

*“Ahora tienen que escucharnos”* [now they *have* to listen to us]: actors' understandings and meanings of planning practices in Venezuela's 'participatory democracy'

by

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## ABSTRACT

Since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, Venezuela has undergone considerable constitutional and legislative reforms to establish a more participatory form of democracy. Two of Chavismo's mechanisms for citizen participation form the units of analysis of the thesis: *consejos locales de planificación pública* (CLPPs) and *consejos comunales* (CCs). These sought to bring citizen participation into public policy and planning at the municipal and neighbourhood levels, respectively.

The thesis draws from democratic and planning theories, engaging with debates in the literature regarding participation and the issues of bringing democratic innovations into representative democratic systems and planning practices and processes. The thesis responds to a gap in the literature regarding how actors involved in CLPPs and CCs understand these instances of participation. The thesis adopted a constructivist approach involving components drawn from new institutionalism (Lowndes and Roberts 2013) and Bevir and Rhodes' (2012) strand of interpretivism into an analytical model that Hay (2011) coins 'interpretive institutionalism'.

The thesis elicited the meanings and understandings of citizen participation in local policy making and planning processes held by participants of CLPPs and CCs. Such accounts enabled an analysis of what participatory democracy meant to those active in the processes seeking to establish it. Data collection involved 10 months of fieldwork in two municipalities (Chacao and Libertador) in Caracas including semi-structured interviews with CLPP and CC participants; observation of CLPP and CC participants; and review of corresponding municipal documents, academic literature, and news articles.

The findings show that participation was widely advocated by CLPP and CC participants. Ideological/ political beliefs and traditions shaped a) the different ways CLPP members (politician versus community members) conceived participation, and b) CC participants' understanding of state-civil society relationships. The thesis provides a contribution to democratic theory by providing further insights about the challenges in designing, implementing and embedding mechanisms involving citizen participation, particularly the tensions between representative and participatory forms of democracy. Secondly, by operationalizing Hay's (2011)

interpretive institutionalist model in the Latin American socio-economic context, the thesis showed that marrying constructivist approaches to institutionalism and bringing institutionalist dimensions to interpretivism provide valuable analytical and theoretical insights. Furthermore, the findings enabled an additional link between the interpretive and institutionalist dimensions of Hay's model to be identified.

## **DECLARATION AND STATEMENTS**

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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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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYMS	Original	English translation of Spanish original
ADV	Asociación de vecinos	Neighbourhood association
AMC	Área Metropolitana de Caracas	
CC	Consejo Comunal	Community council
CM	Concejo Municipal	Municipal Council (legislative chamber)
CLPP	Consejo Local de Planificación Pública	Local Public Planning Council
CFG	Consejo Federal de Gobierno	Federal Government Council
CNE	Consejo Nacional Electoral	National electoral council
CTU	Comité de Tierras Urbanas	Urban Land Committee
DI	Discursive Institutionalism	
EBR	Ejercito Bolivariano Revolucionario	Revolutionary Bolivarian Army
EPS	Empresa de Propiedad Social [comuna]	Community owned business
FIDES	Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización	Intergovernmental Fund for Decentralisation
Fundacaracas	Fundación Caracas	Caracas Foundation [Libertador's decentralised municipal agency for urban development]
GDC	Gobierno del Distrito Capital	Federal District Government
HI	Historical Institutionalism	
IESA	Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración	Institute for Advanced Administration Studies (Business School)
IMF	International Monetary Fund	
IMGRAD	Instituto Municipal de Gestión de Riesgos y Administración de Desastres	Municipal Agency for Risk and Disaster Management (Libertador)
JP	Juntas Parroquiales	Parish Councils
JPC	Junta Parroquial Comunal	Communal Parish Council
LAEE	Ley de Asignaciones Económicas Especiales	Special Economic Assignations Fund
LCC	Ley de Consejos Comunales	Community Councils Law (2006)
LOCC	Ley Orgánica de Consejos Comunales	Organic Community Councils Law (2010)
LOPPM	Ley Orgánica de Poder Público Municipal	Organic Municipal Public Power Law
MBR	Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario	Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement
MUD	Mesa de la Unidad Democrática	Democratic Unity Table (coalition of opposition parties)

MVR	Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario	Derived from MBR. Changes B to V (homophone letter in Spanish) to signify 5 <sup>th</sup> Republic.
MPComunas	Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y Movimientos Sociales	Ministry for Communes and Social Movements
NI	New Institutionalism	
OLPU	Oficina Local de Planificación Urbano (Chacao)	Local urban planning department
PDUL	Plan de Desarrollo Urbano Local	Local Urban Development Plan
PIM	Plan de Inversión Municipal	Municipal Investment Budget
PB	Participatory Budget or Participatory Budgeting	
PJ	Primero Justicia (political party)	
PMD	Plan de Desarrollo Municipal	Municipal Development Plan
POA	Plan Operativo Anual	
PSUV	Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (political party)	United National Socialist Party of Venezuela
RC	Rational Choice (institutionalism)	
RIF	Registro de Identificación Fiscal	Tax Code
SAFONAC	Servicio Autónomo Fondo Nacional de los Consejos Comunales	Service for the National Autonomous Fund for Consejos Comunales
SI	Sociological Institutionalism	
ST	Sala Técnica	Technical Support Office
TIB	Transformación Integral de Barrios	Integral <i>Barrio</i> Transformation programme
VP	Voluntad Popular (political party)	
UNES	Universidad Nacional Experimental de Seguridad	National Experimental University for Security

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis studies two mechanisms (local public planning councils [CLPPs] and community councils [CCs]) that were introduced in Venezuela to increase citizen participation in public policy and planning at neighbourhood and municipal levels. The thesis aims to elicit how participants understand how these mechanisms operate, their agency within them and how this relates to national government's overarching goal of establishing participatory democracy. The research questions of the thesis (see section 5.3) seek to establish: what participatory democracy and citizen participation means to CLPP and CC participants; how participants understand CLPP and CC processes; whether these new mechanisms enable participants to influence local planning and policy making; and whether CLPP and CCs have impacted local governance structures and institutions. The thesis draws on democratic, planning, interpretive and new institutionalist theories. An analytical framework based on Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model is adopted. The remainder of the chapter describes the context and structure of the thesis.

### **1.1 CONTEXT OF THE THESIS**

Held (2006) highlights the most common 'model' of democracy is based on liberal, constitutional principles underpinned by representation. These principles include free and fair elections and a competitive political process - generally regarded as pluralism. The ideas of the Enlightenment and later the Industrial Revolution have greatly shaped the society in which we live. Held (2006) argues the classical, liberal approaches to democracy emerged from an era of battles between citizens and various outright, monarchical or ecclesiastical, authorities. In time, constraints were designed into representative democratic systems in order to ensure that political representatives would act in the interests of, and be accountable to, the electorate (Manin 1997). These included characteristics such as establishing:

- A constitution: a legal code which would set out the framework and limits within which representatives and citizens could act.
- Rule of Law: in addition to the constitution, further legislation would set further parameters with the way society could function. Again with the aim of protecting individual rights.
- Federalism – vertical separation of powers with the aim of distributing power

at different scales within the territory and avoiding over-centralisation.

- Regular elections of representatives.

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, scholars of the New Left (Pateman 1970; Macpherson 1977) began to critique the liberal, representative democratic models which they considered had become far too entrenched with capitalist values and mass consumerism, and served no particular greater good except for the individual. Since the 1970s, despite New Left critiques, neoliberalism prevailed as a dominant (political economic) model, seeking to minimise government intervention on the economy as well as 'stripping back/hollowing out the state' (Barber 2003; de Sousa Santos 2005; Held 2006; Purcell 2013). The influence and effects of neoliberal policies shaped the course of Venezuelan politics from the late 1980s onwards (see below, and chapter 2 for detail).

Fast forward to the late 2000s, and the West suffered its worst economic crisis in a century. Several citizen-based social movements sought alternatives to the major problems that had become increasingly prevalent since neoliberalism took course (Purcell 2013). Although not rooted in the financial crisis, but rather responding to very poor state-civil society (repressive) relationships, the Arab Spring emerged in 2010 as a major citizen social movement. Between 2010-2012, Greek citizens took to the streets to protest against government(s) who sought to impose increasing levels of austerity following bailouts to try and tackle the country's debt. Subsequently, the left-wing anti-austerity coalition party Syriza emerged as leader in the general election in January 2015 (Traynor and Smith 2015). In May 2011, the Spanish government and media's lack of interest and coverage of citizen protests against austerity, bankruptcy and several cases of political corruption led to the 15-M/ *indignados* movement. This movement took to the streets, occupied squares and established a network-orientated, assembly based movement throughout Spain. Although this diffused somewhat, it can be said to be a contributing factor to the emergence of a new political party, PODEMOS, in 2014. In October 2011, the Occupy movement emerged in the US, and sparked similar 'occupations' in cities throughout the world. The common themes among these instances of citizens taking to the streets was a) they did not consider their political representatives to be acting in the common interest b) the political interests were married with neoliberal, economic policies which had failed (given the economic crisis in 2008). Consequently, members in these movements sought to explore alternatives to established practices, whether economic or political representation. While these

movements in the global North are considered new, and continue to emerge, Latin America has been engaged in similar movements and processes which pre-date those in the global North and the Middle East.

Since the late 1980s, a number of experiences (participatory budgeting, community councils, public policy councils) in different countries of Latin America sought to expand upon liberal models of democracy and establish new state-civil society dynamics (Baiocchi et al 2011; Goldfrank 2011a; Pogrebinschi 2012; Pearce 2010). Initially, Latin America's 'left-turn' or 'pink tide' in the 2000s was understood to be a form of addressing the continent's legacy of dictatorships and neoliberal reforms; participatory democracy initiatives were seen to be a corrective mechanism and a way in which citizens could shape from below matters which affected them rather than these being decreed from above by authorities (Baiocchi et al 2011; Irázabal 2005; Irázabal and Foley 2010; Lievesley and Ludlum 2009).

Venezuela is another example of a country whose citizens retaliated against neoliberal policies. Like many countries in Latin America, Venezuela implemented policies of austerity and structural adjustment policies during the 1980s and 1990s. The political landscape meant there were few, if any, true opposition political parties to oppose such policies. As a result, civil society, social movements or 'anti-system' politicians filled this gap (Levitsky and Roberts 2011 pg 18). Throughout Latin America this manifested as a breakdown of party systems leading to an acute political crisis. In Venezuela, this resulted in the 1989 *Caracazo* – a series of protests and riots - and two failed military coups in 1992 (Levitsky and Roberts 2011 pg 19). Wilpert (2007 pg 17) describes that Carlos Andrés Pérez, the then President, lost legitimacy due to the economic and political crises, in addition to a repressive police and military response to protestors. By 1993 Carlos Andrés Pérez lost legitimacy as he was removed from office over a corruption scandal (Lander 2005; Wilpert, 2011). Hugo Chávez emerged as a household name. Despite leading a failed coup, his brief TV apology resonated with the wider Venezuelan public for his apparent sincerity (López Maya 2011; Wilpert 2007). Chávez won the 1998 presidential elections with a mandate to tackle the economic and political crises in the country caused by previous governments, as well as to engage the disenfranchised (Lander 2005; López Maya 2011; Wilpert 2007; 2011). Chavismo, once in power, very quickly sought to re-write the constitution and embark on subsequent legislative reforms to increase citizen participation.



The thesis is therefore situated within the context of a widespread desire for citizens to be part of, or have influence, within political decision making. The research seeks to address a gap in scholarship on participatory democratic mechanisms in Venezuela; to date scholarship has centred on whether these participatory mechanisms have ‘deepened’ democracy (García Guadilla 2005; Goldfrank 2005; 2011a), but little focus has been given to participants’ understandings of these mechanisms and whether this influences the way such mechanisms operate. The research is also considered to provide additional lessons regarding new ‘democratic innovations’ (Smith 2009) which will be of interest to participatory democratic activists and scholars. This contextual introduction is purposively brief. The main themes identified above namely “participation”, the differences between participatory and representative democracy, and the specific mechanisms implemented in Venezuela are discussed in the relevant chapters in the thesis. The following provides an outline of the content of the chapters that comprise the thesis.

## **1.2 THESIS OUTLINE**

The thesis comprises 10 chapters, including this chapter. In broad outline chapters 2-4 provide the literature review and theoretical framework; chapter 5 discusses the research strategy, design and methods. The research aims, objectives and questions are included in this chapter. Chapter 6 presents descriptions of the case locations; chapter 7 presents the findings regarding the first unit of analysis, CLPPs; chapter 8 presents findings of the second unit of analysis, CCs. Analysis of the theoretical framework and findings is discussed in chapter 9. Chapter 10 closes the thesis with overall conclusions and a discussion of the theoretical contributions.

### **1.2.1 Thesis chapters and content**

Chapter 2 provides the historical and contextual background of the thesis. It describes Venezuela’s transition from a bipartisan-led democratic regime 1958-1998 to the current post-1998 period that seeks to implement a new participatory form of democracy. The chapter establishes decades of political and economic crises, and a general feeling of exclusion among ordinary citizens to influence political decision-making, generated the momentum for seeking change. The chapter describes the constitutional and legislative changes that have occurred since 1998 with the aim of building a participatory democracy in Venezuela. Two of the mechanisms for increasing participation, CLPPs and CCs – the units of analysis

– are discussed in depth.

Chapter 3 discusses the theory and concepts regarding representation, participation and democracy. It seeks to identify and discuss the tensions that exist between representative and participatory democracy. It draws on democratic theory and explores how these relate to the process of transition towards a participatory democracy in Venezuela initiated in 1999. Consequently, the chapter discusses the key typologies, arguments and tensions that exist between participatory and representative forms of democracy. The chapter defines how Chavismo conceives expressions of democracy, as well as seeking to establish how citizens can be incorporated into public planning practices and processes.

Chapter 4 establishes the thesis' theoretical framework drawing from strands of new institutionalism and interpretivism. The chapter discusses the nature of institutions and how variants of new institutionalism understand 'institutions', and institutional creation and change. Discussion of Bevir and Rhodes' strand of interpretive theory follows, which is considered an alternative to institutionalist approaches. However, Hay (2011) argued that there has been a convergence between constructivist forms of institutionalist theory and interpretivism in recent years. The chapter concludes by establishing the theoretical framework of the thesis based on Hay's model. The framework comprises the components/ concepts 'beliefs', 'traditions' and 'dilemmas' of actors drawn from interpretivism and 'rules of the game', 'rules in use' and 'rules in form' drawn from new institutionalism (see table 4.2 for definitions). Justification is given why such an analytical and methodological framework is useful for studying the Venezuelan context.

Chapter 5 presents the research strategy and design of the thesis. The chapter sets out how the interpretive institutionalist framework established in chapter 4 informed the research design in conjunction with the research aims, objectives and questions which are also presented in this chapter (section 5.3). This chapter provides further discussion of the ontological and epistemological position of the thesis. Discussion follows regarding the selection process of the case studies, and the pilot study undertaken at the start of the fieldwork period. Sections on data generation and data analysis follow. The chapter concludes with a section discussing ethical considerations.

Chapter 6 presents the geographical, demographic, political, social and economic

characteristics for the municipalities of Chacao and Libertador, the two case locations of the CLPPs and CCs studied. It provides further contextual background for the CLPP and CC cases discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 7 presents the findings of participants' experiences of their involvement in the CLPPs in Chacao and Libertador, respectively. The chapter describes that legislative reforms provided different challenges for CLPP members. Using the theoretical framework, the concept of dilemma is used to describe these challenges and how participants' actions are rooted in their individual beliefs and traditions. The chapter highlights that dilemmas were generated from the 2010 reforms that affected internal composition within CLPPs, failure to maintain adequate electoral processes, and conflicts among the roles and remit of different CLPP members.

Chapter 8 presents the findings regarding CCs in Chacao and Libertador. The chapter applies the concepts of traditions, beliefs and dilemmas (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; 2010) to elicit how CC participants - from 14 CCs in Chacao and 11 in La Silsa, Libertador - understood and acted within their respective CCs. The chapter describes the origins of CCs in Chacao and Libertador from participants' perspectives. Given the political context in which CCs emerged, participants' understandings are presented in the context of whether they embrace, accept or reject the ideology of Chavismo. The theoretical framework is used to elicit whether citizens accept or reject certain ideas or ways of interpreting CCs, depending on their respective traditions and beliefs. The chapter also analyses how CCs operate in practice and whether this deviates from how they were intended to function according to the national law. Finally, the chapter establishes how participants see and understand state-civil society relations.

Chapter 9 provides further analysis of the empirical findings presented in chapters 7 and 8. The first section of the chapter provides an analysis of the key findings regarding the components of the analytical framework provided in chapter 4. The second section of the chapter links the experience of CLPP and CC practices in Chacao and Libertador with the debates in democratic theory regarding participatory democracy versus representative democracy, and democratic innovations concerning citizen participation. The chapter builds upon Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model by providing a critique of the model.

Chapter 10 sets out what the thesis achieved. It provides the theoretical contributions of the thesis (see sections 10.3 and 10.4) and a discussion of future research agenda.

## **CHAPTER 2      DEVELOPING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN VENEZUELA**

### **2.1      INTRODUCTION**

Since the implementation of the 1999 Constitution, Venezuelan democracy is stated to be not only 'elective' (i.e. representative) but 'participatory and protagonistic'. The last 15 years have seen a number of laws enacted which seek to re-shape the country's society, culture, politics and institutions to conform to the constitution. A number of these laws set out mechanisms by which state structures will be more inclusive of citizens' participation; in other cases, laws seek to create new entities and mechanisms which are citizen-orientated and managed. The result is a complex arena of governance.

The first section of the chapter provides a brief historical account of the key factors which brought about considerable political change, i.e. the end of a forty year democratic regime at the end of the 1990s to introduce a new president who, over his fourteen years in government – until his death in March 2013 - increasingly attempted to move towards a more socially just Venezuelan society. Since 2013 the subsequent president (Nicolás Maduro) has attempted to continue this political movement. The nature of what a just Venezuela looks like is highly contested among general citizens and political actors of pro-government and opposition factions.

This chapter aims to provide the background for the remainder of the thesis. It will serve as the contextual reference which will enable subsequent theoretical and case study chapters to be understood.

### **2.1      A BRIEF HISTORY OF VENEZUELA'S TRANSITION TOWARDS A 'PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY'**

Prior to the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, Venezuela's politics was characterised by a political regime following the 'Pact of Punto Fijo' in 1958 (this is also known and hereon referred to as *puntofijismo*). The pact was made between

three political parties following the return to democracy after the fall of the Marcos Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. The pact sought to establish political stability (Smilde 2011 pg 3; Wilpert 2007 pg 12). The pact, however, excluded a number of political parties, most noticeably from the radical left (Smilde 2011 pg 3; Wilpert 2007 pg 12). It also created a structure of representative democracy where citizens voted for a president and party. It was the party and president who then chose the remaining government members at all levels of government (Smilde 2011 pg 3). Given this structure, the political parties were able to prioritise political and economic interests within a narrow agenda, now considered to give a disproportionate lack of voice to lower classes (Smilde 2011; Wilpert 2007). During the period of *puntofijismo* (1958-1998) period, lower classes were targeted via clientelistic practices at the grassroots in order to secure legitimacy (Smilde 2011).

Economically, Venezuela has undergone periods of growth and crisis from 1958 to the Chávez era. Wilpert (2007 pg 10) considers that the 'country's ups and downs [can be traced] to the ups and downs of the oil economy'. In the first twenty years of *puntofijismo*, there was an economic boom due to the high price of oil and the state's revenues as a result (Wilpert 2007 pg 11). During the early 1970s Venezuela also implemented an Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model (López Maya 2011). López Maya (2011) argues that during the initial ISI model period there was considerable social and economic growth and that this helped to consolidate the *puntofijismo* democratic model in a country that had been marred by dictatorships for most of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Venezuela's boom ended in 1979, as a result of increasing oil production costs, declining oil prices and rising debt (Wilpert 2007 pg 13; Smilde 2011 pg 4). The first milestone in the beginning of a twenty year social and economic decline in Venezuela was the social unrest created by the 'Black Friday' currency devaluation in 1983 (López Maya 2011). The continued fiscal resources decline in the 1980s, gave way to IMF structural adjustment packages in 1989, culminated in another milestone (López Maya 2011; Smilde 2011): rioting on the streets of Caracas that was met by a heavy police and military response resulting in 'anywhere between 300 and 3000 dead' (Wilpert 2007 pg 17). The *Caracazo*, as the event was called, is considered by Venezuelans a pivotal moment in recent history (Wilpert 2007; López Maya 2011).

In 1983, a small group, EBR-200, was formed in a military academy; one of the

founders was Hugo Chávez (Wilpert 2007). The group was named using an acronym which served two purposes: 1. the shortening of *Ejercito Bolivariano Revolucionario*, and 2. The acronym comprised letters from Ezequiel Zamora, Simón Bolívar and Simon Rodriguez, key historical figures related to Venezuela's independence from Spain. The number referred to the 200 years since Simón Bolívar's birth in 1783 (Wilpert 2007 pg 16). The group was disenchanted with *puntofijismo* politics but had no initial aims except to be inspired by the key historical figures and envision a revolutionary Bolivarianism. Wilpert (2007 pg 16) describes Bolivarianism as 'an emphasis on the importance of education, the creation of civilian-military unity, Latin American integration, social justice, and national sovereignty'. Later, as a result of the group's links with civilians, the group was renamed MBR – the M standing for movement (Wilpert 2007).

Smilde (2011 pg 5) states that 'the economic decline of the 1980s and 1990s, however, had consequences that went beyond class polarization. It spurred realignment in social-class identity and political cleavages'. The MBR-200, now even more dissatisfied with the social and political disparities in Venezuela, led an attempted coup in February 1992. Chávez was imprisoned as a leader of the coup. A second coup was attempted in November of 1992 but this was also unsuccessful. Wilpert (2007) argues that the group was unprepared at the time of the *Caracazo* to take advantage of the situation to overthrow the government.

Rather than by coup or revolution, the end of *puntofijismo* began because President Carlos Andrés Pérez was impeached on corruption charges (Wilpert 2007; López Maya 2011). In 1994, Rafael Caldera became Venezuela's new president. He was, for the first time since 1958, part of a non-*puntofijismo* aligned party (Smilde 2011). One of Caldera's election promises in 1994, that he fulfilled, was to pardon Chávez – on the condition that Chávez would retire from the military (Wilpert 2007; López Maya 2011).

Awareness of Chávez, and the Bolivarian movement, had grown substantially in the two years of his imprisonment (López Maya 2011). Wilpert (2007 pg 17) argues that the country's political and social inequalities, including the repression of the left for 25 years, legitimised the actions of the attempted coup for millions of Venezuelans, particularly the poor. With the new support of millions around the country, Chávez, and other left leaders, now saw an opportunity for Bolivarianism to be carried out not by revolution but through election to government (Wilpert 2007; López Maya

2011). Once Chávez had entered into the political arena as a civilian, a political party founded on similar principles to the MBR-200 - the Movimiento V República (MVR) was established (López Maya 2011). The nuance is the V and B in Spanish sound similar and the V also referred to the latin letter for 5 which symbolised the movement's intention of establishing a fifth republic (Wilpert 2007).

By 1997, the extent of Venezuela's economic decline was at its worst: unemployment almost doubled between 1981 and 1997 (Smilde 2011); the numbers of workers employed in the formal and informal sectors were almost equal in 1997 compared with the 1970s when formal sector workers doubled the numbers of informal sector workers (Smilde 2011); real wages had declined 37% (Smilde 2011); the richest 10 percent received a greater proportion of the GDP (Smilde 2011); poverty increased from 17% in 1981 to 65% in 1996 (Wilpert 2007); and rising insecurity (López Maya 2011). The IMF reforms implemented in 1989 were supplemented by a new package in 1996, leading to further disillusionment with neoliberalism and the lack of political alternatives offered by *puntofijismo* (Lacabana 2009; López Maya 2011; Smilde 2011; Wilpert 2007).

By the time of the 1998 presidential election, Venezuela's citizens were ready for change (Buxton 2005). For Venezuela's poor, the Bolivarian liberation discourse appealed. López Maya (2011 pg 216) describes Chávez appealed because 'his image – that of a young man uncontaminated by politics and willing to accept responsibility for his actions [reference to taking responsibility for the failed coup] – moved Venezuelans who were disgusted by irresponsible, insensitive, and corrupt politicians'. Wilpert (2007 pg 18) similarly argues that Venezuela's middle-class were also attracted to Chávez as they saw him as 'someone who would completely overhaul Venezuela's hopelessly corrupt and inefficient political system that they held responsible for their 20 year long slide into poverty'.

Venezuela's citizens, seeking an alternative to the *puntofijismo* politics and neoliberal economic policies, which had seen the country slide into crisis, voted Chávez the new president with a majority of 56.2% (Smilde 2011; Wilpert 2007; López Maya 2011). He was voted for despite his rather vague plans for a new democratic model which sought a new way of doing politics and rejection of neoliberalism (Buxton 2005; Smilde 2011; Wilpert 2007; López Maya 2011). As it turns out, the appeal to the middle class was critical: it was the middle-class who voted Chávez into government, because at the time the numbers of poor voters



were proportionally smaller than that of the middle and upper classes (Wilpert 2007 pg 18-19).

The political and economic crises which led to increasing social inequalities and class polarization meant that citizens sought a political system in which they would have more contribution to the processes and public policy that affected them – something that was missing in the *puntofijismo* regime. The Chávez government sought to increase citizen participation and, due to his election campaign, had a mandate to do so (Smilde 2011).

One of Chávez's first actions in office was to write a new constitution (Lacabana 2009). In doing so, Chávez's government, comprised entirely of members of the Venezuelan left, organised a referendum to ask whether a constitutional assembly should be organised – 92% voted yes (Wilpert 2007; Smilde 2011). Following this, referendum elections to form the assembly meant that 125 of the assembly's 131 seats were Chávez supporters. The majority was overwhelmingly pro-Chávez because assembly members were elected as individuals not by party lines (Wilpert 2007 pg 21). The constitution was debated for four months and received final approval in December 1999 (Wilpert 2007 pg 29). The composition of the assembly is likely to have helped the new constitution to be written in such a short period, including a number of key instruments which aim to increase democratic participation and government responsiveness (Smilde 2011).

For the first two years, Chávez's government received high levels of approval and broad consensus with the move towards deepening political democracy (Smilde 2011; Wilpert 2007). This soon changed. As Smilde (2011 pg 9) notes 'the two-and-a-half-year period from December 2001 to August 2004 saw intense and protracted struggle between the Chávez government and oppositional political and economic forces. This period contained a package of 49 reform laws at the end of 2001, an oil strike in April 2002 leading to an attempted and failed coup by the opposition, an oil industry deadlock situation which effectively shut down the industry in December 2002 and a recall referendum for Chávez in August 2004 (Smilde 2011; Wilpert 2007).

Chávez won the revocation referendum with 58% in his favour (Wilpert 2007 pg 26). Following the recall referendum victory Chávez saw an opportunity, and had the confidence, to expand the Bolivarian movement and 'seek to build "socialism of the

21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Wilpert 2007 pg 27). This new programme would ‘push for greater state involvement in the economy, more self-management in the form of cooperatives and co-managed factories, more land reform, and more direct democracy at the local level’ (Wilpert 2007 pg 27).

Chávez subsequently won the presidential election in 2006 with 62.9% to 37.9% - the largest electoral victory in Venezuelan history (Wilpert 2007). Wilpert (2007 pg 28) argues that Chávez’s win, given the tumultuous period 2001-2004, showed that his mechanisms for increasing citizen participation and other related social justice programmes were becoming accepted and legitimised in Venezuelan society. Furthermore, he contends that, although impossible to say for certain, because of the opposition’s tactics, Chavismo became increasingly radicalised after each challenge it encountered which might not have been the case if the opposition had accepted Chávez in 1998 (Wilpert 2007 pg 28). A number of pro- Chávez political parties formed the *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV) in 2007 as part of the move towards consolidating the goals of Chávez’s second term programme.

The second term programme, *Líneas Generales del Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social de La Nación 2007-2013* (MINCI 2008), outlined the government’s intention to enhance citizen’s participation via a process termed ‘democratic revolutionary protagonism’ (ibid pgs 29-41). This is seen as one of seven strategies in delivering Venezuela’s transition towards ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century socialism’ (ibid pg 5-7).

In 2010, the National Assembly approved the next wave of legislative reforms in the form of ‘Popular Power’ laws (*poder popular*), which concur with Wilpert’s (2007) view that Chavismo’s policies were becoming more radical following the 2006 election win. Nonetheless, Chavez’s second term was fraught with difficulties. Wilpert (2011) argues that ‘one must recognize that there are significant shortcomings that have either persisted throughout Chavez’s presidency or in some cases are new. This helps to explain why the Chávez government’s popularity seems to have peaked with Chavez’s 2006 reelection...and has gradually declined since.’ Wilpert (2011) identified the following shortcomings:

- A politicised judicial system. It was considerably pro-Chávez in outlook despite its independence from the national executive; it has received a lot of accusations of human rights violations from international organisations and the opposition.

- The public administration remained extremely bureaucratic
- A two year recession 2009-2010
- The country's continued dependency on oil revenues
- Increasing insecurity and violent crime, despite heavy investment into social and welfare programmes
- A persistent housing shortage

The reasons Wilpert (2011) gives for the above problems, many of which are not specifically a cause of the Chávez administration but have not been resolved or tackled either, include: dependency on Chávez's leadership; clientelistic practices have not changed much at all; Chávez's hierarchical, top-down, military-style management; and many uncertainties of the PSUV's future direction in terms of policy or goals. In addition, Venezuela's politics remains highly contested and demonstrates considerable struggles between elites and non-elites' economic and political interests and motivations (Cannon 2004; García Guadilla 2005).

Following this historical outline, the next section focuses on the government structure of Venezuela. It provides an outline of the representative state which has been in place throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the *puntofijismo*. The sections will also discuss where relevant changes have been made since Chávez's election in 1998 and the enactment of the 1999 constitution.

## **2.2 GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN VENEZUELA**

Venezuela is defined in its current constitution as a decentralised federal state. The constitution also establishes that Venezuela is a republic that will be organised politically into states, the Capital District, federal dependencies and territories, with further division of these political territories into municipalities. As such, Venezuela comprises 23 states, the capital district and 335 municipalities.

Accordingly, the federal structure (*poder público*) is distributed among national, state and municipal levels. National level government is split into the three traditional separation of powers: legislative, executive power and judicial. However, since the 1999 constitution Venezuela has added two further divisions of power. These are 'electoral power' and 'citizen power'. As such the national public authority comprises:

- Legislative power formed from a unicameral National Assembly of 165 deputies elected by popular vote. The National Assembly has the remit of forming, discussing and sanctioning federal laws. It should be noted that the 1999 constitution changed to a unicameral system from the previous bicameral system.
- Executive power is comprised of the President, Vice-president, Ministers and civil servants. The President is elected by popular vote every 6 years<sup>1</sup>.
- Judicial power is constituted by the Supreme Court of Justice.
- Citizen power is comprised of a number of organisms including the Ombudsman (*Defensoría del Pueblo*), Public Prosecutor's Office (*Ministerio Público*) and Comptroller General (*Contraloría General de la República*).
- Electoral power is constituted by the decentralised National Electoral Council (CNE).

The national executive's public policy and planning body is the Federal Government Council (CFG). The CFG is presided by the Vice-president of the country. The rest of the council comprises cabinet ministers, state governors, one municipal mayor per state and twenty spokespeople from popular power entities (such as community councils).

As noted above, Venezuela is split into 23 states and the capital district (GDC) in Caracas. States comprise a governor; executive cabinet, government secretariat, attorney office, legislative council, and police. Each state has a State Public Policy and Planning Council (*Consejo Estatal de Planificación y Coordinación de Políticas Públicas*). This is comprised of the state governor, mayors from each municipality in the state, and members from municipal level public policy and planning councils.

Each state is divided into municipalities which comprise a mayor, executive cabinet, municipal police and the municipal council (*Concejo Municipal*). In addition, since the 1999 constitution each municipality should also implement a municipal level public policy and planning council (CLPP). Each state and municipality is divided into the five main divisions of power at their respective levels.

In addition to the executive (mayor and administration), another key component is the municipal-level legislative branch, the *Concejo Municipal* (CM), which is

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<sup>1</sup> Under Chávez, the Presidential term went up from four years to six years.

comprised of councillors. Population determines the number of councillors in a given municipality; the number ranges from 5 in rural areas to a maximum of 13 in urban areas. Councillors are salaried elected representatives who have a legislative role in the CM. Councillors within the CM are assigned to a commission in which they develop appropriate projects and strategies which may become municipal by-laws if approved by the CM. Each councillor commission has a team of public servants, which includes research staff and legal advisors.

Until 2010, the country had parish councils (JPs) at the sub-municipal level. JPs emerged in 1992 as part of decentralisation reforms. Prior to Chavismo, governments in Venezuela had implemented several reforms in order to establish fiscal and political decentralisation in the country (Castillo Stark 2006; Lander 2005). The Organic Municipal Regime law of 1989 brought quite significant changes. The first was the introduction of elected mayors for municipalities. Secondly, the law also redefined municipalities in the country with the aim of securing decentralisation. As a result, in Caracas (which is where the case studies are located - see chapter 5), three new municipalities emerged in 1989 from the old Sucre District. These were El Hatillo, Baruta and the District of Sucre. Following petition to the State of Miranda, Chacao secured its autonomy from the District of Sucre to become its own municipality in 1992. Chacao is one of the case study locations along with the Municipality of Libertador. At the time of the 1989 decentralisation, Libertador did not undergo any changes. Parishes and their corresponding JPs were also created to 'decentralise municipal administration, promote citizen participation and improve public service provision' (Organic Municipality Law 1989).

Elections for JPs had traditionally been held at the same time as mayoral and state elections. As will be uncovered in more depth later in the thesis, the revocation of JPs has been particularly controversial. One of the key reasons for the controversy is rooted in the intention to substitute JPs with Communal Parish Councils (JPC). JPCs are intended to form part of the "communal state" as part of Chavismo's transition towards "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism" (see figure 2.1). At the time of fieldwork, there were few JPCs in existence. The controversy of removing JPs is a matter that the thesis will return to in chapter 7 as it also affects the composition of CLPPs.

## 2.3 LEGISLATING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN VENEZUELA

Since 1998 national government implemented a wide range of mechanisms to increase citizen participation in public affairs. This section aims to provide an overview of the 1999 constitution and subsequent legislation which provided opportunities to involve more citizen participation in political processes.

The preamble of the 1999 constitution explains where the new constitution departs from the previous constitution of 1961. It states that the 'Republic will establish a participatory and protagonistic [sic], multi-ethnic, pluri-cultural democratic society in a just, federal and decentralised State'<sup>2</sup>. As such, the country is described in article 6 as:

*The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and of the political organs comprising the same, is and shall always be democratic, participatory, elective, decentralized, alternative, responsible and pluralist, with revocable mandates.*<sup>3</sup> (Constitución 1999) [my emphasis]

whereas the 1961 constitution (article 3) stated that:

*The government of the Republic of Venezuela is and always will be democratic, representative, responsible and alternate.*<sup>4</sup> (Constitución 1961) [my emphasis]

The 1999 constitution also sets out in numerous articles different means by which citizens have the right to take part in public affairs. In summary, the 1999 constitution enables citizen participation in public affairs; gives citizens the duty to participate; enables decentralisation to communities, where possible; and the establishment of *Consejos Locales de Planificación Pública* (CLPPs).

Venezuela's 1999 constitution made concerted efforts to direct the country away from the general inability of citizens to participate in public affairs common during the *puntofijismo* period to one where the rights were established for citizens to get

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<sup>2</sup> 'Con el fin supremo de refundar la República para establecer una sociedad democrática, participativa y protagónica, multiétnica y pluricultural en un Estado de justicia, federal y descentralizado'

<sup>3</sup> Artículo 6. El gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela y de las entidades políticas que la componen es y será siempre democrático, participativo, electivo, descentralizado, alternativo, responsable, pluralista y de mandatos revocables. (Constitución 1999)

<sup>4</sup> El gobierno de la República de Venezuela es y será siempre democrático, representativo, responsable y alternativo (Constitución 1961, artículo 3)

involved in public matters. The effectiveness of the constitution, however, depends on how these formal rights are implemented and adopted in practice. Though Chapter 4 provides further detail and conceptualises how there may be a difference between conferred rights and rules and how these are interpreted and enacted in practice, Wilpert (2007) makes a very important point in this regard:

*Ultimately, what makes the difference between a constitution that is actually implemented and one that is merely a formality on paper is the country's political culture. If the institutions, citizens, political leaders, and state officials generally abide by the letter and spirit of the constitution, as part of the population's world view and political culture, the constitution will be very significant...However, if there is a political culture in which the law is regularly subverted and interpreted in ways that violate its spirit, as was the case in state socialism, then the constitution will be mostly meaningless. (Wilpert 2007 pg 42)*

For clarification, 'state socialism' is considered by Wilpert to mean the form adopted by many examples of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (USSR, China, Cuba etc) where a small elite formulated and coordinated economy and policy via central planning. The inference that Wilpert makes here is that in comparison to Venezuela, citizens in other countries – and previous attempts at socialism - had very little input within this system (Wilpert 2007 pgs 245-250).

The 1999 constitution paved the way for later legislation to elaborate and provide more detail on the mechanisms and means through which participation would be incorporated into the political landscape. The focus of the thesis has been on those mechanisms which create the means for citizens to get involved in policymaking and decision making. However, the summary of other mechanisms of varying degrees of citizen participation, see below, highlight that CLPPs and CCs (discussed in full in sections 2.4 and 2.5 below) are not isolated and exist within a panorama of other instances of state-civil society engagement and participation. Twelve engagement mechanisms are outlined in the municipal powers law (LOPPM) which describes how local authorities can cooperate and inform citizens in public affairs using these –or other - means:

- *Open Councils (Cabildos abiertos)*: an open session in the municipal chamber organised with the aim to finding solutions to problems which affect the community.

- *Citizen assemblies*: enable citizens to deliberate on specific local matters. Decisions are stated to be binding.
- *Public Consultation*: citizens, communities, organisations and collectives are given the right to formulate observations regarding proposed law and policy, particularly those related to urban development and environmental conservation.
- *Community initiatives (Iniciativa popular)*: Article 70 of the constitution enables organised community and collectives to undertake autonomous decisions to achieve certain objectives which will improve their quality of life.
- *Participatory budgeting*: enables citizens to participate in the municipal budget as a means of improving distribution of public resources.
- *Accountability (Control social)*: Enables citizens to contribute to the scrutiny of public authorities
- *Referendums*: enables citizens to request referendums for specific topics, or for the revocation of elected members, after a determined period set out in legislation.
- *Legislative initiatives*: enables citizens (greater than 0.1%) of a municipality to present proposals relating to law and policy to the municipal council for consideration.
- *Alternative (community based) news and media*: enables neighbourhoods, communities and organisations to develop their own non profit media.
- *Instances of citizen attention*: poorly defined, but understood to be where municipal governments provide kiosks or 'one stop shops' where citizens can seek information.
- *Self and co-management*: enables communities and citizens to manage public services or manage social programmes as expressions of shared responsibility, decentralisation and democracy, where possible.

Depending on the municipality, the different means of citizen participation adopted will vary. Of the above, the most common that have been used include consultations, open councils, assemblies (although not necessarily binding) and participatory budgeting.

Notwithstanding the above, there are three other mechanisms of participation which were introduced by Chavismo. These include Urban Land Committees (CTU), Water Committees, and "Bolivarian Circles" (*Círculos Bolvarianos*).



Bolivarian Circles were created by a President Chávez decree with the purpose of creating an organisational and political base to promote Chavismo (García Guadilla 2007; 2008a;b). Bolivarian Circles had the purpose of enabling political activism and promoting Chavismo's social and welfare programmes, and establishing a closer link between government and President Chávez (Araujo 2010 pg 252). According to Araujo, other scholars have argued that due to their structure, culture of exclusivity, lack of clear rules, and potential for partisan bias meant that the initiative was short-lived (ibid pgs 252-253).

CTUs were decreed by President Chávez as a means of solving problems related to housing (García Guadilla 2007). In terms of function and remit, they were similar in many respects to Bolivarian Circles and old neighbourhood associations (ibid). The CTUs were supplemented by other technical roles where citizens could identify problems related to other sectors such as water and energy (ibid). García Guadilla (2008a;b) notes that CCs which were introduced in 2006 (see section 2.5) have incorporated many of the functions included in CTUs and Water committees. It should be noted, however, that in certain areas technical committees may still exist independently of CCs.

The next two sections will focus on introducing the units of analysis of the thesis: CLPPs and CCs.

## **2.4 CONSEJOS LOCALES DE PLANIFICACIÓN PÚBLICA**

The Local Public Planning Council, *Consejo Local de Planificación Pública* (CLPP), is formed at a municipal level comprising members of the municipal government and community members from the 'organised community'. CLPPs were one of the first major mechanisms aiming to bring citizen participation into Venezuelan policy and decision making processes. CLPPs were modelled on the structure of Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting (Wilpert 2007), a mechanism of participation regarded as particularly successful (Cabannes 2004; de Sousa Santos 2005; Pateman 2012). Wilpert (2007) also notes that the CLPP structure is very similar to some of the planning councils (e.g. in Massachusetts) in the US. Where they differ, however, is that CLPPs are guaranteed by law and the constitution – the US and Brazilian examples are not (ibid).

The CLPP initiative was first introduced in the 1999 constitution and first outlined in detail in the corresponding CLPP law in 2002. Two later reforms of the CLPP laws were enacted in 2006 and 2010. The CLPP is defined as the entity responsible for local government planning, in accordance with article 55 of the *Ley Orgánica de Planificación*, to develop a Municipal Development Plan. The CLPP was designed with the aim to bring in members from organised community and neighbourhood groups to be involved in municipal policy and decentralisation through ‘participation and protagonism’. According to the law, each municipality is obliged to establish a CLPP.

At the time of the 2002 law, each CLPP comprised a president (municipal mayor); municipal councillors; presidents of local parish councils (*Juntas Parroquiales*); representatives of parish neighbourhood associations, organised community representatives. Indigenous representatives should also have been included in areas of the country where these communities were present. In 2010 the abolition of parish councils by national government meant that these representatives within the CLPP no longer existed. These members were to be replaced by “communal parish council” members, derived from a new mechanism linked to Chavismo’s emerging “communal state” (see chapter 3). This posed a challenge for the structure of CLPPs, as discussed further in chapter 7.

CLPP members that hold political office (mayors and councillors) have a term length of 4 years; community members 2 years. There are differences in how councillors and mayors (traditional elected representatives) are elected compared to community members. Traditional elected representatives are elected via nationally run elections organised by the National Electoral Council (CNE). Elections are held in polling stations following the CNE’s procedures and using Venezuela’s electronic voting machines. On the other hand, the community CLPP members have been nominated and elected by local community organisations. Positions are advertised locally and use a paper ballot system. Colloquially, participants often referred the elections administered by the CNE as ‘first grade’ elections and those undertaken within the community are ‘second grade’ elections. Additionally, mayors and councillors are sometimes referred to as ‘natural’ members of CLPPs because their elections are not made specifically to be part of the CLPP; instead they are elected to office and become automatic CLPP members for the duration of their period in office. One additional difference among elected members and community members in the CLPP is that councillors and mayors are salaried; community members are

volunteers who are only paid for travel and sustenance expenses.

The CLPP law sets out 22 functions for which CLPPs are responsible. These are orientated around the Municipal Development Plan which CLPPs are required to create and implement. As such, CLPPs are required to, among other things, organise and prioritize community organisation proposals; align municipal budgets with the objectives of the Municipal Development Plan, prioritise the areas of the municipality with the greatest need; facilitate cooperation with other public and private sector entities, and undertake needs and technical assessments within the municipality to inform the plan and budget prioritization. In order for CLPPs to develop Municipal Development Plans and carry out their functions, the law stipulates that CLPPs should create, and be supported by technical experts (*Sala Técnica*).

The 2006 partial reform brought in a requirement for mayors to make budget forecasts to ensure compliance with the duties of CLPPs and to incorporate them into municipal governments' budgets. Budgets are required to include community priorities and projects channelled through the CLPP. Municipal governments have responsibility deliver these projects. In order to comply with this part of the budget, many municipalities adopted a form of participatory budgeting to do this. The 2006 changes also required CLPPs to include a vice-president who would be elected from the community. This was in part a response to community members' critique that mayors did not attend CLPP meetings. By creating the position of vice-president, mayors would be absolved of regular attendance while CLPPs would have a formal way of presiding meetings.

Further revisions to the CLPP Law, introduced in December 2010, provided a number of overall goals to ensure consistency with several other new laws or reforms collectively named 'Popular Power' laws. These laws were established to deliver the new national public planning system (*Sistema Nacional de Planificación Pública*) which was a further element in national government's intention of creating 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism and its corresponding "communal state" (MINCI 2008).

In addition to the abolition of parish councils, the 2010 reform provided further stipulations about the composition of community CLPP members. The 'organised community' was to be comprised of a member of each of the following civil society organisations: peasants, workers, youth, intellectual, fishers, sportspeople, women

and indigenous peoples who lived within the municipality. Furthermore, in accordance with the new structure emerging from the 2010 Popular Power Laws and National Planning System members from Communal Planning Councils (*Consejo de Planificación Comunal*) should also form part of the CLPP. In municipalities where Communal Planning Councils do not exist, CLPP members should be formed by nominated community council representatives instead. In order to be eligible to form part of the CLPP, CCs need to be officially registered with the corresponding national ministry (*Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas*).

CLPPs' retained its main 22 functions, where the priority to create a Municipal Development Plan and orientate activities around development were key. However, the 2010 reform created more onus for CLPPs to adhere to the National Plan and other national executive entities. Figure 2.1 illustrates how citizens and the municipal government should interact via the CLPP to formulate, deliver and monitor plans.

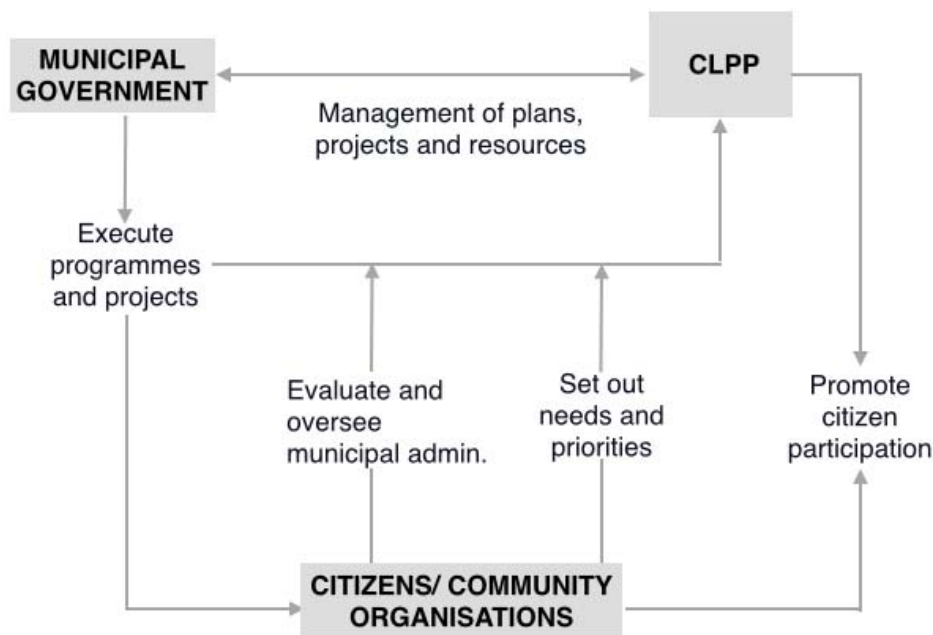


Figure 2.1. CLPP, Municipality and community planning and interfaces, adapted from González Marregot (2010b pg 49)

### **2.4.1 CLPPs in practice: reviewing the literature**

CLPPs had notoriously poor uptake in many municipalities (Wilpert 2007; Esteva 2008). Political events (i.e. attempted coup, strikes), a great amount of misinformation surrounding CLPP development, poor formulation of the law, and resistance from elected officials have been considered the key reasons for CLPPs' lack of uptake and implementation (Wilpert 2007; González Marregot 2010b; Rangel Guerrero 2010; Weky 2007). Additionally, political polarization has made exercising participation rights within CLPPs difficult (González Marregot 2010a;b; Rangel Guerrero 2010). Due to the political and social polarisation in the country, critics argue that CLPPs provide a form of subordination to the national executive's centralised planning and party politics (Maingon 2004, cited in Rangel Guerrero 2010 pg 76).

Venezuelan scholars have also identified that a culture of clientelism persists in public management processes. Clientelism is attributed as one of the main challenges to the uptake of participatory mechanisms in Venezuela (García Guadilla 2005; González Marregot 2010a).

On a more critical level, Ortega and Rodríguez (2011) and Maingon (2004, cited in Rangel 2010 pg 76) argue that CLPPs provide an almost non-existent participation for organised civil society. González Marregot (2010b pg 50) considers this may be linked to two factors: in many local governments there has been low operational and managerial capacity and, secondly, civil society has shown inexperience and/or disinterest in participating in CLPPs.

Several scholars identified that CLPPs and their corresponding processes lack clear laws, rules, and norms (Esteva 2008; Wilpert 2007; Gonzalez Marregot 2010a;b). Furthermore, for Esteva (2008 pg 168), this has meant that regulating participation processes in public policy planning is inefficient and create too many uncertainties.

Mirroring the general academic literature reviewed above, documentary review of Venezuelan theses focusing on CLPPs shows the flaws, issues and challenges identified above. Lacruz Rengel (2008) offers the most positive account. Lacruz Rengel (2008 pg 142) found in her case study that: members of the mayors' administration acknowledged a considerable increase in the number of project

demands submitted by organised civil society; there was an increase in fiscal resource distribution equity as a result of citizen participation; there was an intention by the local municipality to meet project objectives submitted by the community. As a result, the municipal government members interviewed indicated that CCs and the CLPP have created a platform which contributed to attending to the community's needs and requirements (ibid).

Other theses provide a number of negative findings including: CLPPs' failure to exercise all of their functions adequately (Rubio 2005; Husbely 2009); CLPPs had not incorporated community participation in the proposal, planning, execution, control and evaluation of community-orientated projects (Rubio 2005; Husbely 2009; Rondón Quintero 2006); the community had not been given any training to participate in local governance processes (Rubio 2005; Husbely 2009; Rondón Quintero 2006); CLPPs failed to meet as frequently as the law stipulates and is an ad-hoc process (Husbely 2009); CLPPs did not engage enough with the private sector or wider community (Husbely 2009); CLPP budgets were open to manipulation and funds spent on other non-CLPP matters (Husbely 2009); CLPPs were subject to a number of weaknesses including excessive bureaucracy, partisanship, and political clientelism (Rondón Quintero 2006); and, elected officials and civil servants' reluctance to involve citizens is a major obstacle (Rondón Quintero 2006).

Araujo's (2010 pg 318) doctoral research found that CLPPs are 'frequently interpreted as political threats to the power held by local and regional authorities'. Consequently, Araujo (2010 pg 318) identified three factors that were required for successful implementation of CLPPs:

- i) A need to show results (demonstration of effectiveness)
- ii) Political willingness
- iii) Existing/Realistic opportunities for citizen participation

Given the many challenges that CLPPs have faced, national government sought to experiment and introduce further mechanisms for citizen participation. CCs were introduced as a means of generating participation at the sub-municipal level. Notably, these councils excluded any type of traditionally elected, political representative. The next section looks at this mechanism in more detail.

## 2.5 CONSEJOS COMUNALES

*Consejos Comunales* (CC) are community councils formed at the sub-neighbourhood level by residents within a certain (self-determined) geographical area. These councils were first introduced by law in 2006 (LCC) and then reformed into an organic law in 2009 (LOCC). Organic laws are considered to be a form of statute which is at a level between the constitution and ordinary federal laws. As such, the importance of CCs 'increased' with the change of status from the 2006 LCC being superseded by the LOCC in 2009. Preceding the remainder of the Popular Power laws, which were enacted in 2010, the LOCC is considered to be one of the components of this body of legislation.

Article 2 of the LOCC clearly sets out the intended remit of CCs: direct citizen participation in the management of community matters and projects which respond to the needs and aspirations of the community "...towards building a socially just and equitable society". CCs can be understood as an attempt at achieving direct, local community involvement rather than trying to form a council where politicians share planning activities with community members, as is the case with CLPPs. The LOCC states that CCs are autonomous in their formulation, geographical remit and resource allocation. Yet in practice – as will be explored further in this thesis – CCs are supported significantly by the state (national, state and municipal governments) in most respects.

The size of a CC's geographical remit is dependent on whether it is within an urban or rural locale: CCs located in urban areas will be formed of 200-400 families, and greater than 20 families in rural areas. Any citizen over the age of 15 within the CC's defined area can form the 'Citizens' Assembly' on a volunteer basis (i.e. non-compulsory and non-paid). The 'Citizens' Assembly' is defined as the maximum instance of decision making within the CC. The CC Assembly then elects spokespeople who will form the units and sub-committees within the CC.

In 2006, sub-committees comprised the executive unit, a CC 'bank' (financial management unit), the social control/accountability unit and then the various sub-committees (e.g. housing, women's issues, health or recreation) that the CC deemed necessary. CTUs, described above, are one of the organisations that can be subsumed as a sub-committee should the CC wish. The 2010 LOCC made

changes to the internal structure where the 'bank' became a more general financial and administration unit, and a new 'coordination unit' was added responsible for ensuring that each of the CCs units and committees worked together. The social control/accountability unit (*contraloría social*) ensures that resources are being used appropriately, that accounts and transactions are transparent, and ensures plans and projects are implemented and adhered to.

Funding for CCs come from a number of sources, predominantly from the national government via a number of decentralised agencies. These have included organisations such as the Intergovernmental Decentralisation Fund (FIDES) and the Special Economic Assignations Fund (LAEE); at the time of writing, most funding was coordinated from the Federal Government Council (CFG) – but typically transferred to CCs by municipal government. Funds can also come directly from the national government, municipal government, private donations and any other means of securing resources. Citizens who involve themselves in CCs have a duty to ensure joint social responsibility, accountability, transparency, appropriate and efficient use of available resources, whether provided by the state or another source.

Although day to day organisation is internal, Dorta (2007 pg 204) notes that CCs 'correspond to the realm of civilians, they are not a public authority, but the link with distinct national, regional and municipal "public power" entities for the development of their functions is evident'<sup>5</sup>. These include the *Comisión Presidencial del Poder Popular*, the national level commission; *Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Participación y Protección Social*; National Assembly; *Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Finanzas*; *El Fondo Nacional de los Consejos Comunales*; FIDES; LAEE; and states and municipalities (Dorta 2007 pgs 204-208).

One of the more onerous elements that arose with the shift from LCC to LOCC was the need for existing CCs to re-register with the national ministry. The registration process also required a number of tasks such as conducting new censuses and providing additional financial information about residents. As will be discussed in chapter 8, these requirements have been challenging for and/or contested by local residents involved in their respective CCs.

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<sup>5</sup> 'corresponde al mundo civil, no es un ente público, pero es evidente la vinculación con distintos órganos de los poderes públicos nacionales, regionales y municipales para el mejor desempeño de sus funciones'



Similarly, the LOCC set out more specifically the planning cycle that CCs should adopt while requiring them to have a stronger relationship with the national *comunas* ministry:

*The Popular Power Ministry with the competency for [promoting] citizen participation will dictate the political strategies, general plans, programmes and projects for community participation in public matters. [The Ministry] will support consejos comunales' aims and proposals and facilitate their relations with Public Power bodies and organizations.<sup>6</sup>*

The next part of this section turns to the academic literature to provide a review of previous studies on CCs.

### **2.5.1 Literature review of CCs in practice**

It has been estimated that at least a third of the country's 20 million citizens<sup>7</sup> over the age of 15 (the age that one becomes eligible) has participated in CCs at some time (Goldfrank 2011a;b). Goldfrank considers this is an unprecedented level of participation for participatory democratic institutions. To compare, Goldfrank states that participatory budgeting in Brazil has at maximum reached 10% in Porto Alegre, but has had much lower participation rates in other Brazilian cities.

Scholars consider that CCs have reactivated an important debate about community organisation; consolidated citizen involvement in local matters; enabled a 'democratization' of knowledge regarding the management of projects; allowed neighbourhoods to pressure governmental agents; and renovated social leadership and communities (Ciro Marcano 2012; Goldfrank 2011b; Lacabana 2009).

A review of the literature shows that civil society in Venezuela is fraught with class conflict and ideology. This has affected how participatory mechanisms such as CLPPs and CCs have been implemented in practice (García Guadilla 2005; 2008b;

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<sup>6</sup> El ministerio del poder popular con competencia en materia de participación ciudadana dictará las políticas estratégicas, planes generales, programas y proyectos para la participación comunitaria en los asuntos públicos y acompañará a los consejos comunales en el cumplimiento de sus fines y propósitos, y facilitará la articulación en las relaciones entre éstos y los órganos y entes del Poder Público.

<sup>7</sup> Venezuela's population in 2014 was 30.4 million (INE)

Goldfrank 2011b; Smilde 2011). García Guadilla (2005) considers this conflict to be rooted as far back as the 1970s, and is therefore not a recent phenomenon. She argues that because of a poor (performing) representative democracy in the 1970s led to increasing poverty and social inequality in the subsequent years. Demands for inclusion and participatory democracy began at this time. However, social movements were aligned on class and ideological lines. Popular social movements advocated social justice and equality, whereas middle and upper class neighbourhood associations emphasised matters which would secure liberal democracy, economic freedom and the defence of private property (ibid 112-113). García Guadilla considers that the meaning of civil society is still aligned to these two classes, but there has been a considerable re-appropriation and understanding of the concept of 'civil society' in Venezuela. Previously, civil society was a term used only by the middle and upper classes, the Bolivarian project under Chávez adopted the term to include the people-orientated values sought by popular sectors. This has meant, that now the middle and upper classes organise more fervently on class grounds to protect what they have understood to be a threat to their individual freedoms (ibid pgs113-115). García Guadilla (2005) argues that this is manifested spatially (by poor and rich housing areas) leading to considerable segregation, animosity and increased violence in the country, particularly in the larger cities.

Scholars have identified that funding for CCs have positively targeted poor and lower-income areas (*barrios*). Ciro Marcano (2012) argues that CCs have focused on projects of immediate needs for the community – these are usually matters that have been neglected by government administrations over decades (Ciro Marcano 2012 pg 7). Lacabana (2009 pg 11) argues that CCs have enabled people to take more ownership of or within their community, helped communities create new or alternative forms of employment by establishing cooperatives or other ventures. He also states that CCs have sparked vibrancy in the street where previously residents were too focused on insecurity and violence.

Compared with CLPPs, CCs have a number of strengths which have re-established the momentum for participatory democracy in Venezuela (González Marregot 2010a). Ciro Marcano also notes the acceptance of participatory institutions in Venezuela, which he conceives as 'collective legitimacy' (2012 pg 7). According to Araujo's (2010 pg 320) research, the main motivation for people to participate in CCs is to solve immediate community problems. In particular, the focus of projects often relates to the functioning of public services or improvements to community

assets such as water pipes, electricity infrastructure, road improvements, access to transportation systems, schools and the provision or improvement of parks.

A number of weaknesses of CCs have also been identified in the literature. The first relates to the ambiguity with criteria in how to define CCs' territorial remit (González Marregot 2010a). CCs can be of a very micro-scale, which in urban areas can be limited to a few streets; conversely, areas can be considerably large in rural areas (Lacabana 2009; Dorta 2007). Furthermore, CCs only have the capacity to influence public policy within their geographical area/remit and generally do not enable larger municipality-wide matters to be taken into account (Lacabana 2009; Ciro Marcano 2012; Goldfrank 2011b). This overly-micro scale detracts from CCs' efficacy (Ciro Marcano 2012; Goldfrank 2011b). It is only when larger organised groups or federations come together that these community voices can be heard at municipal, state or federal level (Ciro Marcano 2012 pg 8). Goldfrank (2011b) highlights that the newer 2010 reforms, which introduce *comunas* – amalgamations/federations of communal councils – as well as financial support from the CFG, may help in overcoming CCs' issue of scale.

A second set of weaknesses relate to the difficulties with organisation, financial management and accountability (González Marregot 2010a;b; Aceves López and Reyes Rodríguez's 2012; Urdaneta 2011; Vicente León 2009). Additionally, CCs have been described as lacking communication with public authorities; assuming too many responsibilities; and that this can be exacerbated because those involved in the CC are volunteers (González Marregot 2010b pg 66).

Araujo's research identified (2010 pg 319) that CCs were implemented in a chaotic fashion (2006-2007): unclear mechanisms, regulations and procedures meaning their praxis was weakened and disorganised; while the intrusion of party politics divided communities. Goldfrank (2011b) also identified a clear lack of rules as a key issue, and McCarthy (2012 pg 24) argued that there is a 'Pervasive influence of informal rules and practices'. Ciro Marcano (2012 pg 6), like Urdaneta (2011), advises that without clear objectives, goals and organisation, CCs can easily be entrapped in neoliberal or state-led processes which means they adopt a 'sub-altern' role – which is to their detriment.

Scholars opposed to CCs argue that CCs provide a limited means of participation and that those participants have a limited ability to engage in politics beyond

traditional representative means (Rangel Guerrero 2010; Vicente León 2009). CCs are also argued to be a mechanism designed to dismantle and remove competencies which belong to municipal governments (Rangel Guerrero 2010; Vásquez Vera 2010). Scholars (Brewer-Carías 2010; Rangel Guerrero 2010) consider, rather than being instances of self-government, CCs represent an effort to delegitimize local governments and any type of civil society which does not align itself with Chavismo. For Rangel Guerrero (2010 pg 86), CCs are an additional form of bureaucracy, only valid with the presence of national political leaders, eroding any certainty and confidence in state-civil society relations.

CCs have also been criticised for being used as clientelistic tools in order to secure political support (Araujo 2010; Brewer-Carías 2010; García Guadilla 2008b; González Marregot 2010a; Lacabana 2009; Vásquez Vera 2010; Vicente León 2009). Because CCs can be funded directly from national government, critics argue that funding is prioritised towards pro-government CCs – which tend to be the poorer sectors of Venezuelan society - rather than those that are aligned with opposition parties (García Guadilla 2005, 2008a;b; McCarthy 2012; Rangel 2005; Morales et al, cited in Goldfrank 2011b pg 49; Smilde 2009; Vásquez Vera 2010; Vicente León 2009). Additionally, CCs are argued to contribute to centralisation (by the increased linkages to national government) and the appropriation of popular power (Aceves López and Reyes Rodríguez 2012; Brewer-Carías 2010; Goldfrank 2011b). Goldfrank (2011b) argues, however, that there is a lack of conclusive evidence to support these arguments. Conversely, Aceves López and Reyes Rodríguez's (2012) argue that the autonomy given to CCs have created a 'truthful explosion of popular power now that CCs [do] not rely on the CLPP' (pg 4). Furthermore, they state 'from our angle of observation, the CCs are live spaces that have served as a reference for community initiatives which allow participation, deliberation and management'.

Scholars who have explored who participates in CCs have contended that those with political tendencies towards opposition parties do not participate in CCs because their ideological and personal reasons dissuade them from doing so (Aceves López and Reyes Rodríguez's 2012; Vicente León 2009). However, other scholars argue that although the middle/upper classes in Venezuela participate less in CCs than the popular sectors, there is still a significant, and increasing, number who do (Hetland 2012; McCarthy 2012). It should be noted that a great debate in the literature surrounding the polarization of Venezuelan society (socially,

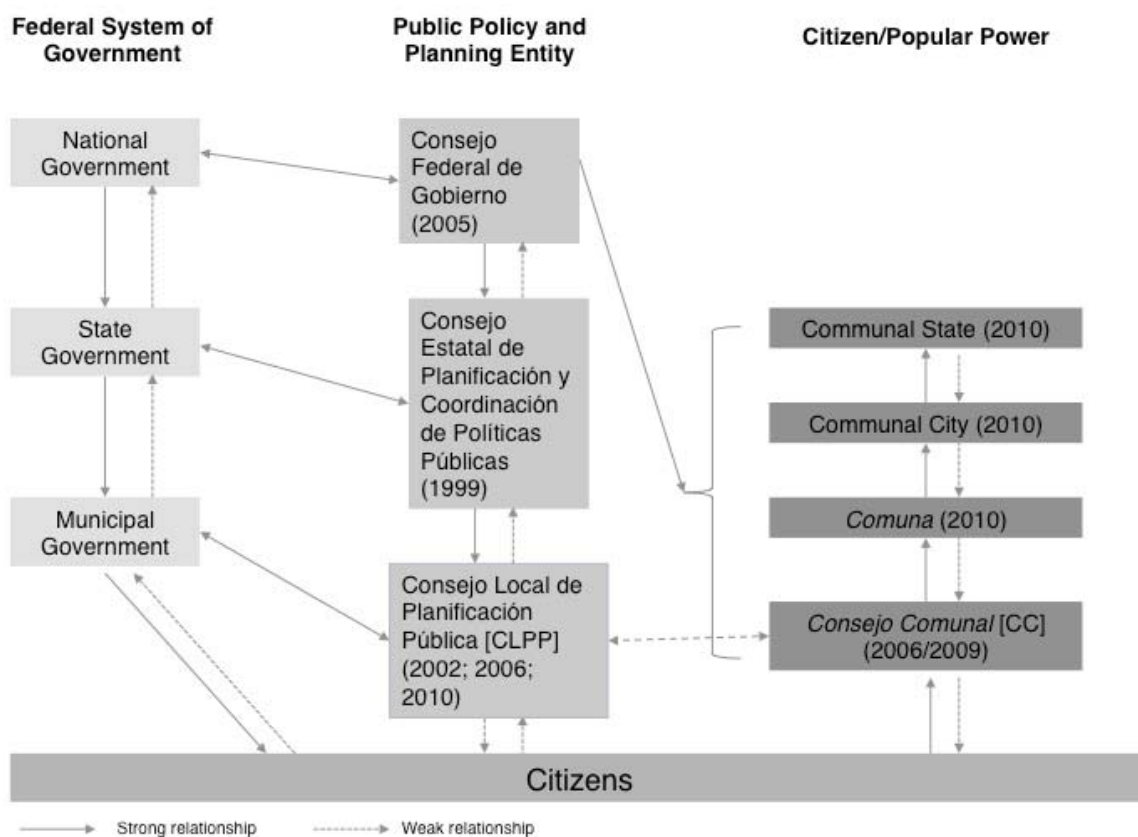
economically and politically) is a huge determining factor in the success or failure of participatory mechanisms (McCarthy 2012).

In addition to the above, Aceves López and Reyes Rodríguez's (2012) identify further problems and challenges including the 'usual suspects' scenario where the same people turn up to CC meetings. And for those people who do turn up, voluntarily in their spare time, there is a need for a work/CC–life balance.

## **2.6 ADDITIONAL EMERGING MECHANISMS**

Though CLPPs and CCs provide the case studies of the thesis (see chapter 6), a more recent mechanism – the *comuna* (commune) - has been created and promoted by Chavismo. *Comunas* were first brought in to being with its corresponding law in 2010, which is one of the five Popular Power laws. *Comunas* are not one of the thesis' units of analysis. They are therefore discussed only with reference to CCs and CLPPs rather than an additional mechanism for analysis within the thesis.

*Comunas* are intended to provide an amalgamation of CCs within a certain neighbourhood or similar territory. It is argued by Chavismo that *comunas* lead to the creation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism by acting as a federation of CCs rather than being an authority imposing upon CCs. It is considered an alternative to the existing representative state. Chavismo describes the emerging parallel structure as the "communal state". Figure 2.2 shows the elements discussed in this chapter, namely the federal government structure on the left, the planning councils in the middle at national, state and municipal levels and with the emerging communal structure on the right.



**Figure 2.1 Interfaces and connections between federal government, multi-level planning councils and popular power mechanisms/ communal state.**

## 2.7 CONCLUSIONS

The chapter opened with a historical account of the changes that have occurred politically and economically in the country since 1958. The key change that occurred in 1998 with the election of President Chávez led to the end of the *puntofijismo* era. Chavismo brought about a number of key political and legislative changes via a new constitution and subsequent laws, many of which sought to increase the level of citizen involvement in public planning and policy making.

Although the reasons why CLPPs and CCs were chosen as units of analysis are discussed in chapter 5, sections 2.4 and 2.5 introduced briefly the legislative context in which they have developed. The chapter highlighted the difficulties that CLPPs have faced; it highlighted mayors and councillors (traditionally elected politicians) have not necessarily placed as much emphasis on the importance of the CLPP as community members do. The literature review revealed that combining community members and politicians to undertake municipal level planning in CLPPs has not

lived up to initial expectations. This tension between community and representative members is a matter which will be the focus discussed in the next chapter.

CCs, discussed in section 2.5, have provided a sub-neighbourhood level of participation for local residents. The literature review has pointed to high levels of engagement (although not necessarily long term participation) in the country. They have been acknowledged as a viable means for local communities to identify and carry out smaller scale projects to improve their local area; with evidence that those located in lower income and *barrios* have benefitted the most. However, critics have pointed to the fact that increasingly CCs have become a mechanism linked to national government, particularly through funding. Hence opinions suggest that CCs are forms of clientelism subject to prioritization in areas with pro-national government affiliations. The literature review shaped the development of the research questions and research design (see chapter 5) by raising the key issues that have been identified by other scholars, including their empirical research findings.

The chapter raised one of the perpetual tensions between participatory democracy and representative democracy: the often-perceived division(s) and tensions between ordinary citizens and political representatives. Chapter 3 aims to draw out these tensions further, making reference to democratic and planning theory, in order to establish conceptual tools which can be used in the analysis of the research findings in chapters 7-9.

## **CHAPTER 3 REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Policymaking and planning involve processes and mechanisms by which resources will be assessed, allocated and distributed (Hill 2005; Irazábal and Foley 2010; Rydin 2011). Traditionally, at the local level, municipal governments formulate plans and public policies and had responsibility for the implementation of policies, plans and service delivery. Government, predominantly led by elected representatives, and its corresponding bureaucracy were those with the remit to undertake such tasks. Liberal or representative democracy is based upon permutations of this model (Held 1996). In academic literature, the traditional representative approach has been referred to as elitist and/or technocratic (Irazábal and Foley 2010; Bevir 2010a).

Since the late 1980s, a number of experiences (participatory budgeting, community councils, public policy councils) in different countries of Latin America have sought to expand upon liberal models of democracy and establish new state-civil society dynamics (Baiocchi et al 2011; Goldfrank 2011a; Pogrebinschi 2012; Pearce 2010). Initially, Latin America's 'left-turn' or 'pink tide' in the 2000s was understood to be a form of addressing the continent's legacy of dictatorships; participatory democracy initiatives were seen to be a corrective mechanism and a way in which citizens could shape from below matters which affected them rather than these being decreed from above by authorities (Baiocchi et al 2011; Lievesley and Ludlum 2009). Consequently, Irazábal (2005 pg 51) argues that 'citizens of Latin America [and elsewhere] are demanding more substantial participation to exert more citizen control in the processes of urban governance and planning'. Given that reforms in Venezuela are aiming to give citizens the opportunity to get involved in policymaking and planning in their communities a number of interrelated issues need to be unpacked. Bringing everyday citizens into planning and policymaking arenas raises questions on the nature of democracy, particularly how, when and why people should be involved.

Overall the chapter aims to establish the tensions that arise from Venezuela's



transition towards a participatory democracy, with a particular focus on those that arise from the involvement of citizens in democracy and planning processes beyond the traditional representative means. Section 3.2 seeks to identify the key typologies, arguments and tensions that exist between participatory and representative forms of democracy. This is followed, in section 3.3, by looking at how citizen participation can be brought into the practice and processes of planning, typically undertaken by technocrats and/or 'planning professionals' (Allmendinger 2009; Bevir 2010a; Rydin 2011). Section 3.4 turns to look at how Chavismo conceptualises the dichotomy between traditional expressions of representative democracy in Venezuela and the newer mechanisms of participation that it created in the 2000s. Contextual factors about how this is interpreted by Venezuela's political opposition are also discussed. Conclusions to the chapter are provided in section 3.5.

## **3.2 EXPRESSIONS OF DEMOCRACY**

With roots as far back as Athenian democracy in 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC (Held 1996), participatory democracy is a wide branch of democratic theory which advocates the active participation of citizens in public affairs, with some strands involving considerable elements of direct democracy (Bevir 2009; Held 1996; Hendriks 2010; Macpherson 1977; Pateman 1970). There is a central premise that citizens and institutions cannot be considered separately, and that institutions should enable citizens to participate with at least an element of self-determination or self-governance (Bevir 2009; Hendriks 2010). There is less emphasis on the importance of elected representatives and institutions of representation; instead there is emphasis on public discussions, forums, deliberation, dialogue exchanges, negotiation and voting where citizens can take part in public matters (Bevir 2009). It is argued that including citizens in public affairs and processes results in more favourable policy outcomes, such as 'trust, understanding and consensus' (ibid pg 146).

Hendriks (2010 pg107) describes participatory democracy to be a form of democracy that is '...shaped interactively from the bottom up'. Bevir argues that 'one of the best ways to grasp the nature of participatory democracy is to think of it as an alternative to representative democracy' (2009 pg 145). Yet expressions of participatory democracy are relatively rare compared with those of the liberal, representative state (De Sousa Santos 2005). With debates spanning centuries,

there are several reasons given by scholars why representative democracy is more favourable to participatory democracy.

From Plato's critique of Athenian democracy to 20<sup>th</sup> Century scholars such as Schumpeter and Weber, it has been argued that participatory democracy lacks an understanding of the need for leadership in democracy (Held 1996; Hendriks 2010; Macpherson 1977; Manin 1997). There is a need for considerable distance between the electorate and governing politicians because, in Weber and Schumpeter's view, democracy in modern, complex societies requires a politically competent, competitive elite. These are typically highly educated individuals with advanced debating and reasoning skills. Competition occurs by these individuals seeking the 'best' and most 'rational' policy via logical argument and debate (Held 1996; Hendriks 2010 pg 61). Schumpeter, following Weber, argued that once elected, politics is the realm of the politician not the citizen (Hendriks 2010 pg 61). Because citizens are under great influence from mass opinion, particularly the media, their judgment can be shaped – and consequently easily manipulated in accordance to the dominant elite's interests (Held 1996 pg 191; Hendriks 2010 pg 36). Hendriks (ibid) notes that democratic theorists such as Sartori, Weber and Schumpeter consider that 'limited participation, disinterest and apathy have a positive effect on the stability of democracy'. In short, these theorists do not think direct or participatory forms of democracy are possible or appropriate for modern societies. For Weber, in order to counter participatory democracy there was a need to find 'a balance...between political authority and accountability *without* surrendering too much power to the *demos*...[therefore] protecting and limiting the political rights of citizens' (Held 1996 pg 173).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a key argument that emerged in favour of representative democracy was that representation is the only feasible way of operating within the population size and complexity of modern societies. For many theorists, representative democracy has been established, and so widely adopted in practice, precisely because it is the means of achieving the generally accepted core values of democracy (formulating and enacting a constitution; the separation of the judiciary and executive branches of the state to ensure that new legislation will not be unconstitutional; secret voting; freedom of speech; decisive action; rule of law) in large and complex societies (Dahl 1998; Held 1996; Hendriks 2010; Manin 1997). These core values and features of democratic institutions have developed over the course of centuries. These institutions are generally considered to be important

distinctions and practices in contributing to the development of political rights of citizens (Held 1996). For those advocating representative democracies, another key aspect of the institutional design was to ensure the protection of minority interests from the majority, particularly with regard to the right to property (Held 1996; Manin 1997).

Manin (1997 pgs 6-7) defined representative governments or regimes to be based on four key principles where the essential component is the election. Those that represent or govern will: be elected at regular intervals; have independence to make decisions separate from citizens preferences; make public decisions following a process of debate; and promote the electorate to express an opinion on public matters independent of any control by those who govern.

Drawing on the legacy of Rousseau, JS Mill, and GDH Cole, the New Left (particularly Macpherson and Pateman) was very critical of Weber and Schumpeter's ill view of citizens' capacity to learn and participate in politics (Held 1996; Irazábal 2005; Macpherson 1977; Pateman 1970; 2012). Participatory democrats question the liberal, representative conception of democracy because they believe that it preserves the status quo and enhances the ability of a small sector within a given society to determine the course of action for any issue – normally in favour not of the collective society but of elite groups' interests (de Sousa Santos 2005; de Sousa Santos and Avritzer 2005; Macpherson 1977; Negri 1999; Pateman 1970; 2012). Weber and Schumpeter's vision of politics led by a small elite with very little input from ordinary citizens in public affairs was described by Macpherson (1977) as 'oligopolistic'. Pateman summarises this issue where she describes that advocates of liberal democracy are:

*...concerned almost entirely with the national 'institutional arrangements' of the political system. The participation of the people has a very narrow function; it ensures that good government, i.e. "government in the universal interest", is achieved through the sanction of loss of office... As we have seen, the formulators of the contemporary theory of democracy also regard participation exclusively as a protective device. (Pateman 1970 pgs 19-20)*

Negri (1999), whose position will be discussed in detail below, argues that non-elite 'constituent power' is ever-present. De Sousa Santos, who also denounces the elitist conception of liberal democracy, states 'representative democracy has

systematically denied the legitimacy of participatory democracy' (2005 pg x). Drawing from Gramsci, de Sousa Santos provides an account of the history of liberal democracy which he considers is a hegemonic practice (ibid). In contrast to the so-called benefits outlined by Schumpeter and Weber, he sees this as:

*...no more than low-intensity democracy, based on the privatisation of public welfare by more or less restricted elites, on the increasing distance between representatives and the represented, and on an abstract political inclusion made of concrete social exclusion (de Sousa Santos 2005 pgs ix-x).*

Scholars (Bevir 2010a; de Sousa Santos 2005; Held 1996; Manin 1997) have also identified that Weberian and Schumpeterian elitist expressions of representative democracy are often linked to capitalism. From the late 1960s, liberal democracies have also associated and advocated pluralism where power is dispersed among several actors in governance networks rather than held entirely by government (Dahl 1961; Held 1996). Despite the trends of neoliberalisation, decentralisation and the increase of markets and networks since the 1970s, Bevir (2010a pg 64) argues 'the state continues to use the language of representative democracy...to try and cope with the new theories and new worlds of governance. Equally, the state tries to plug the holes in representative democracy...' As a result, the link between representative democracy and traditional modes of governance (hierarchies, markets and networks steered by government) very much persists. Challenges arise as the relationships between elected politicians, civil servants and the increasing number of non-state actors associated with the pluralist nature of democracy becomes increasingly complex.

De Sousa Santos and Avritzer (2005 lxvi) consider that alternatives to representative democracy are being explored for three reasons: the dismantling of the welfare, redistributive state and social contract by neoliberalism and neoliberal-globalisation; the problematic relations between the political and economic realms – namely the blending of the two; and the link between capitalism and representative democracy - which has made elections less favourable with citizens because they no longer feel represented by their representatives, and they do not feel their vote (and what they are voting for) is relevant.

With the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century shift towards market and network orientated governance,

two of the key challenges for the state include accountability and democracy (Bevir 2010a pg 95). The neoliberal focus for market efficiency, competition and privatisation results in vague notions of representative democracy (growing discontent between citizen and representatives; increased emphasis and roles of unelected technocrats) as a means of achieving these neoliberal objectives (ibid). For Bevir (ibid), like De Sousa and Santos (2005), the danger of falling participation rates leads to a loss of legitimacy for public policy or government within such governance contexts.

Like Pateman (2012), de Sousa Santos and Avritzer (2005 pg lx) see recent experiments – e.g. participatory budgeting in Brazil, and participatory democracy in Kerala, India – as a challenge to the orthodox expressions of representative democracy by processes they consider ‘democratize democracy’ (ibid). De Sousa Santos and Avritzer (2005) conceive these experiments not only to give greater citizen participation but as a means of “counter-hegemonic practice”. This, they argue, is organised from the bottom up; seeks new forms of resistance and new directions for social emancipation; rejects imperialistic (western) epistemologies in favour of indigenous alternatives. It is democratization beyond the political realm<sup>8</sup> (De Sousa Santos and Avritzer 2005 pgs lxii-lxix; de Sousa Santos 2005 pgs xvii-xxxiii).

Other scholars (Baiocchi et al 2011; Fung 2006; Goldfrank 2005; Pogrebinschi 2012), however, are not so defiant in defining experiments of including citizens in the political sphere as counter-hegemonic. Instead many of these scholars conclude that participatory mechanisms reinforce rather than dismantle or provide an alternative to the representative state. Pogrebinschi (2012 pg 28) argues that, ultimately, ‘participation and deliberation can be understood as constitutive elements of political representation; rather than be seen [sic] as an attempt to add new semantic content to replace old concepts of political representation, they are a distinct means of putting political representation into practice’. Mechanisms such as participatory budgeting have brought accountability and transparency to existing and established political processes by being inclusive and creating spaces for participation and priority setting. How much one reads into the emancipatory or revolutionary potential of such practices is, it would appear, dependent on personal

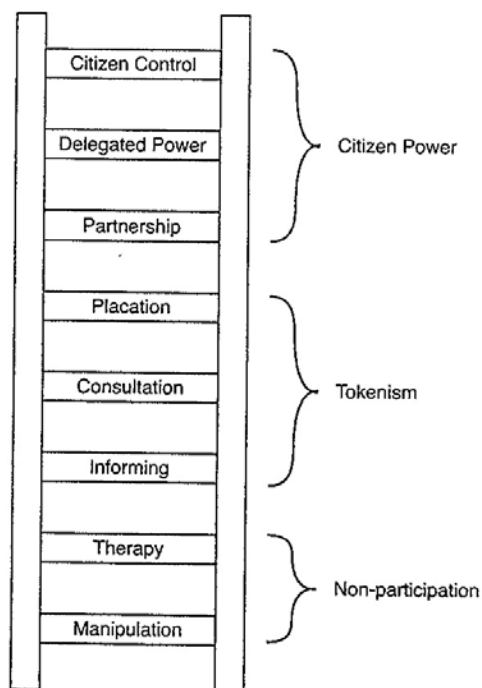
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<sup>8</sup> De Sousa Santos and Avritzer argue other social and cultural realms can be more democratic. Examples cited include patriarchy, exploitation, gender relations, economic and production systems, multiculturalism and minority rights.

preference and normative vision (Hendriks 2010).

This has led to the umbrella term ‘democratic innovations’ in democratic theory. These are initiatives that seek to bring citizens into the political arena through varying degrees. They can range from consultation exercises to more participatory and deliberative forms of engagement and inclusion. Depending on the nature of these innovations, i.e. if they contain both representative and participatory elements, these may be termed ‘hybrid’ mechanisms. Examples of hybrid mechanisms include participatory budgeting and citizen assemblies on electoral reforms (Smith and Power 2005; Smith 2009). Following a review of 57 ‘democratic innovations’, Smith and Power (2005 pg11) consider that direct, popular referendums, participatory budgeting and citizen assemblies are ‘exceptional in the way they manage to both increase and deepen participation’. But, importantly, these innovations are not seeking to replace existing governmental and governance structures; they are inserted into existing practices in order to improve their corresponding processes.

Arnstein (1969) provided ‘a ladder of citizen participation’ which sought to establish the different categories of participation that may occur within the political sphere. Despite its age, it is still referred to in contemporary literature as a useful framework for distinguishing citizen participation levels (Cornwall 2011; Ciro Marcano 2012; Irazábal 2005).



**Figure 3.1 Arnstein's Ladder of Participation. Source: Arnstein (2011 pg 5)**

The framework uses 8 rungs of the ladder (see figure 3.1) to differentiate between three typologies of citizen power (citizen power, tokenism and non-participation). The very top of the ladder is a situation where citizens have control. For Arnstein this meant 'people are simply demanding that degree of power (or control) which guarantees that participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which 'outsiders' may change them (Arnstein 2011 pg 16). Moving down the scales involves less citizens' ability to govern or manage matters. The very bottom of the scale involves non-participation, where citizens are generally subjected to 'public relations vehicle[s] by powerholders' (ibid pg 6).

Although very difficult to determine without addressing specific cases, one would expect participatory democracy practices and mechanisms to come out towards the top of the ladder and a Weberian/Schumpeterian type liberal democracy, where ordinary citizens have a lesser role in public affairs, to be towards the bottom. It should be noted that Arnstein was aware that there might be many more rungs on the ladder than the 8 suggested, while accepting that blurring and fuzziness in practice is likely to occur between them.

Hendriks (2010) highlights that it is simply not appropriate to advocate participatory democracy over representative models of democracy as 'in practice... models of democracy always stray from their ideal types...in other words: practice abounds not with uniform, pure models, but with multiform, mixed models of democracy' (Hendriks 2010 pg 135). Instead, an approach where the contextual background within which such idealised models of democracy are intended to be implemented needs to be understood. Given that transfer of participatory mechanisms from one context to another is difficult, recent scholarship also notes that participatory innovations need to be developed in response to the specific circumstances of a particular place. It is also considered that one innovation or mechanism is unlikely to meet all needs. A number of mechanisms may be required to tackle different issues (Crot 2007; Smith 2009).

Notwithstanding the important identification and nuance that Hendriks (2010) makes about making preferences and advocating one form of idealised model of democracy over another, the 'deliberative turn' of democratic theory has expanded

considerably over the last 20 years (Dryzek 2010; Held 2006). This strand of theory, as its name suggests places participant deliberation at its core as a means of establishing 'legitimacy' (Dryzek 2010 pg14). As a body of theory, it has taken on the matter of not only advocating an increasing number of citizens participating in the political sphere, but also seeking ways to improve the quality of this participation. Held (2006 pg 246) argues that deliberative democrats put 'the quality of public decision making at the centre of the debate'. Furthermore, advocates 'champion informed debate, the public use of reason and the impartial pursuit of truth' (ibid pg 232).

A large part of the theoretical discourse in the deliberative democracy strand is the need for mechanisms and procedures that facilitate deliberation and reflective preference debate (Offe and Preuss, 1991 in Held 2006 pgs 233-234). This body of theory comes from a position that understands the socio-economic and cultural differences between participants when gathering in meeting, assembly, jury or parliament. Deliberation is seen as a means of transcending and transforming citizens' preferences through the act of taking part in a deliberative forum where a wide range of other preferences and issues will be heard. The act of being part of this process will involve reflexive participation leading to processes of social learning and, theoretically, the choosing of sound policies or decisions (Held 2006 235-238). Drawing from Habermas, it is considered that preferences are moving and adjusting and that collective solutions will be attained through 'communicative and discursive rationality' (Held 2006 236). Unlike Habermas, Dryzek (2010 pg 15) does not regard reaching consensus as 'the gold standard of political legitimacy'.

CLPPs (to a lesser extent) and CCs (to a greater extent) allow citizens in Venezuela to get involved in a political arena, deliberate their preferences on a wide range of public affairs. CCs, in particular, provide any voting-age citizen in Venezuela, should they wish to participate, a means of deliberating on community matters in their local neighbourhood. Though the arena for deliberating exists, and taking part is possible, the question of the quality of deliberation remains. For deliberative democrats there is considerable debate about methodologies of achieving 'sound public reasoning' (Held 2006 pg 238). As Held describes, there are the scholars, on one side, who argue for 'impartialism', which assumes that citizens' preferences are not given and that in the deliberative forum they will listen to other preferences and select accordingly after a debate of the pros and cons of each preference has been presented (2006 pgs 239-241). On the other side, opponents to impartialism argue



that the act of trying to be impartial is not possible as people come to a forum with values, biases and/or entrenched preferences. To try and achieve the 'best' argument (as impartialists advocate) is therefore unattainable. These scholars argue that political history has shown that politics and moral values cannot be simplified (ibid pgs 241-242). Thus the act of deliberating is a form of trying to achieve some sort of compromise, given that agreement on preferences is highly unlikely.

Two ongoing debates within participatory and deliberative democratic theory exist:

1) If those coming to a deliberative forum with strong views listen to other preferences and values during the debate but their views or opinions remain unchanged does this mean that meaningful deliberation did not happen? This first scenario arises, as there is a general assumption that some form of preference transformation should occur.

2) In a delegative or representative system of deliberation, a delegate may be sent to a higher abstraction of a council meeting (for example citywide meeting of neighbourhood councils) representing the neighbourhood council's preference. However, if that delegate engages in the city-level debate and changes opinion from the one he or she was sent to advocate by being persuaded during the deliberation, the latter can cause conflict with the neighbourhood. The result can be ongoing disagreement about what constitutes valid deliberation if the neighbourhood council maintains that its position was not put forward correctly at the higher-level council. Despite that the neighbourhood council took part in the deliberation, via their delegate, the collective believes its position was violated. This scenario provides an example showing how the creation of viable systems of deliberation can be challenging.

One of the key arguments made by deliberative democrats, and perhaps a means of simplifying the dilemmas set out above, is the need for ongoing civic education (learning about the meaning and practice of deliberation) to ensure the widespread adoption and understanding of deliberation as a process. Lacabana (2009) has indicated that practices within CCs in particular have allowed communities to obtain a civic and political education experience and knowledge which was previously unavailable to them. At the same time participants acquire skills and knowledge which enables them to engage with the existing municipalities and articulate preferences, or at least provides the means to do so should they wish – personally

or via proxy. Citizens have therefore undergone a (collective) transformative process by having taken part in participatory and deliberative processes. Scholars argue the more this happens, the more it will continue as such practices become embedded (Held 2006 pg 251-252) across a wide range of political levels:

*For theorists like Young and Dryzek, deliberation is a way of transforming democracy and creating a new language of radical politics – a deliberative, participatory political order...to the extent that deliberation is regarded as a transformative mode of reasoning which can be drawn upon in diverse setting, from micro-fora and neighbourhood associations to national parliaments and transnational settings, it tends to be interpreted as a new radical model of democracy. (Held 2006 pg 252)*

While this section has focused on the key concepts of participatory and representative forms of democracy it has not focused on how policies or plans are turned into action and delivered. Consequently, the next section looks at how the debates of participation translate to the practice and processes of policymaking and planning.

### **3.3 PLANNING AND PARTICIPATION**

This section explores the nature of alternative worldviews and epistemologies regarding planning processes and concepts. It aims to look at the debate in planning and public policy literature about how to bring citizens into these practices and processes at a local level. It also seeks to explore how planning can be conceived and carried out in an inclusive and participatory manner. Given the political context and discourse in Venezuela, it is considered that such alternative approaches to planning, policymaking, and ultimately who decides resource allocation, will be useful for understanding and evaluating the planning and decision-making processes undertaken by CLPPs and CCs.

At a more conceptual level, Verma (2010 pg 399) argues that public policy and political science ‘emphasize the separation of authority at federal, state and local levels’ whereas planning is ‘concerned with how all policies, programs and initiatives come together and get enacted at the local level’. Traditionally, planning is seen as a practice led by professionals and a process that is undertaken by governments and associated agencies (Allmendinger 2009; Healey 1997; Rydin 2011).

Within the planning literature, there is debate about the nature of the 'planner' and how the planners' reputation/ professionalism/ expertise may be questioned as a result of changes in policymaking, planning and their implementation in practice (Allmendinger 2009; Healey 1997; Forester 2008). Forester (2008 pg 126) defines "planners" and the process of planning in a broad sense rather than the narrow concept of an urban planner (traditionally a local government officer) seeking to create plans and adhere to statute:

*To make new things happen, to find out what we can do effectively in politically uncertain and fluid settings, we need to learn—and to learn, we very often need to ask questions and listen carefully. When we do this, we're "planners" and policy analysts in the most general sense: exploring what's possible, finding out about what we can and can't do... I use the term "planners" to refer very generally to all those who need to learn about their environments—public or private, social or natural—in order to change them.*

Allmendinger (2009 pgs 220-221) being more cautious frames the debate as follows:

*To accept...[a more participatory type of]...planning you must accept...[the]...foundations of planning as redistributive activity, of planners as more than apolitical arbiters between different interests, and, most importantly, of planning as a participative process. These are definite political stances that involve a radical break with the concept of planners...how can you have a profession (whose raison d'être is the application of expert knowledge) if you argue that there is no such thing as expert knowledge, only different opinions brought together?*

Although Allmendinger's general premise that planning is inherently an elite, expert driven process, a number of other ways of conceiving the way in which planning can be undertaken is prevalent in planning theory. Non-orthodox planning scholars reject traditional (technocratic, expert driven) forms of planning practices, particularly when applied to the global south, because they are considered hegemonic and contain entrenched worldviews and practices borrowed from the first world or European-centred traditions (Irazábal and Foley 2010; Forester 1999; Friedmann 1987; Mirafteb 2009).

Linking with the debates in the previous section, Bevir (2010a) argues that rather than linger on to outdated notions of representative democracy and its institutions there should be a move towards citizen orientated, alternative modes of action which facilitate participative democracy. Healey (2011 pg xiii) shares this sentiment when she considers that those involved in planning should be part of a transformation, not only of the system but actors involved in that process: 'the planning endeavour should focus on transformative development which changes the parameters of the systems and structures that limit people's opportunities to flourish and pursue their search, individually and collectively, for a "good life"'. This implies that both citizens and policymakers/planners need to transform their current conceptions of practising and doing.

In order for planning practices to become citizen orientated, scholars argue that there is a need to re-conceptualise how planning and policymaking processes are viewed, particularly by public authorities (Beard, Miraftab and Silver 2008; Healey 1997, 2011; Irazábal and Foley 2010; Miraftab 2009). Whilst Healey's model of 'collaborative planning' shares many sentiments with inclusive and collaborative modes of planning, its focus lies in established Anglo-american and European democracies and planning systems (Healey 1997 pgs 284-314). Consequently, scholars looking at developing countries have a different perspective. Roy (2005 pg 152, cited in Irazábal and Foley 2010 pg 106) argues this requires a new epistemology that "disrupts models of expertise, making it possible to generate knowledge about [slum/urban] upgrading and [implementing] infrastructure from a different set of experts: the residents". Where communities are completely marginalized from traditional planning practices and processes, planning happens in 'invented spaces' when communities take matters into their own hands. These forms of planning develop in spaces that are not sanctioned or invited. Nor are they confined to professional planners being involved (Miraftab, Silver and Beard 2008; Miraftab 2009 pgs 41-42). Yet, what unorthodox planning theorists seek is for ordinary citizens, residents of local communities, to share a meaningful formalised space within planning frameworks.

Once citizens are brought in to the formalised planning arena, there are also debates about how the operational dynamics of this engagement should work, particularly in making mechanisms for participation meaningful for those involved. The end of the previous section highlighted the deliberative turn in democratic

theory and its focus on bringing citizens into the sphere and enabling them for deliberation; spaces that can include both lay-people and expertise. Scholars (Bevir 2010a; Dryzek 2008) argue that deliberative approaches to policymaking are a positive counter to technocratic, centrally-controlled public policymaking/ planning.

Advocates of a deliberative arena for policymaking believe that knowledge held by bureaucrats and planning professionals is flawed given their view that objective knowledge does not exist and no expert can be all-knowing (Bevir 2010a; Dryzek 2008; Forester 1999; Friedmann 2011). Dryzek provides two reasons why he believes 'perfect' policy decisions or agendas set by technocrats are unrealistic: the first is that 'a single locus of decision making may not exist, and ii) 'technocratic analysis often proceeds from its own frame of reference which may embody values different from those of policy makers' [and citizens] (Dryzek 2008 pg 191).

Forester (1999 pg 246), despite being an advocate of deliberation, offers some caution: 'public deliberation in participatory planning processes is a contingent, fragile, vulnerable possibility in a precarious democratic society; it depends not on some virtuous "good planner", but on the struggle and hard work, insight and imagination, moral 'sensitivity and political perception too'. This position also mirrors Hendriks' (2010) caution about advocating one normative model of democracy over another. Like Hendriks' position, which seeks acceptance of hybrid, contingent and contextual practices of democracy, Forester in effect argues that some form of middle ground is needed between planning among citizens and government, bureaucrats and planners (though these may overlap). Planners can encourage technical inquiry that contributes to deliberative policy and design conversations, encourage explicit value inquiry – such as pros/cons, costs/benefits, goals and values etc, and foster deliberation about citizens' fears, hopes, or commitments (Forester 1999 pgs 244-245).

Given that the world is one of myriad, consistently changing complexities, the challenges to implementing deliberation into policymaking, planning and decision-making processes outlined by Forester and Dryzek are made very real. Some of the limitations that Irazábal and Foley (2011 pg 114) encountered in their empirical research on Venezuelan planning processes included: a parallel functioning of representative and direct democracy institutions; longer and more cumbersome decision making processes; lack of procedural and factual certainties; changing regulations and organizational structures, as the system moves to a more direct

democracy; participation is easier at the local level, less so at the regional or national scale; persistence of hierarchies; unequal power relations between stakeholders; as well as dealing with entrenched ways of thinking.

The above list highlights the many issues that arise in practice between state-led policymaking - which tends to be elite-driven and leads to the reproduction of elite worldviews (Bevir 2010a; Dryzek 2008; Roy 2005) – and citizen participation. It also highlights the issues that are raised when innovating and introducing new mechanisms, processes and practices into existing arrangements. The numbers of conditions and obstacles to overcome traditional, or entrenched, processes are many. The contingent nature of praxis, particularly with any democracy, planning or policymaking process, has a number of unforeseen outcomes. Nonetheless, as described in this section, despite the many challenges to increasing participation in planning processes there is increasing scholarship and advocacy from practitioners, as well as citizens, for greater participation.

Dryzek clearly summarises the essence of the debates explored in this chapter. To improve the scope and authenticity of democracy, citizens need to be brought into the policy arenas and deliberations. However, in doing so:

*there need to be open arenas for public discourse in which all relevant points of view are expressed; citizens ought to view their role as citizens as important, as involving obligations as well as rights, and they must be convinced that government has the interest and capacity to solve public problems; citizens themselves should be supportive of policies and positively involved in producing shared goals; and there must be means to hold government accountable for its actions. These important conditions for democracy are directly related to consequences flowing from policy designs: the framing of issues, how targets are constructed, the structure of implementation and delivery systems; and transparency of governmental actions and citizen access to information. (Dryzek 1997, cited in Ingram and Schneider, 2008 pg 172)*

The preamble of the 1999 Venezuelan constitution sets out that citizens should be active protagonists in shaping public matters and democracy. The intentions of the Venezuelan constitution and later legislation provided a formal framework within which citizens and civil society can begin to flesh out new norms, cultures, or modes

of action which include spaces for community orientated, and context driven practices. How this has been interpreted and conceived, the focus of the thesis, is introduced in the next section.

### **3.4 CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION IN VENEZUELA**

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 discussed the theoretical positions of different forms of democracy and planning and where citizen participation should be placed within such models. This section seeks to unpack where Venezuela's national government and plans – which have advocated and instigated the moves towards participatory mechanisms.

Chavismo introduced a new lexicon into the Venezuelan political landscape. The move towards creating a “communal state”, which is the basis for creating “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism”<sup>9</sup>, has meant that Chavismo has needed to define and conceptualise what it means to have the traditional federal structure – with a strong executive – sitting in parallel with the new “communal state” mechanisms. As such, Chavismo introduced terms which differentiate the two. In legislation, traditional federal government is referred to as “public power”, whereas the newer “communal state” mechanisms are termed “popular power”. Yet, to distinguish between citizens and representatives, as well as between representative and participatory democracy mechanisms, there are two further terms which Chavismo uses (see Acosta Rico 2012). The first of these is “constituted power”, which refers to those who have been elected to be political representatives in the traditional structures (president, governors, mayors and councillors). The second is “constituent power” which includes those elected within communities to sit on committees within the various mechanisms, such as CCs and *comunas*, which fall under the umbrella of “popular power”. Based on Acosta Rico (2012), figure 3.2 shows where the concepts ‘constituent/constituted power’ fall within Venezuelan institutions. Figure 3.3 shows how the two powers work together and function as ‘national planning and coordination’.

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<sup>9</sup> Chavismo named the movement this way in order to try and divorce itself from the negative connotations of communism in the previous century.

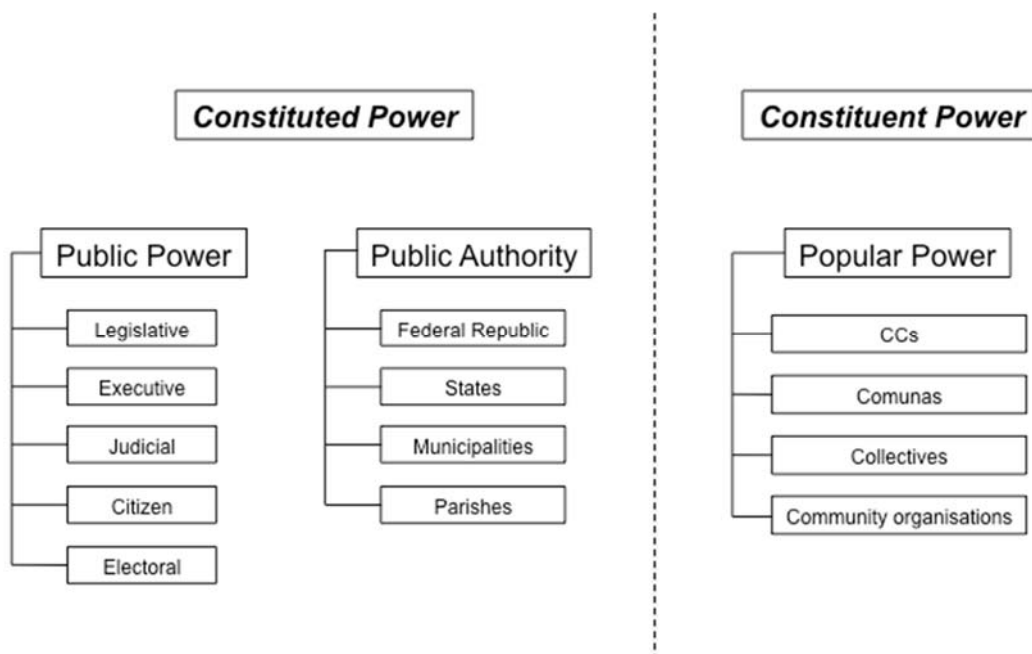


Figure 3.2 Constituted and constituent powers<sup>10</sup>. Adapted from Acosta Rico 2012 pg 44

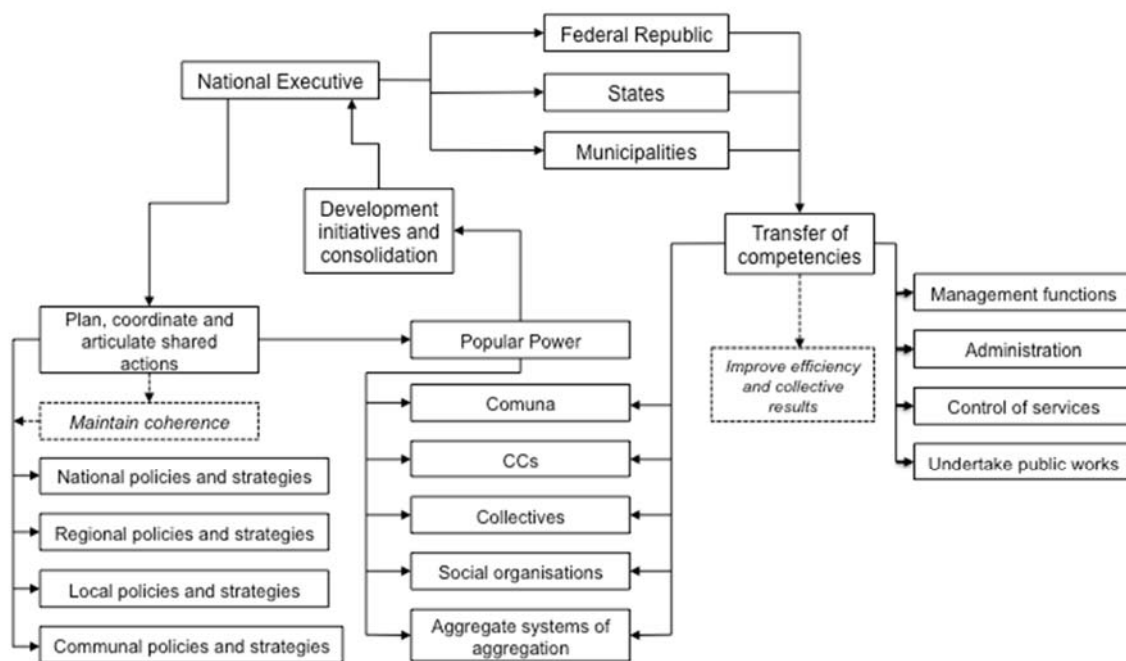


Figure 3.3 National planning and coordination involving both constituted and constituent powers. Adapted from Acosta Rico (2012 pg 95)

<sup>10</sup> N.B. Acosta Rico omits entities such as the CFG and CLPPs from this conceptualization; see figure 2.2 for where these sit.



Negri (1999) provides a theory of constituent power<sup>11</sup>. He considers that ‘to speak of constituent power is to speak of democracy... to acknowledge constituent power as a constitutional and judicial principle, we must see it not simply as producing constitutional norms and structuring constituted powers but primarily as a subject that regulates democratic politics’ (ibid pg 1). By formalising constituent power within the modern state’s apparatus, via juridical figures such as the constitution and legislation, there is a danger that, though powerful, constituent power is often masked and subordinated by representation which, to paraphrase, ‘denaturalizes and disempowers it’ (ibid pgs 10-12). Negri considers that whenever constituent power has arisen in history (such as the English, American, French, Russian revolutions), “constituted power” opposes and extinguishes the movement (ibid viii). Consequently, Negri considers that constituted and constituent powers exist in parallel in an ongoing, interminable process because constituted power reduces citizen’s sovereignty, whilst constituent power is the embodiment of political sovereignty, liberty and freedom. Using the Soviet-Bolshevik experience in Russia, Negri argues that:

*After Marx and Lenin it is not possible to talk of political freedom without talking of economic freedom, free production, and living labor as the political foundation. Freedom has become liberation and liberation is constituent power...the irreversibility of the paradigm of constituent power...[means it] is affirmed as the exclusive foundation of the political. (Negri 1999 pg 300)*

Negri continues by arguing that constituent power is an ever present component of the political realm (and democracy) which has provided ‘historical continuity’ of the concept. He sees that constituted power enshrined in acts such as constitutions can come and go, but constituent power, even if subverted and hidden from view for periods at a time, will re-surface (1999 pgs 309-322). It does so because

*Constituent power is the paradigm of the political because its process is metaphysically defined by necessity. There is no other manner of existence of the political... Constituent power responds to the conditions of definition of the political because it interprets the creative determination of the political and cooperation. Effectiveness and legitimacy...find in strength and in the*

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<sup>11</sup>Acosta Rico (who wrote his manual on behalf of national government) does not reference Negri despite adopting his concepts. Consequently, I have made the linkages between Negri’s theoretical position and Chavismo’s application of the concepts in this chapter.

*cooperation of the multitude...* (Negri 1999 pgs 332-333)

Reflecting on Negri's definitions and theoretical position, Chavismo has sought to reconceive state civil-society relations by creating a dual role among "constituted power" conferred to representatives and governmental institutions and "constituent power" which lie upon citizen agency and participatory mechanisms. In doing so, Chavismo, has sought to redefine the relations among the planners within government and the state bureaucracy with local residents (Acosta Rico 2012; Ciccariello-Maher 2013). Here linkages begin to emerge between the characteristics relating to citizen participation within radical planning epistemologies and alternative expressions to liberal, representative democracy so far discussed in this chapter.

At the time of the 2007-2013 national plan, Chavismo had not fully defined these concepts; instead it focused principally on giving sovereignty to citizens. "Public power" (government and elected representatives) is stated to be a 'lever' to provide 'social welfare and justice (MINCI 2008 pg 35). Policies within the plan state that efforts will be made to develop "popular power" and 'guarantee protagonistic participation in national public administration' (MINCI 2008 pg 39). It was not until the enactment of the "popular power laws in 2009/2010 that specific definitions were provided for these terms.

Acosta Rico's (2012) book for CC and *comuna* participants, published by national government, provides an interpretation of the move towards the "communal state" and how planning should work within the framework of the new legislation. Acosta Rico (ibid pg 40-42) identifies that the elite-led representative liberal model of democracy advocated by Weber is too prone to rule following and maintaining the status quo; this can be avoided by bringing citizens into the process, as they can provide a corrective oversight to policy. The book provides insight into the way in which Chavismo envisages the dual power structure to operate. Consequently, to build "popular power" is to bring to the fore an 'invisible power that has been hidden and turned off' by capitalism. The state, bureaucracy and government ("constituted power") are referred to as 'nothing more than the apparatus of collective power' (Acosta Rico 2012 pg 11). The intent brought about by Chavismo is to bridge the gap between the interests of the state ("constituted power") and the people ("constituent/popular power") to 'apply policy and ensure resources are applied correctly'. Doing so, 'will create an intersection [between the two 'powers'] which will

permit shared decision making in public policy' (ibid pg 43).

Following Hendriks (2010), theories of democracy in reality are subject to contingent factors which shape the way in which they will be implemented. Most often, this means that the normative ideal of a particular form or theory of democracy will not be replicated in practice. The socio-political polarization within Venezuela meant that Chavismo's alternative conception of building alternative mechanisms alongside, or in parallel to, the traditional, liberal federal state reflects Hendriks' argument. Scholars acknowledge that the setbacks that President Chávez faced<sup>12</sup>, in the period 2002-2006, meant that the electoral and referenda wins gave Chavismo motivation, defiance and gumption to increase its socialist rhetoric and accelerate the Bolivarian revolution and its move towards creating "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism" (Ciccariello-Maher 2013; López Maya 2011; MINCI 2008; Smilde 2011).

An additional factor that occurred from the mid 2000s onwards was the concentration of the diverse and numerous political parties into political coalitions for electoral purposes. The first of these was to consolidate political parties of the left, which supported Chávez, into the PSUV (see chapter 2). Similarly, political parties opposed to Chavismo formed a coalition called the Democratic Unity Table (MUD) in 2008. The consequences of increasing consolidation into two completely opposed coalition camps, despite the diverse panorama of political parties, exacerbated Chavista and non-Chavista sentiments; it deepened the animosity between the two.

As noted above, Negri (1999) argued that since Marx, notions of radical democracy are often linked with the (political) economy. President Chávez was openly critical of capitalism and detailed his vision of moving to "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism". Bevir notes 'Radicals, socialists, and anarchists have long advocated patterns of rule that do not require the capitalist state...the spread of the new governance has prompted such radicals to distance their visions from that of the neoliberal rolling back of the state' (2009 pg 7-8). Bevir continues: 'The association of democratic governance with participatory and deliberative processes in civil society thus arises from radicals seeking to resist state and corporate power...these...ideas are not just responses to the new governance, they also help construct aspects of it' (Bevir 2009 pg 8).

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<sup>12</sup> Increasing opposition pressure culminating in an attempted coup, national oil company strikes in 2002; revocation of Chávez referendum in 2004

Despite not writing about Venezuela, Bevir's reading mirrors Chavismo's intentions and programmes.

As discussed in chapter 2, Venezuela's decentralisation and legitimisation crisis in the 1990s sparked the intended shift to a 'participatory and protagonistic democracy' following the new constitution instigated and implemented under Chavismo. Chavismo's intention to create spheres for citizen involvement in planning and service delivery was a move away from the neoliberal, market orientated policies of the 1990s to one which was intended to be citizen orientated, pluralistic and democratic. Such a shift is closer to the 'radical' form of governance described above which challenges neoliberalism and technocratic, elite-driven practices<sup>13</sup> (such as those advocated by theorists such as Schumpeter and Weber) in favour of collective decision making via public deliberation, debate and discourse.

National government's aim to redistribute and reform territorial, geographically and socio-economic inequalities means that policies target the country's lower income citizens (MINCI 2008). The opposition often viewed such mechanisms with scepticism, claiming they were tools that Chavismo/national government used to ensure continued electoral support (Brewer-Carías 2010; García Guadilla 2005; 2008a;b; Gates 2012; López Maya 2011; MUD 2013). Because the middle and upper classes (which comprise the large majority of the opposition) saw Chavismo's changes as a challenge to their class interests and diminishing dominance in political and economic life, they initially rejected most mechanisms. With time, mechanisms such as participatory budgeting, CLPPs and CCs were adopted by certain sectors of the opposition for their own purposes (García Guadilla 2005; 2008a; Hetland 2012).

López Maya (2011) argues that the process towards 'radicalising the revolution' has resulted in centralisation (nationalising water, electricity and telecommunications, for example) and that participatory processes, particularly CCs, have tacitly given new levels of participation. However, because these are controlled and coordinated by central government, decentralisation as the rhetoric intends has been weakened. Critics of Chavismo (Brewer-Carías 2010; Corrales and Penfold 2011; Monaldi and Penfold 2006) consider that the mechanisms of participation given in the

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<sup>13</sup> Such as creating state-controlled industries as well as reversing privatization of water, electricity telecommunications, certain agricultural industries (sugar), and steel. General resistance to IMF, World Bank and wider global north economic practices, as well as technocratic and elite-driven policymaking.

constitution have been subject to political control by the president and his political party. Monaldi and Penfold (2006 pg 19) state explicitly that increased presidential powers means 'most political actors have no choice but to subordinate their political careers to the executive branch'. Corrales and Penfold (2011 pg 1) contend that Chavismo has converted the country from a 'pluralist democracy into a hybrid regime...in which access to state offices combines both democratic and autocratic practice...[and]...the state actively seeks to undermine the autonomy of civic institutions' (ibid). Furthermore, Chavismo's social programmes are also considered to be forms of populism (Corrales and Penfold 2011; Uzcátegui 2010), and Bolivarian Circles (see chapter 2) Chavismo's 'state laboratory of cooptation' (Uzcátegui 2010).

The language and discourse used by Venezuela's opposition to Chavismo and its corresponding projects is attributed to the beliefs that they hold and seeking to protect the existing representative/federal government and associated institutions. Cannon's (2013 pg 6) analysis of Venezuela's opposition and the MUD coalition identified three characteristics: 1. The opposition recognise that the socio-political nature of Chavismo goes beyond liberal democracy, 2. Their worldview is considerably different to Chavismo, some parts of the opposition seek to reverse the regime, others wish to modify it, and 3. the opposition has a diversity of actors and strategies within it. Cannon (ibid) aiming to synthesise these characteristics states that although the opposition is a broad spectrum its 'objectives are seen implicitly or explicitly as fundamentally to construct, or as the opposition would argue, restore, a liberal democratic politico-institutional regime (liberty) and a market based socio-economic regime (property rights)' (ibid).

The above context shows that the basic tenets and beliefs of 'democracy' are contested in theory, interpretation and practice. A basic reading of the Venezuelan context would appear to provide quite sharp dichotomies: representative versus participatory democracy; anti-capitalism and/or state control versus private property rights and liberal, market economies; Chavismo or opposition. Nonetheless, given that Chavismo has spent over a decade trying expand more participatory forms of democracy, despite the complex socio-political landscape and extreme polarization, there remains considerable scope to understand how their respective participants have understood CLPPs and CC processes – and how these fit into the wider democratic context within which they are situated.

### 3.5 CONCLUSIONS

Democracy has myriad meanings and permutations (Hendriks 2010). Representative forms of democracy evolved into systems where professional politicians, who have the inclination, resources, time and capacity to contend with numerous, complex issues are considered the most appropriate way to organise and coordinate society. For democratic theorists such as Schumpeter and Weber, democracy should be an elite-led process. Other scholars believe that such a way of organising society leads in the end for those elites to reimagine the world and frame matters towards their own interests, usually disregarding huge sections of society (Bevir 2010a; de Sousa Santos and Avritzer 2005; Pateman 1970, 2012).

Section 3.3 established that theorists consider alternative ways of conceiving and implementing the praxis of citizen participation in planning and policymaking processes possible. Rather than relying on the traditional top-down expert-driven approach, whether state-led or private sector-led, new epistemologies can allow for more community orientated modes of deliberation, formulation and action (Miraftab 2009; Friedmann 2011; Roy 2005). Deliberative democrats argue that increasing participation is not enough and that seeking a high quality of deliberation within these arenas is vital.

Venezuela's shift towards implementing packages of reforms, particularly the CLPP and CC mechanisms, have created alternative spaces to the existing state structures where citizens can get involved in public affairs. More radical theorists argue that such moves are important as they provide spaces for dialogue and deliberation that encompass alternatives to elite views (Bevir 2010a; Irazábal and Foley 2010; Roy 2005).

The chapter also established that Chavismo has adopted a conceptual model involving dual powers: "Constituent/popular" power comprises mechanisms based on community participation compared with the mechanisms, and "constituted/public" power which encompasses elected representatives and the traditional federal state. But these moves have not been accepted throughout Venezuelan society, particularly opposition parties and their supporters. As García Guadilla (2005; 2008a;b) described, participatory mechanisms have not been implemented with approval across all sectors of Venezuelan society. Venezuela's middle and upper

classes are generally opposed to these mechanisms, as they see this process as an infringement on pre-Chavismo civil society organisations, such as neighbourhood associations, and the federal government institutions and mechanisms that have protected their interests for decades. Although recent studies have shown that areas of opposition are starting to use these mechanisms for its own purposes (Hetland 2012).

This chapter has shown that creating spaces and mechanisms for citizen participation is problematic. Not only do the debates regarding the virtues of representative democracies versus participatory democracy arise, but also the national and local contexts provide contingent factors that theories are unable to foresee. Hendriks (2010) considers that once applied in practice democratic theories end up becoming hybrids of one form or another.

The following chapter will explore new institutionalist and interpretive theories, which in conjunction with the above discourses of participatory planning and policymaking processes and the context covered in chapter 2, establishes a framework through which the empirical research (chapters 7-9) can be analysed.

## **CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: INTERPRETIVE INSTITUTIONALISM**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter establishes the thesis' theoretical framework drawing from strands of new institutionalism and interpretivism. As chapter two established, over the last 12 years, numerous constitutional and legislative reforms in Venezuela have sought to shift the country from being a representative democracy to a 'participatory and protagonistic democracy'. Two mechanisms (CLPPs and CCs), the units of analysis of this thesis, provide potential for citizen participation in municipal/neighbourhood policy and decision making. A key component of the research design and methodology is to establish which theoretical 'lens' will enable the analysis of whether: a) the reforms have consolidated the new participatory mechanisms, b) citizens, as a result of these new mechanisms, have been able to influence local planning and policy making, and c) the new mechanisms have impacted local governance structures and institutions. The theories of new institutionalism and interpretivism are two approaches which provide conceptual and analytical tools to develop the answers of the thesis research questions (see chapter 5). This section, therefore, aims to synthesise the arguments and nuances of these theories to establish an appropriate framework for analysis.

Section 4.2 discusses the nature of institutions and how new institutionalism has moved away from the institutional research of the 1960s. The section outlines the key variants of new institutionalism before looking at how scholars account for institutional creation and change.

Section 4.3 looks at interpretive theory, predominantly from the strand advocated by Bevir and Rhodes. In developing their strand of interpretivism Bevir and Rhodes have explored governance contexts to show how 'storytelling' and narratives are important tools in the political/social scientists' toolkit. This theory is considered an alternative to institutionalist approaches. As such, the alternative ontological approach to institutionalism will be described in this section.

Section 4.4 discusses the two different theories in relation to the thesis research



questions (section 5.3.3) in order to establish a theoretical and analytical framework. A move toward consolidating the two above strands of theory as 'interpretive institutionalism' is advocated. It is argued that this approach provides an analytical and methodological framework useful for studying the Venezuelan context. Conclusions of the chapter are provided in section 4.5.

## **4.2 THEORISING INSTITUTIONS – DEFINITIONS, VARIANTS AND CHANGE IN NEW INSTITUTIONALISM**

Several disciplines within the social sciences have adopted new institutionalism (NI) as a means of explaining how actors' behaviour is shaped by the institutional contexts within which they are situated. It has emerged as a clear distinction from 'old' institutionalism, which new institutionalists consider to be more of a 'descriptive' exercise than analytical. In Bell's words, 'the main emphasis [of old institutionalism] was on description, not on explanation or theory building' (2005 pg 4). Furthermore, there was a focus on the formal institutions of government, the state and legal procedures rather than the informal, cumulative, cultural and inherited practices that may occur within a particular social setting (ibid).

For scholars, there is great debate and different interpretations of what an institution is and how it can be defined. This is clearly reflected in the literature (Rhodes, Binder and Rockman 2006; Lowndes and Roberts 2013; Williams 2011), some of which will be explored below.

In the preface to the extensive Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions, which provides a comprehensive overview of institutional scholarship and research, Rhodes, Binder and Rockman (2006) acknowledge that, despite the new institutionalist interest in institutions and the number of variants, there is a lack of a definition of an institution. They identify a key point which arises from this situation:

*The range of ideas is consequential: it signals that there are also considerable differences of view about why and how we should study institutions, about the impact of institutions, and indeed about the extent to which institutions may be thought to be endogenous (independent or autonomous) or inextricably exogenous (woven into traditions, cultures, norms and preferences). (Rhodes, Binder and Rockman 2006 pg xiii)*

Williams' (2011 pg 1) review of NI literature also describes the variety of definitions: 'Nearly every author seems to propose different definitions of institutions, different reasons why institutions are created and different reasons for their continuation'. Given this diversity it is generally understood that each of the variants of NI have defined institutions differently and make clear distinctions (Lowndes and Roberts 2013; Rhodes, Binder and Rockman 2006; Williams 2011).

March and Olsen, two of the early proponents of NI, argued that political science scholars focusing on behaviourism was 'reductionist' and would not 'ascribe the outcomes of politics to organisational structures and rules of appropriate behaviour' (1984 pg 735, cited in Bell, 2005 pg 4). Lowndes (2001 pg 1953), one of the current key advocates of the NI approach, sets out clearly where the NI breaks from old institutionalism:

*...new institutionalists concern themselves with informal conventions as well as formal rules and structures; they pay attention to the way in which institutions embody values and power relationships; they study not just the impact of institutions on behaviour, but the interaction between individuals and institutions.*

As such, NI includes the informal ways that actors' behaviours can be influenced and shaped, be these rules, customs, practices or social norms, as opposed to a descriptive focus on government, the state and associated institutions, as was the case with 'old' institutionalism. It is in this context that Sweeting (2008 pg 1) argues that 'the new institutionalist approach rejects a dry, descriptive study of legal competences and formal powers, in favour of a more nuanced, rounded and ultimately more informative way of researching institutions and actors' behaviour'.

The NI literature predominantly identifies three key strands of NI, however other variants are emerging. The three strands identified by the majority of scholars are 'rational choice' (RC), 'historical (HI) and 'sociological' (SI) new institutionalisms. A review of the literature has identified a further two variants. These are 'discursive institutionalism' and 'interpretive institutionalism', respectively. It should be noted that interpretive institutionalism is at a very emergent stage and is not discussed in this section. It is briefly mentioned in the following section as it arises from Hay's (2011) response to interpretive theory. An additional caveat: although the characteristics for each of the variants mentioned above will be discussed

separately, overlapping of the different strands occurs depending on the scholars' interpretations and understandings. As Lowndes and Roberts (2013 pg 12) note, scholars such as Vivien Schmidt and Colin Crouch have identified the need for recognising similarities and compatibility among types of NI, despite the need to remain vigilant to ontological differences and/or incompatibilities (such as rational choice and constructivist approaches).

#### **4.2.1 Rational Choice institutionalism (RC)**

RC defines institutions as 'a system of rules and incentives' (Rhodes, Binder and Rockman, 2006 pg xiii). In defining institutions, Williams (2011 pg 2) argues RC institutionalists 'underline the purposive existence of institutions as sets of rules agreed upon by the actors to facilitate interaction and provide stability'.

Hall and Taylor's eminent study describes that RC emerged from the study of congressional behaviour in the US. Institutions were a key aspect of this study as it was believed that 'institutions solve many of the collective action problems that legislatures habitually confront' (1996 pg 943). The RC approach was then used in various types of political science studies. Hall and Taylor (1996 pgs 944-946) identify four key features of the approach. These are:

- Advocates of the approach 'employ a characteristic set of behavioural assumptions'
- They tend to see politics as a series of collective action dilemmas
- They have a particular view in the origin and emergence of institutions, namely by using a deductive position to arrive at how the institution performs
- Actors are considered to make strategic decisions or choices to determine political outcomes.

Bell (2005 pg 5) also identifies that the RC approach is deductive and 'borrows heavily from economics'. He argues that these points are the source of general academic debate between RC and HI approaches. Bell, like other scholars (Bevir 2009; 2010a), criticises RC for being narrowly focused and a 'mechanical specification of actor motives, preferences and institutional contexts' (Bell 2005 pg 6).

As such, the rational choice approach assumes that individuals act within a setting using utilitarian self-interest, out of which rational institutions will arise. Bell

continues his critique of RC by highlighting ‘There is an old debate in the social sciences about the extent to which agents’ behaviour is self determined or to what extent their behaviour is shaped by wider institutions or structures - the so-called agency/structure debate’ (Bell 2005 pg 7). Bevir (2009 pg 166) also notes that ‘criticisms of rational choice theory generally challenge its assumptions of individualism, rationality, and selfishness’. RC institutionalists, according to Bevir (2009 pg 112), argue ‘that institutions, such as rules of procedure, structure the information that individuals have and thus the choices that individuals make. In this view, then, institutions are a solution to collective action problems’.

Given that rational choice theory, as a whole, borrows from economic micro-analysis and applies the concept of human behaviour in society to institutions which favours market solutions and expertise (Bevir 2010a pgs 178-179) this approach will not be adopted as a theoretical lens. Instead, as will be discussed below, a constructivist approach will be adopted.

#### **4.2.2 Historical institutionalism (HI)**

‘Historical institutionalists see institutions as continuities’ (Rhodes, Binder and Rockman, 2006 pg xv). In a more expansive definition, Hall and Taylor (1996 pg 938) argue that HI defines institutions as ‘the formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions *embedded* in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy’ [my emphasis].

Hall and Taylor (1996 pg 937) describe that HI emerged as a response to political and structural-functionalism theories in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was at this stage that new institutionalists were seeking a more ‘expansive conception both of which institutions matter and how they matter’ (ibid). Hall and Taylor (1996 pgs 938-939) identify four characteristics which define the HI approach:

- Conceptualization of the relationship between institutions and individual behaviour is broad
- Power relationships which define institutions’ operations and development are emphasised
- An emphasis on developments occurring as a result of path dependency
- A general unwilling to combine institutional concepts with factors such as ‘ideas’ as alternative means of determining political outcomes.

Rhodes, Binder and Rockman (2006 pg xv) describe that advocates of HI see institutions as being 'preservative' and path dependent. The analogy used is that of 'dried cement' (ibid). HI institutionalists, Rhodes et al (2006) argue, see institutions as preserving the status quo. Bevir (2010a pgs 50-51) also notes that HI institutionalists see path dependency as the reason why policy and institutional changes only occur infrequently. The reasoning given for this is that 'social learning' and 'policy transfer[s]' are 'constrained by the legacy of the past'. For HI scholars, change only occurs at crisis points (critical junctures). HI is considered too narrow in its analytical capability; it considers human agency too constrained by historical antecedents. As a consequence it will not be adopted within the thesis' research framework. This will be discussed in more detail below.

#### **4.2.3 Sociological institutionalism (SI)**

Hall and Taylor's account of SI states that its origins are within the subfield of organisation theory (1996 pg 946). Hall and Taylor argue that SI advocates define institutions more broadly than political scientists do by including many elements of culture. SI therefore sees institutions comprising norms and culture, whereby history of the way that these are undertaken and practised become institutionalised over time (Rhodes, Binder and Rockman (2006 pg xv). In contrast to 'rational self interest, individuals are said to behave according to their sense of duty and obligation as structured by prevailing rules and routines' (Rhodes, Binder and Rockman (2006 pg xvi). As Bell (2005 pg 5) describes, deriving his definition from DiMaggio and Powell (1991), SI puts emphasis 'on the way in which institutional life establishes behaviour, often in subtle ways'.

As such, the adoption of the SI approach has enabled scholars to begin to include routines, symbols or scripts into their templates for assessing behaviour (Hall and Taylor 1996 pg 948). Because of this cultural inclusion, SI allows a distinctive view of the role between institutions and individuals' behaviour (ibid). Lowndes (2001 pg 1958) provides a useful, analogous way of conceiving institutions: 'the sets of rules that guide and constrain actors' behaviour'. In other words, institutions 'provide the "rules of the game", while organisations – like individuals – are players within that game' (2001 pg 1958).

Leach and Lowndes (2007 pg 185) claim that 'all institutions are expressed through rules'. Rules can be 'rules in use' or 'rules in form'. This underlines the particularity

of NI, where it is thought that practices and scripts that underlie the formal are important in any given context (ibid). Leach and Lowndes derive their analogy and definitions from Ostrom, who states “Rules in use are, in short, the distinctive ensemble of ‘dos and don’ts that one learns on the ground’ (Ostrom 1999 pg 38, cited in Leach and Lowndes 2007).

Although SI advocates argue that the approach allows for a more nuanced analysis of the underlying ‘rules in use’ which shape actors’ behaviour, Ostrom (2011 pg 18) offers caution by arguing that ‘scholars frequently try to understand where working rules come from’. She notes that ‘rule-following or conforming actions by humans are not as predictable as biological or physical behavior governed by scientific laws’. As a result, trying to classify rules imposes ‘superficial order onto a large set of seemingly disparate rules’ (ibid pg 19).

The hermeneutic concepts developed within the SI such as “rules of the game”, “rules in use” and “rules in form” provides useful tools in understanding actors’ norms, cultures, practices, and scripts, as well as the opportunities and constraints presented by institutional contexts. As such these elements are adopted in the thesis’ analytical framework which is presented in section 4.4.

The previous sections have described the three ‘main’ new institutionalist approaches discussed in the literature. Although they have been presented separately, it should be noted that there is a considerable overlap between variants and the characteristics from each are frequently used interchangeably by different scholars (Lowndes and Roberts 2013). In addition to the three main variants, two further variants have been addressed in the literature that incorporate elements of contingency and advocate dialogue and deliberation. Discursive institutionalism will be discussed next; the newer interpretive institutionalism will be discussed in section 4.3.

#### **4.2.4 Discursive institutionalism (DI)**

Vivien Schmidt (2008) provided an additional variant of NI on publication of her explanatory paper on discursive institutionalism (DI). She argues that this approach ‘lends insight into the role of ideas and discourse in politics while providing a more dynamic approach to institutional change than the older three new institutionalisms’ (Schmidt 2008 pg 303). Schmidt argues that scholars whose work falls within the

parameters of DI show similar characteristics, namely: a) ideas and discourse are at the core of the analysis, b) ideas and discourse are set in the institutional context, c) communication and meaning are explored, and d) there is a dynamic view of change (ibid pg 304).

Where DI differs from the three main NIs is in their conception of institutions, which she claims are 'overly simplistic' (ibid). Schmidt argues that DI's main innovation is its 'ability to explain change and continuity' by answering the question, 'how does it do so?' (ibid pg 305). Furthermore, the discursive element enables political scientists to establish not only what is said, but also where, when, how and why it was said (ibid). This, Schmidt believes, breaks with looking only at structure by incorporating agency ('who said what to whom').

DI moves towards other theoretical approaches to political and social science such as interpretivism because of its constructivist ontology. DI and interpretivism share the view that institutions or actors' collective patterns are not objective but intersubjective and founded on actors' meanings. Lowndes and Roberts (2013 pg 31) state that DI's 'frames of meanings' are 'ideas and narratives that are used to explain, deliberate or legitimate political action'. However, the extent that 'ideas seem to trump institutions as the key explanatory factors...in political behaviour' makes them question whether the DI approach is at all "institutionalist" (Lowndes and Roberts 2013 pg 66).

Although the DI approach can provide interesting insights it is not adopted within the thesis research framework. Schmidt's approach tends to focus on 'creative agents' such as political leaders, government spokespeople, party activists, and spin doctors (Lowndes and Roberts 2013 pg 101). In other words DI centres on political elites rather than other political actors like community participants. Instead, as will be explained in more detail below, the interpretive approach is adopted. The latter, based on Hay (2011), is considered to be robust enough and manageable given the time, space and resources experienced by the researcher. It is recognised, however, that future research could analyse CLPPs and CCs through the lens of DI to provide supplementary studies to that undertaken in this thesis.

#### 4.2.5 Institutional creation and change

March and Olsen (2006) provide a reflexive review of their seminal 1984 work. In providing a 'reappraisal' of political institutions one of the five criteria that they used to do so was how institutions emerge. At the macro level, March and Olsen argue that 'political order is created by a collection of institutions that fit more or less into a coherent system' (ibid pg 6). This is conceptualised by Lowndes (2005 pg 292), and later adopted by March and Olsen, to be an 'institutional matrix'. The origin of the various institutions which form such a matrix or political order are described by March and Olsen as follows:

*...actors operating within this political arena 'organise themselves and act in accordance with rules and practices which are socially constructed, publicly known, anticipated, and accepted. By virtue of these rules and practices, political institutions define basic rights and duties, shape and regulate how advantages, burdens and life chances are allocated in society, and create authority to settle issues and resolve conflicts. (March and Olsen 2006 pg 7)*

In essence, as they later describe, the political order is essentially rule-following (or resistance).

Von Beyme notes 'institutions develop less quickly than theories on institutions (2006 pg 752). This he argues is demonstrated by HI which shows how embedded institutions consolidate once established over a period of time (ibid). On the whole, within the NI discussion there is little disagreement on the origin of institutions – they can be formal or informal but involve socially accepted practices or frameworks which people generally adhere to. The great debate in the literature is how institutions change.

Williams' (2011) review of the NI literature identifies that change becomes possible because although existing institutions inhibit and set parameters on actors' actions they still have scope to effect change. She relates this to the nature of structure and agency and of actors' psychology (ibid pg 3). However, it is worth looking more specifically to NI theories on change, the majority of which argue that institutions are generally stable except for occasional moments in time. These are termed 'critical junctures, punctuated equilibrium, positive/negative feedback loops, [or] windows of opportunity' (Williams 2011 pg 3). Each of these share the common element of being a radical shift in the overall institutional matrix. Williams' empirical research



provides a counter to this generally accepted view of institutional change:

*'institutional change is not a binary process of stasis and upheaval. Instead, much of institutional existence is composed of incremental change, a gradual shifting that amounts to substantive changes over time but that may pass relatively unnoticed. Furthermore, the critical junctures and punctuated equilibrium frameworks are difficult to operationalize and test and generally require the liberal application of hindsight'. (Williams 2011 pg 4)*

For March and Olsen, change is inevitable: 'Rules, routines, norms, and identities are both instruments of stability and change. Change is a constant feature of institutions and existing arrangements impact how institutions emerge and how they are reproduced and changed' (March and Olsen 2006 pg 11). However, March and Olsen also acknowledge that change is generally a slow process and institutions are particularly robust even in times of great pressure, criticism and reflection (ibid). Punctuated equilibrium requires 'massive failure [of the institution in question] as an important condition for change' (ibid pg 12).

Critical junctures are situations such as post-war periods where a new beginning can be sought and new institutions designed and implemented to deliver such visions (Schmidt 2008; 2011). A key point regarding the general stability of institutions is that rules and routines carry 'accumulated knowledge and generally reflect a broader and a longer experience than the experience that informs any individual actor' (March and Olsen 2006 pg 13).

A further point discussed by March and Olsen (2006 pg 14) is that institutions are not solitary, but exist within an 'institutional matrix' (Lowndes 2005) where institutions interact with other institutions. This practice of institutional interaction creates norms which are shared and created at a meso-level, just as they are between actors to form the rules in use at the micro-level. As such, challenges, inconsistencies and forms of enlightenment or discovery allow institutions to change. But it should be acknowledged that this does not happen arbitrarily (March and Olsen 2006). Lowndes (2005) does not accept the linear type process of change described above. She argues that institutional change is not necessarily path dependent but better described as cyclical as institutional changes can see reversal changes as well as new.

Schmidt (2011), on the other hand, argues that discourse is a key factor in effecting change. She argues that, whether in crisis or in incremental change, ideas and discourse are fundamental. Discourse of ideas can occur in two ways: a) a coordinative discourse amongst policy actors, or b) a communicative discourse between political actors and the public (ibid pg 305). Ultimately, Schmidt sees 'discourse as an interactive process [which] enables agents to change institutions, because the deliberative nature of discourse allows them to conceive of and talk about institutions as objects at a distance, and to disassociate themselves from them even as they continue to see them' (Schmidt 2011 pg 316). Like Lowndes, Schmidt is critical of historical institutionalists' punctuated equilibrium, critical junctures or windows of opportunity as explanations for change; instead she considers these 'inexplicable moments' (ibid pg 316). Discursive institutionalists see discourse as an explanatory mechanism for the change happening in a more evolutionary manner.

Schmidt's evolutionary explanation of change via discourse appear similar in nature to the incremental changes argued by Williams (2011). However, Schmidt is critical of incremental explanations too:

*The incremental processes of change resulting from actors' use of mechanisms of layering, conversion, and interpretation mainly describe such change rather than explain it by reference to what actors themselves think and say that leads to change. (Schmidt 2011 pg 317)*

The crux of DI's development over other variants of NIs is its ability to see institutions of ideas and discourse not only as structures but also as forms of agency (Schmidt 2008 pg 399).

Expanding on the developments of NI in the 2000s, Lowndes and Roberts (2013) argue that there is need for a form of convergence between the way institutionalists conceive change; Rather than adopting a 'sectarian' stance where change occurs via "critical junctures", "punctuated equilibrium" or as a gradual change. They consider that understanding the relationship between actors and institutions shapes the *type* of change that will occur:

*Agency is constrained by, but constitutive of, institutions. We need to understand agency "in and against" institutions. Institutional change occurs*

*when the balance between constraint and creativity shifts in favour of the latter (Lowndes and Roberts 2013 pg 138).*

From the literature reviewed, the positions from the SI and DI variants could both be insightful in the Venezuelan context. Lowndes' concepts of institutional matrices and (borrowing from Ostrom) 'rules of the game', 'rules in use' and 'rules in form' have potential to highlight the way in which actors can accept formal rules or whether practices in a particular community or area actually go beyond such formal rules and are enacted in informal norms. Empirical research shows that this differentiation occurs in practice (Lowndes and Leach 2007; Lowndes and Roberts 2013). In the context of CLPPs and CCs, which are defined formally through legislation, a NI approach, using Lowndes' concepts, would enable analysis of which type of rules, norms and practices are followed in particular contexts.

#### **4.2.6 Section summary**

This section has provided a general overview of NI. It departs from more traditional institutional analyses which focused only on formal institutions and state organisations. NI, however, includes an understanding that institutions can be influenced by a number of day-to-day practices that are not necessarily written down or formalised. These can be inherited, learned over time, and/or form part of individuals' behaviours. Political actors are subject to, and create, these informal rules, scripts and behaviours alongside more formal understandings of institutions acknowledged by old institutionalism.

NI has emerged into four main variants. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the four variants of NI - in addition to interpretive theory and the emerging interpretive institutionalism. The three 'main' variants emerged from different backgrounds – the historical tendency for path dependency, the economic focus on rational choice and the sociological approach to cultures, norms and scripts. The more recent variant, discursive institutionalism, builds upon the three main variants, but includes an analysis of how ideas and discourse shape the institutional arenas within which actors are situated. Thus the DI variant, which focuses on a constructivist rather than positivist ontology, sees a shift towards (namely, contingent patterns of change through dialogue) the ideational dimensions explored in interpretive theory.

As indicated above, RC has a narrow interpretation of human agency in that it views

actions, like liberal economics, to be made for selfish, individualistic gain. It also generally advocates market and expertise over deliberation. HI is also rejected as a theoretical lens for its narrow view that human agency is constrained by historical antecedents. Although it is acknowledged that these can play a part in institutional development and change. Elements of DI have also not been included in the thesis framework because of constraints on time for single researcher, space/length permitted within the thesis, and because of the DI's focus on "creative agents" (political elites).

SI provides useful elements involving the identification of 'rules of the game', 'rules in form' versus 'rules in use'. This understanding can elicit and enable the analysis of the norms, cultures, practices, and scripts that can define and influence human agency. These components have been incorporated into the thesis framework.

The following section will discuss interpretive theory's position given that it provides an alternative to the NI approaches discussed above. As will become evident, the thesis framework adopts a composite derived from different elements of SI and interpretive theory, based on Hay's (2011) model.

<b>Theoretical Approach</b>	<b>Definition of Institutions</b>	<b>Ontological/ epistemological position</b>	<b>Focus of analysis</b>	<b>Creation</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Role of Agency</b>
Rational Choice Institutionalism	'Political institutions are systems of rules and inducements within which individuals attempt to maximize their utilities' (Lowndes and Roberts 2013 pg 31).	Positivist; structuralist	Individuals' preferences and behaviour.	Institutions are solutions to collective action problems that arise out of individual's utilitarian objectives and action.	Institutions try to change and influence behaviour by providing the settings within which individuals act on their preferences; institutions change when people's preferences change (Bevir 2009)	Individuals seek to maximise satisfaction of their preferences (Bevir 2009)
Historical Institutionalism	Institutions are 'formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in...organizational structure[s]' (Hall and Taylor 1996).	Positivist; structuralist	The precedents that influence, and can be maintained, within a given institutional and cultural context; particularly, political elites and national policy.	Institutions come together as a result of historical factors or incremental changes.	Given that institutions are understood to be stable (path dependent), change is rare. Change occurs at 'critical junctures' or 'punctuated equilibrium'.	Minor role
Sociological Institutionalism	Institutions are defined by reference to formal and informal rules, scripts, norms, symbols, beliefs (Hall and Taylor 1996); coined as "frames of meaning' guiding human action' (Campbell 1995 cited Hall and Taylor 1996 pg 947).	Structuralist	The underlying scripts, roles, symbols, norms etc which can affect individuals, contexts and institutional arrangements; institutions are considered dynamic.	Institutions provide the context within which they are situated and influence individuals through norms, conventions and 'appropriateness' (Lowndes and Roberts 2013).	As a result of shifts in norms, roles, scripts, and beliefs within the cultural environment, change is possible.	Individuals act on the adopted rules, scripts, norms, beliefs within the contexts within which they are situated. Rules can be conceived as formal or informal.

<b>Theoretical Approach</b>	<b>Definition of Institutions</b>	<b>Ontological/ epistemological position</b>	<b>Focus of analysis</b>	<b>Creation</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Role of Agency</b>
Discursive Institutionalism	Institutions are agent-centred, dynamic constructs and structures created through agents' ideational and discursive interactions (Schmidt 2008).	Post-structuralist; Constructivist.	Ideas and discourses and the interactive processes in which they are generated (Schmidt 2011)	Institutions and norms are the result of interrelations of ideas and discourses; norms are dynamic not static.	Understands institutions as dynamic as well as seeing change as being dynamic. Discursive interrelations within institutional contexts serve to gradually alter institutions.	Actors interact via communicative, 'coordinative' and discursive processes that generate and develop ideas and may achieve change in discourse.
Interpretivism	Institutions are 'composed of contingent and possibly competing webs of belief. Interpretive science encourages us to think of institutions not as reified structures but in terms of traditions, practices, dilemmas, and other concepts that refer to beliefs'. (Bevir 2010 pgs 266-267)	Constructivist; empiricist; ethnographic	Thick description; narratives; storytelling	Practices, traditions, dilemmas arise from individuals' actions and decisions which come from their 'webs of belief'.	Individuals' 'dilemmas' (To accept a new belief is thus to pose a dilemma that asks questions of existing traditions); 'Local reasoning' can be elicited through the decentred approach and enables unpacking the creation, maintenance or change of traditions and institutions.	Situated agency; contingency of actors

<b>Theoretical Approach</b>	<b>Definition of Institutions</b>	<b>Ontological/ epistemological position</b>	<b>Focus of analysis</b>	<b>Creation</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Role of Agency</b>
Interpretive Institutionalism	Institutions are the structural contexts and configurations that present situated actors with constraints and opportunities (Hay 2011).	Structuralist/ Constructivist	Explores relationships between actors' ideas and discourses, where these come/develop from, as well as the institutional and extra-discursive contexts of those ideas (Hay 2011).	Practices, traditions, institutions arise from individuals' actions and decisions, in addition to institutional and 'extra-discursive' arrangements (Hay 2011)	Through institutional failure as well as individuals' dilemmas. Both mutually influence one other.	Adopts situated agency, enhanced with structural and other similar contextual arrangements.

**Table 4.1 Summary of New Institutionalism, Interpretivism and Interpretive Institutionalism theories**

### 4.3 INTERPRETIVE THEORY

The prevalence of NI approaches to social science has been considerable over the last decade or so. However, a new theory, interpretivism, is also gaining popularity because it enables a lens from which to elicit ‘thick descriptions’ of participants’ beliefs underpinned by ethnography. This section aims to establish its characteristics, usefulness and how it relates and differs from the approach taken by NI.

In a recent paper, Rhodes (2011a pg 202) summarises the ‘interpretive turn’ as follows:

*...individuals are situated in webs of beliefs handed down as traditions and these beliefs and associated practices are changed by the dilemmas people confront. To explain individual actions, we must identify the set of reasons that led to the particular action. To understand an institution and its processes, we must understand the beliefs and practices of its members and the traditions that inform those beliefs and practices. We summarize this approach as ‘situated agency’.*

Rhodes (ibid pg 203) argues that his and Bevir’s work has identified stories that ‘show how ministers, civil servants and citizens construct and reconstruct the state in their everyday lives’. It is argued that these qualitative, expanded narratives provide insights that set the interpretive approach apart from other (particularly positivist) theoretical standpoints (Bevir 2010a; 2011b; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006). According to Bevir (2011b pg 183), the ‘interpretive approach rests on “meaning holism” which arises from the ‘emphasis on meanings and storytelling’. Meaning holism consists of ‘a comparative epistemology, constructivist ontology, and contextualizing an historical form of explanation’ (ibid pg 190). The following paragraphs will take each of these elements in turn to unpack their meaning.

Firstly, Bevir argues that social scientists are predominantly empiricists; therefore epistemologically they believe knowledge is acquired through experience (2011b pg 187). Comparative epistemology is stressed to be a method of attaining knowledge by comparing theories and accounts rather than empiricism via inductive processes (Bevir 2011b; Rhodes 2011). Interpretivists criticise social scientists that focus on purely quantitative data; they advocate a need to attain validity through comparing



rival data, bundles, assumptions and accounts generated through individuals' interpretations (Bevir 2010a; Bevir 2011b pg 188; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006).

Secondly, ontology should comprise constructivism (Bevir 2010a; 2011b; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006). This, Bevir argues, 'does not preclude the existence of institutions or structures. It just requires social scientists to conceive institutions and structures as practices' (2011b pg 189). Emphasis is given to practices and the way people do things as part of their 'webs of belief'. Therefore, the holism approach is to interpret the contextual in order to uncover explanation. To qualify this ontological approach, Bevir argues that:

*Our beliefs, concepts, actions, and practices are products of particular traditions or discourses. Social concepts (and social objects), such as 'bureaucracy' or 'democracy', do not have intrinsic properties and objective boundaries. They are artificial inventions of particular languages and societies. Their content varies with the wider webs of belief in which they are situated. (Bevir 2011b pg188)*

Interpretivists (Bevir 2010a; 2011b; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006) argue that 'storytelling' and uncovering narratives provide the context and explanations for how public administrations or democracies function. Instead of number crunching and isolating precision-like causal relationships, social scientists should remember that the data refers to people and their actions. As such there is a need to bring 'people back in' by eliciting narratives through storytelling (Bevir 2011b pg 193). As Rhodes (2011b) describes it, the outcome is often 'thick description of life', whether life is citizen, civil servant or ministerial. It is through these 'thick descriptions of individual beliefs and preferences' that people's constructs and the reasons for the way in which they act can be explained (Bevir and Rhodes 2003 pg 195).

Interpretivism, at its simplest, can be considered to be a form of interpreting what people say and do as part of their social practices. Storytelling can elicit and explore these narratives (Bevir 2010a; 2011a;b; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006). In contrast, causal relationships obtained through forms of inductive processes prevalent in other social science theories are incomplete and belong to 'reified' ontologies (Bevir 2010; 2011b; Bevir and Rhodes 2003). As discussed in the previous section, newer variants of NI, such as Schmidt's DI (2008; 2011) have adopted constructivist approaches (Hay 2006). This has been criticised by scholars such as Lowndes and

Roberts (2013) for being centred on ideational and discursive elements rather than institutions.

Bevir and Rhodes interpretivism is underpinned by three key concepts that will be discussed below. These are 'beliefs', 'dilemmas' and 'traditions'. The key concept for change is that of the 'dilemma' (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; 2012):

*A dilemma captures the way in which situated agents are able to bring about changes in beliefs, traditions and practices (Bevir 1999: 221–64)...situated agency suggests change originates in the responses or decisions of individuals. Whenever someone adopts a new belief or action, they have to adjust their existing beliefs and practices to make way for the newcomer. To accept a new belief is thus to pose a dilemma that asks questions of existing traditions. A dilemma arises for an individual or group when a new idea stands in opposition to existing beliefs or practices and so forces a reconsideration of the existing beliefs and associated tradition. Political scientists can explain change in traditions and practices, therefore, by referring to the relevant dilemmas. Traditions change as individuals make a series of variations to them in response to any number of specific dilemmas. (Bevir and Rhodes 2006 pg 9)*

With a nod towards theories such as new institutionalism, Bevir and Rhodes describe 'The interpretive approach relies on an alternative epistemology to both modernist empiricism and positivism. It represents a challenge to this dominant or mainstream tradition' (2003 pg 3). Rather than undertaking a process of accumulating facts and truths, interpretivism instead looks at revealing the how 'actions or institutions are constructed by prior webs of belief informed by traditions' (ibid). As a result, they argue there are several ways in which individuals construct political concepts.

Bevir and Rhodes (2003 pg 2) accept that individuals' beliefs are not divorced from the social context within which they are situated and can be influenced by them; however, they do not ascribe to the new institutionalist approach which argues that beliefs are held by individuals because of the social context. In other words, interpretivists contend that beliefs are contingent on the dilemmas and situated agency (context) that actors experience. A way of separating the aggregate from the individual webs of belief is by 'decentering'. This allows detailed understanding

of the myriad individual sets of beliefs that may be encompassed in an aggregative context such as a tradition or culture (Bevir and Rhodes 2003).

Bevir and Rhodes 'insist on the fact of agency', because although backgrounds and contexts may influence individuals there is always the possibility that individuals can 'reason and act in novel ways to alter this background' (2003 pg 32). They consider that just because a tradition exists it is not enough to be fixed and hence it can change. Traditions should not be reified (ibid; 2012). Bevir and Rhodes (2003 pg 35) consider that:

*Traditions do not contain an inherent logic that fixes their development; there are no compelling causes making individuals change their beliefs and actions. Rather, we argue that people change their beliefs or actions in ways that depend on local reasoning.*

It is argued that this 'local reasoning' can be elicited through the decentred approach as it allows unpacking the creation, maintenance or change of traditions and institutions<sup>14</sup>.

Bevir argues that interpretivism critiques other theories that replace 'one type of modernism for another. Out go the bureaucratic narrative, the neutral expertise of the professions, and procedural accountability. In come markets and networks, rational choice theory and network institutionalism, and performance accountability' (Bevir 2011a pg 16). Instead, Bevir (2011c pg 277) argues:

*I believe that social life consists in a constant flux of activity, and that activity is contingent. The contingent nature of actions and practices implies that social concepts...do not have core properties by which social scientists can define them and explain their other properties and interactions...To explain contingent activity and the patterns to which it gives rise, social scientists have to tell historical narratives relating actions to meanings against contingent historical backgrounds.*

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<sup>14</sup>It is important not to conflate Bevir and Rhodes conception of institution with that of NI scholars. For Bevir and Rhodes institutions are practices that are contingent on actor's actions as a result of their ideational reasoning. Bevir and Rhodes resist focusing on institutions because they consider doing so is to reify them, especially when they consider that 'institutions or structures...are composed of contingent and possibly competing webs of belief' (Bevir 2010 pg 247; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; Hay 2011). See table 4.1 for how these are defined.

As noted above, Bevir and Rhodes make clear demarcations between interpretive theory and (predominantly) structuralist theories, such as most variants of NI, because of their tendency to reify structures and provide causal explanations (see Bevir 2012). More recently, however, Hay (2011) sought to explore the potential of blending elements of NI with interpretive theory. Hay argues that despite interpretivists' descriptions of interpretive approaches, such as those by Bevir and Rhodes, which focus on individuals' beliefs and actions, there is still a motivation and need to understand institutions. Thus he argues that a logical step, and research programme, could be to develop such insights into a 'constructivist/interpretivist institutionalism'. Such an approach, Hay argues (2011 pg 180), would:

*explain both incremental/path dependent change and more dramatic/path-shaping episodes...[Furthermore] an institutionalist-augmented interpretivist approach is capable of explaining (indeed, even of anticipating) the dilemma and of describing the conflict and ensuing ideational and institutional change to which the dilemma is likely to give rise. It is not, I think, difficult to see the value of such an approach.*

Other critiques of the interpretive approach advocated by Bevir and Rhodes highlight that it is too parochial (in the case studies used so far, i.e. British Governance) (see Rhodes 2011a) and that there is a "relative paucity of their [Bevir and Rhodes'] own empirical work" (Wagenaar, cited in Bevir and Rhodes 2012 pg 202). In response to the latter comment, Bevir and Rhodes have decided to infer there is a need for further empirical research adopting an interpretive approach (ibid).

The interpretive approach, outlined by Bevir and Rhodes, is appealing in the way that it places contingency and individual human agency at the centre of its ontology. It argues that individuals have their own webs of belief that shape the way in which they act, without being constrained by institutional contexts, norms, and cultures. It is not, as many institutionalists generally argue, that these components determine the behaviour of individuals. Furthermore, their emphasis on eliciting 'thick descriptions' and finding out 'how things happen around here' (Rhodes 2011b) is potentially revealing, particularly in the contexts of CLPPs and CCs.

#### 4.4 ESTABLISHING AN 'INTERPRETIVE INSTITUTIONALIST' FRAMEWORK

The thesis seeks to establish whether CLPPs and CCs have increased citizen inclusiveness in relation to the existing representative state institutions and the way that they are structured and/or operated. It also aims to establish from participants' understandings the agency they have within CLPPs and CCs. As indicated in section 4.2, certain variants of NI, such as RC, HI and DI, do not form part of the framework and will not guide the analysis. This section aims to synthesise the components drawn from new institutionalism and interpretive theory to establish a framework which responds to the thesis' objectives and research questions.

Hay (2011) argues that it is insightful to combine elements of interpretive theory and institutionalism than to dismiss the merits of the latter entirely – as Bevir and Rhodes (2012) continue to do. Hay derives his understanding from the shift in the concept of 'dilemma' defined by Bevir and Rhodes. Namely that 'dilemmas' can be derivatives 'of problems and failings in existing institutional arrangements' (Hay 2011 pg 179). He continues:

*What is important about such suggestions, underdeveloped though at this stage they undoubtedly remain, is that they refer to extra-discursive factors, institutional pathologies in particular. As such they indicate, for the first time really, that interpretivists are starting to move beyond the narrow contextualization of situated actors within ideational contexts. For here we see a clear link drawn between the institutional context within which political actors are situated (in this case an institutional context confounding prevailing expectations of it) and the ideational context (the context within which such expectations were first forged and must now be renegotiated in some way). This suggests to me the value now of an explicit attempt to broaden the interpretivist research agenda by bringing institutional (and potentially other extra-discursive contexts) into the analysis. (Hay 2011 pg 179)*

As a constructivist, Hay (2006) provided an initial outline of the benefits of a constructivist form of institutionalism. This approach, in conjunction with the discursive approach advocated by Schmidt (2008; 2011) indicates further support

for Hay's (2011) model – and the thesis framework derived from it – which will be discussed below.

Whilst recognising the institutions provide 'opportunities and constraints', Hay (2006; 2011) does not ascribe to many new institutionalist scholars' position that institutions are a purely a form of structure. As noted above, Hay (2006) instead has advocated the need for developing constructivist theories of new institutionalism. He states:

*Actors are strategic, seeking to realize certain complex, contingent and constantly changing goals. They do so in a context which favors certain strategies over others and must rely upon perceptions of that context which are at best incomplete and which may very often prove to have been inaccurate after the event...[actors'] desires, preferences, and motivations are not a contextually given fact – a reflection of material or even social circumstance – but are irredeemably ideational [my emphasis]. (Hay 2006 pg 63)*

As discussed in section 4.3, Bevir and Rhodes have been particularly reluctant to accept that institutional factors can affect the way in which actors may interpret the world and this may affect their subsequent actions. Hay identified that their most recent work has shown an evolution in their conceptualisation of collective entities such as institutions. As we can see, Hay's emphasis on the ideational places constructivist institutionalism much closer to the interpretive position set out in the previous section. Hay poses a further question in his exposition of a constructivist form of institutionalism. He states (ibid pg 70), 'In short, where do such ideas come from and who, in a moment of crisis, is capable of perceiving that they have a clearly identified self-interest to the served by the promotion of such ideas?' This resembles the heuristics of Schmidt's DI 'Who said what to whom?' Seeking to establish the position and journey of actors' ideas, discourse and subsequent actions shows a turn towards Bevir and Rhodes epistemological and ontological position outlined in section 4.3. Hay (2011) seeks to narrow the gap between interpretive and institutionalist theories by showing the benefits of combining elements of both sets of theories together in his model.

Hay (2011 pg 180) considers that by bringing in institutions, which he defines as 'configurations of constraints and opportunities' that generate 'good/bad

expectations and performance', explanations of change can be provided - whether incremental, path dependent or more punctuated. The way in which Hay has conceived bringing institutional and interpretive/ideational dimensions together is illustrated in figure 4.1.

To operationalize this diagram there was a need to develop concepts from both dimensions to establish the thesis framework (table 4.2). The components are set out in table 4.2, below. The components are subsequently discussed, with links to the reasoning provided by scholars of the two strands of theory, in section 4.4.1.

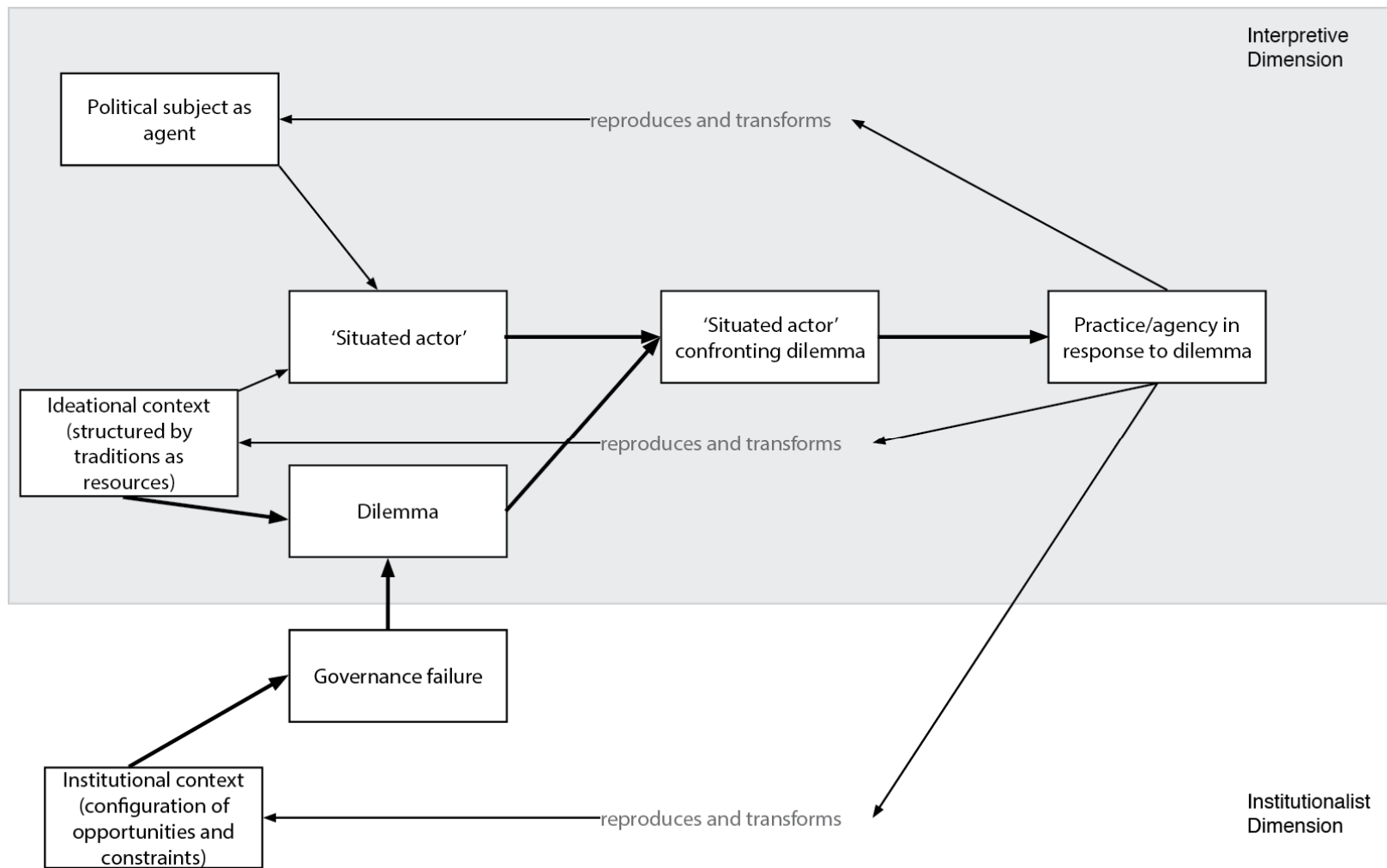


Figure 4.1 Linking institutional and interpretive (ideational) contexts, adapted from Hay (2011 pg 180)



Component	Theory variant	Understanding	Analytical application
A Rules of the game	SI	<b>Definition of institution adopted in the thesis framework;</b> Metaphor that conceptualises institutions as providing the rules of a game whereas actors are players within/ of that game. They are influenced to a varying degree by the rules of the game.	The analytical potential of component A comes from exploring its sub-components, <b>B</b> and <b>C</b> , which allow the 'bigger picture' of the rules of the game to be described.
B Rules in form	SI	Concept that establishes that rules can comprise those designated more formally e.g. by legislation, constitutions, or traditions.	Enables an understanding of how the legislative and organisational processes are intended to work.
C Rules in use	SI	Described by Lowndes and Roberts (2013) as 'practices'. Distinguishes that practices may deviate from the rules in form in as a result of context-driven norms, scripts, cultures etc.	Enables analysis of how processes work in practice to be evaluated against the formal rules ( <b>B</b> ).
D Tradition	Int	Traditions are webs of meanings which actors draw upon to make sense of their experiences (Hay 2011). Traditions are considered a starting point in the cycle of 'situated agency'. Actors' are situated within contexts that present certain traditions. These are then subjected to continued acceptance or challenge (and subsequent action if accepted) depending on the dilemmas the actor is faced with.	Analysis of how actors describe and narrate their experiences helps establish the personal traditions they draw upon. These will include formal or informal rules (components <b>B</b> and <b>C</b> ) as well as actors' ideational contexts such as beliefs (component <b>E</b> ) and dilemmas (component <b>F</b> ).
E Beliefs	Int	Concept which considers that the beliefs that actors hold are influenced by individual 'webs of beliefs' which are made sense of depending on the tradition(s), and dilemmas, that the individual is exposed to.	Exploration of actors' beliefs enables the contingent nature of individuals' accounts and traditions to understand the way in which they interpret matters that they confront and contexts within which they are created (situated agency). Closely related to components <b>D</b> and <b>F</b> .
F Dilemma	Int	The choice that actors face between the existing 'webs of belief' that they hold and the new alternatives that arise through practices, discourse, ideas or contextual and institutional contexts.	Enables assessment of why individuals' acted or decided to act in a particular manner given the circumstances faced. Links closely with contextual/ institutional components <b>A-D</b> .

**Table 4.2 Interpretive-institutionalist analytical framework components**

#### 4.4.1 Explaining the interpretive institutionalist analytical framework

This section aims to explain the relationship between the components of the framework derived from NI and interpretivism provided in table 4.2 and figure 4.1, which shows the interaction between institutional (non shaded area) and ideational dimensions (shaded area in figure 4.1). It also aims to explain the advantages of combining institutionalist and interpretive components of analysis. It is considered that such an approach gives greater potential for providing answers to the thesis' research questions (see chapter 5) given the dynamic political context of Venezuela.

Lowndes and Roberts (2013) consider that the three concepts of rules, practices and narratives (see below) enable the exploration of where rule breaking or shaping occurs, and provides insightful analysis. In order to do this there is a need to study power and agency. Power, they argue, can be conferred by formal rules (regulation), which empower certain political actors and constrain others. The formal rules describe what *should* happen. On the other hand, looking at practices (rules in use) show informal ways of conducting political behaviour. Unlike rules, practices are not formal or sanctioned. These are the “way things are done around here”. These practices may, over time, shape new rules of the future.

Lowndes and Roberts (2013 pg 46) state ‘institutionalists are agreed that political institutions are “the rules of the game”’. Consequently, this is the definition of institution adopted in the thesis framework (component A). Yet, Lowndes and Roberts also note that institutionalists require further nuance to this concept in order to understand what ‘constrains political behaviour and decision-making’ (see also Hay’s 2011 ‘opportunities and constraints’). Drawing from Ostrom, scholars have drawn a distinction of types of rules into two discrete categories: ‘rules in use’ and ‘rules in form’ (Lowndes 2005; Lowndes and Roberts 2013).

Components A-C help study of CLPPs and CCs by enabling an analysis of how they have been incorporated into a dynamic institutional matrix/ landscape in Venezuela (brought about by frequently changing legislation<sup>15</sup>). As described in chapter 2, given the political polarization in Venezuela, CLPPs have not been widely implemented despite being stipulated both in the constitution and legislation. This

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<sup>15</sup> CLPPs, introduced in 2002, have had two reforms (2006; 2010) within 8 years; CCs introduced in 2006 have had one reform within 5 years (2009).

indicates that 'rules in use' compared with 'rules in form' are being played out differently in various municipalities in the country. Given that actor relationships may occur at multiple levels, within CLPPs and CCs, these concepts are very useful for differentiating between how things should work (formally by legislation) and 'how things work around here' (the informal scripts and norms). As such, the thesis framework includes these concepts (table 4.2, components A-C).

Bevir argues that 'holism' compares actors' beliefs and histories to explain actions and practices. This becomes apparent when he states that his approach is 'less on formal connections...[and more on] telling stories about beliefs, actors, practices and contexts' (Bevir 2011b pg 190; see also Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003). As discussed in section 4.3, Bevir and Rhodes enable these 'stories' to be uncovered by focusing on the components of 'beliefs', 'traditions', and 'dilemmas'. These components are included in the thesis framework (table 5.2, components D-F). These ideational elements (shaded area in figure 4.1) provide the understanding that actors are able to conceive and talk about discourses, traditions and practices. Actors are also able to see discourses, traditions and practices at a distance and disassociate from them. Not only do these components reflect the interpretive position but also reflect Hay (2006) and Schmidt's (2011) plea for the need to understand how actors' ideas and discourses shape and construct institutional opportunities and constraints.

The outcome of applying an ethnographic, interpretive approach by eliciting stories and narratives from actors within a given context will provide understanding of how actors see their relationship with both institutional and ideational contexts which have influenced their situated agency. The result of the 'thick description' or narrative built by ethnography enables an analysis of how practices are understood and enacted within a given context. Thus the overall framework indicates that institutional factors can influence actors' ideational components and vice versa. It is this bridging between the institutional and interpretive dimensions that Hay's model (and the framework) provides great potential for insight.

Lowndes and Roberts (2013) also argue, drawing from more recent developments in institutionalism (constructivist and discursive) that narratives also play their part in institutionalism. Narratives are defined as the processes of explanation and persuasion that political actors use by embodying values, ideas and power. They are considered to be expressed via the spoken word and result in constraining

some actors whilst empowering others. Power – an addition to those constrained/enabled via rules and practices - is drawn via storytelling and narratives; power via narratives and storytelling is dependent on the ‘significance of collective understandings in shaping political behaviour’ (ibid pg 98). Constructivist institutionalism moves towards ‘narratives’ (Hay 2006; Hay 2011; Lowndes and Roberts 2013; Schmidt 2011) which bear resemblance to the ‘thick description’ provided by interpretivism. As set out above, it is this important addition to the institutionalist toolkit that brings institutionalism closer to the ideational context studied by interpretivists and gives greater weight to Hay’s model, because it seeks to bring the two theories together.

The components that comprise the framework are considered to reflect the convergence in theory between increasingly constructivist approaches of NI and interpretivism (Hay 2006; Hay 2011). Both NI and interpretivism seek to link theory with practice(s) (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003; Lowndes and Roberts 2013). The application of Hay’s (2011) model is considered appropriate and advantageous given the dynamic and rapid institutional changes experienced in Venezuela since 1999. The institutionalist components enable identification of the ‘opportunities and constraints’ actors encounter, while the interpretivist components elicit the ideational reasoning that actors have undertaken in response to the opportunities and constraints within the context they are situated. The framework is suitable in highlighting structure and agency, as well as describing and explaining practices through the narratives generated from participants involved in CLPP and CC processes.

Hay’s model, and the framework, is considered beneficial because it provides scope for a number of unique analytical insights. Firstly, as Hay (2011) notes, it allows a dialogue between both agential and more structural/ institutional factors regarding change, without privileging one over the other. Secondly, it provides institutionalists with the potential to understand better the way in which actors assimilate, and react to, ideational matters in addition to institutional constraints and opportunities. Thirdly, there is scope to move beyond – and between – the individual nature of the interpretive position, and the more structural/ collective nature of the institutionalist focus of analysis. As a result, the model enables ideas and ‘extra-discursive contexts’ to be identified, and subsequently unpacked in a way which provides new insights not currently being provided by new institutionalist or interpretivist theories alone.

While Hay's model has been useful in creating a dialogue between constructivist institutionalism and interpretivism it does have a certain limitation (discussed fully in chapter 9). Hay gives little emphasis to the role of traditions, and the way that these traditions contribute to explaining the shift between the individual/ ideational and the collective/ institutional dimensions. This gap is discussed fully in chapter 9, which reflects on how the operationalization of the model and framework presented certain challenges in the data analysis.

## **4.5 CONCLUSIONS**

The chapter provided an overview of the key variants of new institutionalism and a strand of interpretivism. It established that both NI and interpretivism have useful components which can be applied to the Venezuelan context of participatory mechanisms at the municipal level in order to evaluate the nature of practices within these new arenas. NI underlines rules in use that shape the institutional boundaries to be understood. Interpretivism enables actors' ideational elements to be elicited, via the concepts 'dilemmas', 'beliefs' and 'traditions', which enable the researcher to establish individuals' reasons for holding the beliefs the way they do – and in doing so understand why actors act in a particular way.

The thesis framework was adopted following Hay's (2011) premise that an institutional analysis combined with elements of the interpretive approach would provide a sounder theoretical standpoint and greater insights. The framework established in the chapter adopted concepts from Lowndes' variant of NI and Bevir and Rhodes' strand of interpretivism. It is believed that such a combination of components gives a more rounded framework for analysis. The framework is also considered to overcome the downsides (namely lack of institutional influence in the origin of 'dilemmas') of a purely interpretive approach. The linkages between agency and opportunities and constraints are not typically incorporated in Bevir and Rhodes strand of interpretivism. Participants' responses can be understood as a narrative, which can be analysed using the components of the framework to elicit how actors' beliefs, traditions and dilemmas shaped their subsequent responses to institutional constraints and opportunities.

## **CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Previous chapters described that Chavismo initiated a unique process in Venezuela which sought to establish a 'participatory and protagonistic democracy'. The thesis aims to elicit the meanings and understandings of participants involved in CLPPs and CCs. Chapter 4 established the interpretive institutionalist framework adopted in the thesis. Such an approach is considered to elicit the underlying beliefs, norms and practices that participants draw on and influence their subsequent actions.

Section 5.2 sets out the ontological and epistemological positions of the framework adopted in the thesis. As the interpretive approach is a relatively new addition to political science research, the chapter contrasts the differences between the adopted framework and the objectivist and positivist terminology commonly referred to in traditional research designs. Section 5.3 provides the aims, objectives and research questions of the thesis. Section 5.4 describes the selection process of the case studies. This includes a sub-section that provides an account of the pilot study at the start of the fieldwork period. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 discuss data generation and data analysis. Sections 5.7 and 5.8 discuss limitations and ethical considerations of the research. The chapter closes with conclusions in section 5.9.

### **5.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION**

Hay (2002 pg 63) summarises the link between ontology, epistemology and methodology as follows: 'ontology relates to the nature of the social and political world. Epistemology to what we can know about it and methodology to how we might go about acquiring that knowledge'. On the one hand, positive and objective approaches see collected data as mirrors of reality (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Such approaches consider knowledge and social phenomena to exist independently from social actors. These influence, act upon and inhibit actors' behaviour. Knowledge can be defined and informed by statistics, causal relationships or models. On the other hand, interpretivists consider that an objectivist ontology, which seeks to provide formal explanations and causation through positivist approaches to epistemology, end up only describing snapshots of

contingent social actions (see Bevir 2012 pg 636-638). Interpretivist ontological approaches consider reality (or realities) to be socially constructed (Bever and Rhodes 2006; Hay 2011; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Reality is generated and reproduced through shared interpretations by social actors (Blaikie 2010). Blaikie (ibid pgs 93-94) describes such an idealist' ontology considers that 'reality consists of representations that are the creation of the human mind...[and] there may be different and multiple perspectives on an external world'. Accordingly, this thesis is premised on an 'idealist' ontological position, which in turn is underpinned by a constructivist epistemology.

Hay (2011 pg 169) summarises the interpretive epistemological position as follows: knowledge looks different depending on the perspective the actor/observer looks at it. Because knowledge is socially constructed there is no definitive or objective knowledge (political or social) to be obtained through research. The social construction of knowledge means that any claims are intersubjective. Interpretive researchers consider that explanations of social and political phenomena are a result of eliciting actors' intersubjective traditions, beliefs and meanings, which are subsequently turned into actions or practices. By uncovering the intersubjective traditions and beliefs that actors hold can provide an account of their motivations and behaviour. Interpretivists believe that knowledge can only be sought by understanding the meanings which inform agents' actions (Bever and Rhodes 2006; Hay 2011; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

Meanings are contingent on context, time and place and are not 'essential, timeless and universal' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012 pg 23). Meanings can change over time and location because knowledge is situated and contextual. The process of making or establishing meanings has no starting point – it begins wherever the interpreters' knowledge or understanding is at that point in time and place. Practices that occur as a result of beliefs are contingent and are constructed upon the local (ideational not geographical) context, time and place in which actors are situated and embedded (Bever 1999; Hay 2011; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

A constructivist approach was chosen because it provides a lens through which participants' intersubjective meanings of CLPPs and CCs can be understood. The interpretive institutionalist approach provides a unique contribution to academic studies on CLPPs and CCs that have not, to the knowledge of the researcher, been used to date. Rather than adopting the objectivist position where data collected are

considered a mirror of reality – enabling models or causal explanations – the interpretive approach conceives multiple and rival interpretations of events and practices (see Bevir and Rhodes 2006 pg 28). Because different neighbourhoods (in the case of CCs) or municipalities (in the case of CLPPs) have their own local issues and/or practices, the interpretive approach provides a way of eliciting the meanings and interpretations that different actors hold within these contingent contexts. Comparing rival interpretations and actions, which occurred as a result of participants' individual and collective dilemmas, provides a 'thick description' (see chapters 7 and 8) of a wide range of beliefs and practices co-existing in a period of time and space (Rhodes 2011b).

The interpretive approach enables participants' to tell the meaning and understandings of participatory democracy, citizen participation and their role in policy making and decision making at the municipal level in their own words. As Rhodes (2011b pgs 6-7) argues this 'narrative' are actors' explanations that result from studying their beliefs and desires in the context of the traditions and dilemmas they face.

### **5.3 RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Given the interpretive and constructivist approach to institutionalism adopted in the framework, the thesis aims, objectives and research questions are as follows.

#### **5.3.1 Aims of research**

To describe and explain, from CLPP and CC participants' understandings (or 'webs of beliefs) and experiences:

- The meaning of participatory democracy
- The role of citizen participation in policymaking and planning
- How participants see themselves (their agency) within policy making and planning processes
- Whether citizen involvement has changed the process of policy making and decision making at the municipal level.

#### **5.3.2 Objectives of research**

- Identify municipal level governance actors involved in policymaking and



planning mechanisms (CLPPs and CCs)

- Elicit participants' views, experiences and understandings of the role of citizen participation in policy making, planning and decision making within CLPPs and CCs by carrying out interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary review.

### **5.3.3 Research Questions**

Based on the aims and objectives, the thesis framework in chapter 4 and the ontological and epistemological positions set out in section 5.2, the thesis has been built around four research questions:

- What is the meaning of participatory democracy for CLPP and CC participants in Venezuela?
- What do CLPPs and CCs and their respective processes mean to participants?
- What do CLPP and CC participants do to meet their respective needs/goals and preferences?
- How do CLPP and CC participants understand planning practices and processes at the neighbourhood and municipal level?

## **5.4 CASE STUDY RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Yin defines (2003 pg 13) a case study 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'. Consequently, following Yin's definition, we can consider the units of the analysis, the CLPPs and CCs, as the real-life phenomena that are the focus of the study. Furthermore, the real-life context of the CLPPs and CCs is what is not evident and will be elicited according to the accounts provided by CLPP and CC participants. Case studies can be either a single case or multiple cases (Yin 2003). The appropriateness of whether the research should adopt a single or multiple cases is dependent on what the research seeks to achieve. Yin advises that a comprehensive strategy will be one that is designed logically by employing data collection and analysis techniques responding to the research aims, objectives and questions. Consequently, the thesis' research strategy was designed in accordance with the interpretive institutionalist framework.

Drawing from Bevir and Rhodes, Hay (2011, figure 1) states that the methodology of interpretivism finds out about phenomena by '[capturing] the meaning [of] political actors['] actions and practices...[via] embedded research and an ethnographic method...[with an analysis] undertaken inductively rather than deductively'. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) argue interpretive approaches place focus on access to material as a key component of case selection.

Traditional research designs consider reliability, replicability and validity vital components of a robust research strategy (Babbie 2007; Bryman 2012; Yin 2003). Interpretivists consider these components of mirroring natural sciences (or positivist approaches) inappropriate to interpretive approaches (Bevir 1999; Bevir and Rhodes 2010; Rhodes 2011b; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Interpretive research (Bevir 1999; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; 2010; Rhodes 2011b; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012 pgs 91-113) focuses on 'meaning-making' as opposed to measurement; contextuality in place of generalizability or replicability of knowledge; and explanatory description and narratives versus prediction or causality. Consequently interpretive research is abductive, iterative and recursive, not deductive (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Importantly, interpretive strategy involves analysis of the evidence by drawing from hermeneutics, searching for coherence in the narratives provided, and logic in argumentation. These are evaluated by considering the data are trustworthy, systematic, reflexive and transparent with regards to the context in which they were drawn. Interpretivists maintain that 'sense-making' (see below) is the key element in establishing confidence in the data. Furthermore, data are considered to be 'co-generated' between the researcher and the participant (ibid).

Co-generated data are underpinned by an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is considered to be key to eliciting and establishing actors' meanings (Bevir and Rhodes 2006; 2010; Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003b; Rhodes 2011b; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Rhodes (2011b) argues that our presence as observers and interviewing subjects influence their behaviour, whether consciously or unconsciously. Something he argues anthropologists and ethnographers have recognised for years. This influence is also recognised by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow:

*Understanding data to be co-generated means that the character of*

*evidence in an interpretive project cannot be understood as objectively mirroring or measuring the world. The researcher is not outside that which is under study (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012 pg 80).*

As noted above, interpretive approaches 'make sense' of phenomena by seeking out the logic and coherence of arguments and data. This is done by pointing to the consistency of evidence among sources and highlighting where conflicting narratives have emerged. Rhodes (2011b) considers that comparing texts (for example participants interview responses and documentary review) will produce something similar to 'triangulation'. Conflicts are not seen as something to be 'resolved', but rather artefacts to be made sense of (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Bevir (2011b) and Rhodes (2011b) consider these artefacts to be presented as 'thick descriptions' or 'narratives'. As such, to ensure that the thick descriptions obtained are 'valid', interpretivists:

*Prefer webs of interpretation that are accurate, comprehensive, and consistent. Objectivity is, therefore, a product of "local reasoning" in that it arises from the critical comparison of narratives within an academic community, reconfirmed in debate between communities, where all debates are subject to the provisional rules of intellectual honesty. (Rhodes 2011b pg 14).*

In an earlier work, Bevir and Rhodes (2006) state that the objectivity of the interpretive researcher comes from our ability to be part of the world in which we are researching through which we genuinely act using our perception on a daily basis. For this reason they argue:

*we can relate relative objective narratives to truth because our ability to find our way around the world vouches for the basic accuracy of our perceptions...our ability to act in the world suggests that our knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions are not wildly random or wholly unreliable, even if they are also not infallible (ibid pg 30).*

In light of the interpretive research approach discussed above, the remainder of this section focuses on how and why case locations were chosen; the reason for undertaking a pilot study and an account of the experience. This is then followed by sections on gaining access to CLPPs and CCs in order to undertake semi-

ethnographic research embedded within their real-life contexts. Over the course of the remaining sections, the 'logic' of the case study approach is provided. The methods used are discussed in section 5.5.

#### **5.4.1 Case location selection**

Although the case locations are discussed in detail in chapter 6, this sub-section outlines the process by which the case locations of the units of analysis were chosen. In order to identify potential case locations, a systematic internet search was undertaken of the 336 Venezuelan municipalities. A number of criteria were used to identify the most appropriate municipalities. The search identified the municipalities with the existence of: an established CLPP; a municipality website where documentary resources could be found (budgets, details of relevant people, policies and plans); a local plan, a participatory budget (PB); and details of local CCs. As discussed in chapter 2, participatory democracy initiatives should have been implemented throughout Venezuela, however, not all local municipalities incorporated a CLPP. Municipalities that had not adopted a CLPP were eliminated as potential case locations. The results were tabulated in a spreadsheet and a shortlist was created giving ten suitable municipalities out of the original 336. On further investigation and checking details (whether documents and plans existed and were available to the researcher) it was found that seven were potential case locations.

The seven municipalities identified through the systematic search were explored in further detail by undertaking a background study to establish the socio-political status of the municipality. This included identifying the political party that mayors belonged to, the political affiliation of the State governor, population, key industries and economic activity within the municipality, and whether the municipality was rural or urban. Through this process two were considered unfeasible due to being located in expensive (island) locations.

In addition to the pilot (Baruta, Miranda – described below), two municipalities were chosen: Chacao and Libertador, both within the Caracas metropolitan area. Municipio Girardot, Aragua had been identified prior to arriving in the field as a potential case location instead of Chacao (which was in the shortlist). However a number of factors, explained in more detail below, highlighted Chacao as providing greater access than Municipio Girardot.

Given the time and financial constraints of a single PhD researcher, using cases within two municipalities was considered most feasible. Consequently, the research involved 'multiple' case studies (Yin 2003). The lack of online information rendered impossible to organise contact with CCs prior to the fieldwork period. Contact had to be made whilst in the field – a common experience within interpretive research (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012 pg 71). Following this principle of flexibility, the case locations were decided whilst in the field. The pilot study was also a key factor in determining the final choices of the two municipalities that provided the case locations of the research.

#### **5.4.2 Pilot Study – Baruta Miranda**

A pilot study was considered during first year of the doctoral research (2012). However, two matters arose that meant that the pilot study would be deferred to the beginning of fieldwork (2013). The first was the presidential elections held in October 2012. It was considered that going to the country in the run-up to the elections would be fruitless as getting access to municipal staff, elected officials and CC participants (who may or may not be political activists) would be difficult. Furthermore, it was considered that going to the country immediately after the election may also have been complicated, particularly if there was a change in president following the election, as municipalities would be preoccupied with the change in government. The second factor that changed the decision was that going to the country in November or December 2012 was too close to the beginning of the intended fieldwork stage (January 2012/February 2013) and would incur expensive costs (flights and accommodation). It was therefore agreed that a pilot study could be commenced immediately on going to Venezuela for the fieldwork. This would enable testing out methods and refining matters fully before undertaking the core research.

Baruta was chosen as the municipality for the pilot study. The municipality is located in the State of Miranda but within the metropolitan area of Caracas. It is predominantly middle-class with pockets of extreme poverty and of upper-class residents. Politically, during the Chávez era the municipality mayors have belonged to opposition parties. Nonetheless, the municipality had established a CLPP, conformed to legislation regarding participatory mechanisms and had also implemented a PB scheme. The municipality website provided a wealth of

documents regarding policy and decision making online which helped identify it early on as a potential case location. Furthermore, a former CLPP vice-president wrote a blog detailing the municipality's engagement with participatory mechanisms, details of which included aspects of the CLPP and local CCs. Contact was made with the person and a 'gatekeeper' was established. The pilot study was undertaken over a six week period between early February to mid-March 2013.

The pilot study provided an adjustment period for getting to know a country that was unknown to the researcher other than media, academic journals and other sources of information. It provided a number of interesting experiences, including some that were unprecedented, such as the death of President Chávez and subsequent state mourning and funeral. It also provided first-hand experience of the extreme political polarization that existed in the country.

Baruta provided a case where political polarization did not only exist against the ruling national party, but also among competing parties of the opposition. This polarization affected citizen participation at the municipal level. The CLPP was on permanent hiatus due to councillors' objections to the demise of JPs and political 'games'. This occurred despite municipal residents trying to prevent such a hiatus. The pilot showed that political differences, particularly the webs of belief that influence such ideas, decisions and actions should be explored throughout the fieldwork period. Because of the political hiatus, observing meetings of the CLPP was not possible.

CCs in Baruta had several problems, particularly registering with the national ministry. Many CCs in Baruta were run on an informal and ad-hoc basis. Observation was not possible either for any CC meeting during the pilot study period. Contacting people in CCs and the community proved to be a time-consuming task; CC participants preferred being introduced to me by other known people so that trust could be established and apprehension appeased, most often due to personal safety concerns. Snowballing techniques were required in order to establish interviews with CC members.

All of the proposed fieldwork methods (see below) prior to the fieldwork period were used, except one: focus groups. Due to limitations on the reach of public transport, time, lack of opportunity to observe and meet CCs in groups, organising focus groups were not possible. It was envisaged at later stages of the case study

research that this method would still be viable and useful. However, on reflection with supervisors and thesis reviewer it was considered unlikely that focus groups would provide additional insights over and above the other methods of data generation. Interviews, on the other hand, provided rich sources of information. Observation and documentary review were fundamental in establishing wider contextual and background understanding. Despite requesting certain documents (CLPP agenda and minutes, draft local plan) the CLPP technical team - *Sala Técnica* (ST) - refused to provide these documents because they were considered 'politically sensitive'<sup>16</sup>.

Because the pilot study showed the time consuming nature of establishing new contacts, it was decided appropriate to pursue leads and contacts for other municipalities in Caracas. Starting from scratch in another city would have likely led to unexploited time which would have been detrimental to the fieldwork research. Access to municipalities with functioning CLPPs and CCs, and with an open attitude to providing information, was fundamental in choosing the case locations of Chacao and Libertador. The following two sections describe how access was gained in these two municipalities.

#### **5.4.3 Gaining access to the CLPPs**

As discussed in chapter 2, scholars have noted that CLPPs were not fully operational or implemented in many municipalities. The pilot study in Baruta, which was chosen due to contact with certain members being established before arriving in the field, uncovered a CLPP that was at a complete standstill. It was during the pilot study experience that CLPP members in Baruta put me in contact with Chacao's CLPP ST and gave me a name of a contact in Libertador's CLPP. The case study locations of Chacao and Libertador emerged through a process of systematic analysis prior to the field as well as encountering the 'reality' of fieldwork such as geographical location, transport constraints and whether CLPPs were operating at the time of fieldwork. One of the key differences in being able to gain access to Chacao compared to Libertador was the presence of the CLPP's ST. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012 pg 34) argue that flexibility in the field is key and part of the iterative, deductive approach to interpretive research because the

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<sup>16</sup> No further details were provided during the course of the meeting. I was told in the lift afterwards that the reason was cross-party conflict regarding a range of political matters; the CLPP hiatus was a one of the results of these disagreements.

researcher cannot fully anticipate everything in advance.

Like Baruta, Chacao's ST was located within a small office in the municipal government's modern Atrium building. The orange brickwork of the facade is interlaced with green shrubs and plants which hang from the balconies of each floor. The municipal government shares the building with the Concejo Municipal (municipal legislature), the Italian Consulate and the Caracas Stock Exchange. Entrance to the building required registering at the front desk. The desk was usually staffed with three people who issued visitor cards that unlocked the turnstiles. Two or three security guards closely observed this entrance process.

The initial meeting with Chacao's CLPP Secretary was positive; I was assured access to the CLPP and given an outline of the CLPP's procedures as set out in the municipal by-law. I was invited to attend the monthly plenary meetings and as many of the PB meetings as I wished. Overall, I was given a considerable sense of transparency and was welcomed to undertake research.

Conversely, establishing initial contact with Libertador's CLPP was not easy. As described in greater detail in chapter 6, the municipality of Libertador is considerably larger, more populated and with greater socio-economic disparity than Chacao. The telephone number of Libertador CLPP contact that the Baruta CLPP participant provided me was no longer working. There was no information on the municipal government website about CLPP meetings and scant information about councillors.

Libertador's main municipal buildings are located in the blocks around the historic centre of Caracas and Plaza Bolívar. Over the course of two days I spent several attempts going from one building to another, one office to another whilst trying to convince security guards and police officers my reasons to get access to the buildings, particularly the Palacio Municipal (where the mayor's office was located). When I finally made it to the finance department I was told that the CLPP was in operation (until this point nobody could confirm the existence of the CLPP). A finance officer informed me that the CLPP's offices were located in Los Símbolos, a predominantly residential area, 20 minutes away from the centre of Libertador in the metro.

Libertador's CLPP offices were located in a brown brick, residential building with two



commercial units at the ground floor level. Above the door was a banner stating “CLPP Libertador”. I arrived late morning and nobody was present. I was informed that after 2pm someone would be in the CLPP office. Compared to my experiences of Baruta and Chacao, both of which had their CLPP ST in the main headquarters, finding the location of Libertador took considerable persistence. This experience provided an initial indication of the level of importance the CLPP was given in Libertador (see chapter 7 for further discussion).

#### **5.4.4 Gaining access to CCs**

Making contact with CCs also required persistence and making use of previous contacts, who acted as gatekeepers. In Chacao, the CLPP secretary and ST maintained a register of CCs with corresponding contact details. Some CCs were contacted by telephone by referring to the register. Other CCs participants’ were approached at CLPP meetings and/or the PB meetings. Participants from 14 of Chacao’s 22 CCs were interviewed (see full list in appendix 1). Due to the small size and the central location of the municipality, which is served well by public transport, meeting with CC participants was not problematic. Interviews were held in public places or cafes, predominantly in the afternoon or early evening when participants finished work.

Libertador, on the other hand, due to its large territorial size and population, had around 1500 CCs (MPComunas 2013). Because many of these were located in *barríos*, CCs were generally not accessible without being provided access by a gatekeeper. Many CCs met in the evenings so that people who work can participate. Violence and organised crime meant that precautions needed to be taken to ensure safe access to *barríos*. Going unaccompanied or uninitiated to these areas of the city in the evenings was not recommended. Municipal government employees did not enter these areas without being accompanied by local residents. Few employees, if any, entered after late afternoon or darkness. Following these practices, my access to evening CC meetings in Libertador’s *barríos* was constrained.

Another factor, which limited initial contact with CCs in Libertador, was related to CCs being a sub-neighbourhood level organisation. CCs typically do not have any association outside of their geographical remit unless contributing to other organisations such as *comunas*. Hence, obtaining knowledge of CCs’ activities as

an outsider can be difficult to find out.

Access to CCs in Libertador resulted from snowballing facilitated by establishing contact with a municipal government employee. The director of Fundacaracas' *barrio* development programme (an agency of Libertador municipal government) provided contacts where specific projects were being implemented. These projects were underpinned by CC involvement. On contacting these project leaders, only one in particular was very keen to give me access and enable me to observe the programme in which he was involved. As a result, the CCs, and their respective participants, that were interviewed in Libertador were only located in *barrio* La Silsa.

Participants in La Silsa gave me considerable levels of access. I attended meetings, observed ST life, chatted with people, and came and went on a relatively free basis. There was considerable ethnographic opportunity to observe people in their day-to-day practices. La Silsa had 12 CCs which were working together to create the "*Comuna Bolivariana Revolucionaria La Silsa*". As mentioned in chapter 2, according to the 2010 national *comuna* law, each of the CCs in the geographical area of the *comuna* needed to be fully registered with the national ministry to become fully formalised. *Comunas* which were working towards but were not yet formally registered were called *comunas en construcción*. During fieldwork there were approximately 44 *comunas en construcción* in Libertador (Rojas 2013).

The interpretive institutionalist framework adopted in the thesis did not aim to provide a 'representative' and/or comparative study of CCs. Although the focus of the thesis is not a comparative study of CCs, the interviews secured in La Silsa provided sufficient data to provide a narrative about how CCs work in a different socio-economic, geographical and political context and conditions than those in Chacao. Full discussion of participants' responses about their understanding of CCs and corresponding processes is undertaken in chapter 8.

## **5.5 DATA GENERATION (COLLECTION)**

The thesis so far has drawn on four main bodies of theory (democratic theory, planning, new institutionalism and interpretivism) in order to provide a contextual background and framework of analysis for fieldwork research. Drawing on theory has provided an understanding of what to look for in the field, particularly as a

means of being able to respond to the research questions and aims of the thesis. Although such an approach may appear to be deductive, the research adopted an interpretive, abductive approach.

The interpretive approach uses abduction as it considers that the researcher, in line with hermeneutics, does not start from scratch and has a certain amount of knowledge and a 'starting point' from which to engage in the research process. Each researcher will have a different starting point and will use an iterative and recursive process of experiencing the field and relating it to their prior knowledge (in this case, the literature review) of the field. Questions and interpretations of the field experienced, with reference to their knowledge, will inform the course of field research (Schwartz and Yanow 2012).

Interpretive research is considered an instance where the researcher and participants construct and generate knowledge and meaning of the acts, objects and language that the research questions initiate (Schwartz and Yanow 2012 pg 78-79). The researcher's background and understanding also generates different data than another researcher would by virtue of their positionality and rapport.

Methods are important to interpretive research as they are to other forms of social science research; however, the modes of conducting particular methods, such as interviewing or participant observation, are done with the understanding that the researcher holds certain knowledge which will in turn generate contingent and context based data. There is a need to ensure that the methods used are appropriate and consistent to interpretive research, not the standards and criteria applied to other forms of social science (positivist quantitative and positive qualitative) research (ibid pg 128).

The methods used in the research - participant observation, interviewing, documentary review and maintaining a fieldwork diary - involved working in an iterative and recursive manner by analysing data as the fieldwork period progressed and responding to findings, collecting further data, and exploring strands of research interest. The remainder of this section discusses each of these methods in turn.

### 5.5.1 Participant observation

Participant observation, a form of ethnography, is considered a means through which a researcher can get involved in the day to day life and activities of a community, group or organisation. The level of immersion, usually over an extended period of time, allows the researcher to see through the eyes of those they are observing (Bryman 2008; Fetterman 2010; Spradley 1980; Rhodes 2011b). Being able to adopt such a position enables the researcher to tell an authentic story, giving voice to participants in the local context and often relying on verbatim quotations to contribute to the “thick descriptions” of phenomena (Fetterman 2010; Rhodes 2011b).

Similarly, Spradley (1980 pg 5) articulates the essence of ethnography as a ‘concern with the meanings of actions and events to the people we seek to understand’. Spradley argues that fieldwork ‘involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that are different. Rather than *studying* people, ethnography means *learning* from people’ [original emphasis] (ibid pg 3). The above thick description and learning from others complies with the interpretive research approach of eliciting meanings that actors have, enabling the local context to be heard. Furthermore, Spradley’s description of learning from others reflects the co-generation of data between participants and the researcher (see Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

Rhodes (2011b) considers ethnographic observation to be an important method, which he argues, until recently, has been absent in political science research approaches. Provided that the observation is compared and contrasted to other sources of information (e.g. interviews and documents) then the data generated can increase the researcher’s confidence in its veracity (in a process akin to triangulation).

The main focus of the ethnographic approach and participant observation was attending and observing CLPP and CC meetings. This enabled me to observe ‘how things are done around here’. For example, who participates, how they participate, observe whether citizens influence public servants and elected officials in the agenda-setting and decision making, observe how matters are taken up and carried through within the CC context, and also to observe how people within the CLPP and

CC context make decisions. Being present in the field also allowed observation of culture and the ways the wider community operated.

To achieve the above, three ethnographic techniques were adopted including interviews (discussed below) and participant observation. This was approached in a sequential (Spradley 1980) or step-by-step (Fetterman 2010) manner. The procedure began with asking general descriptive questions at the start of the research period in the field (e.g what are people doing?). These became increasingly specific (structural questions) once the research period had gone on for a while (a number of weeks or months). The sequential process was undertaken with the knowledge that the (interpretive) ethnographic and participant observation process is cyclical rather than linear (Spradley 1980; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). It involved a process where I sought to describe phenomena, not try to “find something” (Spradley 1980 pg 26). The cyclical process involved writing a field diary which comprised field notes (where possible) during the periods of observation (more below). Constant analysis and noting of impressions and thoughts of the field note observations were part of a recursive and iterative process which created new ethnographic questions leading to more focused observations at the next meeting or assembly.

On arrival in the field, observation of ‘Venezuelan culture’ was undertaken. This comprised observing people and how they did things, watching and listening to local media, attending debates, hearing people chatting in the street and squares, chatting with locals, making local friends, reading local newspapers - particularly the opinion and letters pages to get a sense of what the topics of the day were and the differing opinions made. Making local friends was considerably useful in helping to make sense of observations; friends were available to talk through events of the day as well as discuss or provide their views of historical events. Following up these observations and discussions with documentary review (see below) was a key part of the iterative process.

In total, I attended and observed six CLPP plenary meetings in Chacao. In Libertador, I attended five CLPP meetings. Additionally, I went to 11 PB meetings organised by the CLPP in Chacao. Unfortunately, fieldwork attendance at PB meetings in Libertador was not possible because they were held in local communities outside of my time in the field (November 2013).

As will be discussed in chapter 9, CC meetings in Chacao were infrequent which limited observation. However, I attended two events that involved five different CCs meeting together to discuss concerns about a future tower development. As noted above, CC meetings in La Silsa were held predominantly in the evening and after dark. For safety reasons, I was not able to attend. However, I observed eight weekly meetings of La Silsa's *comuna en construcción*. These meetings involved several CC spokespeople who would present their respective CCs' proposals, projects or wider concerns regarding *comuna* and/or community matters. As such, it was possible to ascertain information about La Silsa's CCs. I also accompanied ST staff on site visits and observed other *comuna* committee meetings. Furthermore I spent two to three days per week over a two-month period sitting in the ST office and watching and observing how things operated. This enabled informal conversations with residents, ST members and municipal government staff providing considerable background information.

### **5.5.2 Fieldwork diary**

In accordance with pre-fieldwork planning, a notebook was carried at all times. It is considered an important part of the ethnographic and fieldwork experience to continue to write down observations and thoughts as they occurred to ensure that they were not forgotten. Small observations, which seem inconsequential at the time, may over the course of the fieldwork period amount to a wealth of ethnographic information that can be used to inform the analysis and subsequent writing up stages of the thesis (Spradley 1980).

The notebook enabled ideas, observations or overhearing something of interest to be jotted down. As such, day to day activities, observations and thoughts were frequently noted allowing for reflection later in the day, or at another appropriate time. Notes were also made when attending academic events, meetings and interviews. Summaries about the setting, the sounds, and the actions of people or interviewees were made. Reports about personal feelings about certain occurrences were also written down.

Following the day's events and observations, a fuller description of events and observations was written up at the end of the day. This write-up, which formed the bulk of the fieldwork diary, allowed for more concrete ideas and strains of thought to be described and written down. Linking events and observations to academic

literature or the theoretical framework was also undertaken. Given the 'newness' to the field, the longest entries were made at the start of the fieldwork period. Towards the end of the 10 months in the field, observations were made but these were often repetitions of previous observations or ideas; as such, entries were much shorter indicating connections to previous observations.

### **5.5.3 Interviews**

For many approaches to research, interviews are regarded as one of the most important sources of information (Bryman 2008; Rhodes 2011b; Yin 2003). In contrast to a quantitative research approach where structured interviews would be used, qualitative interviews are often semi-structured where the researcher follows their line of enquiry whilst allowing the interviewee to elaborate and follow their own course of describing events or phenomena (Yin 2003 pg 89-90). As a result, 'case study interviews are of an *open-ended nature*, in which you can ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events' (Yin 2003 pg 90).

Although interviews are regarded as an excellent source of verbal reports, they have a disadvantage: they are at the mercy of the respondent's 'bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation' (Yin 2003 pg 92). However, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012 pg 41) note that a researcher adopting an objectivist ontological position will interview to find out what "really" happened in a particular situation, which will be established by interviewing numerous participants to establish the validity of the accounts they give. In contrast, a researcher adopting an interpretive ontological position will interview with the understanding that the researcher is an interpreter of world of multiple, intersubjective social realities (Bevir 2010a; 2011b; Bevir and Rhodes 2010; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Interviews were used to allow participants to provide accounts not in order to determine what they said was 'truthful', but to establish the meaning of phenomena to each person interviewed.

It was considered important to support participants' verbal accounts with other information sources to increase confidence in the data (Bryman 2012; Rhodes 2011; Yin 2003). Other methods employed in the data generation period (participant observation, documentary analysis, fieldwork diary) contributed to establishing confidence to participants' responses.

Interviews were conducted using guides that were prepared in advance. These outlined key topics that would be covered and were informed by the literature review and research questions. The guides provided a framework that allowed the aims and research questions of the thesis to be addressed while enabling the respondent to reply in a flexible manner. Depending on the interviewee, the order of the guide differed; however, efforts were made to ensure that each of the topic areas was covered. In general, interviewees were comfortable with the procedure of questions and were happy to talk freely. Responses to unplanned questions were also given importance. As Kvale (2007 pg 51) describes 'the semi-structured life-world interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon'.

In total, 68 interviews were carried out, including the pilot study. A full list is provided in Appendix 1. Key stakeholders in the CLPP and CC processes were interviewed, including councillors, CLPP community members, government officials, and CC members. Interviewees were asked at the start of the interview if they minded it being recorded; none of the interviewees raised any concern. Although consent forms were prepared and taken along to interviews these were considered superfluous and none were signed. Similarly, most interviewees did not see anonymity as important. However, in the interests of all those involved, this was assured and confirmed verbally. Consequently, interviewees in the thesis have been assigned a code - and pseudonym if quoted directly in the thesis.

#### **5.5.4 Documentary review**

Documentary review is considered in academic literature as an additional key data source. It is considered not only a source of collective or individual meanings depending on the document, but also serves as a source of information on local contexts, history, culture and experiences (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Documents facilitate contrasting different sources of information and collective meanings with individual meanings (Rhodes 2011b; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Consequently, any documentary material that outlined descriptions, interpretations, understandings or meanings of CLPP and CC processes were of use.

During fieldwork, a number of different sources of documentary material were consulted. These included local and national government websites and papers,



academic and political speeches/events, newspapers, web forums, blogs, books, social media and academic articles. Local and national government websites typically published relevant legislation and by-laws online. Libertador was the exception; the municipal government and CM provided scant information. This had to be sourced through persistent liaison with municipal government staff. Review and analysis was made of municipal and CC plans, reports, budget documents, and meeting agendas and minutes. This provided contextual and background information as well as increasing confidence in the information generated from other data collection methods. Government documents were consulted frequently throughout fieldwork for reference purposes and to consolidate understanding of formal versus informal (where applicable) practices of CLPP, CC and other municipal processes.

Obtaining copies of municipal documentation was very easy for Chacao; most documentation could be found on the municipal government website. This was not the case for Libertador; instead the municipal government website focussed on providing news reports. Most official documentation (such as budgets, plans and by-laws) was not published online (or easily available elsewhere). The CLPP community members in Libertador helped source copies of Libertador's municipal budget. Similarly, the CLPP's technical team in Chacao was very helpful in providing minutes of CLPP meetings and PB information when requested.

CCs interviewed rarely provided any copies of documentation. The main reasons given were that the amount of pages was numerous (for registration purposes) and that the participants who held copies of this information were not the same as those being interviewed.

Media sources and newspapers were reviewed daily in a systematic manner. Relevant articles were stored and recorded in a database. Newspapers, in particular, were used to triangulate information that interviewees mentioned during interviews. Newspapers such as *El Universal* (anti-Chavismo) or *CiudadCCS* (pro-Chavismo) provided online archives that were used to explore historical events. Newspapers also published articles announcing events for the next few days.

*Aporrea*, a forum and news website written from a pro-government perspective, was another useful source used during fieldwork. Pro-government academics published articles, often critical, about aspects of government policy and implementation. It

was useful for getting detailed analysis about aspects of Chavismo both current and historical.

Social media, like elsewhere in the world, was used to disseminate information. Many academics, politicians and citizens announced certain or published links to information sources and articles via twitter. During the course of fieldwork many political and community events were arranged at short notice. Twitter and other social media were a vital way of finding out that these events were occurring in a timely way.

## **5.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Given that interpretive research is an abductive, reflexive and recursive process there is no clear division between data collection and analysis as with other approaches to social research (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). During the course of an investigation the researcher, who has prior knowledge and certain expectations, will encounter experiences, personal interpretations, meanings and discovery of new knowledge, which informs the course the research will take (ibid). Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012 pg 56) state that 'it is the continuous juxtaposition of conceptual formulations with field realities and the requisite flexibility that accompanies it that comprise the foundational rhythm of interpretative research'. The data generated and subsequent 'sense-making' analysis occurs in a circular or iterative manner throughout the period of research.

The research methods facilitated the abductive, reflexive interpretive approach to analysing the data collected. Note taking in a field diary during observations led to the making of detailed notes and impressions at a later stage; note taking/making and impressions which arose led to exploration of matters that warranted further investigation at a later opportunity. Interview responses were compared and contrasted with prior knowledge, understandings and meanings established during the literature review. Documentary evidence provided a further strand of confirmation and confidence in participants' meanings.

I transcribed 53 of the interviews. A friend, following instructions, transcribed the remaining 15. Interviewees' identities were protected at all times. Transcriptions were fully checked and corrections made where needed. Local friends also helped

check here any sections of interviews that raised doubts, particularly Venezuelan slang. Although transcribing proved to be a lengthy and time-consuming exercise it was considered useful as part of the iterative process. Returning to interviews allowed full engagement with the material. It assisted identification of patterns and points of interest. Checking and making minor corrections to transcriptions was a means of ensuring consistency, particularly with informants 'language'. Interview transcriptions were initially coded and analysed using NVivo. Coding was undertaken in a systematic manner. Table 5.1 outlines this process.

Stage No.	Stage	Process
1	Generating 'in vivo' codes; and making sense of data: using theory based on 'a priori' codes in Nvivo	For each interview transcript: a. Line by line analysis, 'in vivo' codes generated. b. A priori codes refined based on reference to theory chapters and analytical framework (a priori codes); consolidate repeats.
2	Memoing	Revisit each transcript and create extensive memos - building upon the a priori codes, linking to literature and research questions.  Export extensive memos into Excel.
3	Creating themes and identify patterns	Themes based on a priori knowledge (literature), analytical framework and research questions to sort memos/ codes. Excel used to identify characteristics and patterns of memos and codes for each theme. These were then sorted and collated according to similarity.  Export themes, consolidate and organise memos into Word to structure draft case study chapters.
4	Abstraction of codes leading towards/ linking with theory.and analytical framework; Writing of draft chapters (analysis)	Synthesising and aiming to answer research questions, revisiting the original transcripts, codes and themes, especially when new thoughts or questions arose.

**Table 5.1 Coding and analysis procedure**

The analysis procedure followed a grounded theory method of analysis literature (Corbin & Strauss 1990; Saldaña 2013). Stage one, 'in vivo', coding produced 262 codes. Given that this number was too large to be manageable, several visits to transcriptions were made where repetitive codes were identified and consolidated into a common code. 'A Priori' codes derived from the theory chapters (2 and 3), the interpretive institutionalist framework (chapter 4) and research questions (above)

guided consolidation of 'in vivo' codes. Memoing enabled the coding process to involve moving iteratively between research questions, literature chapters and data generated in the field. The case chapters (7 and 8) were written based on the themes and patterns generated via the coding and refinement process. The data presented in these chapters were underpinned by the research questions, analysis framework and theory outlined in previous chapters.

## 5.7 LIMITATIONS

While it is considered that the chapter has provided reasoning and justification for the case approach, case locations studied and the methods used, it was possible to identify three limitations:

- The cases studied were all located in the capital/Metropolitan Area of Caracas. Consequently it is acknowledged that undertaking research in rural and/or predominantly indigenous regions of the country might generate different data.
- The second limitation related to the number and type of CC participants interviewed. CCs can have up to 1000 members; however, given feasibility and time constraints of a single researcher, the majority of interviewees were CC spokespeople; typically this involved one or two members per CC. It is recognised that scope therefore remains for interviewing a wider cross-section of CC members in future research.
- As discussed in section 5.4.4, observation of CC meetings was limited. In Chacao this was because meetings weren't happening during fieldwork. In La Silsa, the area was considered unsafe in the evenings when CC meetings took place. However, observations of *comuna* assembly and committee meetings (which involved CC spokespeople) were considered appropriate alternatives.

Given the ontological and epistemological position of the thesis, it is considered that because no generalisations or aggregations were sought between different cases or locations the effect these limitations had on the findings were minimal. Furthermore, given the social and political polarization in Venezuela combined with serious public safety and insecurity problems, the fieldwork was undertaken in the best way possible.

## 5.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethnographic research involves deciding how much to observe and how much to participate in a given situation. The level of researcher participation and observation will involve more or less interaction with those being studied. It is acknowledged that this will be entirely context dependent (Fetterman 2010; Rhodes 2011; Spradley 1980; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the rapport that may be developed between researcher and participant may be considered friendship and matters discussed in a more frank manner than might otherwise be told via other means or if there was less rapport. In these instances, care needs to be taken to ensure that the information told can be used – much like ‘Chatham House Rules’ in the UK where it is accepted practice to cite politicians’ discussions but not provide attribution, except where agreed (Rhodes 2011b).

As noted above, Venezuelan interviewees did not seek to formalise interviews more than they had to and formal consent forms were not signed. Despite interviewees stating that they had no problem being identified, I had decided prior to fieldwork that interviewees would be kept anonymous. Interviewees were informed verbally that their anonymity would be maintained. As such, the table and any reference to interviewees are made using codes and pseudonyms. Rhodes (2011b) adopted a similar tactic. Such an approach was considered to be both professional respecting those who took the time to be interviewed.

Prior to fieldwork, it was considered that ‘sensitive matters’ such as corruption, issues of security or violence (such as gang relations) would be dealt with in a confidential manner. It was not envisaged that the research would require specific dealings with such activities, but it was considered appropriate to be aware that such practices do occur in Venezuela – and may become apparent in the field. Within the units of analysis, CLPP and CC processes, no such problems or matters occurred. Furthermore, given that certain CCs in La Silsa were based in areas where levels of poverty and crime were considerably high it was considered important to maintain the anonymity of those involved.

## 5.9 CONCLUSIONS

The chapter provided the research aims and objectives and set them in the context of the interpretive institutionalist ontological and epistemological research approach adopted in the thesis. The research questions were provided in the context of this discussion and were linked to the theoretical and contextual discussions in chapters 2 to 4.

The chapter subsequently described the case selection process, which explained that this was linked to the interpretive approach, and although similar to a case study approach, was not to be conflated as the same thing. The pilot study experience in Baruta was described and pointed to matters which influenced the adoption of the case locations of Chacao and Libertador. These were chosen due to access to active CLPPs and CCs, geographical location and the potential for researching CLPPs and CCs in municipalities with very different socio-political and economic backgrounds (discussed in detail in the next chapter). It was described how gatekeepers and snowballing were fundamental in securing access to participants in Chacao and Libertador's CLPPs and CCs respectively.

Discussion of methods, data generation and analysis followed. The final two sections described limitations and ethical considerations taken into account, respectively. Overall, the chapter explained that the research was undertaken in a flexible, abductive, iterative and recursive manner where going back and forth between prior knowledge (the literature review and theory) and information gathered/ generated in the field.

## CHAPTER 6 CASE LOCATIONS: LIBERTADOR AND CHACAO

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides contextual background of the two municipalities, Chacao and Libertador, the locations of the CLPPs and CCs studied in this research. Chacao and Libertador are two of the five municipalities that form part of the metropolitan area of Caracas (the others being Baruta, El Hatillo and Sucre; see figure 6.1). Sections 6.2 and 6.3 provide descriptions of Chacao and Libertador, respectively. Each section is sub-divided to depict the geography, demography, and political, social and economic characteristics of each municipality.



**Figure 6.1 Metropolitan Area of Caracas and its five constituent municipalities.**

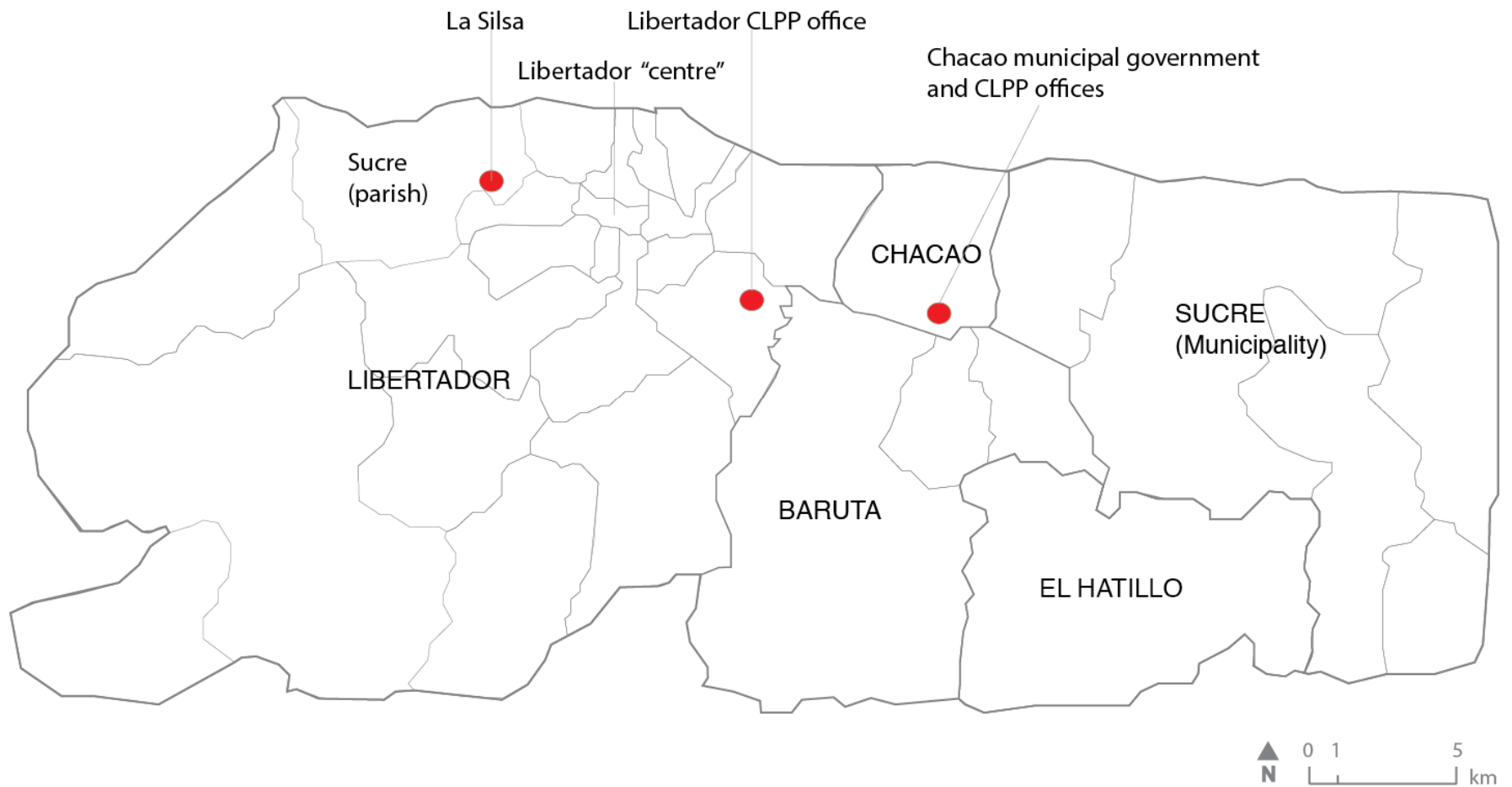


Figure 6.2 Case location municipalities and points of reference.



## 6.2 CHACAO

### 6.2.1 Geographical and demographic context

The municipality of Chacao is located in the centre-north of the metropolitan area of Caracas. The municipality has a population of 71,411, with a high level of development and income equality (relative), according to its human development index (0.87; anonymous, 2010) and Gini coefficient (0.18; CORPOCENTRO, 2010; IADB, 2003). Chacao is highly urbanized with almost no undeveloped parcels of land. The core of the municipality comprises many high rise apartment buildings with commercial spaces at street level. The periphery of the municipality, particularly the north of the municipality has large houses (*quintas*) with gardens.

Chacao has five very small *barrios* or 'popular sectors' scattered through the municipality. The 2011 Census registered 36 "ranchos" (informal houses made from salvaged materials) in the municipality (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2013). The percentage of homes considered "extremely poor" and "poor" are less than 1% and 4%, respectively. Conversely, 95% of homes are considered "not poor" (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2013). In comparison to other neighbouring municipalities in the metropolitan area of Caracas (AMC), Chacao's *barrios* are considered much more developed in terms of services (water, electricity and so on). Table 6.1 provides comparison of poverty levels in locations relevant to the thesis.

Area	Not poor	Poor	Extreme Poor	% Not Poor	% Poor	% Extreme Poor
<b>Libertador/</b>						
Distrito Capital	904,969	106,562	15,787	88	11	1
Sucre (parish)	81,592	11,265	1512	86	12	2
Chacao	20,257	947	46	95	4	0
<b>Metropolitan</b>						
District	23,730	27,713	5746	88	10	2
AMC	928,699	134,275	21,533	86	12	2

**Table 6.1 Number and percentage of poor and non poor inhabitants in Caracas<sup>17</sup> and case study municipalities. Source: INE, 2013**

Given Chacao's location in the centre of the city and with two main arterial roads running east/west through the municipality thousands of transport units (cars and buses) cross through each day. Additionally, given Chacao's importance as a commercial and business district in the city many people who work in the municipality come from other parts of the city or beyond. This causes considerable strain on the transport network within the municipality (Graterón, 2013).

## 6.2.2 Political and administrative context

Chacao was frequently referred to as a 'model municipality' by interviewees. Compared with other municipalities in Caracas, and other large urban areas in Venezuela, Chacao has relatively low crime, high standards of living, high quality plazas and a range of popular cultural venues and recreational activities. Furthermore, the municipality has in the last ten years implemented a municipal health service. The municipal government also strives to be 'transparent' (Alcaldía de Chacao, 2012a; C001).

<sup>17</sup>*Area Metropolitana de Caracas (AMC)*: the name and government which covers the whole of the city of Caracas comprising the five municipalities, Baruta, Chacao, El Hatillo, Libertador and Sucre. The AMC's elected mayor is Antonio Ledezma, who is politically opposed to Chavismo. Since the creation of Gobierno del Distrito Capital in 2009, the AMC has had serious cutbacks in its competencies and budget following a reform of its corresponding law. *Distrito Capital*: same geographical area as Libertador; shorthand for referring to the area governed by *Gobierno de Distrito Capital*. Distrito Capital is its own federal entity and does not belong to a federal state.

*Distrito Municipal*: describes the four municipalities (Baruta, Chacao, El Hatillo and Sucre) of the metropolitan area of Caracas (AMC) without including Libertador or Distrito Capital. Distrito Municipal and its four constituent municipalities belong to the State of Miranda. *Gobierno del Distrito Capital (GDC)*: a governing body created by the National Executive in 2009 covering the geographical area of Distrito Capital/ Libertador. The National Executive appoints the director and is therefore not democratically elected

Like Baruta (pilot study municipality), Chacao's political persuasion is one of 'opposition'. The opposition in Venezuela is complex and at the time of writing consisted of a union of many different parties, including some that were previously aligned to national government, known as the *Mesa de la Unidad Democrática* (MUD). MUD is a relatively recent addition to the Venezuelan political landscape, comprising 17 political parties<sup>18</sup>. Its main purpose has been to provide a counter to the PSUV and other aligned parties which have a network known as the *Comando de Campaña Carabobo* (CCC) where other pro-government political parties support Chavista candidates in elections.

A considerable proportion of Chacao's citizens have consistently voted for non-government aligned parties (>80%; CNE, 2013). There are of course exceptions, particularly in the lower income neighbourhoods, but these, unlike other areas of Caracas, are more diverse in their political affiliations (C001; C004; C010).

The mayor of Chacao (during fieldwork), Emilio Graterón, belongs to a currently small, but growing, political party, Voluntad Popular (VP). The party is very new, only becoming a full political party in 2011. VP is a splinter political party created by former members of one of the key political parties of Venezuela's opposition, *Primero Justicia* (PJ).

The former mayor of Chacao (2000-2008), Leopoldo López, started VP as an activist organisation for values which he considered important to continue in the national political context. These are wide ranging but are underpinned by a centrist, progressivist political stance. It advocates economic "pragmatism" (but unspecified), as opposed to the economic measures taken by the national government (Voluntad Popular 2013). It also advocates citizen participation but is unspecific at the time of writing what this entails (ibid).

Chacao provides a unique example in Venezuela of a municipality which has implemented the full range of participatory mechanisms implemented by the national government, and also has a history of continuity of these processes. Chacao has a culture of experimentation and seeks to learn from previous years' experiences and expand upon them (C001).

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.unidadvenezuela.org/>

Chacao received international notoriety for its mayor, Irene Sáez, in the 1990s as she was a former Miss Universe participant. Notwithstanding this anecdotal point, Sáez was a popular mayor and re-elected for a second term. She later ran for president in 1998, but lost to Hugo Chávez. Sáez was considered to have implemented a number of well regarded policies and organisations within the municipality. The most notable is the municipal police force. Interviewees noted that Chacao's municipal police force is considered to be highly functional, polite and responsive with extended training in conflict resolution and ways of dealing with the public (C001; C002; C006; C012).

During fieldwork, five of Chacao's seven councillors belonged to opposition parties. The remaining two were independent and from PSUV, respectively. As described in chapter 2, councillors form the legislative branch of the municipality responsible for developing and approving local by-laws (often local interpretations of national laws). During fieldwork, councillors met twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) in the municipal legislature (CM).

### **6.2.3 Social context**

Chacao has a highly active civil society. As of October 2012, 119 organisations were registered with the municipality. Of these, 27 were CCs. The other organisations were predominantly related to cultural, recreation and sporting activities.

Observation in the municipality showed that on weekday nights the main squares of the municipality turned into large congregations of people who wished to undertake sporting activities (cyclists, running, aerobics or yoga). Citizens described that the people who met to take part were local citizens; meetings were not organised by the municipal government and responded to the will of local citizens to participate in these activities (informal conversations with local residents, 2013).

Chacao inhabitants are typically well educated. The percentage of tertiary educated inhabitants is 65%, above the AMC average (48%) [see table 6.2 below] and Venezuela (48%; INE, 2013).

Area	3-6 yrs (no.)	7-12 yrs (no.)	13-17 yrs (no.)	18-24 yrs (no.)	3-6 yrs (%)	7-12 yrs (%)	13-17 yrs (%)	18-24 yrs (%)
Libertador	85,622	159,290	125,130	10,9411	75	96	85	45
Sucre	16,233	30,812	23,847	17,787	74	95	84	39
Chacao	1385	2763	2438	3894	71	94	92	65
Distrito								
Metropolitano	38,841	7,3094	55,184	52,203	70	94	85	49
Area Metropolitana	124,463	232,384	180,314	161,614	74	95	86	48

**Table 6.2 Educational attendance numbers and percentage in Caracas and case study municipalities. Source: INE, 2013**

The municipality invests 5% of its budget in *Cultura Chacao*, 7% in *Salud Chacao* (local health service) and 5% in “welfare”. The welfare budget include programmes for the homeless, older people, extracurricular activities for schools and social services (Alcaldía de Chacao, 2013a). *Salud Chacao* provides free primary healthcare to all local residents (following registration); it also provides ambulance and paramedic services. Budget expenditure contributes to the operational costs of the various health centres; equipment and community education outreach programmes (Alcaldía de Chacao, 2013a; b).

Another social programme that has generated considerable support from the community and municipality is *Techo Chacao*. This aims to provide a three-step programme to get homeless people off the streets by providing them with access to hostels, psychological treatment and skills to obtain employment through volunteering initiatives with the municipality and local businesses (C001; Techo Chacao director speech, observation 2013). The success of the programme led to its expansion into the neighbouring municipality of Baruta.

During the López administration the Municipal Theatre and Cultural Centre were inaugurated. One interviewee (C007) demonstrated concern that the director of *Cultura Chacao* is López’s sister implying that there was a level of nepotism occurring during these years. Notwithstanding these concerns, CLPP ST staff (C001; C002) argued that the wide range of programmes and events that *Cultura Chacao* provided was unprecedented in most of Venezuela.

#### 6.2.4 Economic context

Several multi-national corporations' headquarters, as well as a number of shopping centres - including the largest (reputedly) in South America (Sambil) – are located in Chacao. The municipality benefits considerably from revenues generated from local taxes accrued from the private sector. The revenues generated provide over 80% of the municipality's income (Alcaldía de Chacao 2013a; b). Under 3% of the municipality budget comes from national government - which is provided on a per capita basis<sup>19</sup> (Alcaldía de Chacao 2013b; LOPPM 2010). The remainder of income comes from local taxes on property, vehicle registration, licenses and investment interest (Alcaldía de Chacao 2013b; LOPPM 2010).

Given Chacao's unique situation – small resident population, high income and subsequent high per capita spending potential – the municipality has little economic dependence on national government. This unique position has generated criticism from pro-government commentators. One such commentator argued that inhabitants of Chacao benefit from business taxes, despite considerable proportions of the local revenue being generated in businesses whose employees live outside Chacao (Rojas D'Onofrio, 2009).

Unlike other large cities and metropolises, there is no governing body for the entire city of Caracas. Until national government made reforms in 2009, the AMC did have certain level of competencies in this regard. The AMC receives 9% of municipal budgets from the five municipalities in the city (AMC001). However, national government implemented a mechanism provided in the constitution which enables the President to appoint a head of government for 'Caracas'. As such, national government re-established the Gobierno del Distrito Capital (GDC) which occupies the same territory of the municipality of Libertador. It does not extend to the other four municipalities which comprise the AMC. At the same time as creating the GDC several competencies of the AMC were withdrawn by national government. Nonetheless, even prior to the 2009 reforms, there were no governing bodies able to redistribute taxation generated by municipalities like Baruta and Chacao to areas with greater need for basic infrastructure and services (Sucre and Libertador).

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<sup>19</sup> The composition of municipal budgets are stipulated in the Local Administration Law (LOPPM, 2010)

## **6.3 LIBERTADOR**

### **6.3.1 Geographical and demographic context**

Libertador is the largest municipality in the AMC, in terms of both population and territory. The municipality has a population of 1,943,901 (INE, 2013). The geographical area of the municipality covers half of the AMC; and in terms of its population it comprises 67% of the AMC. As shown in figures 6.1 and 6.2, Libertador is located in the western half of the AMC. Because of its large size, geographical locations of the municipality make reference to its parishes, of which there are 23. To put this number into context, the AMC has a total of 32 parishes (Chacao has only one, Baruta, the pilot study, three). 11 of Libertador's 23 parishes have larger populations than Chacao.

Libertador is characterised by its informal settlements, *barríos*, which form the majority of the municipality. The "centre" of Libertador is its administrative and commercial hub. It is surrounded by *urbanizaciones* which are developed, as opposed to informal settlements. They range from lower working class to upper-middle class households. Census statistics show that approximately 60% of Libertador's residents live in *barríos* compared with 3% in Baruta and less than 1% in Chacao (INE, 2013).

Because of the geographical size of Libertador, my fieldwork for CCs focused on a *barrio* called La Silsa. As opposed to Chacao where CCs covered the entire municipality, those in Libertador were located only within La Silsa. The *barrio* had an approximate population of 14,000 (Posani 2012). It is located near to the sub-centre of Catia in the parish of Sucre (see figure 7.2), one of the 23 parishes in Libertador. Sucre has the largest population of all parishes.

### **6.3.2 Political and administrative context**

Libertador is renowned in Venezuela for its reputation as a Chavista stronghold. During fieldwork, Mayor Jorge Rodríguez (2008- ) was a key figure in the PSUV and national politics. Rodríguez was head of the April 2013 presidential election campaign for the PSUV. The previous mayor (2000-2008), Freddy Bernal, was also Chavista (MVR/PSUV). During fieldwork 11 of Libertador's 13 councillors belonged to the PSUV. Hence, the CM had little problem implementing municipal by-laws in

line with national government policies or laws. Given Libertador's support for Chavismo, observation during fieldwork showed that the municipality was often seen and referred to in pro-Chavista media as a hotbed of experimentation and a key part of the "process" in developing, and moving towards, "21st Century Socialism" (L001).

The political landscape in the geographical area covering Libertador is complex. As noted in the previous section, confusingly, Libertador is also referred to as "Caracas" for historical and, more recent, political reasons. The political discourse of Libertador and GDC, also help to perpetuate and sustain political support at national level from a citizenry and organised community which actively seek to support the Bolivarian revolution. This political discourse and support is not as prevalent in the other four municipalities in Distrito Metropolitano or at mayoral level in the AMC (see fn17). During fieldwork, plans and actions deriving from the AMC were rare due to many of its competencies being taken away in 2009. Many actions implemented by the AMC were often derided or rejected by Libertador, the GDC or national government (AMC planning department 2013; AMC001).

The complexity of political and geographical demarcations of Caracas show not only political differences, but also myriad approaches to social and political processes. Libertador is overtly Chavista, pro-national government and pro-Bolivarian revolution; the other four municipalities (Baruta, Chacao, El Hatillo and Sucre) were happy to work together as part of the AMC, with varying degrees of opposition or affiliation to national government.

In addition to the municipal budget, the LA's planning department, in conjunction with Fundacaracas and the GDC, created "Plan Socialista Caracas". The plan aimed to consolidate efforts of a number of initiatives and programmes created in Libertador into a coordinated 'political' plan (Fundacaracas 2013a; b). The plan had four key themes of action: Integral Barrio Transformation (TIB); small public works groups (*cayapas socialistas*) that, for example, can undertake repairs or implement water pipes, stairs or walkways; *barrio* rehabilitation; and "new socialist communities" that focus on the development of social housing (ibid; L003).



### 6.3.3 Social context

The majority of Libertador's citizens are working class. A majority of citizens live in precarious physical and social conditions. Most middle class citizens live in the north-east of the municipality. Libertador inhabitants have a much lower proportion of young adults in tertiary education; only 45% attend in Libertador compared with 65% of young adults in Chacao (INE 2013). Libertador's percentage of inhabitants attending tertiary education is also lower than the AMC and Venezuelan averages, as shown in table 6.2. Educational attendance at secondary level is also slightly below city-wide averages, 85% compared to 86% (ibid); Chacao's attendance at secondary level is 92% (ibid). Table 6.2 shows attendance is much lower in Sucre parish where La Silsa, and many other *barrios*, are located.

Libertador has invested heavily, over the course of Rodríguez's mayoralty, in a number of initiatives to improve the cultural and social quality of the municipality. Considerable effort has gone into improving public squares, creating boulevards and pedestrian areas, as well as providing children's play areas (Alcaldía de Libertador 2013; Lugo 2013a; b). Libertador hosted an international book fair, a theatre festival, film festivals and a number of free concerts with Venezuelan and international acts.

Following electoral victory in April, 2013, President Maduro began a tour of the country speaking to organisations and citizens in what was called *Gobierno de calle* (street government). The objective was to hear directly from communities about what wasn't being dealt with in each of the states and cities visited. Solutions (policies and programmes) would be drawn up shortly after (or on occasions on the spot) (Fiaschi 2013; observation 2013). Libertador, including La Silsa, received a visit from the Mayor, and later from the president, as part of this initiative. As a result, the efforts of La Silsa's *comuna* were recognised and extra funding was offered from both Libertador municipality and national government (Arteaga 2013; Cantillo 2013; Lugo 2013b). La Silsa was apportioned 58 million Bolívares Fuertes (USD 9.2 million) to fund 12 key projects, including social housing, infrastructure improvement, and support for local businesses (Cantillo 2013; L001). Libertador also agreed to extend the "Bulevar Catia", one of the municipality's emblematic public realm improvements, so that the main thoroughfare from the centre of Catia would be connected to La Silsa. A new plaza was also proposed (López 2013; L003).

#### **6.3.4 Economic context**

Libertador's "centre" is the financial, administrative and commercial hub of Venezuela. Most of the national government ministries are located in Libertador. A number of international banks and corporations are also located in the centre. There are also a couple of shopping centres containing international brands. As such, the municipality benefits from business taxation like Chacao, but given its extensive population the municipality has less per capita spending capability than Chacao or Baruta. Libertador has a number of thriving centres with smaller shops and extensive working-class markets.

La Silsa is located on the periphery of two-sub centres within the parish of Sucre. Catia has numerous small businesses and markets; Propatria, to the west of La Silsa, has a medium sized shopping centre. There are very few services within La Silsa itself other than small convenience shops that local residents operate. As part of the emerging *comuna* La Silsa's CCs are trying to develop community-owned businesses that will contribute to the *comuna's* finances. These are promoted by national government's initiatives and are referred to in national plans and legislation as *Empresas de Propiedad Social* (EPS), community owned businesses. At the time of fieldwork, La Silsa's *comuna en construcción* had EPSs comprised of shoe making; brick making, carpentry, ironmongery and a communal cafe/restaurant (Cantillo 2013; Echavarría Quiñones 2013).

#### **6.4 CONCLUSIONS**

This short chapter has provided contextual information on the diverse differences between Chacao and Libertador, particularly with reference to their respective territorial size, geography, and political, social and economic contexts.

The municipality of Chacao is considerably small in both territorial size and population (70,000), but it is wealthy due to high municipal revenues as a result of the high number of businesses and corporations. Municipal revenue has enabled successive mayoral administrations implement social programmes (such as health centres and helping the homeless), improve public realm and cultural centres, independently of the budget national government transfers which amount to just 3% of overall municipal revenue. The municipality is predominantly middle and upper middle class with very small pockets of informal settlements and poverty.

The municipality of Libertador, on the other hand, is a very large municipality, with a large population of approximately 1.9 million residents. It also has a majority of residents living in *barrios*. As a result of the population size and high number of informal settlements municipal government has historically much less per capita spending power than Chacao. Basic infrastructure needs are greater in *barrios*, as are the levels of poverty.

## CHAPTER 7 CLPPS

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in chapter 2, CLPPs were introduced as a mechanism for municipal planning emerging in the 1999 constitution. CLPPs were enacted in national law in 2002 with reforms in 2006 and 2010. Each CLPP comprises the mayor, local councillors and community members, elected from community organisations. CLPP reforms have principally altered the definition and composition of community members in accordance with other mechanisms that have emerged over time such as CCs and *comunas*. Another fundamental change in the latest reform was the removal of members of the Parish Councils from the CLPP following the dissolution of JPs in 2010. The latter were intended to be replaced with Communal Parish Councils (JPCs). To date JPCs have been adopted with mixed success across and within municipalities. This change caused considerable upheaval in the composition of CLPPs and how participants within CLPPs saw their agency and acted as a result. This will be explored in more detail in this chapter. Unless specified, reference within the chapter to the CLPP's roles, responsibilities and composition follow the 2010 reform, which was the current law during fieldwork (2013).

To recap, CLPPs are responsible for designing the 'municipal development plan' (PMD), as well as other municipal level plans, "programmes" or "actions". PMDs should adhere to the National Economic and Social Development Plan. At the time of fieldwork this was the 2007-2013 plan (MINCI 2008), but has subsequently been superseded by the 2013-2019 plan (MINCI 2013). PMDs should ensure citizen participation in their 'formulation, execution, monitoring, evaluation and control' (ibid, article 2). The law emphasises that the PMD should link with CCs' and *comunas*' plans. In doing so, CLPPs should promote identification of community needs, deficits, potentials and aspirations within the municipality. Using a participatory budgeting (PB), plans or projects emerge to be submitted later to the *Consejo Federal de Gobierno* (CFG), which will then transfer funds where appropriate. At the municipal level, CLPPs can approve internal budget allocations and provide opinion for the municipal government's annual budget (POA).

The chapter follows Bevir and Rhodes' (2003; 2006; 2010) position that participants

can be understood as situated actors (community members and councillors) confronting 'dilemmas' (ideas being conflicted by encountering new evidence or practices) which are underpinned by each individual's 'traditions' (ideas, organised in 'webs of belief', which provide historical and social frames of reference). As discussed in chapter 4, focus will also be placed on institutional factors ('rules in use' and 'rules in form') providing an approach which goes beyond the interpretive analysis. The framework (table 4.2) enabled the analysis of the differences in views, understandings and situated agency of councillors and community members within the CLPPs studied.

Section 7.2 describes the general historical context of CLPPs and points towards the traditions behind the creation of the CLPP initiative as a mechanism for participation. Section 7.3 describes each of the key members of the CLPPs in Chacao and Libertador. Section 7.4 uses the concept of dilemma to describe three key factors that shaped the way the CLPP worked. The section highlights that dilemmas were generated from: 1. the 2010 reforms and the need to substitute JP with JPC members; 2. electoral processes and/or lack of elections; and, 3. the roles and remit that respective members within CLPPs held about themselves and other participants. Section 7.5 reflects on how the dilemmas and traditions shaped the beliefs that participants had about the CLPP and its processes. Conclusions to the chapter are provided in section 7.6.

## **7.2 TRADITIONS AND THE CLPP**

This section seeks to look at CLPPs, as a local government reform mechanism, using the concept of 'tradition'. As discussed in chapter 4, 'traditions' are one of three concepts used by interpretive scholars in order to understand actors' agency situated within contingent contexts (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006). Hay (2011 pg 170) described traditions as actors' locus of ideas and meanings (at that given time) that provides guidance and a way of 'making sense' of the experiences that they encounter in the world. Traditions are considered to be 'starting points' from where actors' will first draw upon to provide meaning and understand these contexts. Traditions are not inevitable but an 'initial influence on people' (Bevir 2004 pg 618). To provide indication of how this concept can be applied to the study of CLPPs, I rely on Bevir's (2010 pg 122) argument that 'we may understand... reforms better if we identify the historical traditions that have inspired them'. In order to establish the

root of actors' beliefs and dilemmas, discussed below, this section provides a summary of the origin of CLPPs, drawing from chapter 2, and how it is embedded within political and government traditions in Venezuela.

While reforms in the late 1980s increased direct elections for political representatives (governors, mayors and JP representatives), citizens had little influence over public policy (Lander 2005). JPs were seen to be a sub-municipal level entity that would foster citizen participation. Nonetheless, as seen in chapter 2, economic and political problems culminated in social unrest. Citizens voted for Hugo Chávez in 1998 because they sought to break away from the two party system and neoliberal economic policies in order to seek for some form of alternative.

The 1999 constitution established that, in addition to the existing government arrangements (federal republic), CLPPs would be introduced at the municipal level, incorporating citizen participation into municipal planning. It is unclear why Chavismo specifically sought to introduce such a new mechanism into the constitution, as opposed to introducing it via legislation which was required in any case. According to a manual produced by the then Ministry of Planning and Development, Chavismo incorporated CLPPs into the new constitution, as a demonstration of reducing the deficit of poor citizen engagement from previous government programmes and away from the political system that had been established in 1961 (Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo 2002 pgs 8-9).

Two interrelated strands of traditions became apparent in participants' interview responses. Inserting the CLPP concept into the existing political and municipal governmental structure prompted institutional change. The second strand reflects participants' own political views. Chavismo, once in power, sought to bring people further into these new government arrangements via additional reforms (Popular Power laws) to encourage participation and change state-civil society relations. At the time of fieldwork, Chavismo had been in national government for almost 15 years, and had become increasingly radical in its move towards "socialism". Thus, my research focused on participants' views as a way to elicit political traditions. These were grounded in whether they were in favour or against the ideology, rhetoric and discourse of Chavismo.

Chapter 2 also described that CLPPs had a mixed experience in how they were adopted; not all municipalities implemented one. One of the key reasons is that

elected political representatives saw the CLPP as an encroachment on their role in existing municipal level institutions (Wilpert 2007). During fieldwork, interviewees identified that it was the 2010 reforms and new Popular Power laws that caused problems within CLPPs. As discussed below, the 2010 CLPP and 'Popular Power' reforms raised issues regarding what was a valid structure of government and what constituted valid and legitimate representation.

Unlike political representatives, community members did not have a precedent within an institutional tradition. Prior to the CLPP, other than becoming a political representative within the JP or CM, there was no formal incorporation of community members in municipal-level councils. Some community members, in both Chacao and Libertador, demonstrated affiliation or activism for political parties. Several community members in Chacao supported VP, the same political party as the Mayor of Chacao. In Libertador, community members were openly supportive of the PSUV.

Both mayors and councillors are designated in the constitution as elected representatives within the federal structure of government. The figures of mayor and councillors are therefore a part of the conceptual apparatus of Venezuela's representative democracy. More widely, representative democracy can be understood as a tradition within modern government that emerged in the Enlightenment and persists as the dominant form of democracy, including Latin America (De Sousa Santos 2005; Held 1996; Macpherson 1977; Manin 1997; Pateman 1970).

Rhodes (2011b pg 4), referring to government elites in the UK, stated that a 'tradition is a set of understandings someone receives during socialization. So, a governmental tradition is a set of inherited beliefs and practices about the institutions and history of government'. Rhodes refers to how those who take government positions will be trained by some form of permanent staff member about their political role (showing 'how things are done around here'), in addition to the formal remit and role set out in written rules and legislation. Councillors in Chacao and Libertador demonstrated having a clear idea of what their role as an elected political representative entailed. Councillors defined and demarcated hierarchical priorities within their remit: the CM came first and the CLPP was of lesser importance (C020; C025; C026; L025; L026; L027). Interviews with CM permanent staff members indicated this too (L023; L024).

Unlike councillors, community members had no tradition to fall on. The role of community members created by the CLPP was new. The implications of the demarcation of institutional definitions and remit between political elected representatives and community members in the CLPP will become apparent in later sections. The way in which these respective members of the CLPP saw and understood one another's roles in the CLPP generated dilemmas.

### **7.3 SETTING THE SCENE: CLPP MEMBERS IN CHACAO AND LIBERTADOR**

This section aims to provide a description of the composition of those involved in the CLPPs in Chacao and Libertador, derived from interviews and observation. This is compared and contrasted with the formal composition and legal definitions set out in the relevant laws and bylaws to unpack the differences, if any, of how the two CLPPs operate in practice (potentially showing informal rules) compared with the formal rules. The section aims to identify the institutionalist components of the framework established in table 4.2. Section 7.4 discuss the beliefs and dilemmas (the interpretive components) in more depth.

#### **7.3.1 Mayors**

Mayors in both Chacao and Libertador had very little direct involvement, despite being identified in law as presidents of the CLPP. During fieldwork, Chacao's Mayor Graterón attended two extraordinary meetings. The first of which was organised to present the findings from the PB process held in July 2013. The second, which was convened at just 24 hours notice, was for the municipal government (and CLPP) to present the municipal urban development plan (PDUL) to the CM. In the case of Libertador, Mayor Rodríguez did not attend any of the CLPP's meetings during the fieldwork period. Furthermore, CLPP participants, both community members and councillors, noted that the mayor had virtually no involvement. Based on findings, later discussed, it was not the mayors' direct involvement in the CLPP process, but mayors' absence that had negative implications.

Previous mayors were responsible in both Chacao and Libertador for implementing the CLPP in their respective municipalities. In Chacao, Leopoldo López installed the first CLPP in 2006 (Chacao 2007). Similarly, in Libertador, Freddy Bernal was identified as being key to setting up the CLPP in Libertador in 2004 (L001; L021).



### **7.3.2 Councillors**

Like mayors, councillors in office are automatic members of the CLPP. As described in chapter 2, councillors in Venezuela are elected on four year terms. During fieldwork the councillors in both cases (as well as the rest of the country) had been in office for almost eight. National or state level elections and referenda postponed municipal level councillor elections for four years. The National Electoral Council (CNE) provided extensions to councillors' terms. Their extended period in office caused some friction for participants, such as mayors and community CLPP members in Chacao, elected in the interim period. Dilemmas arose regarding CLPP member legitimacy, which were brought about by questions over elections and electoral processes (or lack of). Observation during fieldwork showed the two dilemmas outlined above (questions about elections and lack of attendance) had serious implications for the operation of the CLPPs and their capacity to fulfil the roles and responsibilities set out in the national law. Councillors – present or absent - played a key role in how the CLPPs in Chacao and Libertador operated in the way that they did.

### **7.3.3 Community members**

Libertador's community members were elected in the autumn of 2005; community member re-election was long overdue at the time of fieldwork (community members serve two-year terms and are re-electable). Libertador had around 15 tenacious community members (approximately 20% of the total CLPP membership) that continued to attend the monthly plenary meetings and make the CLPP work. These members were generally retired or had the time and availability to contribute to the CLPP. All those I observed and interviewed during fieldwork were self-declared supporters of Chavismo.

CLPPs have the ability to create the figure of a 'vice-president', a person from the community section of the CLPP, who will act as president when the mayor (the automatic president) is not available. The CLPP in Libertador did not designate a vice president. The secretarial role in the CLPP in Libertador was one of four 'working groups' (committees). However, the four working groups did not really operate at the time of fieldwork.

Chacao's community members had all been elected in 2011 (some re-elected) and were coming to the end of their two-year term. Though there were no elections programmed, they were expected to be held after the December 2013 municipal elections (for mayors and councillors) (C001). Politically, the community members supported opposition parties; several of the members were aligned to VP (C001; C005; C012; C022). This included the vice-president, who was the JPC representative in Chacao. Those that were interviewed were professionals or small business owners; none of whom were retired but each had the flexibility in their workplaces required to dedicate time to their CLPP responsibilities.

#### **7.3.4 CLPP Secretary**

The national law requires municipal governments to appoint a CLPP secretary, a role that involves co-ordinating the general administration of the CLPP by informing members of meetings, ensuring quorum at plenary meetings, producing minutes of CLPP meetings, and maintaining an archive of CLPP documentation. The role of secretary is a paid, public servant post.

During fieldwork the CLPP secretary in Chacao had been appointed via public tender in 2011 at the same time as the staff of the *Sala Técnica* (ST). The secretary was an architect but was also involved politically with VP, the Mayor's political party (C001). Unlike the ST there is no requirement for the secretary to be a municipal resident. The secretary worked full time and was located within the CLPP office in the municipal government headquarters.

Chacao's CLPP secretary's opposition to Chavismo was no secret due to his political party activism which was apparent on his twitter account. Furthermore, he described during the interview that he had studied at the local business school, IESA, which - he acknowledged - prepared new political leaders. Coincidentally, IESA supported the organisation of PB in 2012 and 2013 (C001). Perhaps reflecting his business administration background, he described that during the two years that he had been in the role, he had been keen to 'innovate'. He cited creating new lines of communication, or community engagement techniques as examples. He noted that Chacao had been unique in the way it implemented its PB, and since its inauguration the CLPP had continually sought to improve the way it liaised with local residents. But he emphasised that this was a cumulative process given that he and the ST were building on an initiative started during the López administration.

Libertador's CLPP secretary was a retired lady, with a higher education degree, who worked in the afternoons (2pm-6pm) in the CLPP's office. She was one of the community members of the CLPP and had been active in the CLPP since 2005. She described herself as a volunteer and formed part of the committee within the CLPP that dealt with secretarial and administrative matters. She was only able to claim basic travel and sustenance expenses as community member roles were *ad honorem*, according to the law (L001).

Libertador's secretary noted that her key role was as liaison between the municipal government and communities that had projects being dealt with by the CLPP. Her role was to ensure the community projects identified in the municipal government's annual budget were being implemented (an informal check and balance of the municipal administration) (L001). Her other tasks included providing CCs with support when they needed to undergo elections, helping other municipalities establish CLPPs, and providing local schools, universities and organisations with work experience (by helping with CLPP administration). When asked about her role and why she continued to work as a volunteer for so many years she replied that this was her way of providing 'a small contribution to the "process"' [of Chavismo and its move to 21<sup>st</sup>C socialism] (L001).

The two cases showed different levels of commitment towards the CLPP. In Chacao the secretary has been employed on a full-time basis, whereas Libertador relied on a volunteer. Where Chacao complied with the rules specified by national law, Libertador had not.

### **7.3.5 Sala Técnica**

The CLPP law states that the ST is a multidisciplinary unit of three to four people, selected via public tender, which will design and implement the methodology for creating the PMD and support the CLPP in its functions. Establishing a ST is obligatory and the mayor and councillors have the responsibility of doing so within 120 days of the law's enactment (approximately April 2011), or potentially face financial sanctions.

The CLPP in Libertador, unlike Chacao, did not have a ST. A committee comprised of CLPP community members ran the day-to-day administration. Any technical

advice needed to be sought from relevant departments within the municipal government. In effect, this procedure required the CLPP to fill out a report that described the project's viability and highlighted any specific matters that should be taken into consideration. The CLPP then passed this project proposal on to the relevant municipal government department or community where it would be checked for accuracy and, if needed, revised (L001).

Community members did not raise the lack of a CLPP ST in Libertador as a particular issue. But councillor García (L026) considered that the mayor's focus on creating *comunas* meant that he neglected the CLPP. She argued this was demonstrated by Fundacaracas (municipal government agency) installing STs in five neighbourhoods instead of establishing a ST for the CLPP, as required by law. Given that the mayor, or municipal government, had not received any sanctions, there was no incentive to change this practice.

In 2011, Chacao established a ST of four staff members comprising two technical staff (architects), an administrator and a coordinator, all of whom were appointed via a competitive application process, as required by the CLPP law. The ST was located within the municipal government building. The ST's activities in Chacao met the requirements of CLPP laws and municipal by-law. The staff, in conjunction with the CLPP secretary, organised the agenda and minutes for each plenary meeting, and assisted CLPP community members and local residents with smaller projects and revisions to project financing, which needed to be discussed and approved at the monthly CLPP plenary meetings. In the spring of each year, the ST began organising the logistics and dates – a time-consuming task – for the year's PB. Following each PB meeting, the ST collated the information and began processing the information into the final report that synthesised the outcomes and community feedback of the PB meetings (Alcaldía de Chacao 2010; 2011b; 2012b; 2013a). The report was then submitted to the Finance department where the proposals were checked and funding allocated according to the forecast budget for the forthcoming year (Alcaldía de Chacao 2013b).

Mayor Graterón in Chacao complied with the national law and had established a ST, unlike Mayor Rodríguez in Libertador. By giving the ST an office in the municipal government headquarters, Mayor Graterón had also assured that the CLPP's ST was not isolated from other municipal government departments with which it needed to liaise closely. Libertador's mayor and municipal government

showed less commitment towards the CLPP by not establishing a ST. The volunteer community members that worked on behalf of the CLPP were geographically isolated from the municipal government's main buildings and had to rely on establishing and maintaining contact with the municipal government's departments out of their own initiative.

Chacao showed commitment to render the CLPP a formal institution. It worked both as a department (ST and secretary) located within the municipal government building, and as a plenary at a municipal council level. Libertador's CLPP did not show the same level of institutionalization. As opposed to Chacao, it lacked an office within the municipal government building, a ST and a formal secretary.

#### **7.4 DILEMMAS WITHIN THE CLPPs**

Following Bevir and Rhodes, Gibbs and Krueger (2012 pg 370) state 'dilemmas come about when new ideas stand in opposition to existing beliefs and practices. Dilemmas force a change in beliefs and practices, such that individuals and institutions have to take action to address them'. As this section will discuss, during fieldwork, the way in which CLPPs operated was the result of a series of inter-related dilemmas. These dilemmas were created by changes in legislation, which prompted participants to take action in order to comply with the law. There was a change in the way CLPPs were structured, which required participants to be re-elected.

In the case of Libertador, lack of elections (for community members and councillors) led to the CLPP members' questioning one another's legitimacy (especially community members versus councillors). In Chacao, councillors questioned the way in which community member elections were held, leading to accusations that these were biased (targeting specific candidates) resulting in unfair community representation. Overall, dilemmas were generated in both CLPPs about the roles, remits and legitimacy between community members and councillors. Although this section focuses on dilemmas, actors' traditions and beliefs also influenced the generation of these dilemmas (as discussed in subsequent sections). As a result of these dilemmas, during fieldwork, CLPPs adopted practices deviating from the CLPP legislation (rules in form). Participants' response to dilemmas widened the gap between formal and informal rules.

#### 7.4.1 Dilemma 1: Changes to CLPP composition

As described in chapter 2, national government dissolved Parish Councils (JP) in 2010 replacing them with Communal Parish Councils (JPC). Though the intention was for the JP presidents to be replaced with JPC spokespeople, the transition from one structure to another encountered variation and difficulties in practice. The removal of JP presidents from the CLPP resulted in a removal of members of the CLPP with no immediate replacement. This generated a dilemma for the remainder of those involved. The way Libertador was able to respond to the change in CLPP structure was limited principally due to the complexity and size of the municipality. Chacao required the replacement of just one JP president in its CLPP. This proved much easier than the 23 changes required in Libertador.

At the time of fieldwork, Libertador's CLPP had not complied with the CLPP reform. The CLPP operated only because of the participation of community members. Councillors only contributed by approving the municipal budget once a year. Libertador councillors described the CLPP's lack of JPC representation as partly responsible for why they failed to participate more regularly. They considered that this was failing to comply with the law.

Community members in Libertador were unable to provide any explanation why there was little momentum to comply with the CLPP reform. Interviews with councillors highlighted the beliefs they held, which provided insight about the origins of the dilemmas - lack of conformity to the law. Two of Libertador's councillors, prior to being elected, were presidents of their respective JPs (L025; L026). Councillor García considered that the CLPP was more active when JPs were involved (L026). Councillors Fernández and García argued that the presence and then removal of the JPs was a result of the 'speed at which the revolutionary process [Chavismo] is going'. As a consequence JPs were eliminated to make space for, or be replaced by, CCs and *comunas* (L025; L026). Both councillors considered that the way in which JPCs have not been elected as a replacement for JPs has created a 'vacuum' of representation (L025; L026). While, councillor Fernández acknowledged that JPCs should have been incorporated into the CLPP, following elections in the different parishes, he ignored why this had not happened (L025). Councillor García, on the other hand, considered that the problem lay with national government because it had not specified the appropriate mechanism [such as

elections] of incorporating JPCs into the CLPP (L026). Overall, the three councillors believed that another reason was the mayor's involvement with national government and party politics [the mayor also served as the national director of the PSUV], both of which had their focus on consolidating CCs and creating *comunas* rather than enhancing older mechanisms such as CLPPs (L025; L026; L027). Councillor López described this as follows:

*The country is involved in a big debate about the 'big commune' and how this should be distributed politically and geographically. And what does it [the debate] consist of? Before the political division were states, local authorities and parishes. ...we considered JPs the [form of representative] government closest to the citizen. This concept has changed completely because of our president of the republic, Hugo Chávez, with the people, [stated] that [now] its the people who are in charge, in an 'organised' form [mechanisms of popular power]. For this reason we talk of laws, and now the CLPP [sic, I believe he meant comunas] and CCs<sup>20</sup>. (L027).*

Following the 2010 reform, Chacao's CLPP was paralyzed for a year and a half, because the JPC had not yet been established. It was community members that revived the CLPP in Chacao. According to David, the person who eventually became the JPC representative in Chacao, the creation of the JPC and the reconstitution of the CLPP were achieved because community members were 'preoccupied with their community and desired to construct a better municipality'<sup>21</sup> (C005). He also described that these proactive members of the community sought the mayor's support in order to re-establish the CLPP. In order to establish the CLPP a JPC was required, which involved getting members from constituent CCs to vote in David's favour (ibid).

As will be explored in detail in chapter 8, CCs in Chacao were established for specific reasons. The first was for CCs to become another type community organisation that could liaise with the municipal government. The second was so

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<sup>20</sup> Hay un gran debate en el país, este, establecido sobre la gran comuna y división política territorial. Y en que consiste, que antes la división política estaba constituida lo que eran los estados y municipios, y parroquias. Ahora, entonces aquí se denominaba que el gobierno más cercano a los vecinos eran las Juntas Parroquiales. Ahora ese concepto cambió totalmente porque como está establecido con nuestro presidente de la Republica Hugo Chávez de que con el pueblo, el pueblo manda en una forma organizada. Por eso se habla de esas leyes, ahora de los CLPP [sic], y la ley de los Consejos Comunales.

<sup>21</sup> preocupados por su comunidad y por poder construir un mejor municipio

that local residents, in favour of opposition parties, could prevent Chavistas creating CCs and undertaking activities that they disagreed with. CCs were a way to occupy and participate within the political spaces defined in national law, but without accepting or contributing to the political ideology underpinning the creation of those mechanisms (establishing 21<sup>st</sup> Century socialism/ communal state).

CLPP participants in Chacao openly expressed that they were opposed to Chavismo and the ideology behind the communal state. Chacao participants did not describe the CLPP as an entity linked to Chavismo's 'communal state' (unlike CCs and *comunas*). They were keen to ensure its continuity because they expressed belief in the CLPP's capacity for citizen participation without being linked to Chavismo's ideology per se. Thus, community participants' actions to create the JPC were effectively contrary to their beliefs (political) and their general support for the JPs that had been removed (institutional tradition). According to CLPP community members, Chacao's CCs only voted in favour of a candidate to create a JPC to enable the CLPP to comply with the requirements of the 2010 reform, but not to create a JPC with the aim of establishing the "communal state" (C002; C012). Paradoxically, by forming a JPC, Chacao's CCs had, in their desire to comply with CLPP legislation, inadvertently contributed to the creation of the "communal" structures in Chacao.

#### **7.4.2 Dilemma 2: Frequency of elections**

As Manin (1999) highlighted, one of the key principles of representative democracy is the need for regular elections to ensure that the legitimacy of the representative is maintained. Voting in regular elections is one of the main ways representatives are held accountable by the electorate. As described in chapter 2, CLPPs are composed of two types of members both of which are elected. Political representatives, mayors and councillors, elected in traditional municipal elections held countrywide and organised by the CNE. Community members are elected from local organisations and/or CCs within the municipality (by elections normally administered by the municipal government).

During fieldwork, mayors had been elected in 2008 and were in the final year of their terms in office. Councillors had been elected in 2005 and after having their elections postponed for various reasons, and extensions to their terms granted by the CNE, had effectively been in office for two terms without election. Community



councillors should be elected for two-year periods. In Libertador, community councillors had been involved since 2005 with no re-election. Chacao's community members had been elected in 2011 after the CLPP was restarted following the 2010 reform. This shows another example of the gap between the formal rules set out in legislation and the rules adopted in practice.

Community CLPP members in both municipalities were very aware of the fact that councillors had served for almost two terms in office without re-election and were keen to point this out whenever the opportunity arose. Though the reason for this fell with national government and the CNE, interviewees' views reflected the weaknesses of representative democracy in Venezuela. As will be explored below, the ongoing extensions to councillors' terms in office generated further dilemmas within the CLPP.

The CLPP in Chacao had, for all intents and purposes, complied with the 2010 law reform: the CLPP had elected a representative for the JPC and re-elected the community members. Councillors were under CNE extension and the mayor was in the third year of his term in office after being elected in 2008. The mayor and municipal government had also installed a ST and employed a CLPP secretary (see section 7.3.4). But my observation of the CLPP plenary meetings, reading of news articles, and interviews with CLPP participants raised a recurrent issue: councillors questioned community members for the way in which they were elected (see below), and also because several community members shared political party affiliations to VP. In turn, community members challenged these councillors' views because lack of elections, and extensions of their terms in office, were not fulfilling their 'representativeness' of local residents either.

Councillor Martínez described the situation as follows:

*Elections were called on a Saturday, and on the Sunday a group of local residents went and voted [for the community members]. The same people, [and] their local group of neighbours chose their candidates. This was the root of the problem. And it was only those that were there that got elected, a group of people, shall we say, most of who are [politically] aligned with the mayor. So that's another factor. It's just not [politically] representative of the community [and support for other political parties in Chacao]. This is the root of the matter. For this reason none of the councillors attend the CLPP [plenary]. Are they [community members] illegal? Well, look, ...how do I say*

*this... I just, simply, don't turn up to these meetings<sup>22</sup>. (C023).*

Councillor González similarly argued that community members' close links to the mayor were problematic:

*...there is no true [political] representation [of community members in the CLPP] because if they only come from 2 organisations. Well, they elected their community members from these two organisations; [ok] there were a few more than 2. Let's be clear, this was an election that was supervised by the mayor and the municipal executive, who failed to recognise whether any of these institutions were legal or not...but that's another matter...<sup>23</sup> (C025)*

When asked how the process should have been carried out, councillor Martínez emphasised the need 'to follow the law', involve the CNE for greater transparency with a clear chronology of the electoral process, and for elections to be publicised widely in the community (C023). Councillor González highlighted that, in her view, the differences of 'first grade' and 'second grade' elections were problematic:

*...What I believe is that the national law needs to change to have a more democratic process of choosing members. It's a matter of...if you want to have efficient and effective participation it needs to be done in a much more direct way, not [through] second grade elections [as opposed to 'first grade' elections such as councillors or mayors] which is what the law requires. Obviously now with the reform there is not much change in this matter, we're still [stuck] with second grade elections<sup>24</sup> (C025)*

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<sup>22</sup> Y vale unas elecciones que llamaron un sábado, un domingo entonces fueron grupos de vecinos que los escogieron. Ellos mismos, un grupo más de vecinos escogieron sus electos. Esto es el problema de fondo. Y quienes están allí justamente salen electos, un grupo de personas, digamos, este, en su mayoría de ellos de la corriente del alcalde. Entonces esto es otro factor, pues. Que no es representativo de lo que es la comunidad, pues, como tal. Entonces allí es donde radique el asunto. Por eso ningún de los concejales asistan al CLPP. Me explico. Porque no tienen esa legitimidad. ¿Que son ilegales? Pues, fijate. Esto...como explicarte...Ehh, yo simplemente, este, no participo en esas reuniones.

<sup>23</sup> *...no hay una verdadera representación, porque si resulta que solamente hay 2 organizaciones, pues de esas 2 organizaciones, que no fue el caso no, fue un poco más, de ahí se escogen a todos los consejeros del, del CLPP... además vamos a estar claro, que esa fue una elección tutelada por el alcalde, por el ejecutivo municipal, desconociendo algunas de estas instituciones que estuviera legalizadas o no, ese es otro tema...*

<sup>24</sup> *...lo que creo es que la ley nacionalmente en cambio de hacer más democrático el proceso de escogencia, ...es un tema de...si tú la quieres hacer eficiente y efectiva la participación tiene que ser de manera mucho más directa, no elecciones de segundo grado que es lo que está planteado por la ley. Claro, ahora dentro de la nueva reforma de la ley, este, no dista mucho de la que está actualmente, seguimos en una elección de segundo grado...*

In effect, councillors were indicating the way elections had been undertaken using informal rules and practices, which favoured community members, the mayor and VP. They also implied that councillors' "first grade" elections were more appropriate, and more valid, than community member elections. My interpretation is they were stressing that the councillor electoral process (despite elections being postponed) was more 'representative' of the community than the way community members had been elected.

Nonetheless, community members believed that *they* were more representative of the local community (C005; C012; C023). They maintained that because their elections had been held in 2011 (as opposed to councillors elections in 2005). Community members found it galling that local politicians accused the community members' electoral process as unfair and non-transparent when councillors were, in their view, well past serving as valid representatives of the community (C012; C017; C021; C022). These questions about the frequency of the electoral processes led to the dilemmas about who constituted a valid representative.

Community members in Libertador had been part of the CLPP since it was created in 2005. CLPP members were nominated by civil society organisations in each parish. These elections were undertaken in accordance with the first CLPP law (2002). Observation of the CLPP during fieldwork, gave a general sense that it was in limbo. Both councillors and community members were waiting for new elections to be held. Yet, it was still uncertain when the community members would have their elections. This, again, depended on how the CLPP would conform to the law reform, and the integration of the JPCs, CCs and the emerging *comunas*. CLPP members were aware of the need for the CLPP to comply with the new law but were uncertain how this would be done or when (L001; L020; L022; L026).

My observation during CLPP meetings showed that a group of around 15 community members regularly attended (the number and specific people varied depending on the meeting). Councillors in Libertador, like Chacao, did not attend these meetings. Libertador's community members found the matter frustrating, not because of councillors' extended term in office, but because of the councillors' lack of attendance to the CLPP meetings (more below).

In addition to the issues surrounding the removal of JPs, councillors told me that

they thought that the CLPP, as it was operating during fieldwork, was non-compliant with the 2010 reforms (L025; L026; L027). The community members continued, albeit needing (re)election, running the CLPP, but with a very minimal level of acceptance from councillors.

Councillors Fernández and López stated that the lack of community member elections was a key factor for them not attending the CLPP plenary meetings (L025; L027). Councillor García, on the other hand, recognised that even though community members had not been re-elected or renewed they continued working admirably on behalf of the CLPP:

*I value the community members we have at the moment a lot. Why? Because despite the CLPP not having complied with the modifications [in the new law]...they have stayed in their, how do we say it, place of combat. They give everything they can...to supervise the [municipal government's] public works. Because [the CLPP] is more than just approving funds for projects. It's also about supervising and overseeing the projects[s development and implementation]. Furthermore, Petra [the secretary] has great influence, because in a certain way she's been the link between the local authority directors, the community, and us as councillors, ensuring that we are informed of any obstacles that arise. It's amazing.<sup>25</sup> (L026).*

Yet councillors (including councillor García above) noted that they were no longer invited to the CLPP plenary meetings (L025; L026; L027). During interviews, it was stated that councillors were not informed, nor did they seek to find out, when CLPP plenary meetings would be held (L025; L026; L027). Councillors recognised that meeting the quorum was difficult, particularly since the removal of the JP. But ironically they were unwilling to attend the CLPP plenary meetings. As discussed above, councillors stated the need for community members to be renewed within the CLPP. They believed these elections needed to ensure conformity to the composition of the CLPP stipulated in the 2010 reform.

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<sup>25</sup> ...yo le doy muchísimo valor a esos miembros de ese CLPP que tenemos en este momento. ¿Por qué? Porque a pesar de que...no sea adecuado a las modificaciones [de la ley]...ellos permanecen en su lugar, como se dice, de combate. Hacen todo un esfuerzo, ehh, impresionante para supervisar las obras porque el tema no es nada más la aprobación. Es la supervisión de las obras, la contraloría de las obras. E inclusive, este, [la secretaria] tiene un peso.. porque ella de una manera sirve de bisagra entre la alcaldía, sus directores, la comunidad, y de una manera y otra mantener a nosotros como concejales informados de cuáles son las trabas que tiene. Es impresionante.

### 7.4.3 Dilemma 3: Community member and political representative roles and remit

The two sets of dilemmas described above (substitution of JPs for JPCs) and the need for accepted, transparent electoral processes for both community members and councillors, generated a third set of dilemmas about who has the role and the remit to make decisions. Chacao provided an instance where councillors did not participate in the CLPP because they questioned the legitimacy of community member elections as opposed to ‘first grade’ elections. Libertador provided a scenario where councillors did not attend the CLPP meetings because of the lack of community member elections, which lacked compliance with the reforms of the 2010 law. Consequently, as this section will explore, the concepts of representativeness and legitimacy between councillors and community members were contested.

Councillors adopted a view of their role that reflected the traditional role of local politicians in the western world: legislating in the municipal chamber, approving budgets, and in the best scenarios, scrutinizing the decisions and actions taken by the municipal executive. For the dilemmas generated in Libertador (lack of conformity to the law) and Chacao (questions over the legitimacy of community members), councillors failed to have regular input in the CLPP; instead councillors in both municipalities limited their involvement to approving only their budget. Community members, who saw the CLPP as an important mechanism for community engagement, were determined for the CLPP to continue operating as ‘normal’. Yet, as a consequence, further dilemmas were generated with regards to who has the capability and responsibility of making (CLPP) decisions.

As discussed in chapter 2, the CLPP remit allows its members to make decisions about approving funding for community organisations, CCs and *comunas*’ plans and projects ‘of minor importance’. PB is identified as the mechanism to allow citizens and community members to have a voice in the annual municipal budget and investment plans. Decisions can be made on the annual budget for the CLPP, but the plenary can only ‘provide an opinion’ on the municipal budget (CLPP law 2010). Furthermore, the law specifies:

*The decisions of the CLPP will be carried out by the majority of its members.  
It is the responsibility and obligation of the president [mayor] to ensure and*

*guarantee that approved decisions are carried out*<sup>26</sup>. (Article 25, CLPP law 2010)

Community members in both municipalities noted that, since councillors and mayors generally did not attend CLPP plenary meetings, it was the community members who provided the quorum and majority in order to take decisions (C012; C021; C022; L021; L022). Observation at meetings showed that the municipal government sent officers to present certain projects to the plenary in order to get specific municipal budgets signed off by the CLPP. It should be noted that this is more of a procedural formality rather than of citizen power because, as discussed below, the role of the CM is more significant.

In Chacao, councillors recognised that the CLPP was an important mechanism for meeting with community representatives, but that this was undermined by the fact that their election was of a 'second grade' and in the mayor's interests (C020; C023). Because of this, councillors maintained that community members were assuming roles and competencies, and making decisions, that they should not be doing (C020; C023; C025). In addition, councillors also alleged that the community CLPP members did not respect councillors or the CM (C020; C023; C025). Two quotations summarise Chacao councillors' positions clearly (see pg136 for community member view). Councillor Martínez described:

*The CLPP...is a very important municipal mechanism. Because as its members we have the scope to make decisions? Right? It's where we meet, exchange opinions, revise some aspects [of projects or plans], [and] listen to the community. [But] basically the election [of community members]...wasn't undertaken with all possible legality and transparency.*<sup>27</sup> (C023)

Similarly, Councillor Gómez, linking the dilemmas of legitimacy and election, argued:

*First of all they [community members] haven't respected the CM. At times*

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<sup>26</sup> Las decisiones del Consejo Local de Planificación Pública se tomarán por mayoría calificada de sus integrantes. Corresponde al Presidente o Presidenta ejercer su función de garantizar obligatorio cumplimiento de las decisiones aprobadas

<sup>27</sup> el CLPP...es una instancia muy importante para el municipio. Porque es el ámbito en donde quienes tomamos decisiones ¿verdad? nos encontramos. Para intercambiar opiniones, para...revisar en unos aspectos, para escuchar a la comunidad, básicamente...[la] escogencia no tuvo toda la transparencia y toda la legalidad posible.

*they have made decisions; that is not their responsibility, but a responsibility of the CM. And [we question this more] because we have serious doubts about the legitimacy of their election to the CLPP. The 'second grade' election is important with the municipality but they divided [the electoral areas in] the municipality in a way they shouldn't have. We have serious doubts...and, at times, they approve...crazy things that we do not agree with<sup>28</sup>. (C020)*

Contextualising these quotations, Chacao councillors considered CLPP community members approved things, for example the municipal urban development plan (PDUL), which was beyond their remit. The municipal government in conjunction with external consultants had prepared the PDUL over a four-year period. With just 24 hours notice, an extraordinary CLPP plenary was convened where the PDUL was presented and 'approved' by the CLPP plenary, which on this only occasion included the mayor. The plenary stated publically that they hoped the CM, which had the final decision, would assess and approve the PDUL within the 60 days stipulated in legislation. Councillors claimed that making a 'decision' within the plenary about the PDUL was beyond the CLPP's responsibility, and making a public display of the fact was disrespectful towards the CM (C020; C023; C025). However, community members and the CLPP Secretary in Chacao argued that the CLPP was a horizontal structure, which meant that all members were equal in their decision-making capacities (C001; C005; C012; C021). Community members asserted that councillors had just as much opportunity (and requirement in their eyes) to form part of a project's deliberative process. But councillors overturning a project approval at a later stage, without having taken part in the deliberation offered by the CLPP plenary, was deemed unacceptable. Over time this manifested in grievances between community members and councillors

Unlike Chacao, Libertador's councillors did not state that the community members were deciding matters beyond their remit. They felt, nevertheless, that those members needed to be replaced via elections. Libertador's PB culminated in a list of projects for each parish, which in turn was included in the annual municipal budget

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<sup>28</sup> Primero no han respetado el CM, a veces toman decisiones que no les corresponde, que son cosas que corresponde al CM, y porque, ehm, nosotros tenemos dudas serias sobre la legitimidad de eleccion de ese CLPP. En la alcaldía es fundamental la eleccion de segundo grado, este, dividieron como no deberían dividir el municipio y tenemos serias dudas de... y a veces aprueban cosas... locas. Con lo cual nosotros no estamos, este, de acuerdo. (C020)

and investment plan. Councillors stated that their role in approving the municipal budget and investment plan was the key and most substantive action that they can undertake (L025; L026; L027). Thus, CLPP plenary decisions involving approving the funds specified in the municipal budget to specific projects were ready to be transferred to the relevant project team. Effectively, the CLPP plenary checked that projects' criteria were met (L001; L002; L022; L026).

Despite councillors' concerns over the lack of compliance with the 2010 CLPP law in both municipalities, the *final* decision of approving substantive matters – municipal plans, budgets, bylaws – was made by councillors in the CM not the CLPP. It is clear that councillors, from both municipalities, attributed greater meaning to the decision making in the CM than in the CLPP, which they understood as a means of inclusion. This is again likely to be a view that is grounded in the remit bestowed (institutional tradition) to councillors through legislation. As such, the role of councillor as political representative shows that this remains fully institutionalised, despite the intention of Chavismo to promote other forms of non-traditional representation.

## 7.5 CLPP PARTICIPANTS' BELIEFS

Both community members and councillors argued that the CLPP was an important space for deliberation; yet practice indicated otherwise. Councillors in both Chacao and Libertador failed to regularly attend their respective CLPP plenary meetings. This was underpinned by how the two sets of councillors responded to the changing legislation, and how they saw, or understood their own role as well as that of community members.

Councillors asserted that their legislative and scrutiny mandates were their key functions (C025; C026; L025; L026; L027). Councillors' staff members also reflected this view<sup>29</sup> (L023; L024). Councillor García stated:

*What is the role of a councillor in Venezuela? The role of councillor is [to be] the first representative for communities following a popular, direct election. [To be] a direct spokesperson. The role is to legislate on behalf of the*

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<sup>29</sup> Although this point may seem to state the obvious, it was quite interesting that whilst speaking with public servants they did not consider the CLPP as one of the key roles of a councillor.



*municipality. Other roles include approving budget for the mayor [and administration] so that he/she can transfer this to the community. We [councillors] also undertake scrutiny of that [municipal] funding. That is all of our remit.<sup>30</sup> (L026).*

This quotation provides a good example of how councillors really saw themselves and their role: legislating, approving municipal budgets and scrutiny. Noticeably, the quotation and remit described made no direct reference to the councillors' role in the CLPP. Councillors implied that because they approved funding for the yearly budgets in the CM – including CLPP projects from the PB - they had implicitly contributed to the CLPP (L025; L026; L027).

However, councillors' limited involvement in the CLPP created dilemmas for community members. Compared with councillors, community members were not torn between different roles in the CM and CLPP. For community members the CLPP was their single focus<sup>31</sup> and one in which they sought to advance their community preferences as much as possible. In practice this meant that community members were the only ones to regularly attend CLPP plenary meetings.

Elizabeth, a Chacao community member, argued that the concept of the CLPP as a shared space between councillors and community members was 'excellent' but that in practice councillors' absence, and their scepticism of projects which were approved by the ST and community members, undermined this understanding (C012). Another Chacao community member defended their election and the work they did within the CLPP as 'legitimate'. Nicolás was adamant that the community members were valid CLPP representatives:

*There's a reality [that] the community members come from communities and we represent those communities directly, but we're not politicians. Councillors are eminently politicians. And political factors, at times, are not in*

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<sup>30</sup> ¿Cuál es la gestión de un concejal en Venezuela? La gestión de un concejal es el primer representante de las comunidades por ley a través del voto popular, directo. Un vocero directo. La gestión viene de legislar en materia del municipio. Luego viene de aprobar los recursos al ciudadano alcalde para que sea un alcalde de respuesta hacía comunidades. Luego somos contralores de esos recursos que damos al alcalde. Hasta allí nuestra gestión.

<sup>31</sup> Several of Chacao's CLPP community members had affiliations to their neighbourhood's CC. However, as will be described in chapter 8, CC meetings and activity were not frequent. Furthermore, it was not guaranteed that the community member would be the same person coordinating CC matters with the municipal government and/or CLPP.

*harmony with the wishes of the community. And they [councillors] don't attend. Where are they? We [community members] never fail to turn up and achieve quorum on our part. If they come or don't come is their problem, because we don't need them [at the plenary] because they have to approve funding later on. They don't approve projects. The projects are approved in the CLPP and they have to approve and assign the [corresponding] funding. But this has been an issue. This was our fight with them. They wanted changes and for funding to be spent on other things, and so they cut the funding [for projects]. But they should be saying "here's the money for this".<sup>32</sup> (C022).*

This quotation raises a number of controversial points. The first is that Nicolás was defiant that community members are 'closer' to the community than councillors and are therefore *more* representative of the community. What is noticeable here is that there is a clear distinction between 'us' [community members] and 'them' [councillors], which may be part of the explanation why the community member conflated levels of representativeness.

From the interpretive institutionalist framework (chapter 4), councillors' beliefs can be understood to come from two sets of traditions: their own idea of what a councillor's role entails, and any forms of learning about the 'ways things are done around here' which may be taught by public servants. Rhodes (2011b) described this as a form of 'socialisation' into a given parliamentary or ministerial role (see section 7.2). The issues that councillors encountered in practice meant that the formal rules set out in law combined with the councillors' individual understandings generated dilemmas. Not only can the role of the councillor be considered a tradition, but also councillors' particular experiences will mean that dilemmas contingent to their own background and beliefs will be encountered. These in turn manifest as councillors' actions (or reactions) to the tradition as a role in conjunction with their other personal traditions and beliefs. Put simply, councillors had to

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<sup>32</sup> Porque hay una realidad, los consejeros que venimos de las comunidades representamos a las comunidades directas y no somos políticos, los concejales son eminentemente políticos y los factores políticos a veces no están muy cónsonos con los sentimientos de las comunidades como los quieren...Pero ellos no asisten... ¿dónde están? ...nunca falta quórum por nosotros,...si ellos vienen o no vienen ese es su problema, no nos hace falta, ellos tienen que después aprobar los recursos, ellos no aprueban los proyectos, los proyectos los aprueba el CLPP pero ellos tienen que asignar los recursos y esa ha sido la pelea, porque ellos los recursos los tienen para otros fines políticos, como pasó este año pues, que ellos cambiaron los recursos a otras cosas y le recortaron a la inversión municipal hacia los vecinos, entonces nuestro peleíto [sic] con ellos es que no bajan los recursos, ellos son los que tienen que decir aquí están los Bolívares para eso.

interpret these two sets of traditions and act accordingly. Data showed councillors' gave more emphasis toward the CM than the CLPP, which granted them more power. As noted in section 7.2, community members did not have a tradition (of their role) to which they adhered to or were socialised with. Instead, in addition to the CLPP laws, the community members acted according to their own, and shared with other community members, beliefs about how to develop their new role introduced by law.

Community members in both Chacao and Libertador held the belief that, within the CLPP, community members have the same political and decision making rights as the mayor and councillors. The legislation, however, does not give community members decision making rights; it simply provides community members with an opportunity to deliberate within a forum and recommend projects that contribute to municipal planning; it is these deliberation rights within the CLPP that are non-hierarchical. A way of differentiating what the two sets of members can do is to consider a two-stage process: matters can be approved in the CLPP plenary; however, councillors undertake the final decision and budget allocation in the CM.

Assuming that the deliberative space in the CLPP plenary operated adequately, councillors would still have greater decision making capacities, and power, than community members. In this sense Chavismo's push for 'popular power' is limited within the CLPP framework. Interviews with councillors showed that they were perfectly aware of this difference, and had no interest or intention of changing it (C025; L025; L026; L027).

## **7.6 CONCLUSIONS**

The chapter provided an account of CLPPs in Chacao and Libertador through the lens of an interpretive institutionalist framework, using the concepts 'dilemmas', 'traditions' and 'beliefs' introduced in chapter 4 (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; 2010; Hay 2011). CLPPs were the first type of mechanism created by Chavismo that tried to bring traditional elected representatives together with members from community organisations into a municipal council as an expression of citizen participation. Chavismo saw the CLPP as a move towards breaking away from an entrenched political system dominated by elites which existed for 40 years prior to 1998. Section 7.2 set out that the CLPP is a new mechanism of participation to be

understood within the context of different traditions. The first of these was the tradition which regard the historical legacy and continuity of a representative democratic government. It includes the figures of councillors, mayors and their associated administrations. A second tradition was identified: Chavismo brought a new participatory toolkit and ideological baggage which encouraged a move towards increased citizen participation and “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism” in Venezuela’s political landscape. The mechanisms that Chavismo introduced may be accepted or rejected by individuals depending on their own political beliefs.

Section 7.3 provided an account of the CLPPs in Chacao and Libertador and their respective members during fieldwork. It highlighted that Chacao had adhered more to the requirements of the 2010 reform, whereas Libertador’s CLPP failed to address most legal requirements. Consequently, it can be concluded that the practices in Libertador were more akin to the informal ‘rules in use’ perspective mentioned in the institutional components of the thesis theoretical framework (table 4.1).

Section 7.4 described three sets of dilemmas faced by participants in the CLPP. Although these have been separated, it should be acknowledged that the dilemmas were inter-related. In summary, the dilemmas were:

- **Changes to the CLPP composition, as a result of the 2010 reforms.** Chacao complied with the law by establishing a JPC, despite that the JPC was a component of the “communal state”, which community members opposed (another dilemma originating from the political beliefs they held). Libertador failed to incorporate JPCs in its structure, although its mayor favoured the idea of the communal state.
- **Election (type, procedure and administration):** Community member elections in Chacao were contested by councillors as being too narrow, and unrealistically favourable towards the mayor’s political party. Libertador’s councillors lamented the lack of elections (for councillors and community members). Community members highlighted councillors’ serving almost two terms in office as a poor element of ‘representation’. This was clearly a failure of national government and the CNE in addressing the problem. Further dilemmas were created, particularly for community members, where councillors failed to turn up because elections either had not happened (Libertador) or were contested (Chacao).

- **Roles, remit and legitimacy between political and community representatives:** This dilemma has clear links with the previous dilemmas. Data showed that councillors see their role as defined by legislation, with minimal input in the CLPP. In particular, Chacao's community members questioned the councillors' ability to overturn the plenary's decisions about projects. They lamented that a space for shared deliberation existed, but it did not achieve its full potential because councillors often failed to turn up (as a result of the second dilemma).

Section 7.5 provided an account of the beliefs of CLPP participants which was derived by reflecting on the context, traditions and dilemmas described in previous sections. It reiterated that councillors perceived and held more decision making power than community members. Empirical results in Chacao and Libertador showed that this shared space was subject to dilemmas due to these uneven power balances in decision making, and these arose due to inadequately defined and enforced electoral and procedural matters.

## CHAPTER 8      CONSEJOS COMUNALES

### 8.1      INTRODUCTION

As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, *consejos comunales* (CCs) first emerged in with the 2006 law which was superseded with the organic law (LOCC) in 2009. The organic law was understood to be a demonstration of the importance that CCs played in Chavismo's move towards creating "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism", which would be underpinned by the creation of the "communal state". CCs were the base unit in the communal state structure (see figure 2.2) closest to the community given that they were sub-neighbourhood level organisations. Furthermore, because CCs were sub-municipal level organisations with links to national government via registration and funding processes, they were either understood by advocates to be expressions of 'popular power' or by critics as tools of Chavismo subject to clientelism (Brewer Carías 2010; García Guadilla 2008b; Goldfrank 2011b). CCs were considered to be more direct expressions of citizen participation because of the lack of formal political representation in their structure (such as mayors or councillors). As the findings in chapter 7 showed, CLPPs generated conflicts of interest between community members and elected representatives.

Like chapter 7, this chapter applies the concepts of traditions, beliefs and dilemmas (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; 2010) to elicit how CC participants - from 14 CCs in Chacao and 11 in La Silsa, Libertador - understood and acted within their respective CCs. Section 8.2 presents the origins of CCs in Chacao and Libertador. It aims to describe, from CC participants' perspectives, the reasons why and how CCs emerged in their respective neighbourhoods. It also provides an account of how CCs formally established, if at all. Furthermore, given the political context in which CCs emerged, participants' understandings of CCs are presented in the context of whether they embrace, accept or reject the ideology of Chavismo. This can be understood to be citizens accepting or rejecting certain ideas or ways of interpreting CCs, which depend on the traditions and beliefs they draw upon.

Where section 8.2 establishes the ideational dilemmas rooted in participants' beliefs and traditions, section 8.3 explores in detail 'how things work around here', i.e. how did participants understand and describe the way in which their respective CCs

operated? The section also includes a discussion of why participants take part, CCs' projects and funding arrangements, and the relationship that CCs have with public authorities. Thus the chapter discusses how participants see and understand state-civil society relations, and CC participants' beliefs and understandings regarding citizen participation in community planning practices and processes. The chapter closes with conclusions in section 8.4.

## **8.2 BELIEFS AND THE ORIGINS OF CONSEJOS COMUNALES**

The origins of CCs differ according to when, where and who decides to form a CC. The basic structure is stipulated by the LOCC (see chapter 2). During fieldwork, there were over 40,000 CCs in the country. In Chacao there were 22 CCs<sup>33</sup> and in Libertador, approximately, 1200 (C001; Libertador webpage). In La Silsa, there were 14 CCs during fieldwork (with an additional 6 in the process of being set up for the first time).

Participants in Chacao regarded the local municipality to have a strong civil society; many Chacao CCs were borne from existing neighbourhood associations [ADVs] (C009; C007; C013; C018). Although some ADVs had been around for over 40 years, national government's push to establish CCs throughout the country, with associated legal backing and funding, meant that local residents in Chacao felt the need to establish CCs in addition to ADVs. Interviewees argued that the motivation for this was underpinned by the need to establish a CC which would reflect neighbours' interests and avoid being established by Chavistas in the area (C007; C010; C012; C019). At the time of fieldwork recent invasions of abandoned buildings and subsequent squatting was occurring in Chacao (and many other parts of the country). National government was not critical of squatting, nor did it create any form of response. Locals, however, saw the potential for squatters setting up their own CCs in their local neighbourhood if they did not. Ana María summarised this perspective as follows:

*The neighbours in this municipality decided, even though they are not agreeing with whatever is happening politically, it is a must to make organised [sic] the consejos comunales to keep..umm.. I don't know if the*

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<sup>33</sup> This number comes from the list of CCs provided by the CLPP. As discussed later in the chapter, it is not a true reflection of registered/active CCs.

*word would be control. But to keep their territoriality. So that's how it got started. Most of the consejos comunales, not all, in Chacao were born out of the neighbourhood associations. That's why we here are very linked.*<sup>34</sup>  
(C009)

Caterina noted that participating in her CC was important, despite being politically sensitive:

*We have to take part in everything there is to participate in because we want the community to benefit. Most of the consejos comunales in Chacao don't work, because they are only focused on the politics [of Chavismo]...the CCs in Chacao are too polarized*<sup>35</sup>. (C016)

Many participants interviewed in Chacao continued to be active in other civil society organizations in addition to participating in their respective CCs (C004; C007; C010; C011; C013; C018; C012). Participants noted that they saw their CCs as a means of channelling community interests, promoting cultural and recreation activities, and looking for solutions to local issues when they arose; but their CCs often did this in conjunction with other civil society organisations (C004; C009; C011; C012). Elizabeth noted that she conceived starting her CC as a means of overcoming the exclusive and entrenched membership in her local ADV. Hence newcomers could not join or participate (C012). Chacao participants indicated that CCs existed alongside the considerable presence of other community organisations and active civil society that were not promoted by government.

Chacao participants' responses point to an initial interpretation: CCs were established, not because they believed in the move towards, or creation of, Chavismo's communal state and/or 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism. This was a political tradition and ideology that all but one interviewee denounced. Instead they saw CCs as an additional form of community advocacy with government. Participants in Chacao understood CCs to be a form of local community organisations like ADVs. They were a means of channelling community matters with municipal government.

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<sup>34</sup>Quotation derived from a section of an interview where with the interviewee talked in English for approximately 10 minutes before changing to Spanish.

<sup>35</sup> Tenemos que participar en todo lo que tenemos que participar porque nos preocupamos con lo que beneficia la comunidad. Y la mayoría de los consejos comunales de Chacao no funcionan [por]que [se] enfocan solamente en la política...consejos comunales de Chacao están demasiado polarizados.



Participants described the establishment of CCs in Chacao as a protective exercise to prevent Chavistas (whose ideology and vision they disagreed with) taking control of CCs in their local area. The creation of CCs point out one of the dilemmas that residents encountered: should local communities formalize the establishment of a mechanism which has close links to Chavismo and its ideology that the large majority of local residents did not believe in? As noted above, participants argued that they had to.

CCs in La Silsa emerged in two stages: those which formed shortly after the first CC law in 2006 and those formed in the post 2010 period resulting from the popular power laws and the national government's push towards creating *comunas*. Six interviewees in La Silsa described that their CCs began in 2006 (L006; L009; L010; L011; L013, L016). Four CC participants noted that their CCs started in 2007 (L019), 2009 (L015; L019), and 2010 (L012), respectively. One participant exaggerated stating that the CC started '10 years ago' around 2003/2004 (L006) – which would be impossible.

Interviewees identified that, because they had been involved in other organisations or community level organisations promoted by Chavismo, they were encouraged to get involved in CCs (L006; L009; 2010; L012; L013; L014; L015). Many of these organisations were precursors to CCs, such as Urban Land Committees (CTUs) and *Barrio Adentro* (see section 2.3). Their participation in these precursor organisations provided residents with knowledge about community matters and the *barrio's* deficits. When *Barrio Adentro* or CTU committees were incorporated into CC structures in 2006, participants realized that it was a logical step to establish and take part in CCs (L006; L009; L010; L013; L015). CCs which started after 2010 were created with the intention of establishing a *comuna* in La Silsa (L012; L014, L016).

The principal reason participants in La Silsa became involved was to try and tackle the many problems that the *barrio* faced and to find solutions or mitigation measures (L006; L007; L008; L009; L014; L015; L019). Cristina described that she enjoyed working on behalf of the community and working towards solutions for the *barrio*:

*The barrios, like this one, of Caracas are humble, and it's where you will find the areas [with] most problems [and need of help] in Venezuela. These problems include [lack of suitable] housing, hunger, stairs [to get up and*

*down the steep hill], pipes, recreational facilities...everything really. Everything<sup>36</sup>. (L008).*

Participants believed that the Sala Técnica (ST) had been instrumental in guiding, educating, organising CCs, helping them become registered with Fundacomunal, either for the first time or by holding elections for (re)electing spokespeople (L009; L010; L011; L012; L014). The ST in La Silsa was set up specifically by Fundacaracas (Libertador municipal government agency for housing and habitat). This ST had no relation to the one that should have been established for the CLPP (see chapter 7)<sup>37</sup>. The ST was established in 2012 and sought to group CC spokespeople who provided access to the *barrio* and coordination among residents alongside architects and engineers who would help design Fundacaracas projects, and advise on the design of projects chosen by CCs. ST staff were paid via Fundacaracas.

Andrea described the ST's positive involvement as follows:

*Interviewee: For us, the Sala Técnica is something completely new. It's an innovation. It's helped us a lot... Am I explaining myself?*

*Interviewer: Did your CC get any help before the ST was established?*

*Interviewee: No, no there wasn't any. It's for this reason that CCs had so many disasters before. Because they didn't have any technical knowledge [to get projects approved and implemented].<sup>38</sup> (L012).*

Similarly, Daniel noted that when CCs emerged people did not really know what they were for. He conveyed how the laws implied different stages of CCs' development within the process advocated by Chavismo:

*Look, CCs started around 2006...participation at this time was really low. Right? It was just the start for CCs...When President Chávez started to*

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<sup>36</sup> En los barrios que son humildes aquí de Caracas, donde verdaderamente encontramos las necesidades venezolanas. Cuando te hablo de necesidades...es de casas, hambre, escaleras, tuberías, o sea recreación...todo, pues. Todo.

<sup>37</sup> Hereon where there is potential for ambiguity of the term "ST" reference will be made as "La Silsa ST" or "CLPP ST", as required.

<sup>38</sup> Interviewee: La Sala Técnica para nosotros es algo totalmente nuevo. Es una innovación que se hizo. Se ha favorecido mucho... ¿me explico?

Interviewer: ¿Había apoyo para el consejo comunal antes de la Sala Técnica?

Interviewee: No, no había. No había. De hecho es por eso que viene el fracaso de los consejos comunales anteriores [sic]. Porque no tenían ningún tipo de conocimiento de nivel técnico.

*promote and encourage CCs, communities, the people, started to get involved and participate little by little...now we are in a third stage of the CCs [referring to the CC's third cycle of electing spokespeople for two year terms]. We've got new people and a revolutionary vision.<sup>39</sup> (L011)*

The above quotation shows Daniel summarising how participants in La Silsa understood the role of CCs: as a means of working for the community whilst contributing towards the vision of '21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism' advocated by Chavismo. Through observation and interview responses, Chavismo's ideology and vision was something La Silsa's CC participants bought in to, supported and actively sought to maintain (L006; L008; L011). In other words, participants can be said to have believed in the creation of these community level organisations, which prior to Chavismo, had not existed. Those in La Silsa understood CCs as a means of engaging with forms of participation offered by the process of Chavismo. Over the years, participants in La Silsa have been involved in other mechanisms promoted by government and have showed willingness to continue to do so, such as showing interest/enthusiasm in establishing the *comuna* and 21 Century Socialism.

### **8.2.1 Registration of consejos comunales**

The LOCC outlines the process by which CCs need to register with the national government. At the time of fieldwork the agency for registering CCs was Fundacomunal, part of the Ministry of Popular Power for Communes (MPComunas).

CCs are required to create a 'promoter' team, which in turn elects a provisional electoral committee at an assembly with at least 10% of the inhabitants within the CCs' geographical remit (see chapter 2). The provisional electoral committee then organises elections within a 'constituent community assembly', which elects spokespeople for each of the units within the CC; if the CC is new this includes a permanent electoral committee. To register, CCs need to provide 'constitutive minutes' that comprise the following details: the name and geographical remit of the CC; date, place and time of the constitutive assembly; confirm how the assembly was convened and the quorum present; the identity, numbers and signatures of

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<sup>39</sup> Mira, el consejo comunal comienza en el 2006, 2006...Este, comenzó con una participación realmente...poca ¿no? En el inicio los consejos comunales ...Ehh, realmente cuando el presidente Chávez, este, empezó a promoverlos, los consejos comunales, la participación en las comunidades y el pueblo, este, empezaron a asomarse, poco a poco... [ahora] tenemos un tercer período del CC. Gente nueva, gente que viene con una visión revolucionaria.

everyone at the assembly; and the results of the elections identifying who was elected as spokespeople to each unit.

The LOCC also provides two reasons where the ministry can abstain from registering the CC: 1. The CC has different objectives than those set out in the law, and 2. The CC was not constituted exactly in the geographical boundary or where another CC exists within the same area (or part of).

Unlike Chacao, participants in La Silsa stated that they encountered no difficulties with registering with Fundacomunal. Although, they described that the process was particularly arduous and bureaucratic (L008; L009; L010; L015). Participants highlighted that prior to the ST, they found the process more difficult. The ST helped CCs in La Silsa undertake censuses<sup>40</sup>, prepare electoral materials, and the electoral register (L008; L009; L010; L011; L012; L013).

Participants in La Silsa understood that by registering with Fundacomunal enabled CCs to secure funding from government [national, state and/or municipal] (L006; L009). During fieldwork the main motivation to get La Silsa's CCs registered (or new spokespeople elected) was for the *comuna* to become formally established. As described in chapter 2, *comunas* require every CC that forms part of it to be fully registered (L006; L009; L010; L011; L013; L014; L015; L017). During fieldwork CC participants, who also worked as part of the ST, admitted that coordinating the registration of 16 different CCs was difficult (L009; L010).

Interviewees in Chacao described that CCs in the municipality had experienced difficulties with Fundacomunal. These can be differentiated into two stages, attributed to the pre and post LOCC eras. In the first era (2006-2010), CC participants noted that they were able to fulfil the requisites and secure registration without any problems (C004; C007; C010; C016). But because of scepticism about what CCs meant in the political context, many residents didn't want to create CCs (C004; C007). As mentioned above, this can be understood by participants' beliefs and traditions disagreeing or rejecting Chavismo's socialism. Consequently,

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<sup>40</sup> *Barrios* can be notoriously difficult for authorities to enter. Local residents can provide information more easily. Providing a census is therefore a way of providing government with detailed statistical information. In turn, this means government programmes can be more specifically targeted to those with greater needs. Critics, however argue that the census is an infringement on private matters (it asks for details of household income, condition and materials used for household construction; types of furnishings etc).

whether to establish CCs in Chacao was the first dilemma for local residents. A second dilemma was how far to progress into the registration process.

Following the enactment of the LOCC, existing CCs were required to reapply for registration. This required submitting additional information and updated censuses. It was also the period that interviewees identified as most problematic for Chacao CCs. There was no clear difference in how CCs were able to become registered with Fundacomunal whether by forming CCs for first time in the post LOCC period or by updating information and complying with the new law. A number of CC participants alleged that despite having complied with the LOCC's prerequisites, Fundacomunal failed to issue/re-issue the registration (C006; C007; C010; C011; C013; C016). Some participants observed that their CCs were not registered despite submitting information to Fundacomunal 18 months beforehand. Participants considered this unacceptable given that each period of registration lasted two years (C004; C010; C012; C013; C017). In some cases, the registration was finally given but with only 6 months left before it expired. Frustrated CC members questioned the lengthy process and the pointless 6 months granted, which meant CCs had 'lost' 1.5 years worth of CC validation (C012). CC participants also described how they had to visit Fundacomunal regularly, once a week, sometimes twice weekly, to try and get answers and/or spur things along (C004; C010; C012; C013).

A number of different views emerged when I asked participants why CCs had difficulties registering with Fundacomunal. The first of these views was that Fundacomunal was disorganised and that papers were consistently lost requiring CCs to resubmit documents (C004; C007; C009; C010; C012). The second of these views considered Fundacomunal to be a politicised state organisation that discriminated in favour of those supporting national government (C004; C007; C010; C012; C013; C021). The third was that civil servants in Fundacomunal were not well trained and experienced a high turnover of staff as well as constant office transferrals. Regularly, CCs often had to try and raise their concerns with new employees that knew nothing about their case (C004; C009, C010). The fourth was that Fundacomunal representatives failed to witness CCs' elections, which was a requirement for registration (C012).

An interview with Antonio, a Fundacomunal officer familiar with Chacao CCs' concerns, stated that to his knowledge no official complaint had been filed:

*I don't know of any specific case [relating to CCs in Chacao], but I'm going to show you exactly what the official response letters state we send out [to CCs]. In all our letters, the part at the bottom states that we [Fundacomunal] have to give a response within 15 days. Ok? And we are obliged legally to do so. So [the case you mentioned] might be an isolated incident...or there is some sort of anomaly. Because we are obliged to ensure that we declare and certify what the situation is... Maybe what has happened is a case of, ehm, something that we are not aware of. Obviously if we find out about it we'll go straight away to sort it out<sup>41</sup>. (NG001)*

Antonio also argued that he recognised that biased positions were often taken due to political differences:

*Sometimes what happens is that we justify or vilify things because of our political beliefs... But that sectarianism unfortunately exists. You see? It [sectarianism] arises ... because of extremists<sup>42</sup>. (NG001)*

I interpreted that the officer was highlighting that perhaps the many difficulties faced by Chacao's CCs were not entirely due to the bureaucratic process (which he did not negate) but might be indicative of their general reluctance to establish CCs completely as a result of their political beliefs. This interpretation can perhaps be validated given that not all CCs in Chacao encountered difficulties in conforming to the LOCC or renewing their registration certificate. This was the case of two CCs interviewed: a CC formed of purely 'opposition' members and another with a 'mixed chavista/opposition' composition (C018; C016). Interviewees from both CCs recognised that the process was not easy and the major challenge was getting local residents to participate. Despite participation problems, one of these two CCs had its RIF [*Registro de Identificación Fiscal*, tax code] (C018). The RIF enabled the CC to apply for and obtain state funding. A participant from another CC (that did have

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<sup>41</sup> Tampoco conozco de ningún caso así específico, pero ya ahorita te voy a mostrar precisamente los oficios que nosotros manejamos directamente, todos nuestros oficios dicen en la parte de abajo que tenemos nada más 15 días para dar respuesta, ok? Y nosotros jurídicamente tenemos 15 días según las leyes... puede que exista un caso aislado o puede que haya sucedido lo que lo que te estoy diciendo,... [si existe] algún tipo de anomalía...obligatoriamente nosotros tenemos que mantener ese certificado hasta que aclaremos cual es la situación...puede que haya sucedido ese caso o puede ser este, eh, algún caso aislado del que no estemos enterados, que obviamente que si nos enteramos vamos al campo, pues.

<sup>42</sup> ...a veces lo que sucede es que a veces justificamos o satanizamos en base a una tendencia política... Ehh pero lamentablemente el sectarismo [existe] ¿ves? Viene... por aquellas personas extremistas.

problems) argued that many CCs in Chacao did not want to get to the RIF stage because they feared that receiving funds, especially from national government, would be used against them in the future<sup>43</sup> (C010).

## 8.2.2 Dilemma 1: Supporting or rejecting the ideology of Chavismo

The Chacao CC participants were, apart from one PSUV supporter, opposition supporters and vocal critics of Chavismo (C006; C007; C009; C010; C012; C015; C016). A group interview (three women) of one Chacao CC described the sentiment and general conflict of views that were shared among many CC participants. Although they considered CCs to be part of the national government's political project and processes, they asserted that CCs should be politically neutral:

*Interviewee 1: let me tell you, let's be clear, our CC isn't even of the opposition because it's not political, ok? We are not pro-national government but our members are mainly independent, we don't belong to a political party. We are not political activists. Logically we all have a heart, almost all of us, well, we all have our little hearts with the opposition.*

*Interviewee 2: Mine is this big! [demonstrates a large size with hands spread wide]*

*Interviewee 1: Ok ok. But you can't say [that the CC] is of the opposition... the majority of people are not political activists for any political party.*

*Interviewee 2: I signed [the revocation petition] against Chávez. I've signed everything there has been to sign [against Chavismo]...*

*Interviewee 1: What is the fundamental thing? The fundamental thing is that the majority of people [in Chacao] that belong to CCs are completely against [not friendly] national government. This gives them a particular political characteristic...they [Chavismo] know it.*

*Interviewee 3: We needed to occupy [political] space. You can't have a community where at most 10%, which is high, agrees with national government policy and that 10% dominates and imposes the other 90% with its policies. It's not fair. You have to occupy [political] space in order to defend yourself.<sup>44</sup> (C010)*

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<sup>43</sup> Luís Tascón (former minister of interior) released a list of all those who had signed in favour of revoking Chávez from office in 2004. It has been purportedly used since then as a means of identifying opposition members, and removing people from public and state authorities (Carroll, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Interviewee 1: te digo, vamos a estar claros, nuestro consejo comunal ni siquiera es de oposición porque no es político ¿ok? No somos oficialistas pero está compuesto de gente principalmente

Several Chacao interviewees described their concern of the LOCC requiring CCs to 'construct a new socialist society' (article 2) and how national government was not interested in helping CCs which did not follow that world view (C004; C010; L012; C014). CCs in Chacao, according to interviewees, were subject to ideological determination and for this reason those based in Chacao were told by national government that they were not 'socialist'. Participants emphasised that CCs in Chacao were not created to form part of the national government's ideologised political project, rather CCs were understood to be a mechanism to resolve local problems (C004; C014; C011, C017; C018).

During a group interview with five women in a CC, one of them, a pro-government supporter, started a monologue about the *Plan de la Patria* [national government plan 2013-2017], and 'what our *comandante* told us...'. The rest of her CC members laughed, as they weren't Chavistas. The group's reaction wasn't discriminatory, but I observed this as a collective understanding that meant: we can tolerate political views to a certain extent, but we'll tell you when enough is enough. Furthermore, it was obvious that the group of women were friends. There was a strong sense of camaraderie among them (C016).

While the majority of participants in Chacao indicated they were not in favour of Chavismo and its ideology, the opposite can be said for those interviewed in La Silsa. The way in which participants in La Silsa responded to the issue of politics and party politics within their respective understandings of the role of CCs reflected the polarized nature of Venezuelan national politics and how they saw their position within this context. Participants' traditions and beliefs in Chacao can be interpreted as focused towards maintaining their strong civil society-municipal government

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independiente, no perteneciente a partido político. □ No militantes políticos, lógicamente todos tenemos el corazón, casi todos, bueno, todos tenemos el corazoncito de oposición.

Interviewee 2: El mío es así de grande. [demonstrates with hands]

Interviewee 1: ok ok. Pero no puedes decir es de oposición...la gran mayoría de los integrantes no militan en ningún partido político

Interviewee 2: yo he firmado en contra de Chávez, he firmado todo lo que ha habido.

...

Interviewee 1: ¿Cuál es la señal fundamental? La señal fundamental es que la mayoría de la gente conforma esos consejos comunales pues simple y llanamente no amiga del gobierno, eso le da una característica política, o sea, ellos la saben....

Interviewee 3: Necesitamos ocupar espacio. Si tu quieres una comunidad donde tienes como mucho un 10% pa decirte mucho, que está de acuerdo con las políticas del gobierno, tu no puedes permitir que la mayoría de ese 10% sean los que te domine el 90% que no está de acuerdo y que imponga una serie de cosas a toda una comunidad, eso no es justo, tu tienes que ocupar espacio aunque sea para defenderte.



relationship; they did not see Chavismo and its political project as something from which they would benefit. In fact, they expressed concern that Chavismo was detrimental to both municipal relations but also the wider socio-political context within the country. Participants believed that the communal state was being constructed with the eventual aim of removing and replacing municipal governments. Conversely, the opposite can be said for residents and participants in La Silsa.

Participants in La Silsa noted that on the whole CCs worked to resolve community problems on behalf of local residents regardless of political affiliations, particularly because La Silsa had basic infrastructure needs, and securing projects via CCs to tackle these, would benefit the whole community (L006; L007; L008; L009; L012; L013; L015). Nonetheless, as will be seen below, more specific questions to interviewees regarding the 'opposition' generated views that showed elements of discrimination between Chavistas and non-Chavistas.

Several participants said that opposition supporters could take part in their CCs, but only on the condition that they did not come to 'sabotage' the process (L006; L011; L014; L016; L019). Where CCs had opposition supporters, interviewees stated that these members needed to either tone down their political ideas or 'come around' to the revolutionary way of thinking (L012; L011; L019). There were also interviewees who aimed to convey that Chavismo worked on behalf of the whole community, whereas other parties or political ideologies did not (L006; L016). This is perhaps rooted in Chavista propaganda: I observed that Chavismo constantly denounced the opposition on state radio, TV channels and newspapers as doing everything they could to derail the process. Thus the maintenance of electoral support within Chavismo's key areas, such as La Silsa, is essential. Within La Silsa participants expressed this as a need to prevent their own CCs being taken over or derailed by those with political leanings favouring opposition parties.

Andrea described this in a way which implied that other residents need to understand that funding comes from Chavismo, not some other apolitical source:

*In the end they [opposition supporters] have had to [understand that Chavismo has funded projects], for their own welfare, for their own benefit, because they are poor people. But as they are of the opposition they have had to give way to us [Chavistas]. We are the ones that want to help them,*

*independently of their political ideology. They have to put up with this because we have to talk about politics. Because everyone in the barrio needs to know where our funding comes from and who provides it. It doesn't just fall out the sky<sup>45</sup>. (L006)*

Unlike Andrea's (L006) radical position, other participants framed the shared history and commonalities of the neighbourhood rather than any political differences that might have existed among residents (L008; L009; L010; L012; L013). Carmen, stated that the CC did not discriminate on political beliefs and worked as long as it benefitted the community:

*...now we're working [in a way] that doesn't matter what colour or race you are. Nothing. We all work together, respecting one another and their ideology. Everyone's ideology at that moment. Let's see, they [opposition supporters] give [us] respect only because we are the ones [Chavistas] that provide solutions for our community<sup>46</sup>(L010).*

The majority of La Silsa's CC participants ultimately saw CCs as a mechanism for improving their neighbourhood. Chavismo had provided residents with this space and opportunity. In turn, this meant participants were willing to support Chavismo which they considered worked on their behalf. However, for certain interviewees CCs were a space for Chavistas and the process towards creating socialism. Furthermore, CCs were spaces that required protecting from opposition (L011; L016). Javier described this as follows:

*Interviewer: How do you incorporate people with different [political] tendencies in the CC?*

*Interviewee: We're radical. Why? The comandante [Chávez] said "look, we're going to turn a page, we're going to sit down with the opposition". And what did they do? An oil strike [2002-3]...which affected everyone... you*

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<sup>45</sup> Pero al final ellos han tenido que, por el bienestar de ellos mismos, por sus propios beneficios, porque son personas de bajos recursos. Pero son opositores. Y ellos han tenido que ceder. Ceder ante de nosotros [Chavistas] porque nosotros, este, queremos ayudarlos. E independiente de su ideología política. Y tiene que soportar porque nosotros tenemos que hablar de política. Porque todo el barrio tiene que saber, la comunidad en pleno tiene que saber de donde vienen los recursos, quienes los baja. Porque no caen del cielo.

<sup>46</sup> ...ahorita estamos trabajando así, no importa color ni creaciones, razas ni nada. O sea trabajamos todo en conjunto. Respetándonos esa ideología. O sea la ideología de cada quien en ese momento. O sea se respeta porque solamente trabajamos para darles una solución en nuestra comunidad.

*see? We have this experience... we're not going to debate with the opposition knowing that they are coming to sabotage and we know that they have no interest... They just want to create a plot to defeat the socialism that our comandante started. We are not going to debate in our space, our space that was won for revolution. A space won for socialism. A space won by our comandante Chávez. And we're not going to take one step backwards from the bourgeoisie that just wants power. What they want is the oil to keep meeting their own needs, just like they did in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic [pre 1998].*

*Interviewer: But does the opposition participate in the CC?*

*Interviewee: Yes, they participate. But...I'll repeat, [we don't tolerate] those that want to be involved to sabotage the CC and ensure that it doesn't make any advances, or so that the CC is in turmoil, or that they provoke situations where the CC is viewed negatively.<sup>47</sup> (L016)*

### **8.3 CONSEJOS COMUNALES AT WORK: ESTABLISHING 'RULES IN USE'**

#### **8.3.1 Taking part**

During fieldwork, only one of the newer CCs (established 2010) in Chacao had regular meetings every Tuesday. The CC comprised 15 principal members and had approximately 11 members that turned up regularly (C014). Other CCs in Chacao met infrequently (C012; C021). Participants described that their respective CCs only organised meetings or assemblies when there was a specific issue to discuss. Examples observed were: writing an open letter, which was later covered in local media; denouncing discrimination of Chacao CCs; campaigning against local developers; and meeting with municipal government officers and municipal police regarding anti-crime measures due to a spate of local murders and kidnappings.

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<sup>47</sup> Interviewer: ¿Cómo se trata de incorporar gente con visiones diferentes en el consejo comunal?□

Interviewee: Somos radicales. ¿Por qué? El comandante dijo "bueno, vamos a pasar la página, vamos a sentar con las oposiciones" [sic] ¿Y que hicieron ellos? [Oposición] Un paro petrolero [2002-3]...que afectó al pueblo...¿Ves? Y nosotros con esta experiencia...no vamos a debatir con la oposición sabiendo que ellos vienen a sabotear, sabiendo que ellos no les interesa al... que ellos lo pasan en complot para derrotar la parte del socialismo que impulsó nuestro comandante...no vamos a debatir en nuestros espacios, espacio ganado por la revolución. Un espacio ganado por socialismo. Un espacio ganado por el comandante Chávez. Y nosotros no vamos a...a... un paso atrás en contra de esta burguesía que quieren el poder. Lo que quieren es el petróleo para seguir satisfaciendo sus necesidades como hacían en la cuarta republica.

Interviewer: ¿Pero al nivel del consejo comunal hay participación de la oposición?

Interviewee: Sí, hay participación. Pero... repito, ellos quieren estar en los consejos comunales para el saboteo, para el saboteo para que el consejo comunal no avanza, para que el consejo comunal queda en pelea, para que la pelea provoque, eh, diferentes situaciones que el consejo comunal se vea negativo.

Some interviewees said that their CCs met infrequently because of registration problems, which led to member despondency, and general public safety concerns/insecurity (C006); or, in most cases, participation fatigue because CCs required lots of work, time and meetings with little immediate benefits (C009; C010; C012; C015; C016; C018). The time consuming nature of CCs was considered by some participants to affect their personal and family life (C009; C016; C018). Two interviewees highlighted that although their CCs did not meet very often some of its members worked within, or in conjunction with other local organisations such as the church and ADV (C007; C011). A further, compelling reason was people did not want to formalise their participation because of the Tascón list that was released in 2004<sup>48</sup> (C015).

The consequence of the above was that on average CCs in Chacao had a small core 4-8 people that did all of the day-to-day work and met regularly (C010; C014; C018). Participants highlighted that the lack of participation and motivation was not the same as lack of interest. Interviewees described that residents were very keen to keep up with current issues or gossip in an informal manner, whether via telephone, email or on the street (C006; C009; C010; C012; C015).

Members of a CC, in one of Chacao's working class neighbourhoods, described that despite having secured funding for a considerable housing rehabilitation project interest declined dramatically once residents found out which houses were to be included and those that were not. One participant, of the group of women in the CC mentioned above, described that there was a considerable element of self-interest and lack of will from people in their neighbourhood to work unpaid on behalf of the wider community:

*Why is there apathy? Local residents want you to resolve problems, that you work, and they are at home watching TV. Why? Because they are lazy! (laughs) Laziness! In reality it's a lack of commitment. If you're a person who commits to something, as a human not just a CC spokesperson, it's your level of personal commitment that makes you do it. If I commit to something, I do it because it's my reputation on the line. But there are people that don't see it like that. [They say] " If others are getting benefit and I'm getting*

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<sup>48</sup> See footnote 43, page 148.

*nothing, why am I going to work for free?" Because what we do is voluntary. If you tell people that it's voluntary, they don't take part. It's lack of commitment<sup>49</sup>. (C013)*

Notwithstanding the challenges to CC participation in Chacao, participants did highlight the support from a particular local resident, who had subsequently been employed by the municipal government to promote community engagement. His advice was significant in providing CCs with information about the registration process (C007; C012; C010; C017; C019).

In contrast to Chacao, CCs in La Silsa were considerably more active. Though a majority of participants were unclear of the differences between CC and *comuna* meetings. Participants mentioned that CC meetings generally took place in the evening, usually after 7pm, or at weekends, to allow those who work or study to participate (L007; L008; L009, L012; L013; L019).

Participants stated that assembly meetings attracted around 40-50 people on average. However, this number was mainly formed of CC spokespeople who were elected to lead the CC on behalf of the community. On occasions where specific projects were being discussed, funding was being received or accounts presented, a much wider audience of local residents attended these meetings (L006; L019). Participants also described that levels of participation increased with the delivery of projects (or the potential of 'seeing results') with support from La Silsa's ST (L006; L007; L009; L010; L011; L012; L015; L016; L017).

The LOCC requires CCs to create various sub-committees. In Chacao, due to very low numbers taking part on a frequent basis these sub-committees were not operating. Interviewees in La Silsa noted committees existed within their respective CCs. They also told me that members would not be confined to working in the committee they were assigned to; they would also help other committees when needed (L009; L012; L016; L019).

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<sup>49</sup> ¿Por qué la apatía? La gente pretende que resuelves el problema, que tu trabajes, y ellos están en su casa viendo televisión ¿Y por qué eso? Flojera! (risas). Flojera! En realidad es falta de compromiso. Cuando tu eres una persona que te comprometes con algo tu nivel de compromiso, como ser humano ni siquiera como vocero del consejo comunal, es tu nivel de compromiso personal que te exige...Si yo me comprometo lo hago porque es mi nombre que está en juicio. Pero hay gente que no lo vea así. "Si otros benefician, y si a mi nada, ¿Por qué voy a estar trabajando gratis?". Porque eso es ad honorem. Si dices que es trabajo gratis, la gente no la hace. Es falta de compromiso.

Some CCs in La Silsa established internal rules to ensure that assembly participants have a right to speak with time limits (3 or 6 minutes). Meetings were facilitated by a nominated person, which was agreed upon by the assembly (L012; L013; L014; L015; L016). Participants in La Silsa described their respective CCs made decisions either by consensus (L006; L008; L014) or by simple majority (L012). Nonetheless, having observed meetings in La Silsa, voting was the preferred decision making method. Should conflicts arise, these were managed by holding a separate meeting with those involved in the dispute to avoid affecting the assembly. Any serious matter would be dealt with at the spokespersons' meeting with the aim of trying to secure resolutions (L012; L013; L016).

I observed CCs presenting their accounts at the *comuna's* assembly. Participants confirmed that this was done to ensure transparency and accountability. They also stated that accounts were presented within their CCs as well as at the *comuna* assembly (L015; L011; L016). Javier, Fundacaracas officer and local resident, argued the need for transparency in managing funds and other resources, making reference to requirements for this in the LOCC and *comuna* laws. He also noted that in the past CCs, not necessarily in La Silsa, were involved in low level corruption (funds going missing, non-implementation of projects). He argued that to avoid this, cultural change was required. He saw his role as a municipal government staff member seeking to establish better links between the municipal government and the community, principally via workshops and training (L016).

Despite the overall level of activity in CCs, La Silsa spokespeople, like those in Chacao, noted that other residents in the community only tended to get involved in CC meetings or the CC when projects were being implemented and when they could potentially be beneficiaries. Interviewees observed that participation tended to decline when there were no tangible results (L006; L007; L009; L019). But interviewees felt that this changed since the ST was established. The ST, combined with the impulse towards creating the *comuna*, became a vehicle to produce clearer proposals and implement projects. This in turn encouraged increased participation (L006; L007; L009; L010; L012; L017).

Participants were conscious that those who worked, studied or had family commitments would find it difficult to commit to the CC on a regular basis. Participants interviewed, for example, were retired or unemployed (L012; L013;

L015; L019); self-employed with time flexibility (L012) or worked in conjunction with their CCs and the *comuna* (L009; L010; L011; L016). As a result, participants lamented that CCs had problems of ‘the same old faces’<sup>50</sup> and ‘too many meetings’ (L006; L009; L010; L012). However, the CC law, which requires re-election of spokespeople every two years, was understood to be a positive step in trying to prevent this dynamic from occurring (L007; L010). Participants also noted that generally young people were less likely to participate (L009; L010; L012). But during fieldwork initiatives were being implemented which sought to increase levels of youth participation in community activities (L010; L012; L015).

### **8.3.2 Projects and funding**

The LOCC outlines that CCs can obtain funds from six sources: 1. National, state or municipal governments; 2. national government decentralisation funds (FIDES and LAEE); 3. public agencies; 4. funding generated internally by the CC; 5. donations; and 6. any other financial activity permitted by law and the constitution

Despite the general lack of participation, continuity and regular meetings, CC participants in Chacao still described achievements, projects and activities that their CC had been involved with, either on its own, with other CCs or civil society organisations. Though in most cases projects undertaken directly by Chacao’s CCs were very limited. Participants of two CCs described having secured national level funding for respective housing and piped gas projects (C016; C018). Participants of another CC noted that their council secured funding from the State of Miranda to lease a community hall (C005; C021). In most cases, due to lack of formal registration, CCs were used as a platform for campaigning and sharing sub-municipal level concerns with the municipal government to try and direct municipal spending towards their residential area (C004; C005; C006; C007; C010; C011; C012; C013; C014; C015; C018; C019).

As noted in the previous chapter, the PB in Chacao was one of the CLPP’s key processes seeking community opinion where the municipal government’s budget should be spent. The CLPP also accepted proposals from the community organisations such as CCs and, if approved, implemented projects. Though there is

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<sup>50</sup> Here interviewees wished to emphasise that it was still a relatively low number of residents that actively took part. Many other residents were unable or uninterested to participate to the same extent as those with the ability or motivation to take part.

opportunity for CCs to be involved in CLPP processes, it is not automatic or guaranteed; several participants noted that their CC had taken part in the CLPP's PB, but with mixed response.

Interviewees from three CCs were content with the CLPP's PB process and results (C010; C011; C012; C018). Conversely, several interviewees described repeating petitions in several PBs (different years) without seeing any results. Those who had not received funding from the CLPP held a critical view, or expressed disappointment with the PB process (C006; C007; C015; C016).

I observed that two CC participants who argued in favour of the CLPP had either direct involvement or had a family member in the CLPP (C012; C010). Thus, it could be argued that their CCs had an 'advantage' in CC-CLPP relations over other CCs that did not. Nonetheless, another participant stated that he considered that the CLPP had 'excellent' communication with the community, and the projects were a positive result of this relationship (C014). Similarly, another CC member also considered that the CLPP works well because of its community members. For this reason the community was able to express its concerns and look for solutions (C018).

Those who were more critical of the CLPP argued that certain areas within Chacao were prioritised more than others, or that some CCs with close links to CLPP were dealt with first (C015). Others argued that communication between the community and CLPP was poor (C006; C007). Ana considered that the CLPP should be more open and accessible, implying that it was a closed circle of friends. This circle orchestrated the projects that the CLPP approved and where those projects were delivered (C013).

Interviewees in La Silsa described that the *barrio* had significant problems which had been tackled in a piecemeal fashion by residents' over the years, and in many cases this was not sufficient. As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, participants also believed that prior to Chavismo, La Silsa received very little help from previous governments, whether national, state or municipal. At the time of fieldwork, La Silsa had become a recipient of both municipal (Fundacaracas) and national government (*Misión Barrio Nuevo Barrio Tricolor*<sup>51</sup>) programmes to improve

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<sup>51</sup> A national government programme targeting chosen barrios with 7 objectives: establish a *comuna*,



*barrio* conditions. A couple of participants identified that funding came from other sources such as the National Police College (UNES) (L012) or the CFG and GDC (L016). As discussed in previous section, the new relationships established between the community, the ST and the municipal government/Fundacaracas enabled more projects to secure funding.

As described in chapter 6, La Silsa is an informal settlement, on a steep hillside location. As such, key projects identified by interviewees included those tackling basic infrastructure needs such as paving streets (L007, L009, L010, L015); creating sufficient drainage channels - the steep hill and heavy tropical rain can lead to landslides and water entering houses lower downhill (L007; L008; L010; L014; L015); improving potable water and/or sewage connections to houses (L007; L009; L015); and retaining walls, again to prevent landslides.

Unlike Chacao, very few participants in La Silsa could identify what the CLPP was and its purpose. The PB process undertaken in Libertador was not necessarily associated with the CLPP but the municipal government. Three participants described that their CC attended meetings regarding the PB to hear about how budgets would be allocated or project submissions accepted for the forthcoming year (L007; L009; L016). Interviewees described that CCs were able to think about projects they considered appropriate; these were presented in assemblies at the *comuna* where different proposals were discussed and prioritised. One or two CC proposals were submitted each year to the municipal government. Hence, it was unlikely that CC projects were prioritised via the PB process (L006; L007; L009; L016).

Javier<sup>52</sup>, who coordinated municipal government-community matters, summarised how the CCs, *comuna*, CLPP, and municipal government were interlinked:

*Interviewer: Have La Silsa residents taken part in many participatory budgets over the years?*

*Interviewee: No. It's at the level of Caracas [Libertador/ GDC] but before the participatory budget was managed by CCs which have more people*

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promote inclusiveness, improve living conditions, improve security, generate a communal goods distribution system, construct a "communal economy", and ensure assembly decision making is established and made permanent (SIBCI 2013).

<sup>52</sup> Javier was a CC spokesperson in La Silsa as well as municipal government employee.

*[involved] because of their open assemblies. [They] don't take into account or give much importance to what neighbourhoods are most vulnerable with different problems. They gave more importance to those with power. More power to influence funding decisions. Now it's different, the participatory budget is deliberative. First...[at the level of] CCs...[then] they deliberate within the different comunas that they are developing in different spaces [areas]. There...they look at the big, macro-sized projects which will benefit various neighbourhoods. Beforehand funding only benefitted one CC, [or] one [sub] neighbourhood. Now all the projects are done at a general level [which encompassed various areas].*

*Interviewer: Is there any relationship with the CLPP?*

*Interviewee: We don't work directly with them. They work from the municipal government ...and they discuss the approval of the different projects [which have arisen] from the participatory budget, as well as other.*

*Interviewer: So the [projects identified by CCs in the] participatory budget process get passed to the CLPP and then to the municipal government, which transfers the funds?*

*Interviewee: Correct. There are budgets that the Alcaldía Libertador [municipal government] manages, but there are other budgets that need to be discussed with other institutions like the CFG, like the CLPP...the Ministry of Comunas among others.*

*Interviewer: With the support that comunas are receiving from Fundacaracas, is this helping to strengthen CCs?*

*Interviewee: Yes, definitely. Right now we are at a stage where the CCs are managing a lot of funding. And these are from projects that were discussed [planned] 4 years ago.<sup>53</sup>(L016)*

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<sup>53</sup> Interviewer: ¿Han participado en el presupuesto participativo durante muchos años en La Silsa?□

Interviewee: No, eso es a nivel de Caracas [Libertador] pero anteriormente el presupuesto participativo que maneja los consejos comunales que llevan más gente por medio de asamblea abierta. No importa, sin importar realmente cuales son los sectores que son vulnerables a diferentes problemáticas sino que allí sea él que tiene más poder. Más poder para que llegara los recursos. Ahora no, ahora el presupuesto participativo se discute, primero...en los consejos comunales,...[luego]□ se discute en las diferentes comunas que se están desarrollando en los diferentes espacios. Allí...se estudia los proyectos macro que beneficia a los diferentes sectores. Anteriormente no, anteriormente solamente se benefició un consejo comunal, un solo sector. Ahora no, ahora los proyectos son a nivel general.□

Interviewer: ¿Hay alguna relación con el CLPP?□

Interviewee: Nosotros no trabajamos directamente con ellos. Trabajan desde la Alcaldía Libertador donde hacen ese trabajo...y se discute la aprobación de diferentes proyectos del PP, y otros pues.

Interviewer: Ese proceso del presupuesto participativo pasa al CLPP y luego a la Alcaldía para transferir los recursos ¿verdad?

Interviewee: Verdad. Hay recursos que maneja la Alcaldía Libertador, pero hay recursos que tienen que ser discutidos con otras instituciones como el CFG, como el CLPP... el Ministerio de las Comunas

The above quotation provided insight on how CCs in La Silsa were beginning to obtain support from different governmental levels: the national government programme and national government funding agencies, as well as GDC and municipal level such as the municipal government and its agencies. Chacao's community engaged primarily with the municipal government, and very rarely with state or federal level government and agencies. The next section explores how, and if, state-community relations have changed in Chacao and Libertador as a result of the agency of those involved in CCs.

### **8.3.3 Traditions and beliefs: Relationship with government and agencies**

On the whole, despite the disappointment with PB or CLPP processes, Chacao CC participants considered that the municipal government, over various administrations, had responded well to the community's demands. Interviewees noted that they were informed sufficiently (some noted the website was a good source of information) and consequently participated in the municipal government's programmes and consultations (C005; C006; C010; C011; C013; C015; C018).

Alejandra, a former municipal government officer, argued that during the period 2001-2008 the municipal administration made considerable efforts to increase participation. In the following quotation it is interesting to note that the participant's language resembles a similar logic to Chavismo despite coming from a distinct ideological background.

*One of the things that citizen participation does is to raise citizens' consciousness about the right to participate. Right? So [Mayor Lopéz] wanted to break the old models of doing things [paternalist government, see Alcaldía de Chacao 2007; Valero Alemán 2009]. But it's also a question about what the state's institutions can do...It's a policy that demonstrates transparency and gives [citizens] confidence [in their municipal government]. This is fundamental for all local governments. Or all national governments... We can see that this link in the policy to [encourage citizen] participation. It's*

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y otros pues.□

Interviewer: Con el apoyo que ya tienen las comunas con Fundacaracas ¿eso está ayudando los CC fortalecer?

Interviewee: Sí, claro, ahorita estamos en una etapa que los consejos comunales están manejando muchos recursos, ehm, de proyectos que están discutiendo desde hace 4 años.

*the way that citizens can participate and that they are beside [holding the municipal government to account/ being involved] with their local government. In this way you create positive municipal development because they [citizens] have collaborated in the process of social participation.<sup>54</sup> (C006)*

The above interview provided considerable insight into the way in which municipal government community-relations in Chacao were established since 2001. Elements of these had continued into the Graterón administration and could be observed during fieldwork. The clearest example was the way in which CLPP carried out its PB process. The PB was introduced in Chacao in 2000 and linked with the CLPP when this was formed (Valero Alemán 2009).

When Chacao CC participants were asked if they observed any changes between mayors and their administrations in how they engaged with community, participants talked very highly of the Irene Sáez period (1990s), and the López administration (2000-2008), but were less enthralled with the Graterón administration (2008-2013). Political differences between Mayor Graterón and local councillors, and Graterón's inefficient and unresponsive administration were attributed by participants as factors in shaping their negative views (C006; C011; C013; C015; C018).

Certain interviewees were aware that the municipal revenue diminished in recent years, so the Graterón administration did not have as much spending capacity as previous administrations (C011; C018). Despite this, some CC participants still considered that they had the ability to influence in what their municipal government spent money. They considered that this was a form of recognition of their CC by the municipal government despite the lack of registration with Fundacomunal (C010; C018). Alejandra, pessimistically, warned that there is always a danger for administrations or politicians susceptible to applying clientelism and a risk of populism (C006).

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<sup>54</sup> Con la participación ciudadana una de las cosas que se da también es la conciencia ciudadana que es el derecho de participar ¿no? Entonces va rompiendo con otros modelos y va transformando...el entorno. También eso lleva cuestionamiento de lo que pueden ser las instituciones del estado...Es una política que mostraba la transparencia y daba confianza. Eso es fundamental en todos gobiernos locales. O todo gobierno nacional...Porque veíamos también esa bondad en esa política de participación. En la medida que los ciudadanos participan y que están a lado de su gobierno local. En esa medida tienes la fruta del desarrollo municipal porque ellos colaborarían en la labor de la participación social...

Chacao interviewees considered that the municipality was the form of government closest to the citizen, not the emerging *comuna* structure pushed by Chavismo. Participants cited suspicion of communism, or state relations resembling communism, which they argued was the goal of national government. As a consequence they were against the new communal state and the move towards reducing the municipal government's capabilities or importance (C004; C006; C009; C010; C012; C013).

La Silsa's CC participants were in the process of consolidating, registering and actively seeking to form a *comuna*. In comparison to Chacao's participants, they had no qualms in contributing towards the construction of the communal state. As noted in section 8.2.2, this was based on participants support, underpinned due to their traditions [community marginalization by previous governments] and beliefs [pro-Chavismo].

Participants described that in the past La Silsa had little relationship with the municipal government, and politicians only appeared at election time, which resulted in the community trying to resolve matters on their own. Andrea noted that there were occasions where the problem was too big or complex and required external expertise and funds, which were not available (L006). Participants also described that previous administrations were simply not designed to help *barrios* due to the considerable bureaucratic structures and procedures. Furthermore, the municipal government did nothing about issues or projects identified by the community (L009; L010; L011). Teresa described that beforehand people had to wait in queues, were fobbed off, and had to return on a later occasion. She believed that CCs could now operate and implement their own projects resolving community issues in La Silsa, which had previously been ignored by the municipal government:

*They had every type of excuse [before]. Now they meet with us and there are more results. [CCs] get funding given to our hands so that we can manage and implement [projects ourselves] <sup>55</sup>(L009)*

Several participants stated that the current relationship with the municipal government was positive and supportive which was considerably different from

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<sup>55</sup> tenían una excusa de por medio. Ahora nos atendemos. Ahora hay mas respuesta. Llegan los recursos a nuestras manos [CCs] y nosotros mismos los manejamos y ejecutamos.

municipal administrations in the pre-Chavez years (L006; L009; L010; L011). The municipal administration supported CCs by regular attendance at meetings and events, and providing materials, information and workshops with the aim to strengthen CCs (L006; L009). Participants also recognised the importance of other municipal government agencies such as Fundacaracas and IMGRAD [risk management] (L006; L009; L010; L011; L015).

Participants described that liaising with IMGRAD meant that areas of substantial risk (landslides or unstable ground) became a key part of project development. This had improved CC participants' understanding, because of the propensity of landslides in La Silsa, it was not worth investing valuable resources into projects in these areas (L009; L011). Because the municipal government, and ST, provided technical support, CCs were able to follow a logical process in creating project proposals which were based on accurate costing and appropriate materials. Consequently, CCs' proposals were better prepared and more likely to be approved by the municipal government<sup>56</sup> (L006; L009; L010; L011; L016).

Participants in La Silsa demonstrated a sense of confidence provided by the shift in government-community relations. Andrea described this in relation to how the mayor was perceived:

*[The mayor] is a comrade like us. The difference is massive because before mayors didn't give anyone participation. Nor did they say take the money and manage it [yourselves].*<sup>57</sup>(L006)

Carmen expected that the municipal government's response would now be guaranteed:

*...I think now that with all the information about the comuna everything is going to be much more positive. Because the process is much quicker. For example, if we submit a project [to municipal government] we now know that we will get an answer the next month. Now we can give our community a guarantee that we will have a project [to improve] paving or drainage*

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<sup>56</sup> Funds had been allocated to CCs by the CFG but it was the municipal government who transferred them to CCs when their proposals were approved.

<sup>57</sup> [El alcalde] es un camarada más que nosotros, o sea que la diferencia es demasiado grande porque antes los alcaldes no te daban la participación ni te decían toma la plata y maneja recursos.(L006)

*channels.*<sup>58</sup>(L010)

Participants described that all levels of government were now required to work together with communities rather than simply acting in a top-down dynamic (L009; L011). Daniel stated that Chavismo provided a shift in government-community relations beyond the municipal level:

*We've seen a change from the municipal government and the ministries. We've seen a change in the relationship [between] the national government and communities. The comandante showed us...that it's the [local] communities that need to [come up with their] proposals, not the government. So, it's not to start from the top-down but rather from the bottom-up.*<sup>59</sup>(L011)

Teresa, on the other hand, stated that given the close relationship between the community and the municipal government, between the community and those with specific expertise [such as IMGRAD or the ST] a fruitful dynamic already existed. There was no need to dismantle the concept of the municipal government as the discourse of the communal state advocated (L009). To qualify her position, she described a relationship where it was municipal responsiveness that was key to the community's development and should not be lost: "We can't lose it. We can't lose this link between the community, the municipal government, and the ST. We can't lose it"<sup>60</sup>(L009).

In comparing both municipal governments, participants in Chacao developed different views of CCs and their role within project planning and implementation. Interviewees indicated that this was due to the historical legacy and traditions of municipal government-community relations in each municipality. La Silsa participants were ignored by previous administrations prior to Chavismo, the

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<sup>58</sup> ...creo que ahora, con toda la información de la comuna, todo va a ser mucho más positivo. Porque es mucho más rápido el proceso. Si presentamos un proyecto por decir algo en lo que va del mes ya sabemos que para el mes entrante ya nosotros tendremos una respuesta. Ahora nosotros podemos garantizar a nuestra comunidad que tenemos un proyecto de caminaría, o de torrenteras, ya por lo menos nosotros en un mes tendremos respuesta.

<sup>59</sup> Hemos visto el cambio en la alcaldía [y] los ministerios. Hemos visto un cambio en el gobierno central hacia las comunidades. El comandante nos enseñó de que...son las comunidades que tiene que dar su propuesta, no el gobierno que da su propuesta. O sea no empezar de arriba abajo, sino de abajo hacia arriba.[original emphasis].

<sup>60</sup> No se puede perder, ese vínculo no se puede perder, entre la alcaldía, la Sala Técnica y la comunidad. No se puede perder" (L009).

community via CCs and the emerging *comuna* felt that they now had a key role in shaping the development of their neighbourhood. Chacao participants felt that the municipal government had generally performed well and were proud of the achievements that the municipal government had secured over a decade. Hence, they saw no need for a complete overhaul in state-society relations. Chavismo's advocacy for a communal state was understood by La Silsa's participants to be part of a system where they played a central role in shaping their local area. They 'bought' in to the vision of Chavismo, its move towards socialism and the communal state. The opposite could be said of Chacao participants: they saw the communal state as depriving them of the very system that had supported them well. The communal state, on the other hand aimed at redistributing wealth across geographical inequalities, which for Chacao, would mean that their municipality would not be front and centre of governmental policy. As discussed in section 8.2, many CCs in Chacao were established to ensure that Chavistas did not take hold of these mechanisms of political participation. Participants occupied these political spaces with the aim of preventing further penetration of Chavismo in Chacao. This practice resulted from the political beliefs of over 80% of the local population (CNE 2013).

#### **8.3.4 Dilemma 2: state-civil society relationship summary**

CCs, in both Chacao and Libertador, materialized in a context where national government had implemented numerous spaces for participation in the first five years of Chavismo. These included (but are not exclusive to) CTUs, Missions such as *Barrio Adentro*, and CLPPs. As Chavismo increasingly sought to move towards creating a socialist state it also sought to overcome some of the obstacles it encountered in spaces such as CLPPs (lack of implementation; differences between community and political representatives), whilst also consolidating other arrangements, such as *Barrio Adentro* into the CC structure.

Participants in Chacao and La Silsa, drawing on their respective political beliefs and different traditions, recognised that CCs were born out of Chavismo's ideologised and politicised background and consequently CCs worked as political spaces. Libertador participants understood CCs to be spaces with agency, provided to them by Chavismo, enabling community development. Given that La Silsa had a weak civil society in the past, CCs provided participants with a space for advocacy with government. They understood CCs to have been brought about by Chavismo. As a



result, participants were grateful, supportive of Chavismo and promoted the move towards the communal state and socialism. Chacao participants, on the other hand, were suspicious of CCs and understood that they emerged and were conceived with an ideological purpose (moving towards the communal state). Paradoxically, despite being opposed in principal to communal state mechanisms, participants felt that they needed to create CCs to prevent spaces being taken over by Chavistas, which they felt would not represent the core political beliefs of their respective local neighbourhoods. Furthermore, Chacao participants sought to frame their CCs as just like any another community organisation prevalent in Chacao, such as ADVs, which were understood as a means of channelling community concerns.

## 8.4 CONCLUSIONS

The chapter presented two key findings. As a result of CC participants' beliefs and traditions, two dilemmas were encountered: 1. CCs' links with Chavismo; and 2. changes in state-civil society relationships and structure. Participants' beliefs, traditions and response to the dilemmas they faced were shown to have influenced the way CCs operated and the 'rules in use' that they adopted.

Section 8.3 described in detail how participants understood how their respective CCs and their respective processes worked. Despite different understandings and the dilemmas identified above, participants in both Chacao and La Silsa described CCs as spaces for community activism and improving their respective communities. Chacao participants, for the main part, were not fully registered with Fundacomunal and were therefore restricted in the projects that could be implemented or undertaken by their respective CCs. Participants indicated that the municipal government was willing to accept CCs as a local community organization. Like the CLPP-PB, CCs were invited to the municipal government's engagement processes. Participants in Chacao defended the role of the municipal government as the key provider of services and municipal public works; they were suspicious and critical of Chavismo's intended move towards the communal state where municipal government's future may be jeopardised. This was a state-civil society relationship that they were determined to preserve; they saw Chavismo as a potential threat.

La Silsa CCs were encouraged to register fully because they sought to formalise the area's *comuna*. Participants considered that establishing the *comuna* would lead to more projects being implemented, and therefore obtain more neighbourhood

improvements. As La Silsa became a target for the municipal government (via Fundacaracas) and national government's *barrio* improvement programmes, the installation of a ST meant that CCs received considerable support in meeting the requirements of Fundacomunal. The ST provided support to develop CCs' capabilities to present coherent and viable projects to the municipal government. Chacao's CCs did not have a ST catering specifically to them, although they did have a municipal government staff member who was able to provide general advice and information.

La Silsa CC participants were significantly motivated to engage with the difficult registration process because there were clear benefits in doing so: the possibility of receiving funding and implementing projects. Without that motivation, projects would not be implemented in areas such as La Silsa (*barrios*). The response to these opportunities generated an inverse type of dilemma in La Silsa compared with Chacao. The dilemma was that if people did not take part in CCs, and the *comuna*, they would not see improved state-civil society relations. Participants in La Silsa therefore felt compelled to register their CCs, actively take part, and promote the emerging *comuna* and Chavismo's move towards the communal state.

## CHAPTER 9 INTERPRETING PRACTICES OF VENEZUELAN PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides further analysis of the empirical findings presented in chapters 7 and 8. These chapters described the experiences of two cases of participatory mechanisms in Venezuela, CLPPs and CCs, both of which have been implemented in different ways in the two municipalities studied. Chapter 7 identified that CLPP participants described three main sets of dilemmas. These were generated as a result of changes to the CLPPs' composition, questions over the absence of elections or the way elections were held, and the ways that community members and political representatives understood their roles and remit. Chapter 8 described that CC participants in Chacao and La Silsa, drawing on their beliefs and traditions<sup>61</sup>, understood their agency as a form of state-civil society relations. The political traditions experienced before and after Chávez played a key role in how participants in La Silsa and Chacao interpreted CCs and their subsequent agency. Chacao participants were more reluctant to accept CCs as anything other than as neutral community organisation (i.e. not linked to a political party/ Chavismo). La Silsa participants saw CCs as a form of improved state-civil society relations, and felt compelled to register their CCs, actively take part, and promote the emerging *comuna* and Chavismo's move towards the communal state.

Section 9.2 provides an analysis of the key findings with regards to the components of the analytical framework. The institutional dimension ('rules of the game'; 'rules in form', 'rules in use') is discussed first, followed by the ideational dimension (traditions, dilemmas, beliefs). This section builds upon Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model by seeking to provide an account of how the model was operationalized in relation to the findings discussed in chapters 7 and 8. It is identified that there is scope to accentuate the concept of 'tradition' in the model.

Section 9.3 provides further discussion on where the findings of the research about citizen participation in CLPPs and CCs sit within wider democratic theory. The

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<sup>61</sup> See definitions in table 4.2.

section discusses how the dilemmas that occurred in CLPPs and CCs are consistent with empirically-based scholarship related to democratic innovations. The uncertainty of successfully increasing citizen participation within existing traditions of representative democracy is also consistent with Bevir and Rhodes' interpretivist theory – which plays a key role in Hay's model. Conclusions to the chapter are provided in section 9.4.

## **9.2 REFLECTION ON THE INTERPRETIVE INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH**

This section unpacks Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model, drawing from the empirical study of CLPPs and CCs in Venezuela. It builds on the experience of operationalizing a model that seeks to combine two bodies of theory which have traditionally been seen to be ontologically and epistemologically incompatible. In summary, Lowndes and Roberts (2013 pgs 66-67) argue that many institutionalists (such as HI and RC, see chapter 4) typically seek explanations by centring their analysis on institutions. They remain sceptical of how new constructivist theories are 'institutionalist' because of their focus on actors and agency rather than 'institutions'. However, there is recognition that constructivist and SI approaches have potential to provide enhanced explanations of actors' agency (Hay 2006; Lowndes and Roberts 2013). Interpretivists have staunchly opposed institutionalism because it 'reifies' the concept of 'institutions' and downplays the importance of actors' individual beliefs and agency (Bevir 2010; Bevir and Rhodes 2010). However, (Bevir and Rhodes 2010 pg 20) have conceded that constructivist institutionalism has the potential to break away from 'modernist-empiricism' and provide explanation of 'the beliefs and desires of actors'.

Hay's (2011) model sought to capitalise on this convergence between two theories, particularly between the ideational explanations of interpretivism and the 'opportunities and constraints' (typically through 'rules') provided by institutionalism. Hay's model leads to an ontology which perceives reality as something developed by agency as well as shaped by external forces (structures) that go beyond agency. Hay's model enables structures and/or institutions to be conceptualised as socially constructed, therefore providing reconciliation for interpretivists, such as Bevir and Rhodes, who have argued that such concepts lead to a 'reification' of actors' behaviour. Hay's model also helps constructivist strands of SI make linkages

between agency and structures/ institutions, particularly by understanding the way individual actors' ideational reasoning shapes structures/institutions and vice versa. The remainder of the section explores in detail the interfaces between the institutionalist and interpretive dimensions of Hay's model. It is identified that the concept of 'traditions' has greater overlap between the two dimensions than Hay's model currently offers.

### **9.2.1 Institutional dimension**

Hay (2011) conceives institutional contexts to be the configurations of 'opportunities' and 'constraints' that actors are faced with (see diagram 4.1). The framework of this thesis adopted additional components for the institutional dimension drawing from institutional theory. Chapter 4 established that the definition of institutions adopted in the thesis was "rules of the game", which is then sub-divided into two further components of "rules in form" and "rules in use". New institutionalist scholars consider that discerning the difference between how rules are played out enables an understanding of how institutions shape the agency of those involved (Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker 2006; Leach and Lowndes 2007; Lowndes and Roberts 2013). Leach and Lowndes (2007) emphasise that the rules in use may be considerably different from those set out in form.

Findings presented in chapters 7 and 8 showed that in addition to the formal rules set out in legislation, actors also conducted alternative practices (informal rules in use). These are summarised in table 9.1. With regard to the units of analysis, we can understand the following: CLPPs and CCs have their remit, membership and operational capacity defined in law. For institutional 'designers'<sup>62</sup>, the ideal scenario would be that these "rules in form" would be interpreted and understood by CLPP and CC participants and carried out in a specific way. This would mean that the rules in use would be equivalent to the rules in form. However, as the findings showed, when CLPP and CC actors demonstrated conduct that was not defined by law, informal practices and 'rules in use' emerged. One would consider that scenarios such as these do not comply at all with the 'rules in form', and could potentially lead to a reconfiguration of the rules in form to constrain these practices or to adopt them as the new rules in form. This would result from actors' understandings and responses to them (dependent on ideational factors, see 9.2.2).

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<sup>62</sup> Term borrowed from Lowndes and Roberts (2013). It signifies any person involved in public policy making that seeks to provide definitions about how 'institutions' should be formed and operate.

Since 1998, Venezuela has been undergoing deep, fast structural changes. During such periods of change, rules in form might not suffice to deal with new scenarios. There is the need for rules in use to be adopted to try out new possibilities in periods of transition. These transitional rules in use may crystallize into rules in form with time.

Currently Hay's model states that, within any institutional context, the dynamic that will lead to a process of change is dependent on what Hay terms 'governance failure'. It is at this point that the model creates an interface between the institutional and ideational dimensions. Hay adopted this term from interpreting Bevir and Richards (2009 pg 7 cited in Hay 2011 pg 179) where they linked 'dilemmas' to 'problems and failings in existing institutional arrangements'. The model enables a way of understanding, and conceptualising, how different, contingent configuration of rules in use versus rules in form in practice may generate a dilemma. Instability may occur where more dilemmas are generated, and actors seek to act in ways other than those envisaged by the 'rules in form'. This may also present a moment of change. Conversely, stability may occur where fewer dilemmas are being generated. Although dependent on a number of factors, this may be a result of institutional arrangements being stable and/or actors interpreting and understanding these arrangements as sufficient – according to their beliefs.

Five main dilemmas (discussed in 9.2.2) were identified in the findings. One example that we can briefly draw on from the findings was the way participants interpreted the 2010 CLPP reform. In Chacao, participants were able to comply with the 2010 law. Participants in Libertador had not made the necessary changes to comply with the reform. Libertador's CLPP structure was out-dated (according to the reform). Furthermore, the municipal government had failed to set-up the ST and employ a secretary, as required. As a result, community members in the Libertador CLPP had to undertake roles and responsibilities that those in Chacao did not. From the institutionalist concepts of the model, we can say that, in practice, Libertador's CLPP employed considerably more informal 'rules in use' than Chacao. Because it had not conformed to the 2010 law, and continued to operate, I interpreted this as demonstrating 'informal rules in use'. The findings provided another example, which showed that CCs in Chacao demonstrated considerably more informal 'rules in use' (infrequent meetings, coordinating with the municipal government despite lack of registration) compared with La Silsa where practices showed more conformity to the rules set out in legislation. Consequently, in each of the cases, dilemmas were

generated for participants and influenced how they acted and responded to the context within which they were situated. The next sub-section will explore the way actors' interpreted matters in more detail.

Case/ Analytical component	Chacao CLPP	Libertador CLPP	Chacao CCs	La Silsa CCs (Libertador)
Rules in form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2010 CLPP law;</li> <li>• 2011 Municipal by-law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2010 CLPP law;</li> <li>• 2008 Municipal by-law (out of date)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2009 Organic CC law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2009 Organic CC law</li> </ul>
Rules in use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors failed to turn up to plenary meetings; approve budget (both CLPP and municipal).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members in 'office' since 2006 without re-election (law stipulates 2 year terms).</li> <li>• Councillors failed to turn up to plenary meetings; approve budget (both CLPP and municipal).</li> <li>• No ST or CLPP Secretary employed; community members adopted these roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCs meeting less frequently than expected (greater than every 2 weeks).</li> <li>• CCs able to engage with municipal government despite not being fully registered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally compliant with law.</li> <li>• Some merging of activities/ coordination between CCs and La Silsa's <i>comuna</i>.</li> </ul>
Traditions (see also table 9.2 for more traditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and remit of councillors remained strong in local governance decision-making and influence.</li> <li>• Most community members professionals (architects, accountants, teachers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and remit of councillors remains strong in local governance decision-making and influence.</li> <li>• Most of community members retired.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many CC participants had strong links with other civil society organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little or no civil society participation prior to Chavismo.</li> <li>• CCs emerged from other mechanisms introduced by Chavismo (Barrio Adentro; Land and Water committees).</li> </ul>
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologically opposed to Chavismo/socialism.</li> <li>• However, CLPP not expressed as being explicitly linked to ideology of Chavismo/socialism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologically supportive of Chavismo/ socialism.</li> <li>• CLPP understood to be a mechanism introduced by Chavismo. But Chavismo now directing its attention to newer mechanisms linked with communal state (CCs/<i>Comunas</i>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologically opposed to Chavismo/socialism (except one interviewee).</li> <li>• CCs understood to be a key component of creating Chavismo's communal state/ 21<sup>st</sup>C Socialism.</li> <li>• CCs understood to be akin to other civil society organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologically supportive of Chavismo/ socialism.</li> <li>• CCs understood to be a key component of creating Chavismo's communal state/ 21<sup>st</sup>C Socialism.</li> </ul>
Dilemmas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors questioned the adequacy of the electoral process – and subsequent composition and legitimacy – of community members.</li> <li>• Councillors' ability to over-turn CLPP plenary decisions (made by community members).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors and mayor have given very little support to CLPP; attended once a year at municipal budget approval.</li> <li>• Community members left to deal with day-to-day running and coordination of CLPP and its activities</li> <li>• Lack of elections (community members and JPC).</li> <li>• Lack of conformity to 2010 law.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of/difficulty registering with Fundacomunal.</li> <li>• Deciding to what extent to participate/utilise a mechanism that is contrary to ideological beliefs and understood to be constitutive of constructing a 'communal state' which participants expressed opposition to.</li> <li>• CCs established as a defensive action preventing Chavistas create CCs in a local area dominated by opposition supporters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear that the political agency obtained through CCs – granted by Chavismo - would be taken away from participants if the mechanisms were not continually used and defended from the perceived threat of losing them via opposition parties.</li> </ul>

**Table 9.1 Thesis framework components with examples drawn from findings**



## 9.2.2 Ideational dimension

Interpretivists and SI institutionalists alike highlight that agency is important to understand because actions are a result of actors' interpretation of the opportunities and constraints. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) describe actors' agency compliant with the institutional context or in contestation of it. As described in chapter 4, Bevir and Rhodes (2003; 2006; 2010) consider actors to engage in 'situated agency' that is dependent on actors' traditions, beliefs and dilemmas.

By looking at the findings from chapters 7 and 8 (table 9.1), we can see why the ideational components taken from interpretivism were useful heuristics. We understand that actors came to their respective CLPPs and CCs from different (and multiple<sup>63</sup>) traditions. Bevir and Rhodes emphasise that traditions are mere starting points in the way participants will interpret and understand their respective CLPP or CC. We need to look at how participants have interpreted contexts and respond to dilemmas, according to their beliefs and traditions, in order to understand how and why participants acted in a certain way (see table 4.2 for definitions). Although discussed in detail in section 9.2.3, my findings show that the component 'tradition' may incorporate 'informal rules' or practices. Institutionalists would consider these informal rules or practices a form of 'institution'. Consequently, this points to an additional link between institutionalism and interpretivism. I consider that this is a matter that has potential to improve the operationalization of Hay's model. I argue that 'tradition' is a conceptual tool that institutionalists need to take more into account, especially for those using Hay's model.

The findings showed that the ideational components of the model were useful in eliciting how CLPP and CC participants understood the wider political context within which they were situated. Participants expressed their views about politics, about local and national governments, and the way in which other participants acted within their respective CLPPs and CCs. Based on this, a picture was established about why these participants had decided to take part in their respective mechanisms in the first place, and how they conceptualised the processes they were involved in. The findings exhibited linkages between the institutional and the ideational dimensions. These linkages were not linear but cyclical (as per Hay's model, see figure 4.2). The following provides a more detailed account of the three ideational

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<sup>63</sup> Educational, political, socio-economic status, family, cultural, or religious traditions, for example.

components of the thesis framework. The concepts of beliefs, traditions and dilemmas are discussed in turn. Discussion of the relationship between the two dimensions is also developed in the remainder of the section.

### *Beliefs*

Bevir (1999; 2010a) and Bevir and Rhodes (2003; 2006; 2010) emphasise that beliefs and webs of beliefs that participants hold are individual and personal. The findings show that eliciting beliefs from participants was fruitful. Participants were very keen to share their beliefs about the case studies being explored and the wider context within which they were situated (particularly the political setting). Furthermore, we know that the benefit of identifying beliefs is contingent on actors' traditions. These two components will then be drawn upon when actors encounter 'dilemmas'.

Chapter 7 found that beliefs about participation in CLPPs were closely related to the opportunities provided to sets of actors by the formal rules. Namely, councillors saw their role as municipal legislators first and foremost (a tradition). Their role in the CLPP was of secondary importance. Furthermore, because they had interpreted their role in the CM as their primary role, and because they had undergone 'first grade' elections, they saw themselves as more important than community members. Community members believed the CLPP provided them with equal participation (equal deliberation rights) and decision-making rights (although councillors retained final decision making powers). The findings showed that the different sets of actors interpreted and understood their respective roles differently. These led to practices that generated dilemmas. These dilemmas were also underpinned by power imbalances between councillors and community members (which were a result of the way their respective roles were defined in legislation/rules in form, and later as traditions). This provides weight to interpretivists' assertion that practices are contingent on actors' beliefs and traditions.

Chapter 8 found that CC participants' beliefs were generally grounded in whether they supported Chavismo or not, and whether they were participating in a process moving towards socialism and the communal state. The consequence of participating in favour (La Silsa CCs) or against (Chacao CCs) this political process generated dilemmas. However, in accordance with the interpretivist view, we can make sense of these based on actors' traditions.

As the findings demonstrated, incorporating beliefs within Hay's model enables scholars to look at the way rules and practices are understood by actors and provide explanation why they acted in a certain way. An institutionalist account does not place as much emphasis on this dimension. Conversely, a purely interpretivist approach would not necessarily acknowledge the different rules (institutional opportunities and constraints). Hay's model enables both dimensions to be taken into account.

### *Traditions*

When explaining change, Bevir (1999 pg 197) argues that the focus of analysis should lie on individuals who extend and modify traditions by drawing on their own 'webs of belief'. To avoid reifying traditions, Bevir stresses the need to ensure that traditions are understood to belong to individuals. Although there may be many traditions which are shared among others, the myriad traditions that an individual is exposed to is unique. The tradition should emanate from the particular 'webs of belief' being studied (Bevir 1999 pg 210). Bevir (2004 pg 618) considers that change comes from individuals' reasoning based on their beliefs and personal conception of agency, whether in practices, traditions and/ or institutions. Explanation of social change is possible because the concept of tradition permits the operationalization of 'situated agency'. These patterns of reasoning are personal, particular and contingent to individual's experiences. Furthermore, Bevir emphasises that change comes from processes that are neither random nor fixed.

Through analysis of interviews, observational data and documentary review, three sets of traditions were identified in relation to CLPPs and CCs. These were political, governmental and state-civil society traditions. These are summarised in table 9.2. Although these traditions are presented as collective traditions, it is understood that participants interpreted these traditions according to the context and their own beliefs and traditions. Furthermore, it should be iterated that traditions can be considered in a collective manner insofar as 'people are not autonomous' (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003; Bevir and Richards 2009 pg 10) and because 'traditions may be widely shared' (Bevir and Rhodes 2001 pg 109). However, one must remember that despite the existence of traditions, no one idea is shared by each participant in the same way (ibid). Hay summarises this characteristic of traditions as 'inter-subjective' but, like Bevir and Rhodes, does not provide any further explanation. A gap therefore remains regarding conceptualising the relationship between individual and collective (shared) traditions. Further discussion is provided

in sub-section 9.2.3.

Tradition/ Location	Chacao	Libertador/ La Silsa
Political	Anti-Chavismo; Voluntad Popular (social democratic); Primero Justicia (centre right)	Chavismo
Governmental	Support traditional, federal republic and government. Also support JPs which were <i>removed</i> in 2010.	Favour construction of the 'communal state' if citizens' agency is maintained and expanded; less support to maintain federal governmental system.
State-civil society relationship	Good traditional municipal government - civil society relationship. See no need for fundamental institutional change.	Previous political and social marginalisation; increased inclusiveness with Chavismo. See institutional change as a positive shift in government-community relations.

**Table 9.2 Summary of traditions identified in Chacao and Libertador**

### Political Traditions

Chapter 2 provided an account of the move towards Chavismo. Thus following 40 years of stormy economic and political strife, the two party system – and its links with neoliberalism – were voted against with a country seeking change. In 1998, however, Chavismo was not openly radical; it was over time in government that the policies became increasingly radical, advocating both the move towards “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism” and the “communal state”. Old political parties still existed, but had to make way to new political parties, which quickly became more dominant in the new political landscape. In Chacao, both CLPP and CC participants (with one exception) identified that they rejected Chavismo and its advocacy of socialism. CLPP participants in Libertador and CC participants in La Silsa described that they were very much in favour of Chavismo.

### Government traditions

Chavismo, as a political movement, increasingly sought to establish alternative institutions to the existing federal government with the aim of establishing the “communal state” as part of the move towards “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism”. In Chacao, CLPP and CC participants expressed scepticism of the motivations behind the

communal state and rejected this ideology. Common in participants' responses was the idea of the long-term goal of Chavismo was to substitute the municipality for communal state structures. Participants expressed their desire to preserve the existing federal state structure. The findings also showed that the *role* of political representative was a government tradition that was given particular importance by councillors. Councillors understood their role as a tradition of political representation within the system of federal government. This shaped their view of their relationship with civil society. La Silsa's participants highlighted the perceived *absence* of government in their neighbourhood as a defining element why they consequently supported Chavismo and its subsequent moves towards building the communal state. Supporting Chavismo, and its goals, was understood as a way of continuing the new linkages developed with municipal and national governments.

#### State-civil society relationship

La Silsa's CC participants expressed that community links with national and municipal governments failed to exist before Chavismo. Participants believed that La Silsa was subject of historical community marginalization by previous administrations (national and local). CLPP participants in Libertador did not discuss this matter other than expressing that they wished for the CLPP relationship to be better supported by the mayor and the municipal government.

In Chacao, both CC and CLPP participants stated their relationship with municipal government, in particular, was very strong. La Silsa's CC participants expressed more affinity and interest in exploring alternatives to representative forms of democracy. Findings showed that La Silsa CCs provided participants with new ways of choosing community representatives (in CCs and the emerging *comuna*); a sense of community spirit and belonging; and, most importantly, a means of dialogue with municipal and national governments, which enhanced participants' sense of ownership over the way their local community would be developed. These resemble Lacabana's (2009) findings. Chacao's participants essentially wished for pre-Chavismo forms of state-civil society relations to be maintained (in Chacao) or re-established (in places where traditional state-civil society relationships were not prevalent). Unlike Chacao, La Silsa participants expressed a desire for taking decision making control away from traditional representatives and government and putting it in the hands of the community in a form of direct democracy seen to be being established.

The concept of tradition has been useful in identifying that:

- Councillors have been socialised<sup>64</sup> into their role. Regardless of the political party they belonged to, they shared very similar views of their role in relation to the community;
- The previous state-civil society relations provided a solid base to understand how participants would then draw on their beliefs with regard to dilemmas occurring out of CC and CLPP practices.
- Actors' traditions did not determine their subsequent actions. A clear example was the way in which community participants in Chacao formed a JPC (contrary to their stated beliefs and traditions) in order to re-establish the CLPP (discussed further below).

Critics of Bevir and Rhodes have expressed that the concept of tradition is difficult to operationalize (Kjaer 2011; Wagenaar 2012). Kjaer (2011 pg 108) suggests that (Bevir and) Rhodes' concept of tradition needs to be supplemented with additional tools for analysis, such as exploring the socio-economic conditions that actors face. She argues that it is important to combine institutions and political agency and ask how and why political actors live by the rules and how they seek to or succeed in affecting them (Kjaer 2011 pg 106). Again, this provides further weight to Hay's model because it does incorporate institutionalist components where the interpretivist dimension is fuzzier in this regard.

Bevir and Rhodes (2012 pg 204) state that traditions enable explanation of beliefs, actions and practices. But the 'looseness' of the concept of tradition is further exemplified when Bevir and Rhodes (2012) state that scholars need to *choose* traditions which will provide a narrative for the clearest explanation they wish to make. It is likely this level of subjectiveness of 'traditions' that critics, particularly institutionalists, take issue with. Nonetheless, Bevir and Rhodes (2008 pg 730) argue that the concept of 'structure' is also vague and embodies a tendency to draw causal properties which they feel is unreflective of the 'fuzziness' of everyday life.

The findings show that traditions have been particularly important in the way CLPP

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<sup>64</sup> This is derived from Bevir and Rhodes (2006 pg7) definition of tradition: 'We define a tradition, therefore, as a set of understandings someone receives during socialization'. Rhodes (2011b) describes how this occurred in the context of civil service and ministerial practices in British Government. It refers to how organisational characteristics, practices and knowledge are passed from one generation to another – such as a more experienced colleague describing 'how things work around here' to a new starter.

and CC participants have interpreted and acted within these political spaces. As a conceptual component within Hay's model, I consider that there is scope to give more emphasis to traditions. The concept encapsulates not only the myriad individual traditions that a participant has been exposed to, but also the institutional configurations within contexts such as CLPPs and CCs. Their rules, whether formal or informal, encapsulate traditions (such as the role of political members, for example). The dynamic transition between the individual and collective is something that institutionalism and interpretivism do not generally account for: interpretivists emphasise the individual, institutionalists the collective. As will be discussed in 9.2.3, placing greater emphasis on traditions, in conjunction with dilemmas, enhances Hay's model whilst supporting Bevir and Rhodes (2012 pg 202) contention that doing so provides a means of explaining how contestable narratives and accounts can be for socially constructed matters.

### *Dilemmas*

Bevir and Rhodes (2003; 2006; 2010) and Hay (2011) use the concept of 'dilemma' in order to convey where change occurs in the model. For Bevir and Rhodes the way actors respond to dilemmas, within a situated context, is dependent on their own traditions and (webs of) beliefs. The way actors act is dependent on a) whether they change their beliefs as a result of the dilemma and act accordingly, or b) reject changing their beliefs as a result of the dilemma and contest the cause of the dilemma. The findings described that participants' encountered dilemmas in CLPPs and CCs. The concept was particularly useful in understanding how participants interpreted legislation and decided to act either in accordance or in divergence from it. During interviews, participants often provided their reasoning in relation to a certain dilemma. They did so by drawing on, and expressing, their beliefs.

Dilemmas identified in the findings can be summarised as follows:

- Dilemmas encountered by CLPP participants:
  1. Legislative reforms affecting CLPP composition
  2. Design and implementation of elections
  3. Roles, remit and legitimacy between political and community members

- Dilemmas encountered by CC participants:
  1. CCs' links with Chavismo
  2. Changes in state-civil society relationships and structure

The first of the three CLPP dilemmas related to the way in which the CLPP had been subjected to three legislative changes within a relatively short space of time (eight years). Hay (2011) pointed out that Bevir and Rhodes do not pay sufficient attention to where new ideas may come from. This has implications for providing an account for the origins of CLPP dilemma 1. It is here that drawing from the institutionalist dimension in Hay's model provides some insight. Lowndes and Roberts' (2013 pg 202) argue that by adopting a more holistic view of institutional change (as opposed to only one form of explanation) 'significant change may result from internal as well as external drivers'. The impetus for change was not dependent on the specific interaction of participants in the CLPPs of Chacao or Libertador because the change was a result of a change in legislation coming from national government. The origin of the dilemma related to CLPP composition can be attributed to the exogenous rule changes brought about by new legislation. However, it does not account for how participants responded to the dilemma. For this explanation we need to draw on participants' beliefs and traditions. Hay's model therefore allows for the institutional and interpretive dimensions to be accommodated and accounted for theoretically.

The findings provided several examples where this was the case (see section 7.4.1 for full discussion). The following example is the most illustrative: the way Chacao participants negotiated the need to form a JPC in order to comply with the 2010 reform. JPCs were understood by Chacao participants to be part of the communal state, which they opposed. This can be understood to be related to their beliefs and traditions (see tables 9.1 and 9.2). This shows that participants had to negotiate the dilemma drawing on the other ideational components in order to understand the opportunities that the new rules (2010 reform) would enable them to re-establish the CLPP, which was a mechanism of participation that they regarded as positive.

CLPP dilemmas 2 and 3 related to introducing citizen participation into arenas traditionally composed only of politicians (mayors and councillors). The existing roles and remit of councillors and mayors had not changed in the municipal legislature (CM) and executive, respectively. From the ideational dimension, these



roles and remits could be considered traditions. The transmission of traditions established a set of beliefs and practices that councillors adhered to. It did not, however, mean that councillors would necessarily conform. This was dependent on the dilemmas councillors were presented with.

The introduction of the CLPP provided politicians with an additional council role at the municipal level. Given that decision-making powers lay principally in the CM, councillors questioned the extent to which community representatives could make decisions in the CLPP. One of the most notable findings was that, regardless of their political affiliation, there was little difference in the way councillors in Libertador and Chacao understood their role. It is clear from the findings, that in terms of decision-making capability, councillors wielded more power than community members. The interpretive institutionalist model has been helpful in identifying and providing an account of why councillors have acted and understood their roles to be such.

From an institutionalist perspective, Lowndes and Roberts (2013) consider power may be established through practices, regulation (rules), or storytelling (dominant narratives). According to Bevir and Rhodes 'power' should not be reduced to interests people may have beyond the situation within which they are located. Accordingly, they state:

*power can refer to the way in which traditions impact on individuals' beliefs helping to define them, their actions, and the world. Power refers here to the constitutive role played by tradition in giving us our beliefs and actions, and in making our world (Bevir and Rhodes 2010 pg76).*

In this case the tradition can refer to the role of councillors and the CM (as identified in chapter 7). Bevir and Rhodes (ibid) also note that power can be drawn from 'the restrictive consequences of the actions of others in defining what we can and cannot do'. Political representatives and community members will be restricted in their actions in one way or another by what other actors enable them to do. Generally institutionalists would state that the agency of participants is constrained by institutions, and of the power dynamics among actors within it. Yet, Bevir and Rhodes warn that institutionalists often conflate agency fixed by norms and do not take into account the contingency of actors' actions underpinned by their ideational interpretations. They are 'not contingent on the particular beliefs and actions of

people at a particular time' (ibid). Drawing on dilemmas as a result of beliefs and traditions enables explanation that is temporal, historical and describing patterns of action through time within their specific and local contexts (Bevir and Rhodes 2010 pg 77).

Hay's model was useful in identifying the narrative behind councillors' response to the dilemma(s) they faced. It enabled links to be made between the rule changes (institutional dimension) and participants' beliefs and reasons to how they responded to them (ideational dimension). The rules in form were important for providing participants the opportunities and constraints to take part in the CLPP. However, CLPP dilemma 1 showed that Chavismo created rules in form granting the ability for elected community members to share a deliberative space for municipal planning with local politicians. CLPP dilemma 2 showed that electoral procedures were important and needed to be accepted between types of members in order to avoid questions of legitimacy. However, both dilemmas generate a question that is likely to be ever present in CLPP dynamics: could councillors and community members ever consider one another's roles and remit legitimate?

In relation to these perspectives, we can see that councillors have drawn on their traditions (as political representatives and drawing on their tradition of this role in the CM) in order to constrain the agency of community members (either by inaction in the CLPP; by overturning decisions made in the CLPP plenary in the CM; or by revoking funding for projects). Community members obviously sought to maximise their agency within the CLPP. However, councillors described that community members assumed roles and made capacity for decision-making which they considered inappropriate (beyond their duty). Councillors viewed their agency and decision making capability above that of community members. This is drawn from councillors' individual actions according to the beliefs, traditions and context within which they were situated. In order for the CLPP community members to be accepted by political representatives within the CLPP would require political representatives to change their beliefs (about their role and what the role of community members entails).

The data showed that both of the CC dilemmas were derived from the way in which participants interpreted CCs, and the subsequent way in which Chavismo sought to change state-civil society relations, with particular emphasis on citizen participation. The findings showed that Chacao's participants, due to their traditions and beliefs

(good, historical municipal-community organisation links; political affiliation with opposition), initially viewed CCs with scepticism. Their later actions to formulate CCs were in response to a dilemma (the ability of Chavistas – a minority locally - to establish a CC in their area). Despite their political beliefs, scepticism of Chavismo and tradition of good engagement with the municipal government, CCs were established. Actors' actions reflected a response to the specific dilemma they perceived. In this scenario, the creation of CCs by themselves was better than leaving it to others (Chavistas) who may use CCs for their own (political) ends. An institutionalist account may not have focused on the way participants responded and acted, particularly in this example where participants acted contrary to their stated beliefs. The role of institutional opportunities and constraints play a smaller part in explaining actors' response compared with the ideational components.

Hay's model has been key to identifying the links between the institutional and ideational dimensions, which interpretive or institutionalist theories alone would not do. Actors drew on their traditions and beliefs and acted according to their situated context. Conversely, the ideational reasoning in La Silsa was that without establishing CCs there would be very little improvement of state-civil society relations. Participants expressed affinity to Chavismo for providing them the opportunity to establish new mechanisms for engagement.

### **9.2.3 Developing Hay's model: increasing the role of 'traditions'**

So far, with regard to the findings, I have discussed that the model has been useful in identifying:

- CLPP and CC practices that showed that 'rules in use' did not always conform to CLPP and CC legislation. From an institutionalist perspective, it can be understood that 'informal rules in use' were practiced.
- The model enabled a way of understanding, and conceptualising, how different, contingent configurations of 'rules in use' versus 'rules in form' in practice may generate a dilemma. But there is a need to understand the relationship with traditions. This supports Hay's assertion that institutional failures, i.e. deviations from the intended rules in form or practice, would lead to dilemmas.
- Five dilemmas from the case studies. Participants acted and responded to the context and dilemmas they faced showing accordance with the

interpretivist stance that their actions were a result of ideational reasoning.

- The ideational dimension of the model enabled accounts for explaining how actors reacted to contingent contexts, reforms or other moments of change - something which institutionalists argue is lacking in many forms of new institutionalist theory (Lowndes and Roberts 2013).
- The ideational dimension enabled the context of the reforms to increase citizen participation in Venezuela to be understood and explained through participants' traditions, beliefs and the dilemmas that occurred in practice.
- Participants presented reasons (e.g. for or against Chavismo) why they encountered dilemmas in relation to the practices of CLPP and CCs by drawing on their webs of beliefs. Traditions were also identified as being important, particularly for providing an explanation of the origin of the dilemmas faced by the two sets of actors.

The findings showed the importance of the interplay between the institutionalist and ideational dimensions of the model. But what is unclear is the convergence between the two dimensions regarding the relationship between the concepts 'practices', 'institutions' - 'rules in use/'rules in form' - and 'traditions'. According to Bevir, we have no way of knowing how actors will react to a rule or norm because they are entirely dependent on their own beliefs and traditions. Consequently, further analysis and discussion is required on the following:

1. The extent to which the concept 'tradition' incorporates participants' actions and how these become and/or shape the 'rules of the game' (and vice versa).
2. Describing shifts from the individual to collective/ systemic levels of analysis.

My analysis of the NI and interpretivist literature highlights considerable potential for convergence than either body of theory currently gives the other credit for. Interpretivists consider that practices, rules and institutions are simply the sum of individual actors drawing on their beliefs and traditions; changes occur in response to dilemmas. While institutionalists place 'institutions' at the centre of their analysis, they have also recognised that practices are dependent on actors' agency whether in conformity or contestation of institutional arrangements (Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker 2006; Leach and Lowndes 2007; Lowndes and Roberts 2013). In order to understand why 'tradition' can be a shared concept among interpretivists and

institutionalists, further scrutiny of the concepts 'rules, 'practices' and 'institutions' seeks to bridge the linguistic and conceptual gap.

**Rules:** "a norm of rule does not determine how people will understand it, let alone respond to it" (Bevir 2010 pg 267). Here Bevir emphasises that institutions do not exist outside of people - they exist as social constructions - and are entirely dependent on the ideational reasoning of actors. Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker (2006 pg 546) identified 'actors do not always follow rules, but they do know when they have broken them!' This implies that actors have knowledge and engage in reasoning for acting in a certain way – and is clearly something that institutionalists are aware of. Furthermore, Leach and Lowndes (2007 pg 185) state:

*But, rules-in-use often vary considerably from rules-in-form. Effective political institutions are those that are 'lived' by political actors: their strength does not rely upon pieces of paper or other physical artefacts – they find expression simply as the conventions or 'unwritten rules' of daily life. They are, however, more than personal habits: they are shared among actors and can be articulated by them. Rules-in-use are, in short, the distinctive ensemble of 'dos and don'ts that one learns on the ground' (Ostrom, 1999: 38). [my emphasis]*

The quotation provides another indication that interpretivists and institutionalists share similar conceptual apparatus but use different language. It highlights that that 'rules in use' are shared among actors, and from generation to generation, in the same way that interpretivists describe socialisation of 'traditions'.

**Practices** are defined 'as a set of actions, often a set of actions that exhibit a pattern, perhaps even a pattern that remains relatively stable across time' (Bevir and Rhodes 2010 pg 452). In short, it is what people do by drawing on their beliefs. Because people draw on their beliefs and act for reasons of their own, Bevir and Rhodes (2010 pg 75) consider that practices cannot provide explanation of actions. Nonetheless, there is also indication that this points towards the creation of a collective arena: "'Practice" suggests that people act in social contexts: when they attempt to perform an action, their ability to succeed often depends on how others act' (Bevir 2010a pg 267). Thus even from the interpretive perspective we begin to see the emergence of a transition from the individual to the collective.

**Institutions** are considered 'contingent and possibly competing webs of belief' (Bevir and Rhodes 2010 pg 266). Because the concept of 'institution' can be 'decentred' into traditions, dilemmas and practices – which refer to beliefs - Bevir (2010a pg 85) states that 'institutions' would be best considered as 'practices'. In contrast to institutions, which Bevir argues are often considered to have fixed content or embody social norms, practices are contingent and embody the situated agency of those involved. Bevir (and Rhodes) makes it clear he is averse to calling the collective actions of individuals 'institutions', as opposed to 'practices', but that they encompass very similar denotations. Likewise, Leach and Lowndes (2007 pgs 184-185) argue that political institutions provide frameworks of understandings which actors use to identify, compare and select courses of actions but these do not determine the behaviour of actors.

Bevir and Rhodes (2010 pg 78) consider that institutionalists have been 'slow' in recognising the importance of meanings, and for this reason they are 'not sure how they would think of traditions'. They argue if institutionalists emphasise the systemic as opposed to an individual level, there is a need for explanation of how meanings can exist beyond the individual. Bevir (1999 pg 196) emphasises that traditions originate, develop, and fade due to individuals' beliefs. And traditions are accepted, continued with, changed or rejected for individuals' personal reasons. Yet the concept of 'tradition', as described by Bevir (and colleagues), suggests that it is predominantly a 'collective' entity.

Bevir and Richards (2009 pg 10) define a "governmental tradition" as 'a set of inherited beliefs about the institutions and history of government' [my emphasis]. First of all is the acknowledgment from interpretivists that 'institutions' exist, especially within the context of government. Bevir and Rhodes have typically considered that to use the concept of 'institution' is to reify individuals' actions, beliefs, traditions and processes within which they are engaged (Bevir 1999; Bevir and Rhodes 2010). Again, to reiterate, Bevir (2010b pg 453) states there is a need to 'unpack...[traditions] as systematic extra-individual level meanings, [while institutionalists] need an analysis of how meanings can exist apart from for individual subjects'.

With regard to this point, Bevir and Rhodes (2010 pg 20) argue:

*...the state arises out of the diverse actions and practices inspired by varied beliefs and traditions. The state, or pattern of rule, is the contingent product*

*of diverse actions and political struggles informed by the beliefs of agents rooted in traditions. We identify new research topics suggested by our decentred analysis under the headings of the '3Rs' of rule, rationalities, and resistance. (pg 20) [my emphasis]*

Here the identification of practices, and then the incorporation of the concepts 'rules, rationalities and resistance' brings the interpretivist position, with regards to government and the state, closer to recent narratives of new institutionalism which advocates incorporating conceptions of agency (Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker 2006; Leach and Lowndes 2007; Lowndes and Roberts 2013). The following quotation from Lowndes and Roberts illustrates this clearly:

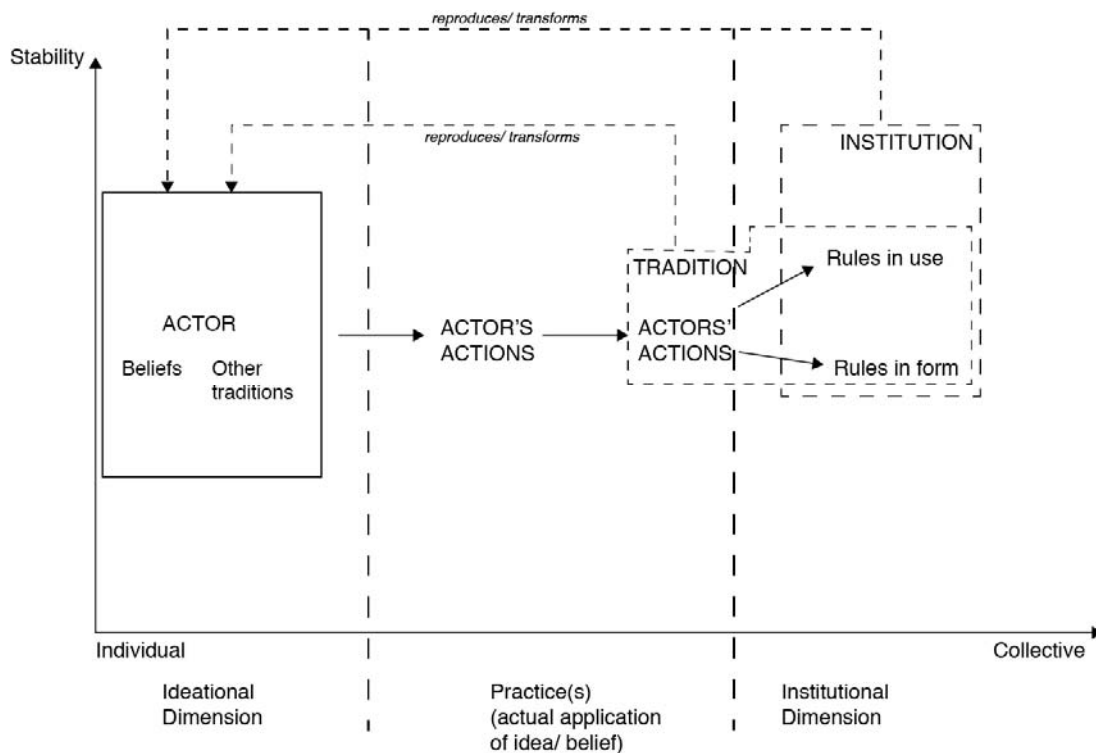
*[institutionalism needs] to address the frequent conceptual slippages between the notion of practices, or informal rules, and broader ideas of norms, culture, beliefs and values. One way ahead is to remember that practices share the core characteristics of other modes of institutional constraints...Practices are specific to a particular political setting, recognized and shared among actors within that setting, and are enforceable. As such, they are distinct from actors' personal values or broader cultural or normative tendencies within society. Actors' orientation to, and interpretation of, specific practices will, however, be influenced by these other elements. (Lowndes and Roberts 2013 pg 62) [my emphasis]*

Lowndes and Roberts argue here that practices are expressions of shared norms, beliefs and values of actors. The underlined sections indicate where Bevir and Rhodes have abstracted this in their concept 'tradition'. Figure 9.1 seeks to illustrate the linkages between traditions and institutions. The diagram aims to show the way actor's actions can become practices, which in turn can become traditions and/or institutions. Bevir and Rhodes have not clearly identified such individual-collective linkages. It is envisaged that the boxes for traditions and institutions can shift up and down (independently or together) according to their respective level of stability. Levels of stability may indicate where actors' ideational reasoning reproduces practices, traditions and/or institutions. The transition from the ideational (individual) level to the collective level involves 'socialization' to some extent, where one generation passes on the 'way things work around here' (Rhodes 2011b). Socialization may indicate higher levels of stability. To educate future generations implies that the properties being communicated have existed for a period of time

and are considered stable enough to be transferred to another generation. Conversely, *transformation* may occur where actors' reasoning leads to a rejection or change in the practices and institutional dynamics (as a result of dilemmas). Any new tradition is a result of actors' ideational reasoning (as a result of their beliefs, other traditions and dilemmas faced). The aggregative result of actors' individual reasoning and actions will shape the practices and rules in use (institutions) that they take part in alongside other actors.

So following this analysis I can identify three characteristics of a tradition:

1. Traditions are 'collective' entities, as they are shared by more than one individual or actor
2. The concept implies that some form of temporal stability occurs, given that its properties are transmitted from one generation to another
3. Transmission involves 'storytelling' to communicate its properties from one generation to the next.



**Figure 9.1** Links between traditions and institutions and individual and collective dimensions.



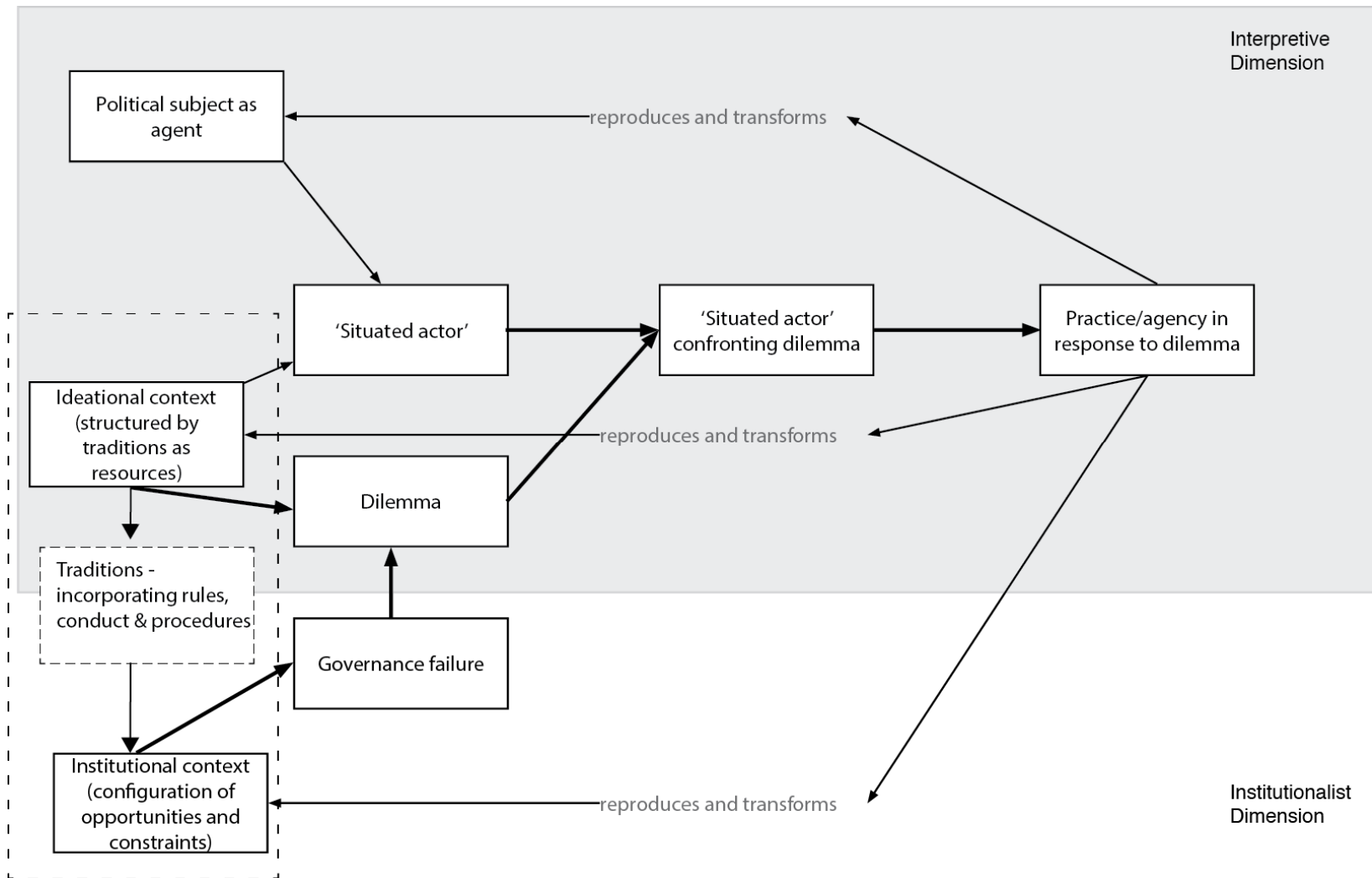


Figure 9.2 Hay's interpretive institutionalist model with added emphasis on tradition

So how do the above discussion and the characteristics identified provide additional nuance to Hay's model? Figure 9.2 provides an illustration where the additional emphasis of tradition would be added to Hay's model (see dashed box to the left). Firstly, we can understand that 'traditions', because they are transmitted from one generation to another, must be embodied in one way or another. The 'rules in use' could therefore be considered a 'tradition'. The rules in use are 'practices', which have arisen from actors drawing on their beliefs and acting accordingly. Currently, Hay's model indicates that 'traditions' are resources that actors draw upon in the ideational dimension (see figure 4.2), but it does not sufficiently highlight the link between traditions and institutional configurations that may themselves be, or comprised of a number of traditions. Secondly, the tradition can allow an additional way of conceptualising the link between the individual and collective/ systemic levels. The third characteristic of traditions identified the existence of traditions tend to imply modes of action or knowledge that has some relative form of stability. It therefore provides a way of conceptualising the link between the individual and collective modes of actions. This is something that Bevir and Rhodes have been particularly poor in describing. Consequently, this link may assist interpretivists and institutionalists make the linkages between institutional/structural/systemic levels and the individual. Diagram 9.2 illustrates this additional link to Hay's model.

To reiterate, Hay argues that where Bevir and Rhodes emphasise the contingency of ideas actors deal with, they do not explain where these ideas will come from. Hence Hay introduced institutional failures as a way of linking to 'dilemmas'. In agreement with Hay, my view is that the interpretive institutionalist model does not disavow the concept of 'institutions' or the fact that institutions and their configurations can influence actors. The institutional configurations are a result of actors' (whether the same or different) previous ideational activity and action. However, it has been identified that there is scope for the identification of 'traditions' to be more important within the model. Just as dilemmas can be said to be important where 'ideas come from', so too is the nature and content of traditions and how these are contested according to actors' beliefs and dilemmas generated.

### 9.3 CLPP AND CC PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Scholars have described how Venezuelan politics are highly contested and demonstrate significant struggles between elites and non-elites and their respective political interests and motivations (Cannon 2004; García Guadilla 2005). The findings in chapters 7 and 8 described that these factors remain an extremely important dynamic in understanding political understandings and behaviour in Venezuela. Yet what can the experience of participants in CLPPs and CCs tell us about participatory democracy, citizen participation in public policy and planning and the agency that participants have been provided with in these new mechanisms? Furthermore, what can this tell us about institutions, institutional design and change?

Drawing from Negri (1999), Chavismo considers representative government to be 'bureaucratic' and a form of 'pseudo democracy' compared to popular or constituent power which in Venezuela's context is argued to be "real, direct, effective, participatory and protagonistic democracy of the people...to control the implementation of public policy"<sup>65</sup> (Acosta Rico 2012 pg 25). As Negri argues, representation suppresses the true democratic spirit and essence of constituent power. Chavismo sees its current position as a process towards 'socialism' (it concedes it is not there yet). Within this understanding, the two concepts, constituent and constituted powers, should work in tandem seeking to close the gap between citizens and political representatives whilst seeking to transfer increasing competencies and powers towards arrangements and instances of constituent power (Acosta Rico 2012).

Effectively, Chavismo has sought to set in motion a process which may lead to overcoming representative government, which itself was considered undemocratic by its founding fathers (Manin 1997 pg 236). Increasing citizen participation, therefore, was considered a means to overcome representative democracy's 'undemocratic elements' (Acosta Rico 2012; Negri 1999). Yet, any process of more direct forms of democracy needs to deal with representative governments' key principle of enabling elected members to act independently of public opinion whilst undertaking their role as decision makers (Manin 1997).

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<sup>65</sup> democracia real, directa, efectiva, participativa y protagónica del pueblo soberano...para controlar la implementación de políticas públicas" (Acosta Rico 2012 pg 25).

Manin provides useful concepts to understand the differences between elected representatives and citizens or spokespeople within mechanisms such as CLPPs or CCs. The difference is one between “absolute representation” and “self government”. This also reflects Negri and Chavismo’s “constituted” versus “constituent” power. Absolute representation is where citizens secure political agency and self expression only through their political representative, whereas self-government is described as one of citizens being able to act and make unadulterated decisions without a political intermediary or representative (Manin 1997 pgs 172-174).

The following sub-sections provide further discussion regarding the CLPP and CC findings within the context of democratic theory.

### **9.3.1 CLPP discussion**

Though CLPPs were not conceived as a mechanism for direct democracy, they were certainly regarded as shared spaces between community spokespeople and elected representatives. CLPPs sought to bridge the gap between the electorate and the electorate’s representation. The tensions and inequalities described in the findings, where councillors saw and understood their role to be supported by law (drawing on their beliefs and traditions), ensured that CLPPs remained spaces where decision making was undertaken by political representatives. Manin’s description of representative government as a system of decision making is useful here:

*...in contrast to what both common sense and democratic ideology affirm, representative democracy is not an indirect form of government by the people...is thus the concept of passing judgment that best describes the role assigned to the community, whether to the people itself or to its representatives. Representative democracy is not a system in which the community governs itself, but a system in which public policies and decisions are made subject to the verdict of the people. (Manin 1997 pg 192)*

Within CLPPs, mayors and councillors are elected as political representatives at the municipal level according to the principles of representative democracy outlined above. While mayors in Chacao and Libertador met Manin’s (1997) first principle of representative democracy (regular election), councillors did not. Because the national electoral council had not convened elections for councillors, but instead

provided a series of extensions to their terms in office, there was a failure to adhere to this first principle of representation. CLPP community members were critical that councillors did not undergo re-election, while these councillors also questioned the way in which community members were elected, especially in Chacao. Those in Libertador stated that councillors could not criticise community members' lack of elections when councillors were in the same position. The fulfilment of the basic requirements of representative democracy at the municipal level in Venezuela was inadequate, and this led to reproaches (dilemmas) within the CLPPs studied based on participants' individual beliefs and traditions.

Salazar Calderón (2013 pg 33) argues the need for CLPP community members to be 'elected "directly" in free and democratic elections'. She implies that CLPP community member elections '[are] not fair, democratic or direct' because members are elected from within CCs<sup>66</sup> internally and not elections held throughout the municipality. González Marregot (2013) calls for community member elections to be subject to the procedures set out in the by-laws of each CLPP. While this may respect the autonomy of CLPPs and their ability to define their own internal norms it is unlikely to resolve the issue of how politicians and community members see themselves as distinct types of members. The MUD<sup>67</sup> emphasises that the constantly changing legislative landscape, and exclusiveness (pro-poor; political bias) of Chavismo's popular power mechanisms, are contributing factors for the scant uptake of CLPPs in Venezuela. Identifying this dilemma about elections – and ultimately about the nature of representation and who is 'representative' – within CLPPs is not going to be resolved easily. Furthermore, given that community members serve a partial (and voluntary) municipal level function, politicians have quite distinct full-time roles and responsibilities: the mayor leads the municipal executive whilst the councillors work in the CM and their assigned sub-committees. Venezuelan scholars (González Marregot 2013; Salazar Calderón 2013) writing on CLPPs fail to address the differences in agency and power that this entails<sup>68</sup>.

According to Myers' (2014 pg 239), Chavismo has consistently demonstrated a problem with 'follow-through and the implementation of government

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<sup>66</sup> This is what Salazar Calderón states (2013 pg 29), but it could be any other 'organised community organisation' as stated in the CLPP law (2010).

<sup>67</sup> Disclaimer: González Marregot is the MUD's citizen participation policy advisor.

<sup>68</sup> In our correspondence via email on various CLPP matters following my analysis, I sought Miguel González Marregot's opinion (as the MUD policy advisor, leading scholar, and advocate of CLPPs) on this matter but he failed to answer.

programs...When he [Chávez] turned his attention elsewhere the *misiones* [social programmes] stagnated'. My view underpinned from observing CLPP meetings and listening to CLPP participants (informally and interviews) is that CLPPs have been largely ignored by national government since 2006. First of all, as scholars and my findings show, Chavismo sought to extend citizen participation via CCs. The way CCs were designed (direct national-neighbourhood link) would circumvent the dilemma that was generated in CLPPs between community and political representatives.

The spaces for citizen participation that national government concentrated on during fieldwork were CCs and *comunas*. *Comunas* were Chávez's main focus in the period 2010 until his death<sup>69</sup>. My understanding was that since 2006, and the emergence of CCs, CLPPs were no longer interpreted as a radical mechanism. Municipalities, such as Chacao, have been keen to incorporate CLPPs in their institutional repertoire because they can provide an element of citizen participation whilst protecting the representative structure and sovereignty of the municipal tier of federal government. As the findings showed, the CLPP in Libertador was barely operational. Interviews with participants highlighted that CCs and the emerging *comunas* were receiving much greater national and municipal government attention. Libertador's CLPP participants accounts corresponded with Myers' (2014) observation of Chavismo's tendency to let certain mechanisms or programmes languish if its attention is directed elsewhere.

Given that many municipalities in Venezuela have failed to implement CLPPs, or where they have they exist with dilemmas (as the findings and previous studies show). Some of those implemented eventually stop operating, such as the CLPP in the pilot study Baruta, due to political opposition at the demise of JPs within the municipal governance structure. This situation raises an important question: *Why do CLPPs continue to exist?* On the side of Chavismo, my interpretation is that CLPPs seem to be an innocuous entity for Chavismo; they do provide a space for citizen participation to a certain extent. For this reason CLPPs can still be considered to fall under Chavismo's umbrella of 'participatory and protagonistic democracy'. It is also

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<sup>69</sup> Chávez constantly stated "*comuna o nada*", publically. Here he was referring to the need for the construction of communes. Without them 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism or the communal state would not be created. He also provided a speech, following his presidential win in 2012, referred to as the *Golpe de Timón*. This described his vision for rectifying the slow progress of implementing the communal state. It was also transcribed and published and circulated in a little booklet by the government (MINCI 2012).

clear that Chavismo has designed, and is in the process of building, an alternative system of mechanisms granting citizen participation (communal state involving CCs and *comunas*).

My understanding is that CLPPs remain within the governance framework at the municipal level because, at the time of fieldwork, alternative means of coordinating projects had not yet been devised. For example, beyond the national government ministry for *comunas* or CFG there was no body to coordinate community based projects. I believe that the CLPP served this purpose. A second reason I believe that national government had not revoked CLPPs was that CLPPs were described in the 1999 Constitution as a means of citizen participation, and in subsequent laws as a component of Popular Power. To revoke an entity of this type, with no clear alternative, could be understood to be reneging a means of 'participatory and protagonistic democracy'. The findings showed participants, particularly community members, promoted CLPPs as a means of municipal level participation. In addition, the MUD (as a coalition of political parties seeking to win elections against the PSUV/Chavismo) also continued to support CLPPs.

*Why are CLPPs popular in strongholds of the opposition?* Firstly, the MUD describes the municipality as a space of participation for local residents, CCs, technical committees, and other community organisations (MUD 2013 pg 11). The MUD election manifesto also states that the CLPP is one of these spaces, which can coordinate the interests of various community based organisations (MUD 2013 pgs 11-12). The MUD argues that CLPPs are not being used to the best of their potential. CLPPs should be promoting 'municipal autonomy and decentralisation'. In doing so CLPPs 'will be rescued as instances of participation, coordination and evaluation of public programmes under a inclusive, responsible and plural process'<sup>70</sup> (MUD 2013 pg 162). My interpretation of this statement, based on the data collected, is that the opposition (and its supporters) considers the processes of Chavismo as exclusive (pro-poor; in favour of Chavista supporters) and centralising (by registering and administering CCs and *comunas* via the national ministry and agencies). My data showed considerable scepticism about the nature, role and purpose of establishing an alternative to the existing federal government, and most importantly, of the potential in reducing the sovereignty and capabilities of municipal

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<sup>70</sup> Los CLPP merecen serán [sic] rescatados y empleados como instancias de planificación, concertación y evaluación de los programas públicos bajo un enfoque incluyente, responsable y plural.

government. The communal state promoted by Chavismo was seen to be constructing an alternative that would put municipal governments in jeopardy<sup>71</sup>.

The findings on the way CLPPs have enacted citizen participation have important consequences for the broader domain of the design of democratic innovations and democratic theory. Though CLPPs may deal with CCs' projects, this relationship is not strong compared with that of CCs and *comunas*. The way that Chavismo has conceptualised 'participation', has evolved since CLPPs were introduced. Chavismo's focus has been on creating alternative innovations and spaces for participation, which seek to break beyond traditional representative democratic mechanisms or those that are still dominated by political representatives, such as the CLPP. Chavismo's communal state has created a vast divide in legislative and procedural processes since the CLPP was first envisaged. For scholars such as Romero Mendoza (2010) and González Marregot (2013) such developments in Venezuela are unconstitutional, and diminish the importance of the municipality.

### 9.3.2 CC discussion

CCs emerged at a time when Chavismo sought to increase both socialism and overcome difficulties (power differences or complete inaction) faced in mechanisms such as CLPPs (MINCI 2008). Acosta Rico argues that CCs form part of the emerging communal state structure to overcome representative democracy. It stems from the political tradition of socialism, which its advocates believe will overcome the issue of political representation's shortcomings:

*The creation of new systems, ways of doing things, or mechanisms of socio-political participation of community actors, such as CCs, provides a counter-hegemonic concept and perspective. These [mechanisms] provide the possibility of deepening democracy in a concrete, pragmatic and realistic manner which will overcome the tired model of representative [democracy]. This will lead to new paths towards a participatory democracy...and new mechanisms of self-governing socialism.*<sup>72</sup> (Acosta Rico 2012 pg 179

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<sup>71</sup> Chavismo's long-term goal is to get rid of the federal state and replace it with the communal state. This implies new territorial spaces, not re-configurations of the existing federal state.

<sup>72</sup> La creación de nuevos sistemas, formas o mecanismos de participación socio-política de los actores comunitarios bajo una perspectiva contra-hegemónica en su concepción, tal como lo representan los Consejos Comunales, posibilita una profundización de lo democrático de manera concreta, pragmática, realista haciendo que este concepto supere el agotado modelo de la mera



Brewer-Carías (2010), one of Venezuela's fiercest critics of Chavismo, considers that CCs are under direct presidential control and suffocate local governments because of their close links to the president. He also claims:

*[that Chavismo] deliberately confuses the instruments of direct democracy with effective political participation. That is why the citizen's assemblies and the communal councils, which began to be established in 2006, have gradually replaced local governments, being in contrast, directed from the center, and without any general electoral representative origin (Brewer-Carías pg 98-99).*

To put this in context, he also states choosing people from assemblies<sup>73</sup> 'of course, that is not democracy, as there can be no democracy without the election of representatives' (ibid pg 67). His understanding of democracy equating representation is prevalent throughout his book. Although Brewer-Carías can be considered as one of the most critical scholars of CCs, the communal state and Chavismo, this reasoning is also prevalent in the MUD's election manifesto (MUD 2013). The opening sentence under the heading 'basic principles' is 'the Venezuelan municipality is the primary political unit of national organization, with legal character, autonomy and a democratic government'<sup>74</sup> (MUD 2013 pg 8). This is later followed by emphasis that the municipality represents 'self government and popular sovereignty of the people' [as opposed to communal power entities]. Furthermore, the manifesto criticizes Chavismo directly:

*The current national government has taken away municipal [economic] resources that belong to the people...[and] the elimination of parish councils [JPs] and [created] centralist control of community organization and citizen participation...the attack against municipal governments is an intrinsic part of the communal state which is characterized by its centralism and authoritarianism and goes against the ability for people to freely elect their*

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representatividad y se encamine hacia senderos de una democracia participativa...un nuevo mecanismo de autogobierno socialista. (Acosta Rico 2012 pg 179)

<sup>73</sup> CCs' maximum internal decision-making forum is the 'citizen's assembly' (see section 2.5 for more detail).

<sup>74</sup> El Municipio venezolano es la unidad política primaria de la organización nacional, con personalidad jurídica, autonomía y con un gobierno democrático.

*local authorities*<sup>75</sup>. (MUD 2013 pg 8).

La Silsa's CC participants saw themselves as an integral part of the community's development and planning processes. Participants described that CCs had a role of identifying local neighbourhood issues and had the ability to seek funding and implement projects. CC participants worked in conjunction with the *comuna's* ST which provided technical support and enabled projects to secure approval, predominantly from the municipal government. Unlike Chacao, La Silsa's participants saw Chavismo and its CCs as fundamental in meeting the community's needs, goals and preferences. CCs were understood as a form of agency and engagement with municipal and/or national government that had not existed before; La Silsa's participants saw a shift in state-civil society relations as a result of Chavismo from political marginalisation to one of increased inclusiveness. The roles of municipal and national government were undoubtedly important in creating the environment and conditions that led La Silsa's participants to feel part of the Chavista project. CC participants argued that they saw the emerging *comuna* as an example where residents would be able to further their role in planning processes.

CC participants in Chacao regarded CCs as one of several civil society organisations that existed in the municipality. Their liaison with the municipal government was positive and one in which reflected a successful state-civil society relationship. This was one of the traditions (starting point) from which Chacao participants then reasoned with the reforms and the situation they faced. The findings showed how CLPP and CC actors' beliefs regarding participation were linked to the tradition of these good state-civil society relations. The political traditions and beliefs of participants were also shown to influence the way in which both CLPP and CC mechanisms were understood and ultimately implemented in practice. The dilemma(s) faced by Chacao's CCs with Chavismo can be understood as one in which local residents shared a historical political rivalry against its values and vision.

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<sup>75</sup> El actual gobierno nacional le ha quitado a nuestros Municipios los recursos que son de la gente... A ello se une la eliminación de la elección de las Juntas Parroquiales y el control centralista de la organización comunitaria y de la participación ciudadana... La arremetida contra el Municipio se inscribe dentro del proyecto del Estado Comunal caracterizado por su centralismo y autoritarismo, contrario al derecho de la gente a elegir libremente a sus autoridades locales.

The findings did not provide evidence of self-government as envisaged by the communal state. The role of municipal government in both municipalities was still extremely important, as were the powers of decision making by, those that Manin would term, “absolute representatives”. This shows that the established practices (traditions of representative democracy; of government and its bureaucracy) still played a key part in the implementation of planning and public policy, whether at neighbourhood, municipal or national level. Though certain individuals (such as La Silsa’s CC participants) expressed desire for alternative practices in the form of the communal state, these had not reached a level where existing practices and traditions could be superseded. The sum of ideational reasoning of these individuals – and others who came to similar beliefs - had not reached a tipping point to overcome the traditions and practices. Where institutionalists may argue that this is an example of ‘path dependency’, Bevir and Rhodes (2012) remind us that traditions and practices may exert stability over time and are the result of decisions/actions following actors’ ideational reasoning.

What has become apparent is that in Venezuela the increasing momentum for the communal state has co-existed alongside, rather than dismantle the federal, representative state. Acosta Rico’s description of Chavismo’s constituent/constituted powers model shares certain elements with Hendriks’ ‘vital democracy’ which is described as “[combining] models of democracy in a way that is both creative and contingent and, thus, manages to unite effectiveness with legitimacy” (Hendriks 2010 pg 134). Hendriks argues that reformers who fail to address the two components of being creative and contingent will not lead to success. Chavismo’s constituent/constituted power model enables a form of democracy that Hendriks would consider a hybrid (representative and participatory elements). And because the hybrid is not some ideal form either, and is contingent to its context, Hendriks would describe this as a ‘vital democracy’.

In the context of the findings, and of Hay’s model, we can understand Hendrik’s ‘vital democracy’ as a result of the contingency of action according to CLPP and CC participants’ beliefs and traditions. The traditions identified in table 9.2 (political, governmental, state-civil society relations) have shown to mean different things to different actors dependent on traditions and beliefs that they previously held. The five dilemmas that were identified in the findings meant participants’ acted in accordance or in divergence from these traditions and beliefs. Democratic practices are very unlikely to reflect utopic ideologies or intentions precisely because actors

reflect ideationally within a situated context. Deviations will therefore occur from utopic goals and ideologies. This has been the case so far in Venezuela: CLPPs have not met Chavismo's expectations; CCs have been positive in certain areas such as La Silsa but less so in Chacao.

But the results of the research have shown that in Venezuela - like Pogrebinski (2012) and Avritzer's (2010) findings in Brazil - participatory mechanisms such as CCs and the CLPP are reinforcing rather than replacing the institutions of representative democracy, which Chavismo seeks to remove as a long term goal. At the time of fieldwork, the role of national and local governments and their associated bureaucracies were extremely important. Despite the Chavista discourse of creating alternatives to representative democratic structures, the representative structures remained (except JPs which were controversially revoked in 2010). Furthermore, the findings showed that where the desire for participatory democracy was greatest (La Silsa), was when the community had received most government support (national and municipal government programmes as well as a community specific ST).

Baiocchi et al (2011 pg 1) argued that where participatory democracy was strong on normative, moral-philosophical grounds its empirical results and testing were weak and fragmented. Overall, the findings of the thesis have provided further empirical support to Baiocchi et al's argument. The findings showed that tensions occur when citizen participation is increased within existing models, practices and structures of representative democracy. This also supports the concepts outlined by scholars who argue that different models of democracy enacted in practice will manifest as some form of hybrid due to myriad contextual and contingent factors (Barber 2003; Hendriks 2010).

## 9.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provided an analysis of Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model drawing on the empirical findings presented in chapters 7 and 8. The concepts of two ontologically and epistemologically distinct theories of interpretivism and institutionalism were discussed in turn. It was found that there was considerably more overlap between the most recent literature regarding institutionalism (Hay 2006; Lowndes and Roberts 2013) and interpretivism (Bevir and Rhodes 2010) than either body of theory currently recognises or acknowledges. It was found that Hay's model was useful and thorough, but can be improved with an increased focus on traditions. The model enabled a way of understanding, and conceptualising, how different, contingent configurations of 'rules in use' versus 'rules in form' in practice may generate a dilemma. In doing so, it was identified that there was a need to emphasise the role of traditions because the analysis highlighted that in addition to 'dilemmas' these provided an important interface between the institutional and ideational dimensions of the model. An example identified was the way 'rules in use' could be embodied as a tradition. The analysis also identified a way of conceptualising shifts between the individual and collective/ systemic level which is of benefit to interpretivists and institutionalists who tend to focus on the former and latter, respectively.

Furthermore, the relationship between 'practices', 'rules in use' and 'traditions' were also found to support Hay's claim that his model enables an understanding of 'where ideas come from'. Therefore, Hay's model enables ideas to emanate not only from the relationship between dilemmas and institutional opportunities and constraints, but also from a refined analysis where the relationship between traditions and rules in use/practices are operationalized. Because of the two links between the interpretive and institutionalist dimensions (dilemmas and traditions) identified in the findings, it is considered that this provides a level of analysis that 'hybrid' scholars, interpretivists and institutionalists, should take into account.

Section 9.3 sought to place the findings from chapters 7 and 8 with regard to democratic theory. It emphasised the polarization that exists among scholars and political activists with regard to representative versus participatory democracy. Political polarization in Venezuela has meant that participants and scholars have been keen to demonize (in the case of opposition scholars and certain participants)

further attempts to establish participatory democratic mechanisms beyond CLPPs and CCs, such as *comunas*, with the aim of constructing the 'communal state'. In these cases the traditions (governmental, administrative, practices) of the representative state are fiercely guarded. This is at odds with communities, such as those in La Silsa, which are keen advocates of Chavismo and its processes. Findings showed that given the contingency of actors' beliefs and traditions and the context within which they were situated, CLPP and CC practices did not meet the high standards of normative goals of Chavismo and participatory democratic theorists. This was found to support democratic scholars' (Baiochi et al 2011; Hendriks 2010; Pogrebinschi 2012) findings on hybridity.

## **CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS**

### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

The thesis has established two theoretical contributions. The thesis provides a contribution to democratic theory by providing further insights about the challenges in designing, implementing and embedding mechanisms involving citizen participation, particularly about the tensions between representative and participatory forms of democracy. Supporting existing empirical studies, the thesis findings showed examples where democratic innovations demonstrate enhancing existing representative expressions of democracy rather than superseding them. The thesis also showed that operationalizing Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model in the Latin American context provided valuable analytical and theoretical insights. The second contribution highlights that although Hay's interpretive institutionalist model is sound, placing greater emphasis on 'traditions' can enhance it.

This chapter elaborates on these theoretical contributions and the empirical research findings. Section 10.2 provides an overview of the research. Section 10.3 discusses the empirical findings and contributions of the research. Section 10.4 discusses findings and contributions regarding the interpretive institutionalist model adopted in the thesis. Section 10.5 closes the chapter and presents potential avenues for future research.

### **10.2 RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

Since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, Chavismo brought about a number of key political and legislative changes via a new constitution and subsequent laws. Many of these changes sought to increase the level of citizen involvement in public planning and policy making. CLPPs and CCs, two of these reforms, formed the units of analysis of the thesis. The thesis research aims, objectives and research questions (see section 5.3) sought to establish participants' meanings and understandings of CLPP and CC processes, and their agency within these mechanisms. The research also sought to elicit what the planning processes meant to participants and whether they were able to achieve their respective needs and

preferences by participating in CLPPs and CCs.

In order to address these objectives and related research questions, the thesis adopted an interpretive institutionalist framework. This was based on a model developed by Hay (2011) which was supplemented with components drawn from new institutionalism [NI] (Lowndes 2005; Lowndes and Roberts 2013) and Bevir and Rhodes' strand of interpretivism (Bevir 1999; 2010a; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; 2012). It was considered that NI allows for a focus on underlying rules in use that shape the institutional boundaries to be understood. Interpretivism enables actors' ideational elements to be elicited, via the concepts of 'dilemmas', 'beliefs' and 'practices', which enable the researcher to establish individuals' reasons and 'narratives' for holding the beliefs they do – and in doing so understanding why they act in a particular way.

The research involved an extensive literature review (chapters 3-4) taking into account democratic, planning, NI and interpretivist theories. The review established that democracy has myriad meanings and permutations (Hendriks 2010). Chapter 3 outlined that Chavismo has adopted a conceptual model involving dual, "constituent/popular" powers. Elected representatives - belonging to the traditional federal state, referred to as "constituted/public" power, community/citizen agents are considered "constituent/popular" power. CLPPs and CCs were advocated as mechanisms that would increase constituent power. Chavismo responds to a worldview which participatory democratic advocates consider more community orientated modes of deliberation, formulation and action (Bevir 2010a; de Sousa Santos and Avritzer 2005; Mirafteb 2009; Friedmann 2011; Pateman 1970, 2012; Roy 2005).

The literature review showed that creating spaces for citizen participation can be problematic. Not only do the debates regarding the virtues of representative democracies versus participatory democracy arise, but also the local context provides a contingent factor that theories are unable to foresee. Hendriks (2010) considers that once implemented in practice normative ideals end up being hybrids of one form or another. The findings, discussed in section 10.3, support Hendriks' thesis. Additionally, the highly polarized and divisive nature of Venezuelan politics and society means that Chavismo's participatory mechanisms have not been implemented with approval across all sectors of society. In many cases they have been resisted by middle and upper classes for a perceived infringement on pre-



existing state-civil society and organisations (García Guadilla 2005; 2008ab).

The research was undertaken in a flexible, abductive, iterative and recursive manner involving prior knowledge (the literature review and theory) and data collected in the field. Fieldwork was undertaken between February and December 2013. The scope of the thesis encountered certain restraints, which arose principally due to the complex context presented during fieldwork in Venezuela. Nonetheless, fieldwork was undertaken with diligence, persistence and conscientiousness. Although described in detail in chapter 5, the following provides a reflective summary.

The first stage of fieldwork (February-April 2013) comprised a pilot study in Baruta, Caracas. This provided opportunity to adjust to the country (it was a first time visit) and test the various methods for data collection. Shortly after arriving in the field the death of President Chávez, subsequent presidential elections and transition to President Maduro provided an unprecedented situation. It also highlighted, and provided insight into, the country's extreme political polarization. The pilot study was key in establishing gatekeepers for the municipalities of Chacao and Libertador which became the locations chosen for the case studies. These municipalities were identified prior to arriving in the field as part of a systematic analysis of potential case locations.

The decision to remain in Caracas, as opposed to study other municipalities in Venezuela, emerged through the combination of a systematic analysis prior to entering the field as well as dealing with the 'reality' of fieldwork such as geographical location, transport constraints and whether CLPPs were operating at the time of fieldwork (see section 5.4.1). The case locations were chosen following an 'iterative, abductive approach', consistent with interpretive research (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

The fieldwork methods adopted were also consistent with interpretive approaches to data generation. Fieldwork research involved 68 semi-structured interviews with politicians, CLPP community members, CC participants, and municipal and Caracas Metropolitan government officers (see Appendix 1). Participant observation of CLPP and CC/*comuna* meetings (see Appendix 2) was also undertaken. Additionally, the research period involved systematic review of documentation relevant to CLPPs and CCs, such as municipal budgets and news reports. A fieldwork diary was

maintained which helped make sense of observations and interpretations of encounters in the field. This also helped make linkages to literature reviewed. The over-riding concern during fieldwork was personal safety and security. Attending CC meetings in the evenings in La Silsa was not considered appropriate for a single researcher, for example. This was also in conjunction with advice and practices of municipal government staff.

It is considered that the methodological and theoretical approach to the research provided an account that reflected participants' views and understandings. It is widely acknowledged that ethnographic/interpretivist research involves 'interpretations of interpretations' (Bevir 1999; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; Rhodes 2011b; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Data analysis involved grounding the data by 'making sense' (triangulation) of the data by checking my interpretations of observations and interviews with documentary review. This approach is widely accepted by interpretive scholars (Rhodes 2011b; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Furthermore, Hay's (2011) model provided a theoretical lens which enabled the context of cases in the global South to be studied by a researcher from the global north, and making sense of the data in a manner that would be consistent with the views of those in Venezuela. This is considered an additional benefit of Hay's model (see below for further discussion).

## **10.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **10.3.1 CLPPs**

CLPPs were the first citizen participation mechanism created by Chavismo. They sought to bring politicians together with members from community organisations into a municipal council. Using the concepts and components of the interpretive institutionalist framework (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; 2006; Hay 2011), it was possible to identify that CLPPs were conceived in different ways due to its constituent actors drawing from different traditions. The first tradition identified related to the way Chavismo linked new participatory mechanisms with the normative ideals of "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism". Consequently, in support of Bevir and Rhodes' interpretivism, participants accepted or rejected these traditions dependent on their own political beliefs. The second tradition found was the historical legacy and continuity of a representative democratic government, particularly the figures of councillors, mayors and their associated administrations. The third tradition related to the way in

which participants perceived and understood state-civil society relations as a result of Chavismo and its aims to reconfigure such relationships.

The CLPP in Chacao was found to have conformed to the requirements of the 2010 reform, whereas the CLPP in Libertador had not. According to the thesis framework, it was concluded that CLPP in Libertador operated using 'informal rules in use'. Because of participants' beliefs and traditions and the issues of conforming to the 2010 reforms, CLPP participants identified three sets of dilemmas.

The first dilemma related to the rapidly changing composition of CLPPs as a result of the reforms. Chavismo's intention to further establish the 'communal state' required substitution of parish council (JP) members with 'communal' parish council (JPC) members. Chacao's CLPP managed to comply with this requirement while Libertador's did not.

The second dilemma related to elections. In both CLPPs, community members questioned why councillors had not been re-elected instead of being granted extensions by the CNE. Councillors in Chacao's CLPP questioned the way its community members had been elected. They considered the elections were unfairly advertised and had a poor turnout leading to targeted candidates being elected (favourable to the mayor). In Libertador, there was very little political will to undertake elections for the CLPP. Participants attributed Chavismo's focus on the construction of other mechanisms, such as *comunas*, as an explanation.

The third dilemma showed that there were strong tensions between politicians and community representatives in both CLPPs. Councillors saw and understood their role based on the tradition of elected representatives. And this granted councillors greater decision making power. Previous studies highlighted mayors and councillors (traditionally elected politicians) did not necessarily place as much emphasis on the importance of the CLPP as their community members. The findings in Chacao and Libertador's CLPPs showed that this shared space was subject to dilemmas due to these uneven power balances in decision making, and these arose due to inadequately defined and enforced electoral and procedural matters. Consequently, CLPPs have generally failed to live up to the expectation that bringing together community and elected officials would create an effective mechanism for including community members in municipal level planning.

Table 10.1 provides a summary of CLPP participants' views and understandings in relation to the research questions.

Research Question/ CLPP and member type	Chacao		Libertador	
	Community member	Political member	Community member	Political member
What is the meaning of participatory democracy for CLPP participants in Venezuela?	The ability for citizen participation without ideological pre-conditions; liaison with municipal government.	Citizens have a right to participate but this participation has limits; political representatives and representative democracy remain authoritative.	Participatory democracy is one where citizens have a role in shaping local-national politics. Citizen participation can be in conjunction with government, or it can be as a long-term process in order to create new modes of action as an alternative to representative democracy.	Participatory democracy remains a long-term goal of Chavismo. It is understood to be something that has not yet been established and is still emerging/ being constructed. Citizens lead public policy and planning; if government still remains they would have to respond to citizens' organisations (most likely CCs and <i>comunas</i> ).
What do CLPPs and their respective processes mean to participants?	The CLPP is an extremely important mechanism for citizen engagement and municipal planning. It should have equal importance to the municipal government and <i>Concejo Municipal (CM)</i> .	The CLPP is a form of engagement and includes certain community organisations in municipal planning. But it is not as important as the municipal government or legislature (representative democratic structures).	CLPP was a mechanism and process that had potential to provide citizen participation in municipal level planning. Community members lamented that the mechanism had not lived up to this expectation.	The CLPP was an initial step in the process to establishing participatory democracy and citizen participation more widely. Its importance was understood to have been superseded by CCs and the emerging <i>comunas</i> .
What do CLPP participants do to meet their respective needs/goals and preferences?	Actively take part in all monthly plenaries and yearly participatory budgeting; undertake CLPP sub-committee work to promote community projects.	Approve municipal budget each year. Very little participation in, or engagement with, CLPP otherwise.	Attend plenary meetings; make site visits; undertake sub-committee work.	Approve municipal budget each year. Very little participation in, or engagement with, CLPP otherwise.
How do CLPP participants understand planning practices and processes at the neighbourhood and municipal level?	CLPP and its participatory budgeting is seen to be a fundamental and positive form of involving the community/ citizens in municipal level planning. Community members actively seek to further community's role in municipal level planning.	CLPP projects can be positive but are not a replacement for municipal government and legislature's role in planning. Municipal planning should be undertaken by the municipal government and the plans and process scrutinized by councillors in the CM.	The CLPP is seen to be coordinative (it checks projects are being implemented) and provides a weak form of liaison between citizens and municipal government. The CLPP is understood to have largely been ignored or superseded by the focus on the emerging communal state mechanisms.	Planning is seen to be a process that is in evolution. It is moving away from a government/ technocratic led process to a mode of citizen-government synergy. Citizens who participate in the emergent communal state mechanisms shape the direction of planning and development. Government should respond to this, or provide constructive feedback to enable the plans to be implemented.

**Table 10.1 Summary of CLPP findings in relation to research questions**

### 10.3.2 CCs

CCs emerged in 2006 as a result of Chavismo seeking to further implement citizen participation and avoid the tensions that existed between politicians and community members, such as CLPPs. The findings showed participants' beliefs and traditions significantly shaped the way they acted within their respective CCs. This in turn shaped how CCs operated. The findings showed the CC participants encountered two dilemmas: the perceived links CCs have to Chavismo, and the changes in state-civil society relations and structure.

Most CCs in Chacao were not fully operational (i.e. not meeting) or fully registered with Fundacomunal (national agency with remit to certify CCs) during fieldwork. Despite inquiry, it remained unclear whether this was failure on the part of the CCs to comply with the requirements, a result of bureaucratization from Fundacomunal and/or favouring poorer parts of the country. Participants in Chacao emphasised the municipality and municipal government as the most appropriate demarcation and governance of territory, as opposed to the emerging communal state that they opposed due to their beliefs and traditions.

The findings demonstrated that Chacao's CC participants resisted and denounced Chavismo's 'popular power' structures to defend existing representative arrangements. The dilemma that participants were faced with was the extent to which they should become involved in a mechanism whose purpose was to create re-structuration of democratic institutions and arrangements towards a form of society that was contrary to their beliefs. CCs were implemented and used for a specific purpose: to be one of a varied range of organisations contributing to plurality in Chacao's civil society, not one that sought to supersede existing arrangements of representative democracy that they supported.

CC participants in La Silsa identified themselves as Chavistas, and were supportive of the communal state. The neighbourhood had been recipient of municipal and national government programmes. These programmes were closely linked to the emerging *comuna*. This required that CCs were fully registered. In contrast to Chacao, government support, especially via the *comuna's* ST, ensured that a) CCs were being supported and given guidance, b) were encouraged to register c) were able to receive funding for small projects. As a result, CC participants in La Silsa stated the need to take part in CCs and the *comuna* otherwise they would not have

seen improved state-civil society relations or neighbourhood developments. Participants therefore felt compelled to register their CCs, actively take part, and promote the emerging *comuna* and Chavismo's move towards the communal state.

Table 10.2 provides a summary of the relationship between the research questions and the findings, according to participants' understandings and meanings of CC and wider democratic processes.

Research Question/ CCs	Chacao CCs	La Silsa CCs
What is the meaning of participatory democracy for CC participants in Venezuela?	Although Chacao participants valued citizen participation, they did not advocate the replacement of existing federal structures of government or systems of representative democracy more widely. Participants were keen to defend the existing government and territorial demarcations and arrangements; they rejected Chavismo's intentions of establishing a communal state.	Participants favoured Chavismo and its move towards creating and embedding the 'communal state'. Certain participants argued the communal state would lead to participatory democracy and replace existing federal government and representative democracy. Other participants saw the communal state as a means of enhancing the existing governmental/ representative arrangements by creating a more symbiotic relationship.
What do CCs and their respective processes mean to participants?	CCs were described as a means of liaising with municipal government, akin to other community organisations such as neighbourhood associations. CCs were also understood to be a mechanism closely linked to Chavismo - and were therefore mechanisms to be dealt with scepticism.	CCs were a fundamental and innovative mechanism for ensuring citizen participation in community matters, providing a means of liaising with the municipal and national government, and a means for securing projects within their respective neighbourhoods. CCs were also a step towards establishing the communal state.
What do CC participants do to meet their respective needs/goals and preferences?	CCs had considerable limitations and scope for delivering projects because they were not registered formally, and/ or they did not meet frequently.	CCs worked with La Silsa's <i>comuna</i> ST to liaise and secure funds with municipal (and national) government for neighbourhood projects.
How do CC participants understand planning practices and processes at the neighbourhood and municipal level?	Planning was predominantly a municipal government activity. Certain members with links to the CLPP highlighted that the CLPP was a mechanism for helping secure community projects. CCs provided scope for liaison and advocacy with municipal government but were generally not seen to be mechanisms for planning.	CCs were understood to be the base for neighbourhood planning and liaising with government. They were also argued to be the <i>only</i> way to secure projects. Participants indicated previous administrations failed to implement projects. CCs were seen to be providing opportunities for planning, and meeting aspirations of community development.

**Table 10.2 Summary of CC findings in relation to research questions**



### 10.3.3 CLPP and CC findings and democratic theory

Since 2009, Chavismo sought to advance “popular power” where citizens would be sovereign decision makers and could exercise self management (MINCI 2008). CCs and *comunas* were expressions and intentions of achieving these goals (MINCI 2008; MP Comunas 2013). At the time of fieldwork, these mechanisms sat in parallel to the federal structure of government. Critics of Chavismo (Brewer Carías 2010; MUD 2013) maintain that CCs have become increasingly linked to national government, particularly the way they are administered and funded. Critics suggest that CCs are tools of clientelism and subject to the political whims of Chavismo and prioritise areas with pro-national government affiliations.

As described in chapter 3, Chavismo sought to conceptualise Manin’s (1997) “absolute representation” versus “self government” as “constituent power” versus “constituted power”. Constituent power is one that comprises citizens and their agency as ‘popular power’ and these are expressed in instances such as CCs and *comunas*. Constituted power is the existing traditional representative arrangements and institutions.

Chacao’s CC participants described that participation was a way of having their voice heard but not necessarily to devolve decision making or powers to the CCs – or other community organisations – as Chavismo intended. While the community-municipal government relationship was considered positive, the emerging communal state was viewed with distrust and scepticism. Participants advocated extending the municipal government-civil society relationship that existed in Chacao because they felt that it was successful. In La Silsa, on the other hand, Chavismo enabled a deviation from historic state-civil society relations, which was manifested as marginalisation, to one of inclusiveness. La Silsa’s participants increased sense of agency transformed their beliefs, as well as reinforced their support of Chavismo’s goal of moving towards more participatory forms of democracy. Representative government was seen to have failed areas such as La Silsa in the past, whereas the emerging alternative was something that they believed would benefit the community. Where La Silsa CC participants saw opportunity, Chacao CC participants saw the potential demise of the existing positive relationship between municipal government and the community.

CLPP experiences in both Chacao and Libertador showed the continued dominance of politicians and structures of representative democracy. This created considerable tensions where citizen members of the CLPP wish to express greater agency. CCs, on the other hand, did provide potential for communities and citizens to increase dialogue with municipal governments in particular. How this was understood was also dependent on the location: La Silsa saw it as extremely important, Chacao saw it as positive but no different from other ways of liaising with municipal government. Rather than seeking to subvert the representative democracy model, CCs in Chacao were understood as an additional means of supplementing it. Conversely in La Silsa participants were supportive of the emerging communal state structure and any other means of creating alternatives, so long as it meant continuing a positive process of community benefit which they had experienced under Chavismo.

Baiocchi et al (2011 pg 1) argued that where participatory democracy was strong on normative, moral-philosophical grounds in theory its empirical results and testing was weak and fragmented. Similarly, Hendriks (2010) considered advocating a 'pure' model, such as that of participatory democracy, was a normative exercise and that in practice the weaknesses of any pure model results in hybrid models being formed. Reality presents co-existing dialectical forces - that do not mix - subjected to contextual and contingent factors leading to practices of democracy that rarely reflect the theoretical, normative or those planned by reformers (Barber 2003; Hendriks 2010) – such as Chavismo.

The analysis chapter (section 9.3) emphasised the polarization that exists among scholars and political activists with regards to representative versus participatory democracy. Political polarization in Venezuela has meant that participants and scholars have been keen to demonize (in the case of opposition scholars and certain participants) further attempts to establish participatory democratic mechanisms beyond CLPPs and CCs, such as *comunas*, and the 'communal state'. In these cases, the traditions (governmental, administrative, state-civil society relationship) of the representative state are fiercely guarded. This is at odds with communities, such as those in La Silsa, that are keen advocates of Chavismo and its processes.

## 10.4 REFLECTION ON THE USE OF THE INTERPRETIVE INSTITUTIONALIST MODEL

The thesis has found that the application of Hay's (2011) interpretive institutionalist model was valuable in eliciting participants' meanings in response to a fast moving structural and legislative landscape in Venezuela. To the knowledge of the researcher, Hay's model has not been applied in studies of the Venezuelan context or the global south more widely. It therefore brought a new epistemological and ontological lens to study the Venezuelan context and units of analysis.

Hay's model sought to bring together two theories (interpretivism and institutionalism) that were previously considered epistemologically and ontologically distinct. Hay argued that understanding the institutional opportunities and constraints in his model provide a way of describing where actors' dilemmas come from. The origin of dilemmas is something that Hay believes Bevir and Rhodes's theory lacks. Consequently, Hay's model was applied to the research, which sought to understand two new mechanisms for citizen participation in Venezuela - CLPPs and CCs, respectively. The model was appropriate because it enabled participants within these mechanisms to provide a narrative about how they saw and understood their respective roles within these new mechanisms. These narratives drew heavily on the ideational strand of the model (interpretive theory). The rules, scripts or procedures that actors carried out also informed by what Hay terms the 'opportunities and constraints' within the given context (institutional dimension). Consequently, the findings showed that ideational and institutionalist elements were complementary and reinforcing, supporting Hay's model.

Most importantly, however, was that the model enabled a way of generating data in a fast moving context. It provided a way of understanding participants' experiences in a country that has undergone considerable structural transformations since 1998. The model afforded explanation in this environment of *institutional*<sup>76</sup> transition brought about by successive legislative reforms. Given that this rapidly moving situation may not allow for new rules and repertoires to become fully embedded, the model provided a framework where actors' responses and alternative modes of action to those intended could be clarified. The model enabled both this fluctuating institutional development to be understood, as well as explaining the way actors

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<sup>76</sup> Changing 'rules of the game'

responded and reacted. The model therefore provided a dynamic between the institutional and ideational dimensions, that neither interpretivism nor institutionalism provides alone.

The thesis findings have shown that the linkages between these dimensions enable understanding and conceptualization of the different, contingent institutional rules (formal and informal) and how the actors involved within these configurations understand these. The model enables dilemmas to be highlighted (see sections 7.4, 8.3.3 and 9.2 for detail). These tend to arise where flux occurs as a result of the transition to new modes of rules. Actors respond in favour or against the new dilemma. Consequently, this supports Hay's assertion that his model provides explanation of where ideas that lead to dilemmas come from, something he argues that Bevir (1999) and Bevir and Rhodes (2003; 2006; 2010) have failed to do sufficiently.

In applying the model to the case studies of CLPPs and CCs in Chacao and Libertador, five main dilemmas (discussed in 9.2.2) were found. Dilemmas were generated where participants' beliefs and traditions (ideational components) were shaped by the institutional configurations they were presented with.

Institutionalist theory has found it difficult to specify how actors' agency shapes institutional contexts. Typically it is understood that the institutional context shapes actors' behaviour. Hay's model enables a two-way dynamic. By incorporating interpretivism, it can show that actors' traditions and beliefs can determine how actors' understand any rules or contexts they are presented with. The findings, as described in the previous section and chapters 7 and 8, demonstrated several examples of this.

Through my analysis I have been able to identify that while Hay's model is right to use 'dilemma' as an interface between the interpretive and institutional dimensions, I found that there is scope to give greater emphasis to 'traditions'. My findings demonstrated that traditions could be both an ideational and institutionalist element. For example, a tradition can be the educational background of an actor which provides a certain vision or way of looking at the world. Or a tradition can be a set of rules or behaviours that belong to a group of people. Consequently, a new interface has been identified between the two dimensions of Hay's model.

When actors faced a particular context or situation, their traditions and beliefs created dilemmas depending on how they saw and understood that context. We can understand that context to be the rules, whether formal or informal, or a tradition. According to Bevir and Rhodes (2010) traditions are always evolving, although they can show certain periods of stability. Consequently the tradition may incorporate a set of rules and behaviours that shape the way actors encounter new situations, such as those occurring in Venezuela. As such, the findings showed Hay's model, enables scholars to look at the way rules and practices are created, understood, resisted or enacted. Drawing from the ideational dimension, explanation can be provided from this analysis why actors' acted in a certain way. An institutionalist account does not place as much emphasis on this dimension. Conversely, a purely interpretivist approach would not necessarily take the different rules (institutional opportunities and constraints) into account.

Bevir and Rhodes interpretivism has typically emphasised that the ideational dimension is shaped entirely by how *individuals encounter and shape their world*. My findings show that although individuals do make their own decisions it is Hay's model that provides scope to conceptualise linkages between the individual/ideational and collective/institutional dimensions (see section 9.2.3). This is something that Bevir and Rhodes (2010) have been very scathing of in the past, but have recently conceded has scope to be developed further. Hay's model, supplemented with the findings from the thesis, particularly the development of the concept of 'tradition' can provide a step towards this individual-collective link. This transition between the individual and collective is something that both institutionalism and interpretivism do not currently emphasise. Furthermore, it is considered that a dilemma can also provide linkages between the individual-collective where sets of actors share very similar circumstances (such as community member power imbalances within the CLPP).

## 10.5 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Three further strands have been identified as having potential for furthering research regarding CLPPs and CCs. The first of these relates to adopting a deliberative democratic theoretical approach. The second could involve comparative research looking at how the experience of CLPPs and CCs relates to other participatory planning practices and experiences in neighbouring countries. The third could incorporate a discursive institutionalist (DI) approach.

Scope exists to supplement the research undertaken in the thesis by utilising recent developments in deliberative democracy scholarship. In particular, scholars such as Dryzek (2010) and Niemeyer (2011) have developed theories and methodologies that enable study of the quality of deliberation within 'mini-publics' or fora involving citizens (such as CCs, *comunas* and CLPPs). They have developed means to study the extent, type and quality of discussions and decision-making within deliberative arenas. It is considered that adopting such an approach would provide additional insight into the way citizens deal with matters in their local areas – and see how the transmission of ideas occurs within participatory mechanisms. It is considered that CC and *comuna* assemblies would provide a rich environment for empirical data. Furthermore, exploring whether participants undergo transformations of personal beliefs and opinions could also be explored by tracking thoughts, feelings and opinions before, during and after taking part in CC or *comuna* processes.

There is scope for comparative research, particularly with experiences in neighbouring Brazil and Colombia. Brazil has implemented many programmes to improve conditions in its *favelas*<sup>77</sup> (Magalhães and di Villarosa 2012). Similarly, Medellín and Bogotá in Colombia have implemented comprehensive urban development programmes that resemble, or have inspired, similar projects in Venezuela (Sotomayor 2014; Dávila 2012). Given that the political background and contexts of each country is considerably different, there is potential to look at the way actors have assimilated, understood and implemented such programmes. Furthermore, the way citizen participation has been incorporated into these programmes remains under developed and provides ample opportunity for future

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<sup>77</sup> Various examples of urban upgrading programmes ('Favela-Bairro'; Integrated Urbanization Program; 'Nova Baixada'; 'PROAP', for example) provide programmes which seek to tackle informal areas of the Latin American city. The goals of these programmes share similarities to programmes such as 'Barrio Nuevo Barrio Tricolor' in Venezuela.

research.

Chapter 4 (see section 4.2.4) identified the potential insights of incorporating DI components within the thesis' theoretical framework. The DI approach focuses on 'creative agents' such as political leaders, government spokespeople, party activists, and spin doctors (Lowndes and Roberts 2013 pg 101). Consequently, following Schmidt (2008; 2011), these components could help elicit the nature of ideas and where these come from; it would facilitate understanding how such ideas are communicated, disseminated and adopted. It is considered that tracking such ideational communication among actors would supplement Hay's model further and also be compatible with a deliberative democracy approach.

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## APPENDIX 1

### List of Interviewees

N.B. Interviewees that have been cited directly in the thesis have been given a pseudonym. These are indicated in the table using 'name', where appropriate. All other interviewees are given a general title/ description.

No	Code	Interviewee	Organisation Title	Date	Mins	Municipality/ location
1	B001	Sala Técnica Secretary	Alcaldía de Baruta	19.02.2013	60	Baruta
2	B002	Sala Técnica technical staff	Alcaldía de Baruta	19.02.2013	25	Baruta
3	B003	Councillor	CLPP Baruta	19.02.2013	45	Baruta
4	B004	Councillor	CLPP Baruta	26.02.2013	85	Baruta
5	B005	CLPP community member; CC spokesperson	CLPP Baruta, CC Prados del Este	05.03.2013	75	Baruta
6	B006	CC spokesperson	CC Sorokaima	11.03.2013	90	Baruta
7	B007	CC spokesperson	CC Sorokaima	11.03.2013	30	Baruta
8	B008	CC spokesperson	CC Las Minas	13.02.2013	50	Baruta
9	B009	Vicepresident	CLPP Baruta	14.03.2013	15	Baruta
10	B010	CC spokesperson	CC Caurimare	20.03.2013	30	Baruta
11	C001	Sala Técnica Secretary	Alcaldía de Chacao	21.02.2013	45	Chacao
12	C002	Sala Técnica Coordinator	Alcaldía de Chacao	21.02.2013	25	Chacao
13	C003	Urban planner	Alcaldía de Chacao	21.03.2013	25	Chacao
14	C004	Community organisations coordinator	Alcaldía de Chacao	21.03.2013	30	Chacao
15	C005	'David', vicepresident	CLPP Chacao	03.04.2013	30	Chacao
16	C006	'Alejandra', CC spokesperson	CC Bello Campo 2	09.05.2013	90	Chacao
18	L001	'Petra', Sala Técnica Secretary	CLPP Libertador	29.04.2013	75	Libertador
19	L002	CLPP Community member (Sucre Parish)	CLPP Libertador	29.04.2014	30	Libertador
20	L003	Head of Plan Integral del Barrio	Fundacaracas	08.05.2013	60	Libertador
21	L004	Comuna coordinator	Sala Técnica Comuna Cacique La Silsa	14.05.2013	30	Libertador
22	AMC001	Head of Urban Planning and 2 other urban Planners (3)	El Instituto Metropolitano de Urbanismo Taller Caracas	15.05.2013	70	Área Metropolitana a Caracas
23	L005	Architect	Sala Técnica Comuna Cacique La Silsa	04.06.2013	30	Libertador
24	C007	CC spokesperson	CC El Rosal	28.06.2013	60	Chacao
25	C008	Community Member (sports committee)	CLPP Chacao	14.06.2013	20	Chacao
26	C009	'Ana María', CC spokesperson	CC Altamira	16.07.2013	75	Chacao
27	C010	CC spokespeople (3)	CC El Dorado	18.07.2013	90	Chacao
28	C011	CC spokesperson	CC Zona 3	25.07.2013	45	Chacao
29	C012	'Elizabeth', CLPP community member (environment committee)	CLPP Chacao; CC Bosque Sur	26.07.2013	120	Chacao
30	C013	'Ana', CC spokesperson	CC Zona 2	27.07.2013	45	Chacao
31	C014	CC spokesperson	CC Zona 1	27.07.2013	25	Chacao

No	Code	Interviewee	Organisation Title	Date	Mins	Municipality/ location
32	C015	CC spokespeople (2)	CC Bello Campo 1	29.07.2013	45	Chacao
33	C016	'Caterina' and 'María José', CC spokespeople	CC El Pedregal	29.07.2013	85	Chacao
34	C017	CC spokesperson	CC Zona 6	30.07.2013	45	Chacao
35	C018	CC spokespeople (2)	CC Zona 4	13.08.2013	60	Chacao
36	C019	CC spokesperson	CC Bosque Sur	13.08.2013	65	Chacao
37	C020	Councillor 'Gómez'	CLPP Chacao	14.08.2013	90	Chacao
38	C021	CLPP; CC spokesperson	CLPP Chacao; CC Norse	14.08.2013	22	Chacao
39	C022	'Nicolás', CLPP community member	CLPP Chacao; CC Los Palos Grandes	14.08.2013	60	Chacao
40	C023	Councillor 'Martínez'	CLPP Chacao	16.08.2013	75	Chacao
41	C024	Councillor 'Pérez'	CLPP Chacao	16.08.2013	35	Chacao
42	C025	Councillor 'González'	CLPP Chacao	20.08.2013	60	Chacao
43	C026	Councillor 'Sánchez'	CLPP Chacao	27.08.2013	95	Chacao
44	L006	'Andrea', CC spokesperson	CC Manos de la revolución, La Silsa	05.09.2013	30	Libertador
45	L007	CC spokesperson	CC Bolívar Libertador, La Silsa	05.09.2013	10	Libertador
46	L008	'Cristina', CC spokesperson	CC Nueva Generación, La Silsa	05.09.2013	20	Libertador
47	L009	'Teresa', CC spokesperson	CC Unidos Venceremos, La Silsa	06.09.2013	40	Libertador
48	L010	'Carmen', CC spokesperson	CC Tercer Plan, La Silsa	06.09.2013	30	Libertador
49	L011	'Daniel', CC spokesperson	CC Nueva Generación, La Silsa	06.09.2013	40	Libertador
50	L012	CC spokesperson	CC Silsa en progreso, La Silsa	10.09.2013	45	Libertador
51	L013	CC spokesperson	CC Jose Gregorio Hernandez, La Silsa	10.09.2013	30	Libertador
52	L014	CC spokesperson	CC Carlos Esquerra, La Silsa	10.09.2013	30	Libertador
53	L015	CC spokesperson	CC Esperanza de las Tapitas, La Silsa	12.09.2013	30	Libertador
54	L016	'Javier', comuna coordinator;	Fundacaracas,	18.09.2013	30	Libertador
55	L017	CC spokesperson	CC Tercer Plan, La Silsa	18.09.2013	30	Libertador
56	L018	Sala Técnica Architects, engineers (4)	Sala Técnica Comuna Cacique La Silsa	18.09.2013	30	Libertador
57	L019	CC spokesperson	CC Esperanza la revolucion, La Silsa	18.09.2013	40	Libertador
58	L020	CLPP community member (environment committee)	CLPP Libertador	19.09.2013	30	Libertador
59	L021	CLPP community member (no specified committee)	CLPP Libertador	19.09.2013	40	Libertador
60	L022	CLPP community member (housing committee)	CLPP Libertador	24.09.2013	25	Libertador
61	L023	Councillor head of staff 1	Concejo Municipal Libertador	09.10.2013	40	Libertador
62	L024	Councillor head of staff 2	Concejo Municipal Libertador	09.10.2013	25	Libertador
63	L025	Councillor 'Fernández'	CLPP Libertador	15.10.2013	55	Libertador
64	L026	Councillor 'García'	CLPP Libertador	15.10.2013	90	Libertador
65	L027	Councillor 'López'	CLPP Libertador	15.10.2013	45	Libertador
66	L028	Urban planner	Alcaldía de Libertador	15.10.2013	60	Libertador
67	L029	Director of Planning, Libertador	Alcaldía de Libertador	15.10.2013	60	Libertador
68	NG001	'Antonio', Social Accountability section officer	Fundacomunal	18.10.2013	60	Miranda State

## APPENDIX 2

### CLPP Meetings

Municipality	Date	Start	Finish
Chacao	05.03.2013	1500	1658
Libertador	16.05.2013	-	-
Libertador	20.05.2013	1440	1630
Chacao	22.05.2013	1503	1729
Chacao	02.07.2013	1630	1800
Libertador	17.06.2013	1430	1700
Chacao	14.08.2013	1630	1800
Libertador	19.09.2013	-	-
Libertador	24.09.2013	1430	1635
Libertador	16.10.2013	1430	1620

### CC/ comuna meetings

Place	Date	Start	Finish
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly Meeting (all La Silsa CCs)	14.05.2013	1630	1800
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	21.05.2013	1620	1745
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	28.05.2013	1700	1830
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	04.06.2013	1600	1805
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	11.06.2013	1620	1800
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	18.06.2013	1615	1835
Joint CC meeting: CC El Bosque; CC El Rosal; CC Zona 4 and ADVs (Chacao)	18.07.2013	1930	2030
CC El Pedregal (Chacao)	28.07.2013	1500	1700
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	10.09.2013	1640	1835
La Silsa <i>Comuna</i> Assembly	17.09.2013	1625	1810

### Participatory Budgeting Meetings (Chacao)

Municipal area	Date	Time	Place
Zona 4; Campo Alegre, San Marino y Country Club	12.06.2013	7pm	Plaza Gran Colombia
Zona 3: Bello Campo, Sector La Cruz, Sector Popular Bello Campo	13.06.2013	7pm	UEM Carlos Soubllette
Encuentro Deportivo	14.06.2013	4pm	Centro Deportivo EM
Encuentro Ambiental	15.06.2013	2pm	Mercado de Chacao
Zona 1: El Bosque	18.06.2013	7pm	Parque Pedro Centendo Vallenilla
Zona 2: Población de Chacao	20.06.2013	7pm	Plaza Bolívar de Chacao
Zona 6: Altamira, La Castellana y Bucaral	25.07.2013	7pm	Parque Caballito
Zona 8: El Rosal, El Retiro, Edo Leal	26.07.2013	7pm	Parque Boyacá
Zona 9: La Floresta, San José La Floresta, El Dorado	27.06.2013	7pm	Parque Aruflo
Encuentro Juvenil	28.06.2013	10am	Plaza La Castellana
Zona 7: Los Palos Grandes y Pajaritos	02.07.2013	7pm	Plaza Los Palos Grandes
Zona 5: El Pedregal, La Manguera, Barrio Nuevo, El Tártago	03.07.2013	7pm	UE Juan de Dios Guanche

## APPENDIX 3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

During fieldwork the following protocol and table, adopted from Spradley (1980), provided guidance for undertaking participant observation.

### WRITING AN ETHNOGRAPHY

- Levels of ethnographic writing (ibid pgs 162-167)
  - Level one – universal statements
  - Level two – cross-cultural descriptive statements
  - Level three – general statements about a society or cultural group
  - Level four – general statements about a specific cultural scene
  - Level five – specific statement about a cultural domain
  - Level six – specific incident statement

#### Questions to guide identification of statement levels:

	SPACE	OBJECT	ACT	ACTIVITY	EVENT	TIME	ACTOR	GOAL	FEELING
SPACE	Can you describe in detail all the places?	What are all the ways spaces is organized by objects?	What are all the ways space is organized by acts?	What are all the ways space is organized by activities?	What are all the ways space is organized by events?	What spatial changes occur over time?	What are all the ways space is used by actors?	What are all the ways space is related to goals?	What places are associated with feelings?
OBJECT	Where are objects located?	Can you describe in detail all the objects?	What are all the ways objects are used in acts?	What are all the ways objects are used in activities?	What are all the ways that objects are used as events?	How are objects used at different times?	What are all the ways objects are used by actors?	How are objects used in seeking goals?	What are all the ways objects evoke feelings?
ACT	Where do acts occur?	How do acts in detail all the objects?	Can you describe in detail all the acts?	How are acts a part of activities?	How are acts a part of events?	How do acts vary over time?	What are the ways acts are performed by actors?	What are all the ways acts are related to goals?	What are all the ways acts are linked to feelings?



	SPACE	OBJECT	ACT	ACTIVITY	EVENT	TIME	ACTOR	GOAL	FEELING
ACTIVITY	What are all the places activities occur?	What are all the ways activities incorporate objects?	What are all the ways activities incorporate acts?	Can you describe in detail all the activities?	What are all the ways activities are part of events?	How do activities vary at different times?	What are all the ways activities involve actors?	What are all the ways activities involve goals?	How do activities involve feelings?
EVENT	What are all the places events occur?	What are all the ways events incorporate objects?	What are all the ways events incorporate acts?	What are all the ways events incorporate activities?	Can you describe in details all the events?	How do events occur over time? Is there any sequencing?	How do events involve the various actors?	How are events related to goals?	How do events involve feelings?
TIME	where so time periods occur?	What are all the ways time affects objects?	How do acts fall into time periods?	How do activities fall into time periods?	How do events fall into time periods?	Can you describe in details all the time periods?	When are all the times actors are "on stage"?	How are goals related to time periods?	When are feelings evoked?
ACTOR	Where do actors place themselves?	What are all the ways actors use objects?	What are all the ways actors use acts?	How are actors involved in activities?	How are actors involved in events?	How do different actors change over time or at different times?	Can you describe in detail all the actors?	Which actors are linked to which goals?	What are the feelings experienced by actors?
GOAL	Where are goals sought and achieved?	What are all the ways goals involve use of objects?	What are all the ways goals involve acts?	What activities are goal seeking or linked to goals?	What are all the ways events are linked to goals?	Which goals are scheduled for which times?	How do the various goals affect the various actors?	Can you describe in detail all the goals?	What are all the ways goals evoke feelings?
FEELING	Where do the various feeling states occur?	What feelings lead to the use of what objects?	What are all the ways feelings affect acts?	What are all the ways feelings affect activities?	What are all the ways feelings affect events?	How are feelings related to various time periods?	What are the ways feelings involve actors?	What are the ways feelings influence goals?	Can you describe in detail all the feelings?

## **APPENDIX 4 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE**

During fieldwork the following guide was used. As indicated by the 'semi-structured' title, interviewees were asked specific questions according to their individual responses, as well as their specific position within their respective CC or CLPP. Although the questions may have differed slightly between interviews and types of participants, the general content followed those outlined below.

### **PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND**

- Who are you?
- How did you get involved in community matters?
- What do you do in the CC/ CLPP?

### **PARTICIPATION AND CLPP POLICY/DECISION MAKING**

- How does the CC/ CLPP work?
- What does the CC/ CLPP mean to you?
- How do you understand citizen participation in public matters?
- As a citizen, what significance does being involved in the CC/ CLPP have for you?
- Does your CC/ CLPP have any relations with the municipality and CC/ CLPP? Can you tell me how?
- How important is the municipality and its elected members for you in policy making and planning processes?
- What policies has the CC/ CLPP created?
- How do CCs/ CLPPs influence municipal policy making and planning?
- How willing are elected representatives and civil servants to support bottom-up community initiatives?
- How do you see yourself in the CC/ CLPP?
- What do you think you can do in the CC/ CLPP?
- Roles are unpaid, does this matter?

### **MUNICIPAL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD NEEDS, GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

- Can you tell me how you advocate preferences in the CC/ CLPP process? Can you give me an example? What matters influenced such a position? Why did that particular course of action seem important to you?
- Do you believe that CCs/ CLPPs have been able to achieve their community-needs, as a result of being involved in policy making and planning processes?

### **MEANING OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

- What does democracy mean to you?
- What do you understand by the phrase 'participatory democracy'?