Opening up possibilities for health in all policies:
An action research study to understand local level policy practice and its development

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The candidate has already achieved 180 credits for assessment of taught modules within the blended learning PhD programme

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

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With thanks to those colleagues who were willing to add to an already frantic workload to become part of this action research. I hope that collectively we have generated valuable insights into policy practice and that my account does our work justice.

I thank those who supported me as I tussled with the sayings, doings and relatings of research practice in both familiar and new disciplines especially my supervisors, Sabir Giga, Mark Limmer and Robert Geyer. I am grateful to other PhD students I journeyed with - particularly Milly, Sarah, Lolita, Martin, Natasha, Barbara, Bryan and Joan - for the intellectual, practical and emotional support. I thank my colleagues and students at The Open University who, probably without realising it, helped me stay true to my identity as a systems practitioner.

And lastly, but by no means least, my thanks to Alex. You encouraged me and supported me throughout a process even though you didn't know what I was talking about most of the time! Perhaps this will help.

Abstract

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Local government in England has a role in leading health improvement which includes making progress towards health in all policies. International research has focused on identifying the strategies and tactics being taken by local government as part of a health in all policies approach. However, there is little research evidence behind these actions and recent literature critiques the assumptions underpinning the dominant approach.

This thesis is positioned within the scholarly field of health political science which seeks to draw on different branches of political science to understand the determinants of health and public policy. It argues that developing policy practice could be a possible area of action for those seeking to achieve local level health in all policies. Therefore, it set out to understand the practice enacted by those who are professionally engaged in local level policy as a form of employment, the influences on that practice and how it does, or could, develop. The research presented has an action research orientation with three concurrent, interrelated streams of action that focus on understanding professional practice and its development, engaging with archival data and conducting fieldwork. In doing so, it contributes to health political science by drawing attention to the value of the previously neglected field of policy work studies. It also provides methodological insights for those studying professional practice, developing researcher-practitioner partnerships and engaging with non-health literature in this interdisciplinary field.

The study finds that policy practice is constituted of a number of sub-practices (research, collaboration, public participation, public affairs and development) and two diffuse practices (documenting and interacting). Dynamic distal and proximal conditions, as well as the background of the individual practitioner, influence which sub-practices dominate and how they are enacted, at both a point in time and over time. Of all the influences identified, policy capacity – the local authority's ability to marshal the necessary internal and external resources to support local policy processes – is particularly influential to the quality of policy practice and any practice development efforts. Developing policy practice requires local government to create the time and the space to pay attention to coordinating and strengthening policy capacity, including enabling practitioners to develop relationships with each other and initiate practitioner-led improvements.

The findings have implications to the achievement of local level health in all policies in England. The specialist public health workforce needs to work with other policy practitioners to advocate for, and implement, a multi-sectoral approach to coordinating policy capacity and developing policy practice.

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Part One: Origins

This thesis responds to a need for knowledge about what can be done to achieve health in all policies at a local government level, particularly in England, UK where the present study takes place. As chapter 2 will elaborate there has been recent critique of some of the characteristics of the dominant approach to health in all policies and arguments have been made to draw more strongly on political science in health research and practice. The present study focuses on the practice of those who are professionally engaged in policy as a form of employment in a non-partisan role, and seeks to provide insights into three research questions:

♦ What is policy practice at a local level?
♦ What influences how policy practice is enacted?
♦ How does, or could, policy practice develop?

In common with other action researchers (studied by Smith, Rosenzweig and Schmidt, 2010), I have departed from conventional report writing structures in order to present the inherently complex process. Therefore, I start here by providing a brief outline of the entire thesis structure.

The thesis is composed of four parts each consisting of two or more chapters (Figure 1). This first part of the thesis consists of two chapters which introduce the origins of the study. Firstly, I situate it within my personal trajectory and positionality (chapter 1). Then I outline the English context for health in all policies and review existing scholarly discourse to clarify terminology and critique the currently dominant approach (chapter 2).
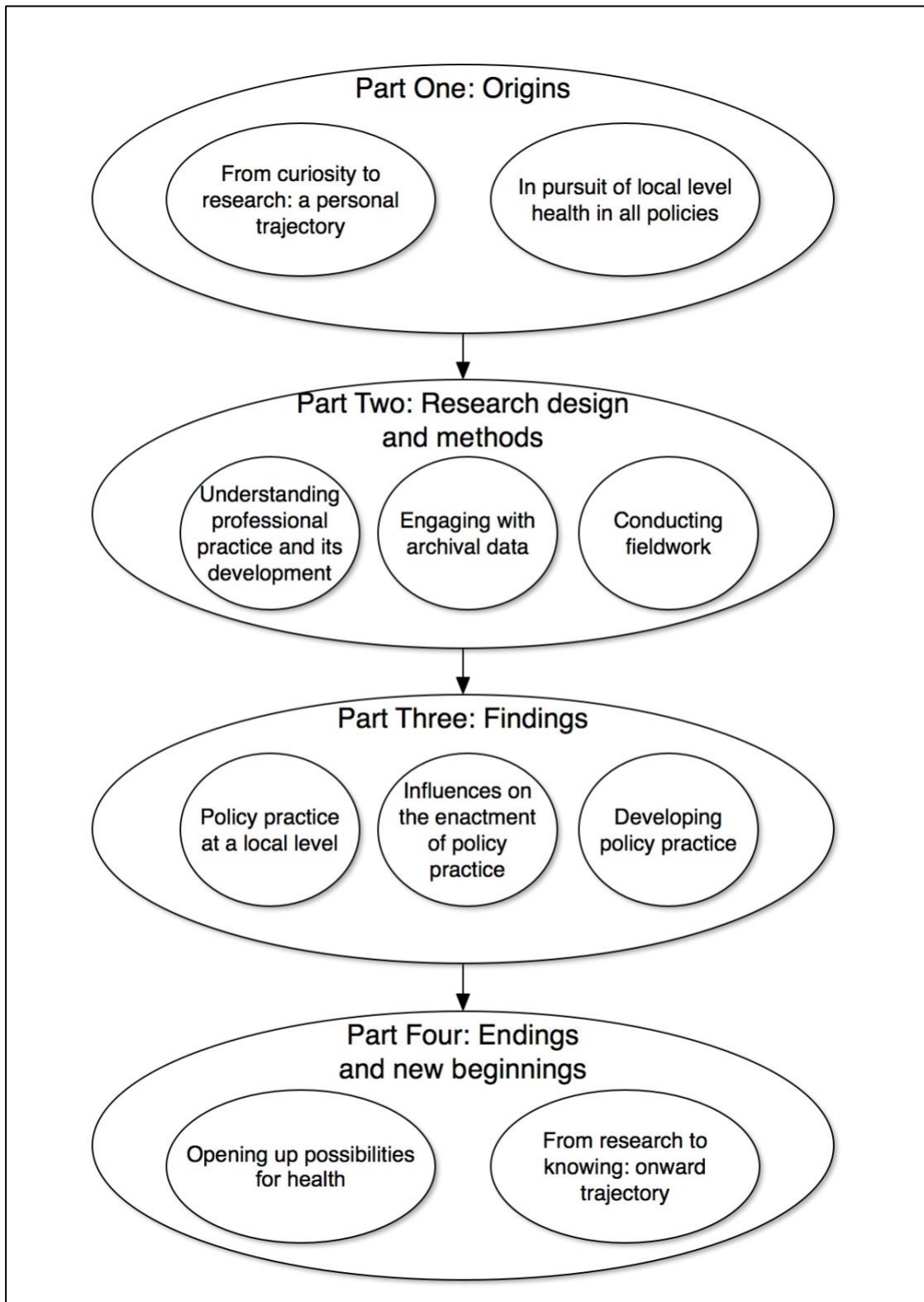
Figure 1: The structure of this thesis

Part Two describes the research design and methods. The research had an action research orientation and was conceptualised as three concurrent, interrelated streams of action. This design is explained in the introduction to Part Two and its three chapters each focus on one of the streams of action. Chapter 3 presents my understanding of professional practice and its development. This understanding influenced, and was influenced by, the two other streams of action and shapes the way analysis was conducted and the findings are presented. Chapter 4 describes the methods used to identify, and analyse, the archival data used in the study. The archival data was used in combination with data generated through fieldwork in the form of a practice development initiative in an English local authority. The detail of this initiative, the data generated and the methods of analysis are described in chapter 5.

Part Three also consists of three chapters. They use the understanding of professional practice and its development (from chapter 3) to present the insights from both the fieldwork and archival data. The chapters align with the three research questions introduced above. Chapter 6 responds to the question "What is policy practice at a local level?" by identifying its purpose and constituent sub-practices. The second question, "What influences how policy practice is enacted?", is addressed in chapter 7 with consideration given to proximal, distal and individual influences. Finally, chapter 8 considers how policy practice does, or could, develop and the implications for designing and implementing practice development initiatives.

The final Part Four concludes the thesis with a chapter considering the contribution made to health political science. It then considers the implications of the findings to those seeking to achieve local level health in all policies in England. Finally, the last chapter revisits the three audiences that I introduce in chapter 1 and reflects on the complexity of contributing to different areas of knowing.

Having provided an outline of the structure of the thesis, it is now possible to proceed with the main chapters of Part One.

Chapter 1: From curiosity to research: a personal trajectory

"All good research is for me, for us and for them; it speaks to three audiences, and contributes to each of these three areas of knowing. It is for them to the extent that it produces some kind of generalisable ideas and outcomes […]. It is for us to the extent that responds the concerns of our praxis […]. It is for me to the extent that the process and outcomes respond directly to the individual researcher's being-in-the-world"
(Reason and Marshall, 1987, p. 112)

In this thesis, policy practice is framed as a phenomenon as if it is ontologically real. However, my stance is one of constructivist realism - I write with awareness that I present just one account of something that is inherently messy and subject to multiple, potentially conflicting, perspectives. Furthermore, in focusing on policy practice, I am making a normative claim that it *should* be attended to and improved. According to Takacs (2003), positionality is "the multiple, unique experiences that situate each of us" (p. 33). As Wenger (2010) highlights, the unique trajectory I have followed and the distinctive perspective it gives me is the gift that I bring to my interactions with others and the world. However, this subjectivity has "the capacity not only to enable but also to disable" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 104). During the process of conducting this research as an insider to the practice and the research setting, I was particularly aware of the risks associated with leaving my understandings unexamined and unchallenged. I therefore paid close attention to others' perspectives in literature, conversations and the data. Nevertheless, given that "knowledge gets constructed by interaction between the questioner and the world" (Takacs, 2003, p. 31), it is appropriate to start out by elaborating on those experiences that situate me as a researcher and strongly influenced the choice of research topic and methods.

From 2010 - 2012, I studied for an MSc in Systems Thinking in Practice (Open University, UK). At the outset, I focused on the fact I was expanding and

deepening knowledge and practical use of the Systems[1] discipline and its different traditions, but overtime I became more intrigued by the *in practice* part of the qualification title. During one module, students were invited to reflect on practice using a key question *what do you do when you do what you do?* (Ison, 2017). In working with this question, I realised I found it hard to articulate an answer to *what do I do?* let alone *what do I do when I do what I do?* My job title meant very little and it was difficult to account for what I did and why. I also observed this struggle amongst other colleagues engaged in policy work - we knew that we mattered but could not explain how. I realised that, unlike formalised professions such as nursing, teaching or specialist public health, those who enact policy practice do not have a common training or competency framework that brings with it a shared language and external recognition. My interest in understanding policy and my own practice development continued beyond the achievement of the Masters. I read the odd book or article that seemed to resonate and reflected on my own practice. In action research terms, I now understand that as first person inquiry (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) - although I occasionally opened up conversations with others or published blogs it was *by me* and *for me* (Reason and Marshall, 1987).

My trajectory into research was prompted by a conversation with Ray Ison, Professor of Systems, Applied Systems Thinking in Practice group at the Open University, UK. The first time we met I told him that I liked being a practitioner and therefore did not want to do research. His reply "research is a practice too" completely changed my perspective. I started to think about what would be important elements of systems thinking in research practice, a curiosity that directly influenced my decision to apply to do a PhD. Action research has been developed, and used by, influential systems thinkers such as Kurt Lewin, Peter Checkland and Chris Argyris (Ramage and Shipp, 2009) so it seemed natural to explore these connections. I realised early on that

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[1]   Following Ison (2017), I use the convention of capitalising the S when denoting the academic discipline of Systems.

action research could overcome a frustration that my colleagues and I had experienced when researchers asked us to be research participants, but we never got to benefit from the process or even hear about the outcomes. The promise of action research being a shared inquiry, *for us* (Reason and Marshall, 1987), appealed.

In the meantime, my work as a local government official gave me the exciting experience of engaging with the World Health Organisation European Region's Healthy Cities Network. I learned about the links between politics and health and the importance of health in all policies. However, I noticed that a lot of emphasis was placed on the decisions of politicians, the role of public health professionals in advising them and the production of health impact assessments. My experience told me that policy did not really work that way and I was particularly concerned that this ignored the potential contribution of other participants in the policy process. When the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (HM Government, 2013) gave English local government the statutory role for health improvement leadership, it reinforced the need for local government to consider health in all policies. In addition, the transfer of staff resulted in specialist public health practitioners becoming local government-employed officials. This means that greater insights into the practices that they interact with, intend to influence or may be expected to enact, promises to help with integration as well as the achievement of health in all policies. In this context, my inquiry had relevance for third parties. However, if it needed to be *for them* (Reason and Marshall, 1987) it had to be more systematic and rigorous and my case needed to be better argued - in other words it needed to become publishable research.

These three motivations are associated with different types of goal. From an intellectual perspective, I seek to make a contribution to health political science. In doing so, I hope to open up possibilities for achieving local level health in all policies - a more practical goal. Finally, the research process was designed to improve understandings of, and develop, policy practice in the

setting thus meeting personal goals of those active in the research process, including myself.

In this chapter, I have briefly outlined the origins of this research in my personal trajectory and considered the implication for what I researched and how I researched it. The next chapter elaborates on my argument that understanding policy practice and its development opens up possibilities for local level health in all policies and positions the study in the scholarly field of health political science.

Chapter 2: In pursuit of local level health in all policies

This thesis responds to a need for knowledge about what can be done to achieve health in all policies at a local level. As each of the four UK nations have different arrangements for local government and public health, I will focus on the context in England where the present study takes place.

English local government operates in the most centralised system in Europe with national government deciding "the shape, size, responsibilities, powers and functions of councils" (Copus, Roberts and Wall, 2017, p. 16) and using financial and other inducements alongside its constitutional and legal powers to influence what local government does (Copus, Roberts and Wall, 2017). In recent years, there have been wide ranging changes, including establishment of combined authorities; directly elected mayors; increased use of outsourcing; and, austerity related budget reductions, which have led to concerns about the future of the town hall (Latham, 2017). According to Copus, Roberts and Wall (2017), the twin functions of local government (governing and providing public services) each require different forms of capacity. The governing role needs capacity to understand and address social concerns, navigate and reconcile competing local views and power to make legitimate and authoritative decisions. Whereas the public service delivery role requires a different form of capacity focused on the efficient and effective provision of services, whether provided in-house or out-sourced. There are tensions between the most appropriate structures for governing capacity and that for public service delivery. Copus, Roberts and Wall (2017) argue that there is currently a strong focus on what is best for efficient service delivery to the detriment of governing capacity.

In April 2013, the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (HM Government, 2013) gave local government in England a new statutory responsibility for health improvement leadership. Local authorities were required to employ Directors of Public Health and an associated specialist public health workforce to support them to implement their new duties. The

specific duties under the act depend on the type of local authority[2], but in essence the statutory role extends local government responsibilities for public services to incorporate those linked to public health (for example, stop smoking or weight management services) and has implications for governing responsibilities. The most visible changes to governing arrangements are the establishment of multi-agency Health and Wellbeing Boards as a committee of the council and requirements to publish a Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Health in all policies is not explicitly mentioned in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (HM Government, 2013), but it is generally understood as one way in which local government takes forward this statutory role for leading health improvement consistent with the recommendations of *Fair Society, Health Lives (The Marmot review)* (Marmot, Goldblatt and Allen, 2010) and a wider international focus on addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health, rather than only focussing on prevention and treatment at an individual level. At face value, the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Boards is consistent with the use of an intersectoral steering group as part of a health in all policies approach (see section 2.2). However, not all Health and Wellbeing Boards make progress on the determinants of health because of a focus on health and social care integration and service commissioning (Perkins et al., 2020). This is consistent with Copus, Roberts and Wall (2017)'s argument that there is a strong focus on efficient service delivery.

In 2016, Public Health England and the Local Government Association each published materials for local government covering the rationale for health in all policies; how to achieve it; and, examples of what is being done. *Local wellbeing, local growth: adopting health in all policies* (Public Health England, 2016) is a series of downloadable resource documents. The presenting web-page states that they are aimed at local authority leaders, chief executives,

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2   In England, local government is comprised of five different types of local authority - county councils, district councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan districts, and, London boroughs.

other senior officers and councillors and Directors of Public Health. The resource emphasises the importance of considering health when decisions are made and working with a range of partners. *Health in all policies: a manual for local government* (Local Government Association, 2016) refers to a range of people who may need to be involved in a health in all policies approach both internal to the council and externally. It highlights the importance of health specialists gaining an understanding of different council functions and in "supporting councillors and council staff to understand the health impact of their area of work" (p. 30). It also touches on the importance of facilitation and the need for a team of "backbone staff" (p. 35) to support the collaborative process. Both of these sets of guidance prioritises what is important for health and in doing so neglects to take into account the nature of existing governing practices, why they are what they are, and, the actions others are taking, or would like to take, to improve them. Therefore, following the guidance risks a health imperialist approach which could result in the alienation of colleagues working in non-health sectors.

The study in this thesis responds to the need for additional knowledge about what could be done to achieve health in all policies in a way that could also respond to the concerns and interests of policy practitioners. It is positioned within an emerging field of scholarly activity referred to as health political science (Kickbusch, 2013) which I will describe in section 2.3. However, first I will review the existing scholarly discourse on health in all policies to clarify terminology, outline findings of research into local level health in all policies and critique the currently dominant approach.

2.1   The nature of health in all policies

As de Leeuw et al (2015) highlight, the terms *health*, *policy* and *public* are used in various combinations which means it is important to clarify what is, and is not, meant by their use in any given phrase and context. The most dominant interpretation of the term *health policy* is that it concerns the health (or sick) care system. For example, the nature of the funding, organisation

and workforce of health care services in a given jurisdiction. A broader view also incorporates policies associated with particular risks to population health, such as tobacco, obesity or alcohol. These are referred to as public health policies to help differentiate them from health (care) policy. These two forms of policy usually arise from processes where the health sector is the dominant, lead player.

In contrast, this thesis is concerned with the policies and interventions that arise in non-health sectors, such as transport, spatial planning, economic development and welfare. These policies are of interest to public health scholars and practitioners because they concern the up-stream determinants of health and therefore shape health outcomes and health inequalities, even when health is not their intended aim (World Health Organisation, 2008). In other words, as Bambra, Fox and Scott-Samuel (2005) state, public policy is itself a determinant of health.

In the 1980s, the term *healthy public policy* was coined to refer to non-health policies that "improve the conditions under which people live" (Milio, 2001, p. 622) and have an overall positive impact on population health. The more recent term *health in all policies* is often used as a synonym to healthy public policy (Carey, Crammond and Keast, 2014) even though it potentially embraces a wider range of policies than *public* ones which are predominantly associated with government (de Leeuw et al., 2015).

It is noteworthy that the terms are not used in a way that refers to a description of current reality. Two distinctive uses can be observed. Firstly, they appear in phrases such as "A great deal has therefore been achieved towards the aim of Health in All Policies" (Madelin, 2006, p. xiii). In these contexts, they are expressions of intent to integrate health into other policies, or, to draw on an expression used in gender mainstreaming, they are "policy about policy" (Scala and Paterson, 2018, p. 209). However, even within the same publications, the term *health in all policies* refers to an approach or a strategy. For example, Wismar et al (2006, p. xviii) propose "Health in all Policies as a strategy to help strengthen [the] link between health and other

policies". This more common usage draws attention to a desired set of institutional arrangements (Carey, Crammond and Keast, 2014) and practices - the means to an end rather than the end itself.

This second usage has its roots in the public health community's efforts to establish the governance and working arrangements that will link the health sector horizontally into other policy sectors. According to Kickbusch and Gleicher (2012), there have been three waves in this history of horizontal governance for health which have been associated with shifts in discourse linked to evolving understandings of policy, the policy process and the determinants of health. The first wave, initiated with the Alma-Ata Declaration (World Health Organisation, 1978), first drew attention to the importance of the health sector initiating intersectoral action. It was superseded in the late 1980s when healthy public policy (the second wave) gained prominence as one of five areas of health promoting action in the WHO Charter for Health Promotion adopted in Ottawa (World Health Organisation, 1986). Healthy public policy drew more explicit attention to the role of non-health sectors in addressing the determinants of health and creating health-promoting environments, and called for an accountability for health impact (World Health Organisation, 1998). The third wave, health in all policies, originated as a result of its introduction as a theme of the Finnish European Union Presidency in 2006 (Ståhl et al., 2006) and has since informed global health promotion (World Health Organisation, 2014).

Peters et al. (2014) use prior literature to distinguish the three waves with respect to initiator, actor, policy goals, determinants and policy instruments (Table 1). Their work shows that health in all policies is distinguished from previous waves in that it:

♦ Is determinants-based and has broad goals (for which I coin the term *whole of health*).

♦ Entails both horizontal collaboration between policy sectors and vertical collaboration between different levels in a multi-level governance system (referred to as *whole of government* by Kickbusch and Gleicher, 2012)

♦ Is inclusive of both governmental and non-governmental actors, such as private sector, third sector and civil society (referred to as *whole of society* by Kickbusch and Gleicher, 2012).

Whilst the three waves are described as historical shifts, it has been identified that all three may be present in contemporary local government (Peters et al., 2014). This suggests that it is better to think of them as different forms of horizontal governance, rather than historical phases. Furthermore, the three terms are often used interchangeably and without precision (Kickbusch and Gleicher, 2012; de Leeuw, Keizer and Hoeijmakers, 2013). There are indications that the term *health in all policies* is not being used in a distinctive way and is potentially being corrupted to refer to intersectoral approaches to implementing public health policy. For example, there is research that focuses on a health in all policies approach to obesity (Hendriks et al., 2013) and sexually transmitted diseases (Avey et al., 2013) which are not consistent with the characteristics of taking a determinant of health as the starting point and having broad goals. This is suggestive of lifestyle drift where efforts to address the determinants of health "drift downstream to a focus largely on factors related to individual lifestyle" (Baum et al., 2019, p. 9). It is problematic because, if health in all policies is used in a way that does not convey its distinctive characteristics, the nature and extent of change required to achieve it is likely to be underestimated.

In this thesis, I use phrases such as *achieve health in all policies* to refer to the overall aim (the first usage outlined above) and the phrase *health in all policies approach* to refer to the set of institutional arrangements that are understood to be important (the second usage outlined above).

Table 1: Distinctions between intersectoral action, healthy public policy and health in all policies

Adapted from Peters et al. (2014)

	Intersectoral action	Healthy public policy	Health in all policies
Initiator	Primary health sector and public health sector	Mainly public health sector (but not necessarily)	Any sector (government and societal actors)
Actor(s) at different stages of policy process	Health sector engages in policy development Other sectors invited to engage in policy implementation Health sector shows other sectors how to contribute	Any policy sector, including public health, engaged in both policy development and implementation	Any policy sector (both government and societal actors) engaged in policy development and implementation - this is recognised as dynamic and partnership-based

	Intersectoral action	Healthy public policy	Health in all policies
Policy goals	Narrow, health-related	Health related in terms of creating environments for health	Broad, relating to health, wellbeing and equity Includes benefits of improved population health for goals of other actors
Determinants	Focus on individual behaviour change and individual lifestyle factors	Problems addressed at the causal level: lifestyle, environment and people's empowerment	Key determinants of health addressed in a more systematic manner Core is examining determinants as starting point of policy process
Policy instruments - interventions	Lifestyle intervention, predominantly communication instrument	Mix of strategic communication, economic and legal instruments	As with healthy public policy

	Intersectoral action	**Healthy public policy**	**Health in all policies**
Policy instruments - policy context	Project-based, policy component not necessary Rational policy making	Settings approach Incremental policy	A dynamic policy response across portfolio boundaries Evidence-informed policy making

2.2   Health in all policies at a local government level

Local government is one level in a multi-level governance system and therefore has a role in a whole of government approach. The nature of local government responsibilities and the degree of autonomy from national government varies between countries. As already noted, English local government operates in the most centralised system in Europe (Copus, Roberts and Wall, 2017). In contrast, Norwegian municipalities[3] operate in a strongly decentralised system (Fosse et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it is widely recognised that local governments' governing processes and the policies that emerge from this impact on the conditions in which people live, not just through the provision of services, but through functions such as spatial planning, economic development, housing and transport (World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe, 2012). Furthermore, local government is the lowest level of political mandate so offers potential for participation (Ashton, Grey and Barnard, 1986; Hancock and Duhl, 1986) and political empowerment (World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe, 2012) which are important for a whole of society approach.

The recognition of the strong role of local government led the World Health Organisation to launch the healthy cities movement in the late 1980s. In Europe, this was the start of WHO European Regional office's direct work with a self-selected number of local authorities/municipalities (Wilding, 2017). The different phases of the European Healthy Cities Network have prompted the member cities/towns, including some in England, to work towards the aim of healthy public policy/health in all policies with the lessons drawn from that work informing special issues of academic journals (Health Promotion International, Volume 24 Supplement 1, 2009; Journal of Urban Health, Volume 90, Supplement 1, 2013; Health Promotion International, Volume 30, Supplement 1, 2015) and the ongoing work of member cities. However, it is

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[3]   A municipality is a type of local government that exists in USA, many European countries and other continents.

likely that other European local authorities/municipalities endeavour to achieve health in all policies without this direct relationship with World Health Organisation or an affiliated national network given the extra expense and capacity that participation requires.

Research into health in all policies at a local level predominantly focuses on the institutional arrangements and practices being put into place, that is the components of a health in all policies approach. This body of literature has been synthesised by two very recent scoping reviews of local level health in all policies literature. Van Vliet-Brown, Shahram and Oelke (2018) examined how a health in all policies approach is being used in a municipal context, whilst Guglielmin et al (2018) examined the factors facilitating or hindering its implementation at the local level. The authors used different search strategies and inclusion criteria and therefore based their findings on different, but overlapping, sets of both peer-reviewed and grey literature. Nevertheless, the reviews identify a similar range of strategic and tactical implementation actions (Box 1) and facilitators and barriers to their success.

Notably, Van Vliet-Brown, Shahram and Oelke (2018) highlight there is limited research evidence behind these actions. Yet, a very similar set of strategies and tactics were identified in a USA focused stocktake of emerging practice (Gase, Pennotti and Smith, 2013) and increasingly items such as these are incorporated into logic and evaluation models (for example, Storm et al., 2014; Gase et al., 2017).

Box 1: Strategic and tactical implementation actions for local level health in all policies

Sources: Guglielmin et al (2018), Van Vliet-Brown, Shahram and Oelke (2018)

Strategic implementation actions include:

♦ Build national leadership

♦ Build local leadership

♦ Establish shared vision/goals, ownership and accountability across policy sectors

♦ Build community engagement and participation

♦ Ensure all policy sectors (including health sector) understand, and appreciate the importance of, determinants of health

More tactical implementation actions include:

♦ Ensure adequate - preferably earmarked - funding

♦ Employ dedicated staff

♦ Communicate internally and externally

♦ Use win-win strategies

♦ Build capacity through training

♦ Establish task force/steering group

♦ Introduce use of health impact assessment

♦ Introduce local health and policy process indicators

Rather than repeat the work of these existing scoping reviews in identifying the components of the dominant local level health in all policies approach and the issues experienced in implementing them, I sought to examine whether the body of scholarly literature includes any critique of the approach itself as a result of empirical work that gains insights into the knowledge, experiences or practices of policy participants beyond the health sector. This approach was prompted by my own experiences and by Holt's (2018) argument that it is possible to interpret the findings of one study in terms of failure of the

underpinning theory of change, rather than in terms of implementation failure. Therefore, a systematic search was performed to identify peer-reviewed primary research articles which:

♦ included a clear description of methods used for the research, particularly in terms of the research participants selected

♦ focused on regional/local level health in all policies (articles that reported research across a number of levels of governance were only included if the regional/local government level findings were clearly distinguished)

♦ included data collected from non-health policy participants as part of the study design

♦ critiqued the principles or assumptions underpinning the dominant health in all policies approach

Search databases and terms were adapted from those used by Van Vliet-Brown, Shahram and Oelke (2018) and Guglielmin et al (2018). As Appendix A details, eight health and social science databases were searched in late 2019 using ((("Health in all policies" OR "HiAP") OR ("Healthy public polic*")) OR ("Intersectoral action for health")) AND (Local OR municipal* OR town* OR region* OR city OR village* OR suburb*). Results were then limited to those published after 2006 in the English language as peer reviewed articles (where the database allowed). A total of 639 records were identified which was reduced to 342 records once duplicates were removed. The abstracts of these articles were reviewed. 81 articles were selected for full text review because their abstracts suggested that they would provide insights into experiences and practice of local level health in all policies or be a useful source of references. Hand searching in the reference lists in these articles identified a further 36 articles. Four previously known or serendipitously identified articles were also considered.

Of the 121 articles that were reviewed in full, 74 were primary research articles. Of these, the vast majority were descriptive case studies of one or more cases of the implementation of health in all policies or one of its specific

elements (such as intersectoral working[4] or health impact assessment). Although a number of articles provide helpful insights, only five articles include explicit critique of assumptions underpinning the health in all policies approach (Holt *et al.*, 2016, 2018; Holt, Carey and Rod, 2018; Scheele, Little and Diderichsen, 2018; Synnevåg, Amdam and Fosse, 2018b). It is notable that these articles, based on studies in Scandinavia, were published after the inclusion dates for the two previous scoping studies.

The critique can be grouped into two key themes - involvement of people from the health sector and the use of health terminology. I shall take these in turn.

A distinctive feature of health in all policies (Table 1) is the recognition that any sector could initiate, develop and implement policy. However, nearly all local level health in all policies research focuses on intersectoral working *by* health - that is where people from the health sector are engaged in intersectoral work with people from other policy sectors. According to Saidla (2018), a successful active transportation initiative in Helsinki was achieved with little involvement of people from the health sector. It has also been identified that intersectoral working arrangements involving health can result in smaller scale, win-win interventions rather than policy level improvements (Holt et al., 2016). Taken together these findings raise questions as to whether intersectoral working *for* health necessitates involvement of people from the health sector. Nevertheless, the literature as a whole reflects a strong focus on structural issues such as public health capacity, the position and role of coordinators and public health teams and the use of steering groups (Helgesen, Fosse and Hagen, 2017; Hagen et al., 2018; Holt, Carey and Rod, 2018). This structural focus can detract from the important work of managing across boundaries, including appreciation of otherness (Holt, Carey and Rod, 2018).

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[4]   Intersectoral working can be interpreted in two different ways - work between policy sectors (the horizontal aspect of the whole of government characteristic) and work between government, the private sector and/or the third sector (whole of society). The literature focuses almost exclusively on the former interpretation.

Health in all policies is also associated with a broad wellbeing approach that organises its work by determinants rather than health or lifestyle concerns (whole of health). Non-health sectors' frame their goals in a way that is already consistent with a broad wellbeing approach using terms such as liveability, sustainably safe, and ageing in place (Hendriks et al., 2013; Saidla, 2018) and their work is already focused on specific determinants of health that are amenable to action at a local government level (for example, education, transport, housing). Nevertheless, a perceived barrier to health in all policies is that different sectors have different policy goals and therefore, as Box 1 notes, one key area of action is to develop shared vision and goals. However, the nature of intersectoral policy creates a tendency for abstract rhetoric, rather than specific actions (Holt et al., 2018). Moreover, specific health terminology can be seen as an attempt for health imperialism (Synnevåg, Amdam and Fosse, 2018b) or is associated with lifestyles and disease rather than structural determinants (Collins, 2012). Holt (2018) argues that it is time to question whether health needs to be expressed as an overarching aim. A similar conclusion is reached by Scheele, Little and Diderichsen (2018) who suggest that a broad concept such as social sustainability is easier for non-health sectors to relate to.

This review has demonstrated that the dominant health in all policies approach is largely unquestioned in that academic accounts predominantly describe one or more cases and any difficulties are portrayed as issues of implementation. However, there is a small body of recent research that has challenged the overall approach as a result of paying attention to the perspectives, experiences or practices of policy participants. The present study goes a step further in that it seeks to identify other possibilities for achieving the aim of health in all policies by developing an understanding of policy practice and the influences on its enactment and development. In order to do this, I position the research within the developing field of health political science which I will now describe.

2.3   Health political science: politics, policy and public administration

As previously stated, the study in this thesis is positioned in an emerging field of scholarly activity referred to as health political science. This aims to "understand, analyse and to some extent predict systems of governance, political activities, political thoughts and political behaviour in and *for health*" (de Leeuw, 2020, p. 381 my emphasis). This section outlines the nature of this interdisciplinary space and the position I take within it.

The understanding that politics, "the constrained use of social power" (Goodin, 2013, p. 5), has an impact on population health and health inequalities is not new. It can be traced back to Virchow and his widely-quoted statement "medicine is a social science, and politics nothing else but medicine on a large scale" (1848, quoted in Mackenbach, 2009, 2014). There is, however, a tendency for health and health policy to be treated in an apolitical way thus limiting understanding of the political nature of health, health systems and health promotion practice (Bambra, Fox and Scott-Samuel, 2005; Hunter, 2015). As a result, there is a case being made for public health researchers to draw from, and potentially contribute to, the discipline of political science. Two distinct - but interrelated - arguments can be identified. Firstly, the importance of understanding the political determinants *of health*. For example, Mackenbach (2014) argues that comparative political science could complement the established techniques of epidemiology to identify the impact of political variables on health outcomes. Secondly, the importance of understanding the determinants *of public policy* (Bambra, Fox and Scott-Samuel, 2005) which has been established as a key influence on population health and health inequalities. As examples, Raphael (2015) demonstrates the value of using political economy literature to understand the raw politics that constrain opportunities for healthy public policy. And, Van den Broucke (2013, p. 284) makes the case for drawing on political psychology to "analyse, explain and predict the decisions made in the political arena".

Political science - the systematic study of politics - has a number of branches or sub-disciplines. For example, the topics covered by the ten-volume Oxford Handbooks of Political Science include political theory, political institutions, comparative politics, law and politics, international relations and public policy. Of these, the branch that has drawn most attention in discussions of health political science is policy studies (also referred to as public policy or policy analysis) which seeks to understand what policy is, the content of specific policies, and, the nature of the policy process (Hill, 2013). This focus links most directly to the second of the two arguments distinguished above - being able to understand the determinants of public policy - and to the concern of the present study.

Policy is perhaps best understood as a construct used to "mak[e] sense of the complex process of governing" (Colebatch, 2009, p. 1). It is both "ubiquitous" and "elusive" (Clavier and de Leeuw, 2013a, p. 1) in that texts that discuss its meaning outline how difficult, and even inappropriate, it is to fix the concept to a single, incontestable definition (for example Colebatch, 2009; Cairney, 2012, chap. 2; Hill, 2013, pp. 14–21). Box 2 shows some definitions that have been referred to in health political science scholarship. As Bernier and Clavier (2011) highlight, they demonstrate that policy is not reducible to a single document or piece of legislation nor to a single decision.

Box 2: Definitions of policy cited, and discussed, by health political scientists
Sources: Bernier and Clavier (2011); de Leeuw, Clavier and Breton (2014)

♦ Anything a government chooses to do or not to do (Dye, 1972)

♦ A set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them (Jenkins, 1978)

♦ A purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern (Anderson, 1988)

♦ The actions of government and the intentions that determine those actions (Cochran, 1999)

Studies of policy and the policy process challenge a dominant (and *sacred*) authoritative account of policy being the product of informed (evidence-based) choice made by legitimate decision makers. Instead, they highlight that policy forms through interactions between policy participants and the social construction of both policy concerns and target populations (Colebatch, 2009; Shaw, 2010; Sabatier and Weible, 2014; Bacchi, 2016). This process is "best imagined as a complex phenomenon of continuous interactions involving public policy and its context, events, actors, and outcomes" (Weible, 2014, p. 391).

It has been identified that health policy literature adopts a naive view of the policy making process (Bernier and Clavier, 2011; Fafard, 2015) and rarely draws on theories of the policy process in its analysis (Breton and de Leeuw, 2010). Similarly, there is little use of policy analysis concepts in social determinants of health and health equity policy research (Embrett and Randall, 2014). This is also the case in the local level health in all policies research I identified - only a few articles (for example, Hoeijmakers et al., 2007; Mannheimer et al., 2007; Mannheimer, Lehto and Ostlin, 2007; Guldbrandsson and Fossum, 2009; Saidla, 2018) referred to policy process theories in their analysis. In an attempt to counteract this, a variety of glossaries, editorials and other articles have aimed to draw health researchers' attention to the value of key insights, concepts and theories from policy studies and political science more generally (for example, Smith and Katikireddi, 2013; de Leeuw, Clavier and Breton, 2014; Crammond and Carey, 2017; Fafard and Cassola, 2020). There is now a small body of empirical work applying theories of the policy process to key public health issues, such as those in a special issue of the European Journal of Public Health (Bekker et al., 2018; Greer et al., 2018).

In addition to the interest in policy studies, there has been a call for public health to draw on public administration as a way of understanding *the implementation* of policies to improve health equity (Carey and Friel, 2015). Public administration is not included in the ten-volume Oxford Handbook of

Political Science. However, it has been referred to as a branch of political science (Nilsen et al., 2013), a research domain within political science (Gagnon et al., 2017) and political science's applied cousin (Greer and Lillvis, 2014). These differences reflect the contested relationship between these two fields which varies in different national contexts and over time (Whicker, Olshfski and Strickland, 1993; Guy, 2003; Bauer, 2018). Furthermore, there is even a question as to whether public administration is better regarded as an interdisciplinary profession than an academic discipline (Bauer, 2018). Whicker, Olshfski and Strickland (1993) trace the origins of public administration to a naive dichotomy between the creation of policies (politics) and their implementation or execution (public administration). However, research challenges this dichotomy, with Peters and Pierre (2012, p. 3) concluding "politics and administration should be thought of as different elements of the same process of formulating and implementing policy". Therefore, public administration has a wider relevance to public health's interest in policy than Carey and Friel's (2015) specific focus on implementation.

As an applied field, public administration has a strong interest in instrumental knowledge and draws from management and law as well as political science in order to study, and improve, government practice (Bauer, 2018). However, Bauer (2018) highlights that it can be difficult to distinguish the work of those political scientists who focus on public policy and that of public administration scholars who contribute to, and draw lessons from, political science. It is notable that this area of overlap coincides with the interest of health political scientists. In particular, the literature on joined-up government has been used to gain insights into the difficulties of, and possibilities to improve, intersectoral action for health (Carey, Crammond and Keast, 2014; Greer and Lillvis, 2014). This literature is also utilised in local level health in all policies research (for example Hendriks et al., 2013; Holt et al., 2018) along with public administration research on the characteristics of planning (Synnevåg, Amdam and Fosse, 2018a).

As Part Two describes, one source of data used in the present study is archival data in the form of research publications from the field of policy work studies. This is a sub-field of the policy studies/public administration overlap which, to date, has not received any attention in health political science. The sub-field focuses on providing knowledge of activities, practice and experiences of policy workers, that is those professionally engaged in policy as a form of employment (Kohoutek, Nekola and Veselý, 2018) including, but not limited to, public administrators. Noordegraaf (2010) refers to the accounts generated as second order accounts of policy to contrast them with the more abstract third order theories of policy and the policy process. While there are some earlier studies (for example, Meltsner, 1976; Durning and Osuna, 1994; Page and Jenkins, 2005), the growth of this field was initiated by a book, *The work of policy* (Colebatch, 2006d), which responded to reports that practitioners experienced a disconnect between their day to day work and textbook descriptions of what it should be (Colebatch and Radin, 2006).

A general definition of policy worker is "those whose engagement in policy is a consequence of their paid employment: primarily the political leaders, and the bureaucratic officials who work under them, but also the staff of organised interests and causes" (Colebatch, 2006e, p. 4). The specific focus in this thesis is the practice enacted by mid-level officials who, according to Page and Jenkins (2005), do a lot of the work that shapes policy. It has also been demonstrated that policy managers can be more influential in public health policy than public health specialists (Oliver et al., 2013). To use the language of epidemiologists, the practice enacted by policy practitioners can be thought of as one *determinant* of public policy; however, as Hendriks et al (2013) highlight, this influence has been mostly overlooked in public health research. I use the term policy practitioners to refer to this sub-set of policy workers. Other authors have used the terms policy analysts (for example, Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009), policy officials (Page and Jenkins, 2005), policy bureaucrats (Page and Jenkins, 2005) and policy managers (Oliver et al., 2013). In focussing on mid-level officials, I am excluding front-line service workers (such as social work, nursing or policing) - the *street-level*

bureaucrats who use their discretion to shape policy (Lipsky, 2010). In addition, it is important to emphasise that the term policy practitioner is not used in this thesis to refer to a job title, a delineated occupational category, or, those in a specific department or team. The study demonstrates that, at a local government level, some practitioners have policy as the main focus of their job whilst others combine policy-related responsibilities with other roles associated with the public service delivery function of local government.

Positioning research in an interdisciplinary space does not just have implications for the insights that are imported. It also requires navigating tensions that exist between each discipline's perspectives of, and approaches to, the purpose and process of research, the forms of knowledge it should generate, and who that knowledge is for. A tension discussed by Bernier and Clavier (2011) is that associated with the degree to which research should be driven by a scientific purpose or a practical, and therefore by its very nature political, one. In general, political science is oriented towards scientific purposes (Bauer, 2018). But, policy studies can be distinguished from other branches of political science by its quest for relevance as well as being more value laden and action oriented (Goodin, Rein and Moran, 2006). As Figure 2 illustrates, policy studies draws a distinction between analysis *of*, and analysis *for*, policy (Hill, 2013). This can be understood as the difference between the type of analysis performed mainly for scientific purposes (analysis of) and that undertaken for a client or political engagement (analysis for). According to Weible (2014), policy process scholars have been more likely to see their work in terms of scientific contribution. In contrast, policy analysts have always been engaged to some extent in influencing policy.

analysis of

Studies of policy content or output

Studies of policy process

focus on policy content

focus on policy process

Providing advice for policy Policy content advocacy

Policy process advocacy: seek to improve nature of policy process

analysis for
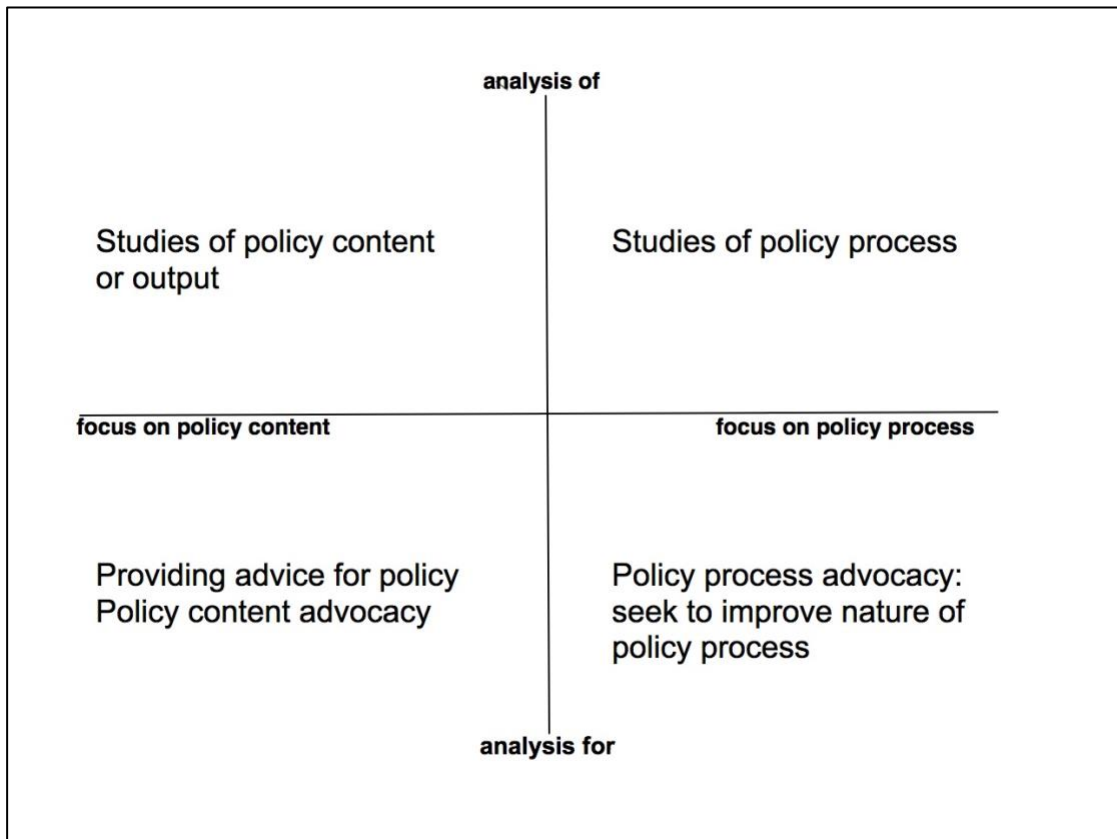
Figure 2: Different orientations in the field of policy studies
Based on typology by Hill (2013, pp. 4–5)

Public administration is also more focused on practical relevance than political science (Bauer, 2018). Here the concern is for relevance to public administration practice, which interrelates with the process advocacy orientation in policy studies (lower right quadrant in Figure 2). The definition of health political science quoted in the opening paragraph of this section emphasises its purpose as being *for health.* This is a practical interest - with the aim of informing both the political activism of researchers and public health practice (Sparks, 2009). This orientation aligns with analysis *for* policy (both lower quadrants in Figure 2) and the concerns of public administration, but, it is also acknowledged that applying the theories generated through analysis *of* policy is a way of achieving this (de Leeuw, Clavier and Breton, 2014). At a practice level, the work entailed in establishing a health in all policies approach is a form of policy process advocacy – one which aims to

ensure that those with health-related information and knowledge are well positioned to provide advice on, and advocate for, specific policy content.

The shared interest that public administration and public health scholars have in improving practice leads to an additional tension - that is the degree to which practitioners are engaged in the research process and their interests taken into account in setting research aims, conducting the research and disseminating. This has been a contested issue between political science and public administration in that the former has critiqued the latter for compromising methodological rigour to generate findings that were accessible to practitioners (Whicker, Olshfski and Strickland, 1993). Both public administration and public health have a concern for stronger researcher-practitioner partnerships as part of an engaged scholarship movement (see for example Bushouse et al., 2011 in public administration; Pinto, Spector and Rahman, 2019 in public health). This position is echoed by Clavier and de Leeuw (2013b) who highlight that health policy development will benefit from integration between scholars and activists, as well as between academic disciplines.

The study presented here is concerned with the practical relevance to public administrators and public health practitioners who wish to understand, and develop, policy practice. In a sense, as both a practitioner and a researcher, I embodied practitioner-researcher integration - the so-called pracademic (Posner, 2009). But, I still navigated tensions with respect to the interests and knowledge that are prioritised. As an insider researcher concerned as much with change as with knowledge generation, I conducted the study in a way that opened up possibilities for the development of my own, and others' practice. This is one motivation that underpinned the choice of action research orientation which I will elaborate on in Part Two. The unique position I had has resulted in an account of policy practice and its development that places the current understandings of practitioners, rather than pre-existing theory, in the foreground. This provides those who want to develop policy practice with a possible starting point for their endeavours.

I also experienced a tension with respect to the degree to which health should be explicitly articulated as the primary topic or interest in the research. In other words, what is it that makes a study *for health* rather than *for policy* (policy studies) or *for improving government practice* (public administration)? There are debates about the tensions that arise from taking a health imperialist stance in public health practice which have led to the use of win-win strategies (Molnar et al., 2016) and suggestions that the word health should be dropped altogether (Holt, 2018). However, I could not find any reference to the potential strengths and pitfalls of health imperialism in (health) political science. My own position was to frame the research questions and conduct the fieldwork in a way that avoids suggesting that health has primacy over other interests. I took this position to ensure that the fieldwork would be of interest to the case study site and to attract the widest possible variety of policy practitioners, rather than only those who actually perceived their work as connected to health. As a result, the findings could be of interest to those who wish to understand and improve government practices generally. However, this thesis specifically draws out the practical significance for achieving health in all policies and more general insights for health political science (see chapter 9).

2.4   Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted that there is a need for knowledge about what can be done to achieve local level health in all policies in England. There is scholarly research about the health in all policies approach in other countries and guidance for English local government, but there is little research evidence behind the dominant health in all policies approach (Van Vliet-Brown, Shahram and Oelke, 2018) and very little critique in the body of scholarly research. A key concern, arising from my professional experience as well as a few recent studies, is the risk of health imperialism. In prioritising what is important for health, rather than any other interests, the dominant health in all policies approach neglects to take into account the nature of

existing practices, why they are what they are and the actions others are taking, or would like to take, to develop them.

Policy practitioners, defined in this thesis as those who are professionally engaged in policy as a form of employment in a non-partisan role at a middle-level, enact practices that influence both policy process and outcomes. One way forward then is to seek to understand policy practice, what influences its enactment and its development. This leads to the three research questions posed in the present study:

♦ What is policy practice at a local level?

♦ What influences how policy practice is enacted?

♦ How does, or could, policy practice develop?

The questions are deliberately framed in a way that are not specific to health in order to avoid any suggestion that it has primacy over other interests. The study will seek insights into these questions through action research that generates fieldwork data from a practice development initiative and collects archival data from a systematic search for policy work research publications.

Conclusion to Part One: Origins

Part One has provided a rationale for the study in terms of its relevance to achieving local level health in all policies, whilst at the same time acknowledging that both the research interest and design arise from my own interests, history of experiences and traditions of understanding. The chapters in Part Four will return to consider the implications of the findings and the research experience to these different origins.

The next part elaborates on the research design and details the three concurrent streams of action that I pursued.

Part Two: Research design and methods

Part Two: Research design and methods

Understanding professional practice and its development

Engaging with archival data

Conducting fieldwork
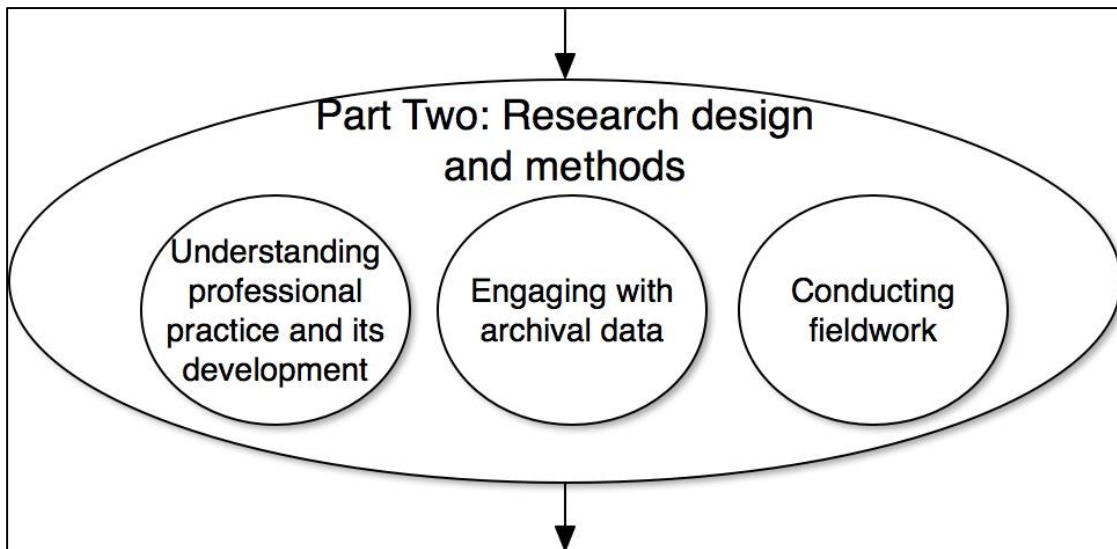
Part Two consists of three chapters which introduce the understanding of professional practice and practice development that was influential throughout the research and describes the methods used to collect and analyse data. Before proceeding to those chapters, this introduction explains the overall approach and design.

The research questions posed in the present study are concerned with the phenomenon of practice and its development. According to Orlikowski et al. (2010), both intensive participant observation and action research are appropriate for studying practice. In this study, there was a need to adopt an approach that was feasible for insider research, which is commonly used by those combining part-time studies with full-time work (Coghlan, 2007). Insider participant observation was discounted as it would have interfered with the conduct of my work responsibilities and created ethical tensions linked to informed consent amongst the multiple stakeholders I interact with. It would have also offered less opportunities to understand possibilities for policy practice development.

Action research is an orientation to research, rather than a specific set of methods. It is a "period of inquiry" (Waterman et al., 2001, p. 11) which has a

positive advantage of contributing to improvements in addition to meeting a research aim (McKay and Marshall, 2001, 2007). Therefore, it helps avoid the conceptual error that diagnosis (understanding) can be separated from, and precedes, intervention (Schein, 1996). Action researchers acknowledge that actions taken to generate data are in fact interventions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) with the implication that it is important to think about what changes the research intends to make (Law and Urry, 2004). The process leads to actionable knowledge – "knowledge that is usable by practitioners and theoretically robust for scholars" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p. xix). Issues of validity are addressed in a pragmatic way in that truth is taken to be what can be acted on (Bradbury-Huang, 2010) although it is important to acknowledge the limitations in doing so (Ulrich, 2001).

Action research has been used in one previous study with an interest in local level health in all policies. Steenbakkers et al (2012) used it to evaluate whether a coaching program helped the adoption of health in all policies. In contrast, this study recognised the value of action research in terms of creating change and explicitly aimed to develop policy practice in the research setting, but the research purpose is to draw insights on policy practice and its development rather than to evaluate the intervention.

The participative nature of action research and its dual aims can lead to tensions. Referring to the initiative as *research* and insisting on an academic requirement for rigour can limit the success of an initiative in creating change (Badger, 2000). Equally, there are risks of getting so engaged in the improvement aspect that accepted scientific practices for generating knowledge are neglected (Baskerville and Wood-Harper, 1996). The contribution of each participant's experiences and perspectives and their engagement in generating and testing knowledge improves its quality (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011). However, the intention for participation does not automatically translate into reality and a "paradox of participation" can result from researchers unintentionally imposing research roles on participants who are not interested (Arieli, Friedman and Agbaria, 2009, p. 263). There can be

a negative impact on the quality of the inquiry if participants do not actively inquire (Wadsworth, 2006). It is therefore important that the researcher acts as a facilitator of a shared inquiry process (Wadsworth, 2006) and negotiates the level of participation in research tasks with participants on an ongoing basis (Arieli, Friedman and Agbaria, 2009). This requires a flexible, adaptive approach which responds to changing circumstances (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011).

In this study, I conceptualised the actions I took in terms of three concurrent and interrelated streams of action. The first two of these were conducted alone so that there were limited expectations on potential co-inquirers to engage with literature. I also conducted the analysis of the data independently, although the concurrent nature of early analysis meant that there were opportunities to discuss and develop early interpretations with participants.

The first stream of action was focused on the way I understand and conceptualise professional practice and practice development. The reflexive inquiry entailed drawing on my own traditions of understanding, paying attention to practitioners' everyday understandings and reviewing literature focusing on professional practice development, particularly from the fields of nursing and teaching. This understanding was influential in the design and conduct of the study as well as in the analysis of data and presentation of the findings. Chapter 3 outlines the end-point of the inquiry and indicates how this is subsequently utilised in the findings chapters in Part Three.

In contrast, chapters 4 and 5 detail the methods used in the two other streams of action. The research had a combined design in that it used two different sources of qualitative data (archival data and fieldwork data). Two data sources were used to broaden the understanding of policy work practice and its development and therefore provide greater insights into the research questions. However, the fieldwork data predominates in the presentation of the findings in Part Three in order to ensure that the account presented is based on practitioners' understandings.

The archival data took the form of research publications from the field of policy work studies. Whilst the term secondary data is often used to refer to this form of data, I have coined the term archival (introduced by Vogt, Gardner and Haeffele, 2012), to emphasise that it is was the entire research publications that were used as data, rather than just the data reported within them. Chapter 4 explains the methods that were used in this stream of action to identify, select and analyse publications and ends by evaluating the strengths and limitations of this body of data in relation to the present study's research questions. In addition to collecting archival data, this stream of action provided material and ideas that informed the fieldwork and in some cases concepts and prior research findings were explicitly introduced as conversation starters to promote understanding and discussion.

As chapter 5 elaborates, the fieldwork data was generated through interviews and workshops which took place during a practice development intervention in an urban local government area in England, UK between June 2016 and January 2018. Acting as a change agent and facilitator, I invited colleagues to engage in an inquiry oriented by the question "How can we understand and develop our policy work practices and the context in which they take place?" The fieldwork influenced my sensitivity to some of the ideas and concepts that I was encountering in the other streams of action and therefore influenced their process and outcomes. The process generated data that was analysed concurrently to use the emerging findings and ideas in the fieldwork process itself as well as retrospectively alongside the archival data to generate the findings presented in this thesis.

Now that an overview of the research design has been provided, we turn to the first of the three Part Two chapters.

Chapter 3: Understanding professional practice and its development

Practice is a complex notion and can be very elusive (Green, 2009; Kemmis, 2011) and is therefore subject to different understandings. In this study, my understanding of professional practice and its development informed, and was informed by, the evolving research questions, the overall design of the research, the facilitation of the fieldwork, the data collected and, ultimately, the analysis of data and the presentation of the findings. It was therefore important to surface, and be reflexive about, my understanding – hence the first stream of action which was guided by the question "How do I understand professional practice and practice development?"

Before outlining the end-point of this inquiry in the sections that follow, it is first necessary to explain the main influences on my developing understanding.

The prime influence, particularly with respect to what to focus on, was the interests and understandings of policy practitioners, mainly the participants in the fieldwork. In order to answer the research questions in a way that is accessible to, and usable by, those interested in developing policy practice, I worked to ensure that the framework of ideas that the account is based on is consistent with everyday understandings, rather than being theoretically laden. This stance is consistent with that of Elliot (1994) who warns against privileging academic understandings over more common-sense ones in action research (see also Somekh, 1995).

Secondly, I was informed by my pre-existing understandings of concepts and tools from the intellectual field of Systems. Contemporary systems ideas and approaches have been shaped by a number of different lineages, including general systems theory, complexity sciences and cybernetics (Ison, 2017). Systems practitioners use systems as conceptual constructs to explore, understand and improve messy situations or phenomena, such as those where there are interrelationships and interdependencies between factors and multiple, potentially conflicting, perspectives (Reynolds and Holwell, 2010).

Systems approaches include a range of tools, including diagrams, that assist in both developing understanding and communicating to others (The Open University, 2002).

And finally, I drew insights and some terminology from practice focused literature, particularly that which focuses on practice and practice development in professions such as nursing and teaching. There is no unified theory of practice, but theoretical developments can offer a range of lenses through which to understand and study practice (Nicolini, 2012). Postill (2010) distinguishes two generations of practice theorists. The theories of the first generation (for example, social theorists, Bourdieu and Giddens, and cultural theorist, Foucault) are being tested and extended by those in the second generation in what is referred to as the *practice turn* in social science (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and von Savigny, 2001).

The specific set of literature that was most useful in my developing understanding is that associated with the theory of practice architectures. The full theory provides a concise language and an analytical framework for understanding professional practices and the way they are shaped by the conditions in which they occur (Mahon et al., 2017). It is based on the work of both first- and second-generation practice theorists, such as Bourdieu, Foucault, Marx and Schatzki. After a number of years in development, it was first articulated by Stephen Kemmis and Peter Grootenboer (2008) and has continued to evolve since (Kemmis and Mahon, 2017). It has been re-articulated and elaborated by Kemmis et al. (2012, 2014a, 2014b), Mahon et al. (2017) and Kemmis, Wilkinson and Edward-Groves (2017) and has been used primarily, but not exclusively, in the study of education-related practices (Mahon et al., 2017). The theory of practice architectures does not itself incorporate a particular methodology. However, as it can act as a resource to help both researchers and practitioners consider ways to develop or transform practice (Mahon et al., 2017), it has been associated with action research (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014).

The following sections elaborate the different elements of the understanding of professional practice and its development that I developed, and used, in the course of this study.

3.1   Practices have purpose

Practice is human action that has intention and meaning arising from its social context. It is purposeful in that the practitioner has a motivation or aim and intends to achieve some sort of outcome. The theory of practice architecture refers to this as the "project (or telos or purpose) of a practice" (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 39) and suggests it can usually be identified by asking a practitioner what it is they are doing and why. Furthermore, teleological practices are "*constituted* by certain aims" (Biesta, 2012, p. 12) in that the orientation to purpose is what makes the practice what it is. Biesta (2012) argues that considering questions of purpose are particularly vital when taking action to develop practice as they help to clarify whether any changes are desirable or not. This teleological focus was very much evident amongst participants in that they sought to articulate and discuss what their work is trying to achieve, rather than only what it entails.

The first research question in this study – "What is policy practice at a local level?" – entails describing a practice. One way of doing this would be to focus on the different components of practice, which the theory of practice architecture lists as the "utterances and forms of understanding (sayings), modes of action (doings), and ways in which people relate to one another and the world (relatings)" (Mahon et al., 2017, p. 24). However, this was not consistent with the focus of practitioners and the fieldwork data was not collected in a way that fully elucidated all these components. Therefore, the answer I provide to the first question, in chapter 6, does so in a way that focuses on purpose. It particularly focuses on instances in the data where participants referred to what they are trying to achieve and why.

To enhance the analysis, I draw on tools used in systems thinking which represent systems as expressions of purpose with varying degrees of

granularity (Reynolds and Wilding, 2017). At the most basic level of granularity I use snappy systems which are simple statements, starting with *a system to….* (Armson, 2011; Reynolds and Wilding, 2017). For example, I could express my perspective of the purpose of academic research practice as *to make a contribution to knowledge.* Snappy system statements can be expanded further using the PQR formula originating in soft systems methodology (Checkland and Poulter, 2006) and elaborated by Armson (2011). This uses the template: "A system to do <what> by means of <how> in order to contribute to achieving <why>" (Armson, 2011, p. 215). For example, I could express my perspective of the purpose of academic research practice as *to make a contribution to knowledge by means of a rigorously conducted inquiry process in order to contribute to achieving better policy and practice.*

3.2 Practices have different scales and levels of complexity

Schatzki (2002) distinguishes dispersed practices which are simple social actions, such as asking questions and explaining, from integrative ones which bring together distinctive forms of dispersed practices in characteristic ways. Professional practices, such as teaching and nursing, are integrative (Kemmis, 2009) and examples can be identified reflecting different scales and levels of complexity (Rönnerman and Kemmis, 2016). One way of understanding a complex practice is to identify its sub-practices. For example, a study examining school environmental practice unpacked it into the sub-practices of picking up litter, minimising paper waste and minimising food waste (Gabrielsson, 2016).

Systems practitioners use the notion of hierarchy to unpack a system of interest in terms of its sub-systems, sub-sub-systems and so on in a recursive structure. A sub-system has a purpose which contributes to the achievement of its parent's purpose. Thus, there will be a nested relationship in the expression of the purpose of the two systems - the *why* of a sub-system is its

parent system's *what*. Focus can be shifted to any level in the recursive structure - zooming in (narrowing the boundary) to examine details and zooming out (widening the boundary) to incorporate elements that were previously perceived as context. Systems maps are used to provide a snapshot of a system of interest and its perceived sub-systems, sub-sub-systems and so on.

In chapter 6, I utilise systems maps to provide an understanding of policy work practice in terms of its component sub-practices and inter-linked purposes.

3.3 Practices co-exist with other practices

A practice is in both dependent and interdependent relationships with other practices in a site (Kemmis, Wilkinson and Edwards-Groves, 2017) and therefore they can mutually shape each other. In the theory of practice architectures, the concept of ecologies is used to consider the relationships between practices. In utilising Systems concepts from Capra's principles of ecology (Kemmis et al., 2012, 2014a), it draws analytical attention to "how different practices co-inhabit and co-exist in a site, sometimes leaving residues or creating affordances that enable and constrain how other practices can unfold" (Kemmis et al., 2014a, p. 43). For example, it is possible to identify the way in which practices nest within one another, overlap or mutually constitute each other.

In the same way that I utilise systems maps to understand policy work practice by identifying its sub-practices, I use systems maps in chapter 6 to represent co-existing practices that are present in the site. This elucidates practices that are not considered to be policy practice and in doing so helps to draw attention to the context in which policy practice is enacted.

3.4   Practice is situated

Practice is temporally and spatially located (Schatzki, 2012) or situated (Ison, 2017) and is shaped by the conditions in the site. Different ways of distinguishing the elements that make up the context have been proposed.

The theory of practice architecture emphasises the architectures which are the arrangements in, or brought to, the site of practice. They form a niche that make a practice possible (Mahon et al., 2017). The arrangements both enable and constrain, which mean some ways of enacting a practice are more possible than others (Kemmis, Wilkinson and Edwards-Groves, 2017). The theory elaborates on three forms of practice architecture which shape different elements of a practice:

> *"Cultural-discursive arrangements prefigure and make possible particular sayings in a practice by constraining and/or enabling what it is relevant and appropriate to say (and think) in performing, describing, interpreting, or justifying the practice.*
>
> *Material-economic arrangements shape the doings of a practice by affecting what, when, how, and by whom something can be done.*
>
> *Social-political arrangements shape how people relate in a practice to other people and to non-human objects"*
>
> *(Mahon et al., 2017, p. 23).*

Practice architectures act as a form of memory in that they incorporate the practice traditions or history of the sayings, doings and relatings in the site. Thus memories are *stored* in the shared language, physical layouts and organisational arrangements at the site and not just *in* the individuals involved (Kemmis et al., 2014b).

It is also possible to understand the context in terms of a distinction between proximal influences and distal ones. The proximal elements are those that are present in the site, whilst the distal ones could be wider discourses or sets of relationships that are reflected in the site (Kemmis et al., 2014b). This focus resonated with the more everyday understandings of policy practitioners, including myself. I therefore utilised it both in the fieldwork process and the retrospective analysis.

In addition, I sought to identify and communicate perspectives of the conditions that afford a high quality performance of a sub-practice, rather than constrain it. To achieve this in chapter 6, I utilise attribute maps which are a form of diagramming based on Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1983; Ackermann and Eden, 2010). Attribute maps take a similar form to a spray diagram, but each node is phrased as a bi-polar construct which adds meaning by including the perceived opposite pole. For example, a perceived condition for enacting good academic research practice could be *time available to discuss with peers, rather than always working alone*. In attribute maps, the phrase *rather than* is replaced by three dots - thus *time available to discuss with peers…always working alone*.

3.5   Practitioners enact practices

Practitioners enacting a particular practice "speak language characteristic of the practice (sayings), engage in activities of the practice in set-ups characteristic of the practice (doings), and enter relationships with other people and objects characteristic of the practice (relatings)" (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 31).

When giving primacy to the phenomenon of practice and the way it is shaped by proximal and distal conditions, it is possible to assume that practitioners have little agency. However, even though the conditions within a site create the possibility for some practices more than others, it is the practitioner who enacts or performs a practice. Each practitioner will be shaped by their traditions of understanding (Ison, 2017) and be familiar with a particular

repertoire of ideas and tools. Therefore, different practitioners will make different choices about how they frame, understand and engage in the site of a practice. It is possible that the conditions in a site leave the individual with little choice about what they do and how, but usually there is scope for creativity and innovation. Individual and collective human activity makes, re-makes, alters and dissolves practice architectures (Kemmis, Wilkinson and Edwards-Groves, 2017).

Practice can be habitual but conscious awareness of the choices being made is more likely to lead to praxis, a particular form of practice. Praxis arises when the practitioner acts with awareness that their actions are morally committed, informed by traditions in a field and have historical consequences (Kemmis and Smith, 2008; Kemmis, 2010). Kemmis (2012, p. 88) elaborates further:

> *"Praxis is not a matter of following rules or priorities or routines. It is a matter of deliberating in the face of uncertainty about how to act rightly, taking into account moral, social and political considerations, not just prudential questions, and then acting for the good – acting rightly or as one should under the circumstances."*

3.6 Practice is a performance

The previous sections have highlighted that when a practice is performed or enacted, it is shaped by different elements in the context, the practitioner and the interactions between them. In other words, a practice performance (particular happening of sayings, doings and relatings) is the emergent property of the interactions between a practitioner and the conditions that shape practice (Armson, 2011; Ison, 2017). This can be represented using an influence diagram where the arrows between elements means *influences* (Figure 3).
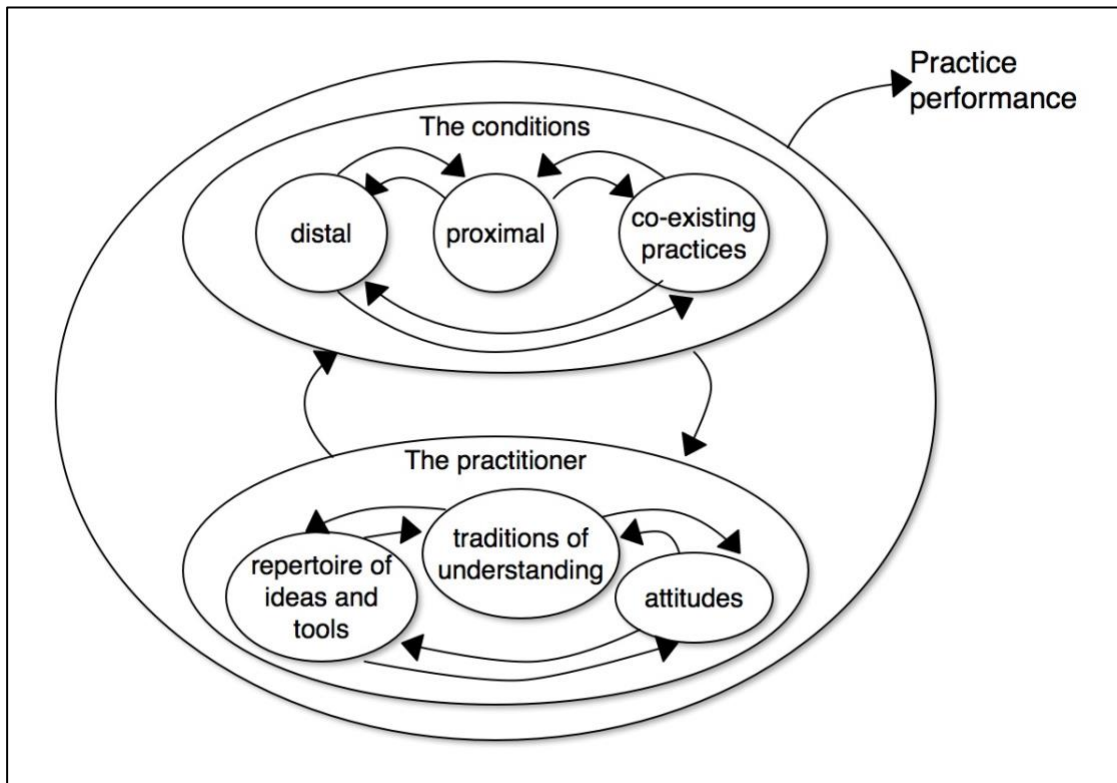
Figure 3: An influence diagram of the elements that give rise to a practice performance

The elements in the influence diagram provided an orientation to analyse the data and organise the findings in chapter 7 which focuses on the second research question "What influences how policy practice is enacted?"

3.7   Practices develop and are developed

The distinction between *development as history* and *development as intervention* which is made in institutional development scholarship (The Open University, 2005) is used here to distinguish two perspectives on practice development. These distinctions inform the structure of chapter 8 which focuses on the findings to the third research question – "how does, or could, policy practice develop?"

3.7.1   Practice development as history

Practice development as history draws attention to the changes that are the emergent properties of complex social interactions over time as practitioners constitute and reconstitute the practice. There is a tradition of practice research that particularly focuses on this historical dimension (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Here, practice is "understood as an evolving social form which is reflexively structured and transformed over time" (Kemmis, 2009, p. 20). The theory of practice architecture accounts for this in the way it considers practice traditions and the history of the practice architectures in the site. It is important to understand the history of a practice in a site as it forms part of the context that shapes potential interventions.

These emergent changes could be perceived as better and therefore be welcomed by those concerned with the quality of a practice. However, they may also be unwelcome, in that they could constrain possibilities for praxis or make it less likely that a practitioner enacts a practice in a way that would be perceived as good quality.

3.7.2   Practice development as intervention

Practice development as intervention involves an intentional, purposeful act by individuals or groups to change or improve practice. Practice development itself will also be shaped by the conditions in the site and the practitioners involved.

Practice development is often conceived in terms of individual practitioners gaining new knowledge through experience, training or formal education. This equates practice development with personal or continuous professional development and is a manifestation of what Cook and Wagenaar (2012) refer to as the received view of practice as applied (specialised) knowledge, which originates in a technical, positivist rationality (Schön, 1991). This dominant discourse has been challenged but it still underpins the practices of many involved with professional training and organisational management (Cook and Wagenaar, 2012). There is an interrelationship between changing

understandings and changing practices - different understandings can give rise to new practices which in turn provide new experiences that lead to new understandings in an iterative fashion (Ison, 2017). A key element of this process is reflecting on, and in, action (Schön, 1991).

However, a focus on knowledge or understandings in isolation does not take into account constraints to implementing new ideas in the workplace (Manley, Titchen and McCormack, 2013), the practice architectures that afford or constrain different practices and the wider ecologies of practices (Kemmis et al., 2014a, 2014b). A concern for developing practice therefore goes beyond the development of skills, knowledge or values to also embrace practitioners taking purposeful action to shape the context and culture within which they do what they do (Manley and McCormack, 2003). Furthermore, the quality of an organisation's structures, culture and leadership can impact on the success of practice development initiatives (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2002) which means that practice development may need to promote change in the very conditions which influences its own success.

3.8   Conclusion

The framework of ideas introduced in this chapter formed through a stream of action guided by the inquiry "How do I understand professional practice and practice development?" The inquiry has led to a new way of conceptualising practice and practice development which is consistent with the everyday understandings of participants in this study. As the chapters in Part Three will illustrate, the ideas and accompanying Systems tools have practical utility in developing, and presenting, an understanding of complex, multi-faceted practices enacted in a professional capacity in dynamic environments.

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Chapter 4: Engaging with archival data

This chapter is the first of two which provide detail on the methods used to generate the data used in this study. The element of the combined design that is focused on here is the stream of action focused on the identification of archival data in the form of research publications from the field of policy work studies. The chapter is in three sections. Firstly, it describes the methods used to search for and select publications. It then describes how the publications were analysed, and used, in the study. And finally, it provides an overview of the nature and scope of prior empirical work and acknowledges its strengths and limitations as data for the present study.

4.1   Searching for, and selecting, publications

As explain in section 2.3, health political scientists highlight the value of both policy studies and public administration to public health endeavours. As I had little knowledge of these academic disciplines, I set out to become familiar with key concepts, debates and empirical work. Building a bibliography and undertaking background reading takes place for all studies but the search and selection methods are not always described. I document it because the broad search process led to the identifications of the publications that I utilised as archival data. During the process, I drew guidance and reassurance from descriptions of traditional narrative literature reviews (Hart, 1998), the hermeneutic approach to literature review (Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014; Greenhalgh, A'Court and Shaw, 2017) and scoping studies (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Daudt, van Mossel and Scott, 2013).

The search and selection process involved three broad activities described in the sections below.

4.1.1   Building, and maintaining, a bibliography

Keyword searching in managed databases is the most widely adopted search method used to identify literature in health research. However, indexing

barriers provide a challenge to conducting these searches in the discipline of political science (Daigneault, Jacob and Ouimet, 2014). Furthermore, my lack of knowledge meant that it was difficult to identify accurate search terms. Therefore, snowballing (citation and ancestry searching), an effective way of searching for heterogeneous literature when addressing broad questions (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005), was selected as the primary search strategy.

The searches started early in 2016. Google Scholar was used for citation searches because it returns broader citation counts than managed databases and includes conference papers and publishers' content (Halevi, Moed and Bar-Ilan, 2017). Atlas.ti (a qualitative data analysis software package) and Microsoft Excel were used to manage records and publications and I kept a journal of actions and reflections.

Prior to 2016, I had taken a berry picking approach to identifying publications - it was circuitous with occasional finds of ripe berries interspersed with periods of wandering (Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson, 2013). This led to the identification of seminal texts associated with policy work studies (Box 3) which were used for citation searching.

Box 3: Seminal texts in policy work studies

♦ Colebatch (2006c, 2006d, 2006e)

♦ Colebatch and Radin (2006)

♦ Colebatch, Hoppe and Noordegraaf (2010)

♦ Hoppe and Jeliazkova (2006)

♦ Mayer, van Daalen and Bots (2004)

♦ Meltsner (1976)

♦ Page and Jenkins (2005)

♦ Radin (2000, 2013)

♦ Tenbensel (2006)

The records returned by Google Scholar were title screened and marked for inclusion if I judged that they would help me develop an understanding of policy practice, consistent with the approach in a hermeneutic review (Greenhalgh, A'Court and Shaw, 2017). Exclusions were due to the publication title implying a focus on a specific policy or more generic policy processes, rather than policy practice. Publications in languages other than English were also excluded.

Starting with the most recent and working back to 2006, I accessed the full text of selected titles in batches according to the year of publication. This cut-off date was selected because the book which is referred to as the instigator of empirical studies of policy work, Colebatch (2006d), was published that year. I did, however, subsequently access selected earlier texts. As each publication was imported into Atlas.ti, I coded the abstract (or initial paragraph if there was no abstract) to identify the type of publication, author(s), year of publication and source, and to distinguish empirical from conceptual papers.

After conducting an initial analysis of each publication (see section 4.2), I title screened the references to select publications that could also add to an understanding of policy practice (ancestry searching). These references were added into the list of titles that needed to be retrieved on an ongoing basis.

New publications were continuously identified via Google Scholar citation alerts for the texts listed in Box 3. In addition, I hand searched journal special issues and edited books which had been identified through the snowballing searches. I remained alert to the possibilities of serendipitous discovery (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005) and included publications I was already aware of.

As Figure 4 shows, 459 publications were identified, accessed and utilised for ancestry searching.
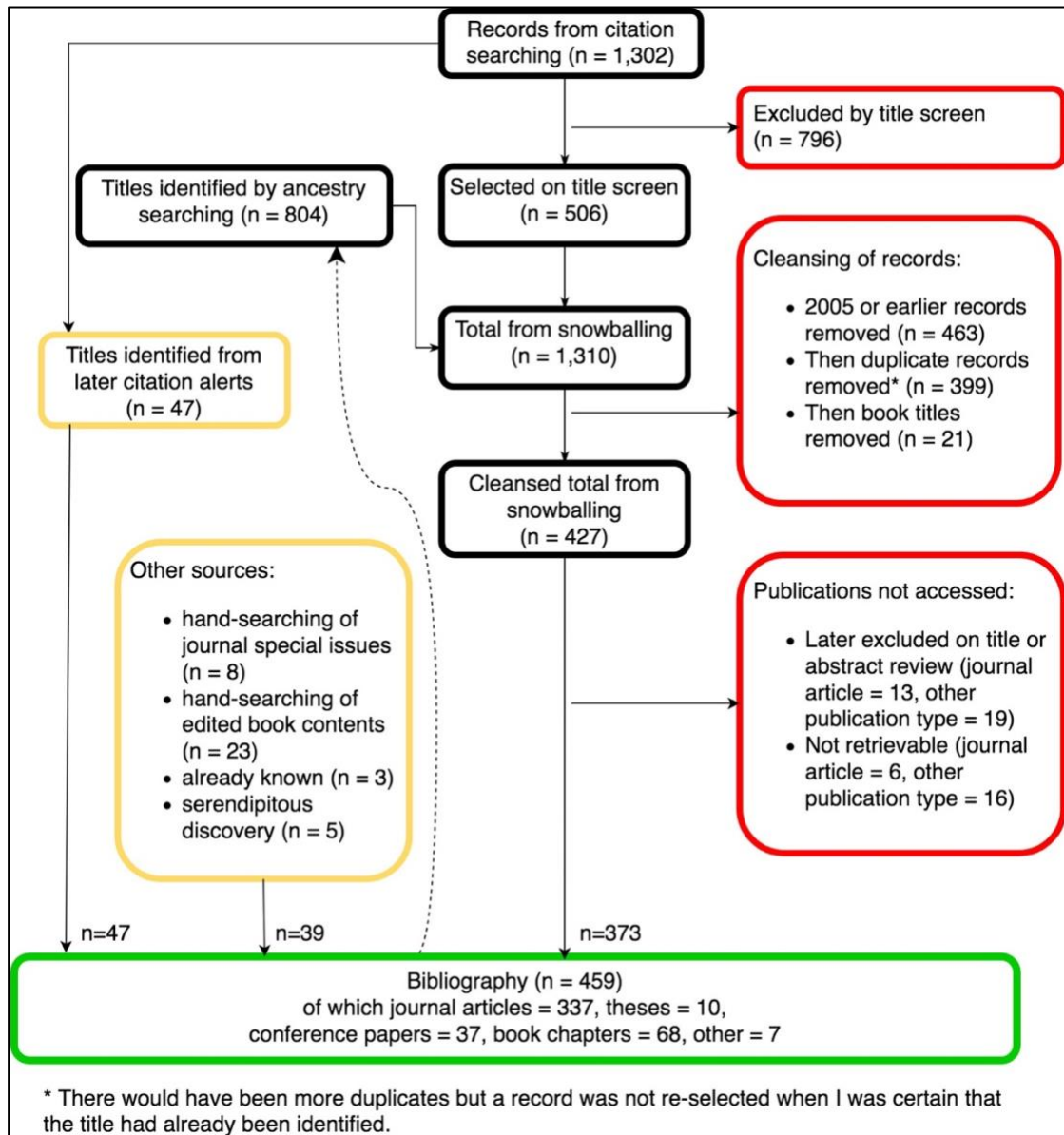
Figure 4: A diagrammatic illustration of the bibliography building process

4.1.2   Identifying relevant and reliable empirical publications

In addition to gaining insights through background reading, it was also important to select the publications to use as archival data. In scoping studies, it is not always possible to develop inclusion and exclusion criteria at the outset (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Daudt, van Mossel and Scott, 2013). In this case, a set of criteria developed iteratively as I became familiar with the field of policy work studies.

Although there was no intention to quality assess included studies, it was important to mitigate against Google Scholar's lack of quality control. Therefore, only publications that were peer-reviewed journal articles or theses submitted in fulfilment of a PhD/Doctorate were considered for inclusion. Amongst these, some publications were clearly conceptual or theoretical and others were clearly empirical, but there were grey areas such as papers using a case to illustrate a theory or proposed framework. Following Daigneault, Jacob and Ouimet (2014) who also observed this practice in political studies literature, only those publications that had an explicit description of the approach and method used were included.

Consistent with this study's use of the term policy practitioner, I focused on studies of those in paid, non-partisan roles working at mid-level in any sector. This excluded studies of the policy work or role of politicians, partisan advisors, senior officials/managers, academics, front-line service workers or active citizens. Studies that did not directly include policy practitioners as research participants, for example by using documentation or second-hand accounts as their source of data, were also excluded.

As Figure 5 illustrates, 72 publications met these criteria.
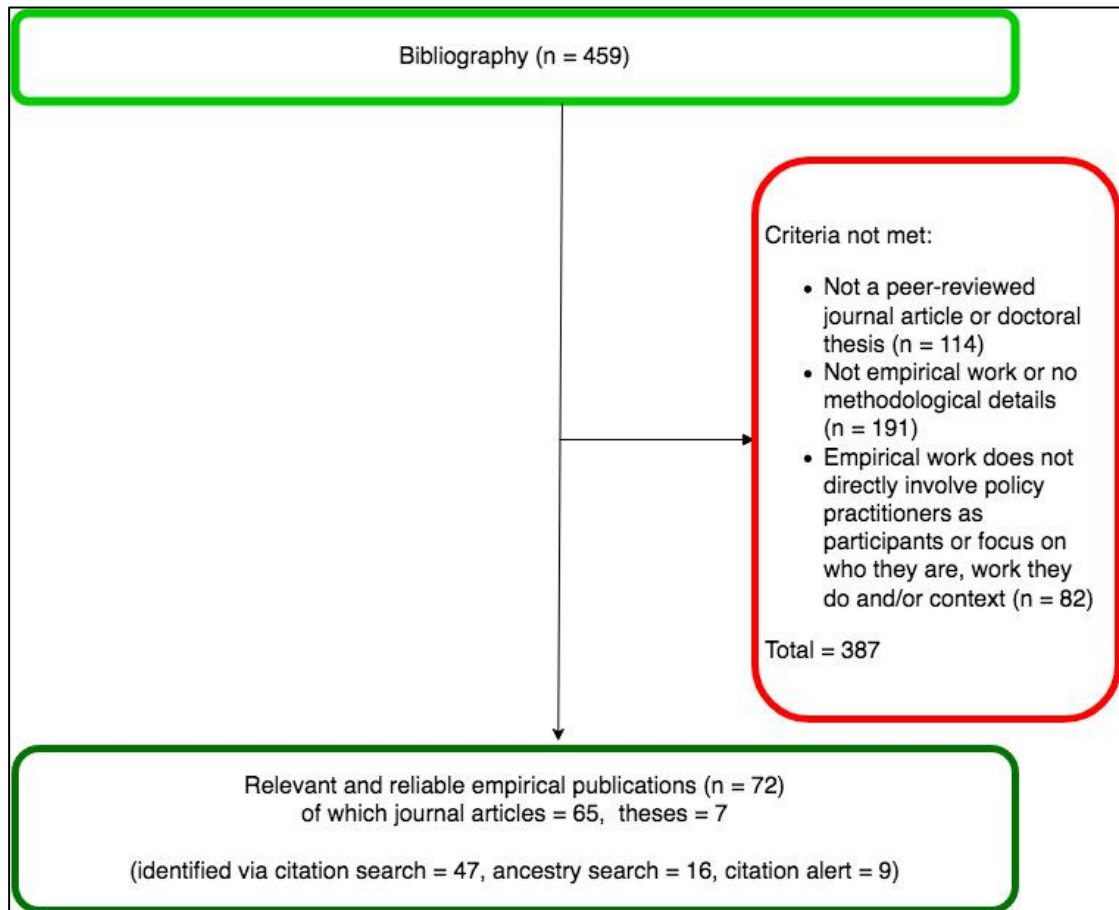
Figure 5: A diagrammatic illustration of the empirical work identification process

4.1.3   Judging the comprehensiveness of the search process

As the search strategy was iterative, I needed to make a judgement of its comprehensiveness to inform my decision to stop. Three considerations were used to make this judgement.

Consistency with key informant papers

Booth (2001) suggests that papers in a literature review can be thought of as informants and that key informants are those that have a broad selection of references. In this case, three chapters from recent edited handbooks were key informants as they provided narrative overviews of policy work research

as a whole (Kohoutek, Nekola and Veselý, 2018), from a practice perspective (Bartels, 2018) and at a local level (Lundin and Öberg, 2017).

Data saturation

Qualitative researchers, particularly grounded theorists, use the concept of saturation - the point when new data does not offer any new insights - to identify when to stop sampling participants to a study. Booth (2001) proposes that this can also be applied in literature review.

Exploration of potential for keyword searching

In January 2020, steps were taken to identify whether keyword searching in managed databases would enhance the bibliography further.

To identify search terms, the author-supplied keywords in the 72 empirical publications (see section 4.1.2) were identified and ranked according to their frequency of occurrence. The 47 publications that supplied keywords used a total of 157 different terms of which 128 were used only once. The most frequently used terms - policy analysis (10 occurrences), policy work (8 occurrences) and policy capacity (7 occurrences) - were selected as the search terms. Automated text mining in Atlas.ti (Table 2) indicated that searches using *policy analysis* or *policy work* in the full text of the article are most likely to identify relevant publications.

Two general social science databases (Academic Search Ultimate and SCOPUS) were used to search for publications using the three search terms. Both databases were used to search within the abstract, title and keyword fields. Academic Search Ultimate was also used for searching within the text of the publications (this was not possible in SCOPUS).

Table 2: Occurrences of search terms in the empirical publications

	As author-supplied keyword	In abstract (or first paragraph)	In entire pdf text (includes publishers' information and reference list)
Policy analysis	10	17	60
Policy work	8	30	56
Policy capacity	7	11	37
policy analysis AND policy work	1	8	53
policy analysis AND policy capacity	1	2	37
policy work AND policy capacity	0	9	36
All (AND)	0	2	36
Any (OR)	23	41	63
None (NOR)	49	31	9

Table 3: Records returned from searches of social science databases

	Fields searched	**Academic Search Ultimate**	**Academic Search Ultimate**	**SCOPUS**
	Fields searched	Text	Abstract, Title, Keywords	Abstract, Title, Keywords
S1	"policy analysis"	27,029	3,009	9,288
S2	"policy work"	2,221	267	504
S3	"policy capacity"	491	68	179
S4	"policy analysis" AND "policy work"	382	16	46
S5	"policy analysis" AND "policy capacity"	144	5	28
S6	"policy work" AND "policy capacity"	57	3	9
S7	All (AND)	43	0	4
S8	Any (OR)	29,201	3,320	9,892

All searches were conducted 22 January 2020 and were limited to results published after 2006, in English, in scholarly journals

As Table 3 demonstrates, *policy analysis* is a widely used term. It incorporates analysis carried out by any actor, including academics. It can focus on the content of a policy or the policy process and can be either analysis *of* policy or analysis *for* policy (Hill, 2013; Brans, Geva-May and Howlett, 2017). In scholarly work, the term is used as a synonym for policy studies, to refer to a research approach and to introduce policy analysis methods. Amongst this diversity, publications about the work of policy practitioners are in a minority. The term *policy work* generates a smaller number of records. However, a cursory title screen of the results revealed that the words *policy* and *work* appear adjacent to each other in evaluative questions, such as *did [name of] policy work?* resulting in irrelevant results*. Policy capacity returns a more manageable number of records. However, it cannot be relied on in isolation because it did not occur frequently in the previously identified publications and is predominantly associated with just one of the research trajectories identified by Kohoutek, Nekola and Veselý (2018).

A cursory title screen of the results of the combination searches (S4 - S7 in Table 3) identified one very recent empirical study, taking the total to 73 publications. Full screening of all titles and abstracts could have continued to build the bibliography and resulted in additional relevant empirical publications being identified. However, as I had reached data saturation and the existing bibliography was consistent with key informant publications, I decided on the basis of the law of diminishing returns not to continue.

4.2   Analysing the publications

Dick (2007) suggests that one of the ways that action researchers can learn from grounded theorists is in relation to the way literature is used during the research process and as data. In grounded theory, the role and timing of literature review is contested but three main phases can be identified - initial, ongoing and final (Thornberg and Dunne, 2019). These three phases can also be identified in this study, although, as Figure 6 demonstrates, they

overlapped and were not completely coterminous with either the search process or the fieldwork milestones.
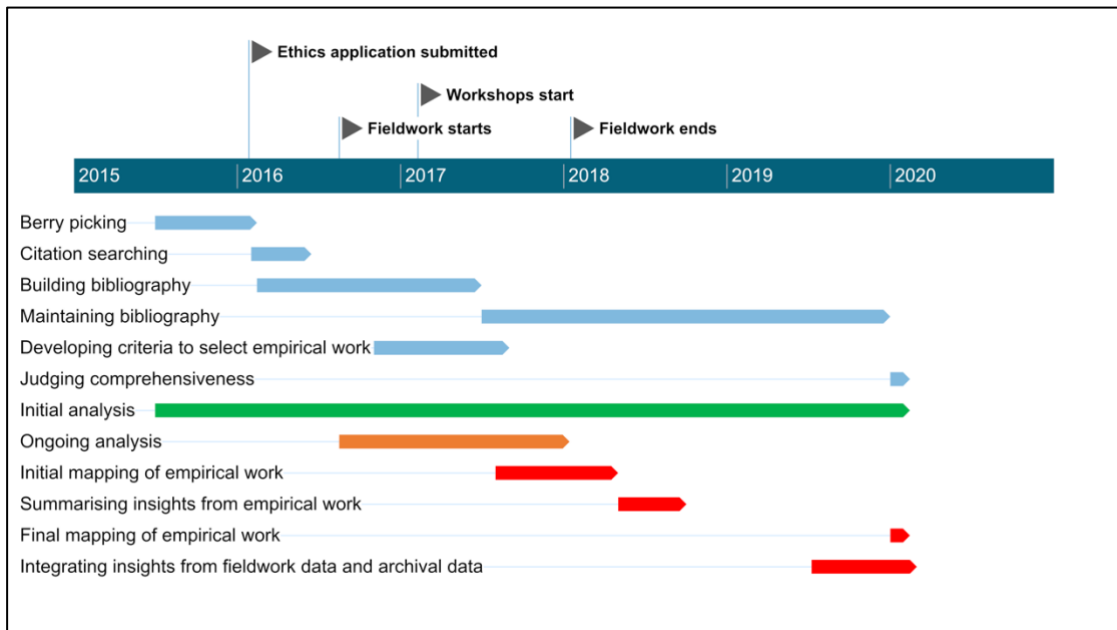
Figure 6: Timing of the search, selection and analysis activities in relation to fieldwork milestones

Initial analysis

The initial analysis, which started prior to the onset of data collection and continued throughout, had two main purposes. Firstly, it established whether there is a strong extant literature on policy practice in general and at a local level in particular. This was important to inform the research proposal and accompanying ethics application, hence the initial focus on the most recent literature. Secondly, it developed my understanding of the concepts and research methods used in this academic field. This was a continuous longer-term endeavour. My degree of engagement with each publication varied according to how useful it was for these purposes. When I completed the initial analysis, I used Atlas.ti to code the abstract (or first paragraph) according to the theme(s) covered to help with future retrievability. These codes developed inductively and were influenced by the fieldwork experiences as well as growing knowledge of the field of policy work studies.

Ongoing analysis

During the fieldwork period, the ongoing analysis had different purposes. It identified concepts or frameworks that were helpful to participants in our shared inquiry. Furthermore, I carried out ad hoc searches and revisited publications prompted by the themes and ideas that arose from the concurrent analysis of the fieldwork data and my reflections on the experience. This was a two-way relationship - the archival data sensitised me to aspects of the fieldwork data but at the same time the fieldwork sensitised me to certain aspects of the archival data.

Final analysis

The final analysis focused on consolidating and preparing to communicate the insights gained.

I mapped the empirical publications to identify research focus, design and methods, distinguishing unique and interrelated studies in the process. This mapping, which follows in the next section, provides an understanding of the nature and scope of policy work research which informed an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of this body of data in relation to the focus of the present study.

I then analysed the empirical publications to identify the insights that they gave into the study's three research questions. The process used coding and spray diagrams and also required me to re-read some conceptual publications that explained key concepts and their origins. I then produced a study-by-study summary of the pertinent findings. This summary was re-analysed later using themes identified in the fieldwork data (see section 5.4).

4.3 The nature and focus of policy work research

This section provides a description of the archival data identified by providing an overview of the nature and focus of the policy work research. Firstly, the research design and strategies will be summarised and then an overview will

be provided of the groups of policy practitioners that have been studied by considering level of governance, employment sector and policy areas.

All of the identified empirical publications refer to studies using a cross-sectional design with either a quantitative (40 publications) or qualitative research strategy (33 publications). The absence of longitudinal designs reveals a gap in what is known with respect to how policy practice changes over time as a result of either dynamic change or deliberate intervention. It is significant that no publications were based on an action research design as the case has been made for its value to policy analysis and administrative research (Wagenaar, 2011, pp. 228–230; Bartels, 2012; Bartels and Wittmayer, 2018).

All quantitative publications use large-N surveys to collect data. Of these 18 publications represent ten studies (Appendix B, Table 8) that draw on data collected using a policy capacity survey adapted from one originally developed to assess capacity in Canada's federal government. The commonality of items in these surveys enabled the secondary use of combinations of these data sets with the results presented in an additional eight publications (Appendix B, Table 9). The remaining 14 quantitative publications present eight unique studies each using a tailored survey design with a specific policy audience (Appendix B, Table 10). These large-N surveys contribute to knowledge of the demographics of policy practitioners, activities of policy work, different policy styles and variation between and within countries, jurisdictions and policy areas. However, the surveys include items that the researchers anticipate they will see based on their expectations of what policy practitioners *should* do. Many of them favour the authoritative choice account of policy as it manifests itself in the policy analysis and evidence-based policy movements. This was particularly evident in one early publication which concludes that networking tasks blur the policy work role and negatively impacts on overall policy capacity (Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009).

The 33 publications reporting qualitative research represent 27 unique studies. Most unique studies (n=23) (Appendix B, Table 11) use one or more cases such as a government department, organisation or a policy project with several authors explicitly referring to a case study approach. They use the case in a general way as a "method for selecting the source of data" (Blaikie, 2010 p. 186) and present it as a backdrop to studying policy practitioners and policy work. Although case study is the most common approach stated by the authors, other approaches and theoretical orientations, such as ethnography, grounded theory and interpretivist, were also adopted. The remaining four studies (Appendix B, Table 12) were not directly associated with a case, other than the country or countries in which they were conducted. These used networks and snowballing as the primary means of recruiting participants. All the qualitative studies generated data using interviews and some also used focus groups and observation. Documentation was occasionally used as a supplementary source of data. The qualitative studies enable a greater range of accounts of policy and policy work to emerge. They give insights into knowledge and knowing in policy work, collaborative and participation work and contextual influences.

The distinction made above between the focus of quantitative and qualitative studies aligns with two different trajectories in policy work research outlined by Kohoutek, Nekola and Veselý (2018). The first trajectory is concerned with evidence based policy making that focuses on the policy (analytical) capacity across jurisdictions and policy advisory systems whilst the second trajectory is more concerned with the practice and lived experiences of policy practitioners. Although the term *practice* is used frequently in this body of work, it is predominantly used in an atheoretical, everyday sense. Consistent with a "weak approach to practice" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 12), many of the studies using a large-N survey design focus predominantly on cataloguing what policy practitioners do (or do not do). There is only reference to practice theorists in three studies (all qualitative) (Freeman, 2007; Maybin, 2013, 2015; Escobar, 2014, 2015). This is consistent with Bartels (2018) observation that practice theory is not routinely used by researchers in this field.

Turning now to the groups of policy practitioners that have been studied. Research has taken place in twelve different countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, UK, USA). Most focus is at a national level, sub-national level (for example, region or state) or a combination of the two. The exceptions are two studies drawing participants from the European Union (Turnpenny et al., 2008; Egeberg et al., 2013) and just five studies (all qualitative) which focus on policy work at a local government level (Cooper and Smith, 2012; Johansson, 2012; Escobar, 2014, 2015; Wesselink and Gouldson, 2014; Wimmelmann, Vallgårda and Jensen, 2018). There were three additional publications in the wider bibliography which reported empirical work that had taken place at a local government level, but they did not meet the selection criteria because senior policy managers were the informants (Lundin and Öberg, 2014; Lundin, Öberg and Josefsson, 2015; Öberg, Lundin and Thelander, 2015). This scarcity of empirical research at a local level has been noted elsewhere (Brans, Geva-May and Howlett, 2017; Lundin and Öberg, 2017).

In general, policy work literature recognises that policy practitioners are employed outside of government and refers to the concept of policy advisory systems (Halligan, 1995). However, as Brans, Geva-May and Howlett (2017) highlight, empirical work is predominantly government-employee centric. The main exceptions being two Canadian studies that focus on policy work in non-governmental organisations (Evans and Wellstead, 2013) and policy work undertaken by private sector consultants (Howlett and Migone, 2013). A few studies (for example Boxelaar, Paine and Beilin, 2006; Cooper and Smith, 2012; Elgin, Pattison and Weible, 2012) draw their participants from a project, issue network or particular policy community and therefore include people from government, academia, non-profits and/or private sector without necessarily distinguishing the work of participants based on their employment sector.

Whilst most researchers study policy practitioners from across multiple government departments irrespective of the policy sector, some focus on those working in a particular department or on a specific issue. Focused studies include those in departments of health in UK (Ettelt, Mays and Nolte, 2012; Maybin, 2013, 2015), Canada (Lomas and Brown, 2009; Ouimet et al., 2009; van Mossel, 2016) and Australia (Gleeson, 2009; Hughes, 2014) and Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), UK (Wilkinson, 2011). Other studies use a specific policy area to guide their participant selection, for example public health (Freeman, 2007; Haynes et al., 2011; Wimmelmann, Vallgårda and Jensen, 2018), indigenous affairs (McCallum and Waller, 2017), land use planning (Putland, 2013) and various environmental concerns (Boxelaar, Paine and Beilin, 2006; Howlett and Oliphant, 2010; Wellstead and Stedman, 2011, 2014; Elgin, Pattison and Weible, 2012; Wesselink and Gouldson, 2014; Coffey, 2015).

This overview has demonstrated that, whilst flourishing, policy work research has a number of limitations in relation to the specific concern of the present study. There has been little attention at a local government level, scant use of practice theory and no longitudinal studies to provide insights into changes over time. It is also significant that neither health in all policies or healthy public policy feature in this body of empirical work, even though a number of studies took place in health departments. In comparison, there are publications considering the cross-departmental capacity required to integrate climate change considerations (for example, Wellstead and Stedman, 2014) and the experiences of practitioners responsible for gender mainstreaming (Scala and Paterson, 2018). Whilst it is possible to conclude that little is *known*, the archival data does provide helpful insights that, as Part Three demonstrates, make a key contribution to the findings of the present study.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter described the methods used to build a bibliography and identify archival data. It has demonstrated that snowballing (citation and ancestry searching) is a productive way of seeking literature in disciplines where there

are indexing barriers and there is little prior knowledge of the field. It also demonstrated that action researchers can usefully draw on literature review practices enacted by grounded theorists, as Dick (2007) proposes.

The chapter finished with an overview of the nature and extent of empirical work and concluded that there were a number of limitations in relation to the specific concern of the present study. Nevertheless, the literature still provides insights that corroborate, or contrast with, those provided by the fieldwork data. It is now time to turn to the methods used during the fieldwork to provide insights into what that data is and how it was generated.

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Chapter 5: Conducting fieldwork

This chapter provides detail on the methods that generated the fieldwork data used in this study. However, it is important to note that the action research orientation meant that the selection of methods were primarily influenced by the motivation to achieve improvements in the case study site.

The fieldwork consisted of a practice development initiative which involved inviting colleagues to engage in an inquiry oriented by the question "How can we understand and develop our policy work practices and the context in which they take place?" According to Schein (2006), a helping approach like this can result in access to much deeper, valid information. However, there are challenges because the researcher has less control over what happens and therefore the data that is generated. It can result in high volumes of data (Creed and Zutshi, 2014) and it is possible that saturation from the perspective of the research aim can be reached when it is inappropriate to cease the fieldwork. There are also implications for the timeline of the study in that it has to be paced to allow for the participants' reflective cycles (Creed and Zutshi, 2014) and fit with their capacity to be involved.

Additionally, the development work was initiated, designed and facilitated by an insider to the setting. This offers the advantage of an existing intimate understanding and familiarity with potential participants (Drake and Heath, 2011; Taylor, 2011). However, Drake and Heath (2011) highlight that it too creates challenges. An insider researcher, who is encultured into the norms and values of a single case study site, needs to exercise reflexivity so that they can critique the dominant ideology and discourse and take a perspective beyond the specific case. Insider research also challenges the researcher to understand their own positionality (Herr and Anderson, 2015) and the implications for epistemological, ethical and political issues. The researcher also needs to continually navigate the tensions between their roles as employee, researcher and facilitator (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

The first three sections of this chapter provide a description of how the fieldwork itself was initiated and facilitated giving a context for the way that fieldwork data was generated. The fourth section outlines the methods used to analyse the data retrospectively.

5.1   Negotiating initiation and continuation

As an insider to the single case (an urban local government area in England) there was no need to negotiate entry, but it was necessary to gain permission to carry out the study and to ensure senior officers were supportive of working hours being used for the initiative. Given that the quality of leadership is important to the success of practice development (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2002), the process also served to establish senior support for the improvement aims.

Prior to seeking ethical approval, informal discussions took place with two senior officers in the local authority who indicated their intent to agree that the area could be the case study site. Once ethical approval was granted, this was formalised through written letter (Appendix C) and sharing the study information sheets (Appendix D and E). A signed copy of the letter was returned by the senior officers to confirm their permission. However, within a few months, both of these senior officers left the organisation and their responsibilities were reconfigured. A meeting was arranged with a new senior officer to explain the study and they subsequently confirmed by email that permissions and support would remain in place.

A concern for those granting access was the extent to which the anonymity of the setting and the organisations or individuals within it could be guaranteed. Whilst ethical guidelines have normalised the practice of keeping research settings anonymous, this position is contested because it can limit opportunities for dissemination and accountability (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011). Naming the study site brings with it some potential benefits to the quality of the study in that there are less constraints to the use of thick description (Bickford and Nisker, 2015). However, possible tensions can arise

in writing up and dissemination due to sensitivities around what stakeholders would want published (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). It is especially difficult to guarantee research site anonymity for insider research when researcher biographical information is accessible on the internet. In this case, the setting has been anonymised, but managers and potential participants were made aware that this cannot be guaranteed.

5.2 Identifying, and recruiting, participants

Developing a population list of policy practitioners can be complex due to the use of different terminology and the fact that individuals identify with different roles (Veselý, 2013). This study was not concerned with identifying a population to whom findings could be generalised but there was a need to develop criteria to identify potential participants.

In discussion with a senior officer, I developed a list of teams in the local authority and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in the area who employed policy practitioners. We also named some individuals that we agreed engaged in policy work who I included in the list of potential participants.

In May 2016, searches were conducted in the local authority's internal staff directory. These searches identified individuals:

♦ in the list of teams
♦ with one of the following in their section title – policy, economic, public health or transport, or
♦ with the word *policy* in their job title.

The websites of the VCS organisations were used to search for staff with the word policy in their job title.

Once duplicates were removed and records filtered drawing on my insider knowledge (for example, removing inappropriate hits, those about to leave and those in senior manager positions), there was a list of 96 potential

participants. The list was partially amended during the recruitment period (for example, to include new starters and to reflect changes of job role).

Given that policy practice is subject to multiple perspectives, it was important to ensure a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. As the fieldwork intended to make improvements, it was also important to recruit people who would act as a change agent within their own networks. Therefore, a purposive sampling approach was used to select an initial set of eight people to invite to participate (17 June 2016). However, even after a reminder (8 July 2016), just two became participants. The second batch of invitations (16 August 2016) were sent to five people selected on the same basis. This resulted in the recruitment of three additional participants. As it was by now evident that there was a low response rate, I decided to cease the purposive sampling approach and send an invitation to all remaining potential participants (30 September 2016). This recruited seven more participants.

Within research ethics, emphasis has been placed on the importance of voluntary participation, participant anonymity and the right to withdraw (Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2014). This is different to the way pieces of development work are established in the local authority setting. Usually, individuals are nominated and expected to maintain their involvement, with managers having open access to the list of participants. There is also an expectation that the facilitator reports regularly about discussions and progress. The email invitation (Appendix F), accompanying participants' information sheet (Appendix D) and consent form (Appendix G) all emphasised the voluntary nature of the participation. However, I suggested that the participant discuss their intent to get involved with their line manager to ensure that this was possible within their workload. A separate managers' information sheet (Appendix E) was provided to support this process.

The twelve participants were from five different teams in the local authority itself and one local VCS organisation. They had a variety of roles and backgrounds. Nine were women and three were men. During the study, three

withdrew due to changed job circumstances but did not ask for their data to be withdrawn.

5.3   Designing, and facilitating, the development work

The development work consisted of three phases. It was intended that phase I (starting out) and phase III (taking stock) would be more researcher designed and led. Phase II (inquiring and acting together) was intended to be more participant designed and led with the researcher acting in a supportive role. However, as the phase by phase description below elucidates, these original intentions were only partially realised. In a presentation on action research, Professor David Coghlan (2016) emphasised that "whatever happens is data", so a relatively thick description is provided. Figure 7 shows the timing of the phases of the development work and their interrelationship with data management and analytical tasks.
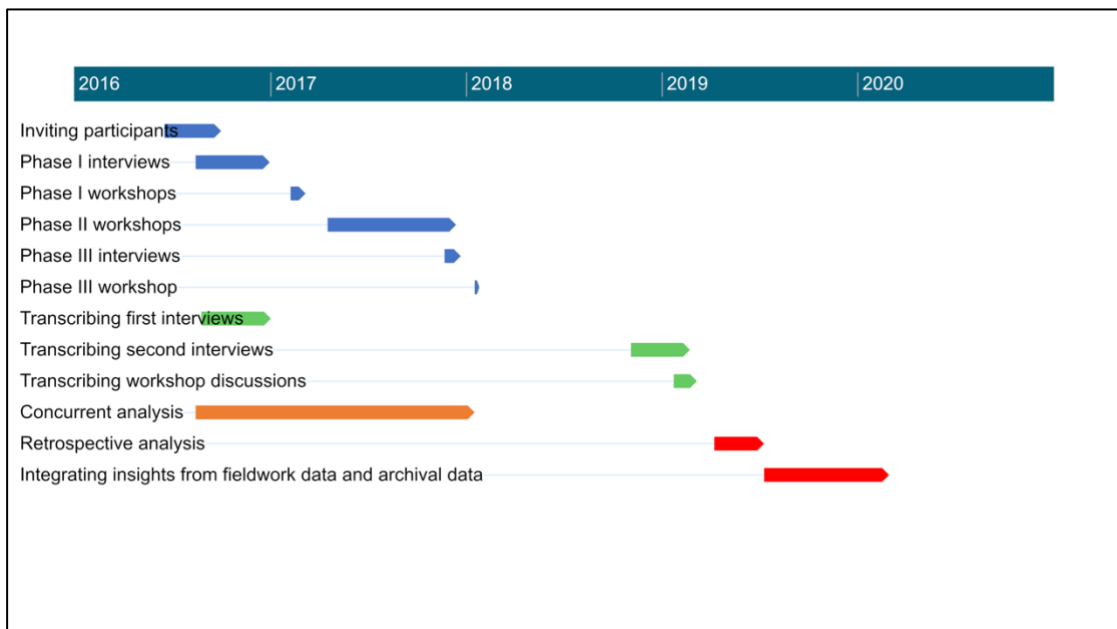
Figure 7: Timing of the phases of the fieldwork and data analysis

Before providing more detail about the phases, it is important to explain the way in which the fieldwork data was generated through, and used within, the process. Each encounter between the participants and myself had the potential to serve two purposes – to contribute to practice development and to

generate data, with primacy given to the former when conflicts arose. Semi-structured interviews were included in phase I and phase III of the study. The interview guides for these interviews were developed to include action elements (Nielsen and Lyhne, 2016) so that the participant considered their own possibilities for action. Workshops took place in all phases of the study. These were designed to promote exchange of perspectives and reflection drawing on a range of different activities such as summary presentations, small group discussions, group tasks and plenary discussions. Different forms of systems diagramming were introduced and used by participants. I recorded personal observations, reflections and the rationale for decisions in an electronic journal. As Table 4 details, the different types of data generated through the process vary in terms of my influence as a researcher and the role(s) that I adopted. The table also shows the nomenclature used to refer to the different events and data types in this thesis.

Titchen (2000) describes two forms of data analysis within action research - concurrent analysis and retrospective analysis. Concurrent analysis took place during the fieldwork to provide feedback and a point of reflection for the participants' inquiry process. The focus was on supporting the development of actionable knowledge but also offered opportunities to member check and to critique emerging propositional knowledge. As there was a need to rapidly turn around analysis, it was pragmatically driven focusing in on issues that were relevant to the flow of the inquiry process. At times, it was little more than a process of making sense of recollections of workshops and interviews rather than formal analysis of data. The analysis used a variety of methods, including diagramming, contextualised to the task in hand. Whilst beneficial to the participants' real-time inquiry, this way of working carried the risk that some parts of the evidence were ignored thus compromising rigour.

Table 4: Data generated in the fieldwork

Data type	Means of influence	Role adopted	Referred to using…
Semi-structured interview	design of interview guide	Interviewer	I
Workshop plenary discussions	setting task/discussion topic.	Facilitator and participant	W
Workshop group work discussions	setting task/discussion topic.	Facilitator and in some cases, participant	W
Notes or diagrams recorded on flipcharts or handouts	setting task/discussion topic.	Facilitator and in some cases, participant	F
Key products	negotiated and iterated by all involved	Researcher, facilitator and participant	K
Emails to participants	sole influence	Facilitator	E
Presentations prepared for workshops	sole influence	Facilitator	S

Data type	Means of influence	Role adopted	Referred to using…
Journal entries	sole influence	Researcher, facilitator and participant	J

Now we turn to the detail of the three fieldwork phases.

5.3.1 Phase I: Starting out

Box 4: Extract from participant information sheet

During this phase we will:

♦ Get to know each other and appreciate each other's perspectives

♦ Initiate our inquiry by talking about our understandings of the current situation

♦ Start making sense of policy work practice together by exploring the context and motivations for change

♦ Start developing a shared view of what it *ought* to be like

This will be achieved by you taking part in:

♦ one individual interview that will last up to one hour and

♦ three subsequent half-day workshops with other participants.

Box 4 shows the explanation provided to participants about what phase I entailed. The individual interviews (I1) took place as each participant was recruited. A semi-structured interview guide was used (Appendix H). The primary diversions from the guide entailed inviting participants to elaborate on the distinction between terms that they seemed to use interchangeably (for example, the terms *policy* and *strategy*).

Subsequently, the three workshops were scheduled at fortnightly intervals in February and March 2017. The interviews started to surface different perspectives on policy, the policy process and policy work in local government. Different accounts were also evident in the literature. With this in mind, I designed the first of the workshops (W1.1) in a way that gave the participants the opportunity to engage with the diversity in their own perspectives by working with anonymised extracts from the interview transcripts. Subsequently, the second (W1.2) and third workshops (W1.3) introduced ideas and frameworks from existing literature - a process that helped the participants with sense-making whilst at the same time testing the utility of the frameworks in the local government context.

From the perspective of each workshop, the design worked well in that participants reported they were involved in valuable discussions and enjoyed getting to know each other. However, from the perspective of the whole process, some difficulties became evident. Only three participants were present at all the workshops and attendance decreased from nine, to seven, to five. The nature of the participants' work commitments curtailed their ability to attend the workshops, and as different participants were attending each session, there was little continuity between discussions hindering the development of shared understandings. Furthermore, even though participants asked for reading material and welcomed the idea of keeping a journal, in practice they had little space to engage with these activities and the ongoing inquiry between workshops. The participants confirmed these observations when I shared them (W1.3). This context presented an ongoing design challenge - the need for each workshop to stand-alone whilst at the same time there being a sense of progression.

Appendix I (Table 13) details the activities in phase I, the number of participants involved and data generated.

5.3.2 Phase II: Inquiring and acting together

Box 5: Extract from participant information sheet

During this phase we will:

♦ Continue making sense of the situation.

♦ Define actions that are desirable and feasible

♦ Take those actions – creating a new situation

♦ Review the impacts (whether intended or not) of actions taken

♦ Reiterate through this cycle of activities

You will be involved in deciding the detail of what will happen in this phase, such as how we organise ourselves and how often we meet. It is likely we will decide to have further workshops and also group meetings.

Box 5 shows the explanation provided to participants about what phase II entailed. Using email prior to the phase I workshops, the participants agreed to my proposal to put a monthly two-hour session in our diaries for the nine-month duration of the phase (April to December 2017). As the first of these sessions approached, I realised that I needed to continue creating space for participants to share understandings whilst also supporting them to agree on and take actions. Therefore, I continued to take the lead on planning the sessions as workshops anticipating that the ownership would shift over time.

At the April session (W2.1), those present reviewed a presentation I had prepared which provided an overview of our discussions and possible actions that had been mentioned in phase I. We then developed a force-field diagram (devised by Lewin, 1951 cited in The Open University, 2002), informed by a discussion about what helps and hinders possibilities for improving the quality of policy practice. As a result of that discussion, we decided that the most appropriate first action would be to arrange a time for us to meet with the two senior local authority officers who had most responsibility for policy. We thought this would be a good opportunity to share our insights to date and

some ideas for what could be done to improve policy practice in the organisation. In addition, it was perceived that this would act to check that intended actions would be welcomed by the wider organisation. So, acting on behalf of the group, I emailed the two officers concerned and asked if they would be prepared to create the diary space to meet. The offer was welcomed, but one of the senior officers asked for a briefing paper in advance. Therefore, the second workshop (W2.2) discussed the purpose, structure and content of the briefing paper. The four participants present had a valuable conversation and I left with notes to inform a first draft which I subsequently shared by email. Three participants were able to make a short additional meeting to review the paper and on the basis of their comments I prepared and circulated a second draft. This was discussed at length by those who attended the third workshop (W2.3) as another participant had raised concerns about the degree to which we should articulate our ideas for improvement without yet knowing whether the two senior officers shared a concern for the existing quality of policy practice. We agreed a way forward and I subsequently prepared the final version (K1). In July 2017, six participants, the two senior officers and I met. The meeting went well in that the briefing paper served to stimulate a conversation. However, as I noted in my journal, the meeting did not feel very energetic and there was no sense of what next. One possible reason for this is the meeting coincided with a period when the two senior officers were due to announce a re-structure for a team that had a key role in policy.

During July, we also had a scheduled workshop (W2.4). I designed this session in a way where I would introduce causal loop diagramming, used in System Dynamics (Morecroft, 2010), to explore the variety of influences on the quality of local level policy practice. Only two participants attended but we had a fruitful conversation that particularly considered the volatility of the policy environment.

Due to even higher number of apologies for the August session (W2.5) and no volunteers coming forward to take a lead role in September when I could not

be present (W2.6), I cancelled both of these workshops. Whilst disappointing, this gap provided a space for me to reflect on progress and to consider how I could make the remaining sessions as useful as possible for the participants. The action research had been designed to minimise the research tasks that participants were invited to undertake, but I had not envisaged that it would be as difficult for them to find the capacity to actively inquire, decide on and progress actions together. Furthermore, my own workload was such that it was difficult for me to coordinate actions on behalf of the group.

I decided to use the final three phase II workshops to present and work with provisional findings from the concurrent analysis. In addition to continuing to generate data, this also served as a form of member checking. The overall structure for this was an early iteration of the elements that interact to give rise to a practice performance (see section 3.6). I used email to explain that three broad areas in addition to the task itself seemed to shape policy practice - the individual, the organisation and the wider context. Each of the final three workshops focused in on discussing one of these areas. The workshop (W2.7) that focused on the individual considered the different roles adopted (or hats worn by) policy practitioners. Drawing on previous data, I prepared approximately 70 cards each naming a different role that had been mentioned (for example, *researcher*) or implied (for example, use of the verb *negotiate* led to a card for *negotiator*). During the workshop, the participants worked to group the cards into similar themes. I subsequently consolidated the grouping and produced a mind-map of the many hats of policy work (K2) which was shared by email and at the next workshop. To focus on the organisational aspect, I drew on causal mapping used in Strategic Options Development and Analysis (Ackermann and Eden, 2010), to bring together and organise those aspects of the data that mentioned actions that could make a contribution to a local authority area that fosters good quality policy practice. The draft causal map was discussed (W2.8) which led to some amendments to the diagram (K3). Finally, to support discussions about the influence of the wider context, I developed a presentation that introduced some of the terminology that I had identified in the ongoing analysis of the archival data and used examples from

our local context to elaborate on them prior to a plenary conversation amongst those present (W2.9).

On average, participants attended two of the seven phase II workshops, ranging between zero and five sessions attended. Appendix I (Table 14) provides further detail.

5.3.3   Phase III: Taking stock

Box 6: Extract from participant information sheet

During this phase we will:

♦ Review overall progress and re-visit our shared view of what it *ought* to be like
♦ Review our experiences of participating in this work – its benefits and limitations
♦ Make decisions about whether to continue our development work and if so how.

This will be achieved by you taking part in:

♦ a second individual interview which will last up to one hour, and
♦ one half-day workshop with other participants.

Box 6 shows the explanation provided to participants about what phase III entailed. The second semi-structured interviews (I2) took place in late 2017, coinciding with the final phase II workshops. At this stage, two of the participants had withdrawn from the study so ten interviews were conducted. The interview guide (Appendix J) was structured to ask the participants about the changes that they had perceived during the study period using the same three elements (individual, organisational and wider context) that were being discussed in the workshops. The interviews also provided an opportunity for participants to think ahead beyond the formal study period.

The final workshop (W3.1) took place in January 2018. I started by mirroring back what I had learned during the interviews with respect to the value of the development work, its importance to the participants and the challenge of making progress in a context where it is not prioritised. The discussions about the ongoing work were influenced by a recent announcement that I was going to leave the organisation. We discussed the arguments for the ongoing work, identified possible rebuttals to these arguments and considered how the participants could continue championing it.

Appendix I (Table 15) provides further details of this phase.

5.4   Analysing data retrospectively

Transcribing the audio-recordings of interviews and workshop discussions enabled intensive immersion in the data. I also re-familiarised myself with the broad range of data and its content as I imported transcripts and other data (for example, digital photographs of flipcharts and pdfs of presentation slides) into Atlas.ti. During the process, I reflected on themes, differences between participants, similarities and differences with the literature and challenges to my pre-conceived ideas. I made notes on these reflections and insights for future reference.

The analysis process was both deductive and inductive. Firstly, I derived five different broad areas linked to the understanding of practice and practice development presented in chapter 3. These related to what policy practice is, the proximal conditions, the distal conditions, the individual and the development of policy practice. As I reviewed each item of fieldwork data, I used a combination of a priori codes and separate spray diagrams to organise my insights and the supporting material into these five different areas.

The spray diagrams developed as I added branches and developed clusters reflecting what I identified in the fieldwork data. When an important insight did not fit with the existing structure of a spray diagram, I re-organised it to create a structure that accommodated the variety. This process enabled me to inductively identify themes within each of the five spray diagrams. The

themes subsequently informed the different sub-headings in a first draft of the findings, with the coded data and the spray diagrams acting as a form of index so I could re-look at segments of data. I subsequently used the themes to deductively analyse the study-by-study summary produced during the final analysis of the archival data (see section 4.2), thus enabling me to draw together insights from the two sources of data.

It was at this point that the three different streams of action came together to provide answers to the research questions. As I wrote the findings chapters in Part Three, there was ongoing interaction between the insights from the fieldwork data, those from the archival data and the understanding of practice and practice development. For example, I identified instances where participants used terminology that were also concepts which led me to re-visit conceptual literature to identify whether the intended meaning was similar or different. I also revisited practice development literature to refine the terminology I used and made explicit connections with my pre-existing understanding of Systems concepts and tools thus enhancing the ways in which I analysed the data and presented the findings.

5.5   Conclusion

This chapter outlined the approach to conducting the practice development initiative that generated the fieldwork data for this study. It has provided insights into the challenges facing an insider leading a practice development initiative which was agreed by, but not actively championed by, senior leadership. As Rycroft-Malone et al. (2002) have previously identified, the quality of an organisation's structures, culture and leadership can impact on the success of practice development initiatives. In this case, the proximal conditions were such that the design was adapted throughout as the participants and I learned about what was possible in terms of what constrained and helped us to be change agents. However, as chapter 8 will demonstrate, whilst the conditions limited what was achieved, the initiative was not perceived as a failure by those directly involved.

As the design adapted and changed, so did the data that was generated. With low numbers of participants attending each workshop, there was not always a range of perspectives shared. However, the inclusion of semi-structured interviews in phase I and phase III and the iterative development of key products counteracted this limitation in the workshop data.

Conclusion to Part Two: Research design and methods

Each of the three chapters in this part focussed on one of the three interrelated concurrent streams of purposeful action that constituted the overall study design. I adopted the term streams deliberately. Action research is predominantly conceptualised and described as existing of a cycle or spiral variously consisting of stages such as planning, taking action, reflection and back to planning which can be passed through once or multiple times in a study (McKay and Marshall, 2001). Personally, I found the depiction of a cycle, and particularly the dual cycle model developed by McKay and Marshall (2001, 2007), helpful to *know about* action research and get started with a design, but it was not useful as *know-how* or to make sense of my experiences, during the process. This parallels the discomfort I experience as a policy practitioner when I can not relate my experience and practice to depictions of a policy cycle. For me, the metaphor of streams with blockages, eddies, points of convergence and divergence and the relentlessness of uncontrollable forward movement is a much more accurate depiction of the messy and dynamic action research process.

This is not to say that I did not exercise any agency as I acted and interacted in those streams. I made choices about which stream of action I should attend to at any point in time. These choices were often shaped by the sometimes competing expectations and standards of the two different contexts that I straddled – the setting of the fieldwork and the academic institution. I was particularly aware of how my positionality and traditions of understanding constantly influenced the choices, judgements and connections that I made. I used a range of ways of challenging my developing understandings, including using a journal, seeking contrasting perspectives in the data, feeding the results of concurrent data analysis back to participants for further discussion and constantly comparing insights from the fieldwork and archival data.

Taken together, the chapters have demonstrated the fluidity of action research practice and the active agency of the action researcher in making judgements, deciding priorities and generating data. The ideas and methods were ultimately the result of my choices of engagement at a point in time and over time. In turn, these choices influenced the data generated and the findings that I present in the next part of this thesis.

Part Three: Findings
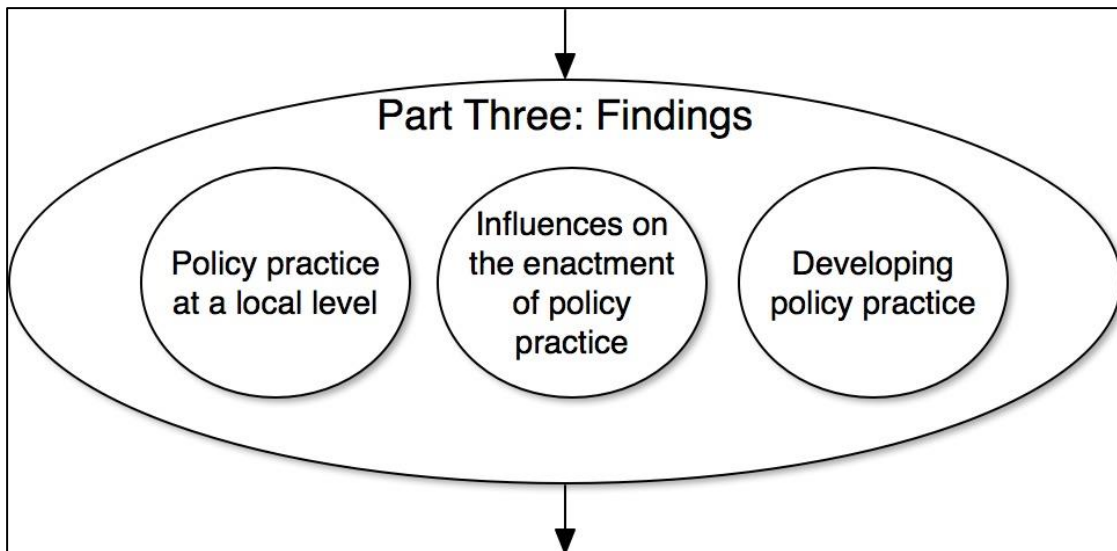
Each chapter in this part addresses one of the research questions that were posed in chapter 2 using the understanding of professional practice and its development that was outlined in chapter 3. Chapter 6 responds to the question "What is policy practice at a local level?" by considering its purpose and identifying constituent sub-practices and diffuse practices. Chapter 7 addresses the question "What influences how policy practice is enacted?" by elaborating on the proximal and distal conditions and individual influences. Finally, chapter 8 considers the question "How does, or could, policy practice develop?" drawing on the participants' perspectives and their experiences during the study itself.

Throughout, insights are drawn from both the fieldwork data and archival data but primacy is placed on participants' understandings and interpretations, rather than that of prior researchers. Fieldwork data is both directly cited and referenced as a source. Table 5 illustrates how the data is attributed to an individual contributor (using P01-P12 for participants or R for myself), an artefact and the event when it was generated. Further detail is in Appendix I. Archival data is referenced using usual academic conventions for referencing publications.

Table 5: Notation used to reference fieldwork data

Data type	Example
Semi-structured interview	P01-I2 - participant 01 during the second semi-structured interview
Workshop group work or plenary discussions	P07-W1.3 - participant 07 in the third workshop in the first phase
Notes or diagrams recorded on flipcharts or handouts during discussions at workshops	F-W2.2 - flipchart generated during the second workshop in the second phase
Key products	Three key products (K1, K2 and K3) generated during phase II (see section 5.3.2)
Emails sent to participants	R-E.02.04.17 - email sent by researcher on 2 April 2017
Slides prepared for workshops	S-W3.1 - slide pack used during the workshop in the third phase
Journal entries	R-J.19.04.17 - researcher journal entry made on 19 April 2017

Chapter 6: Policy practice at a local level

This chapter provides an understanding of policy practice at a local government level. Consistent with the teleological interest of participants, it describes its purpose and then identifies the practices that constitute it from two different perspectives. Firstly, it distinguishes a number of sub-practices that those engaged with policy practice enact in doing what they do (research, collaboration, public participation, public affairs and development). The sub-practices have their own distinct purposes and are put to use in different combinations in enacting policy practice. Secondly, it elaborates on two diffuse practices (documenting and interacting) which are engaged with extensively.

6.1   Purpose of policy practice

Policy practice is sometimes ascribed a purpose that would be hard to differentiate from any other practices associated with public service or public administration. For example:

> *"I do this because I want to help people to have a better quality of life […] and that is always my starting point whenever I am asked to look at a particular issue" (P11-W1.2)*

However, participants do distinguish policy practice from other practices. These are those that are predominantly associated with local government's service provision responsibilities, such as commissioning, conventional management (responsibility for people and resources) and project management, as these quotes illustrate:

> *"I guess there's some activity that we can […] procure in terms of [service] delivery […] but equally there's a lot of work that sits outside of that that relies on partnerships […] on people, or services, or systems to come together and influence." (P01-I1)*

"There may be some roles in local government which are very much more about delivering the service but policy…" (P03-I1)

"Over the last year […] there have been sort of task and finish type projects rather than policy" (P10-I2)

"It's not just management" (P07-I2)

Reflecting the centralisation of local government, there were some explanations that associated local level policy practice with the contextualisation and implementation of national policy, such as:

"If I think about policy I think about perhaps we've had some guidance or some national policy that's come out [that] then needs to be understood at a local level […] and to do that there are people, officers involved obviously in developing what that means" (P08-I1).

"I guess what I'd be looking to do is put action plans or delivery plans in against those national frameworks to sort of make sure that we're […] meeting those relevant standards" (P01-I1)

This was often the first explanation that participants made and, when questioned, they found it difficult to recall examples of work that had not been initiated in response to national policy. However, there were some explanations that reflected more autonomy for local government:

"It's about identifying a situation and determining what course of action we want to take and how we want that situation to shape and develop" (P03-I1)

"Policy work […] is oriented towards enabling politicians, citizens, other council officers and stakeholders to find out about social issues, learn with and from each other, and take action to make improvements" (W2-8, K2)

Drawing on these findings, the purpose of policy practice at a local government level can be expressed as *to support local policy processes*. This incorporates processes that arise from both national policy and local developments, and also encompasses local participation in sub-national or national policy processes. Taken in conjunction with the discussions about the dual role of local government (Copus, Roberts and Wall, 2017), policy practice can be considered to be a contribution to the effectiveness of governing which in turn is a contribution to improving local quality of life. This places policy practice in an ecosystem with a range of other practices, including those associated with the service provision role of local government.

Figure 8 presents this diagrammatically and provides a way of conceptualising the relationship between policy practice and co-existing practices at a local government level. This diagram, and others presented in the findings, make explicit that there may be other practices that are not evident in the present set of fieldwork data.
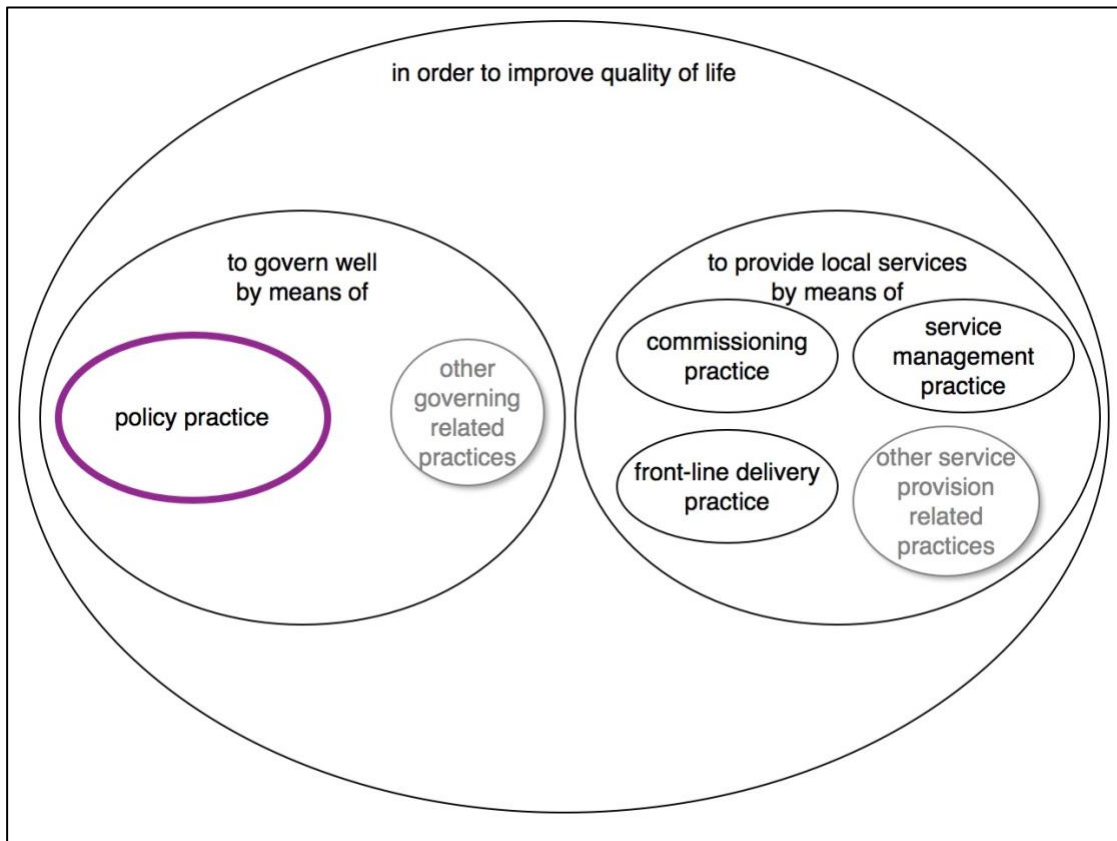
Figure 8: A systems map of policy practice in relation to co-existing practices present in the site

6.2   Sub-practices of policy practice

This section zooms in to focus on policy practice. It introduces a model of the sub-practices that constitute policy practice. Subsequently, each of the individual sub-practices are elaborated.

Insights from the fieldwork data

Policy practice is constituted of a number of sub-practices as illustrated in Figure 9. These sub-practices are not exclusive to policy practice as they may also be enacted as sub-practices of co-existing practices in local government and in other settings.
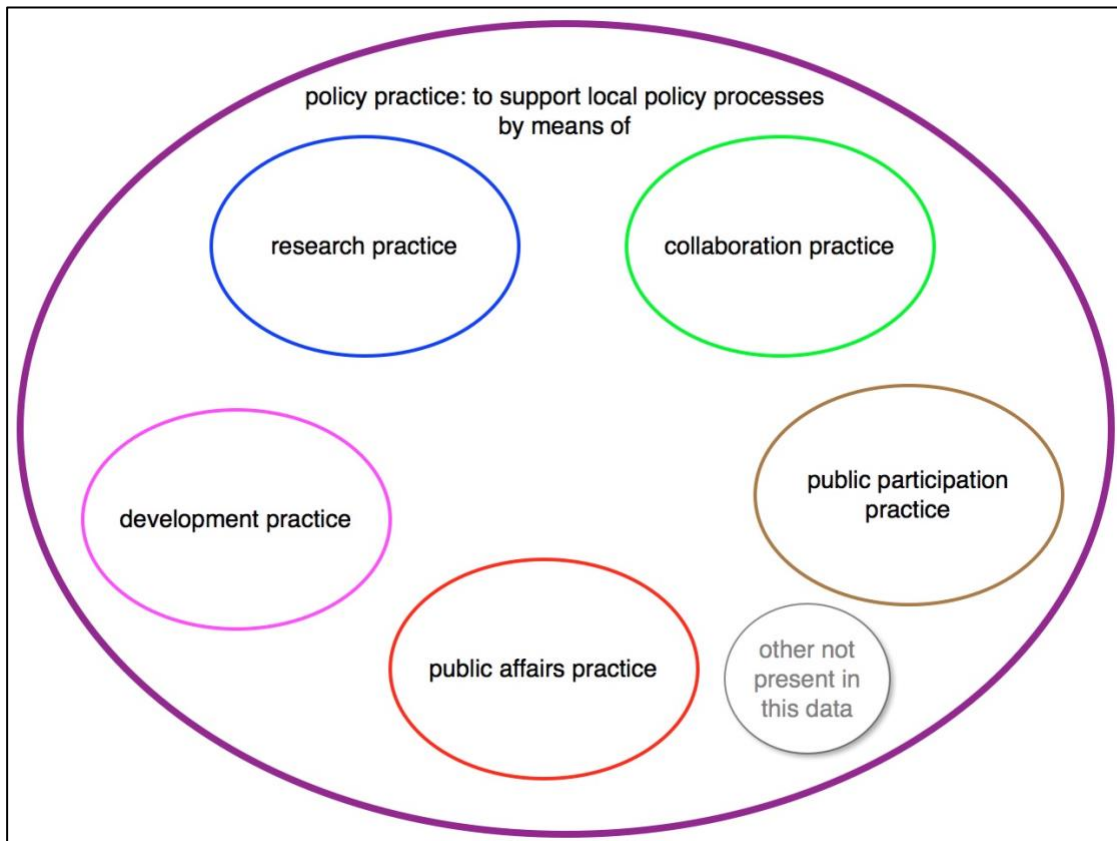
Figure 9: A systems map of the sub-practices of policy practice

It is notable that there are instances in the data where participants identified with a sub-practice in a way that separated it from, or put it alongside, policy practice, for example:

> *"Much of what I do [..] would tend to be classed more as research than policy" (identity withheld-I2).*

This is indicative of the fluid nature of policy practice and the way that it is subject to individual interpretation, rather than there being a shared understanding.

Two diffuse practices (documenting and interacting) are engaged with extensively as part of all sub-practices. These will be elaborated further in section 6.3.

Insights from the archival data

Some prior studies have developed and presented frameworks or categorisations of the activities that constitute policy work. However, none of these studies focused at a local government level or focussed on practitioner perspectives of purpose.

Page and Jenkins (2005) distinguishes three different forms of policy work - production work which is concerned with the production of a written document, such as a bill, regulation or consultation document; maintenance work which entails "tending a particular set of arrangements governing particular policies" (Page and Jenkins, 2005, p. 67) with no obvious end point; and service work which involves advising or providing support to a person, committee or body. A more elaborate framework is that of Mayer, van Daalen and Bots (2004, 2013) which identifies that policy analysis incorporates six archetypal activities which are: research and analyse; design and recommend; clarify values and arguments; advise strategically; democratise; and mediate.

Amongst the post-2006 empirical studies identified, the most common approach to understanding the different types of work or activities is cluster analysis of responses to survey questions where respondents are asked how often they are involved in different forms of policy-related work. Whilst there is variation in the clusters identified in different studies and nomenclature used (see Appendix K), distinctions are made between analytical work and networking. These different forms of work are not mutually exclusive, in fact combined Canadian datasets reveals that those engaged in analytical work were also likely to be networking (Wellstead, Stedman and Howlett, 2011). A study in the Czech Republic also identifies that multi-tasking is very common particularly amongst regional-level officials where the smaller size of regional offices means there is less capacity for specialisation (Veselý, 2014). The primary limitation of the cluster analysis is that it relies on surveys that have been developed by researchers so may omit activities. An alternative approach was taken in a qualitative study (Hughes, 2014) which identifies the

activities commonly referred to by participants when describing policy work (Box 7). Of note is the observation that testing, monitoring and reviewing are rarely undertaken even though they are acknowledged as desirable activities.

Box 7: Activities referred to when describing policy work

Source: Hughes (2014, pp. 139–148)

♦ Identifying a problem and placing on the agenda

♦ Engaging stakeholders

♦ Investigation and analysis

♦ Negotiating and influencing

♦ Preparing a written document

♦ Authorising

♦ Implementing

♦ Monitoring and reviewing

♦ Testing

The different frameworks in the archival data and that derived from the fieldwork data corroborate each other in that they draw attention to the multi-faceted nature of policy practice. At all governance levels, research and collaboration are important components of policy practice and both documenting and interacting are engaged with extensively. Additionally, the fieldwork data indicates that public participation, public affairs and development practices are prominent at a local government level.

The sections that follow elaborate on each of the sub-practices identified in Figure 9.

6.2.1   Research practice

"It's useful to kind of pull all of that knowledge together and condense it and try to make some sense of it before you blindly go and make some policy" (P10-I1)

Insights from the fieldwork data

Research practice is enacted with different degrees of formalisation depending on the time available, the task in hand and the individuals' role and skills. It is enacted on a continuous basis to ensure currency with the evolving situation and context, as well as in more discrete project-like studies. Research is also referred to in generic terms, such as *finding out, investigating* or *looking into* and the context is such that it rarely has the degree of rigour associated with academic research practices.

Research practice is, or should be, enacted for a number of different purposes, such as:

♦ to understand the situation or issue of concern as it is manifested in the local area (P11-I1, K1)

♦ to learn what is planned, or is proving effective, elsewhere (P10-I1)

♦ to understand national government policy and others' analysis or opinion of it (P01-I1)

♦ to understand (assess) what a national policy will mean for the local area (P05-I1, P06-I1, P08-I1)

♦ to ensure awareness of the latest developments and publications about a policy issue (P02-I1, P05-I1)

♦ to understand local public or stakeholder opinion about a proposal (consultation) (K1)

♦ to review or evaluate previous activity and its impact (P03-I1, P11-I1)

♦ to produce an evidence base that will inform policy (P03-I1, P04-I1)

♦ to develop an economic and/or social case for a proposal (P06-I1)

This variety could all be encompassed within a purpose expressed as **to enhance knowledge and understanding** as a contribution to supporting local policy processes.

Research practice is itself constituted of other sub-practices as illustrated in Figure 10.
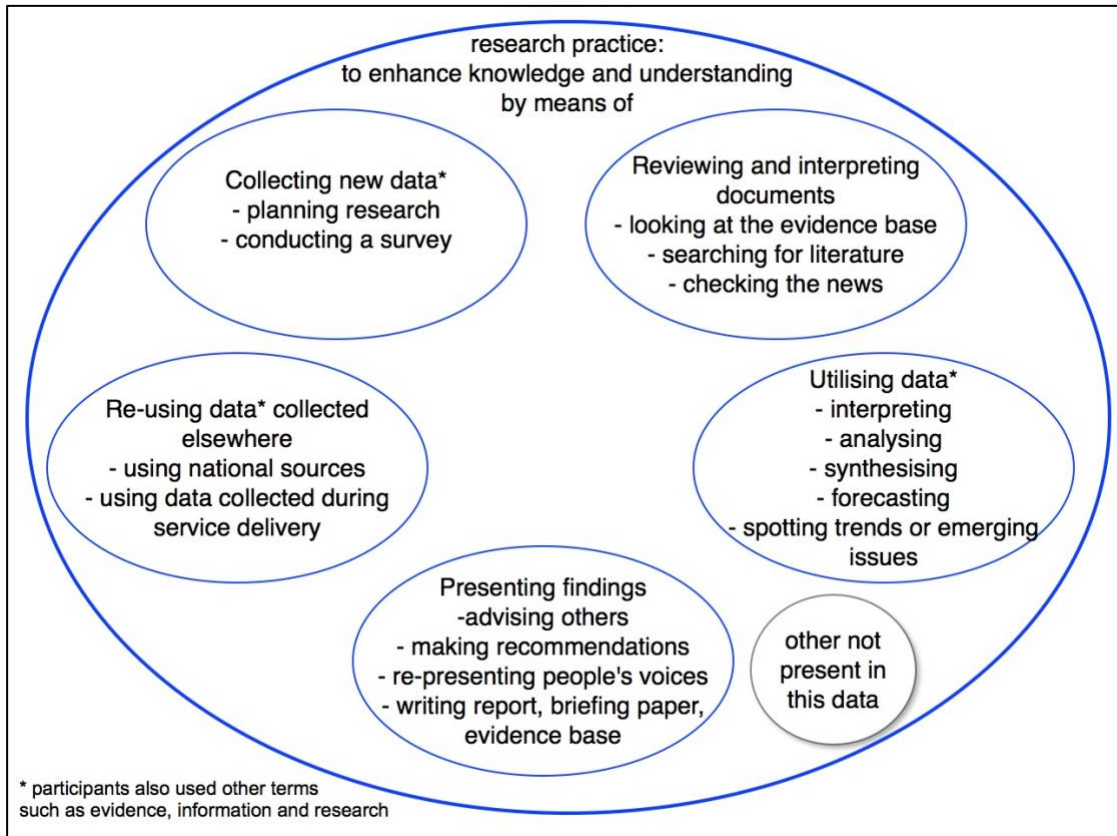
Figure 10: A systems map of the sub-practices of research practice
(Sources: P01-I1, P02-I1, P03-W2.7, P03-W2.9, P04-I1, P07-I1, P11-I1, K1, K2)

During the fieldwork, participants shared a variety of perspectives on the attributes of the conditions that afford high quality research practice, rather than constrain it. These can be grouped into those related to timing and time; those related to sharing data assets; those related to good use of research 'outputs'; those related to resourcing of research activity; and those related to approaches and tools (Figure 11).
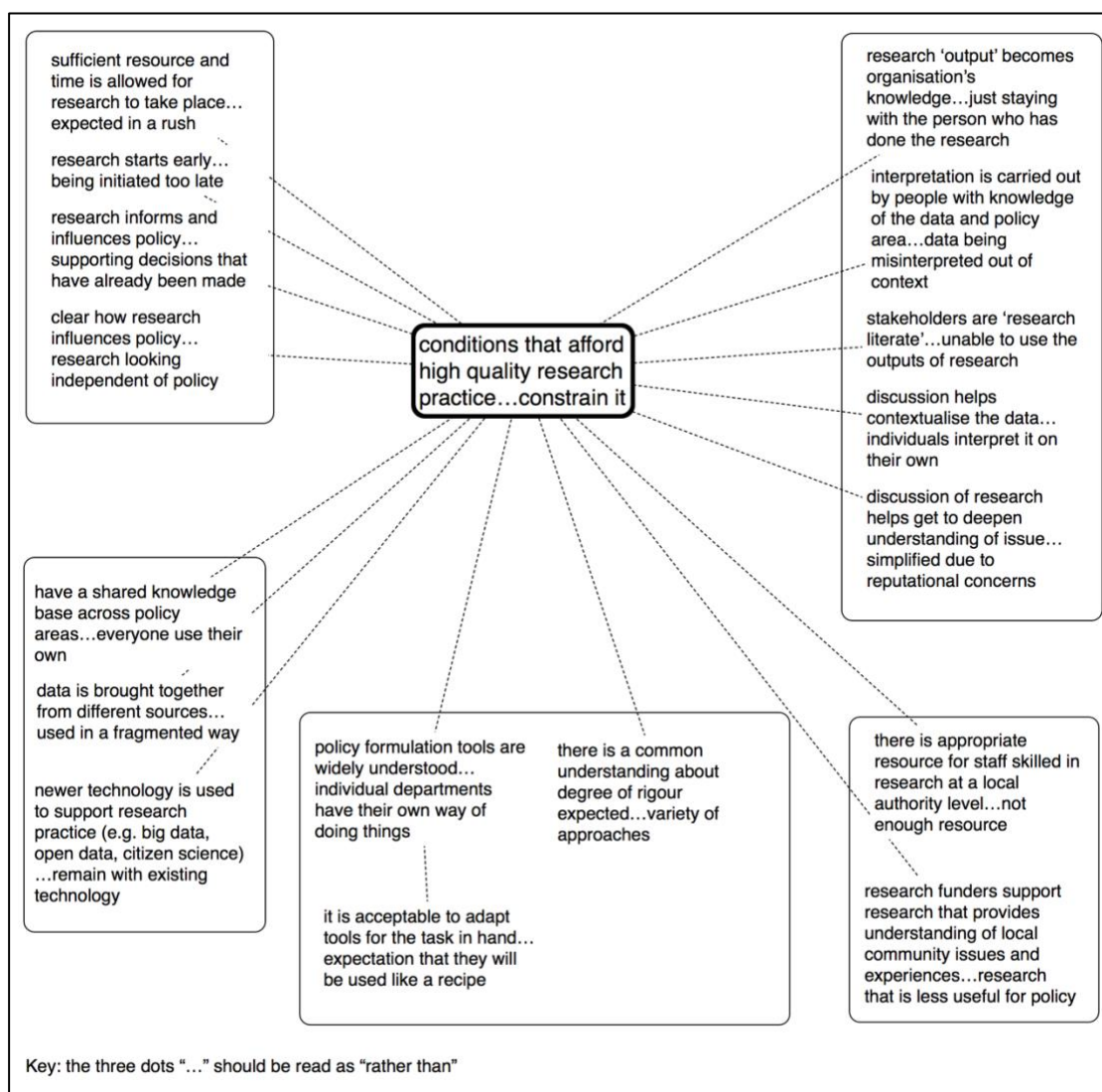
Figure 11: An attribute map of perspectives on the conditions that afford high quality research practice
(Sources: P02-I1, P03-I1, P03-W2.7, P03-I2, P06-W2.8, P07-I1, P07-W1.1, P07-W1.2, P07-W2.8, P08-I1, P10-I1, P10-W1.2, P11-I1, P11-W2.8, P11-I2)

Insights from the archival data

Prior literature does not attend to practitioners' perspectives of the purpose of research practice. However, a considerable proportion of the prior empirical work focuses on the activities or work that are linked with policy analysis or research. Three different themes can be identified - use of policy analysis

tools, use of academic research and policy learning - which will be focused on in turn.

The interest in the tools and techniques that policy practitioners use in their work stems from the origins of North American policy work in the policy analysis movement. Various typologies of tools have been advanced based on criteria such as the simplicity/complexity of the tool and their relationship to different policy-related tasks but creating a "usable typology […] is not as straightforward as one might imagine" (Jordan, Turnpenny and Rayner, 2015, p. 270). A factor analysis of the usage of common analytic techniques identifies four clusters (Howlett and Wellstead, 2011) - evaluative techniques (for example, cost-benefit analysis, financial impact analysis), sociological techniques (for example, problem mapping, social network diagrams), consultative techniques (for example, brainstorming, consultation exercises and focus groups) and mathematical techniques (for example, modelling tools, Monte Carlo techniques). Survey studies have identified that practitioners use informal and simple techniques, such as brainstorming or checklists, much more frequently than formal, complex ones (Howlett, 2009a, 2009b; Howlett and Newman, 2010; Bernier and Howlett, 2012; Craft and Daku, 2016). This informality is also identified in a qualitative study carried out in Australia - Gleeson (2009) notes that practitioners describe undertaking analyses but there "was little evidence of the formal application of policy analytic techniques described in the literature" (p. 142). Of particular relevance to the present study's interest in local government is a US-based study (Weible and Elgin, 2013) which identifies that those involved in city- and state-level policy are more likely to use collaborative techniques than those who do not engage at this level. In contrast, analytic techniques are used more frequently by those working at a national and international level.

Practitioners interact with academic research differently depending on the policy-related work being undertaken (Lomas and Brown, 2009). Firstly, research can be helpful in agenda setting or signalling areas that need attention. However, in this respect it is one of many competing inputs that are

being *pushed at* civil servants and the policy system more generally which means that practitioners "are in a defensive stance" (Lomas and Brown, 2009, p. 919). Secondly, when developing new policies, research is valuable to reduce uncertainty, increase confidence and create validation for recommendations. Here, practitioners want to *pull in* research to achieve their task within the deadline. Finally, research can be helpful in monitoring and modifying existing policies in that it provides a basis for ongoing improvement and creates a currency of accountability. For this task, ongoing exchange and the collaborative production of evidence are important. However, academic research use is not universal. Just 61% of respondents to an Australian based survey study had used academic research whilst writing documents in the 12 months prior to the study and only 32% stated that they always or usually cite research studies in their own reports and documents (Newman, Cherney and Head, 2016). The main means of accessing research is through the internet and in interaction with colleagues or researchers, rather than through academic sources (Head et al., 2014). Similarly, a Canadian study identifies that practitioners were more likely to read non-academic documents such as briefing notes and press reviews, than academic publications (Ouimet et al., 2010). Policy proposal documents are constructed to tell a persuasive story, reduce uncertainty and fit with the existing narrative of government policy. So even when research is used, it is used "selectively in creating convincing, acceptable policy stories" (Stevens, 2011, p. 250) - in the process, caveats that create uncertainty and any arguments against the dominant narrative are filtered, even deliberately edited, out.

The third aspect of research practice that has been examined in prior studies is policy learning, where ideas and examples are drawn from other countries or from other jurisdictions within the same country. Learning from abroad is consistent with the idea of evidence-based policy and in theory at least is assisted by information technology (Ettelt, Mays and Nolte, 2012). Interviews with senior officials in Department of Health, UK reveal that, in addition to gaining ideas from more general exposure to information, they may undertake field visits, pick up information through their international networks or ask

junior staff to conduct a review. This study also highlights that officials are wary of the quality of information and the transferability of policies and that application is inconsistent (Ettelt, Mays and Nolte, 2012). A survey of Canadian provincial/territorial policy analysts identifies that 7% of environmental policy analysts and 2% of non-environmental policy analysts report being contacted by international governments at least once a year. A higher proportion are contacted by other provincial/territorial governments with 22% of environmental and 26% of non-environmental analysts being contacted (Howlett and Joshi-Koop, 2011). This highlights that both contacting others to seek information and responding to queries from others can be a part of a policy practitioner's role.

Previous research also considers the factors that impact on high quality research practice. Turnpenny et al. (2008) investigate the institutional factors that impact on the use of one particular tool, integrated policy assessment, and the influence of the results. Their findings, from the EU and three of its member states, demonstrate that there is little integration of policy assessment into the policy process. Constraints operating at a micro-level include the training and experience of the policy practitioner. Meso-level constraints arise from perceptions about the role of the analyst and the use of expert power, the 'silo-mentality' and goal conflicts. Finally, at a macro-level, policy assessments are shaped by prior policy commitments encoded in existing directives and commitments.

Systematic reviews have been conducted to identify and synthesise studies focusing on the barriers and facilitators to the use of evidence in policy making. For example, Oliver et al. (2014) identify commonly reported barriers as availability and access of research, clarity/relevance of research findings, timing, the research skills of policymakers and costs. Facilitators include collaboration and relationships with researchers/information staff (Oliver et al., 2014). However, this body of research literature has been critiqued for using over-simple models of the policy process and not seeking to understand the

actual information needs, practices and context of policymakers (Oliver, Lorenc and Innvar, 2014).

Analysis of the fieldwork data has identified that the purpose of research practice at a local level is to enhance knowledge and understanding as a contribution to supporting local policy processes. In addition, policy practitioners' normative perspectives (what it ought to be like) are consistent with the ideas behind the policy analysis and evidence-based policy movements. The archival data provides insights on the use of policy tools, use of academic research and policy learning predominantly at national and sub-national levels of government. Both sources of data reveal that research practice rarely has the rigour associated with research in an academic setting and formal approaches and existing research are not used consistently.

6.2.2 Collaboration practice

"I think the big issue is the different stakeholders people work with because you end up kind of serving a number of different masters in a sense" (P05-I1)

Insights from the fieldwork data

Collaboration practice concerns working with other policy actors including those within the local authority as well as those in other organisations (public, private or third sector). Different actors have varying levels of concern for a particular policy issue, different roles in the policy process and different amounts of time and attention to devote to it. Collaborating is also referred to using terms such as *engaging* or *co-producing.*

Collaboration practice is, or should be, enacted for a number of different purposes, such as:

♦ to ensure different viewpoints and knowledge are brought together and considered (P02-I1, P03-I1, P04-I1, P07-W1.1)

♦ to bring a variety of sources and kinds of evidence together (P04-I1)

♦ to consult and engage with other practitioners (P02-I1)

♦ to learn from others (P01-I1)

♦ to discuss common issues that have been identified (P11-I1)

♦ to develop a collective understanding of the problem situation (P11-I1)

♦ to agree priorities to work on together (P01-W1.3, P08-W1.3)

♦ to work out how everyone can work together to deliver something (P01-I1)

♦ to develop shared responsibility for making change happen (P01-W1.3)

♦ to ensure others support plans, rather than inadvertently disrupt them (P03-I1)

♦ to understand problems and negotiate possible actions (K1)

This variety could be encompassed within a purpose expressed as: **to bring together expertise and resources** as a contribution to supporting local policy processes.

Collaboration practice is itself constituted of other sub-practices. As Figure 12 shows these can be grouped into those that are enacted as a collaborator and those that are enacted as a facilitator of collaboration amongst others.
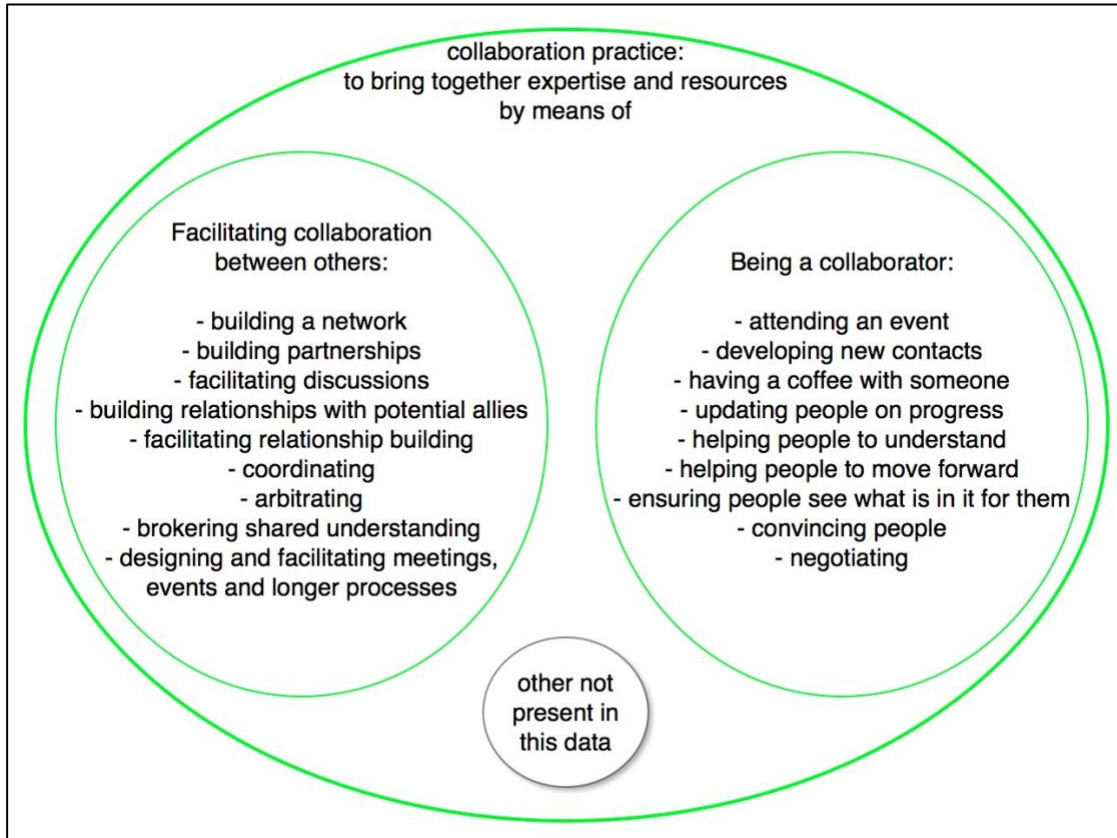
Figure 12: A system map of the sub-practices of collaboration practice
(Sources: P01-I1, P01-W1.3, P05-I1, P09-I2, P09-W2.3, P11-I1, K1, K2)

During the fieldwork, participants shared a variety of perspectives on the attributes of the conditions that afford high quality collaboration practice, rather than constrain it (Figure 13). Most of these can be grouped into those associated with the attitudes of people involved; those associated with the nature of the policy process; the quality of relationships; and the skills of those convening collaboration.
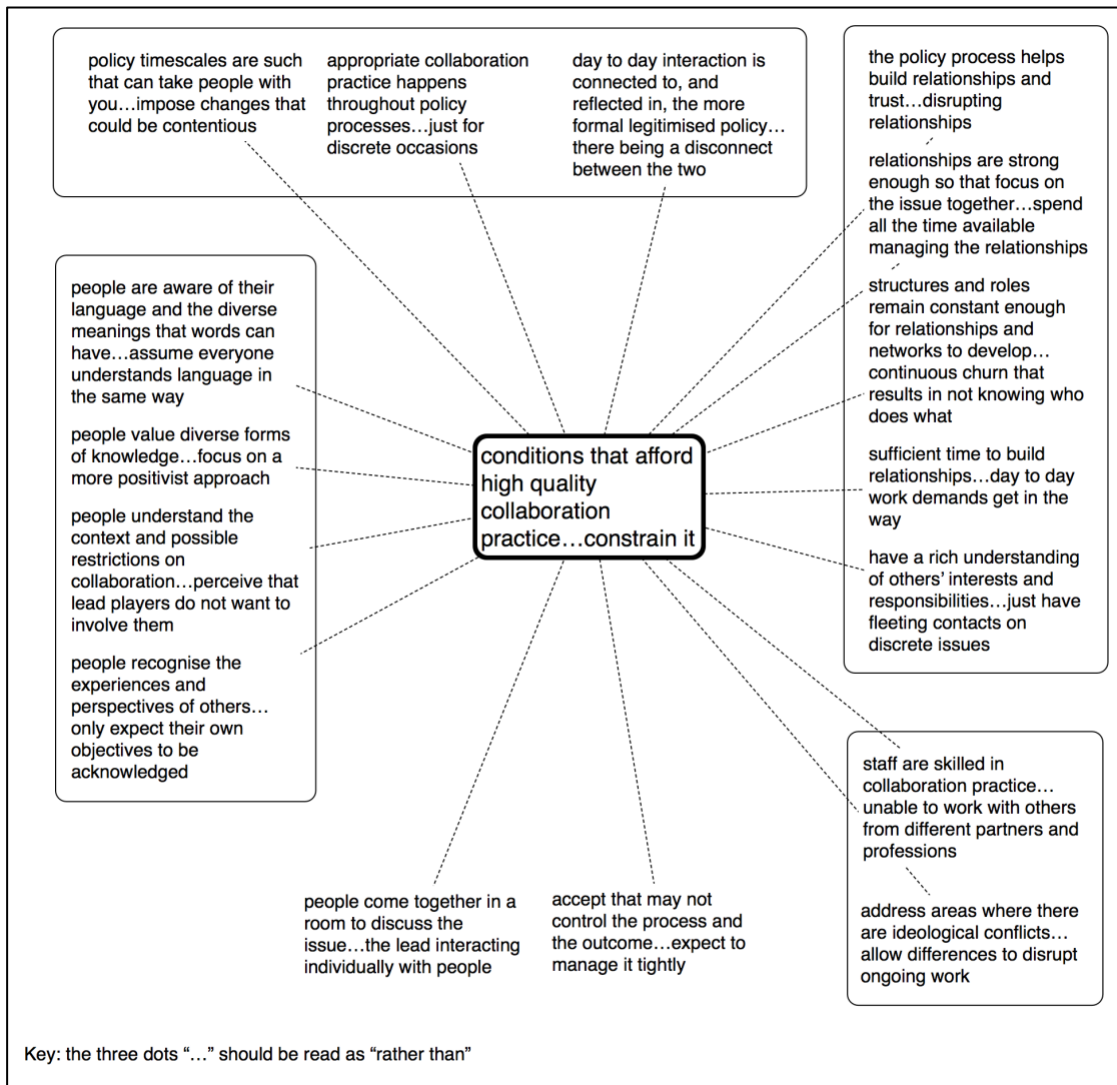
Figure 13: An attribute map of perspectives on the conditions that afford high quality collaboration practice
(Sources: P01-I1, P01-I2, P02-I1, P02-I2, P03-I1, P04-I2, P05-I1, P05-W1.1, P06-W2.1, P09-W2.3, P10-I2, P11-I1, P11-W2.3, P11-I2, P12-W2.3)

Insights from the archival data

The collaboration practice that that has been distinguished here is consistent with a broad account of policy, referred to as the structured interaction account (Colebatch, 2006b, 2006c, 2006e, 2009, 2010). This account draws on the experiences of policy workers in that they spend their time negotiating with others on behalf of their organisation, are engaged in continuous

management of an issue and sustaining relationships and discourse amongst interested parties (Colebatch, 2006a, 2006b).

There is a relatively small body of studies concerned with the nature, and frequency of, interaction between policy practitioners. Practitioners use their personal network of internal and external contacts (and contacts of contacts) to seek information and become informed, particularly when starting work in a new policy area (Maybin, 2013, 2015). However, interactions with external contacts are much less frequent than those with internal contacts (Howlett and Wellstead, 2012a; Wellstead and Stedman, 2014).

Reflecting the interest in evidence-based policy, prior studies have focused on interactions with university researchers. Haynes et al. (2011) identifies that the way that policymakers relate to researchers can be categorised into four patterns - galvanisation (the stimulation of ideas); clarification and advice; persuasion; and defence. Researcher-to-practitioner interactions can make a difference to the absorption of research (Ouimet et al., 2009). However, a study in the UK civil service department responsible for exotic disease, identifies that the relationship between invited scientific advisers and policy practitioners is carefully managed, so that the former participate in evidence-gathering and the latter in policy development and decision making (Wilkinson, 2011).

Practitioners employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) interact with those employed by government, but the two groups have very different experiences of the frequency of these interactions (Evans and Wellstead, 2013). Just 9% of NGO-employed policy workers report that they assist informally and 25% report that they assist formally on at least a monthly basis. In contrast, 30% of their government counterparts report informal contact and only 15% report formal contact on at least a monthly basis. It is notable that it is government officials that decide on the ways and means of interaction - for example, Wilkinson (2011) describes how stakeholders from pressure groups only get to participate at the invitation of officials and the venue and room layout is carefully managed. Johansson (2012) identifies that officials who

carry out infrastructure policy work use different negotiating practices and methods based on their knowledge of the attitudes and position of different stakeholders. Officials may use methods that aim at consolidating their negotiating position, facilitating trade-offs or avoiding "negotiations on issues where the result of the negotiations is regarded as almost impossible to anticipate" (p.1039).

Analysis of the fieldwork data has identified that the purpose of collaboration practice at a local level is to bring together expertise and resources as a contribution to supporting local policy processes. Practitioners may be responsible for facilitating collaboration between others as well as being a collaborator. High quality collaboration arises when those convening collaboration are highly skilled and there is sufficient time and space during the policy process for strong relationships to develop. The archival data provides insights on the nature, and frequency of, interaction between policy practitioners and the nature of negotiating practice.

6.2.3   Public participation practice

"it's especially important local government's role in reaching out to different communities of identity, geography and of interest and to involve them in a conversation about what they would see are the key issues or challenges or opportunities […] and how we might work together to address them" (P11-I1)

Insights from the fieldwork data

To some extent, public participation practice can be considered to be a form of collaboration practice. Participants conflated members of the public and people from other organisations using terms such as *stakeholders* when they spoke about working with others. Many of the purposes and sub-practices identified for collaboration practice (see section 6.2.2) were also intended to

refer to collaborating with the public. In addition, some pieces of work bring together members of the public and people from organisations so collaborative practice and public participation practice can often be enacted simultaneously.

However, there are some key ways in which public participation practice is different to collaboration practice. It has a unique purpose in that it is, or should be, enacted **to create a "healthier democracy"** (P02-I1) and involves much greater consideration of the openness and inclusiveness of local policy processes. Collaborating with members of the community from diverse backgrounds and with different levels of experience in social activism is different to collaborating with people in professional roles and therefore requires different skills and attitudes. Whilst many of the sub-practices are similar to those of collaboration practice, it is possible to identify some that are unique to public participation practice (Figure 14).
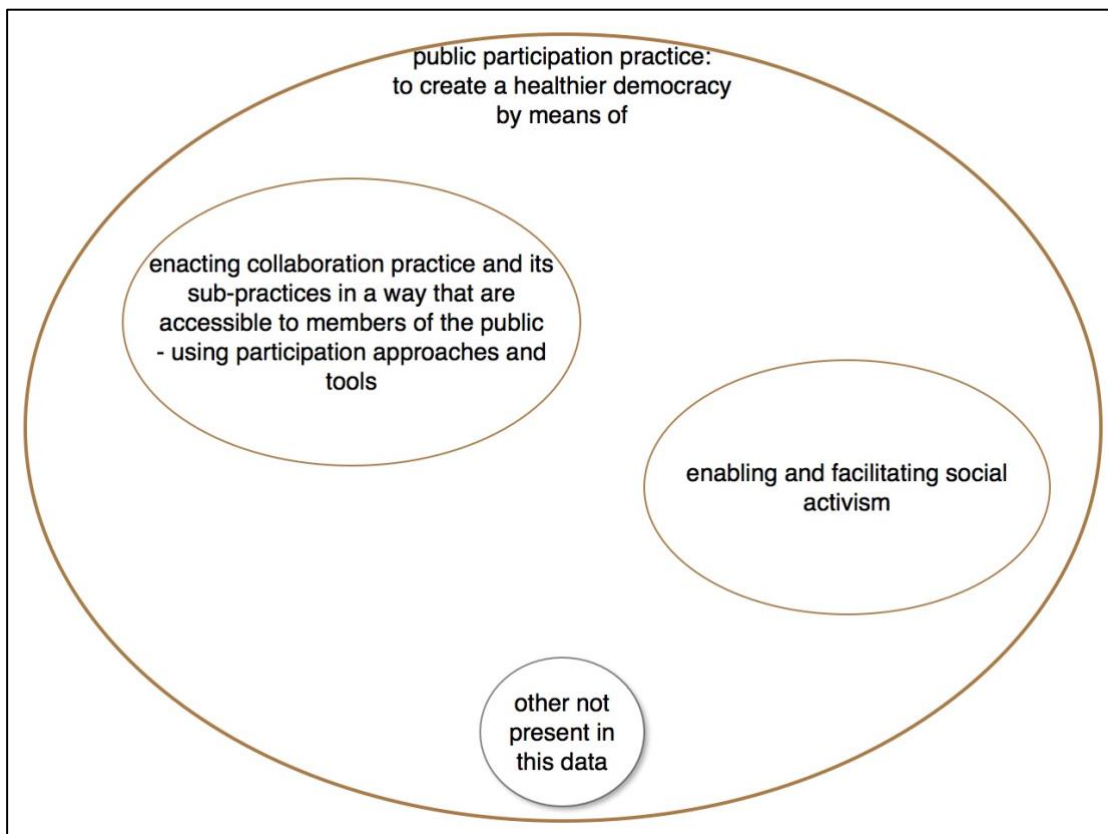
Figure 14: A system map of the sub-practices of public participation practice
(Sources: P02-I1, P12-I1, W2.9, K2)

During the fieldwork, participants shared a variety of perspectives on the attributes of the conditions that afford high quality public participation practice, rather than constrain it (Figure 15). Most of these can be grouped into those associated with the use of different ways of carrying out engagement; those associated with appropriate engagement at different times; and those associated with building peoples' understanding.
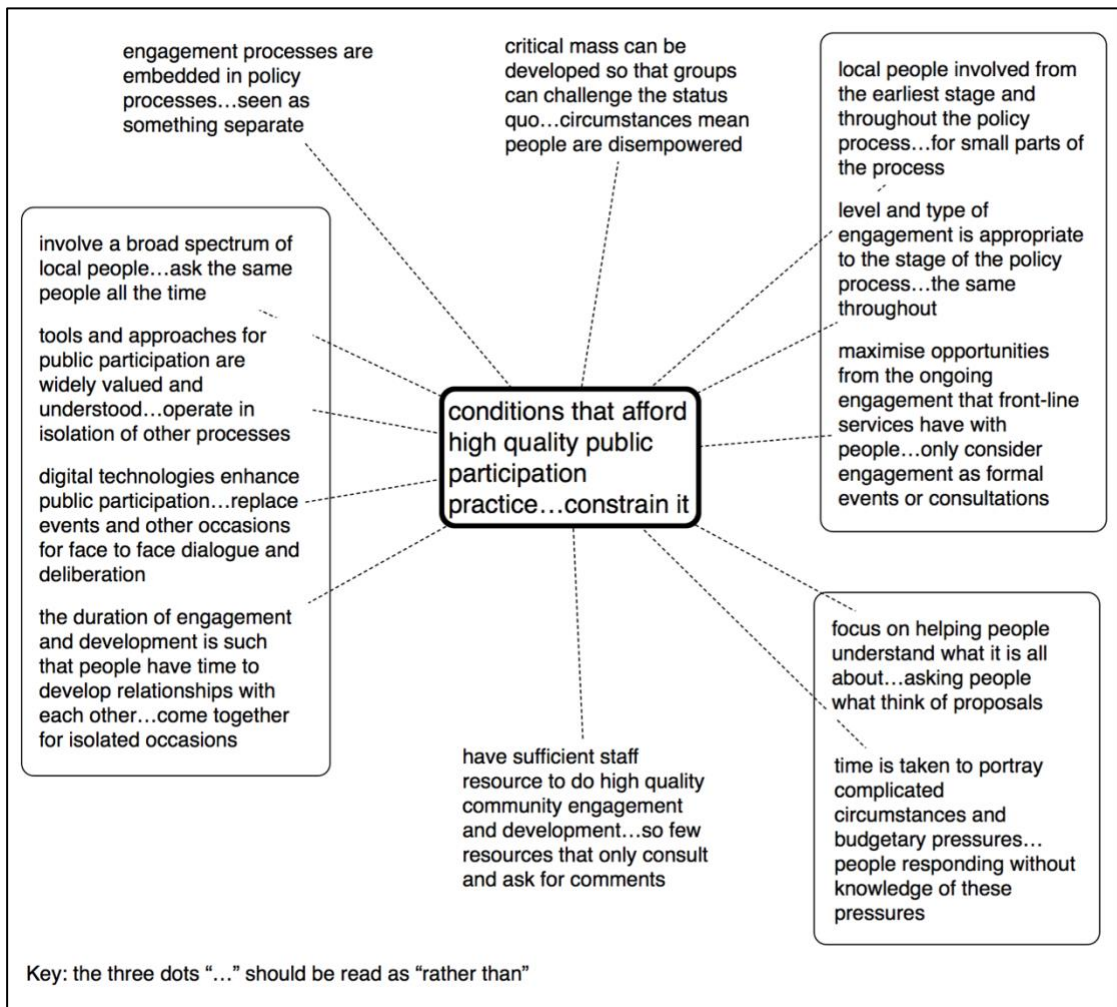
Figure 15: An attribute map of perspectives on the conditions that afford high quality public participation practice
(Sources: P02-I1, P04-I1, P06-I1, P06-W1.3, P07-I1, P08-I1, P09-I1, P10-I1, P12-I1, P12-W2.3, P12-I2)

**Insights from the archival data**

Participatory democracy concerns "the institutions and practices through which all those affected by a problem or policy are involved in public decision-making and implementation processes" (Bartels, 2015, p. 3). It has developed extensively and is now considered the norm in western societies. In this context, encounters between public professionals and citizens and the way in which they communicate are important considerations (Bartels, 2015).

Nonetheless, the majority of the identified studies were remarkably silent with respect to the degree to which policy practitioners relate directly with members of the public compared to stakeholders from organisations. There is little agreement with the statement *I am increasingly consulting with the public as I do my policy-related work* in Canadian surveys (Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009; Howlett and Wellstead, 2012a), even though there was a positive attitude to the potential benefit of involving the general public (Howlett and Walker, 2012). It is notable that most participation work is at local authority level (Cooper and Smith, 2012) so it could be that the predominant focus on national and sub-national policy work is one reason for this absence.

However, two studies focused specifically on practitioners with responsibility for participation. These provide strong insights with respect to how public participation practice is performed. An ethnographic study in a Scottish local authority area (Escobar, 2014, 2015) focuses on the practices of in-house public engagement practitioners who have a role in designing and facilitating deliberative processes, rather than delivering on decisions or becoming an expert in any policy area. The analysis reveals that the participants engaged in four different forms of work. Firstly, public making which entails assembling together particular combinations of citizens to become involved in, or active about, a policy area. Practitioners seek to maximise turnout and ensure diverse involvement in different processes. Secondly, scripting which is the backstage work that takes place to develop the engagement process or event. Amongst other elements, it entails anticipating what may happen, framing the issue and devising the room layout to ensure appropriate participation.

Thirdly, facilitating which entails a focus on the process of groups' conversations, steering it, rather than contributing to it. And finally, inscribing which involves creating physical or electronic documents, such as translating the artefacts of an event into a report (Escobar, 2014).

The other study (Cooper and Smith, 2012) interviewed participation practitioners who work in a consultancy role in UK or Germany. These practitioners design and facilitate processes that help citizens interact with each other and those that create dialogue between citizens and public authorities but find the latter more difficult to achieve. Practitioners draw on a wide range of participatory techniques (for example, participatory budgeting, citizens' juries) but rather than use them in their original textbook form, they adapt and blend them with others during a piece of work.

Public participation work does not feature strongly in the work of policy practitioners at national and sub-national level and therefore the main insights into public participation practice were gained from a small number of studies of specialist public participation practitioners. The fieldwork data revealed that collaboration and public participation practices are sometimes conflated, but public participation does have a distinctive purpose - to create a healthier democracy as a contribution to supporting local policy processes. Whilst it does vary between individuals, public participation practice is enacted by practitioners who are not specialist participation staff.

6.2.4   Public affairs practice

"So, if we are looking for policy change to be x, you know there is quite a journey isn't there […] particularly with some issues that are a bit contentious and have huge impacts for how the community feels about it" (P01-I2)

Insights from the fieldwork data

Public affairs practice is enacted **to influence others' opinions and galvanise their support for a particular concern or proposed intervention**. In the data, three broad sub-practices of public affairs practice are apparent (Figure 16). Firstly, it is enacted to influence the opinions of others engaged in local policy processes. This form of public affairs practice is perhaps more associated with people from outside of the local authority. However, those employed by the local authority also enact this practice in internal discussions and processes. Secondly, public affairs practice is enacted to influence the opinions of those engaged in national policy processes, particularly national government. Finally, it is enacted to influence the opinions of local people. This often entails the use of mass media, such as the press, websites and social media and requires consistent messages over a long period of time. It is particularly important in the context of possible controversial proposals that are not currently considered acceptable. However, one participant explained that it can be difficult to frame complex issues in a way that draws the attention of both specialist media advisers and journalists (P12-I2).

The data does not provide any insights into the attributes of the conditions that afford high quality public affairs practice, rather than constrain it.
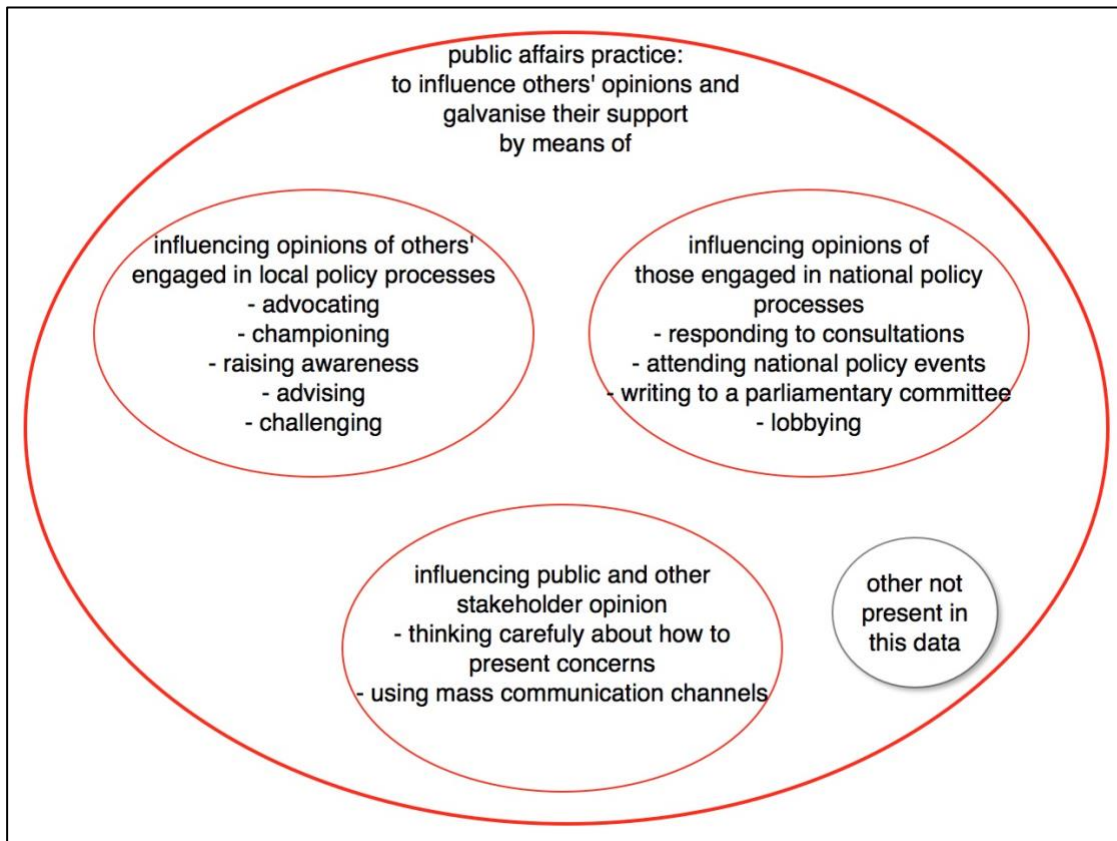
Figure 16: A system map of the sub-practices of public affairs practice
(Sources: P01-I2, P04-I2, P07-I2, P11-W1.2, P11-I2, K2)

Insights from the archival data

On the whole, the archival data provides few explicit insights into public affairs practice but a related sub-practice that has received attention is managing the media. The description of public affairs practice above refers to pro-active use of the media to influence public opinion and the earlier description of research practice highlights media use as a way of gaining relevant knowledge. However, literature suggests that managing the media could be considered a more dominant dimension of policy practice. According to McCallum and Walker (2017), policy practitioners are aware of media debates and understand how it works. They monitor media coverage personally, "anticipate and pre-empt media coverage of their issue" (p.184) and are responsive to the media working alongside specialist media advisers who have direct relationships with journalists. Surveys conducted in Norway and

the Netherlands reveal widespread use of the media (for example, following the media) and media awareness (for example, considering how the media may present something), but less direct media work (for example, responding to media inquiries, writing press releases), amongst policy staff. This leads to a concern about a possible disconnect between media specialists and policy practitioners (Schillemans and Karlsen, 2019).

Analysis of the fieldwork data identified that public affairs practice is enacted to influence others' opinions and galvanise their support for a particular concern or proposed intervention as a contribution to supporting local policy processes. This incorporates, but is not limited to, the use of the media and other mass communication channels with an intention of influencing the public. Public affairs practice is also enacted to influence others engaged in local and national policy processes. The archival data suggests that managing the media is an increasingly dominant dimension of policy practice. This was less prominent in the fieldwork data, but it was not disputed by participants when I mentioned it (W2.9) and is consistent with my general observations as a policy practitioner.

6.2.5 Development practice

"people don't understand the transformational nature of policy work umm and that it's a long-term process. […] it's quite fluid and intangible…" (P04-I1)

"I think it is interesting how much of it is oriented towards change […] it's almost building and maintaining momentum isn't it?" (P06-W2.8)

Insights from the fieldwork data

Development practice is associated with words like *change, transform* and *innovate*, but one participant commented a degree of discomfort with words that can portray change done *to*, rather than *with*, people (P04-I1). It is

enacted **to bring about a positive improvement** by making recommendations for change or intervening in social processes. These interventions could relate to changes in different dimensions of the situation, such as service or practice improvement, organisational development, partnership development, community development or societal change.

The data does not contain many details on the sub-practices of development practice (Figure 17). It seems these will depend on the type of changes deemed necessary and relationships with co-existing practices. Development practice can be enacted by recommending (but not implementing) feasible, acceptable proposals (for example, related to public service reform). However, development practice is also associated with the more gradual changes that arise from processes associated with negotiation or learning as an integral part of enacting research, collaboration, public participation and public affairs practices. This form of gradual change is not supported by conventional project management approaches and tools, but participants did report using them on occasions when they needed to focus others' attention to more bounded tasks in the longer-term process.

The data does not provide any insights into the attributes of the conditions that afford high quality development practice, rather than constrain it.
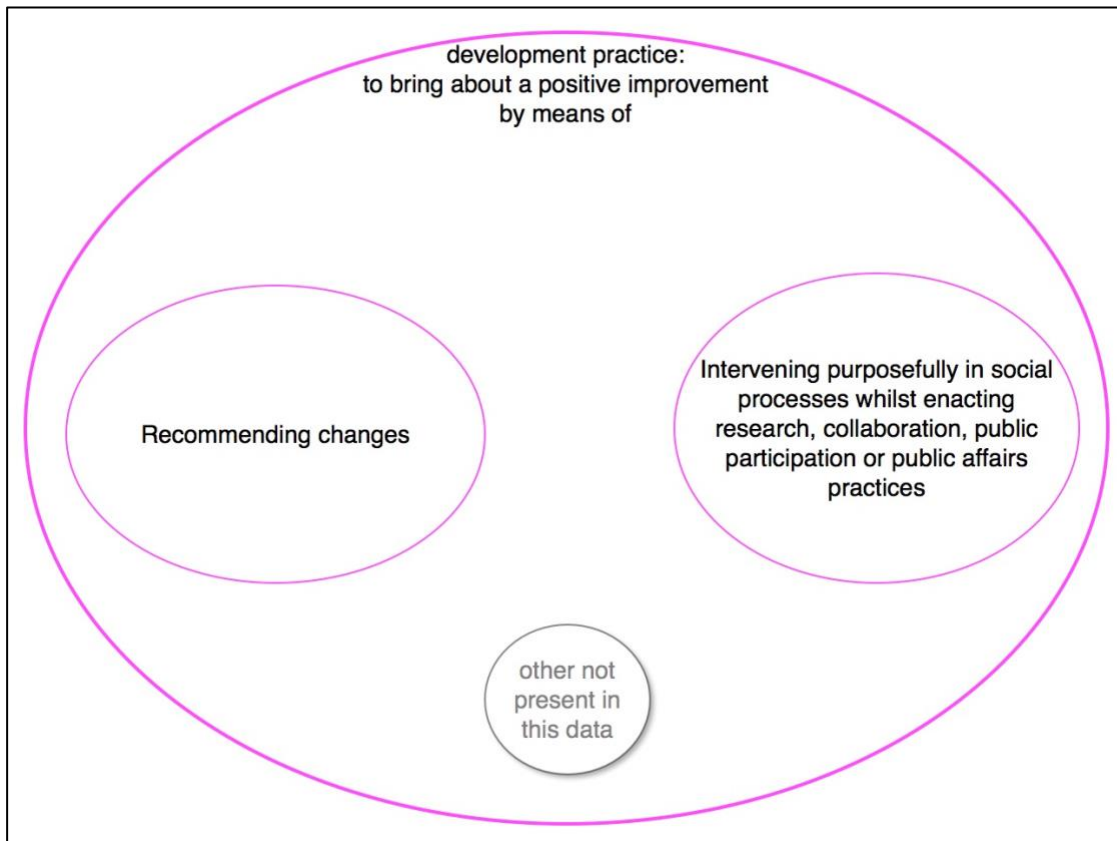
Figure 17: A system map of the sub-practices of development practice
(Sources: P04-I1, P05-I1, P06-W1.1, P11-I1, P12-I1, K2)

Insights from the archival data

Policy work studies has paid a lot of attention to the idea that policy analysis and design leads to the development of recommendations. One of the six archetypal activities in Mayer, van Daalen and Bots (2004, 2013) model for understanding policy analysis is *design and recommend.* The authors associate this, along with the activity *advise strategically*, with a rational view of policy which sees the policy practitioner as providing objective advice to politicians (the legitimate decision makers) and others. According to Veselý (2016), policy advice can be conceptualised as one type of policy work. It can take place directly whilst engaged in the decision-making and implementation processes or through more indirect means of influencing. Previous studies have also identified that policy practitioners are involved in implementing

(Hughes, 2014) and that capacity is needed to work between policy development and program management (Gleeson, 2009).

> **Whilst the archival data acknowledges the role of policy workers in making change happen, it has not been explored extensively. The fieldwork data reveals that the purpose of development practice at a local level is to bring about a positive improvement as a contribution to local policy processes. Policy practitioners are aware that change arises as a result of their actions and interactions within the policy process. This remains an area that is under-explored.**

A possible avenue of future exploration is the interrelationship between different conceptualisations of policy, different paradigms of change and the individual practitioner's perspective of how to enact development practice. A rational model of change suggests the need to "think first and then act according to plan" (Vermaak and de Caluwé, 2018, p. 175) using interventions such as project management. This strongly aligns with a rational view of policy and a linear process with separation between development and implementation. Other paradigmatic understandings of change are integral to the structured interaction account of policy. As examples, negotiation assumes change happens when you "bring common interests together" (Vermaak and de Caluwé, 2018, p. 175) and collaboration and public participation practices are often concerned with creating space for social learning and more evolutionary forms of change.

6.3   Diffuse practices

In addition to the five sub-practices identified above, two diffuse practices (documenting and interacting) can be distinguished. Documenting and interacting practices are not enacted separately - producing a document entails lots of interaction and interacting is often supported by documentation. Nevertheless, it is helpful to consider them separately.

6.3.1   Documenting

"The conversation made me realise that writing a paper forces a situation where you need consensus in the form of a written document everyone can own - not having to write it down allows differing views to exist. Writing exposes what you can and can't agree on." (R-J.18.06.2017)

Insights from the fieldwork data

A variety of document types were mentioned by participants (Figure 18).
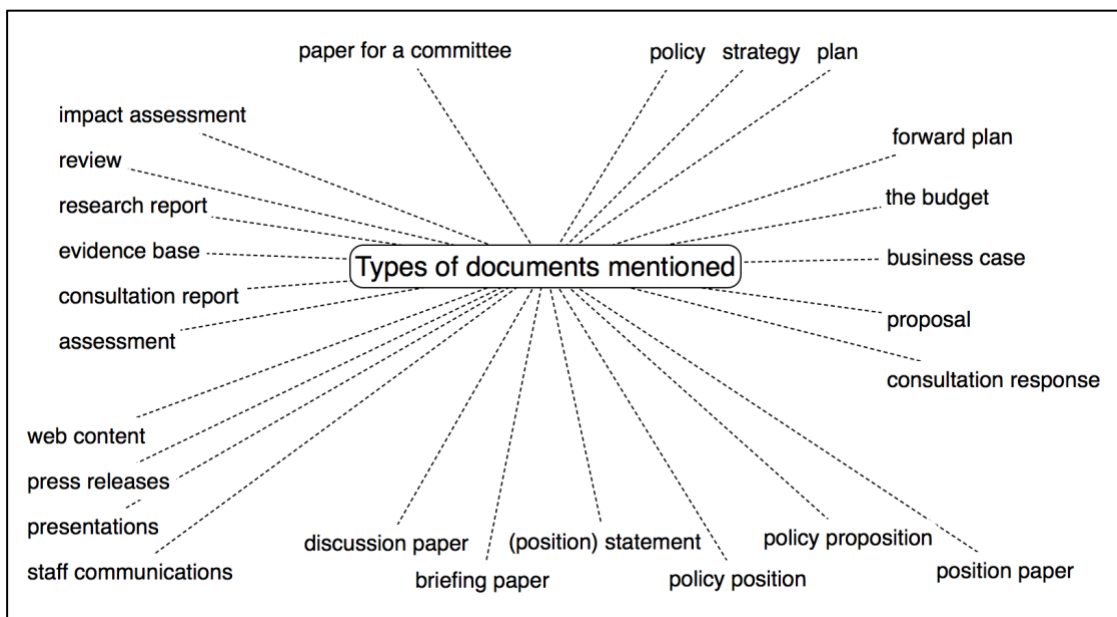

Figure 18: Document types mentioned by participants

(Sources: P03-I1, P03-W1.2, P03-W2.9, P05-I1, P05-W1.1, P06-I1, P06-I2, P07-I1, P10-I1, P12-W1.1)

Some of these are *"designed to produce a better decision that actually affects people"* (P03-I1) and can be particularly associated with research practice. Others (particularly policy, strategy and plan) help *"bring partners together to have a shared understanding as to where [we're] going and to the direction of travel"* (P01-I1) and are particularly associated with collaborative and public participation practices. The remainder have a variety of internal and external purposes. However, terms are not used consistently and nomenclature changes over time in accordance with changes in the distal conditions and the preferences of local political leaders.

Irrespective of the name given to the end product, documenting entails a variety of sub-practices (Figure 19). Some of these are associated with producing a document as a lead author or contributor, but there are also sub-practices linked to gaining approval and ensuring awareness and use of documents. The extent to which these latter sub-practices are required depend on the document type and whether or not the policy area is being attended to by senior managers, politicians or inter-organisational governance structures.

Insights from the archival data

Documents are considered to be the "primary medium" of policy (Budd, Charlesworth and Paton, 2006, p. 1). They can be formal or informal, public or private and exist in electronic form as well as, or instead of, hard copy. Documents support communication and play a critical role in "connect[ing] actors and coordinat[ing] their actions" (Freeman and Maybin, 2011, p. 2011) at a point in time and over time. The purpose of documenting could therefore be expressed as **to communicate, connect and coordinate**.

The activity of preparing documents has been highlighted in other studies, including two focused at local government level (Escobar, 2014, 2015; Wesselink and Gouldson, 2014). Similarly, prior research has highlighted that policy work entails getting the content of a document authorised (Hughes, 2014).
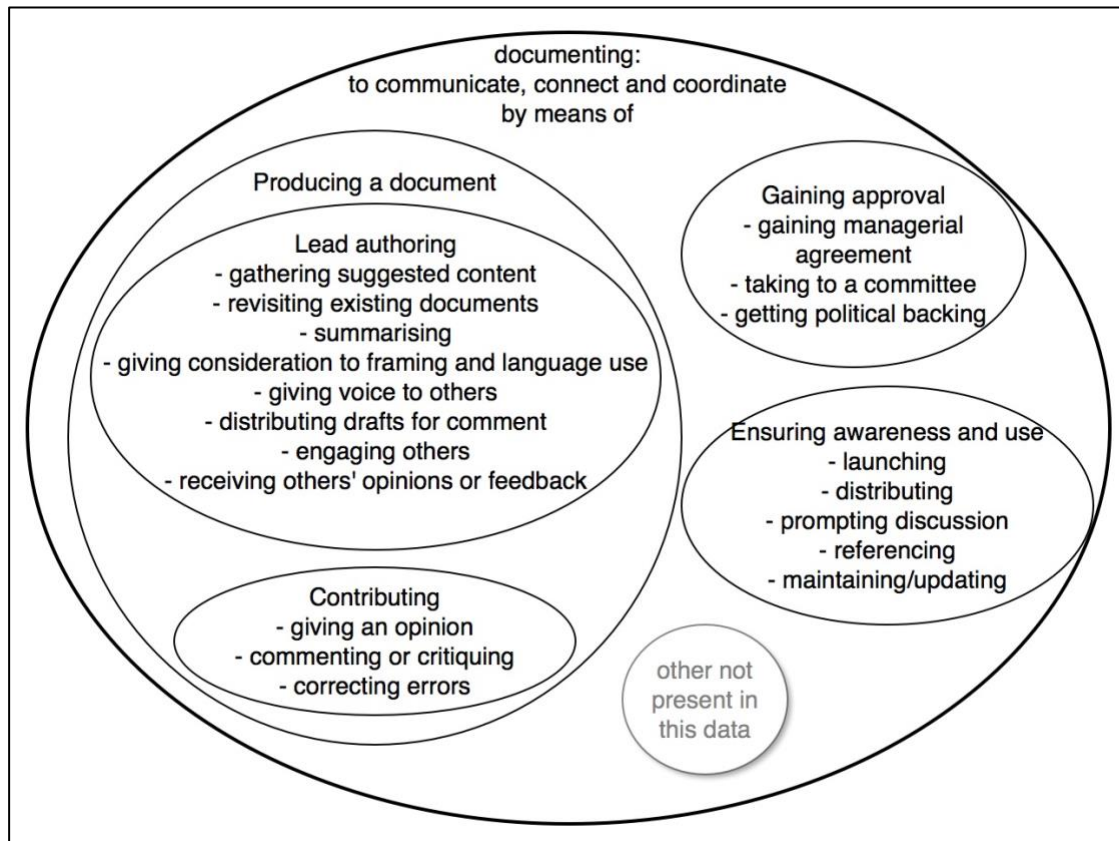
Figure 19: A system map of the sub-practices of documenting practice
(Sources: P02-I1, P03-W1.2, P07-I1, P10-I1, K2)

The archival data has helped to express the purpose of documenting practice as to communicate, connect and coordinate. The fieldwork data highlights that a variety of different types of documents - some with interchangeable labels - are produced in the course of supporting local policy processes. Documenting practice does not only entail the production of a document, it also encompasses enacting sub-practices linked to gaining approval and ensuring awareness and ongoing use.

6.3.2 Interacting

"I suspect it is something that we don't think about because we all do this automatically within our day job. We are constantly having conversations to facilitate people to understand, to move them toward, to understand how you could pitch it" (P09-W2.3)

Insights from the fieldwork data

Although it does vary depending on the sub-practice, policy practice entails a lot of meetings (P03-I1, P07-I1) which can be face to face or via telephone. Meetings vary widely in terms of size, the degree of formality, the seniority of the people involved and whether or not documents are utilised. They can be with people internal to the local authority, with people from other organisations, with members of the public or with various combinations of these.

As a result, there are a wide variety of purposes for the practice of interacting (Figure 20) which can come into focus at different points in a single encounter. It is not possible to encompass this diversity within a single purpose statement.

Insights from the archival data

As explained earlier (section 6.2.2), the degree of interacting that policy participants engage in has led to an account of policy referred to as structured interaction. Studies have focused on specific purposes of interaction, such as negotiation (Johansson, 2012) and learning (Maybin, 2013) and conceptual literature considers advice (Veselý, 2016).

to negotiate

to help others understand

to explain

to present

to lobby

to reduce opposition

to influence

to convince

to win people to a way of thinking

to develop/
broker collective
understanding

to advocate
other's viewpoints

to get people on
board

to mediate

Purposes of interacting

to challenge

to listen and understand

to advise

to recommend

to be briefed

to receive direction

to report or account
for actions

to brief

to prime

to draw someone's
attention to something

to give an update

to liaise

to network   to build a relationship

to put ideas forward

Figure 20: Purposes of interacting mentioned by participants

(P01-I1, P03-I1, P03-W1.2, P05-I1, P06-I1, P08-I1, P09-I1, P11-I1, P11-W1.2, K2)

Individual studies in the archival data focus on one possible purpose of interacting and therefore overlook the other purposes that may be achieved within the same encounter. The fieldwork data does not contain direct insights into encounters in the same way that data generated through intensive participant observation would have done. However, it does highlight that there is an interplay of different purposes - for example, in any one encounter a policy practitioner may interact to provide advice, receive guidance and develop their understanding.

6.4   Interrelationships between sub-practices and diffuse practices

The sections above have elaborated on the five sub-practices and two diffuse practices of policy practice. They have demonstrated that each of the sub-practices make a different contribution to supporting local policy processes and are themselves constituted of a number of sub-practices. The diffuse practices are enacted as part of all sub-practices. These additional details can be added into the diagram presented earlier (Figure 9) to form Figure 21.
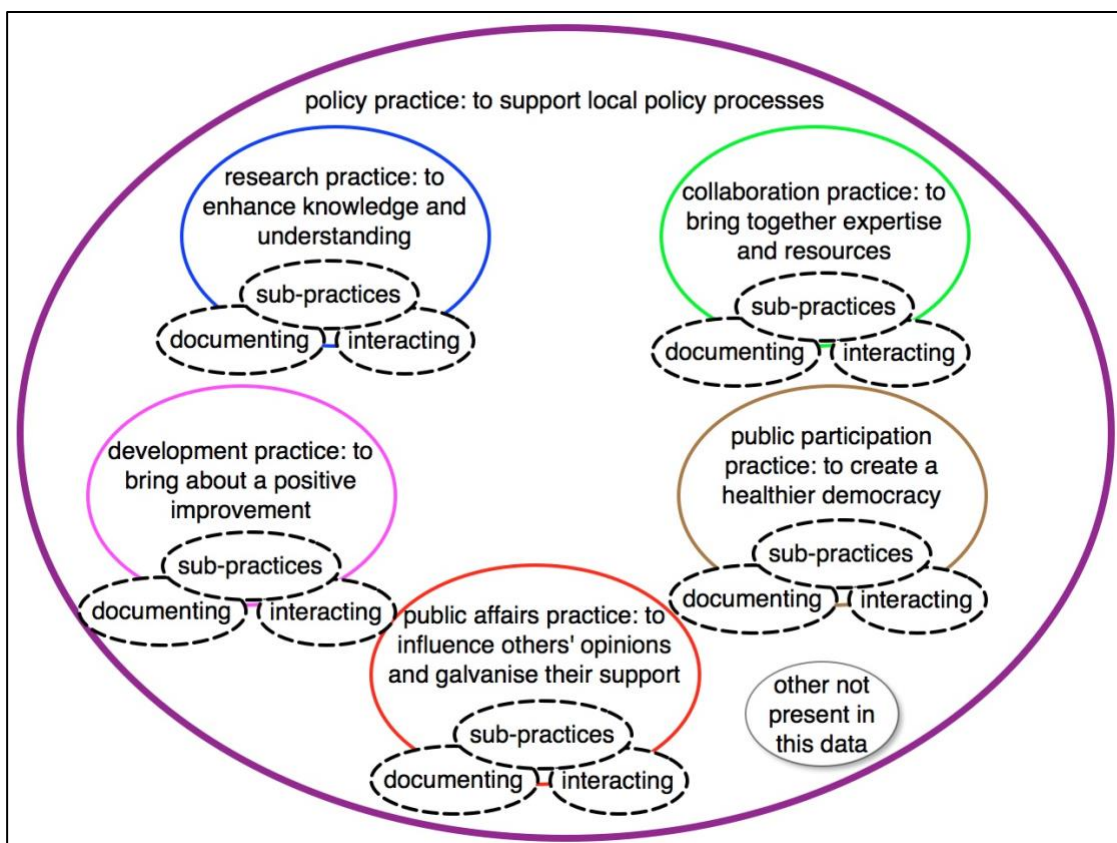
Figure 21: The practices that interact to support local policy processes

Ideally, the different sub-practices should work "in harmony" (P03-I1) with each other both at a point in time and over time. It is the interactions between, and appropriate co-enactment of, these practices that give rise to effective support for local policy processes, rather than any single practice in isolation. Different policy areas (see also section 7.1.1) may require different

blends of these sub-practices and there may be periods when a particular sub-practice is in the foreground in accordance with discrete tasks required.

However, tensions and conflicts can arise as a result of the interactions between the sub-practices. An example in the fieldwork data (P09-I1, P10-I1) is when the views of people from organisations or members of the public are not consistent with the knowledge and evidence arising from research practice. At a deeper level, there are in-built conflicts with respect to the way the sub-practices relate to local citizens. For example, they are perceived as research participants (research practice), collaborators and social activists (public participation practice) and people with opinions to influence (public affairs practice). Surfacing, recognising and managing tensions like these are also important aspects of policy practice.

6.5   Conclusion

This chapter has provided an understanding of policy practice at a local government level drawing on the participants' perspectives in the fieldwork data and supplementing this with insights from the archival data. Consistent with the participants' interest in the purpose of what they do, the analysis focused on drawing out the telos or purpose of policy practice and its sub-practices. This is important as it subsequently helps to clarify whether changes to practice are desirable or not.

In the local government setting, policy practice co-exists with a range of other practices that are predominantly associated with the service provision role of local government. The purpose of policy practice is **to support local policy processes** as a contribution to the effectiveness of governing. It is constituted of five sub-practices (research, collaboration, public participation, public affairs and development) and two diffuse practices (documenting and interacting) each with their own distinct, and potentially conflicting, purposes. Public participation, public affairs and development practice have not featured strongly in research taking place at other levels of governance highlighting that policy practice at a local level has its own distinctive style.

Now that an understanding of policy practice at a local government level has been established, it is possible to explore what influences the enactment of policy practice, in other words how it is performed. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Influences on the enactment of policy practice

Earlier, in chapter 3, an influence diagram of the elements that give rise to a practice performance was presented (replicated in Figure 22).
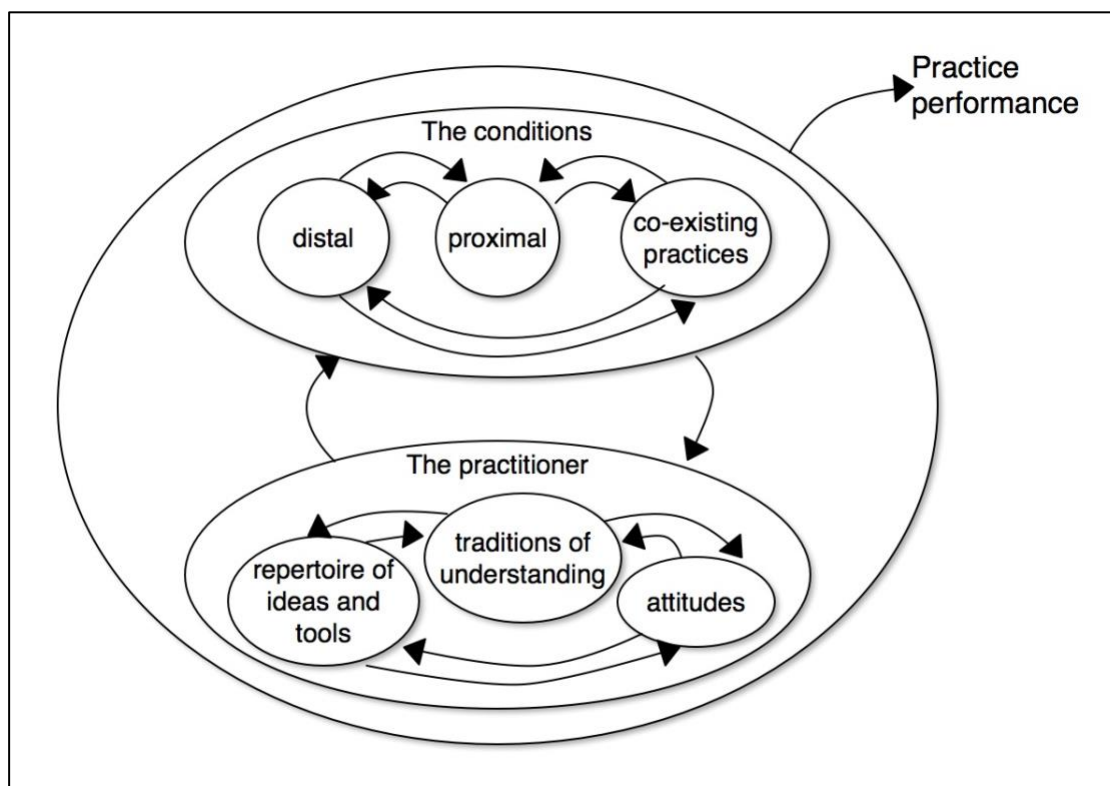
Figure 22: An influence diagram of the elements that give rise to a practice performance

This chapter uses this framework to consider influences on the enactment of policy practice. It has three sections which focus on the proximal conditions, the distal conditions and the individual. The previous chapter (section 6.1) identified that co-existing practices are predominantly concerned with service provision responsibilities at a local level. The influence of these co-existing practices is not elaborated in a dedicated section. This should not be considered indicative of a lack of significance, rather it is because of the pervasive nature of their influence. For example, the discussion of policy capacity (section 7.1.4) reveals that the resources and attention required to organise and deliver service provision will distract from that needed for policy

and the discussion of New Public Management (section 7.2.3) suggests that the discourses associated with service delivery impact on the way in which policy and the policy process is discussed.

7.1   Proximal conditions

This section outlines the dimensions of the proximal conditions that shape how policy practice is enacted.
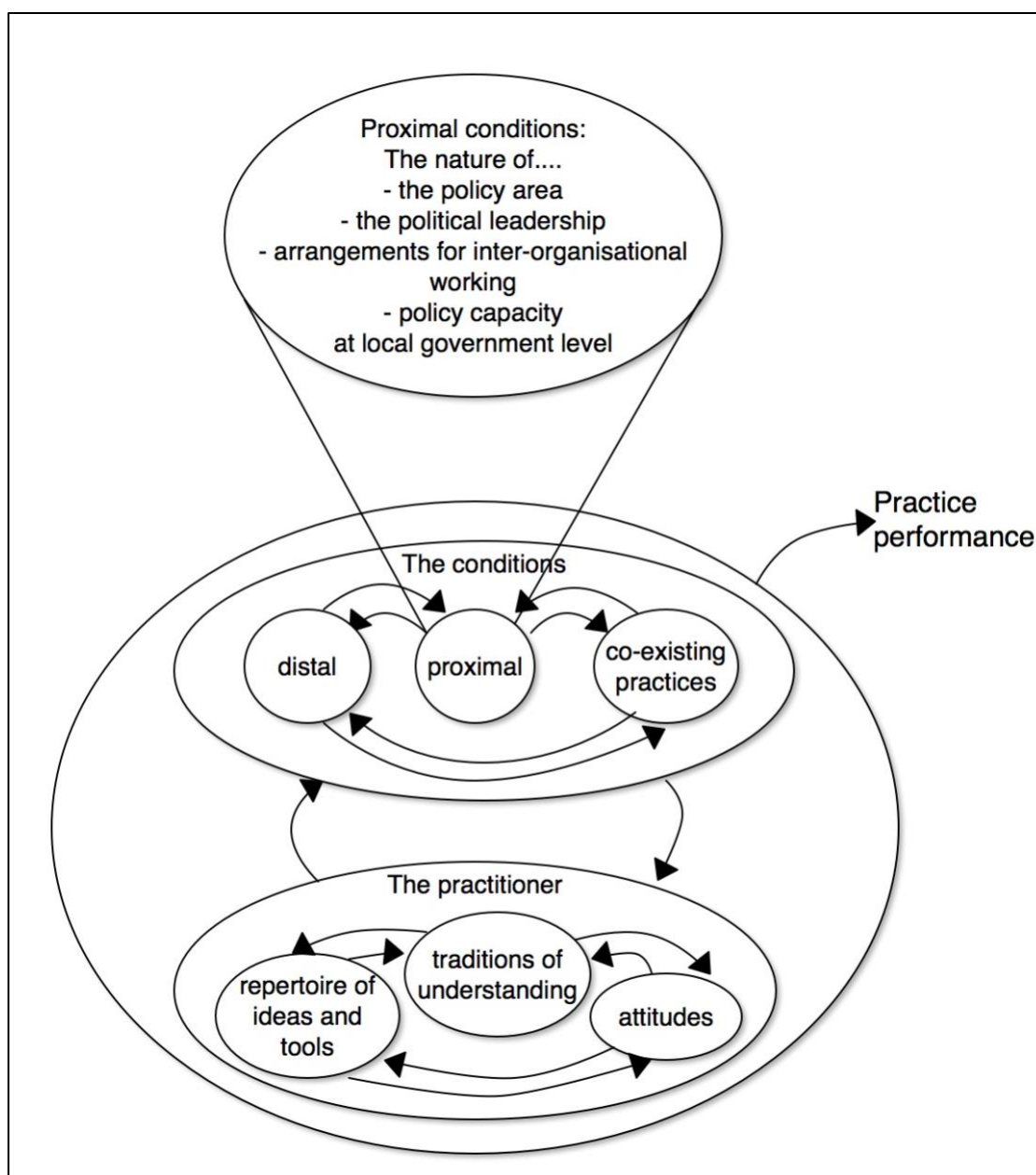

Figure 23: Key dimensions of the proximal conditions

As Figure 23 illustrates, four dimensions were identified in the data - the nature of the policy area, political leadership, inter-organisational arrangements and policy capacity - which will each be elaborated. Policy capacity is focused on in greater detail because it is seen by participants as particularly influential to the quality of policy practice and any practice development efforts.

7.1.1   The nature of the policy area

Insights from the fieldwork data

Early in the research process, the participants and I distinguished three broad types of policy area engaged in by policy actors at a local government level (K1). *Sectoral policies* relate to a specific local government function and set of partners. Drawing on previous work by Johansson (2012), these can be further sub-divided into welfare policies which are concerned with delivering services to individuals (for example, social care) and infrastructure policies which are those concerned with creating benefits for collectives (for example, housing policy). Secondly, *cross-cutting policies* are concerned with societal challenges, such as equalities, sustainability, wellbeing or adapting to an ageing population. These can only be taken forward through their integration into other policies and all activity at a local government level. Finally, *contextual policies* are broader policies that impact on the local area as a whole. For example, devolution, public service reform, Brexit and austerity. Different policy types require different sub-practices to be more dominant. For example, contextual policy is likely to emphasise public affairs practice (P11-W1.1).

Different policy areas are influenced differently by legislation, frameworks or guidance which tightly shape aspects of the work, such as who should be involved, governance structures, the documents required, timescales, funding, required interventions or performance measures (P03-W1.1, P05-I1, P07-12, P09-I1, P09-W.1.1, P11-W2.3). This can mean that local government has

very little discretion with respect to how to proceed (R-J.03.09.17), particularly when resources are constrained (P03-I1).

Policy areas and the situations they aim to improve are not static, they are "a moving feast" (P06-I2). This means that maintaining connection and cohesion is an ongoing, never-ending task (P06-I2). In addition, tasks deemed important enough to initiate can become unnecessary and remain unfinished (P06-W2.4). One aspect of a policy area that changes over time is the degree to which it is being attended to by senior officials or politicians. Reasons for increased attention include: national policy changes (P01-I2); local or national focusing events (such as the fire at Grenfell, London) (P03-W2.4, P06-W2.4); organisational structure and management actions (P07-I1); and availability of funding (P09-I2). When a policy area is being attended to, there are greater requests for information requiring a quick turnaround (P07-I1) emphasising research practice and documenting, but creating the conditions for less rigour and interacting. Alternatively, a policy area may be in a phase where it receives less active attention from senior officials or politicians. Reasons for decreased attention include the issue being relevant to a small minority of the population (P01-I2) and the issue getting less national or international attention (P04-I2, P11-I2). In these periods, internally focused public affairs practice is emphasised to make sure the policy area gets enough attention and legitimacy to help it move forward (P04-I2, P06-W2.8).

Whilst, participants identified differences between policy areas, they also emphasised that they are not discrete (K1). They should not be siloed (P12-I1) or contradict each other (P05-I1). Achieving cohesion between policy areas requires people to understand the connections (P12-I1) and involves reconciling potentially opposing priorities (P03-W1.1) through collaboration and public affairs practices. This can be challenging given that different policy areas engage different people both inside and outside of the local authority (P05-I1) who are likely to have different perspectives with respect to the type of knowledge that is most relevant and trustworthy (P04-I1).

Insights from the archival data

Previous empirical work has identified that different policy analytical tools are favoured in different policy departments (Howlett et al., 2014). Research is also used differently - the extent to which research articles are accessed monthly varies from 71% in sustainable development to 21% in justice, with the health and social services policy sector at the higher end of this range (Ouimet et al., 2010). These differences are substantial enough for one systematic review to conclude that different policy sectors have different *cultures of evidence* that is "coherent patterns of norms and orientations governing how knowledge is understood and used" (Lorenc et al., 2014, p. 1045).

More broadly, policy scholars have recognised that the ongoing interactions between policy actors linked by an interest in a particular policy arena leads to them developing shared knowledge, discourse and norms (Colebatch, 2006b). The degree of cohesiveness will vary according to the number of participants and their frequency and nature of interaction. Policy communities with a high degree of consensus are more likely to arise when a small number of participants are engaged in frequent, stable interaction; whereas issue networks involving larger numbers and less frequent, poorer quality communication are more likely to have conflict and opposition (Cairney, 2012).

The changing needs and expectations of political or managerial leadership linked to a policy area means that policy practitioners must constantly re-prioritise their workload. Furthermore, the most urgent and pressing tasks are often delegated to a smaller group of the most competent people (Baehler and Bryson, 2008, 2009). The degree of firefighting prompts concerns about the time that policy practitioners have to work on complex issues that require in-depth technical work and coordination, such as environmental policy (Howlett and Joshi-Koop, 2011). Issues that require expediency can prompt a different mode of operating. For example, in the exotic disease division of DEFRA, UK, disease outbreak requires officials to find ways around

necessary meetings and paperwork and hierarchy is replaced by a very flat structure (Wilkinson, 2011).

Both sources of data highlight that different ways of working are prominent in different policy areas and that this will adapt depending on the degree of attention being given to it. The fieldwork data has additionally identified three broad types of policy areas that concern actors at a local level - sectoral, cross-cutting and contextual. Policy practitioners make distinctions between different policy areas and recognise that these favour different styles of policy practice. However, they are also aware of the importance of joining up and seeking coherence between policy areas.

7.1.2   Nature of political leadership

Insights from the fieldwork data

The fieldwork took place in a local authority that uses a cabinet-leader model of governance which is the most common model currently in use in England (Latham, 2017). The cabinet-leader model concentrates decision-making in fewer individuals than committee-style structures but it is not as centralised as when there is a directly elected mayor. In this context, lead politicians set policy direction (P03-I1) and act as "the face" (P10-I1) of a policy in the public domain. Judgements about what is acceptable to them will influence the ideas that are put forward (P04-W1.1). Lead politicians will also attend to some policy areas more than others (P11-I1) and switch attention quickly in response to issues arising in the news and social media (P11-I2). In the meantime, back-bench and opposition elected members influence policy through the scrutiny process (P05-I1) which will impact on the degree to which documenting practices are required.

In addition to an interest in policy content, lead politicians also influence how they would like policy to be done (P04-I1). For example, they set expectations on what good advice looks like (P05-I1); the knowledge that is most trustworthy (P03-I1); forms of public participation (P02-I1); the style and

type of documents (P09-W2.7); and which documents should proceed through different governance structures (P09-W2.7). In turn, this influences the sub-practices that are emphasised and the way in which they are enacted.

Party politics also influences expectations about policy practice. Changes in administration result in different priorities (P03-I1) that impact on the framing used in documents and interactions. When the local government majority is different to that in the national government, it is important to maintain local interpretations of key issues (P11-W2.3) and in some cases there may be a need to develop counter policy positions (P06-I1). The electoral and budget-setting cycles of the local authority also provide a context for what is appropriate, for example, contentious proposals should not be made in the lead up to an election (P06-W1.1, P06-I2) and proposals can be more acceptable if they are likely to give tangible results within electoral cycles (P06-W2.1).

Policy practitioners vary in the opportunities available to them to directly interact with elected members (P03-I2). They may only hear about expectations on content or process "by accident" (P11-W3.1) or via senior officials (P07-W2.7). At times, this can be fragmented resulting in the need to move forward with uncertainty about what is expected (W3.1, R-J.22.10.17). The normative stance of local politicians on the division of policy responsibilities between politicians and paid officials influences the degree to which it is appropriate to talk about, and draw attention to, the policy practices of paid officials (W2.2) which can present challenges to practice development efforts (R-J.19.05.17).

Insights from the archival data

Even though officials are recruited to public bureaucracies, like local authorities, on the basis of merit and are expected to be non-partisan, it is still vital that they understand the political nature of the environment within which they work. In that context, effective advice is "tailored to the preferences and goals of the political leadership" (Peters, 2017, p. 38). For example, previous

research with local government policy managers has identified that policy practitioners discard policy options if they do not think they are politically feasible (Öberg, Lundin and Thelander, 2015).

The archival data highlights that it is important that policy practitioners understand the political nature of their working context. The fieldwork data demonstrates just how extensively the political cycle and the preferences of the political leadership are taken into account - not just in the advice that is given but in the way in which sub-practices are enacted and talked about. Unlike senior officials, policy practitioners may not have direct interactions with lead politicians and therefore may be in the position of inferring what is required from more general communications.

7.1.3   The nature of arrangements for inter-organisational working

Insights from the fieldwork data

As a result of changing national policy or local interests, formal and informal arrangements for organisations to work with each other are established, maintained and dissolved (P11-I1). Inter-organisational arrangements are perceived to create a wider and more cohesive approach to policy (P04-I1, P08-I1, P11-I1), ensure organisations get leverage from each other (P05-I1) and provide a stronger opportunity to influence national policy (P06-W2.8). The public sector organisations involved in inter-organisational arrangements are not static - their responsibilities and structures change in response to national policy which can create barriers to progress as well as opportunities (P01-I1).

Inter-organisational arrangements engage different combinations of public sector organisations, the private sector or the third sector and may also directly involve members of the public. They may be confined to a single local authority area, a group of neighbouring areas or be made up of a number of local authorities with interests in common. Any one organisation could

simultaneously be a lead in some inter-organisational arrangements and be less of a key player in others (P08-I1). Lead organisations are often local authorities who have to strike a balance between being an enabler and facilitator and pursuing their own agenda (P02-I1). Different organisations vary with respect to the capacity to take part in these processes and those with higher capacity are likely to have a stronger shaping role (P06-W2.8).

The existence of formal partnership arrangements provides additional ways of gaining attention and legitimacy to progress a policy area (P01-I1). Documenting has to be enacted with awareness that gaining approval and legitimacy will involve meeting a range of organisational interests, but it is important to avoid documents which just aggregate the individual interests of the organisations involved (P06-W2.8). In addition to collaborating externally, individuals need to be able to interact internally to ensure that they can contribute and, if necessary, negotiate in accordance with their own organisational interests. This can be particularly problematic when a single individual represents a very large organisation or a whole sector where those interests are not necessarily unified (P05-I1, W2.4). It can also be problematic for people combining the need to represent organisational interests with a facilitatory role where it is expected that they will be more neutral (P02-I1).

Insights from the archival data

A landscape of intra- and inter-organisational initiatives, variously referred to as horizontal initiatives, partnerships or networks, are a characteristic of collaborative governance. Policy practitioners may be members of one or more formal collaborative initiative and may hold convenor or network manager roles with a focus on process management and mediation. A study of public servants working in four different horizontal initiatives in Canada (Joshi-Koop, 2009) highlights that they experience tensions and challenges as they balance their responsibilities for good process with those for good policy. The public servants may feel disconnected from the politicians and senior officers they act on behalf of and have little authority to negotiate or commit

resources. At the same time, they are managing relationships with network members who may also be experiencing a disconnect from political networks.

Both sources of data highlight that the nature of inter-organisational arrangements impact on the policy work that is done and create tensions for policy practitioners with respect to the different roles they have and the way policy practices need to be enacted. The fieldwork data has additionally highlighted that these arrangements and the organisations that are part of them, operate on different geographical footprints and are continuously changing. Appropriate capacity is important to ensure that an organisation can effectively engage in, and if necessary facilitate, inter-organisational arrangements. The next section focuses on the nature of policy capacity at local government level in more detail.

7.1.4 The nature of policy capacity at local government level

Insights from the fieldwork data

This aspect of the context is the one that participants referred to most of all in individual interviews and workshop discussions. It is regarded as particularly influential to the quality of policy practice and any practice development efforts and therefore greater attention is paid to it than other aspects of the proximal conditions. As elaborated below, policy capacity is also a key focus within the policy work literature and both definitions and conceptual models have been advanced. However, the way that the participants used the term in their discourse was not synonymous with these academic definitions. There were four different aspects that participants were concerned with - understanding who enacts policy practice, the overall size of policy capacity, its distribution and its coordination - which will each be elaborated in turn.

A wide range of paid staff both in and outside of the local authority enact policy practice even if they do not recognise and label it as such (P02-I1, P05-

I1, P12-I1, P12-W2.8, P12-I2). Different distinctions were used by participants to make sense of the diversity of colleagues enacting policy practice.

Firstly, individuals vary in respect of the proportion of time they spend supporting local policy processes. At one end of the continuum, there are "designated policy practitioners" (K1) and at the other are those who combine occasional policy-related responsibilities with co-existing practices, such as service management or commissioning (P04-W3.1).

Secondly, people vary in respect of the number and type of policy areas they directly support both at a point in time and over time (P03-W2.7, P11-I1). This is similar to a distinction made by Putland (2013) who contrasted *technical policy specialists* who have expertise in a specific field of policy with *policy officers* who develop expertise related to policy process and engage in a variety of policy areas. However, it is important to note that even people who directly support a single policy area have to understand enough about other areas to consider how they integrate together (P03-W2.7).

Finally, people vary in respect of the range of sub-practices that they regularly enact and develop expertise in. Those specialised in a sub-practice, such as research or public participation, may enact that sub-practice as a contribution to improving service delivery as well as contributing to local policy processes.

These three continua lend themselves to a range of possibilities (Figure 24). An individual's position in this matrix is not fixed, it will vary over time in accordance with the tasks allocated to them (P10-I2).
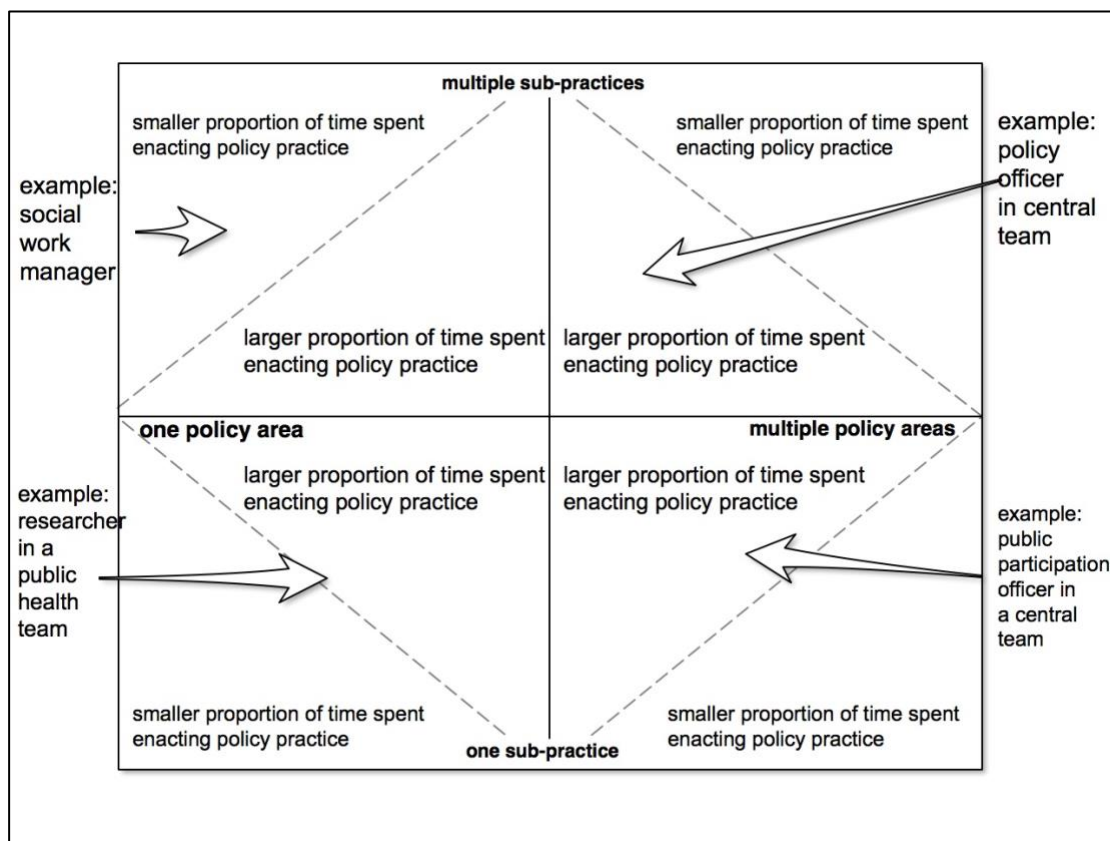
Figure 24: Representation of the variety of those who enact policy practice

Overall, policy capacity is much larger in national government than local government (P06-I1) and better resourced local authority areas are more likely to have larger centralised policy teams (P11-I1). Furthermore, local government has a smaller network of institutions and think tanks to directly engage with than national government (R-J.03.09.2017). The size of policy capacity is particularly dependent on the overall amount of funding available to a local authority. This study occurred at a time when the national austerity policy is resulting in cuts to local government finances and discussions were taking place around fair funding and business rate localisation (P11-I1). Individual local authorities do make different local choices about how to allocate the decreasing resources between service delivery capacity and policy capacity (P11-I1). In the local authority area where this study took place, less resource is put into policy capacity than previously (P01-I2, P04-I1, P04-W3.1, P06-I1, P09-I1, P10-I1, P11-I1, P11-I2) with a subsequent impact on scope for specialisation and the need for multi-tasking (P04-I2, P06-I1,

P06-I2, P07-I1, P07-I2, P10-I1) combined with less opportunity to build relationships and connections (P01-I2, P02-I2, P11-W3.1, P12-W2.9, P12-I2). Participants expressed concern that the remaining capacity had to focus on the interface with national policy, to the detriment of locally initiated policy development (P07-I1, P10-I1).

Whilst participants appreciated the diverse ways in which people are involved in enacting policy practice, there were concerns about the way in which responsibilities and capacity are distributed (both internally within the local authority and external to it) and then coordinated (P01-I1, P03-W2.2, P12-I1) in accordance with what local politicians need (P11-I1). Over time, a range of decisions with respect to organisational structure, financial allocations, policy priorities, contractual relationships and job specifications impact both intentionally and unintentionally on the distribution of policy capacity. Allocating lead responsibility for a policy area is not the same as suggesting that all relevant policy capacity should be concentrated in, and organised solely by, a particular department or external organisation. For example, it is appropriate to integrate lead responsibility for different sectoral policy areas with its associated function because similar expertise and external relationships are required and policy developments can draw directly on day to day delivery experience (P06-I1, P10-I1, P11-I1, P11-I2). However, people who are more detached from day to day delivery are still required to provide challenge (P06-I1), prompt holistic thinking (P11-I1, P11-I2), assist with policy learning from elsewhere (P10-I1) and provide expertise or mentoring in good policy process (P01-I1, P10-I1). Similarly, it is appropriate for the focal points for cross-cutting and contextual policies to be associated with a department not directly involved with service or infrastructure responsibilities. However, the engagement of people with different sectoral policy knowledge and service improvement responsibilities is still crucial to successful progression of these types of policy area (P11-I1).

Participants also drew attention to the importance of leading and coordinating policy capacity (P06-I2). The dispersal of policy responsibilities and policy

capacity carries a risk that it can be disorganised and silo-ed rather than coordinated and coherent. During the course of the fieldwork, participants commented on the characteristics of disorganised policy capacity which can be contrasted with well-coordinated policy capacity (Figure 25).
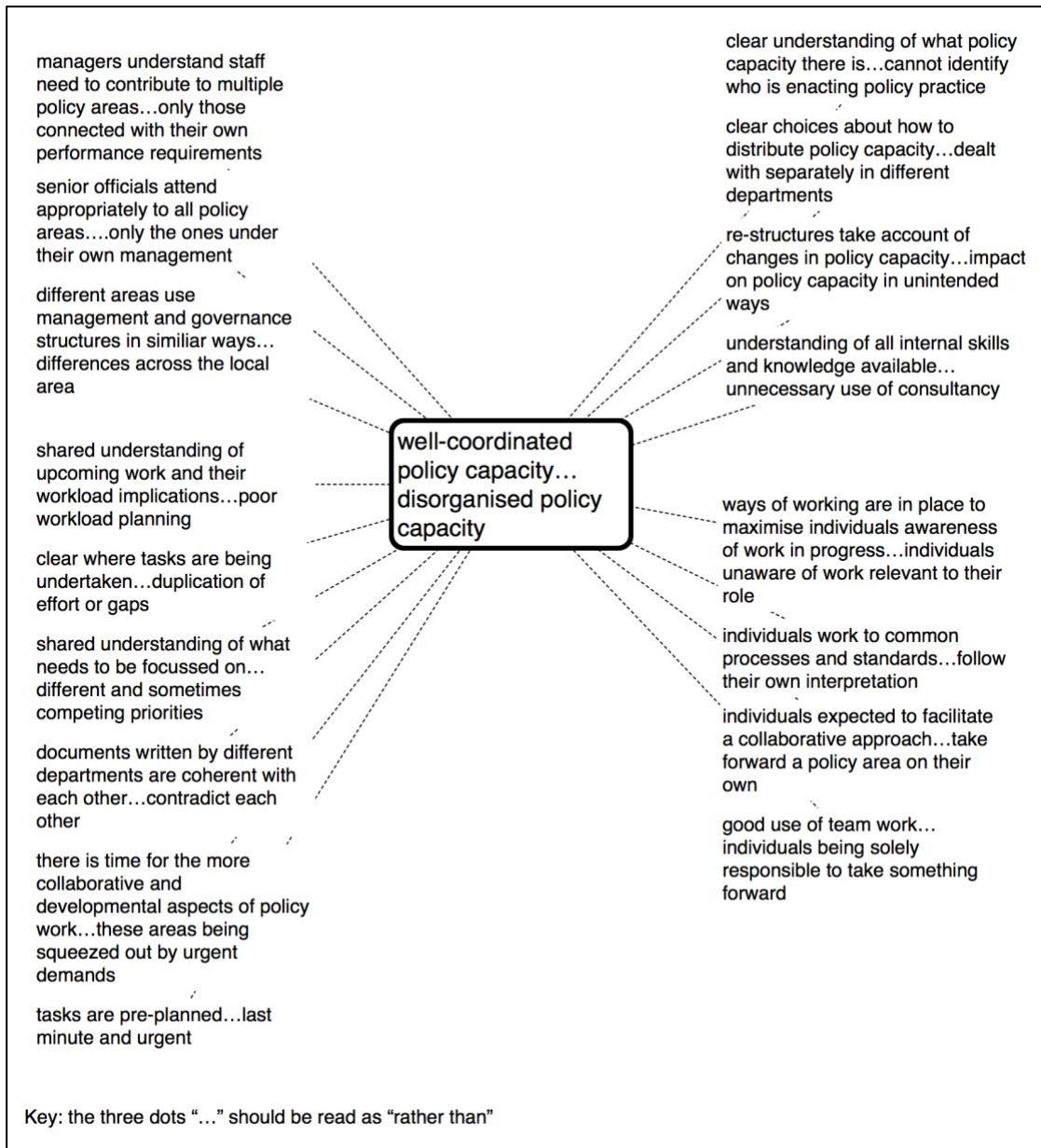

Figure 25: An attribute map of the characteristics of well-coordinated policy capacity (Sources: P01-I1, P01-12, P02-I2, P03-I1, P03-I2, P04-I2, P06-I1, P06-W3.1, P06-I2, P07-I2, P07-W1.2, P09-I1, P09-W2.1, P10-W1.2, P10-W3.1, P10-I2, P11-I1, P11-I2, P12-I2)

It was repeatedly emphasised that senior officials or at least one champion amongst senior officials, must proactively coordinate financial and human resources that are deployed to support local policy processes (P01-I1, P04-I1, P04-I2, P06-I2, P10-I2, P11-I1). This ensures a stronger visibility of, and identity for, those who enact policy practice (P04-I1, P04-I2, P11-I2). It is, however, challenging for senior officials to attend to this leadership and coordinating role. Firstly, their time can be pre-occupied with ensuring appropriate service delivery capacity and dealing with policy areas requiring their immediate attention (P03-I2, P11-W2.8). Secondly, it is difficult to understand policy practice and its value (P01-I2, P04-I1, P11-I1, P12-I1) and it often remains invisible (P02-I1, P07-W1.2). And, finally, policy capacity is dispersed - not only within the local authority but also beyond it - and therefore does not lend itself to traditional vertical management and leadership practices (P06-12, P11-W2.8).

Coordination mechanisms also minimise the risk of policy capacity being disorganised and siloed. For example, the data in this study reflects findings elsewhere (Baehler and Bryson, 2008, 2009; Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009; Howlett and Newman, 2010) with respect to the amount of workload reprioritisation and firefighting that is involved in doing policy work. This can result in poorer quality policy practice with an impact on the quality of local policy processes (P11-I1, P11-W2.9). Last minute work cannot be completely eliminated, but participants value coordination mechanisms that minimise unexpected demands, such as strong prioritisation (P06-I1, P11-I1) and forward planning that integrates organisational, team and individual levels (P11-I1, P11-W3.1). This also enables appropriate combinations of staff, with different policy area knowledge and skills in different sub-practices, to be tasked collectively (P03-I1, P09-I1, P11-I1, P11-W2.9) and provides greater visibility for the work overall (P04-I2).

Insights from the archival data

Policy capacity is the focus of a key strand of policy work research (Kohoutek, Nekola and Veselý, 2018) and is "among the most fundamental concepts in

studying public policy" (Wu, Ramesh and Howlett, 2017, p. 1) because high capacity is linked to policy success and low capacity to policy failure. However, as Wu, Ramesh and Howlett (2017) outline, there is no agreement on how to define, operationalise or measure it and it is unclear whether it differs from related concepts such as governance capacity. Drawing on previous work by Gleeson, Legge and O'Neill (2009), they define it as "the set of skills and resources - or competences and capabilities - necessary to perform policy functions" (Wu, Ramesh and Howlett, 2017, p. 3). The conceptual framework advanced by these authors emphasise that this is needed at three levels - individual, organisational, systemic - and has three different types - analytical, operational and political. However, elsewhere other forms of capacity have been named - such as communicative capacity (Bartels, 2015) and deliberative capacity (Dryzek, 2009) - suggesting that different conceptualisations of policy will lead to different perspectives on the capacity that is required.

In their work on English local government specifically, Copus, Roberts and Wall (2017), use the term *governing capacity* and contrast that with the capacity needed to provide public services. They describe the tensions between the most appropriate structures for governing and those for public service delivery and argue that the current focus on what is best for efficient service delivery is eroding local governments' governing capacity. Tensions between the different forms of capacity needed in government and the possibility for misalignment between them is also present at state level in Australia (Gleeson et al., 2011).

Empirical work has identified that the overall size of policy capacity is influenced by both the position of a jurisdiction in a multi-level governance system and its size. In turn, this can influence the nature of the policy work undertaken. For example, Veselý (2014) concludes that the smaller size of regional governments meant that people have less scope to specialise and are therefore more likely to multi-task. Smaller jurisdictions also experience a range of barriers to good quality policy work. Carson and Wellstead (2015)

observe that policy practitioners in the remote and sparsely populated Northern Territory, Australia were hard to identify, had little policy training and are relatively inexperienced. They did not provide directly comparative data but comment that this is a very different picture to the state governments serving the more populous areas of Australia. No research has directly compared local government to other levels of governance.

Whilst prior research has not explicitly considered the way that policy capacity is dispersed, it has demonstrated that an individual's location in their organisational structure impacts on what they do. According to Putland (2013) technical policy specialists play a role in initiating new policy and are a good source of advice on specialist issues. On the other hand, policy officers bring expertise in policy processes, political acceptability and implementation issues and are engaged in refining policy initiated elsewhere. Policy analytical tasks are more likely to be carried out by those in formal policy work teams (Wellstead and Stedman, 2010). Shapiro (2017) highlights that whilst analysts who work more independently in their agencies are in a better position to challenge, they are invited to be involved at a later stage in the process and have less impact on the culture of their agency in the long term. The different echelons (or groupings) of policy practitioner (coordinator-planner, researcher-analyst, director-manager) identified by Howlett and Walker (2012) are likely to interpret and experience organisational life in different ways. It is noteworthy that organisational structure is by no means static. Regular re-structuring and re-organisation requires policy practitioners to constantly negotiate new job titles, department names, managerial arrangements and workload changes (van Mossel, 2016).

There are some similarities between the participants concern for policy capacity and that in scholarly literature. Participants viewed it as vital to the achievement of good quality policy practice, in the same way that scholars have argued that it is important to policy success. Policy capacity is smaller and more fragile at lower levels of

the multi-level governance system and in smaller jurisdictions with less resources.

Policy practitioners do not use the term policy capacity in accordance with academic definitions. They use it to focus on the organisational and systemic levels and are concerned about the capacity for all policy sub-practices to be enacted well on their own and in combination at a point in time and over time. An explanation of policy capacity consistent with the fieldwork data (and the purpose of policy practice) is: *the local authority's ability to marshal the necessary internal and external resources to support local policy processes***.**

At a local government level, policy capacity is dispersed both within a local authority and externally. In a context where there is constantly changing demands and senior officials are concerned with service delivery and policy areas requiring immediate attention, it is difficult to create the time and space to undertake the complex task of identifying, and then coordinating, the internal and external resources available to support local policy processes.

7.2 Distal conditions

This section focuses on the distal conditions that are perceived to impact on the way that policy practice is, or should be, enacted. Four dimensions, shown in Figure 26, will be considered in turn - the changing multi-level governance system, discourses about policy and good governance, New Public Management discourse and technological changes.
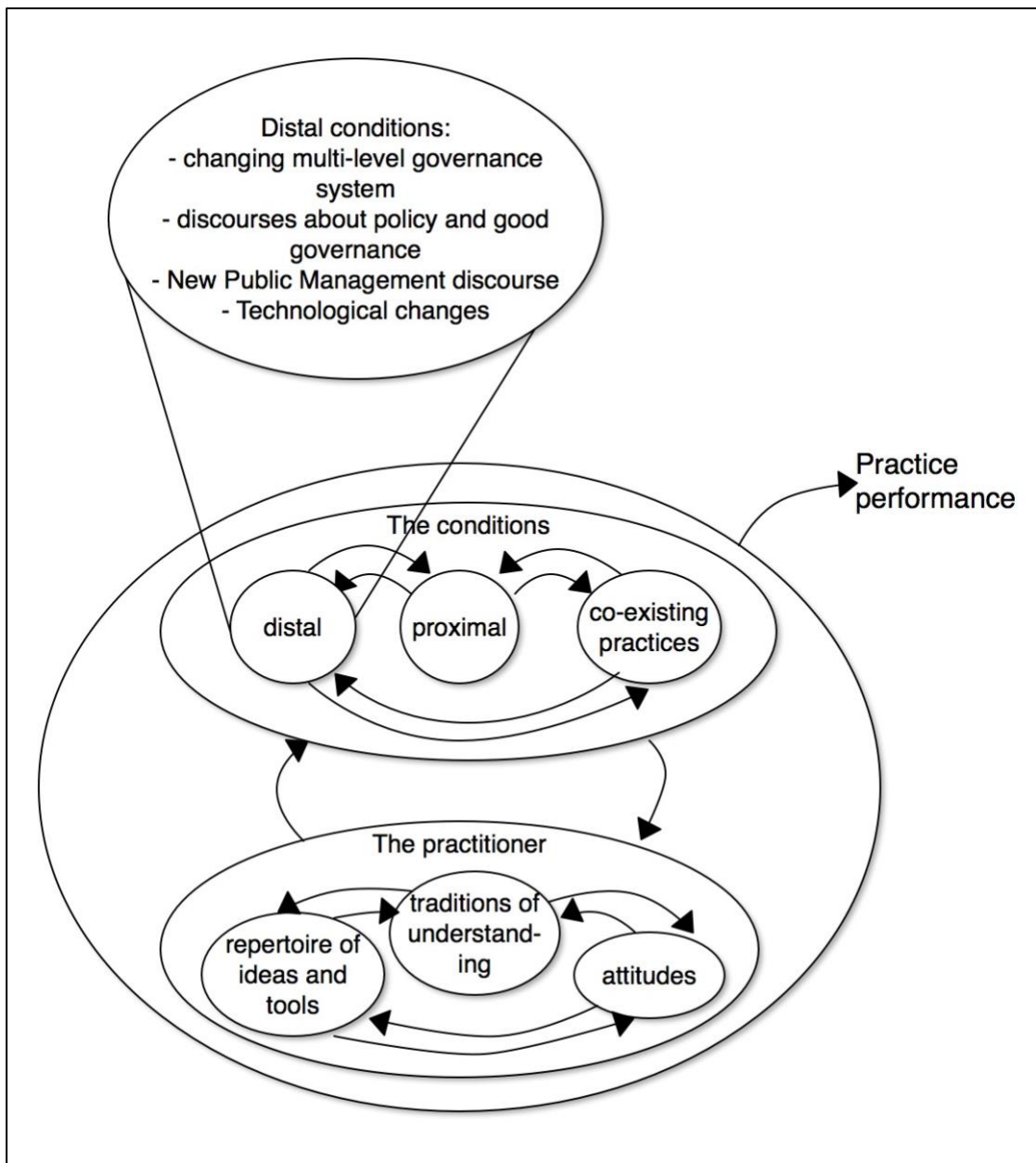

Figure 26: Key dimensions of the distal conditions

In this section, insights from the fieldwork data and archival data are integrated rather than presented separately. This reflects the way in which discussions at the workshop sensitised me to different aspects of the archival data and subsequently prior research informed what was discussed in the workshops.

7.2.1 The changing multi-level governance system

As previously elaborated (sections 6.2 and 7.1.4), the nature of policy work and policy capacity varies according to the position in the multi-level governance system.

The fieldwork data was generated at a local government level not long after English regional government offices and development agencies were removed, and at a time when Brexit, devolution and the establishment of combined authorities were being focused on. This served to highlight that local government's position in a multi-level governance system is not fixed and that the process of preparing for, and adapting to, these changes requires policy capacity (P11-I1).

Participants highlighted that these types of changes result in:

♦ changes to funding availability (P04-I1, P06-I1)
♦ changes in arrangements for inter-organisational working (P08-I1)
♦ potential for locally led policy development (P07-I1) and freedom to determine local outcomes (P05-I1)
♦ and ironically, a greater need to be able to handle the interference and constraints that comes with localism (P06-I1)!

One participant envisaged a much greater need for "negotiation capacity which has a bit more of a dynamic element to it" (P06-W2.4) suggesting that public affairs sub-practice will become more dominant as a result of current changes.

7.2.2   Discourses about policy and good governance

According to Colebatch (2006b), the most dominant discourse of policy is that it is the result of authoritative choice entailing rational decision making and the use of scientific evidence. Talking about policy in terms of the experienced reality of every day structured interaction can undermine authority structures. So, practitioners develop competency in how to act and do policy and how to talk about, or present, policy. Empirical research is consistent with this claim. Maybin (2013, 2015) identifies that civil servants perform two different forms of practice - understanding and thinking which happens informally predominantly in interaction with others, and legitimating and justifying which entails describing what they do in a way that is consistent with dominant discourses. Similarly, policy practitioners report being involved in many tasks associated with evidence-based policy making but are aware that the reality of their work in a political environment is very different to that ideal (van Mossel, 2016).

There is no sign that the "rationality project" (Stone, 2012, p. 9) associated with objectivity and analysis is declining. Over time, this has underpinned different developments such as the policy analysis and evidence-based policy movements (Shaw, 2010) and is also evident in an emerging field of policy analytics drawing on *big data* and data science (see for example, Daniell, Morton and Ríos Insua, 2016; Longo and Dobell, 2018). This focus is more common in some policy areas than others (P09-W2.3) but nevertheless increases the focus on research practice and suggests the need for greater rigour. At the same time however, the complexity of policy issues, the fragmented institutional landscape and participatory ideals are leading to a greater impetus for collaborative and participatory governance suggesting that collaboration and public participation practices should be prominent in local level policy practice.

The fieldwork data provides evidence that policy practitioners not only recognise these normative ideals, they understand that there are tensions between them and that paying attention to one of them may "distract from, or

harm, the possibility of realising the others" (K1). It was also noted that the public attitude to the value of professional expertise is changing (P03-I2) making it more difficult to use the outcomes of research practice effectively in a participative policy process.

7.2.3   New Public Management discourse

New Public Management (NPM), a reform program that started in the 1980s and still informs many public administration practices, originated in the conviction politics of leaders like Margaret Thatcher which "reduced the need for civil servants to debate policy options and instead, required them to focus on delivering" (Metcalfe, 1993, p. 353). NPM focusses attention on improving the government's ability to deliver services using business management practices and according to Bernier and Howlett (2012), has resulted in a neglect of policy capacity. NPM has also led to a greater tendency to contract with external consultants and other sources of policy advice (externalisation) leading to the need for government-employed policy staff to manage contractual relationships (Howlett and Migone, 2014).

It has been identified that NPM also impacts on the way in which policy practitioners report the work that they are involved in. Boxelaar, Paine and Beilin (2006) identified three competing narratives in a study of a natural resource management project in Australia . The project team aspired for a way of working informed by constructivist, soft systems principles - the aim was an inclusive approach involving stakeholders in a learning system. However, as project team members engaged with public administration practices which were underpinned by New Public Management ideals, two other narratives became evident. The requirement to work with project management tools such as developing a project proposal resulted in a more positivist project management narrative. Those involved were aware that "they were required to create a different account of the project in order to validate it within the organisation" (p. 118). In addition, the requirements to engage with evaluation processes aimed at enhancing accountability required the team members to engage with the language of an evaluation framework

which had a linear approach to change and focused on what a restricted group of actors do. Unfortunately, the team's original aspirations were "subverted" (p. 121) by the project management and evaluation narratives associated with the dominant public administration practices.

The fieldwork data highlights that business management discourse has influenced the sayings of policy practice through the adoption of the term *strategy,* the language of strategy making and terms such as the "commercial business case" (P06-I1). The terms policy and strategy were used interchangeably by participants and when questioned they could not all readily articulate a distinction between the two. The distinctions that were offered were not necessarily compatible with each other.

For example:

> *"We develop policy to try and generate action on the ground that'll make some sort of difference or contribute towards the objectives in the […] strategy" (P07-I1)*

> *"Policy documents [are] a bit more high level […] and a strategy might go into a little bit more detail" (P10-I1)*

> *"Policy […] carries much more of a sense of principles and values perhaps" (P02-I1)*

7.2.4 Technological changes

Technological changes have resulted in shifts in the availability of data and much easier access to policy (P02-I1, P09-I1). This offers opportunities for open data, transparency, data analytics and citizen science (P03-I2, P11-I1) which are all perceived to democratise the policy process. Technology also offers new ways of delivering information to, and interacting with, members of the public. These changes are opening up the policy process to previously hard-to-access members of the community, such as younger people (P10-I1), and offer new ways of targeting and mobilising very specific communities (P06-W1.3).

Using technology is attractive in a world of reducing resources (P07-I1), but it can mean that people make judgements on the basis of very little information (P09-I1) and it reduces the quality of deliberation between members of the public (P02-I1, P09-I1). There is also a limitation to the amount that a local authority can post through its social media channels. In this context, policy areas can compete with each other and with the needs of service delivery to gain coverage (P12-I2).

The archival data highlights that technological developments has also altered the way that the formal media relates to government - a trend referred to as mediatisation. The changes have "had a major influence on the structural processes of political decision-making and political communications" (McCallum and Waller, 2017, p. 174). In this context, managing the media can be seen as a form of policy work (Anderson, 2006). As explained earlier (section 6.2.4), this particular aspect of public affairs practice was not particularly prominent in the fieldwork data, but the trend was not disputed by participants (W2.9).

7.3   Individual practitioner

"See I think a lot of the factors that influence are actually the person who's leading on it and whether they are kind of go with this is the policy kind as sort of a done deal or whether there is a lot of involvement around how that structure is shaped" (P12-I1)

This final section in this chapter focuses on the influence of the individual practitioner. As outlined in chapter 3, the unique history of a practitioner will influence the choices they make about how to enact a practice.

Insights from the fieldwork data

Both the participant profile and fieldwork data indicate that people enacting local level policy practice come from a variety of backgrounds with different formal education and career histories (P07-I2). In the absence of a formal

professional framework, policy-specific training and local shared understandings, an individual's historical experiences play a large part in influencing the way in which an individual associates themselves with, and enacts, policy practice. The participants in this study connected enough with terms like *policy work practice* to respond positively to the invitation to participate, but they do not necessarily identify first and foremost with the *label* of policy practitioner or a job title such as policy officer (P03-I1, P12-I1, P12-I2). They may identify more with a sub-practice, a policy area or a co-existing practice (P08-I1, P12-W1.1). Participants commented that many colleagues would also not associate themselves with policy (P02-I1, P06-I2, P10-I1, P12-W2.8) and realised that this could be a barrier to engaging with policy implementation (P06-I1) as well as policy practice development initiatives (P10-I2). In addition, participants recognised that they and their network of colleagues have very different conceptualisations of policy, the policy process, policy work, the most trustworthy knowledge and the nature of change (P02-I1, P07-I1, P07-W3.1, P11-W1.1, P12-W1.1) and that policy practitioners also have very different skills (P03-W.2.9, P10-I2).

This diversity also existed amongst the participants themselves (P02-W1.2, P09-I2). For example, this following quote illustrates that participants brought different conceptualisations of policy to their conversations:

> *"it seems like we are trying to define policy as if it is a static product […]. I don't see it like that I see it as something which is iterative and it's quite organic and it involves numerous stakeholders and evidence that is constantly updated […] as we further develop our collective understanding about a particular issue" (P11-W1.1)*

From my unique position as a researcher, I observed that the participants draw on different normative ideas when they describe what better would look like and interpret changes in the distal environment very differently. It is noteworthy that this diversity could result in very different approaches to similar tasks (P01-I1, P08-I2, P11-W1.2, P12-I1) and could even result in

conflicting actions if individuals work independently to make improvements in their practice context. As the next chapter demonstrates, having the opportunity to appreciate this diversity, but also understand commonalities, was reported to be one of the most positive aspects of the practice development initiative.

Insights from the archival data

As Nekola and Kohoutek (2017) summarise, the backgrounds of policy workers varies according to where they are in the multi-level governance system with those in lower levels being less likely to have had formal policy analysis training. Practitioners vary with respect to how they seek and use research. According to Bogenschneider, Little and Johnson (2013), US legislative staff and agency officials differ in the degree to which they value research in policy (enthusiastic and skeptical) and their actual use of research (high, mid- or low users). Individual-level differences in the use of research can partly be explained by level of education with those having done post-graduate and PhD qualifications tending to be greater users than those with undergraduate qualifications (Ouimet et al., 2009; Newman, Cherney and Head, 2016). However, one study has demonstrated that post-recruitment socialisation in the workplace is more likely to explain differences in technocratic mentality, than type of training (Ribbhagen, 2011).

Of particular relevance to local government is that there is variation in the way in which local policy workers reason about, and enact, centrally issued guidelines. Wimmelmann, Vallgårda and Jensen (2018) identified that some practitioners approach health promotion guidelines with the intent to loyally implement them but others follow different strategies. For example, practitioners with training in what it is to do evidence-based work take a critical stance and will seek to verify that the recommendations meet their own set of standards and as a result may end up acting against the guidelines. The study demonstrates that local policy workers are not neutral implementers of guidance but are active agents in interpreting and influencing

decisions taken at a local level with previous professional experiences informing the stance taken.

The fieldwork data has highlighted that those who come into roles where they may need to enact policy practice come from diverse backgrounds. Whilst further empirical research into this area would be helpful, the data suggests that these differences will influence the nature and quality of policy practice as well as perspectives of desirable changes. There is a tension here. On the one hand, the diversity of backgrounds suggests potential for innovation but, in a context where policy capacity is dispersed (see section 7.1.4), there is a risk that practitioners do not learn with, and from, each other to develop a shared idea of what it is to be competent in policy practice or its sub-practices.

7.4   Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated on different proximal, distal and individual dimensions that influence the enactment of policy practice. The different dimensions can impact on which sub-practices and diffuse practices are emphasised as well as the way in which they are enacted.

Overall, the nature of policy capacity - the **local authority's ability to marshal the necessary internal and external resources to support local policy processes** - was emphasised more than any other factor. From the participants' perspectives policy capacity strongly determines the quality by which policy practice is enacted. It was also regarded as an influence that could be pro-actively shaped in order to improve the quality of policy practice. In comparison, other proximal influences (nature of the policy area, political leadership and inter-organisational arrangements) and distal influences (changing multi-level governance system, discourses about policy and good governance, New Public Management discourse and technology) were portrayed as dynamic features of the operating context creating affordances,

constraints and tensions that need to be recognised and navigated, rather than changed.

The previous two chapters have established an understanding of policy practice at a local government level and explored what influences its enactment. The next chapter builds on this to consider how to develop policy practice.

Chapter 8: Developing policy practice

> *"I think this process has enabled us to recognise that we all have agency, both individually and collectively, to effect change but that's inevitably constrained by the environment in which we operate. And I'd like to think that I never lose sight or hope in people's ability to work together effectively […] in spite of some of those challenges that we face" (P11-I2)*

In addition to providing additional insights from the two sources of data, this final Part Three chapter considers the implications of the findings presented in the previous chapters for policy practice development. It focuses on developing policy practice as a whole, given that previous sections (6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3) have already presented participants' perspectives on the conditions that afford the high quality enactment of three of its sub-practices (research, collaboration, public participation).

8.1   Policy practice development as history

The previous chapter provided insights into the proximal and distal conditions that influence how policy practice is enacted. It emphasised that these conditions are not static - they have a dynamic element to them and change over time. There are relatively short-term changes associated with the changing nature of a policy area, political leadership and inter-organisational arrangements, as well as broader longer-term influences of evolving distal conditions. In addition, policy capacity is getting smaller, more diffuse and less likely to be coordinated. Taken together, these dynamic conditions are changing the way that policy practice is enacted - in other words, it is developing whether or not an intervention is made. Unfortunately, from the perspective of the participants in this study, the changes to policy capacity are not positive in that they are eroding the quality of support for local policy processes with a detrimental impact on policy outcomes.

8.2   Policy practice development as intervention

Insights from the archival data

As highlighted earlier, one perspective of practice development is to consider how individual practitioners gain new knowledge through experience, training or formal education. There are two different aspects of policy knowledge - that relating to the content of a particular policy area and that needed to "mak[e] policy happen" (Maybin, 2015, p. 288).

The extent to which an individual practitioner has, or develops, expertise in the substance of the policy will depend on whether they are more like the technical policy specialist defined by Putland (2013) or the process generalist identified by Page and Jenkins (2005). Freeman (2007) distinguishes three forms of learning amongst specialist practitioners involved in public health policy making. These are rational learning, which involves relating to academic research; institutional learning, which is concerned with the relevance and acceptability of new information to the jurisdiction they are responsible for; and situated learning, which takes place through site visits and conversations with contacts. The study highlights that whilst it is possible to conceptually distinguish these three forms of learning, the key insight is the way in which practitioners bring together what they know. Practitioners are involved in "epistemological bricolage" (Freeman, 2007, p. 476) in that they engage in, and negotiate between, ways of knowing in the course of doing what they do.

The knowledge of the process of making policy happen (policy know-how) is developed on the job through experience and socialisation (Maybin, 2013, 2015). A UK-based study draws attention to the importance of this knowledge in the career of civil servants by stating "the specialist knowledge that civil servants are incentivised to develop is […] of the complex inner workings of Whitehall and of how to solve problems within it" (Stevens, 2011, p. 245). Facilitated discussions with Australian practitioners also highlighted that policy work is something that "you learn as you go" (Adams, Colebatch and Walker,

2015, p. 104) mostly in an unstructured way. Those practitioners who had attended graduate classes found them useful to reflect on their experiences, but overall formal education only plays a small part in learning. The explanation indicated by the data, and favoured by the authors, is that "the policy process is inherently fluid and ambiguous, and cannot be understood in advance from a text" (Adams, Colebatch and Walker, 2015, p. 107). The authors propose that facilitated workshops within workplaces could help with learning.

Insights from the fieldwork data

Although it was not the primary aim, conducting a practice development initiative as the fieldwork for this study served to test out whether facilitated workshops contribute to changing understandings. At the end of the fieldwork period, participants reported that their understanding of policy and what it entails had become broader and deeper. They had expanded their appreciation of what is entailed in policy work (P03-I2, P10-I2, P12-I2); the number and range of people enacting policy practice or its sub-practices both in and outside of the local authority (P02-I2, P04-I2, P06-I2, P07-I2, P10-I2, P11-I2); the different policy areas being focused on (P07-I2); and the importance of bringing together diverse knowledge skill sets to achieve good quality local policy processes (P01-I2, P04-I2, P11-I2). Participants attributed their changing understandings to the workshops or associated emails, rather than other experiences during the year. This was the case regardless of how many workshops an individual participant attended. Participants were disappointed that often last-minute work demands meant that their attendance was lower than intended (P01-I2, P02-I2, P04-I2, P07-I2, P10-I2, P11-I2).

There were four dimensions of the workshop experiences that were considered important to these changing understandings. Firstly, participants had the opportunity to step back and reflect on what it is they do and how they do it (P01-I2, P04-I2). It is unusual to create space for such reflection and to be able to speak openly about challenges at work (P12-I2). Secondly, participants had the opportunity to build relationships with, and learn from,

peers from around the organisation. The conversations contributed new insights into interpretations of policy, the policy process and policy work (P01-I2, P03-I2, P06-I2, P09-I2, P12-I2,) and enabled people to share frustrations and problems (P10-I2). Better relationships were seen as a positive outcome in their own right (P01-I2, P03-I2, P04-I2, P11-I2) and have resulted in changes in the way people connected with each other during the course of their work (P09-I2, P11-I2). One participant referred to the moment when they realised the significance of these new relationships:

> *"I thought actually we are all policy people and we are a community and we should be able to share ideas and we have a lot of the same experiences even though we have different job titles" (P10-I2).*

Thirdly, participants had the opportunity to engage with a selection of academic work linked to policy, the policy process and policy work. At the outset, there was enthusiasm for reading materials (R-J.08.02.2017). However, participants did find it difficult to create space to focus on reading (P04-I2, P10-I2) and it can be difficult engaging with, and applying, theoretical material if you are not used to it (P06-I2). This meant that most engagement was during the workshops where academic work was introduced as an "understandascope - a lens to make sense of the world" (S-W1.3) predominantly to provide structure for participant interaction. Participants did appreciate the way this worked to support their conversations and developing understandings (P06-I2, P10-I2, P12-I2). Finally, participants valued the structured and ongoing nature of the work. This contrasted to previous experiences of away days which did not seem to have any follow up or lasting impact (P04-I2). In the context where individuals could not attend every session, the continuity and structure I provided as the facilitator was particularly important (P09-I2, P11-I2). The distinctions that I offered as a result of general sense making and concurrent data analysis were valued:

"all of a sudden I started to recognise my profession almost mirrored back at me in a way that I'd never done before" (P11-I2).

Whilst it is helpful to understand the processes by which an individual practitioner develops their policy knowledge and to know that facilitated workshops can help with this, this is not the same as practice development. At the time of the second interviews, participants were still making sense of the experiences and conversations in the workshops (P07-I2, P10-I2) and also stressed that new understandings result in gradual, organic changes to practice rather than instant ones (P06-I2, P12-I2). However, there were a few reported changes, such as renewed efforts to build relationships with others (P04-I2), greater confidence in interactions with elected members (P04-I2, P10-I2) and stronger awareness of the importance of framing in documents (P10-I2). On a less positive note, the new understandings had also resulted in a degree of frustration because *"you […] see things that you wish were happening but are not happening. And that you don't yourself have the ability to effect"* (P03-I2).

Focusing now beyond the level of the individual practitioner, it is important to consider the implications of the case made by participants that the quality of policy practice deteriorates when policy capacity is weaker and more disorganised. This means that policy practice is likely to develop in desirable ways if a local authority proactively attends to ensuring local policy capacity can meet both current demands and possible future requirements. Due to the dispersed nature of policy capacity, this process needs to be seen as an initiative that is organisation-wide and have the active engagement of senior officials (P11-I2). Participants in this study had a strong desire to create the conditions where senior officials could have productive conversations about policy capacity (P11-W2.2) and consider how to effectively mobilise such a dispersed resource (P06-I2). However, the single action we took (writing a paper for and meeting with, two senior officials who have policy-related responsibilities) did not result in sustained attention by those senior officials or

access to conversations with their colleagues (P06-I2, P12-I2). As section 7.1.4 elaborated, the demands associated with service delivery and attending to policy areas requiring urgent attention is a barrier to senior officials engaging with work that strengthens policy capacity and develops policy practice. It is difficult to envisage all the possibilities that could have been opened up if senior officials had been able to attend to policy capacity during the period of the fieldwork. Nevertheless, the experiences and perspectives of those involved in this action research work do highlight some important ways forward for any future practice development efforts.

Participants aspired to work in an environment where policy practice is valued as a professional activity. Unlike other areas of local government work, there is no specific framework which helps individuals to gain recognition as a competent policy practitioner and to undertake continuous professional development. As a result, there is a tendency to assume that anyone can do policy work even though there can be a variation in standards (P07-I2). A framework would need to allow for both a general understanding of policy, the policy process and policy work and for greater specialism in individual sub-practices (P07-I2). It could support both individual professional development and overall workforce planning (K3). However, a structured approach of this kind did not appeal to all participants (R-J.22.10.2017).

Participants considered that any organisational efforts to develop policy capacity should include practitioner events based on the nature and style of the workshops (P04-I2, P10-I2). Participants highlighted that practitioner networks or forums are common in other areas of professional practice (P01-I2, P10-I2), but also recognised that the context made it difficult (P04-I2). To be effective in the long term and with a greater variety of colleagues, it needed to be championed by senior officials (P10-I2) and it was vital that managers not only actively encourage attendance but ensure the time is protected from other work demands (P02-I2, P03-I2). A dedicated, regular time slot of this kind could build stronger relationships (P02-I2, P03-I2, P12-I2) and allow for discussions about connectivity between policy areas (P02-I2), particular sub-

practices (P03-I2) and upcoming collective work demands. If the organisation is supportive of practitioner-led innovation (P06-I2), work could also be initiated to develop shared principles, standards or procedures (P01-I2, P07-I2) or to establish opportunities for greater engagement with academic writing on policy, the policy process and policy work (for example, based on a journal club or book club (P10-I2)). It was emphasised that the process as a whole, and the individual meetings, are designed, facilitated and appropriately resourced (P02-I2, P12-I2). This process would create conditions for *"a community of practice […] where we have relationships with each other and as a group [and] we feel that we have people who will be there as a sounding board"* (P11-I2).

Given that the participants' perspectives of what should happen in the future was based on the experience of the practice development initiative, it is important to consider the ways in which the process was influenced by its dual role as fieldwork for a PhD. Some participants said that a motivation for participating was to help out a colleague (F-W1.1) suggesting that the development work may not have gained momentum without this dual function. In spite of the original negotiations and agreement with my line manager, my own workload was such that I spent personal time planning for, and following up on, the workshops (R-J.21.02.2017). If I had initiated the work only as an internal change agent, it is highly likely I would not have carried out such extensive concurrent data analysis and preparation or continued for as many sessions (R-J.19.05.2017). There were also subtle ways in which the nature of the participants' engagement was affected. Occasionally, a participant asked whether I was getting what I needed (P03-W2.9, P03-I2) suggesting that they were focused more on the needs of the research than practice development. Participants also expressed hope that the formal research findings would help to engage senior officials (P06-I2, P11-I2) which indicates that they saw their role as more passive research participants than active inquirers and change agents. One participant touched on this in their reflections:

"We could have done some things ourselves […] because I think attending things can be a bit of a passive activity, you go along and you do something and you're doing all the work at the end of it really because it's your PhD. But I think we're all going there to seek, because we think it will benefit you, but it will benefit the whole of the organisation and ourselves as well" (P07-I2).

This suggests that there would have been different experiences and outcomes if the practice development initiative had not been associated with a formal research project. But the experiences do reinforce the importance of senior support and appropriate resourcing of any practice development efforts.

8.3   Conclusion

This final chapter in Part Three has considered the way in which policy practice develops. Natural changes will occur as the proximal and distal conditions evolve and individual practitioners learn their way to enact their agency in their practice context. However, these changes may not always be perceived as beneficial.

This study actively intervened to develop policy practice in order to draw insights from the participants' experiences of that process. It has demonstrated that new understandings can develop by facilitating a process through which policy practitioners learn with, and from, each other. However, in order to ensure high quality policy practice, it is also important for senior officials to pay proactive attention to ensuring local policy capacity is able to meet current and future requirements recognising the forms of leadership that are appropriate for coordinating dispersed capacity and diverse individual backgrounds.

Conclusion to Part Three: Findings

> *researcher: so, the conclusion is - that what you thought was a nice neat thing is now messier? (laughing)*
>
> *participant: probably yeah (laughing) but that means it's more interesting and it just shows there is a lot going on and, umm, we're trying to make sense of it, in some way and to try and make it better in some fashion, I mean that will be a good thing (P07-I2)*

Policy practice is an elusive, messy phenomenon which is subject to multiple, potentially competing, perspectives underpinned by different conceptualisations of policy, practice and change and different normative ideals. However, it has been possible to provide an account that accommodates diverse perspectives and considers the different elements that interact to produce a practice performance.

Policy practice is one of a number of practices that co-exist at a local government level. It is enacted to support local policy processes as a contribution to the governing role of local government which in turn makes a contribution to the quality of life of local people. It is constituted of a number of sub-practices (research, collaboration, public participation, public affairs and development) and two diffuse practices (documenting and interacting). It is the appropriate co-enactment of, and interactions between, these sub-practices that give rise to effective support for local policy processes.

Dynamic proximal and distal conditions influences which sub-practices dominate, and how they are enacted, at both a point in time and over time. Proximal conditions include the nature of the policy area, political leadership and arrangements for inter-organisational working. However, policy capacity – the local authority's ability to marshal the necessary internal and external resources to support local policy processes – is particularly influential to the quality of policy practice and the success of any development interventions.

Policy capacity tends to be dispersed so efforts do need to be made to ensure it is coordinated and coherent. However, policy capacity, and the ability to attend to it, is being eroded as local government focuses on sustaining service provision in the context of austerity.

At a distal level, local government's position in a multi-level governance system and its degree of autonomy from national government impact on the nature of policy practice at a local level. Trends in the use of technology and the mediatisation of policy, along with discourses linked to evidence based policy, collaborative and participatory governance and New Public Management, influence what is done, how it is talked about and what practitioners perceive should be done.

Those who enact policy practice at a local government level come from a variety of backgrounds and traditions of understanding. They not only vary in the degree to which they enact policy practice, but many do so without consciously acknowledging their contribution to supporting local policy processes.

In order to develop policy practice, local government needs to create the time and space to pay attention to coordinating and strengthening policy capacity. One way of doing this is to create the conditions where people who enact policy practice come together, build relationships and explore the nature of their practice and its context.

Part Four: Endings and new beginnings
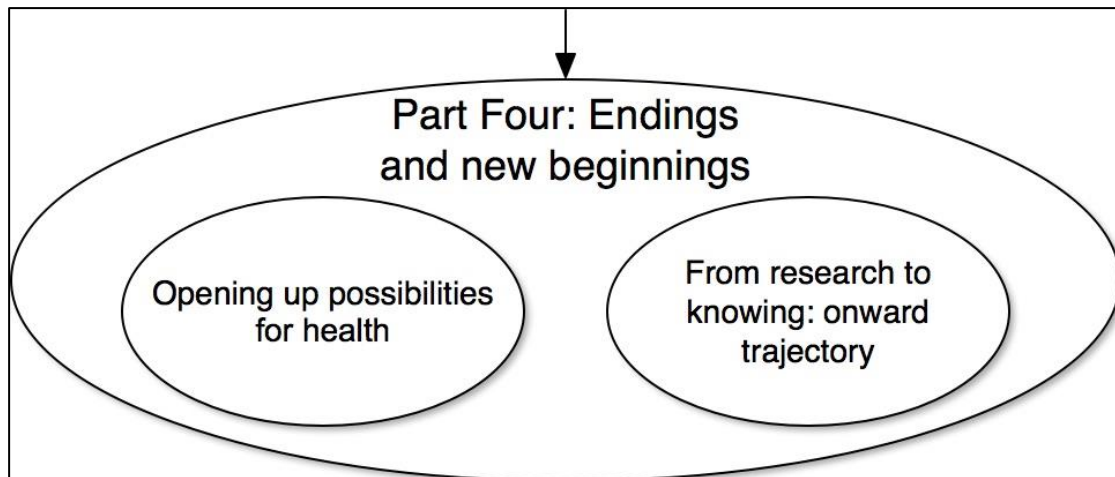
Part Four considers the implications of the findings and the research experience to the concerns that motivated it.

Chapter 9 draws out the insights for health in terms of both the contribution to health political science and the practical implications for achieving health in all policies in England. The final chapter returns to the three audiences introduced in chapter 1 - me, us and them - and reflects on the complexities of contributing to different areas of knowing.

Chapter 9: Opening up possibilities for health

As outlined in chapter 2, there is a need for knowledge about what can be done to achieve local level health in all policies in England. There is little research evidence behind the dominant health in all policies approach and very little critique of it in the body of scholarly research. Yet, it fails to take into account the nature of existing governing practices, why they are what they are and the actions others are taking, or would like to take, to improve them. Therefore, there is a strong risk that implementing this approach is experienced as health imperialism by those in non-health sectors.

The findings in Part Three were reported in a way that is consistent with participants' understandings in order to make them practically useful to practitioners who are interested in understanding and improving government practices. This chapter returns to the significance *for health*. It starts by acknowledging the limitations of the research design before considering the contribution to, and lessons for, health political science. It then focuses on the practical significance of the findings for achieving health in all policies in England.

9.1   Limitations

There are three limitations of the research methods that need to be acknowledged.

Firstly, owing to a lack of familiarity with policy studies and public administration, there was no clear search strategy in the very early stages of seeking the literature used as archival data. Once I identified the field of policy work studies, snowballing was used as a way of pursuing other references. This can be considered as a form of mining - encountering a seam of coal and then pursuing its course until it peters out. Whilst there are many strengths to the concepts used in, and insights provided by the archival data, different insights could have been gained if other seams, such as local government studies, had been pursued.

Secondly, the fieldwork data was generated through fieldwork in a single case study site in England. Given that practices are situated and temporally located, there will inevitably be differences within different authorities in England, depending on their specific roles and responsibilities and the governance structures in place. As local government in other parts of the UK and in other countries operates as part of different multi-level governance systems with different levels of autonomy, there is likely to be further differences in those contexts. In single case study research, the concern is with seeking to generalise to theoretical propositions, not to populations (Blichfeldt and Andersen, 2006). Furthermore, action researchers should present their findings in a way that academics and practitioners can consider whether they are useful to their interest and context (Herr and Anderson, 2015). With these points in mind, the findings in this study have been presented as models and heuristics to initiate sense-making and dialogue about their relevance in different contexts.

Thirdly, the fieldwork data generated during the workshops was naturalistic and less researcher-shaped than if the data had been generated in focus group style discussions. Furthermore, the time available for concurrent analysis was not always sufficient to identify gaps and other avenues to explore during the fieldwork process. As a result, the retrospective analysis revealed that some sub-practices and some influences were focused on in more detail than others. The ideal situation would have been to continue engaging with practitioners both to generate data on aspects that had received less attention and to continually member-check the findings. However, the end date for the fieldwork was established to fit with a timeline for a part-time PhD study and my decision to leave the organisation in March 2018 meant that formal access to participants was no longer possible. The areas which received less attention, particularly the nature of public affairs practice and development practice, are avenues for future research.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study makes a contribution to health political science and provides practical insights for those seeking to achieve local level health in all policies in England. These will be focused on in turn.

9.2   Contribution to health political science

Policy practice shapes policy and therefore can be thought of as a distal determinant of health. However, to date, health political scientists have paid little attention to policy practice and the influences on its enactment and development. This study contributed to this gap by developing an explanation of local level policy practice and associated influences which is consistent with the everyday understandings of policy practitioners and incorporates insights from previous policy work research.

In doing so, the study provides methodological lessons for the developing field of health political science. Discussions of the challenges in this field, such as that by Fafard and Cassola (2020), assume an inter-disciplinary team made up of experienced public health researchers and political scientists and do not reflect on issues arising when practitioners are also involved in these research partnerships. However, this study was conducted alone and required me to identify and navigate challenges as both researcher and practitioner through reflection and reflexivity, rather than inter-disciplinary dialogue.

Like public health and public administration, health political science acknowledges the value of researcher-practitioner partnerships but there is little discussion with respect to what this may mean for research design choices. In contrast, there is well-developed literature about the use of action research to understand and develop professional practice in the fields of education and nursing, linked to "an aspiration to give [practitioners'] control over what is to count as knowledge about practice" (Elliott, 1994, p. 133). Action research is concerned with contributing to improvement as well as meeting a research aim and therefore suited my dual positions as both researcher and practitioner. In contextualising action research to the setting, I worked to limit expectations on time-poor policy practitioners to engage in

research-focused tasks. This led to the study being conceptualised as three concurrent and interrelated streams of action. The concurrent nature of these streams is reflective of the way policy practitioners work in that it is often inappropriate to delay taking action in order to undertake initial desk research. When practitioners see the need for change, even the delay created by research ethics approval processes can be frustrating. This is a key consideration for others who want to design action research with policy practitioners.

There is a strong interest in studying what happens in practice in public health, public administration and policy studies, though there has not yet been specific discussion about this in health political science literature. In spite of the interest in practice, there is a great deal of variation in the way in which studies engage with, and utilise, practice theory. This is also the case in the studies of policy work used as archival data in this research. This study developed a framework of ideas about professional practice and its development that privileged the everyday understandings of practitioners, rather than pre-existing practice theory. This stance was taken in order to ensure that the way in which the findings are presented makes them accessible to, and usable by, practitioners. The framework of ideas helped to understand the fluid and multi-faceted nature of policy practice and has potential use in future studies of professional practice and its development.

Health political scientists have already used literature review to identify relevant insights from policy studies and public administration research. This may be reported as stand-alone research (for example, Carey, Crammond and Keast, 2014; Koon, Hawkins and Mayhew, 2016) or as a discreet stage which seeks to provide conceptual insights, identify gaps and develop and refine research questions (for example, Synnevåg, Amdam and Fosse, 2018a). In contrast, this study drew on systematic literature review methods as part of a combined design in that the search and review process was conducted concurrently to the fieldwork process and the identified publications were used as archival data to provide insights into the research questions. In

health research, keyword searching is the most widely adopted search method but this relies on the strong indexing practices used in health journals and databases. As previously observed (Daigneault, Jacob and Ouimet, 2014; Koon, Hawkins and Mayhew, 2016), political science literature is not as conducive to this sort of searching. This study has demonstrated that a snowballing search strategy is an effective alternative and is especially helpful where there is little prior knowledge of the field. To date, empirical studies of policy work have used a cross-sectional design and have focused predominantly on federal, national, state/provincial and regional levels. The body of policy work literature was valuable in this study to corroborate, or contrast with, insights from the fieldwork data. However, it could be of interest in its own right when considering policy work in, or for, health.

The fieldwork was valued by participants in that they reported that their understanding of policy and policy work had become both broader and deeper as a result of their engagement in the process. This contrasts with previous experience of being research participants where there was little benefit from the process. However, all participants experienced workload conflicts which resulted in lower engagement than they envisaged and the group encountered difficulties in taking action to change the practice context. Whilst disappointing for those involved, these problems provide important insights into the levels of attention and time that officials at a local government level have available to them to strengthen policy capacity and develop policy practice. This should be a key design consideration for future researchers seeking to understand and develop practice, whether as insiders or outsiders.

To date, there has not been any attention to the issue of health imperialism in health political science. This study has demonstrated that health imperialism is not just a consideration for public health practitioners but needs to be a key consideration in the design and conduct of health political science studies. The degree to which health is explicitly articulated as the primary interest of research can impact on access to a case study site, participants recruited, the data generated and the claims made with respect to the contribution of the

research. Therefore, health political scientists need to pay active attention to the impact of their health interests on the account generated and conclusions drawn. However, it is equally important to consider the ethical implications of being covert about an interest in health. This study resolved this tension by conducting the fieldwork and writing up the findings in a way that is of interest to those wish to understand and improve government practices generally, and using specific chapters in this thesis to focus on health interests.

9.3 Implications for achieving local level health in all policies

To date, the literature on health in all policies at a local level has not drawn on the field of policy work studies. This could partly be explained by the scarcity of specific studies at a local government level, but nonetheless there has been a remarkable disconnect between those researching policy work and those researching local level health in all policies.

In a video interview, Etienne Wenger (239MikeO, 2010) reminds us that "the purpose of theory is not to tell practitioners what to do". In presenting a map of how to think about and navigate local level policy practice and its development, I intend first and foremost to provide a language for sense-making and dialogue. However, my own familiarity with that map leads me to draw attention to some particular considerations for those concerned with achieving local level health in all policies in England, especially Directors of Public Health and the specialist public health workforce who usually carry lead responsibility for this within local government.

Previous local level health in all policies literature has noted that local government is engaged with different types of policy. However, the distinction has been a binary one between welfare oriented and technically oriented sectors (Hendriks et al., 2013) or social policy and physical policy sectors (Storm et al., 2016). In section 7.1.1, I highlighted how participants in this study recognised these forms of sectoral policy but also distinguished two additional types - cross-cutting and contextual policy areas. Whilst rarely

mentioned, references to public health implied that it is perceived as a sectoral policy area which is subsequently sub-divided into disease, risk or lifestyle concerns. Health was never specifically mentioned as a cross-cutting concern, though the broader concept of *wellbeing* was used. Achieving health in all policies requires public health to also be understood as a cross-cutting policy area, in the same way that policy areas such as equalities and sustainability are. This strong relationship between health, equity and sustainability is consistent with an ecological public health approach (Bentley, 2014) and in a sense, creating a strong alignment between these cross-cutting policy areas blurs, or even eliminates, the perceived boundaries between them. These findings reinforce the suggestions made elsewhere (Holt, 2018; Scheele, Little and Diderichsen, 2018; Synnevåg, Amdam and Fosse, 2018b) that it is unhelpful to introduce health as an overarching aim or use health specific terminology when non-health sectors already use terms that are consistent with a broad wellbeing approach.

Chapter 6 presented an understanding of policy practice and its constituent sub-practices. The relevance to health in all policies is two-fold. Firstly, the specialist public health workforce itself enact these practices in the course of seeking to achieve health in all policies. Although health-specific terminology may be used (Table 6), they undertake research, collaborate, facilitate the collaboration of others, enable social activism, seek to influence others' opinions, galvanise the support of others and seek to bring about positive improvement. As they do so, they interact extensively and engage in documenting. As with other policy practitioners, the degree to which policy practice is enacted and the sub-practices that are more prominent varies between individuals and through time in response to dynamic proximal and distal conditions.

Table 6: Sub-practices of policy practice and public health terminology

Sub-practice of policy practice	Example of terminology used in public health
Research practice - to enhance knowledge and understanding	Health intelligence
Collaboration practice - to bring together expertise and resources	Partnership development
Public participation practice - to create a healthier democracy	Community engagement Mobilise community partnerships
Public affairs practice - to influence others' opinions and galvanise their support	Health advocacy Training and awareness raising
Development practice - to bring about a positive improvement	Community development Service improvement

Secondly, an aspect of the positive improvement needed for health in all policies is change to policy practice. This poses a dilemma because the findings have demonstrated that the current nature of the proximal and distal conditions in England make it a challenging time for making positive improvements to policy practice. In this context, introducing new demands and new ways of working that are perceived as only benefiting those with health interests could be problematic. However, the findings do give insight into a way forward. Whilst the health word was rarely used, the perspectives offered by participants on what good policy practice and well-organised policy capacity looks like has strong synergies with a health in all policies approach.

If these links can be maximised within a strong multi-sectoral approach to coordinating policy capacity and developing policy practice, it will be possible to make progress.

A strong message arising from this study is that policy capacity - the local authority's ability to marshal the necessary internal and external resources to support local policy processes - is a key influence on the quality of policy practice and its sub-practices. The existing approach to health in all policies does acknowledge the issue of capacity. However, its main interest is in public health capacity, including the position and role of coordinators and public health teams. The only mention of more general capacity building is in relation to providing training which does not take into account those aspects of capacity that are important to policy practitioners, such as the overall amount of resource, the distribution of the capacity and its coordination. The key insight from the findings of this study is that the achievement of health in all policies requires strong overall policy capacity across the local government level as a whole. As a senior official within each local authority, Directors of Public Health are well placed to play a key role in raising awareness for, and participating in, cross-organisational discussions about the best ways to organise and coordinate dispersed policy capacity, including the specialist public health workforce. Within specialist public health, the dual role of progressing both sectoral public health policies and cross-cutting health in all policies creates a challenge for the division of responsibilities and intrasectoral coordination. There is a balance to be struck between capacity to progress particular disease or lifestyle concerns and capacity for progressing health in all policies. In addition, there needs to be clarity and coordination in terms of when to focus on a determinant only through the lens of a specific disease or lifestyle and when to progress a whole of health approach.

Given that health in all policies is best positioned as a cross-cutting concern alongside policy areas such as equalities and sustainability, local authorities should consider the pros and cons of organising and deploying available

capacity accordingly. Participants in this study did make distinctions between different sectoral policy areas but they also emphasised interconnections between them and the need for policy coherence. This desire for policy coherence creates an opening to introduce discussions about coherence between sectoral policies and local government's health improvement, equalities and sustainability responsibilities and commitments. However, it is most appropriate that this happens within the day to day policy process of the policy area in question, rather than through establishing mechanisms, such as intersectoral steering groups, extraneous to that process. Working *within* the process as part of a policy community is more likely to result in advocacy or advice that recognises the direction set by political leadership, the existing inter-organisational arrangements, the priorities and perspectives raised by other stakeholders and constraints and day to day demands. Coordination mechanisms, valued by practitioners, such as strong prioritisation and cross-department work plans, would create an opportunity for understanding how the specialist public health policy capacity can best be deployed, alongside other policy practitioners, to foster the considerations of health, equity and sustainability.

Section 6.2 identified sub-practices of policy practice and gave some initial insights into what needs to be in place, in addition to appropriate capacity, for the sub-practices to be enacted well. Opportunities need to be created for discussions about improvements to each of the sub-practices, thus creating an opening to consider how practices developed in public health can be a source of learning for others whilst at the same time recognising the need to learn from other disciplines and adapt across different contexts. For example, the characteristics of the good use of research practice (Figure 11) include shared data assets, better rigour in the use of policy formulation tools and greater dialogue to internalise the knowledge generated through research. Discussions about these types of improvements would therefore create an opening to bring forward discussions about the potential benefits of health intelligence practices such as use of indicators, needs assessments and impact assessments. The specialist public health workforce is more likely to

be positioned to create opportunities and act opportunistically, if they are a visible and enthusiastic part of an active policy practitioner community.

Holt (2018) argues that, in order to make progress, it may be necessary to drop the health word. I reach a similar conclusion. Dropping the health word, offers opportunities to work with other policy practitioners to draw attention to the need for, and the mutual value of, a strong multi-sectoral approach to coordinating policy capacity and developing policy practice. The specialist public health workforce needs to position themselves as part of these endeavours, not apart from them, in order to create the conditions for good governing associated with health in all policies.

Chapter 10: From research to knowing: onward trajectory

As I move on from this research, I remind myself of the three key audiences that led me to do what I did and the complexity of contributing to different areas of knowing.

> *"It is for me […] and so elicits the response "that's exciting" -*
> *taking exciting back to its root meaning, to set in action"*
> *(Reason and Marshall, 1987, pp. 112–113).*

I started this research as a curious policy practitioner, seeking to understand my own practice and how to develop it better. It is still a topic that excites me. It feels like a huge irony to me that there is so much literature on policy, the policy process and policy work that I, like many policy practitioners, was not aware of. It is hard not to use this new knowledge when the daily news provides illustrations of the erosion of policy capacity and trends such as mediatisation and politicisation. But the difficulties facing local government go largely unreported and when we do hear about it, the concern is for its ability to empty our bins and provide social care, rather than for the strength of its governing capacity.

During the course of the study my personal circumstances changed. In 2016, I started working part-time as an Associate Lecturer for the Open University, UK teaching on the postgraduate Systems Thinking in Practice programme that I studied. It gradually became obvious to me that being an almost full-time policy practitioner, a part-time PhD student and a part-time lecturer did not add up! I had to make a decision about what excited me the most and where I wanted to invest my time. In March 2018, shortly after the end of the fieldwork, I left my local authority job.

This means that the process and outcomes of my research have a very different meaning for me than they did at the start. Since March 2018, I have focused on developing competence in the twin practices that characterise being an academic - researching and teaching - albeit at a distance from the

academic institutions I am affiliated with. Gradually, I have come to identify with these practices more than the identity of policy practitioner. Whilst I started the research with a curiosity about policy practice, the excitement that now sets me in action has expanded to include the links with practice-based pedagogical scholarship and what I have learned about enacting action research practice.

> *"It is for us […] and so produces the response "That works!"*
> *from those who are struggling with problems in their field of*
> *action" (Reason and Marshall, 1987, p. 112).*

Beryl Radin highlights that policy workers "seem to need a language to describe what they do and to convince themselves - as well as others - that they contribute to the process" (2013, p. 221). Once I encountered these words, they remained strongly in my mind throughout the fieldwork. It was not easy for us to find the words that describe what we do and the contribution we make. The struggle for a language was interrelated with a struggle for legitimacy, for identity and for a sense of belonging to a professional community. The problem in our field of action was as much to do with our professional identity and sense of empowerment as it was to do with contributing to good governing.

The final interviews indicated we had made a good start - we did have more of a language and we had a greater shared identity. Unfortunately, the practice development initiative did not continue beyond the formal fieldwork. My main regret is that my decision to leave my post contributed to its decline. I am still in touch with some participants and one of them very kindly looked at an early draft of the study findings. When we met up, I realised that our conversation about policy practice and its context used vocabulary introduced in the material I had shared. In 2020, I developed online resources on the findings and set up discussion opportunities for participants. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that it was even harder for participants to engage, but those that did said they found the findings helpful. These experiences give me hope about

the utility of what I have presented here and I continue to seek ways to share with both the research participants and other policy practitioners.

> *"It is for them [...and] elicits the response "That's interesting!"*
> *from those who are concerned to understand a similar field."*
> *(Reason and Marshall, 1987, p. 112).*

At the time that I write these final sentences and work on the final edits, this is the overall question in my mind. Will readers not only think "that's interesting" but also judge the knowledge as trustworthy and credible?

As the product of an action research study, this thesis presents actionable knowledge - "knowledge that is usable by practitioners and theoretically robust for scholars" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p. xix). This raises questions about which practitioners - I have very broadly defined this as policy practitioners themselves, senior officials with a responsibility for policy capacity and those in the public health community with a concern for achieving health in all policies. I anticipate that different parts of what I have presented will appeal to, and be usable by, these different groups.

It also raises questions about which scholars. I did not realise at the outset of this process that the scholarly community not only clusters into disciplines such as public health, policy studies, and public administration, but there are also communities who develop an identity associated with particular methodological approaches. Each discipline and community has different criteria for what is theoretically robust and what constitutes high quality research practice. I have therefore experienced tensions associated with producing knowledge that aims to cross disciplines and draws on a methodological approach that is not commonly used. I have chosen to navigate this tension by close consideration of the choice points for quality in action research (Bradbury et al., 2019). I have been clear about the different purposes I aimed to achieve through the process and how these affected the choices I made. The context was such that my original intent for partnership and participation was not fully realised, but I have been conscious about my

responsibility to provide a voice for the multiple perspectives of the research participants. I have also been clear about my positionality as a practitioner, change agent, facilitator and researcher and have surfaced the ways in which my own traditions of understanding affected what I did and how I approached it. Finally, I presented the findings in a way that helps others consider the relevance to their contexts and concern - to initiate sense-making and dialogue, not to stop it in its tracks.

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Appendix A: Searches to identify local level health in all policies research

Table 7: Searches conducted to identify local level health in all policies research

	Database	CINAHL	MEDLINE	AMED	Academic Search Ultimate	Web of Science	PsycInfo	JSTOR	Worldwide Political Science Abstracts
	Search date	23 Sept 19	23 Sept 19	23 Sept 19	23 Sept 19	23 Sept 19	26 Sept 19	26 Sept 19	8 Oct 19
S1	"Health in all policies" OR "HiAP"	149	272	0	241	358	53	352	33
S2	"healthy public polic*"	142	248	0	178	257	85	1	27
S3	"intersectoral action for health"	21	33	0	18	27	10	43	6

	Database	CINAHL	MEDLINE	AMED	Academic Search Ultimate	Web of Science	PsycInfo	JSTOR	Worldwide Political Science Abstracts
S4	S1 OR S2 OR S3	305	525		417	610	143	391	60
S5	Local OR municipal* OR town* OR region* OR city OR village* OR suburb*	302,484	3,085,967		4,022,781	4,898,489	437,640	5,075,978	323,449
S6	S4 AND S5	81	176		138	164	51	325	42
S7	S6 limited by 2006 to date	74	162		132	144	47	144	30
S8	S7 limited by language English	73	147		124	132	47	140	23

	Database	CINAHL	MEDLINE	AMED	Academic Search Ultimate	Web of Science	PsycInfo	JSTOR	Worldwide Political Science Abstracts
S9	S8 limited to peer review	73	No option		119	No option	44	101*	23
	Records retrieved	73	147	0	119	132	44	101	23
	Total records retrieved: 639 Records once duplicates removed: 342								

*Limited to articles or research reports

Appendix B: Empirical policy work research

Table 8: Publications using a dataset generated using policy capacity survey design

	Focus	Country	Publications identified
1	Policy capacity at sub-national level (Northern Territory)	Australia	(Carson and Wellstead, 2015)
2	Policy advisory styles at sub-national level (French speaking)	Belgium	(Aubin and Brans, 2018)
3	Policy work of regionally employed federal employees (compared to nationally based counterparts)	Canada	(Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009) (Wellstead and Stedman, 2010)
4	Policy work of provincial/territorial government employees	Canada	Datasets from 12 provinces/territories (Quebec excluded): (Howlett and Newman, 2010) (Howlett and Wellstead, 2011)

	Focus	Country	Publications identified
			(Howlett and Wellstead, 2012a) Datasets from 7 provinces/territories: (Howlett, 2009b) (Howlett and Joshi-Koop, 2011) Dataset from a single province: (Howlett, 2009a) (British Columbia) (Bernier and Howlett, 2012) (Quebec)
5	Policy work of consultants	Canada	(Howlett and Migone, 2013)
6	Policy work of NGOs (compared to their counterparts in provincial government)	Canada	(Evans and Wellstead, 2013)

	Focus	Country	Publications identified
7	Policy work of 'elite' recruits participating in policy capacity development programmes	Canada	(Craft and Daku, 2016)
8	Climate-change policy capacity in federal and provincial/territorial government	Canada	(Wellstead and Stedman, 2014)
9	Policy work of ministerial officials (MOs) and regional-level officials (ROs)	Czech Republic	(Veselý, 2014)
10	Climate-change policy capacity at state-level (Colorado)	USA	(Elgin, Pattison and Weible, 2012) (Weible and Elgin, 2013)

Table 9: Publications making secondary use of a combination of policy capacity survey data sets

	Focus	Country	Publications identified	Using datasets first introduced in
1	Comparing national, regional and provincial/territorial policy work	Canada	(Wellstead, Stedman and Howlett, 2011) (Howlett and Wellstead, 2012b)	(Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009) (Howlett and Newman, 2010)
2	The policy work of 'policy managers' (compared to policy workers with no managerial duties)	Canada	(Howlett, 2011) (Howlett and Walker, 2012)	(Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009) (Howlett and Newman, 2010)
3	Comparison of role and tasks of internal (government-employed) and external policy workers (consultants)	Canada	(Howlett, Migone and Tan, 2014)	(Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009) (Howlett and Newman, 2010) (Bernier and Howlett, 2012)

	Focus	Country	Publications identified	Using datasets first introduced in
				(Howlett and Migone, 2014)
4	The distribution of policy advisory capacity across public, private and NGOs.	Canada	(Howlett et al., 2014)	(Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009) (Howlett and Newman, 2010) (Howlett and Migone, 2014) (Evans and Wellstead, 2013)
5	Comparison of subnational policy work in two countries	Canada Czech Republic	(Veselý, Wellstead and Evans, 2014)	(Howlett and Newman, 2010) (Veselý, 2014)
6	Comparison of the work of policy workers in managerial positions in	Canada Czech	(Nekola and Kohoutek, 2016)	(Howlett and Newman, 2010) (Veselý, 2014)

	Focus	Country	Publications identified	Using datasets first introduced in
	two countries	Republic		

Table 10: Other publications using surveys

	Focus	Country	Publications identified
1	Perceptions of value of academic research and its actual use in policy making	Australia	(Head et al., 2014) (Cherney et al., 2015) (Newman, Cherney and Head, 2016)
2	Work undertaken by government policy managers in relation to consultants	Canada	(Howlett and Migone, 2014)
3	Absorption of research knowledge by provincial civil servants.	Canada	(Ouimet et al., 2009)

	Focus	Country	Publications identified
4	Use of research evidence by provincial government employees (Quebec)	Canada	(Ouimet et al., 2010) (Bédard and Ouimet, 2012) (Bédard, 2015) (Bédard and Ouimet, 2017)
5	Climate-change policy capacity in provincial government (Alberta)	Canada	(Wellstead and Stedman, 2011)
6	Media work, and associated media stress, amongst civil servants	Norway Netherlands	(Schillemans and Karlsen, 2019)
7	Determinants of 'technocratic thinking'	Sweden	(Ribbhagen, 2011)
8	Use of social science research (Wisconsin)	USA	(Bogenschneider, Little and Johnson, 2013)

	Focus	**Country**	**Publications identified**
9	Role of officials in the European Parliament policy process	N/A - European Union	(Egeberg et al., 2013)

Table 11: Studies using a case-based qualitative research strategy

	Focus	**Case**	**Approach(es) stated**	**Data generation methods**	**Publications identified**
1	Achieving collaborative policy processes in the context of public administration practices associated with New Public Management	Australia - the Developing Social Capability project implemented by Victorian government department of Natural Resources and Environment	Case study Narrative approach	Focus groups Interviews Participant observation Documentation	(Boxelaar, Paine and Beilin, 2006)
2	Policy practitioners' perspectives of the policy process in	Australia - Victorian State Department of Human Service	Embedded case study Qualitative	Interviews A focus group	(Gleeson, 2009) (Gleeson et al., 2011)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	relation to the organisational context and what initiatives could enable improvements		thematic analysis		
3	Policymakers use of public health researchers	Australia - Victoria and New South Wales. Five examples of significant policy decisions informed by research or researchers (one each in fields of illicit drugs,	Case examples	Semi-structured interviews	(Haynes et al., 2011)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
		injury, obesity, skin cancer and tobacco control)			
4	Role of technical and generalist policy specialists in issue-based policy process	Australia - development of a land use planning policy in Western Australia	Single case study Interpretivist approach, based on social constructionist paradigm Qualitative, inductive approach	Semi-structured interviews Participant observation Documentation	(Putland, 2013)
5	Organisational and	Australia - health	Multi-methods	Focus groups	(Hughes, 2014)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	systemic factors influencing health policy work	authorities in three jurisdictions (Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and South Australia)	qualitative approach	Interviews Documentation	(Hughes et al., 2015)
6	Forms of knowledge in environmental governance	Australia - environmental policy work in Victoria	Interpretivist perspective	Semi-structured interviews	(Coffey, 2015)
7	Media-related practices of policy bureaucrats	Australia - Indigenous affairs administration (both federal and territorial levels)	Media-as-practice Grounded theory	Interviews	(McCallum and Waller, 2017)

	Focus	**Case**	**Approach(es) stated**	**Data generation methods**	**Publications identified**
8	Experience of public servants who work in policy networks	Canada - four cases of collaborative governance. (the Mackenzie Gas Project, Team Canada Inc., the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada and the Sector Council Program)	Case study	Interviews documentation	(Joshi-Koop, 2009)
9	Work of civil servants in producing evidence-informed	Canada - Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care		Interviews	(Lomas and Brown, 2009)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	policy advice.				
10	Policy analytical capacity in environmental policy sector	Canada - three organisations with research and advice role (Environment Canada, British Columbia Ministry of Environment and David Suzuki Foundation)	Case study	Interviews	(Howlett and Oliphant, 2010) (Oliphant and Howlett, 2010)
11	The work and discourse of evidence-based	Canada - British Columbia Ministry of Health	Case study Ethnography	Interviews documentation	(van Mossel, 2016)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	policy making		Foucauldian		
12	Policy workers approaches to implementation of centrally issued health promotion guidelines	Denmark - ten Danish municipalities	Hermeneutic methods	Interview Observation	(Wimmelmann, Vallgårda and Jensen, 2018)
13	Anticipatory, future-oriented policy work (long term policy)	Netherlands - all national government ministries	Single-country case study	Interviews Documentation	(van der Steen and van Twist, 2013)
14	Factors that contribute to work	New Zealand - different national		Interviews	(Baehler and Bryson, 2008)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	stress of policy advisors	government departments		Focus group	(Baehler and Bryson, 2009)
15	Policy work of public officials in infrastructure bureaucracies	Sweden - major road construction project	Exploratory case study	Passive participatory observation Interview Documents	(Johansson, 2012)
16	The use made of evidence in making policy	UK - anonymous policy making section of UK civil service	Ethnography	Covert participant observation Interviews	(Stevens, 2011)
17	The form of evidence based	UK - Department of Environment, Food	Interpretive	Participant observation	(Wilkinson, 2011)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	policy making and role of scientists in the process	and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	approach Ethnography	Interviews	
18	Process of policy learning from abroad	UK - Department of Health in England		Interviews	(Ettelt, Mays and Nolte, 2012)
19	Forms of knowledge used by policy workers in their work	UK - Department of Health in England	Interpretive approach Case study Ethnography	Interviews Meeting observations	(Maybin, 2013) (Maybin, 2015)
20	Impact of a commissioned	UK - Local authorities in the Leeds City	Case study	Interviews	(Wesselink and Gouldson,

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
	academic study on policy development	Region. Climate change policy.			2014)
21	Policy work of deliberative engagement	UK - anonymous Local Authority Area in Scotland	Interpretive political ethnography Multi-site case study Grounded theory	Participant observation Interviews Focus groups Recorded 'working conversations' Photographs Documentation	(Escobar, 2014) (Escobar, 2015)

	Focus	Case	Approach(es) stated	Data generation methods	Publications identified
22	The learning of public officials involved in policy work	Public health policy makers in Edinburgh, Scotland and Boston, USA	Comparative study	Elite interviews	(Freeman, 2007)
23	Capacities and constraints relating to use of policy assessment tools by policy workers	37 separate cases of policy making which had been subjected to a formal policy assessment in Germany, Sweden, UK or European Union		Interviews Documentation	(Turnpenny et al., 2008)

Table 12: Qualitative studies not using a case-based approach

	Focus	Country or countries	Means of recruitment	Data generation methods	Publications identified
1	Learning about the work of policy and the role of educational institutions and employers in facilitating it	Australia	Policy workers they already knew (convenience sample)	Focus groups Interviews	(Adams, Colebatch and Walker, 2015)

2	Challenges faced by those responsible for gender mainstreaming	Canada	Gender mainstreaming practitioners they already knew (convenience sample) Peer-recommendation (snowballing) Letter of invitation distributed through a network	Interviews (narrative analysis)	(Scala and Paterson, 2018)
3	Impact of organisation structure on involvement of analysts in policy-making decisions	USA	Civil servants they already knew (convenience sample) Promotion through a LinkedIn group Snowball sampling	Interviews	(Shapiro, 2017)

4	Work of participation practitioners (people who have a role in organising events for citizens to deliberate issues of public policy).	UK Germany	Participation practitioners they already knew (convenience sample) Peer-recommendation (snowballing)	Interviews	(Cooper and Smith, 2012)

Appendix C: Letter to senior officials

Dear [name]

Re: **Establishing an understanding of policy work practice and its development at local government level in England: an action research study**

As you are already aware, I am proposing to undertake an insider action research study as a part-time student in the PhD Public Health programme at Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom.

As an action research project the study will simultaneously seek to develop local policy work practice as well as develop knowledge that is of academic interest. You have said in our previous conversations that the development work is consistent with overall transformation aims and that it will be appropriate for the participants and myself to carry out this work during our working hours.

I can confirm that I have now received Ethics Approval for the study from Lancaster University and will soon be recruiting participants for the work. I attach an information sheet for managers and will provide an electronic copy of this so that you can distribute it to other senior officers. I also attach a copy of the information sheet that will be used for potential participants for your information. As this is a research study, it is important that individual staff members are not coerced to take part and that the data they provide is understood to be confidential.

Whilst the local authority area will not be named in my thesis or any research articles submitted for publication, it will be possible for interested parties to identify the setting through the association of my name with the area.

I attach a second copy of this letter and would be grateful if you could sign and return one copy to confirm that research access is granted.

Kind Regards

Helen Wilding

I, [name], [job title], [organisation], confirm that I have read this letter, the Information Sheet for Managers and the Participant Information Sheet and grant access for this research to take place.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix D: Participant information sheet

Participant information

Establishing an understanding of policy work practice and its development at local government level in England: an action research study

My name is Helen Wilding and I am conducting this action research project as a part-time student in the PhD in Public Health programme at Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom. You may know me in my role as [job title] for [local authority area] employed by [organisation].

This information sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part. I will go through the information with you and answer any questions you may have. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this study. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent corm. I will give you a copy of this information sheet and the consent form to keep.

Why have I been approached?

You have been approached because the project requires the active participation of between 10 and 18 policy workers from a range of different backgrounds.

I am using 'policy worker' to refer to people in paid roles which impacts on, or intends to influence, the content and/or process of policy at a local government level. You may see policy work as just one dimension of your role, rather than your 'whole job'. You may have a specialist area of application or a more generic policy process coordination or engagement role. You could work for the local authority or one of its partner organisations.

What is the project about?

As an action research project, it has two related purposes:

- To develop policy work practice in our local authority area (the "development work"), and
- To better understand what shapes policy work practice and its development at a local government level in England by collecting and

analysing the data generated through the development work (the "research study").

Who has agreed this work can take place?

[name], [job title] of [organisation] supported the development of these proposals. [name], [job title] of [organisation] has also agreed that the development work is consistent with overall transformation aims and it is appropriate for those involved to participate during their working hours. He has agreed that the work can be used as a basis for a research study.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. It is important that you do not participate due to pressure from your colleagues, your manager or me. There will be no negative repercussions if you decide not to take part.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

The development work will be guided by the question "How can we understand and develop our policy work practices and the context in which they take place?" and will proceed in three phases described below.

The length of the phases of the study and the timing of the interviews, workshops and meetings within them have been informed by a consideration of the need to fit the development work around our existing workloads and also make space for a participatory process that facilitates learning and change. The phases are:

Phase I: Starting out (April to September 2016)

During this phase we will:
- Get to know each other and appreciate each other's perspectives
- Initiate our inquiry by talking about our understandings of the current situation
- Start making sense of policy work practice together by exploring the context and motivations for change
- Start developing a shared view of what it *ought* to be like

This will be achieved by you taking part in:
- one individual interview that will last up to one hour and
- three subsequent half-day workshops with other participants.

Phase II: Inquiring and acting together (October 2016 to May 2017)

During this phase we will:
- Continue making sense of the situation.
- Define actions that are desirable and feasible
- Take those actions – creating a new situation
- Review the impacts (whether intended or not) of actions taken
- Reiterate through this cycle of activities

You will be involved in deciding the detail of what will happen in this phase, such as how we organise ourselves and how often we meet. It is likely we will decide to have further workshops and also group meetings.

Phase III: Taking stock (June 2017 to early September 2017)

During this phase we will:
- Review overall progress and re-visit our shared view of what it *ought* to be like
- Review our experiences of participating in this work – its benefits and limitations
- Make decisions about whether to continue our development work and if so how.

This will be achieved by you taking part in:
- a second individual interview which will last up to one hour and
- one half-day workshop with other participants.

Throughout all phases we will use methods and tools from systems thinking to help us. Systems approaches are particularly helpful when working in multi-stakeholder situations that are subject to multiple perspectives, interdependencies, complexity, uncertainty and controversy. We may also use ideas and frameworks from existing research literature to help us.

What data will be generated and collected?

As you have seen, the phases include a mix of individual interviews and workshops/group meetings with other participants. For the research study, the individual interviews will be audio-recorded and typed-up as will group discussions at meetings and workshops. All of the materials prepared for, or generated during workshops/meetings, such as flipchart pages or notes, will be collected and digitally photographed to form an additional part of the pool of research data. I will also take notes to record my observations of, and reflections on, interviews, workshops and meetings.

You will also be invited to keep a reflective journal to record your thoughts about the work you are part of. This will be optional and you will be able to choose to do this in writing, by typing or audio recording. You will be invited to give me your journal entries so that I can use it as research data – again this is optional.

What happens if I take part and then change my mind?

If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. There will be no negative repercussions if you decide to withdraw.

If you withdraw from the work during phase I or II, I will contact you at a later date to see whether you are willing and able to participate in phase III. Again it is completely up to you if you decide to take part.

If you withdraw from the study, you have up to two weeks to tell me whether or not you want to retract your individual data (interview and journal entries). However, due to the nature of group discussion and the difficulty of picking out who said what, it will not be possible to withdraw any contributions you make in workshops or group discussions.

Who will know I am taking part?

Other than me, there will be the other participants who you will meet at workshops and meetings.

You will need to talk to your line manager about taking part in order to ensure that you are provided with the time in your workload. A separate information sheet is available to help you discuss your interest with your line manager. You should agree with your line manager whether or not you are happy for your team members and other close colleagues to be aware of your participation.

As you work in phase II to take the actions you agree, you may be having conversations with other local stakeholders. You will be involved with other participants in agreeing how we describe and raise awareness of what we are doing and naming who is involved.

Whilst every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of participation, it may not be possible to do this because the interviews, workshops and meetings will take place in work premises.

Will my data be identifiable?

Typed versions of individual interviews, group discussions or journal entries will be made anonymous by removing any information that identifies you or any person or identifiable place you mention. Any identifying information in digital photographs of materials from the workshops, such as flipchart pages or notes, will be pixelated.

The information you provide will be pooled with information from other participants in order to look for commonalities and differences. It will then be reported in a way that individual contributions cannot be identified.

When direct quotes are used for illustration purposes in reports or publications or shared in data repositories they will be used anonymously i.e. without your name attached to them. This means that people in the 'outside world' will not be able to attribute the quote to you, but you should be aware that people who know you well may be able to associate a quote with you.

There are some limits to confidentiality:
- if what is said in an interview or group discussion makes me think that you, or someone else, is at significant risk of harm, I will have to break confidentiality and speak to my research supervisor and also follow any relevant organisational procedures, such as safeguarding or bullying. If possible, I will tell you if I have to do this.
- You will be asked to negotiate and agree issues of confidentiality with respect to reporting what is said in workshops and/or group meetings with other participants.

How will the data be stored?

The data collected for this study will be stored securely and only my research supervisors and I will have access to this data.

All data in an electronic form will be stored on my password protected, encrypted laptop (that is no-one other than me will be able to access them).

All hard copy materials will be stored in a locked desk drawer when they have to be at work and transferred to a locked filing cabinet in my home as soon as feasible.

Once my PhD has been examined, digital audio recordings will be deleted and all hard copy materials will be destroyed. The remaining electronic files will be kept for a period of 10 years both by myself and on the servers at Lancaster University under the guardianship of my supervisor. After 10 years the electronic files will be destroyed.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be summarised and reported in my PhD thesis and may be submitted for publication in an academic or professional journal. In these cases, our local authority area will not be named but it will be possible for interested parties to identify the area through the association of my name with the area.

We may choose to share the story of our development work with other local authorities through presentations at networking events. This would mean that our local authority area would be identifiable so if we choose to do that we would need to consider which parts of the research study results we will incorporate.

Are there any risks?

There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study. However, if you experience any distress during or after participation you are encouraged to inform me and contact the resources provided at the end of this sheet.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

It is anticipated that you will find the experience interesting. It is likely that you will develop useful knowledge and skills and build your working relationships with other participants. People who participate in action research often find it empowering and value the space it gives to reflect on understandings and practices.

There are no payments for taking part and you are unlikely to incur any expenses that cannot be claimed from your organisation. All activities will take place within usual working hours.

Who has reviewed the research study?

This study has been reviewed by the Faculty of Health and Medicine Research Ethics Committee, and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Lancaster University.

Where can I obtain further information about the research study if I need it?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me, Helen Wilding. I recommend you use my university e-mail address to help in keeping your information confidential. It is h.wilding@lancaster.ac.uk

You may also want to contact me from a non-work email address so that what you write is not stored within your organisation's systems. If you do not want to use your current personal email, you may want to set up an email specifically for use during the study.

You can also contact my research supervisor, Dr Sabir Giga, on s.giga@lancaster.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint or raise concerns about any aspect of the research study and do not want to speak to the researcher, you can contact:

Professor Bruce Hollingsworth   Tel: (01524) 594154
Head of Department;   Email:
b.hollingsworth@lancaster.ac.uk
Division of Health Research
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YG

If you wish to speak to someone outside of the PhD Public Health Programme, you may also contact:

Professor Roger Pickup   Tel: +44 (0)1524 593746
Associate Dean for Research   Email: r.pickup@lancaster.ac.uk
Faculty of Health and Medicine
(Division of Biomedical and Life Sciences)
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YG

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Resources in the event of distress

Should you feel distressed either as a result of taking part, or in the future, the following resources may be of assistance. ...

[helpline name]
This is a 24 hour confidential counselling service for Council employees and their families that is independent to the organisation. Face to face and telephone counselling is offered. The counselling service includes advice on a range of issues including debt worries, bereavement, well-being and legal issues.
You can access the helpline by calling free phone [phone number].

If you are not a council employee or would prefer not to use this helpline then you can access self help resources on mental wellbeing and find out about support services in the area where you live at [local website]

Appendix E: Manager information sheet

Information for managers

Establishing an understanding of policy work practice and its development at local government level in England:
an action research study

My name is Helen Wilding and I am conducting this action research project as a part-time student in the PhD in Public Health programme at Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom. You may know me in my role as [job title] for [local authority area] by [organisation].

This information sheet tells you about the project that I am doing and what policy workers in the local authority area may choose to be involved in. It also explains the ways in which the research element of the study impacts on what you may normally expect as a manager.

Who is being approached?

The project requires the active participation of between 10 and 18 policy workers from a range of different backgrounds.

I am using 'policy worker' to refer to people in paid roles which impacts on, or intends to influence, the content and/or process of policy at a local government level. Staff members may see policy work as just one dimension of their role, rather than their 'whole job'. They may have a specialist area of application or a more generic policy process coordination or engagement role. They could work for the local authority or one of its partner organisations.

What is the project about?

As an action research project, it has two related purposes:

- To develop policy work practice in our local authority area (the "development work"), and
- To better understand what shapes policy work practice and its development at a local government level in England by collecting and analysing the data generated through the development work (the "research study").

Action research is used to support organisational change and development in addition to contributing to academic aims. It has a participative and democratic nature and facilitates organisational learning. Therefore it is anticipated that benefits will go beyond the direct participants in the study and have a beneficial impact on policy work practice in our local area more generally.

Who has agreed this work can take place?

[name], [job title] of [organisation] supported the development of these proposals. [name], [job title] of [organisation] has also agreed that the development work is consistent with overall transformation aims and it is appropriate for those involved to participate during their working hours. He has agreed that the work can be used as a basis for a research study.

Do those approached have to take part?

No. It's completely up to them to decide whether or not they take part and there should be no negative repercussions if they decide not to. It is important that you do not pressure them either way. This is different to how you may usually select a member of staff to participate in a piece of work.

If they want to take part they will need their line managers agreement and support to allocate the time within their workload. If you are approached by an interested participant, please give their request careful consideration as participants will need to have the appropriate time allocated to participate consistently over an extended period.

What will they be taking part in?

The development work will be guided by the question "How can we understand and develop our policy work practices and the context in which they take place?" and will proceed in three phases described below.

The length of the phases of the study and the timing of the interviews, workshops and meetings within them have been informed by a consideration of the need to fit the development work around our existing workloads and also make space for a participatory process that facilitates learning and change. The phases are:

Phase I: Starting out (April to September 2016)

During this phase participants will:
- Get to know each other and appreciate each other's perspectives

- Initiate their inquiry by talking about understandings of the current situation
- Start making sense of policy work practice together by exploring the context and motivations for change
- Start developing a shared view of what it *ought* to be like

This will be achieved by participants taking part in:
- one individual interview that will last up to one hour, and
- three subsequent half-day workshops with other participants.

Phase II: Inquiring and acting together (October 2016 to May 2017)

During this phase participants will:
- Continue making sense of the situation.
- Define actions that are desirable and feasible
- Take those actions – creating a new situation
- Review the impacts (whether intended or not) of actions taken
- Reiterate through this cycle of activities

Participants will be involved in deciding the detail of what will happen in this phase, such as how work is organised and how often they meet. It is likely they will decide to have further workshops and also group meetings.

Phase III: Taking stock (June 2017 to early September 2017)

During this phase participants will:
- Review overall progress and re-visit their shared view of what it *ought* to be like
- Review their experiences of participating in this work – its benefits and limitations
- Make decisions about whether to continue the development work and if so how.

This will be achieved by participants taking part in:
- a second individual interview which will last up to one hour, and
- one half-day workshop with other participants.

Throughout all phases, methods and tools from systems thinking will be used. Systems approaches are particularly helpful when working in multi-stakeholder situations that are subject to multiple perspectives, interdependencies, complexity, uncertainty and controversy. Ideas and frameworks from existing research literature may also be used.

What data will be generated and collected?

As you have seen the phases include a mix of individual interviews and workshops/group meetings with other participants. For the research study, the individual interviews will be audio-recorded and typed-up as will group discussions at meetings and workshops. All of the materials prepared for, or generated during workshops/meetings, such as flipchart pages or notes, will be collected and digitally photographed to form an additional part of the pool of research data. I will also take notes to record my observations of, and reflections on, interviews, workshops and meetings. Participants will also be invited to keep a reflective journal to record their thoughts about the work they are part of. This will be optional.

All of this research data will be stored either on a password-protected, encrypted computer or in a locked filing cabinet away from the research site. You will not be able to directly access the data but I will provide a report of the overall findings at the end of the research study.

Will people know where the research study has taken place?

The name of the local authority area or places, organisations and individuals within it will not be named in publications, reports or presentations. However, you need to be aware that this does not guarantee anonymity as it is possible for people to identify our local authority area by searching using my name on the internet.

We may choose to share the story of our development work with other local authorities through presentations at networking events. This would mean that our local authority area would be identified so if we choose to do that we would need to consider which parts of the research study results we will incorporate.

Will people know who has participated in the study?

Participants will obviously get to know each other and may choose to tell their colleagues or friends that they are involved. As the work involves taking actions it is likely that local stakeholders will become familiar with the names of participants involved. I will only tell others who the participants are if they ask me to do so.

Participants' anonymity will be protected in publications or reports by reporting findings in a way that individual contributions cannot be identified. When direct quotes are used for illustration purposes in reports or publications or shared in data repositories they will be used anonymously i.e. without names attached to them.

If the names of any third parties appear in the research data, they will be removed and replaced with an identifier or general term.

Are there any benefits for the participants?

It is anticipated that participants will find the experience interesting. It is likely that they will develop useful knowledge and skills and build their working relationships with other participants. People who participate in action research often find it empowering and value the space it gives to reflect on understandings and practices.

There are no payments for taking part and they are unlikely to incur any expenses that cannot be claimed from their employer. All activities will take place within usual working hours.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be summarised and reported in my PhD thesis and may be submitted for publication in an academic or professional journal.

Who has reviewed the research study?

This study has been reviewed by the Faculty of Health and Medicine Research Ethics Committee, and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Lancaster University.

Where can I obtain further information about the research study if I need it?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me, Helen Wilding. I recommend you use my university e-mail address to help in keeping your information confidential. It is h.wilding@lancaster.ac.uk

You can also contact my research supervisor, Dr Sabir Giga, on s.giga@lancaster.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint or raise concerns about any aspect of the research study and do not want to speak to the researcher, you can contact:

Professor Bruce Hollingsworth   Tel: (01524) 594154
Head of Department;   Email:
b.hollingsworth@lancaster.ac.uk
Division of Health Research
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YG

If you wish to speak to someone outside of the PhD Public Health Programme, you may also contact:

Professor Roger Pickup   Tel: +44 (0)1524 593746
Associate Dean for Research   Email: r.pickup@lancaster.ac.uk
Faculty of Health and Medicine
(Division of Biomedical and Life Sciences)
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YG

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix F: Email invitation

**Initial email to potential participants
(sent from university email address)**

Subject line: **Understanding policy work practice and its development**

Dear xxxx

You are likely to know me already as the [job title] for [local authority area]. I am currently doing a part-time PhD at Lancaster University – hence the different email address.

My PhD research will take the form of an action research study and I am contacting you to see if you would like to participate as someone in a paid role that impacts on, or intends to influence, the content and/or process of policy within [local authority area].

I attach a participant information sheet that explains the work in more detail and will help you decide if you are interested in knowing more. If you are interested, the next step will be for us to arrange a meeting so that I can go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you may have. Expressing your interest at this stage, does not commit you to ongoing participation. You can withdraw your interest at any time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Helen Wilding
PhD Research Student

For the purposes of this research study, please contact me on my university email address: h.wilding@lancaster.ac.uk

Appendix G: Consent form

Study Title: Establishing an understanding of policy work practice and its development at local government level in England: an action research study

I am asking if you would like to take part in a research project to better understand what shapes policy work practice and its development at a local government level in England.

Before you consent to participating in the study I ask that you read the participant information sheet and mark each box below with your initials if you agree. If you have any questions or queries before signing the consent form please speak to the researcher, Helen Wilding.

	Please initial
1. I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet and fully understand what is expected of me within this study	
2. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and to have them answered.	
3. I understand that • Interviews and group discussions that I participate in will be audio recorded and then made into an anonymised typed transcript. • Materials prepared for, or generated during, workshops and group discussions, such as flipchart pages or notes will be retained and anonymised. If they are not already in electronic form, they will be digitally photographed and any identifiable information will be pixelated • The researcher will keep notes to record her observations of, and reflections on, interviews, workshops and meetings • My reflective journal if I choose to keep one and submit it will also be anonymised	
4. I understand that the researcher will share and discuss data with her research supervisors.	
5. I understand that audio recordings and hard copy materials will be kept until the research project has been examined.	

6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.	
7. If I withdraw I understand that I have up to 2 weeks to retract my individual data (interviews and journal entries).	
8. I understand that it will not be possible to withdraw any contributions I make in workshops or group discussions.	
9. I understand that my contributions will be pooled with other participants' responses, anonymised and may be published or stored in open data repositories	
10. I consent to information and anonymised quotations from my contributions being used in reports, publications and presentations.	
11. I understand that any information I give will remain strictly confidential and anonymous unless it is thought that there is a risk of harm to myself or others, in which case the researcher will need to share this information with her research supervisor and may need to follow relevant organisational policies, such as safeguarding or bullying.	
12. I consent to the researcher and Lancaster University archiving electronic files of anonymised typed up interviews, group discussions, journal entries and materials prepared for, or generated during, workshops and group meetings such as flipcharts or notes for 10 years after the study has finished.	
13. I consent to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant:
Signature:
Date:

Name of Researcher:
Signature:
Date:

Appendix H: Interview guide for semi-structured interview in phase I

Interview aim:
- to develop an understanding of the participant's perspective on existing policy work practice, the context in which it takes place and stakeholders' views on how policy work practice could/should change.
- to encourage reflection on helpful attitudes and behaviours in the upcoming group workshops and activities

Scene setting:
- reminder that just given informed consent – information confidential; will record it; free to stop at any time or refuse to answer any questions
- not like a 'normal' workplace conversations in that you will do most of the talking

Prompts to be used:
- Drawing from your experience working at local government level, what sort of activities and roles come to mind when you hear the phrase "policy work practice"?

- Thinking back as far back as you can, in what ways do you think policy work practice at local government level has changed over time?

- If you think about the context in which we work what factors impact on the nature of policy work practice? [Prompt if necessary – Think of both positive and negative influences]

- What sort of trends and influences – locally, nationally or just generally – do you think will shape policy work practice at local government level in the future?

- If you could decide, what would be the ideal for policy work practice at a local government level?

- It's great that you have decided to be part of this development work – what sort of things do you think those involved – including you and me – can do (or avoid doing) to make this collaborative work feel worthwhile?

Appendix I: Fieldwork events and data

Table 13: Activities undertaken and data captured in phase I

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
I1	Semi-structured interviews (15 August - 29 December 2016)	12	**Preparatory work** Development of interview guide (see Appendix H) **Activities undertaken** 1:1 interview with each participant **Data generated/captured** Audio recordings (Shortest: 22 minutes 43 seconds; longest: 59 minutes 16 seconds; average length: 38 minutes 37 seconds), plus transcripts
W1.1	Workshop 1	9	**Preparatory work**

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
	of 3 (7 February 2017)		S-W1.1: Slide pack (included provisional ground rules based in part on interview data)
			Selected extracts from interview transcripts (I1) on policy, policy work and the role of local government in relation to policy
			Activities undertaken
			Extended structured introductions (in recombining pairs)
			Discussion on motivations (whole group)
			Generating ground rules (whole group)
			Appreciating different perspectives on policy, policy process and policy work in local government (using interview extracts) (2 x small groups)
			Taking stock of the morning (whole group)
			Data generated captured

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			F-W1.1: Flipchart - participants' motivations for getting involved
			F-W1.1: Flipchart - participant generated 'ground rules'
			Audio recordings of two small group discussions (length: approx 38 minutes), plus transcripts
			F-W1.1: Flipchart - notes generated by one of the small groups
			E.07.02.2017: Researcher follow-up email (7 February 2017)
			R-J.08.02.2017: Researcher journal entry (8 February 2017)
W1.2	Workshop 2 of 3 (21 February 2017)	7	**Preparatory work** E.19.02.2017: Email prior to workshop (19 February 2017) S-W1.2: Slide pack (included newer version of ground rules based on discussions at

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			previous workshop)
			Handout summaries of five existing academic perspectives on policy work
			Activities undertaken
			Recap (researcher led)
			Helpfulness and critique of existing academic perspectives on policy work (2 x small groups)
			Feedback and review (whole group)
			Data generated/captured
			Audio recordings of two small group discussions (length: approx 48 minutes), plus transcripts
			Audio recording of group feedback session (length: 37 minutes 38 seconds), plus

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			transcript E.21.02.2017: Researcher follow-up email (21 February 2017) R-J.21.02.2017 Researcher journal entry (21 February 2017)
W1.3	Workshop 3 of 3 (7 March 2017)	5	**Preparatory work** S-W1.3: Slide pack **Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led) Discussing accounts of policy (2 x small groups) Feedback and review (whole group) **Data generated/captured**

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			Audio recordings of two small group discussions (length: approx 60 minutes), plus transcripts
			Audio recording of group feedback session (length: 46 minutes 9 seconds), plus transcript
			E.11.03.2017: Researcher follow-up email (11 March 2017)
			R-J.10.03.2017: Researcher journal entry (10 March 2017)
02.04.17	Reflecting on phase I	N/A	Prezi slides developed by researcher and shared with participants
			E.02.04.2017: Email to participants (2 April 2017)

Table 14: Activities undertaken and data captured in phase II

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
W2.1	Workshop 1 of 9 (18 April 2017)	3	**Preparatory work** S-W2.1: Prezi presentation (summarised discussions to date) **Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led) Helping/hindering forces towards 'better world', plus what we should do (whole group) **Data generated/captured** F-W2.1: Flipchart - force field analysis Audio recording of discussion (length: 1 hour 24 minutes), plus transcript E.19.04.17: Researcher follow-up email (19 April 2017)

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			R-J.19.04.17: Researcher journal entry (19 April 2017)
W2.2	Workshop 2 of 9 (16 May 2017)	4	**Preparatory work** S-W2.2: Prezi presentation (new iteration) S-W2.2: Slide pack **Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led) Discussion on issue of time and availability (informal whole group) How do we introduce our work to two key senior people and what would we like from it? (whole group) **Data generated/captured**

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			F-W2.2: Flipchart - notes taken by researcher during discussion
			Audio recording of discussion (length: 58 minutes 30 seconds), plus transcript
			E.19.05.17: Researcher follow-up email (19 May 2017)
			R-J.19.05.17: Researcher journal entry (19 May 2017)
W2.3	Workshop 3 of 9 (13 June 2017)	4	**Preparatory work** E.11.06.17: Email prior to workshop (11 June 2017) Second draft briefing paper for two key senior people (first draft already circulated, commented on and discussed between workshops) **Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led)

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			Reviewing briefing paper and its purpose (whole group)
			Discussion on process of writing the paper (whole group)
			Data generated/captured
			Audio recording of discussion to review briefing paper (length: 1 hour), plus transcript
			Audio recording of discussion of process (length: 32 minutes 33 seconds), plus transcript
			E.18.06.17: Researcher follow-up email (18 June 2017)
			R-J.18.06.17 Researcher journal entry (18 June 2017)
			K1: Final version of paper
W2.4	Workshop 4	2	**Preparatory work**

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
	of 9 (11 July 2017)		S-W2.4: Slide pack **Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led) Introduction to diagramming (researcher led) Producing a causal loop diagram relating to influences impacting on quality of policy work (whole group) **Data generated/captured** F-W2.4: flip chart - causal loop diagram Audio recording discussion whilst producing diagram (length: 1 hour 11 minutes), plus transcript R-J.13.07.17: Researcher journal entry (13 July 2017)

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
W2.5	Workshop 5 of 9 (22 August 2017)	Cancelled	N/A
W2.6	Workshop 6 of 9 (19 September 2017)	Cancelled	N/A
W2.7	Workshop 7 of 9 (17 October	3	**Preparatory work** E.11.10.17: Email prior to workshop (11 October 2017) - introduced four elements that interact (individual factors, task factors, organisational factors, contextual factors)

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
	2017)		S.W2.7: Slide pack (included influence diagram)
			Index cards itemising 'roles' of policy workers (predominantly generated from interview transcripts)
			Activities undertaken
			Recap (researcher led)
			Review of meeting with two key senior people (whole group)
			Clustering index cards itemising roles of policy workers into themes (whole group)
			Data generated/captured
			Photographs of clustered cards
			Audio recording - discussion whilst clustering index cards (length: 44 minutes 48 seconds), plus transcript

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			E.22.10.2017: Researcher follow-up email (22 October 2017) R-J.22.10.17: Researcher journal entry (22 October 2017)
W2.8	Workshop 8 of 9 (14 November 2017)	5	**Preparatory work** S-W2.8: Slide pack K2: Researcher developed 'mind-map' on many hats of policy work (continuation of clustering task at previous workshop) Research developed cause map on organisational factors (drew on interviews and workshop discussions to develop this) **Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led)

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			'Live' work reviewing, discussing and amending diagrams (whole group) **Data generated/captured** Audio recording - discussion whilst reviewing diagrams (total length: 1 hour 28 minute), plus transcript E.17.11.17: Researcher follow-up email (17 November 2017) R-J.17.11.17: Researcher journal entry (17 November 2017) K3: Final version of cause map
W2.9	Workshop 9 of 9 (12 December	3	**Preparatory work** S-W2.9: Slide pack **Activities undertaken**

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
	2017)		Recap (researcher led)
			Discussion on contextual influences on policy work (whole group)
			Data generated/captured
			Audio recording - discussion (length: 1 hour 2 minutes), plus transcript
			E.15.12.17: Researcher follow-up email (15 December 2017)
			R-J.15.12.17: Researcher journal entry (15 December 2017)

Table 15: Activities undertaken and data captured in phase III

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
I2	Semi-structured interviews (22 November - 21 December 2017)	10	**Preparatory work** Production of interview guide (see Appendix J) **Activities undertaken** 1:1 interview **Data generated/captured** 10 x audio recordings (Shortest: 27 minutes 0 seconds; longest: 53 minutes 38 seconds; average length: 36 minutes 9 seconds), plus transcripts
W3.1	Workshop 1 of 1 (16 January	6	**Preparatory work** S-W3.1: Slide pack (included 'common narrative' from second interviews)

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
	2018)		**Activities undertaken** Recap (researcher led) Sharing 'common narrative' from second interviews (researcher led) Reflections and comments on 'common narrative' (whole group) Role play - convincing a manager of importance of focus on developing policy capacity (2 x small groups) Discussion of case for and against focus on developing policy capacity (2 x small groups) Feedback and discussion on next steps (whole group) **Data generated/captured** Audio recording - reflections (length: 13 minutes 50 seconds), plus transcript

Event reference	Event/Date	Number of participants	Detail
			2 x audio recordings - role play plus discussion for and against (length: approx 18 minutes), plus transcripts
			F-W3.1: 2 x flipcharts - case for and against focus on developing policy capacity
			Audio recording - next steps (length: 37 minutes 49 seconds), plus transcript
			E.15.-3.18: Researcher follow-up email (15 March 2018)

Appendix J: Interview guide for semi-structured interview in phase III

Interview aim:
- To explore participant's views of individual, organisational and wider changes during the study period and how/why these changes arose
- To explore participant's experiences of being engaged in the process

Scene setting:
- reminder that previously given informed consent – information confidential; will record it; free to stop at any time or refuse to answer any questions
- not like a 'normal' workplace conversations in that you will do most of the talking

Prompts to be used:
- Last time, I started off by asking you what sort of activities and roles come to mind when you hear the phrase "policy work practice". I'm not asking you to remember what you said but I am interested in whether you think your understanding of policy work practice is different now.

- What do you think has shaped your changing understandings?
(Supplementary probes: The discussions we have had in workshop? Knowing more about how others go about their job? Other personal development opportunities?)

- Do you think these new understandings have changed what you do in your job or how you go about it?
Prompts: tell me more.

- Do you think organisational changes (or indeed lack of changes) have helped or hindered the achievement of better policy work practice?

- Do you think any changes in the wider context have helped or hindered the achievement of better policy work practice?

- Looking forward, what local changes, trends or influences make you feel hopeful or less hopeful in relation to achieving better policy work practice?

- I'd like now to talk more about your reflections on involvement in this development work. Perhaps start by reflecting on the factors that have made involvement in the development work positive or beneficial?

- And how about the factors that have made involvement in the development work negative or frustrating?

- Overall would you say that it has been worthwhile being part of the work? In what ways?

- Are there any elements you would like to see continue?

Follow-on: if yes, what sorts of things can you do to help them to happen?

Appendix K: Clusters of policy work identified, and nomenclature used, in policy capacity studies

Although there are slight differences in the items used in the cluster analysis, most studies reveal similar clusters, but use different nomenclature to label these (Table 16). Two of the studies reveal distinctively different clustering patterns (Table 17 and Table 18).

Table 16: Clusters of types of policy-related work identified in large-N policy capacity surveys

Example items incorporated	Appraise policy options	Evaluate policy results and outcomes	Implement or deliver policies or programs	Prepare reports, briefs, or presentations for decision makers on policy matters	Conduct scientific research
	Collect policy-related data*	Evaluate policy processes and procedures	Negotiate with stakeholders	Consult with decision makers on policy matters	
	Collect policy-related information*		Negotiate with central agencies		
	Conduct policy-related research		Negotiate with program managers	Brief lower- or mid-level policy	
			Consult with the		

| | Identify policy issues

Identify policy options | | public

Consult with stakeholders | managers

Brief high-level decision makers, such as cabinet ministers, ministerial staff, and senior managers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Wellstead, Stedman and Lindquist, 2009) | (Traditional) Policy work | N/A - items not included | Networking | N/A - items not included | N/A - items not included |
| (Wellstead and Stedman, 2010) | Traditional policy analysts/Policy work | N/A - items not included | Street level bureaucracy | N/A - items not included | N/A - items not included |

(Wellstead, Stedman and Howlett, 2011)	Technical policy work	N/A - items not included	Street-level analysts	N/A - items not included	N/A - items not included
(Howlett and Wellstead, 2011)	Appraisal	Evaluation	Implementation	Strategic Brokerage	N/A - items not included
(Howlett and Wellstead, 2012a)	Research	Evaluators	Implement	Strategic	N/A - items not included
(Howlett, 2011)	Research	N/A - items not included	Negotiate	N/A - items not included	N/A - items not included
(Evans and Wellstead, 2013)	Policy work		Consulting	Briefing	Conduct scientific research

(Wellstead and Stedman, 2014)	Policy work	Consulting	Briefing	N/A - items not included
(Veselý, 2014).	Analytical tasks	Brokering tasks	N/A - items not included	N/A items not included

*In some surveys appeared as single item "Collect policy-related data or information"

Table 17: Clusters of types of policy-related work identified in data from provincial analysts, British Columbia, Canada

Source: Howett (2009a)

	Researchers	**Managers**	**Evaluators**	**Consulters**
Items	Appraise policy options Collect policy-related data or information Conduct policy-related research Identify policy issues Identify policy options Prepare reports, briefs, or presentations for decision makers on policy matters Consult with decision	Negotiate with stakeholders Negotiate with central agencies Negotiate with program managers Brief high-level decision makers, such as cabinet ministers, ministerial staff and senior managers	Implement or deliver policies or programs Evaluate policy results and outcomes Evaluate policy processes and procedures	Consult with the public Consult with stakeholders

	Researchers	Managers	Evaluators	Consulters
	makers on policy matters Brief lower- or mid-level policy managers			

Table 18: Clusters of types of policy-related work identified in combined data from Canada and Czech republic

Source: Veselý, Wellstead and Evans (2014)

	Policy analysis work	Evidence Based Work	Consulting and briefing
Items	Appraise policy options Collect policy-related data or information Identify policy issues Identify policy options Implement or deliver policies or programs	Conduct policy-related research Negotiate with central agencies Prepare reports, briefs, or presentations for decision makers on policy matters Consult with decision makers on policy matters Evaluate policy results and outcomes Evaluate policy processes and procedures	Consult with the public Consult with stakeholders Brief lower- or mid-level policy managers Brief high-level decision makers, such as cabinet ministers, ministerial staff and senior managers