. As well as reflecting the professional backgrounds of the female and male board members encountered on the two case study board of management (discussed in chapter 7), it also is a reflection of the wider societal debates around second class citizenship of women, being involved and concerned with issues to do with the home and the community (discussed in chapter 2).

Interestingly, as well as the types of interactions and level of interactions that were different between female and male board members, the way that females came into discussions on certain topics were different to their male counterparts. Female board members were less likely than their male counterparts to interrupt discussions that were taking place, and were more likely to wait for a pause in the conversation than their male counterparts, who in some cases it was a case of *"who could shout the loudest".* Many of the female participants patiently waited their turn with their hand up, trying to attract the eye of the chair of the board to be brought into the discussion.

Case Study 1

Female/ Male Typical Interactions

Figure 8.6 Case Study 2 Female / Male Interactions by Topic - (The Author, 2014)

Case Study 2

Male/ Female Typical Interactions
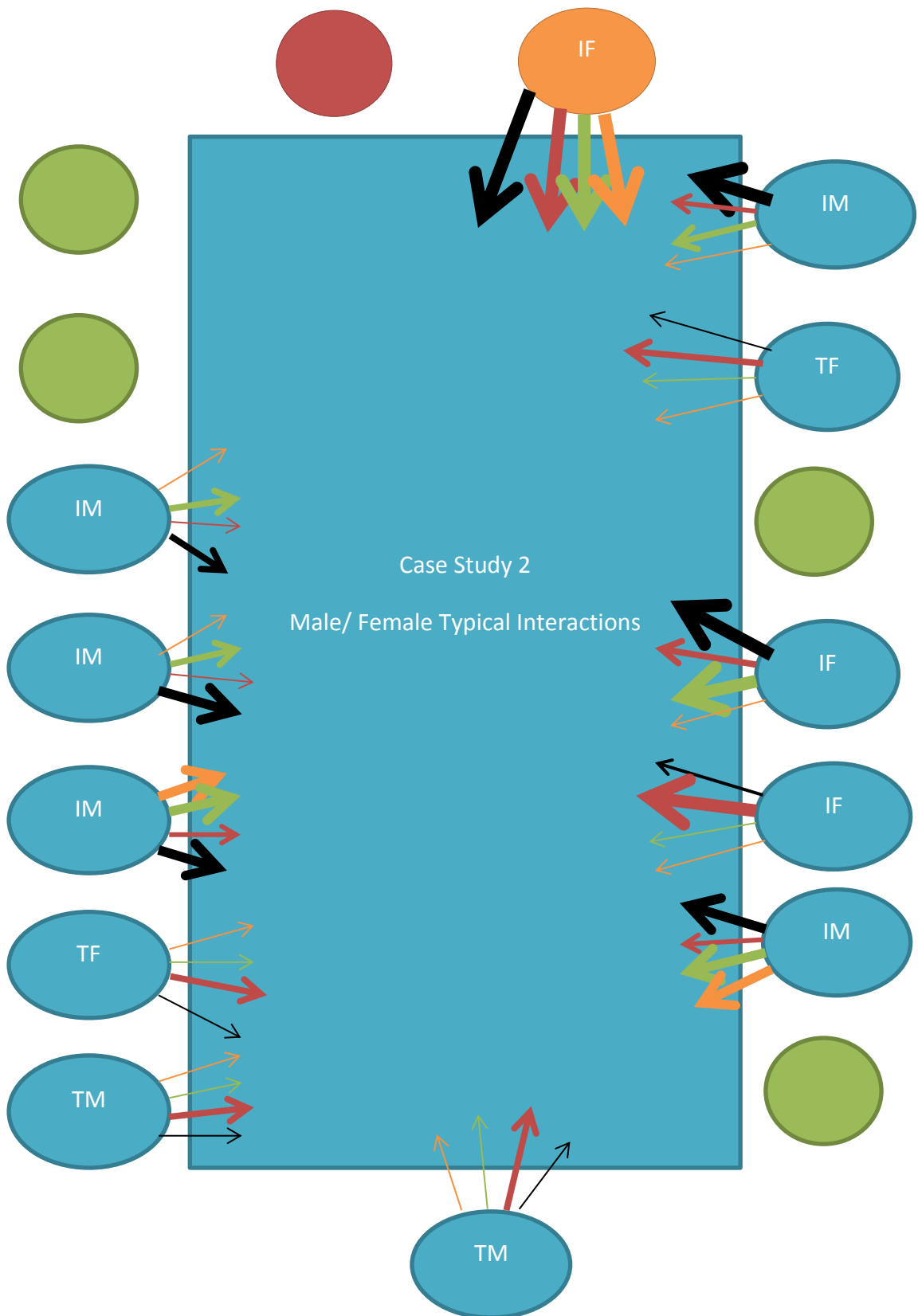
Key interaction arrows: Note the thickness of the arrow lines denotes the typical number of interactions on the topics at board meetings	
Orange	Development /Maintenance
Red	Housing Management/ Operations/ Welfare Reform
Black	Finance / Risk
Green	Legal /Governance

It was noted; on several occasions that once a female board member had the opportunity to interact within the board meeting, they were more likely than their male counterparts to ask multiple questions in one go than their male counterparts. In one instance, a female board member in Case Study 2 was observed:

> *"Thank you Chair, now may I ask 2, no……. 3 questions about (case study 2's) position on the welfare reform"*
>
> (Female Independent Board Member, Case Study 2)

For Clegg (1989) *"Power is best approached through a view of more or less complex organised agents engaged in the more or less complex organised games"* (Clegg, 1989; 20). Central to the marshalling of agents skills and resources, which as a stabilising or fixing factor in the circuits of power, and thus determine the potential for transformation of power. Forces become fixed and attached to what he terms the *"nodal points"* of practice that become privileged in an unstable terrain. To understand this, it is necessary to explore the strategies of agents who act in such a way as to enrol others, along with their resources, into an agreement about what needs to happen in any given circumstance. In this sense power can be viewed as a process (as opposed to a concrete entity), which flows through three circuits that contain areas of resistance. Agency is central to Clegg's thinking about how power works, and is *"achieved by virtue of organisation"* (Clegg, 1989:18).

If power does play out in this way, then there is potential for female board member involvement to make a difference and for those involved to become empowered. Power only appears to be fixed to the extent that it is perceived as such; thus it has become reified as a result of successful modes of discipline and control becoming embedded over time and space. In the context of my research, this is reflected in the belief of many female board members that they do not have the power to change things, or to become more empowered in terms of increasing their scope of action and influence in board of housing associations.

For power to transform, changes need to take place in the rules of practice that govern actions and outcomes between two (or more) agencies, whether they are groups or individuals. For female board member involvement, transformation can mean empowerment, in that there is more scope, rights or resources, available them in the future, and thus more potential for their desired outcomes to be achieved. For Clegg, this reflects a change in the relationships of meaning and membership, and thus the standing conditions are also changed. For commentators such as Somerville (1998) this can mean that empowerment is achieved to a greater or lesser extent and accrues to individuals, groups or elites. By exploring who it is that benefits from the dynamics of board member involvement, and what shape these benefits take, it is possible to establish the extent of transformation.

Using Clegg's (1989) concept of *"standing conditions",* the diversity of board membership and the variety of knowledge and skills brought to the table have a significant bearing on the standing conditions in terms of the power to understand and construct meaning, and the power to shape the views and attitudes of those one wishes to influence. If knowledge and skills are shared amongst the group, they have the potential to increase the capacity of the whole group, thus significantly improve the standing conditions.

Moreover, I found that many board members and particularly tenant board members had been involved with housing association over a lengthy period, suggesting that they have considerable experience of working in corporate settings with professionals. Again this experience could be used to support newer members in getting to grips with the formal rules of involvement as well as the unwritten *"way we do things round here" dimension*. Instead of this, in the boards that I observed, individuals and small cliques (constituent parts of boards) used their knowledge, skills and experience to gate-keep or exclude others from conversations and debates at board level. The associations themselves also used gate keeping techniques, such as not having a board renewal policy, policy for positive action to encourage diversity of board membership and closed recruitment processes to bring in new members was lost.

Power and influence can be exercised through the definition of purpose and issues, and the creation and dissemination of text. The executive management team servicing the board of their associations therefore have a substantial influence over potential outcomes. The tenant involvement policies and strategies, and board codes of conduct and business plans examined as part of the case studies contained a range of aims, all of which at some point included empowerment, partnership, influence, and building social capital or capacity, as well as improving services and accountability of the case study organisations. However, the various aims were not fleshed out, or even defined; nor did most strategies follow the pattern of *"where are we today, where do we want to get to, and how are we going to get there?"*

The standing conditions and relations of meaning and membership are influenced by the emphasis that national policy makers and regulators place on governance and accountability, and the organisations' interpretation of national policy, their capacity to deliver that policy, and the organisation's perception of the potential consequences of following, or not following, national directives. Chapter 3 demonstrates that many changes were made to the way housing associations were regulated and funded from the 1970s onwards.

Within the development of the regulatory frameworks there has been an increasing emphasis on the governance and accountability of these organisations. Policies developed by housing associations encapsulated these aims, and from these, structures were developed to deliver them.

The regulator acts as a key external nodal point through which all housing associations have to pass, because of the associations' collective dependence on regulation and its relationship with access to funding (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000). The regulator therefore has a potentially powerful role in shaping the governance and accountability of the housing association, and thus operates as an exogenous influence in Clegg's terms and thus the potential to empower female board members, albeit from a distance. In relation to the circuits of power, an exogenous influence working through the system integration and social integration levels of the circuit should have a big impact on rules of practice, and ultimately on the relations of meaning and membership. Most importantly, the regulator does not regulate housing associations performance on the diversity and makeup of boards of housing associations.

Clegg (1989) points out that access to resources and knowledge are key tools for informing the strategies of those who are subordinated in any system, if they wish to empower themselves and transform power. The acquisition of knowledge could indeed be seen as empowering in its own right. Therefore access to, and the quality of, training and support, prior to becoming a board member, or whilst being a board member is crucial to transforming power and the potential outcomes female participation on boards of management.

Taking all this into account, together with the relative characteristics of the executives in housing associations, the regulatory requirements, structure and policy aims, it is hardly surprising that housing association boards very soon become settled into a set of routine meetings, for which the executive set the agendas, chairs facilitate discussion and during which drafts of plans and policies are presented to boards for ratification and agreement. This offers some clues as to why boards tend to operate in similar ways within different organisations, and why female board members are excluded from positions on boards of management and that generally they are the exception rather than the rule.

In conclusion, it is my contention that the dynamics and power struggles between the executive and the board, the constituent parts of the board and the genders on the board serves to create significant barriers to successful involvement of female board members in the two case study organisations. Whilst the power dynamics and power struggles observed in the two case study organisation has not led to a breakdown of the relationship and trust between the different constituent parts in these well-functioning organisations, it could be seen as an explosion waiting to happen, especially if either of these associations found themselves in a crisis situation. Of note is that members on both of the boards of the case study organisations muddle along in knowing the rules of the game, and that with the introduction of the two very vocal female independent board members, who appear to want to change the rules of the game in their vocal interactions at board level, the power dynamics and operation of the boards could be about to change.

8.5 Participation and Empowerment in the Decision Making Processes

In this section I consider my findings using the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 4 (Somerville's (1998) typology of empowerment). This typology explores involvement initiatives in terms of: (a) the direction of action (whether *"top down"* or *"bottom up"*); (b) the dependency effect (whether it is increasing or decreasing); and (c) the extent that institutional change is achieved (whether it is radical, reformist, or reinforces the status quo i.e. conservative).

The ultimate question is that of who benefits: whether it is elites, groups or individuals. This enables me to explore the longer term prospects for effective female board member involvement and the transformation of power in each example. As Somerville (1998) points out, empowerment can be seen as principally top down or bottom up, originating from those who have power and wish to see the balance shift towards those currently without power, or starting the other way round, with those without power seeking to gain power from those who currently hold it.

All of the above mentioned interactions and empowerment of board members is essentially a one-way *"top down"* process for the board of management. There was only one example of bottom-up pressures or initiatives brought to the attention of the case study organisations by a female board member. Many of the board members stated that it was not their place to bring in their own initiatives to board discussions, and that tenants, through the case study organisations involvement process were the only ones that could bring pressure on the organisation in this way, although this was actively discouraged by both case study organisations. In this way both of the case study organisations maintain a strong control over the areas in which the boards are permitted to participate, and at which stage they will be allowed into the decision making process.

This is not inconceivable, and given the governance typologies which these two organisations operate and the regulatory requirements of the Welsh Government that the boards of housing associations should operate as strategic and policy leaders for the organisation (the role of the boards was discussed in chapter 7 of this thesis).

There were instances where female board members acted on their own agenda to bring things to the attention of the executive and the board (e.g. a discussion around welfare reform), which can be seen as bottom up pressure. However, boards of housing associations do not operate as conduits of information that flows from individuals and the community.

In both case study organisations, the idea of (particularly tenant board members) bringing their personal experiences of service delivery was frowned upon and shut down at every opportunity. In fact tenant board members themselves noted that the board was not the correct place to bring their or their community issues to the attention of the organisations.

Although there was only one example of *"bottom up"* pressure from board members, it can be seen that there is the potential for such pressures to be enacted on boards of management. However, it is likely that these pressures will only succeeded when board members work together as a collective, and have sufficient skills to be able to communicate their message to those whom they could enrol into a common understanding of the problems and solutions.

From the point of view of Somerville's typology, the empowerment process for boards and female board members are essentially *"top down".* Information and empowerment of the board is controlled by the executive on what they should and should not be involved in, and also the decisions that they have to make.

This is consistent with the regulatory framework in which the housing associations in the model operate, where there is a focus of the work of the board on the policy and strategy of the organisation and not the day to day operational management. In this model, institutional change will be limited, and the outcome is based on preserving the status quo.

The dependency effect of both of the boards in the research is strong, as board members and the chair depended on the executive members for the flow of information, and rights to act in certain ways. The executive are able to determine the formal and informal rules of the game, and are able to use power and discretion in many ways to affect four important areas: resourcing; level of access to information and training; the conferral of rights (statute); and the transfer, or not, of specific powers to board members.

The case studies reveal that *"top down"* initiatives to support the development of involvement are subject to a range of barriers, which are experienced by both staff and tenants. In this respect *"top down"* initiatives, as they are currently structured, will not empower female board members, and this potentially affects the quality of outcomes for both the organisation and the individuals themselves.

8.6   Conclusion

Having considered the governance arrangements of the two case study organisations the in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter was to address the issues of motivation, power dynamics and participation and empowerment of board members in the two case study organisations. In particular the chapter has two main themes around which the findings of the study are analysed. This first addresses the motivations of participation from the perspective of members of the boards of management of the two case study organisations, establishing the differences in motivations of male and female boards of management.

Secondly the chapter analyses the power dynamics in relation to: power dynamics of the executive and the board, and power dynamics of the constituent parts of the board, and the opportunities for participation and empowerment of board members.

In relation to the objectives of the research (considered in Chapter 1), this chapter has discussed the empirical research and findings in relation to two areas, outlined below (table 8.2).

Table 8.2 – Key Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Explore the motivations of board members' participation
Uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation and opportunities for empowerment.

Motivations for board member involvement were split along gender lines; however, all board members as part of this research could be categorised as active citizens, taking part in a range of activities outside of the activities of being board members of the two case study organisations. It was assessed that male board members were usually acting in a self-centred way seeing their membership as part of career development, whilst women conversely wanted to give something back to the community.

However, it could be contended that the two most vocal female members of the boards of management were conscious that their involvement on a board could further their experiences, knowledge and skills and as a consequence their careers.

The research also revealed that the power of the board itself was concentrated within the hands of a few male, powerful, vocal independent board members within both case study organisations.

The power of the board was concentrated with the male independent members of the boards of management, mainly as a consequence of the issues being discussed at boards – finance, risk, governance, legal issues; and mainly as a consequence of the professional backgrounds of these male board members. Their power was demonstrated through their level of interactions at board meetings, and the way that their interactions were implemented, close questioning, interrupting of conversations and dominant speech. Female board members were often side-lined in their power and influence in these discussions, and female tenant board members were even more conspicuous by their absence in discussions and interactions. Most importantly, wherever possible, female board members need to be given the *"power to become empowered"* and to be valued by the organisation.

My research shows that boards are essentially a top-down practice, where the association maintains strong control over the areas in which all board members are permitted to participate, and the stage of the process at which they will be consulted and the decisions made. Both case study organisations were resistant to bottom-up pressure, despite the fact that this can often alert the association to important service delivery issues, and to what is important to board members. How professionals and service users consciously or unconsciously use power has been explored in a range of settings. The executive management of both organisations control power in many ways, of which they may or may not have been aware. This included the power to shape formal and informal rules of practice by determining meanings and priorities; controlling agendas, access to resources, and timing of meetings, and, broadening or limiting the scope of the work of the board. Many of these activities could be identified as gate keeping: if managed well, these issues could serve as potential empowerment opportunities and development tools for boards of management, rather than limiting their work and effectiveness. Interestingly, my research revealed that controlling behaviour, gate-keeping, and blocking are rarely done in a conscious way; more often, they result from the desire to get things done within an organisational time frame and within a context of competing priorities.

The next chapter (chapter nine) is the concluding chapter draws out all of the main research themes, evidence and conclusions and looks at the limitations and challenges of the research and proposes thoughts for future areas of research.

Chapter 9 – Conclusions and Potentialities

9.1   Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis starts by returning to the original reason for my research: my own experience at the outset of the research as a female professional involved in the support for tenant participation and for women to be involved in the higher level participation with housing associations. This, together with a literature review and a consideration of the historical context of women's relationship to social housing and the involvement and policy development in this area, helped me to establish my research questions.

The first section returns to the scope and focus of the research and considers the limitations of my work, and assesses both the effectiveness and the limitations of the methods employed. The second element of the chapter looks to the contribution to knowledge and the key research questions, which are considered in relation to my findings, before assessing their contribution to the development of knowledge and theoretical understandings in female participation in housing association boards. The third and final section of the chapter considers my final reflections together with my recommendations for future research.

9.2   Scope and Limitations of the Research

The aim of this thesis has been to consider women's contribution and participation on boards of management of two housing associations in Wales. Whilst there has been a significant amount of research into tenant participation activities of housing organisations, there has been little focus on the strategic decision making bodies of these organisations, or the governance arrangements of housing associations. This is particularly pertinent give the increasing importance of the housing association sector in the provision of social affordable housing, and the evolution of housing associations to focus on other areas of health and social welfare provision in the UK.

This absence from academic scrutiny has partly arisen as a result of other areas of the operation of housing associations being more scrutinised, and, because housing associations are hybrid entities in competition with each other, and under no obligation to allow external review. Entry for researchers is generally restricted to the invited.

At the outset it was unclear to me whether all housing associations operated their boards in similar ways, and whether the anecdotal evidence I had gathered on female participation on boards of management was a sectoral wide phenomena. I wanted therefore to investigate the governance of housing associations in Wales in relation to female board member participation, to discover the kinds of women that became involved at this level, and to explore women's experiences; I also wanted to gain an understanding of the association's governance practices and organisational positioning and cultures.

To achieve this I needed to research a number of organisations if I was to gain a useful picture. I was aware that there was considerable research into female involvement in community development, and involvement at a community level in tenant participation activities. My particular interest, therefore, was in what happens when women want to become members of boards of management, what motivates them and what they and the organisation get out of the process. From my own experience I had found this to be an interesting area of research.

As well as looking at enumerating the level of female participation on boards of management in Wales (information that was collected by the Welsh Government, but not analysed or published), I wanted to understand the governance arrangements of the two types of housing associations in Wales (traditional and stock transfer housing associations) and whether each type of organisation, or organisational culture was more conducive to ensuring a gender balanced board of management.

I had found no other work that had attempted to look at the participation of female board members on housing association boards, and at the start of the research process there was scant literature on the governance of housing associations, and for these reasons this became my area of focus for the research a barriers as entities in themselves, and for this reason I made this my particular area of focus. For a full understanding of the issues facing women becoming board members it was essential that I focused specifically on the power dynamics at board level to see whether once on boards of management women were empowered or disempowered. For this reason, I selected a theoretical model that would shed light on the processes involved and reveal possibilities for change, by establishing how the parties concerned used power and achieved, or not, their aims.

Since the start of this research, regulators and other organisations have commissioned a number of studies that have explored the diversity of housing association boards in Wales (Griffiths, 2008; Miljevic et al, 2013), using analyses of surveys and self-assessment material but never including direct observation over a period of time. In addition, the Welsh Government themselves have recently directed housing associations to improve the gender diversity of housing association boards of management through a request for a minimum board composition of 38% female membership (Welsh Government, 2014 (c)), and requesting those organisations that fall below this threshold to have in place a plan of action to increase the gender diversity of their boards.

The methodology employed combined key informant interviews, exploratory interviews with participants, non-participant observation, and discourse analysis of corporate and national policy documentation in an in-depth case study format. The empirical research took place over a period of 1 year.

This brought richness and depth to my work, but I would be the first to admit that my findings may have been subject to bias due to my own position, both as female and working within a national organisation supporting the development of participation and empowerment of individuals at a policy decision making level.

The initial analysis of secondary information illuminated the level of female participation on boards of management in housing associations in Wales. This information was set aside the in-depth empirical case study research into two housing associations in Wales. The case study format including key participant interviews with all board members of the case study organisations and the executive teams of the housing associations, this combined with direct observation of 16 board meetings and an analysis of corporate and national policy information painted a picture of female participation on boards of management of two housing associations in Wales which can be considered as deep.

The limitations of the data relate to selection of the two housing associations as case studies, although care and attention was taken to ensure that the housing associations represented a number of key areas including; size of the organisation, location (rural or urban), availability and accessibility to me, the different characteristics in terms of board of management make-up, historical development of the organisation, gender of the Chief Executive, and approach to board member recruitment.

A central ingredient was my own position as an insider at the outset of the research employed by a national third sector organisation to support participation and empowerment of tenants in housing organisations. This position brought with it a range of considerations in relation to my own actions in the involvement environment and a need for self-awareness at all stages of the research process.

However, as a female, a feminist and working within the housing profession, I am likely to bring a distinctive perspective to my narrative, and I feel that this is a refreshing contribution to the research literature in its own right, which will complement the work undertaken by practitioners and academics coming from a different position.

9.3   Contribution to Knowledge – Key Research Questions

This section of the concluding chapter focuses specifically on the conclusions drawn from the previous empirical chapters of 6, 7 and 8.

9.3.1   Organisational Positioning and Culture

The key research aims in relation to this element of the research were:

Table 9.1 – Key Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Identify the organisational typology and culture of the case study organisations and how this facilitates female participation on boards of management

The institutional field (Scott, 2001) for the case study organisation is the social housing sector in the UK with its peculiar sets of change drivers and organisational responses (See Chapter 3). Within the social housing sector itself the largest few HAs display a distinct set of organisational qualities driven by certain economic, political and cultural change factors. To some extent these distinctive characteristics have been self–defined by the larger HA sector (L&Q 2005; Housing Futures Network, 2009), yet organisational size is not the only basis for differential strategic positioning, but that an organisation's culture, values and identity also determine where it is located between public and private or commercial and social poles.

Analysing the *"hybridity"* of the housing associations in the research was helpful in indicating the competing principles that affected the organisational positioning in the case study organisations. There were clear differences between the two case study organisations in terms of the levels of hybridity of the organisations. Case study 1 was an exceptional hybrid organisation in terms of the organisational positioning, and case study 1 was less hybrid in nature.

The research found that females will be more inclined to join boards of management that are organic shallow/ organic entrenched third sector organisations, especially if they have a background in their employment/ career that fits with the board of the organisation that they are joining, and also because of the strong link that the organisation has to the community/ citizens that it serves. Males will be attracted to joining boards that are enacted entrenched third sector organisations because of the visioning and position of the organisation, and the skills, knowledge and experience that they can bring to these organisations. However, these positions can be altered if the right succession, recruitment and training strategies are put in place.

Organisational cultural theory provides the tools to uncover and describe cultural variation between the two case study organisations. Many of the themes discussed above such as structure, leadership, and values and organisational identity contribute towards building a picture of the organisational culture or the *"way things were done"* in the two case study organisations (Tunstall, 1983; Drennan, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Schein, 1991; Schwartz and Davis, 1981)

The power structures in an organisation can lead to the beliefs and assumptions of dominant groups being adopted while the organisation's structure highlights key foci and important relationships in the organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 2002).

This can be seen in case study 1 where a dominant executive business culture permeates a centralised structure with the emphasis on top down leadership, contrasted with case study 2, with a more inclusive approach to management and leadership.

Looking across both organisations, these descriptions attempt to capture the key aspects of organisational culture pertinent to this study namely values, power and organisational structures (Jonson and Scholes, 1992, Gregory, 1983, Schein, 1981). Trying to find the appropriate terminology to capture the essence of the common cultural characteristics across the two case study organisations was a challenging part of the analysis. Words like *"corporate"* and *"commercial"* seemed to aptly describe the identity and values, the centralised structure and hierarchical management with its dominant executive leadership of case study 1. Whilst in case study 2, *"empowerment"* and *"accountability"* seem aptly to identify the values and more decentralised management and leadership structures.

So what does this say about the influence of the organisational culture on the successful recruitment, retention and participation and involvement of female board members? It is my contention that the *"fit"* between personal beliefs and the beliefs, vision and values of the organisation will be the key to ensuring and increasing female representation on boards of management of housing associations. There was a clear synergy between the cultures of the organisation and the cultures of the board in both case study organisations in the research. If potential female board members feel *"comfortable"* with the organisation that they are applying, selected or elected to join, then their participation will be meaningful and successful, if there is no *"fit"* then the relationship will break down.

9.3.2 Governance Typologies and Cultures

The key research aims in relation to this element of the research were:

Table 9.2 Key Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Uncover the board composition and diversity and how recruitment strategies influence female participation and barriers to involvement
Identify the governance structures and prevailing board culture of the case study organisations and how they influence female participation

The research revealed some interesting information about the characteristics of board members of housing associations in Wales which, at the time of writing in 2014, is only just starting to be collected as a matter of course by housing associations, and used to inform and support the development of board involvement.

When looking at the diversity of those involved board level, the research revealed that older men dominated, while some younger women were starting to access key roles in board membership, this was limited. Individuals from different ethnic backgrounds were also substantially under-represented.

Regulators have developed *"equality schemes"* and policies which are as applicable to board level involvement as to any other service area, yet most organisations are still not monitoring the diversity of their board members against the local tenant population. It is clear that certain people experience difficulty in accessing opportunities for involvement; indeed this is a significant and serious barrier for some identifiable groups.

The lack of diversity within the boards of the housing association affected the capacity of these groups which, in turn, affected the impact and relevance of their work.

Inspection is an important element in association business, yet the regulation of governance fails to recognise the issues of equality of boards of housing organisations, through the failure to collect data on the profile of boards of management. Both staff and regulators know of the issues in relation to the diversity of board membership, yet it was found that there was little evidence that organisations were trying to address this issue despite, despite having a commitment to increasing diversity of its employees through positive action strategies and action plans.

The study revealed a great deal of information about how organisations ran their board activities. A range of persistent barriers were identified right across the research period which, despite the publication of a plethora of good practice guides and regulatory requirements (Community Housing Cymru, 2010, 2012 and 2014, Welsh Assembly Government 2008 (a), and Welsh Assembly Government 2010 (b)), continue to affect the prospect of successful involvement outcomes for board members and staff. These include:
• accessibility for harder to reach groups;
• disempowering female board members through the way in which meetings are held and managed;
• a lack of feedback about outcomes;
• Individual capabilities.

Celebrating different skills and capabilities within boards will help to develop tolerance and respect amongst board members, would open up the potential for less rigid roles, and would help to avoid the concentration of power and resources on one or two key individuals. Encouraging housing associations to work actively with, and understand, board members in relation to the skills, capabilities and experiences they bring would prevent them from inadvertently stereotyping board members as a homogenous group. An understanding of team roles is also essential, as is the development of a sense of shared goals and shared experience.

This should be facilitated in the early days of a board's existence, and also form part of succession planning for these groups.

9.3.2 Motivations for Participation, Power Dynamics and Opportunities for Empowerment.

The key research aims in relation to this element of the research were:

Table 9.3 Key Research Aims (The Author, 2014)

Research Aims
Explore the motivations of board members' participation
Uncover the power relationships on the boards of management in relation to female participation and opportunities for empowerment.

Motivations for board member involvement were split along gender lines; however, all board members as part of this research could be categorised as active citizens, taking part in a range of activities outside of the activities of being board members of the two case study organisations.

It was assessed that male board members were usually acting in a self-centred way seeing their membership as part of career development, whilst women conversely wanted to give something back to the community. However, it could be contended that the two most vocal female members of the boards of management were conscious that their involvement on a board could further their experiences, knowledge and skills and as a consequence their careers.

How professionals and service users consciously or unconsciously use power has been explored in a range of settings. The executive management of both organisations control power in many ways, of which they may or may not have been aware.

This included the power to shape formal and informal rules of practice by determining meanings and priorities; controlling agendas, access to resources, and timing of meetings, and, broadening or limiting the scope of the work of the board.

Many of these activities could be identified as gate keeping: if managed well, these issues could serve as potential empowerment opportunities and development tools for boards of management, rather than limiting their work and effectiveness. Interestingly, my research revealed that controlling behaviour, gate-keeping, and blocking are rarely done in a conscious way; more often, they result from the desire to get things done within an organisational time frame and within a context of competing priorities.

The research also revealed that the power of the board itself was concentrated within the hands of a few male, powerful, vocal independent board members within both case study organisations. The power of the board was concentrated with male independent members of the boards of management, mainly as a consequence of the issues being discussed at boards – finance, risk, governance, legal issues; and mainly as a consequence of the professional backgrounds of these male board members.

Their power was demonstrated through their level of interactions at board meetings, and the way that their interactions were implemented, close questioning, interrupting of conversations and dominant speech. Female board members were often side-lined in their power and influence in these discussions, and female tenant board members were even more conspicuous by their absence in discussions and interactions. Most importantly, wherever possible, female board members need to be given the *"power to become empowered"* and to be valued by the organisation.

9.4 Contribution to the Theoretical Understanding of a Social Policy Issue

The application of my chosen theoretical frameworks (see chapter 4) has shown that it is possible to unravel the complexities of dynamic interaction in order to establish why certain outcomes are achieved.

My research is distinctive in that the theory demonstrates how the governance structures, organisational positioning and organisational culture, individual motivations for participation and power dynamics influence and constrain the opportunities for female participation on housing association boards of management.

A lack of awareness about the uses of power and resistance in both group dynamics and organisational structures, together with the failure to understand how individuals use power in *"everyday"* ways, results in power-related barriers never being surmounted. Conversely, a greater awareness of such a theoretical perspective offers the opportunity for both practitioners and potential and current female housing association board members to find ways of working together. In an age of individualised services and *"customer focus"*, increasing focus on governance and accountability of housing associations, it is easy to lose sight of the value of enabling females to develop effective skills, both in terms of their empowerment and in achieving positive service outcomes that might not otherwise occur. In addition, the insight into how power relations work in such corporate will open the eyes of staff and managers and regulators to how power works.

9.4.1 Implications for Practice

The research findings above can have a contribution to the development of national and local practice for increasing female participation on housing association boards of management.

Despite a decade of national policy development by the Welsh Government and two years since the implementation of the regulation and governance frameworks, many aspects of the governance of housing associations in Wales remains out of sight, in particular areas of weakness relate to the lack diversity boards of management of housing associations, particularly in relation to gender.

If practice is to change, then the potential for the Welsh Governments' Regulatory Framework (Welsh Government, 2010 (b)) to be a significant exogenous influence through regulation and inspection needs to be recognised. Such bodies have the potential to transform and influence the diversity of housing association boards of management (or at least ameliorate the imbalance) and thus power relations and dynamics of these boards to make them more inclusive.

The Welsh Government has recently required housing associations in Wales to assess the level of gender diversity on their boards of management (Welsh Government, 2014 (c)), and to increase the gender diversity using positive action should the level of female representation fall below 38%. Having a requirement to assess this as part of the equality and diversity reporting will lead housing associations to improve strategies for increasing the diversity of their boards. However, I would go further in this area, and consider that housing associations need to consider the diversity of their boards of management in relation to their tenant profile, and enact positive strategies to increase board diversity as a whole to reflect the tenant and local profile. This information should be reported on, on an annual basis to and by Welsh Government.

If boards are to become more gender neutral and reflect the gender diversity of society as a whole, and the local tenant profile of housing associations opportunities for board membership need to increase. I agree with the current consultation on the Code of Governance for housing associations in Wales (Community Housing Cymru, 2014) in that there should be maximum terms of service for board members.

This in itself will ensure that there are opportunities to increase the gender diversity of housing association boards as more openings will become available.

In addition, housing associations themselves should ensure that there is a succession planning strategy for increasing female representation on boards, through identifying potential board members through professional network organisations (Come on Board Project, Women on Boards, Women in Social Housing, Chwaraeteg etc.) where there are links to female professionals outside of the traditional arena of housing, health and social welfare professionals. This could potentially lead to the increased representation of women from risk, finance and legal career backgrounds which have been identified in this research as being dominated by males on the two case study organisations boards of management.

The use of a succession planning strategy will also give housing associations time to train and support potential female board members, in order that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate effectively at board member level. The succession planning strategy will link in well with an organisations business planning strategy cycle, therefore ensuring that appointments to boards are fit for the future, rather than the immediate period.

The use of open advertising, and recruitment strategies, rather than a reliance on close personal and professional networks could also lead to increased gender diversity of board members. Advertisements for board member opportunities should be advertised in a wide range of professional publications rather than just in the housing press, and using professional network organisations (as identified above) could lead to an increased pool of potential board members.

Housing associations should also undertake an assessment of the power dynamics at play within their boards of management. This will lead to a better understanding of who is *"empowered"* or *"disempowered"* at board meetings, thus leading to opportunities for additional training for current board members to increase levels of contributions and the quality of debates at board meetings. This will ensure that board members are performing their roles more effectively and that boards are more accountable in their governance arrangements.

9.5   Further Research

My work has exposed areas that would benefit from further research. One of these is the experience of the executives who administer and facilitate board of management, which I have begun to explore in the case studies. A better understanding of their experience would facilitate the reshaping of the support in place for female participation and involvement in boards of housing associations, so that it becomes more effective for all those involved. Specifically the research could focus on the conceptions of power, and models such as Clegg's (1989) *"circuits of power",* could be used to explore the executive manage the tensions between their commitment to involvement of the board in the decision making processes, and their commitment to other organisational priorities.

The study's contribution to literature on boards of management, through the collection of observational data from inside the boardroom, gives this research a textured understanding of group processes within the board. As boards of management are hard to access the development of the non-participant observation methodology, and the development of the behavioural and interactional coding system within this thesis, could be (and should be) used by other researchers in the field to further evidence and understand the processes and the issues of corporate governance within other housing associations, and third sector organisations.

Whilst this research only provides a small snapshot of the case study organisations in relation to the topic of study, a future development of this research could contribute to an understanding of how the dynamics of strategic decision making changes over a longer period of time in relation to external pressures on the organisations through changes to government policy, governance arrangements and also change in terms of different board members joining and leaving the boards of management of these organisations.

In addition, a more longitudinal study of these organisations could also elicit more information and understanding in terms of the requirement for the increase in diversity of boards of housing associations. In addition, a future topic of research using this observational methodology framework could lead to a better understanding of the notion of whether and how group think and group behaviour grows and is accepted within boards of management.

Another area that could be explored further is the issue of female experiences as managers and chief executives in housing associations, and in particular, the career trajectories of these individuals. The research could focus on the competing priorities of being a female in a male environment and look at styles of leadership, management and how these impact on the culture of the organisations that they lead.

9.6   Concluding Remarks

This research has taken many years, and has covered in-depth the operation of two housing association boards of management. Whilst I believe that the housing associations investigated as part of this research are not inherently sexist, and would not obstruct overtly any potential female participation on their boards of management, the research has found that the governance structures, typologies, organisational cultures, routes to participation and power dynamics operated at board level do inhibit female participation on boards of management.

Similarly the organisations themselves failed to consider the lack of diversity on their boards of management, in particular in terms of gender, but also in wider issues in terms of age, ethnicity and their link to the local or tenant profile/customer base of the housing associations.

In addition, associations have failed to address the situations where dominant members on boards of management hold onto their power, and influence the majority of the decisions made at this level, to the possible detriment of the tenants as customers and service users. There is a need for staff to develop the tools and capacities for dealing with such situations, which includes an understanding of how power works in groups and indeed how they use power themselves.

Such arrangements are often based on a perceived need to preserve the strategic and policy focus of the housing associations on finance, risk, legal and governance issues, and as it is mainly men who are involved in these professional areas, it is ultimately their views which direct the organisations. The positioning, capacity, knowledge and skills of other board members, female and tenant board members needs to be increased in order for them to be able to influence the associations work in these areas.

Future changes in policy and the development of the regulatory framework in Wales will, in addition, have implications for how boards of management operate and transform to ensure that there is an increase in diversity in representation, and to ensure far reaching accountability to tenants.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Key Informant Interview Questions (Third Sector Housing Support Organisations and Welsh Government)

Name of organisation
Name of Interviewee
Role and Job Title of Interviewee
Date
Location of Interview

1. Do you think that women's experience of social housing is different from men's?
2. Does having a male/ female chair of the board of management influence the level of participation of women at board level?
3. Does having a male/ female dominated senior management team influence the level of participation by women in board membership?
4. Would having a gender balanced board of management would encourage more women to consider joining the boards of management?
5. What would encourage more women to join boards of management
    a. Policy
    b. Culture
    c. Individual barriers
    d. ?
6. Do you think women and men participate at board level for different reasons?
    a. What reasons do you think women might have?
    b. What reasons do you think men might have?
7. Do you agree with the following statement: "It is women who are involved at the community level and men at the strategic level?"
    a. Why do you think this may be the case
8. Any other comments about female participation on boards of management?
9. Anyone else I should speak to?

Appendix 2 – Key Participant Interview Questions: Board Members

Name of organisation
Name of Interviewee
Position on Board of Management of Interviewee
Date
Location of Interview

Women and Social housing
1. Do you think that women's experience of social housing is different from men's?
    a. In what ways?

Gender and Tenant Participation
2. Do you think women and men participate for different reasons?
    a. What reasons do you think women might have?
    b. What reasons do you think men might have?
3. Do you agree with the following statement: : "It is women who are involved at the community level and men at the strategic level?"
    a. Why do you think this may be the case
4. Any other comments about female participation?

General Governance
5. Can you tell me about the operation of board meetings
    a. Is there clear leadership
    b. How are meeting run
6. What training have board members undergone to fulfil their role on the board of management
7. Have you experienced observed any individuals having individual barriers to joining the board of management
    a. How did you overcome them/ did the organisation aid the person overcome them through training and development

Tenants and Governance (board of management)
8. Could you describe the relationship between tenants on the board of management and the other members of the board of management
    a. Are tenants view valued

Gender and Governance (board of management)

9. Would you say that the men and women on the board of management participate equality within the meetings
10. Does having a male/ female chair of the board of management influence the level of tenant participation by women?
11. Does having a male/ female dominated senior management team influences the level of participation by women in tenant participation with the organisation?
12. Would having a gender balanced board of management would encourage more women to consider joining the board of management for this organisation?
13. What would encourage more women to join the board of management
     a. Policy
     b. Culture
     c. Individual barriers
14. Have you experienced or observed any sexist behaviour by other members of the board of management

Other Comments

15. Any other comments about female participation?
16. Anyone else I should speak to?

Appendix 3 – Key Participant Interview Questions: Chief Executives and Senior Management Team Members

Name of organisation
Name of Interviewee
Date
Location of Interview

Women and Social housing
1. Do you think that women's experience of social housing is different from men's?
2. In what ways?

Gender and Tenant Participation
3. How is your own / officers in general relationship with tenants?
4. Would you say that you / officers value tenant opinion?
5. Do you think that you / officers listen to tenant views?
6. How involved are tenants in making decisions?
   a. How much influence do tenants have?
   b. How useful is their input?
7. How are the tenants groups organised?
   a. Formally, informally?
   b. Is there a clear leadership?
   c. How are the meetings run?
8. Do women and men participate equally in TRA meetings?
9. Do you think women and men participate for different reasons?
   a. What reasons do you think women might have?
   b. What reasons do you think men might have?
10. Do you agree with the following statement: : "It is women who are involved at the community level and men at the strategic level?"
    a. Why do you think this may be the case

General Governance questions

11. Can you tell me about the operation of board meetings?
    a. Is there clear leadership
    b. How are meeting run
12. What training have board members undergone to fulfil their role on the board of management
13. Have you experienced observed any individuals having individual barriers to joining the board of management
    a. How did you overcome them/ did the organisation aid the person overcome them through training and development

Tenants and Governance

14. Could you describe the relationship between tenants on the board of management and the other members of the board of management
    a. Are tenants view valued

Gender and Governance (board meetings)

15. Would you say that the men and women on the board of management participate equality within the meetings
16. Does having a male/ female chair of the board of management influence the level of participation in meetings of female members
17. Does having a male/ female dominated senior management team influences the level of participation in meetings by female members
18. Does having a male/ female dominated senior management team influences the level of participation by women in tenant participation with the organisation?
19. Would having a gender balanced board of management would encourage more women to consider joining the board of management for this organisation?
20. Have you experienced or observed any sexist behaviour by other members of the board of management
21. What would encourage more women to join the board of management
    a. Policy
    b. Culture
    c. Individual barriers

Other Comments

22. Any other comments about female participation?
23. Anyone else I should speak to?

Appendix 4 – Key Participant Interview Questions: Chair of Boards

Name of organisation
Name of Interviewee
Date
Location of Interview

Women and Social housing
1. Do you think that women's experience of social housing is different from men's?
   a. In what ways?

Gender and Tenant Participation
2. Do you think women and men participate for different reasons?
   a. What reasons do you think women might have?
   b. What reasons do you think men might have?
3. Do you agree with the following statement: : "It is women who are involved at the community level and men at the strategic level?"
   a. Why do you think this may be the case
4. Any other comments about female participation?

General Governance
5. Can you tell me about the operation of board meetings
   a. Is there clear leadership
   b. How are meeting run
6. What training have board members undergone to fulfil their role on the board of management
7. Have you experienced observed any individuals having individual barriers to joining the board of management
   a. How did you overcome them/ did the organisation aid the person overcome them through training and development

Tenants and Governance (board of management)
8. Could you describe the relationship between tenants on the board of management and the other members of the board of management
   a. Are tenants view valued

Gender and Governance (board of management)

9. Would you say that the men and women on the board of management participate equality within the meetings

10. Does having a male/ female chair of the board of management influence the level of tenant participation by women?

11. Does having a male/ female dominated senior management team influences the level of participation by women in tenant participation with the organisation?

12. Would having a gender balanced board of management would encourage more women to consider joining the board of management for this organisation?

13. What would encourage more women to join the board of management
    a. Policy
    b. Culture
    c. Individual barriers

14. Have you experienced or observed any sexist behaviour by other members of the board of management

Other Comments

15. Any other comments about female participation?

16. Anyone else I should speak to?

Appendix 5 – Interviewed Participants

Third Sector Housing Support Organisations
- Director, TPAS Cymru
- Chief Executive, Community Housing Cymru
- Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru
- Director, Tai Pawb
- Director, Welsh Tenants
- Director, Chwaraeteg

Welsh Government Officials
- Senior Regulation Manager (South East Wales)
- Regulation Manager (South East Wales)

Case Study 1
- Chief Executive
- Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources
- Director of Housing and Communities
- Director of Property Services
- Corporate Services Manager
- Community Services Manager
- Chair, Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Local Authority Nominee (Vice Chair)
- Local Authority Nominee
- Local Authority Nominee
- Local Authority Nominee

Case Study 2

- Chief Executive
- Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Customer Service
- Director of Support Services and Continuous Development
- Director of Corporate Services
- Director of Finance
- Head of Housing Management
- Chair, Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member (Vice Chair)
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Independent Board Member
- Co-optee Board Member
- Co-optee Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Tenant Board Member
- Tenant Board Member

Appendix 6 – Participant Consent Form

PhD Research into Gender and Governance

I am currently a student undertaking a PhD research study into Gender and Governance within two housing associations in Wales. This research is being undertaken through the School of Planning and Geography at Cardiff University.

This information flyer invites you to take part in this research study, as one of two case-study organisations within the research. There are no intended risks to any participants who wish to become involved in this process and your organisation will not suffer commercially as a result of your participation within the research study.

All information from the research will be anonymised to ensure that participants and the organisation are not identified from the research and any future academic papers on this subject. Your participation within this research projects is entirely voluntary.

Information gathered from the research from you will be used to inform the conclusions and recommendations within the PhD thesis and may also form part of further academic literature on female and general governance issues within the field of housing studies.

Information and data generated from the research will be kept within the provisions of the Cardiff University Policy and the Data Protection Act 1998 will apply whenever using data from living identifiable individuals. Cardiff University is registered with the Information Commissioner as a Data Controller who processes personal data for research purposes. All personal data will be held securely to prevent unauthorised access or accidental loss.

Further information about this research project can be gained by contacting the Supervisor for the PhD research study, Dr. Robert Smith or Co-Supervisor, Dr. Pauline Card and by contacting me on the details below.

As part of the research process, you can also contact Prof. David Clapham, Chair of the School of Planning and Geography Research Ethics Committee, if there are any concerns about how the research is to be conducted.

Kindest Regards,

Amanda Oliver, PHD Researcher
School of Planning and Geography, Cardiff University

Email: Phone:

Consent Form
Research Study into the Gender Inequalities and Tenant Participation

I (Name of Individual)	
Job Role/ Position within Organisation	

Consent to taking part within the research on Gender and Governance, being conducted by Amanda-Jane Oliver, PhD Research Student within the School of Planning and Geography, Cardiff University.

	Please Tick
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation within the research study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving my reasons for withdrawal.	
I understand that any personal data given as part of the research will be held in accordance with the Cardiff University Policy on Data Protection, and in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1988.	

I agree to take part in the research study

Participant	
Signed	
Date	

Researcher	
Signed	
Date	

1 copy to be retained by Research Participant
1 copy to be retained by Researcher and held securely on file.

Appendix 7 – Observational Coding and Recoding Sheet

Organisation		Meeting No.	
Time		Location	
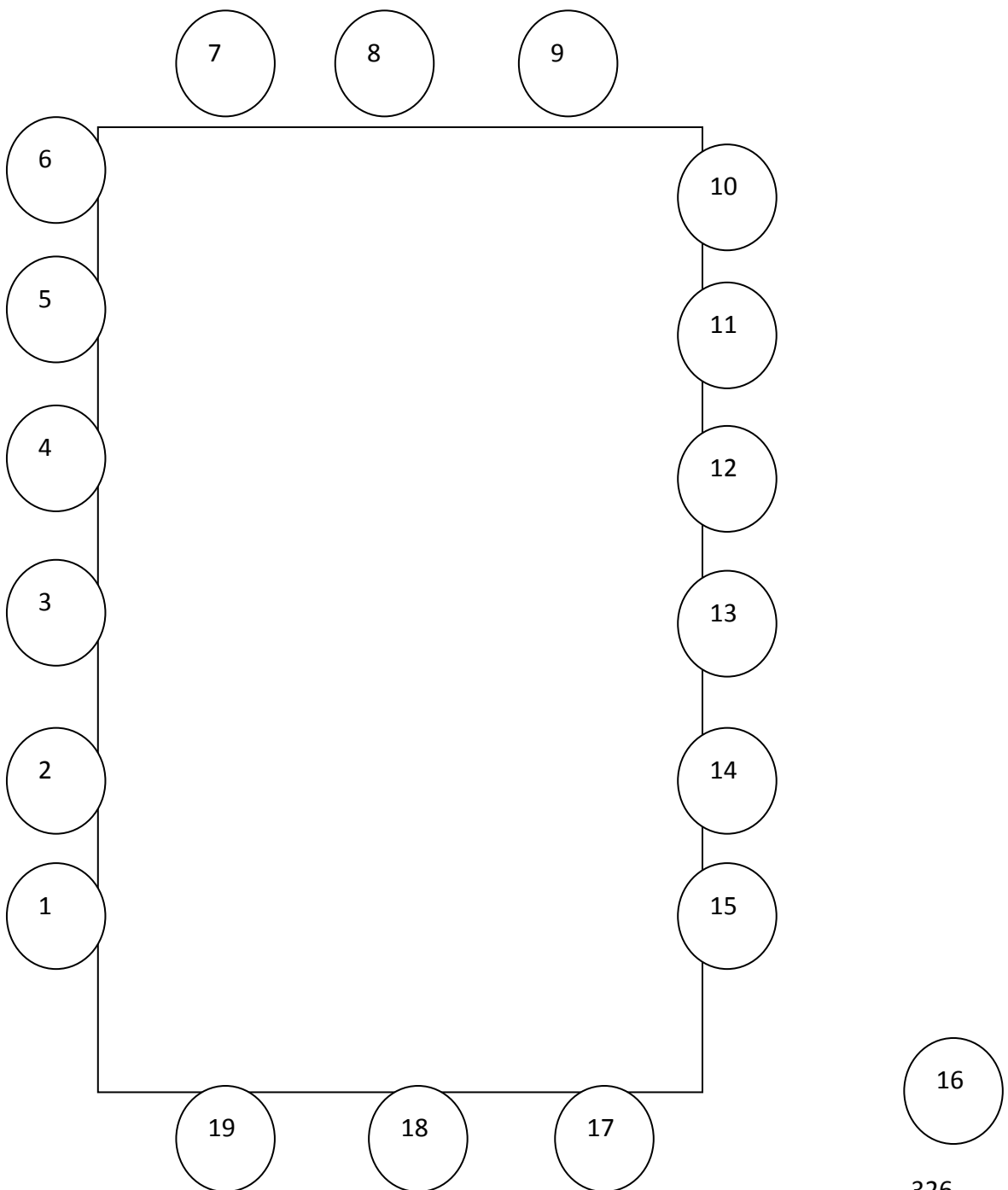
Board Member Characteristics Recording

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	

Agenda Item No.		Title of Agenda Item	

No.	Type of Interaction/ Content of Interaction/ Behaviours	No.	Type of Interaction/ Content of Interaction/ Behaviours
1		9	
2		10	
3		11	
4		12	
5		13	
6		14	
7		15	
8		16	

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Appendix 8 – Topic Coding Categories – Labels and Definitions

Code	Label	Definitions
1	**Routine Board Functions**	Presentations to the boards Access to company information
2	**Scope of Board Issues**	Discussions about what were proper topics for the board etc.
3	**Management and Personnel Issues**	Recruitment and selection Salaries and remuneration etc.
4	**Development and Maintenance Issues**	Development of new sites for properties Discussion around achieving WHQS Maintenance statistics etc.
5	**Housing Management, Operational and Welfare Reform Issues**	Operational management of the housing business Policy / operational updates of housing management issues Policy / operational updates on welfare reform issues
6	**Finance and Risk Issues**	Government grants Lending/ gearing Corporate budget planning Financial supervision of the organisation Risk management Development of the businesses
7	**Legal and Governance Issues**	Meeting welsh government governance requirements Amendments to bylaws, board structures, committees etc.

Appendix 9 – Verbal Contribution Coding Categories – Labels and Definitions

Code	Label	Definition
1 **Initiation Activity**	1a	Motion making
	1b	Information giving (also includes prompting specific others to report or asking someone specific to make a motion)
	1c	Information seeking (Includes asking questions, requesting clarifications, explanations and opinions)
	1d	Making specific suggestions for action (to a person in the boardroom or the whole board)
2 **Supportive Behaviour**	2a	Motion seconding
	2b	Making statements in support of others
3 **System Maintenance**	3a	Tension management (emotional behaviours, making people stick to the norms, boardroom etiquette and decorum, compliments to other board members, mediation of conflicts)
	3b	Direction of traffic (direction of communication, keeping to the board agenda, summarising of discussions, calling for a motion from the board)
	3c	Collective spirit and solidarity moves (commitment to making it work, reminders of common interest, reminder of common goal)
4 **Discussion/ Debate / Argument**	4a	Personal defensiveness (petulance, attempts to place blame elsewhere)
	4b	Personal gain (attempting to make oneself look good, personal interests being pursued)
	4c	Agreeing reluctantly (acquiescing to another's demands)
	4d	Sensible nonperson arguments (discussion between two or more people, persuasions attempts)
	4e	Attempts to propose new board topics (additional board items to be added)
	4f	Personal contributions and experiences (person using stories to illustrate points, trying to have personal issues/ concern resolved in discussions
	4g	Corporate or company interests (for the good of the organisation as an institution)
	4h	Disagreements, conflicts and attacks (aimed one specific person or sub-group)
	4i	Stonewalling (obvious non-response to respond to questions, stopping someone from brining topics for discussion and debate, discussion that a topic is not a board issue, stalling or postponing an action)
5 **Unclassified**	5a	Idiosyncratic verbal behaviours – not categorised as above

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