



Research article

Ardagh Community Trust: transgressing boundaries, asserting community

Sam Thomson,^{1,*} Alex Franklin¹

¹ Ardagh Community Trust, Bristol, UK

* Correspondence: sam@theardagh.com

Guest Editors: Fabian Neuhaus and Natalie Robertson, University of Calgary, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Calgary AB, Canada

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Abstract

Administrative boundaries are ubiquitous. A vital technology of power within the modern nation-state's mode of bureaucratic governance, they carve up and abstract land and water alike into conceptual totalities that, in their simplification, render them legible to centralised administrative bodies. This is a foundational tool of state planning, the impact of which permeates all aspects of socio-economic life. These boundaries are not passive; they do not simply define a geographical area. Rather, they are selective in what they encompass and, as a result, what they include and exclude and what is rendered visible and, hence, valuable. This article describes an example of the real-world impact of this selectivity through discussion of the experiences of a community-led charity (Ardagh Community Trust) and the community group that founded it (Friends of Horfield Common). In their work to demonstrate that an administrative-boundary-spanning public green space (Horfield Common) and leisure facility (the Ardagh) was a vital community resource and hub, this article focuses on the work of Friends of Horfield Common/Ardagh

Community Trust to ensure that their local community, one dissected by multiple administrative boundaries, was recognised and acknowledged when, in 2008, Bristol City Council in the UK proposed the sale of multiple publicly owned green spaces through their Parks and Green Space Strategy. Administrative boundaries played a key role in defining and determining which sites in the city were proposed for sale and in structuring the accompanying public consultation process, thereby determining which communities were recognised as communities in relation to this policy and, hence, which communities' opinions were actively sought and heard. This article concludes by highlighting some of the potential political and economic costs attendant on reifying administrative boundaries rather than lived communities in both planning and consultation processes.

Keywords: administrative boundaries; democratic representation; local authorities; community-led charities; deprivation; green spaces; Bristol

Introduction

'Every act of measurement [is] an act marked by the play of power relations.'¹ However benign the original intent, through their acts of demarcation and simplification, administrative boundaries function to rationalise and impose an artificial order on the organic, ever-evolving communities they seek to define. In the UK, the Boundary Commission for England is sponsored by the UK government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It is an 'arms-length' public body and outside direct ministerial control,² positioned as 'independent and impartial',³ nevertheless, its boundary-making and boundary-shifting decisions have a direct impact on the lives of those it maps.

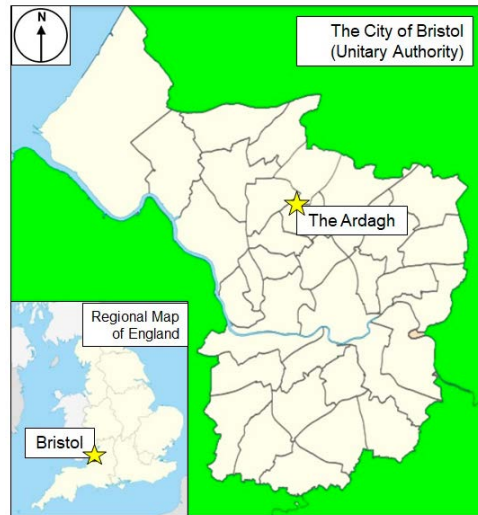
It is this real-world impact on people's lives and the strategic use of these independent and impartial administrative boundaries to achieve policy aims that this article seeks to make visible. To that end, it discusses the example of a small, community-led charity in the UK, Ardagh Community Trust (ACT), through which the lived impact of the use of administrative boundaries for policy-planning purposes can be seen. It provides broader context for the subsequent discussion of ACT by briefly taking into account the type of administrative boundaries in operation in England and their application in practice. It describes what ACT is and does, the site it operates and how that site's location within a community that sits across multiple administrative areas presents particular challenges for the democratic structures intended to ensure community representation in decision-making. Furthermore, it describes a specific political initiative – Bristol City Council's (BCC) Parks and Green Space Strategy (PGSS) – and, through discussion of the Friends of Horfield Common (FoHC) and ACT's work in response to it, demonstrates the impact of the PGSS's reliance on administrative boundaries as unquestioned foundational, building-block concepts. It describes the political and economic risks attendant on ignoring the issues presented by boundary-straddling communities – specifically, the negative impact on achieving policy aims and the associated waste of state resources. ¶

The Ardagh: location, location, location

Horfield Common is a public park and urban green space located in the north of Bristol, the largest city in South West England in the UK (see Figure 1). Bristol is approximately 190 km west of London. The city is approximately 110 km² in area, has an estimated population of 472,400⁴ and is divided into 34 wards.⁵

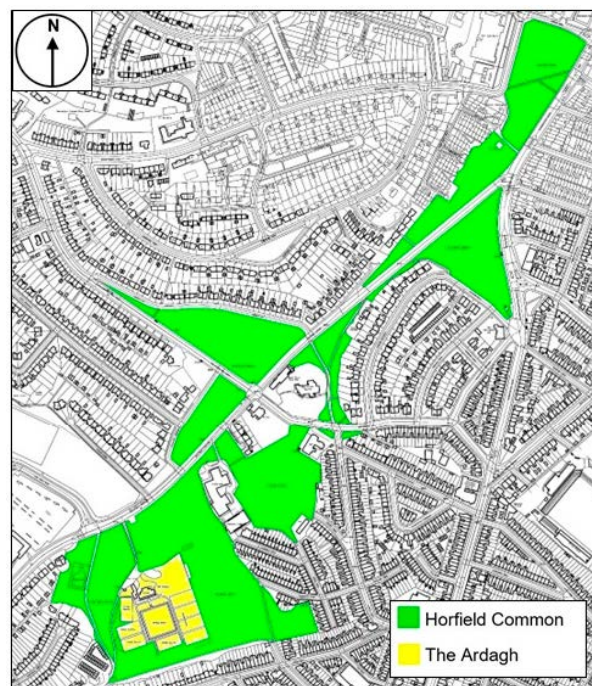
The Ardagh is a former local-authority sports-and-leisure facility built in the 1920s, located in the centre of Horfield Common (see Figure 2). ACT is a small charity that manages the Ardagh through a community asset transfer lease from BCC, secured by the charity in 2019. In the UK, a community asset transfer is a process that allows a community organisation to take over the management of publicly owned land or buildings in a way that recognises the public benefits that the transfer will bring: 'The ultimate aim of Community Asset Transfer is community empowerment – that is, to ensure that land and buildings are retained or transformed then operated for public benefit through community asset ownership and management.'⁶

Figure 1. Ward map of the city of Bristol (Unitary Authority) and nested regional map of England (Source: Data taken from © WECA, 2017. This information is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0)



The Ardagh site consists of a 14,000 m² sports-and-leisure facility, which includes 11 'tennis and multi-sports courts, a recently [partially] refurbished pavilion building with café and public toilets, public gardens, and [ACT provides] employment and volunteering opportunities'.⁷ ACT's 'charitable objects' focus explicitly on working to 'improve the conditions of life' and 'benefit the people who live and work in the Horfield Common area',⁸ although it is important to note that the boundaries of this 'area' are not geographically defined.

Figure 2. Map of Horfield Common and the Ardagh (Source: Contains OS data © Crown copyright, Friends of Horfield Common, 2015)



Why Ardagh Community Trust?

ACT grew out of the Friends of Horfield Common, a volunteer-led community-parks group that was established in 2006 by local residents who were concerned about the lack of maintenance and care for Horfield Common.⁹ Project Ardagh (which later developed into ACT) was established by the Friends group in response to the 2010 publication of BCC's Area Green Space Plan (AGSP) proposals. Project Ardagh was born out of local residents' frustration at the failure of the city's decision-making structures and systems to recognise the community surrounding Horfield Common as a community. Prior to ACT taking over responsibility for the site's management, maintenance of the Ardagh had declined over a 30-year period – a decline that consistently coincided with changes to the city's internal administrative processes and policies. For example, the site was written out of the city's sports strategy in the 1990s, terminating any potential investment in the site to improve sports provision by the local authority. Furthermore, in the UK, public parks receive no statutory funding and local authorities are facing increasing costs for a range of statutory services. This has resulted in budgets allocated to manage and maintain UK public parks by local authorities having been reduced by £690 million in the last decade.¹⁰ Therefore, ongoing public investment into the sports facility at the site was not an option for the local authority. Furthermore, maintenance of the Ardagh site and of the wider Horfield Common public park area – which were both managed by BCC's Parks Department – was increasingly limited to external subcontractors mowing the grass very short (to limit the number of times it needed doing) and the gradual removal or closure of anything that might require ongoing maintenance, such as toilets, benches, bins, flowerbeds, shrubs and trees – that is, anything that might lead to a public-liability insurance claim.

The Ardagh site had thus been in managed decline for 30 years when ACT took over the lease in 2019, following a 10-year campaign by local residents to persuade the local authority of its value. By 2022, it was reported that 'the Trust has transformed it from a neglected, tired-looking site into a thriving community hub'¹¹ and the Ardagh site now embodies the ethos of 'mixed primary uses'¹² advocated by pioneering US urban activist Jane Jacobs. Since 2010, ACT's volunteers have raised more than £550,000 from external grant funding, all of which has been invested in public facilities – including the creation of signposted walking and running routes to emphasise the wholeness of the green space despite its dissection by roads and multiple administrative boundaries. In addition to capital regeneration, ACT has transformed a dilapidated, underused local-authority asset into a vibrant community centre providing both formal and informal opportunities for all ages and abilities, and non-transactional spaces for community-generated activities that aim to meet existing and emerging needs.

ACT is now recognised by BCC as one of the city's 'Community Anchor Organisations', which have the potential to function 'as integral elements in the city's social infrastructure, to strengthen conduits of knowledge and enhance local and city governance structures'.¹³ Furthermore, the Ardagh – despite sitting outside statutorily defined community boundaries – was one of only three community asset transfers identified as 'successful' by BCC's Communities Scrutiny Commission in 2022.¹⁴ Fundamental to ACT's success has been its understanding and recognition of the community that surrounds Horfield Common as a community, rather than as a series of discrete wards. There are more than 45,000 households within a 10-minute walk of the Ardagh site and data gathered by the charity since 2019 consistently confirms that the site's users come from different parts of the city, with less than a third coming from the ward in which the Ardagh site is actually located.

Administrative boundaries in England: a brief introduction

To understand how administrative boundaries and associated decision-making impact on the Ardagh and the community it serves, it is first necessary to understand why such boundaries exist and their stated purpose. Since 2001, in order to facilitate the national census in England, the Office for National Statistics has schematised the country into a hierarchy of areas known as super output areas (SOAs)¹⁵ that function as 'building block' geographies¹⁶ for data collection, resource planning and allocation, and comparison. In order of scale, smallest to largest, these are: output areas (OAs), encompassing between 100 and 650 people; lower layer super output areas (LSOAs),¹⁷ typically made up of between four and six OAs, with an average of 1,500 residents;¹⁸ and middle layer super output areas (MSOAs), which fit within the boundaries of local authorities and have an average population of 7,200.¹⁹

Initially, SOAs were required to nest neatly within the many levels of governmental administrative boundaries, such as those that demarcate civil parishes,²⁰ wards²¹ and parliamentary constituencies.²²

However, following administrative ward-boundary changes brought in in 2007 and 2019, some LSOAs now sit across two or more wards.²³ Many parts of the country have two tiers of local government – city, borough or district councils²⁴ and county councils²⁵ – while others have just one,²⁶ into which SOAs are also required to map. Furthermore, the logics determining the boundaries of unitary authorities do not necessarily correspond with the edges of a lived city: for example, the majority of the City of Greater Bristol falls within the City of Bristol Unitary Authority, run by BCC, but a significant proportion of its north and north-eastern neighbourhoods²⁷ fall within the purview of South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority and hence, South Gloucestershire Council. All of these boundaries impact on the lives of those who dwell within the areas they map. For example, the boundary between these two unitary authorities often runs through densely populated urban areas, so that neighbours whose properties adjoin each other and who would both describe themselves as living in Bristol can live in different Authorities and have to contact different service providers to deal with any shared issues – that is, they are not statutorily considered to be part of the same community.

Another example of the dissonance created through existing structures can be found at the national level in the use of the English indices of deprivation (ID)²⁸ and the index of multiple deprivation (IMD), the most widely used ID,²⁹ which provide sets of relative measures at LSOA level based on seven different, but interrelated, domains of deprivation.³⁰ This data is used to rank all LSOAs in England – from 1, the ‘most deprived’ area, to 32,844, the ‘least deprived’.³¹ IDs are powerful policy drivers, and multiple successive UK governments have used them to identify areas in which to invest. For example, the New Labour government (1997–2010) used them explicitly to drive its flagship policy, Sure Start, ‘an area-based programme to deliver services and support to young children and their families . . . initially targeted at the 20% poorest wards in England’³² and then expanded to ‘the bottom 30% of the deprivation scale’,³³ while the current UK Conservative government’s *Levelling Up White Paper* explicitly uses the IMD, ‘together with a measure of retail exposure’,³⁴ to allocate the attentions of its High Streets Task Force. Furthermore, IMD data and LSOA rankings are utilised by local authorities to position themselves and their citizens in relation to the rest of the country; inform their policy and investment decisions; and also, as stated by BCC, when ‘bidding for national funding or resources’.³⁵

At first glance, the use of IDs seems to be a transparent and rational way of identifying deprivation and hence need; however, as detailed above, multiple LSOAs go to make up larger administrative areas and within these areas some of the most deprived LSOAs in the country can abut some of the least deprived, with residents in both being part of the same community. For example, the LSOA ‘Bristol 004D’ (Horfield Common, in the Horfield Ward) was ranked 4,934 in the 2019 IMD, placing it in the top 15 per cent most deprived areas in England, while directly abutting it is Bristol 011B (West Broadway, located in the Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze Ward), which was ranked 30,147, placing it in the top 9 per cent of the least deprived areas in the country.³⁶ Residents in these two LSOAs sit on opposite sides of the same road (Wellington Hill West), which means that neighbours with the same street address and who live in the same community are administratively conceived of as distinct and separate.

Administrative boundaries and democratic representation

The public green space Horfield Common currently sits across three city-council wards – Bishopston and Ashley Down Ward,³⁷ Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze Ward³⁸ and Horfield Ward³⁹ (see Figure 3) – and so falls under the jurisdiction of seven city councillors: three in Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze Ward and two each in the others. Despite their immediate proximity, the IMD profiles of the LSOAs that make up the three wards differ markedly: Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze Ward encompasses some of the least deprived areas in both the city and the country, with over half of its LSOAs ranked as in ‘decile 10 – least deprived’ and with a mean ranking of 90 per cent. Bishopston and Ashley Down Ward’s LSOAs’ mean ranking is 72 per cent. Horfield Ward’s mean ranking is 42 per cent⁴⁰ and it contains two LSOAs that are in the top 20 per cent most deprived areas in England.

Horfield Common is also currently bisected by parliamentary constituencies – Bristol North West⁴¹ and Bristol West⁴² (see Figure 4) – and so its community is currently represented by two members of parliament.⁴³ This constituency boundary also acts as the statutory-services boundary for police, health-service provision and so on.

It is worth noting that this plethora of political representation would seem to suggest that Horfield Common, and the community that surrounds it, would be very well represented and that local residents’ concerns and needs would be communicated repeatedly by their elected representatives. However, the

reality is that in the UK, elected representatives must limit their formal interests entirely to within the confines of the boundaries of their ward or constituency.⁴⁴ In this case, this means that councillors for the Horfield ward can formally concern themselves only with the section of the common that falls within their ward and are not permitted to consider the fate of the Ardagh (in the Bishopston and Ashley Down ward) as falling within their purview, despite hundreds of their constituents using the site daily.

Figure 3. Local-authority ward boundaries mapped across Horfield Common and the Ardagh (Source: Contains OS data © Crown copyright, Friends of Horfield Common, 2015)

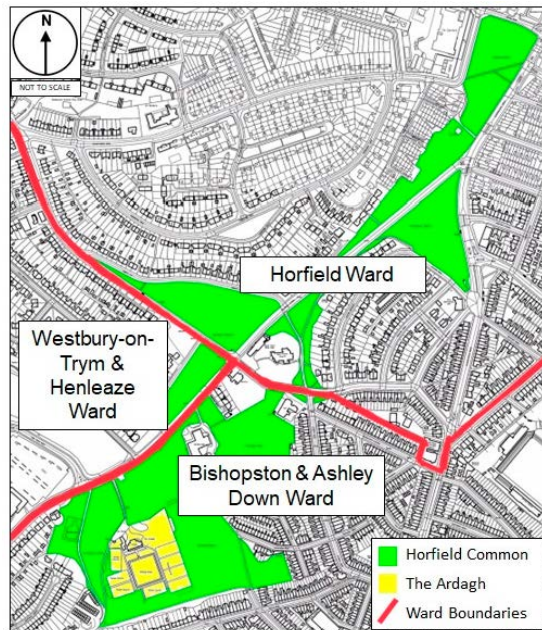
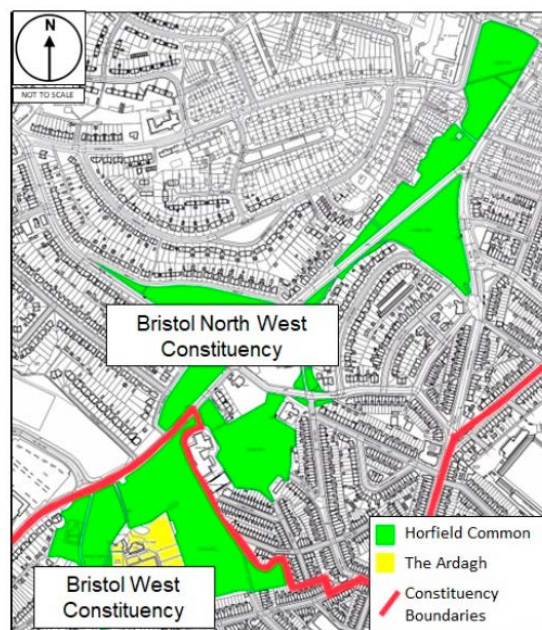


Figure 4. Parliamentary constituencies mapped across Horfield Common and the Ardagh (Source: Contains OS data © Crown copyright, Friends of Horfield Common, 2015)



Bristol City Council's Parks and Green Space Strategy

This section focuses on how administrative boundaries were employed to structure and define BCC's proposed PGSS and the accompanying statutory public consultation. Ward boundaries were employed as if they were synonymous with the lived experience of residents and communities, and were not problematised in any way.

BCC's 2008 PGSS proposed that in 'order to make necessary improvements to green spaces across the city [they would] sell off a small amount of low value green space'⁴⁵ in Bristol.⁴⁶ When the final details were published in 2010, this 'small amount' equated to over 60 public parks and green spaces⁴⁷ – or 80 hectares (200 acres) of land⁴⁸ – potentially being sold by the local authority for development.⁴⁹ These green spaces were presented as having been identified using a 'quantity standard', one that detailed 'how much green space of different types there should be'⁵⁰ in the city and that stipulated both 'citywide and locality components'⁵¹ in metre square per capita, with 'localities' being made up of two or three wards.⁵²

At the same time that the PGSS proposal was published, neighbourhood partnerships (NPs) were established.⁵³ Each neighbourhood partnership area (NPA) combined multiple wards (which corresponded with the PGSS 'localities') and NPs were intended to function as mini, local, devolved decision-making fora, on which local councillors sat alongside 'local residents, community groups, and representatives from public services'⁵⁴ to decide on local priorities and to address local issues. In 2010, these responsibilities included making decisions about local resources and sites for inclusion in the citywide proposed 'sell-off'⁵⁵ of parks and green spaces. Horfield Common sat across three NPAs: Horfield and Lockleaze NPA; Henleaze, Stoke Bishop and Westbury-on-Trym NPA; and Bishopston, Cotham and Redland NPA. Despite objections being raised by local community organisations that NPAs did 'not represent people's actual use of different [parks and green] spaces',⁵⁶ these administrative areas nevertheless remained as the defining factors for decision-making.

While NPAs could in theory make decisions that pushed back against cascaded policy aims and assumptions, there was no clear mechanism through which this could be done. There was no formal route through which community views could be communicated back up the decision-making chain in order to instigate meaningful change or the reconsideration of policy or key principles. This absence rendered these devolved decision-making structures effectively impotent in relation to influencing the outcomes of the PGSS. In addition, far from adhering to the PGSS's localities, when expedient, these boundaries were ignored. A noteworthy example of this was in 2010 when the Ardagh was relocated to the Horfield and Lockleaze NPA from the Bishopston, Cotham and Redland NPA with minimal comment.⁵⁷ Whereas the Bishopston, Cotham and Redland NPA, even with the inclusion of the Ardagh, did *not* meet the minimum standards of green space per head of the population, Horfield and Lockleaze NPA had a perceived surplus. By moving the Ardagh into this NPA, it then sat within a structure that defined the site as 'surplus'.⁵⁸

Following the change of ward boundaries for Horfield and Bishopston in 2008, Wellington Hill Playing Field (part of Horfield Common) was proposed for sale, despite Bishopston Ward not meeting the minimum space standards for green space per head of the population.⁵⁹ This is because moving the ward boundary from the east to the west edge of the playing field meant that it was included in Horfield – which was allied with Lockleaze, where it was considered that there was a surplus of green space. It is worthy of note that for the five BCC wards identified as *not* meeting the minimum standards detailed within the PGSS (including Bishopston Ward),⁶⁰ there were no proposals forthcoming to increase provision.

In their PGSS proposal document, BCC claimed to have 'carried out a large-scale public consultation on [the] strategy'⁶¹ in advance of its being published, with a total of 1,540 people⁶² participating in the research. While this may in principle have constituted a statistically significant sample of the population of Bristol at the time,⁶³ the data presented was problematic: for example, nowhere, in either the full or summary reports of that research, were the number of research respondents per ward or per NPA disaggregated; findings were only presented in terms of percentages, thus obfuscating the depth and breadth of local opinion being represented. Once the consultation process was situated within the public domain, and its processes and findings to date subjected to public scrutiny, it became apparent that the preliminary consultation and development up until that point had been limited, with parks campaigners from around the city reporting that 'people were not properly consulted and the sites [identified for disposal] were chosen based on flawed information'.⁶⁴

It is important that the administrative and political processes detailed above are not omitted from this account of the impact of administrative boundaries. BCC used ward boundaries in the PGSS as if

they were fixed, neutral and apolitical entities, rather than subject to ongoing review and change, and yet in the formal consultation documents it was evident that decision-makers responsible for developing the policy proposals had chosen to ignore such boundaries when expedient. Political decisions with real-world ramifications were presented throughout the PGSS consultation as rational and apolitical; ward boundaries were arguably employed as a form of 'depoliticizing sleight-of-hand',⁶⁵ being adhered to when useful and quietly ignored when not. To the communities affected, this 'usefulness' appeared to have little to do with the strategy's stated aims of achieving citywide equitable access to green spaces and everything to do with presenting a seemingly neutral and objective case for the sale of the spaces identified. To those communities effected, the plan's principal function appeared to be to identify areas with *too much* green space so that it could be sold.⁶⁶ Furthermore, what is revealed is that the use of, and selective adherence to, ward boundaries as a means of delimiting responsibility for decision-making and planning is an illustration of James C. Scott's 'vast and deceptive "antipolitics machine" designed to turn legitimate political questions into neutral, objective administrative exercises.'⁶⁷

Engagement with decision-making fora

Boundary-transgressing totalities, like Horfield Common, were administratively 'deterritorialized'⁶⁸ and detotalised⁶⁹ by the PGSS. The PGSS functioned to deny Horfield Common's existing community's identity and, in doing so, worked to atomise it. In order to counter this, the FoHC volunteers had to attend all of the NP meetings at which the PGSS was discussed. Given that Horfield Common sat across three NPAs, volunteers had to effectively attend the same meeting three times, build relationships with each NP committee and relevant subgroups, make the case to each group, provide data for each group and so on. What volunteers could not do, however, was to rely on communication between NPs or even subgroups within the same NP. In addition, each NP was able to set its own priorities and deadlines, which meant that volunteers not only had to attend three different sets of meetings but also meet three different – and often competing – sets of deadlines and priorities. Furthermore, NPs did not consult with one another about when they were scheduling their meetings and so they would sometimes clash, which for a small number of volunteers presented a significant logistical challenge.

No accommodation was made for the increased workload that this generated for the volunteers; formal complaints were made by the FoHC via the 2010 Equality Act, but such complaints about the unfair impact of these administrative structures on boundary-spanning communities were ignored. Formally recognising these issues would have challenged the entire administrative structure of both the proposed policy and the council, and there was no political appetite for this discussion at that time. Indeed, it could be argued that the unwillingness to examine and change the consultation process stemmed at least in part from the active use of those very processes and systems to *wear down* community opposition through a process of attrition. It is a rare team of 'very determined'⁷⁰ volunteers, capable of 'intelligent lobbying',⁷¹ who are willing and able to provide the time and effort necessary to challenge such large systems of statecraft – or, indeed, who have the skillset to do so effectively.

Again, it is important to draw attention to the all-too-often hidden cost of the use of administrative boundaries to structure public consultation processes – a cost that is paid both by communities and those bodies who are seeking to deliver projects, changes and activities that require statutory consultation.

Participatory democracy

In addition to attending all relevant BCC meetings, FoHC volunteers hosted open meetings⁷² to discuss the potential impact of the council's proposals for the whole of Horfield Common and worked to engage in genuine consultation with the local community across administrative boundaries. Without these volunteer-instigated and volunteer-run fora, there would have been no co-ordinated response from the people living and working in the area, as this was neither being facilitated nor sought as part of the formal consultation process.⁷³ Findings from these meetings were developed by volunteers into a community response that was formally submitted to the council as part of the PGSS consultation process.

BCC's PGSS proposals received 'literally thousands of responses to [the] consultation exercise'⁷⁴ – including statements,⁷⁵ petitions⁷⁶ and individual objections – constituting 'one of the biggest city-wide outcries for years'.⁷⁷ This resulted in the PGSS proposals effectively being abandoned, as it was clear that Bristol residents would not accept public parks and green spaces being sold for development in

this way. The then administration were voted out at the next election⁷⁸ and the PGSS condemned as ‘a waste of time and money’.⁷⁹

Councillors from opposition parties variously described the consultation process as a ‘sorry saga’ and a ‘fiasco’ while drawing attention to the results, which appeared ‘to be a mish-mash of accepting officer recommendations on some sites, while giving others protections for apparently political reasons, [thus undermining] any confidence that this was an impartial consultation and assessment of the sites’.⁸⁰ This latter point compounded earlier allegations that many councillors in the majority party were ‘hypocrites’ when, despite having told their constituents that they would ‘help them fight to save *their* [green] spaces’,⁸¹ they blocked attempts by a coalition of councillors from other parties to scrap the AGSP’s land-sale proposals. This led one opposition party leader to assert that those majority councillors were willing to support selling off green spaces, ‘any green spaces, provided it’s not in their ward’.⁸²

Conclusion

Administrative boundaries are ubiquitous; however, these boundaries do not necessarily correspond with living communities. What this study illustrates is that those communities that do not sit neatly within administrative boundaries are currently at risk of being, at best, disadvantaged by and, at worst, excluded from statutory processes that rely upon such boundaries for their formulation. The use of ward boundaries as unproblematised components of the PGSS’s development and decision-making structures was arguably a contributing factor to its failure; its ward-based processes effectively attempted to erase boundary-transgressing communities and assets and, in so doing, highlighted the PGSS’s disconnect from the lived experiences of those who inhabit the city. Such a disconnect comes at a high economic and political cost; over five years were spent on the PGSS – drafting it, engaging in preliminary research and then opening it up to public consultation. With the PGSS eventually being effectively abandoned, the public resources that this process consumed were essentially wasted. Furthermore, the lack of meaningful feedback mechanisms through which organisational learning can occur means that other policy proposals are at risk of repeating this flawed and wasteful process.

Organisations, institutions and/or policymakers who wish to engage in meaningful and economically efficient public consultations must acknowledge the limitations of using administrative boundaries in their thinking and recognise them as mutable elements within *de facto* heuristic processes rather than fixed, neutral entities. In addition, they must recognise the existence of administrative-boundary-transgressing communities (and assets) and work to ensure that their opinions are actively sought, and their concerns heard. Such organisations should not wait until engaging in a public consultation process to involve communities. The inclusion of community-group representatives as co-creators at the policy-design stage would forestall many of the issues that might otherwise only come to light during the public consultation stage. At the very least, transparent procedures for organisational learning need to be included whereby proposed strategies can adapt and change in response to the feedback received and which ensure that flawed processes are not repeated *ad infinitum*. Communities and community-led organisations want their localities and communities to thrive and including them in the collaborative co-creation of policies is one way in which policymakers might achieve improved outcomes in such consultations.

Notes

¹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 27.

² Boundary Commission for England, ‘About us’.

³ Boundary Commission for England, ‘Revised proposals’.

⁴ Bristol City Council, ‘Population of Bristol’.

⁵ Bristol City Council, ‘Ward profile data’.

⁶ myCommunity, ‘Understanding community asset transfer’, 2.

⁷ Holmes, *Community Buildings*, 24.

⁸ Charity Commission for England and Wales, ‘Ardagh Community Trust’.

⁹ Moore, ‘Park revamped’.

¹⁰ O’Brien, ‘Foreword’, 4.

¹¹ Holmes, *Community Buildings*, 25.

- ¹²Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 164–90.
- ¹³Nicholls et al., *Many Neighbourhoods*, 9.
- ¹⁴Holmes, *Community Buildings*, 23–5.
- ¹⁵Department of Energy and Climate Change, *MSOA/IGZ and LSOA Gas and Electricity Statistics*.
- ¹⁶Office for National Statistics. 'Population estimates by output areas'.
- ¹⁷LSOAs were constructed using data from the 2001 census and were initially constrained by local-authority wards.
- ¹⁸Department of Energy and Climate Change, *MSOA/IGZ and LSOA Gas and Electricity Statistics*, 10. In Scotland, the equivalent of an LSOA is a 'datazone'; in Northern Ireland, it is a 'super output area'.
- ¹⁹Department of Energy and Climate Change, *MSOA/IGZ and LSOA Gas and Electricity Statistics*, 10.
- ²⁰There are 10,480 parishes in England. Civil parishes are the lowest tier of local government, vary considerably in size and are run by elected parish councils; Office for National Statistics 'England'.
- ²¹A ward is an administrative area used to elect local-government councillors, who, in turn, constitute, for example, the city or county council; Office for National Statistics 'England'.
- ²²There are currently 533 parliamentary constituencies in England, with an average of 73,000 voters per constituency, and each constituency is represented by one member of parliament in the House of Commons; UK Parliament, 'Parliamentary constituencies'.
- ²³South Gloucestershire Council, *An Analysis of the English Indices of Deprivation 2019 for South Gloucestershire*.
- ²⁴City, borough and district councils are responsible for services including housing, planning applications, refuse collection and council-tax collection in their areas; Gov.uk, 'Understand how your council works'.
- ²⁵County councils are responsible for services such as education, social care, waste management, fire and public safety, transport, libraries and trading standards across counties; Gov.uk, 'Understand how your council works'.
- ²⁶Typically, metropolitan borough councils, London borough councils or unitary authorities in the shire areas, which are responsible for all local services – except in London and metropolitan areas, where 'joint authorities' such as the Greater London Authority provide services like public transport, the fire service and police; Gov.uk, 'Understand how your council works'.
- ²⁷Filton Ward, Bradley Stoke North and West wards, Stoke Park and Cheswick Ward, Frenchay and Downend Ward, and Staple Hill and Mangotsfield Ward all form part of the Bristol urban area but sit within South Gloucestershire.
- ²⁸Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Collection'.
- ²⁹Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Collection'.
- ³⁰The seven domains are: income deprivation; employment deprivation; education, skills and training deprivation; health deprivation and disability; crime; barriers to housing and services; and living-environment deprivation; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *The English Indices of Deprivation 2019*, 4.
- ³¹Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *The English Indices of Deprivation 2019*, 5.
- ³²Bouchal and Norris, *Implementing Sure Start Children's Centres*, 3.
- ³³Bouchal and Norris, *Implementing Sure Start Children's Centres*, 9.
- ³⁴HM Government, *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*.
- ³⁵Bristol City Council, *Deprivation Deciles*, 2.
- ³⁶Bristol City Council, *ID2019 Deprivation decile*.
- ³⁷Bristol City Council, 'Ward profile: Bishopston & Ashley Down Ward'.
- ³⁸Bristol City Council, 'Ward profile: Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze Ward'.
- ³⁹Bristol City Council, 'Ward profile: Horfield Ward'.
- ⁴⁰Bristol City Council, *ID2019 Deprivation decile*.
- ⁴¹UK Parliament, 'Location of Bristol North West'.
- ⁴²UK Parliament, 'Location of Bristol West'.
- ⁴³This will change in 2023, when Bishopston and Ashley Down Ward will become part of the Bristol North West Borough Constituency, meaning that for the first time Horfield Common will sit within just one parliamentary constituency; see point 51 of Boundary Commission for England, 'Initial proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South West region'.
- ⁴⁴Working for an MP, 'Protocol clarified on representing constituents'.
- ⁴⁵Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 51.

⁴⁶Initially, BCC was unwilling to commit to any percentage of the monies generated by the proposed land sales being retained for the maintenance and/or improvement of the remaining parks and green spaces. During the Bristol Parks Forum (BPF) 2007 Annual Conference, upon being asked how much of the money raised would go back into the remaining green spaces, the then council cabinet member responsible for parks and green spaces, Councillor Rosalie Walker, responded 'I cannot say how much, but at least 80%. It is still in the melting pot – 80% is better than nothing' (Bristol Parks Forum, *Green Space Provision Standards*, 6). This figure was then reduced to 50 per cent in the strategy that was considered for adoption by the cabinet in January 2008, with it being 'clear that the change from 80% to 50% had been driven by those departments in the Council who wanted more capital for other projects'; Bristol Parks Forum, *Parks & Green Spaces Strategy Funding*, 5. A technicality led to the cabinet being unable to adopt the proposed policy at this point. After much pressure from BPF, parks groups and others, the final PGSS stated that while it was the 'council's usual policy . . . that all receipts from asset disposals should go into a "single capital pot" for distribution to overall priorities . . . in this case 70% will be ring fenced for reinvestment back into parks and green spaces', Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 42 – but that this percentage would be subject to regular review.

⁴⁷BBC, 'Opposition grows to Bristol council plans to sell land'; BBC, 'Bristol open spaces consultation starts'.

⁴⁸Bristol Parks Forum, *Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Funding*, 4.

⁴⁹Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 1.

⁵⁰Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 30.

⁵¹Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 34.

⁵²Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 35.

⁵³NPs no longer exist, having been terminated in 2017 by the administration elected in 2016.

⁵⁴Neighbourly, 'Bristol's Neighbourhood Partnerships'.

⁵⁵Rkaina, "'We weren't consulted on green space plans'"; Rath, 'Making voices heard to stop parks sell-off', 3; Onions, 'Waste of time and money'.

⁵⁶Windmill Hill City Farm/NET-WORK South Bristol quoted in Bristol City Council's *Strategy for Improving Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces*, 53.

⁵⁷Bristol City Council, *Ideas and Options Paper*, 12.

⁵⁸Another example can be seen in the exclusion of Knowle West from the AGSP process; Bristol Parks Forum, *BPF Position on the P&GSS*, 1.

⁵⁹Specifically, in Redland, Cotham and Bishopston, the green space space per capita was 2.7 m² rather than the 18 m² per capita standard; Bristol City Council, *Parks and Green Space Strategy*.

⁶⁰Bristol Parks Forum, 'Green space disposals'.

⁶¹Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 1.

⁶²Bristol City Council, *Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy*, 4.

⁶³Data Commons, 'Bristol'.

⁶⁴Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 2.

⁶⁵Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, 111.

⁶⁶Rath, 'Making voices heard to stop parks sell-off'.

⁶⁷Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 111.

⁶⁸Baydar, 'Gender, public space and resistance'.

⁶⁹Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 180.

⁷⁰Holmes, *Community Buildings*, 25.

⁷¹Gary Hopkins, councillor with responsibility for targeted improvement quoted in Rath, 'Making voices heard to stop parks sell-off'.

⁷²Rkaina, "'We weren't consulted on green space plans'"; Merchant, 'Wellington Hill playing field'.

⁷³As one campaigner from the northeast of the city reported, 'The first we knew about [the proposed sale of a local green space] was reading about it in the [local newspaper] – we didn't have any leaflets through the door or anything like that'; Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 2.

⁷⁴Council leader, Barbara Janke, quoted in Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 2.

⁷⁵A 'statement' is a formal submission to the local authority's Democratic Services responding to a consultation or agenda item that must be recorded and responded to appropriately by the local authority.

⁷⁶Rath, 'Making voices heard to stop parks sell-off'.

⁷⁷Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 3.

⁷⁸BBC, 'Local elections 2013'.

⁷⁹Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 1.

⁸⁰Onions, 'Waste of time and money', 2.

⁸¹Rkaina, "'Hypocrites'", 2, emphasis added.

⁸²Rkaina, "'Hypocrites'", 2.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare the following interests: Sam Thomson is the founder CEO of ACT and Alex Franklin was one of ACT's first trustees and is now a volunteer with ACT. All efforts to sufficiently blind the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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