The 'Authoritarian Turn' in Environmental Planning? Examining the conflict over shale gas 'fracking' in England

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May 2021

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine the changes in the dominant regime within environmental planning in England. Scholars have argued that although a 'post-political regime' had come to dominate English planning at the beginning of the last decade, the ongoing economic crisis and 'perpetual austerity' have led to a rise in right wing populism and a turn towards authoritarian rhetoric and governance. The planning literature has yet to contribute to the conceptualisation of the 'authoritarian turn', and the literature on authoritarianism has yet to examine its implication for environmental planning decisions at an institutional level. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to filling these gaps.

The thesis' starting point is a tentative hypothesis that there is a turn towards more authoritarian (yet still neoliberal) planning regime following a crisis in the 'post-political'. Using a Political Discourse Analysis approach, the thesis examines the highly contested case of shale gas fracking to show how the political challenge from an anti-fracking movement has undermined the legitimacy of a 'post-political regime'. Through the analysis of: planning and policy documents and other related texts, 23 unstructured interviews with the different sides of the conflict, and non-participant observation of protest sites the thesis traces the emergence of an increasingly authoritarian planning regime in two key shale gas planning decisions (in Lancashire and North Yorkshire) and subsequent government interventions in the planning process.

The move towards the new regime is conceptualised as increasingly executive led, punitive and antagonistic, drawing on a 'state of exception' to justify central government's interventions and the bypassing of existing democratic processes. The authoritarian turn, however, is limited by legal and political provisions that govern shale gas fracking in England. The thesis shows, and provides a novel framework for analysing, the crisis of post-political planning and an ongoing authoritarian turn.

Dedicated to Paul Shelton

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND AND AIM OF RESEARCH

The background to this thesis, and a running theme through it, is crisis. The story it tells starts with an international financial crisis in 2007-8 that the U.K. was particularly exposed to, and it is written and completed amidst both a crisis of public health and what could be an economic depression the like of which the world has not seen in a century. Cutting through the economic crisis is a set of overlapping anthropogenic ecological crises that are killing off animal species, melting icecaps, shrinking lakes, displacing communities, flooding plains which disproportionately impact those who live in the Global South.

One might expect that either of these major and related crises would lead to a substantial change in the dominant social and political order in the U.K. and elsewhere, if only to revive the faltering capitalist economy, as seen in the Keynesian-welfarist and neoliberal turns of the 20th century. Instead, the story of the last decade is one in which hegemonic neoliberalism has persisted (Cahill, 2015), despite pre-emptive declarations of its demise. Economic and ecological crises have not yet caused a substantial reconfiguration of political relations. Power is even more concentrated in private hands and many governments continue to explicitly or implicitly endorse ecological destruction with meagre and ineffective commitments to reducing emissions or mitigating the current impacts of climate change.

That neoliberalism has persisted, however, does not mean that it has done so in the same way. A decade of austerity in the U.K. has hollowed out an already substantially privatised welfare-state (Peck and Theodore, 2019) and the E.U. referendum and its aftermath provided an opportunity for the construction of an aggressive, right-wing populism that animates an 'authoritarian subjectivity' (Brown, 2018). U.K. Political parties are shifting from long held positions, and a putatively neoliberal government is engaging in the sort of state interventions that would make Milton Friedman spit out his coffee. After a period of what was turned 'zombie neoliberalism' (Peck, 2010), there are signs across the globe of a substantial political change towards a new form or neoliberalism or perhaps something beyond (neo)liberalism entirely (Cahill, 2011,

Davies, 2021). Either way, scholars argue that there has been an 'authoritarian turn' in states across the world (Bruff, 2013; Bruff and Tansel, 2019).

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how the 'authoritarian turn' is developing at an institutional level, and what that means for our understanding of that institution which is partly responsible for responding to the ecological crisis - the planning system. I focus specifically on the English planning system, which has been identified as "both an object and subject of neoliberalism" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2013: 10), insofar as English planning reproduces neoliberal space (Gunder, 2010) whilst also facing neoliberalisation of its practices. The English planning system has been increasingly orientated towards the objectives of supporting the market and private enterprise since the 1980's, through the rolling back of regulations and rolling out new forms of governance through the different phases of neoliberalisation (Peck and Tickell, 2002). The English planning system now stands upon the verge of its most radical overhaul since 1947, subject to a new wave of neoliberal reforms in response to overlapping crises. This thesis explores the *political crisis* which is played out within the planning system amidst the ecological and economic crises; of how planning is modified and contested as an institution and how this relates to authoritarian shifts in neoliberal statecraft.

The thesis makes three contributions to understanding the current trend of neoliberal reforms and crisis-management. It firstly examines the breakdown of the dominant regime of planning developed through the New Labour period of government as part of the 'Third Way' approach to neoliberalisation. The 2008 financial crisis followed by austerity and a renewed 'rolling back' (Peck and Tickell, 2002) of the State from its welfare functions have deeply undermined the capacity and legitimacy of what the Labour administration termed 'spatial planning' to deliver developments in a publicly acceptable way, in what was critically termed a 'post-political regime' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011). The thesis identifies, specifically, the features of this regime and its breakdown through empirical research into the case of the shale gas fracking controversy in England and through a detailed study of two particular planning decisions in Lancashire and North Yorkshire. In doing so, it contributes to a debate within planning literature on the suitability of 'post-politics' as framework for assessing planning practice (Legacy *et al.*, 2019). It shows how the crisis within the 'post-political regime, symptomatic of a wider

collapse of what I term 'technocratic-progressive' neoliberalism, has opened up new space for further anti-democratic reform.

The second contribution is to provide an account of the transition between the post-political, 'Third Way' practices of planning to an increasingly authoritarian set of practices developed in part in reaction to the success of the anti-fracking movement in challenging shale gas. This movement would appear to have won; the government having abandoned fracking. Nevertheless, the thesis shows both a direction of travel and the connections between features of the post-political and authoritarian. The thesis addresses a gap within planning literature (with the first two contributions), where there has been criticism of the 'post-political' critique without a clear alternative critical approach being advanced. It follows a call from Eraydin and Frey (2019) to analyse current cases of politicisation within planning and the state reaction to this.

The third contribution of the thesis is to examine the new regime emerging for planning. I draw upon a relatively new literature which argues the current moment is one of a turn towards an 'authoritarian neoliberalism' (Bruff, 2016; Bruff and Tansel, 2019; Peck and Theodore, 2019). The turn is not one of radical reinvention, but rather a reanimation of the "authoritarian populism" (Hall, 1978; 1985) in arguably a more virulent and powerful form. The turn towards 'authoritarian neoliberalism' is manifested in the use of austerity as a disciplinary method, and more radical State interventions to support capital beginning with the bank bailouts in 2008. These changes echo the 'authoritarian statism' (Poulantzas, 2000) that pre-figured the neoliberal turn, and my thesis identifies the emerging features of state practice in a period where authoritarian rhetoric has only increased.

The thesis therefore provides an institutional level account of another attempt at "experimental statecraft" (Peck and Theodore, 2015) for a reconfigured neoliberal order, one which may presage a post-neoliberal shift. The research is driven by a tentative hypothesis that:

there is a turn towards a more authoritarian (yet still neoliberal) planning regime following a crisis in the 'post-political'

When I started to examine the breakdown of the 'post-political' in the fracking case, it became evident that there were signs of a new regime emerging in planning.

Further exploration of the literature on 'authoritarian neoliberalism' led me to develop the above hypothesis. Following this tentative hypothesis, what I find is a failed attempt to institute an authoritarian planning approach which is thwarted by an effective and organised political movement and the limitations of the law and geology. This authoritarian approach, however, is also present in the latest reforms to the planning system proposed in the summer of 2020 which have been framed as a response to the coronavirus pandemic. In light of these developments, I can say that the thesis provides a critical account (through one small window) of the breakdown of the 'Third Way', post-political regime for planning, how this facilitated an 'authoritarian turn', and the experiment in institutionalising what may become the dominant regime of planning and other areas of the State. Scholars have once again begun to suggest neoliberalism has had its day (Cooper, 2020); what this thesis finds in the planning system caught between technocratic and authoritarian poles of neoliberalism, albeit with some signs that something beyond neoliberalism new may be emerging. Ultimately, I find a new and more aggressive approach to keeping things broadly the same – vis à vis economic and ecological relations.

In doing so, the thesis responds to a call for research into precisely how governments are reconfiguring the state in response to insurgent authoritarian populism and continued overlapping crises (Bruff and Tansel, 2019). Research into the 'authoritarian turn' has yet to examine shifts in environmental governance generally, or of planning systems specifically. My research begins to fill this gap by focusing on the environmental planning practice for shale gas 'fracking' in England, an example of a highly contested form of extraction with implications for greenhouse gas emissions.

The following sections will explain the 'fracking' case study in more detail and the reason for its selection, the approach to exploring the hypothesis set out above and the structure of the thesis.

1.2   The Shale Gas Revolution and the Authoritarian Turn

The analytical focus of the research is on the logics and practices of the English planning system which will be discussed further in the next section. Here, I introduce the case study of shale gas fracking. I will set out how this case study intersects with

the shifts in neoliberalisation and becomes such a contested issue for the planning system – highlighting three more contributions the thesis makes.

'Fracking' refers to a relatively new technology for extracting deep lying 'shale' oil and gas. The full name for the technique is 'high pressure, horizontal, hydraulic slickwater 'fraccing' (the original industry shorthand for 'fracturing'), and it has been employed from the mid 2000's onwards in the U.S.A. This process, now known informally as 'fracking', has been a key reason why the U.S has gone from being import dependent for gas and oil to the world's largest producer of both (International Energy Agency, 2018). As a form of 'extreme energy' production, fracking is a prime example of how, despite the widely acknowledged problem of anthropogenic global warming, the same extractive economic and ecological relations continue to be reproduced once there is a profit incentive to do so (Malm, 2016).

The rapid expansion of the fracking industry in the U.S. has had significant social impacts (Willow *et al.*, 2014; Willow and Wylie, 2014) been linked to health problems (Finkel and Hays, 2016) as well as environmental and geopolitical consequences (Blackwill and O'Sullivan, 2014). For this reason, it has been the focus of significant political contestation in the U.S. (Majumdar, 2018).

Fracking has proliferated across the globe and been the subject of academic attention and controversy in each nation it appears in (Evensen, 2018). In many cases, the industry has been met with protests and been supported with state violence (Evensen and Stedman, 2018). Nations as diverse as Argentina (Riffo, 2017), Algeria (Aczel *et al.*, 2018) and Romania (Vesalon and Creţan, 2015) have experienced major public shale gas/oil controversies. Others, such as France, moved to ban the process before it had really got close to developing in response to pre-emptive demonstrations (Keeler, 2016).

Fracking makes a suitable case study for investigating planning as a state institution responsible for managing the environment, because as a process it is a new method of continuing fossil fuel extraction which demands a state reaction (e.g. new regulations), usually in response to political resistance. The U.K. Government had to make a decision on whether to exploit its gas reserves and a new fossil fuel industry in spite of outstanding international climate agreements. It had to intervene in

favour of either the anti-fracking groups or the industry. Further, the emergence of fracking as an issue in England from 2008 follows the financial crisis and its aftermath right up until the government introduced a moratorium for the process in December 2019. The fracking case in England tracks the period in which the literature I review in Chapter 2 identifies a crisis for technocratic-progressive neoliberalism and the beginnings of an authoritarian turn, allowing the thesis to identify changes in planning as a state institution over this time period.

As well as the temporal fit, spatially England is a suitable case study, as a neoliberalised state that has historically been quick to adopt neoliberal reform. English planning specifically was identified as a 'post-political regime' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011), and research on an authoritarian turn draws upon English case studies and examples amongst others (e.g. Bruff and Wohl, 2016).

As this thesis will show, the contestation of shale gas fracking in England challenges not only the principle of this specific industry but the suitability of the existing environmental planning practice to make decisions that adequately account for ecological crisis. The U.K. government consistently intervenes to make the planning process more amenable to fracking. When faced with resistance, the state response is to experiment with authoritarian practices. In doing so, the thesis makes a fourth contribution to knowledge by providing a critical perspective to the debate on fracking in the U.K. by articulating the fracking conflict as a political and hegemonic struggle in which state institutional practice is challenged. The thesis tells an original story of the resistance to fracking and its wider implications, providing a different sense of how the English fracking story has unfolded to other research. There is a fifth contribution here too - the thesis brings to bear the critical approach of 'authoritarian neoliberalism' on both the planning system and contestations over land and ecology in the U.K. To do so, I develop a novel analytical framework, which I will now outline.

1.3   APPROACH TO ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I focus in this thesis specifically on shale *gas* fracking (rather than oil) as this has proved most controversial in part because the U.K. Government claimed gas was a necessary part of a transition to a low carbon economy, with gas acting as a 'bridge'

fuel (Cotton, 2015). I approach the contestation over shale gas fracking by conceptualising it as a discursive conflict which is processed by the planning and regulatory system. On one side of the conflict was an anti-fracking movement made up of environmentalists, those who live near fracking sites, NGOs and political parties; on the other was the nascent industry, its representatives and the government (Bomberg, 2017b). Both sides competed to hegemonize their own articulations of shale gas fracking, and the planning system had to mediate and manage the discursive conflict when making decisions on specific sites. The thesis assumes that

".... planning processes, like governance and management processes generally, are active social processes in which social meanings are constructed through discourse and language, and in which social practices are shaped and given legitimacy." (Healey, 1998: 1543)

The focus of the analysis is the logics and practices of the English planning system. To analyse this system, the thesis draws upon the approach developed by Glynos and Howarth (2007), which identifies the rules that govern a practice or regime according to social, political and fantasmic logics. Drawing on a critical literature review, I develop an analytical framework for identifying the different logics of both a 'post-political' and an 'authoritarian' regime for planning. As Figure 1.1 shows, this approach starts from a problematisation (of the planning system) and the generation of the tentative hypothesis[1] I introduced above. The use of 'logics' allows me to connect the wider theoretical understandings of an authoritarian turn with the specific practices of planning in the fracking case.

The thesis deconstructs texts and interviews and presents a reconstruction of the shale gas conflict according to a Political Discourse Theory (Howarth, 2018) derived from Laclau and Mouffe (1985). Through a focus on two local authority decisions in Lancashire and North Yorkshire as well as national level policy making and debate. The Lancashire case covers two decisions (Preston New Road and Roseacre Wood) and the subsequent appeals, the North Yorkshire case is of one decision for a site in

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[1] I explain this further in Chapter 3, but the 'tentative hypothesis' is a theory driven hypothesis that drives the research and is modified throughout. It is not something to be proven/disproven in the purely positivist sense.

Kirby Misperton. I identify the logics of the planning practice in relation to the analytical framework through analysing how the 'rules' of planning practice govern decision on fracking. I produce a critical explanation of the planning process in the fracking case. I argue that these 'rules' are shifting towards a more authoritarian regime for planning, yet in the fracking case the shift is limited by legal, political and geological factors. The logics are not institutionalised in the shale gas case; instead the case study shows an experiment in practices the logics of which are reproduced in ongoing planning reforms.

Figure 1.1 - Five steps of political discourse analysis (Howarth *et al.*, 2016: 100)

Five Connected Steps	
1. Problematization	Constructing the object of study as a problem, at requisite level of abstraction and complexity.
2. Retroduction	Production and testing of a tentative hypothesis to account for problematized phenomenon by a to-and-fro engagement with empirical data.
3. Logics	Content of explanation: capturing the rules that govern regimes or practices, as well as the conditions and objects that make such rules possible. Focus on: *social logics* that characterize a practice or regime; *political logics* of equivalence and difference that account for emergence of practice or regime and its contestation and transformation; *fantasmatic logics* that account for the way particular practices and regimes 'grip' subjects.
4. Articulation	Process of linking together a plurality of logics in order to account for problematized phenomenon, modifying each element in the process.
5. Critique	Employing political and fantasmatic logics to explain and expose the contingency of processes and relations. Political logics reveal exclusions and foreclosures at moments of regime institution. Ideological closure is evident in fantasmatic narratives that naturalize relations of domination.

The empirical research is guided by the following three questions:

1- *How did the State initially respond to the political contestation of shale gas? To what extent is this indicative of a 'post-politics'?*

2- *What logics underlie the decision making on shale gas? How are these 'logics' of planning practice articulated and challenged within the decision-making process?*

3- *What signs are there of an 'authoritarian turn' within planning? What are the limitations to the turn in the case of fracking?*

These questions reflect the development of the framework and the tentative hypothesis. The retroductive approach, explained in Chapter 3, is a post-positivist way of conducting qualitative research where the driving hypothesis of the research is modified through the project rather than proven/disproven. Such an approach is

particularly useful when researching a dynamic case study that is developing alongside the production of the analysis. When I started the project, there were signs of an authoritarian turn which became clearer during the research project, modifying the hypothesis towards a critical explanation of the changing regimes within the institution of planning helped to explain the conflicts within the fracking case. A final contribution of the thesis is to provide an original analytical and methodological operationalisation of these planning 'regimes' which can be used to critique planning and other state institutions. I develop mid-range concepts that link the more general theories of changes in state practice with empirical cases.

To summarise, the thesis makes six contributions to literature following this hypothesis and approach. The first three contributions are: to show a crisis in the post-political regime, that in the fracking case the planning system is caught between two related but different sets of practices, and to identify the features of an emerging authoritarian regime for planning. It also provides a critical telling of the story of fracking in the UK, it brings a new critical perspective to bear on planning (authoritarian neoliberalism) and as I have set out above it provides an original analytical and methodological framework for analysing practices within planning and state institutions.

The findings of the research are significant to several fields, consistent with the cross-disciplinary approach to the research. The identification of an authoritarian turn challenges planning scholars to confront the darker side of neoliberalised planning systems, particularly those who equate deregulation and privatisation with some notion of freedom. For those who research the state, as scholars of Politics or Political Economy, it also highlights the contested nature of the 'authoritarian turn' as a reactionary form of neoliberalisation that incorporates the antagonistic aspect of right-wing populism. The thesis is also of significance to those interested in political ecology by highlighting the contradiction between claims of decarbonisation and the time and effort put into fighting citizens over new extractive projects. The anti-fracking movement have been immensely successful in resisting shale gas , but an important aspect of the authoritarian turn so far is that it has filled a defensive role – its function is to either drain or crush opposition to the status quo rather than build anything new.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis sets out two critical positions on neoliberalisation and their features: the post-political and the authoritarian. These two positions, which bring together different theoretical perspectives, inform an analytical framework. This framework is supported by Political Discourse Theory and is the basis for analysing the case study. I draw upon data collected from texts, unstructured interviews and non-participant observations. The case study is split into three 'phases', and I analyse each to show the shift in logics over time.

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 critically reviews the relevant theoretical literature as well as providing the historical context for the study. It examines the neoliberalisation of planning in the U.K., from the crisis of the 1970s through to the reforms of the Coalition government in 2011-12. The review covers both planning literature as well as the theoretical approaches to understanding neoliberalism, distinguishing two poles of neoliberalism: the 'technocratic-progressive' and the 'authoritarian-conservative'. It finishes on a problematisation of 'post-politics' as the planning regime of technocratic-progressive neoliberalism, through the recent scholarship on 'authoritarian neoliberalism'.

Chapter 3 draws upon the literature review to develop an analytical framework for analysing the case study. It sets out the theoretical, ontological and epistemological basis for the research.

Chapter 4 explains the methodological approach, how data was collected and analysed and how the empirical chapters are presented. It also addresses the ethical issues of the project.

Chapter 5 addresses the first research question, focusing on the initial government response to shale gas fracking and the development of the anti-fracking movement.

Chapter 6 covers the two local authority decisions and appeal, providing a detailed analysis that answers the second research question. It then analyses the inquiry into the one of the local decisions (Lancashire) that dislocates the post-political regime and signals a turn towards the authoritarian.

Chapter 7 answers the third research question, by showing the failed attempt to institutionalise an authoritarian planning practice in the fracking case.

Chapter 8 outlines the contribution to academic literature, as well as relating the fracking experiment to the current planning reforms and highlighting avenues for future research.

2   NEOLIBERALISM, POST-POLITICS AND AUTHORITARIAN TENDENCIES IN U.K. PLANNING: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"...the urban has no worse enemy than urban planning and "urbanism", which is capitalism's and the state's strategic instrument for the manipulation of fragmented urban reality and the production of controlled space." (Lefebvre, 1976: 15)

The understanding that guides this thesis is that there are two poles of neoliberalism, which the UK state has shifted between over time: the 'authoritarian-conservative' and the 'technocratic-progressive'. Since the neoliberal turn in the 1970's, governments (as well as international governance bodies) across the world have swung between both of these poles and developed particular modes or 'regimes' of governance within these broad types appropriate to the local and international context. This chapter discusses the features of these two different poles through a review of different literatures on the neoliberalisation of the U.K. state. Literature on neoliberalism tends to identify something like these two poles, however different theoretical perspectives give different terms. I introduce these two terms to cover these two broad orientations of neoliberalism, as the ideological basis for state practice and 'regimes' of planning. The term 'poles' captures that there is some continuity in neoliberalisation from 1979, however under distinct ideological orientations with particular state practices and regulatory approaches. . Neoliberalism as a term covers the turn towards more a market oriented politics and political economy following the economic crisis within individual states (like the UK), as well as internationally (through bodies like the IMF) towards economic liberalisation. It is 'neo' in that it breaks with classical liberalism as there is a more interventionist role for the state, yet also breaks from the liberalism of the post-war period in that there is a significantly reduced role for direct state provision of good and services. This Chapter gives more specific content to what neoliberalism is in the British context, as neoliberalism is understood as variegated and context specific (Peck and Theodore, 2019).

The chapter focuses primarily on the neoliberalisation of the planning system in the U.K. and England[2] since the neoliberal turn in the late 1970's. Neoliberalisation is a process that is realized across the wider State and its different facets can be seen within reforms of the planning system. The chapter also provides the historical context for the study and allows me to judge the novelty of an authoritarian turn in planning. The 'poles' of neoliberalism are dominant in different periods, the 'authoritarian-conservative' capturing the initial neoliberal turn (and perhaps the last few years) and the 'technocratic-progressive' the hegemony 'end of history' period from the early 1990's.

From the historical-theoretical narrative, I identify the different 'regimes' of planning and governance related to each pole. I problematize contemporary conceptions of planning and the state under as 'post-political' by drawing on a recent characterisation of the (re)turn of authoritarian neoliberalism. I argue that a 'post-political regime' was particular to technocratic-progressive neoliberalism, and this problematisation supports the tentative hypothesis introduced in chapter 1 that planning is undergoing an authoritarian turn. The conceptual tools of 'post-politics' and 'authoritarian neoliberalism' are used to inform the analytical framework for researching planning practice in the shale gas fracking case set out in Chapter 3. The framework sets out the institutional regimes of the two different poles of neoliberalisation based on the critical review of the 'post-political' and 'authoritarian' literatures in this chapter.

The approach to understanding the changes to the neoliberal state starts from the assumption that there has been a long and deep process of neoliberalisation, one that is characterised by periods of 'roll-back' and 'roll-out' reforms of regulatory frameworks (Peck and Tickell, 2002). 'Roll-back' neoliberalism is the "the active destruction or discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions" (Ibid: 37), and 'roll out' is "the purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations" (Ibid). The chapter draws upon these dynamics to tell a story of 'experimental statecraft' (Peck and Theodore, 2015), in which the planning system goes through a set of rollback/rollout reforms to find the ideal land-use regulatory

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[2] The research focuses on a case study of the English planning system however this only really becomes distinct following devolution to the constituent national governments of the U.K. from 1997 - up until then the U.K. planning system is the focus of the discussion.

system for capitalist reproduction that also maintains public legitimacy and serves selected citizen priorities. The problem with the rollout/back distinction is that it does not always fully capture other aspects of neoliberalism, e.g. the use of populist rhetoric to maintain consent for changes to state practices as well as targeting particular enemies (Hall, 1985). These wider political and ideological features are important for considering an 'authoritarian turn', which is another attempt to find an institutional fix for yet another capitalist crisis, one heavily imbued with populist positioning. The 'technocratic-progressive' and 'authoritarian-conservative' are used here to link the state-regulatory changes (roll back/roll out) with wider political-cultural shifts.

The chapter draws on the roll out/back conception of neoliberalisation, as well as work from Marxist political economy, Gramscian political theory and Foucauldian governmentality to provide an account of changes in the state and the planning system since the neoliberal turn. Planning has developed as "both an object and a subject of neoliberalism" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2013: 10), its practices and policies changed as a means of constructing a neoliberal space of private over public led development (Gunder, 2010). Contemporary theories of planning in the UK have tended to focus on the politics of planning as a negotiated process which some scholars critique as 'post-political'. I suggest at the end of this chapter that the more authoritarian tendency of planning captured in the Lefebvre quote above is becoming more prominent, as part of a wider 'authoritarian turn'.

Figure 2.1 below provides a broad outline of the neoliberalisation of the state and planning in the U.K, leading to the period this thesis focuses on. This chapter follows this periodisation, Figure 2.1 is included here to help orientate the reader rather than as a comprehensive summary. My periodisation follows that of Davies (2016), who marks out combative, normative and punitive phases of neoliberalism and I draw upon his work through the Chapter. I choose to use different terms that are both more useful to understanding planning and which I think more clearly mark out the British states actions over these period, but I identify many of the same features.

This chapter starts with a brief discussion in 2.1.1 of the formal institution of the planning system as part of the 'post-war consensus'. The post-war planning system was targeted for reform as part of the neoliberal turn and reform under the Conservative government from 1979, oriented towards authoritarian-conservative

neoliberalism. Section 2.2 then discusses the 'technocratic-progressive' pole of neoliberalism. The tensions caused by the initial waves of neoliberal reform led the Conservatives to what was termed a 'new consensus' for planning. The 'new consensus' was formed the basis for planning reform undertaken the New Labour government from 1997. Labour set out their own 'spatial planning' reforms, which were critiqued as 'post-political'. I identify the features of such a regime in 2.2.3. Section 2.3 discusses the extent to which the Coalition government's planning reforms from 2010 onwards can be seen as a 'post-political regime', following the financial crisis and the implementation of 'austerity'. Section 2.4 then introduces theoretical and empirical work on an 'authoritarian turn' within contemporary neoliberalism and hypothesises that we may soon see an authoritarian regime for planning in England. In 2.5, I summarise and set out the problematisation and tentative hypothesis for the research.

Figure 2.1 Summary of the periods and Phases of neoliberalisation in UK state and planning (2time periods are a rough approximation)

1947-1979 Post-war consensus	1979-1993 Authoritarian-Conservative	1993-2008 Technocratic - Progressive	2008-now Authoritarian (re)turn?
Keynsian Welfare State	Authoritarian populism	Social demcoratic/neoliberal conjuncture (Third Way)	Financial crisis 200/78
Bretton Woods, fixed currency	Strong State/free market	Roll-out of new market-supportive network governance forms: public-private partnership	Perpetual austerity (public sector cuts)
Crisis in 1970s: Authoritarian statism- Proffessionalis-ation / elitism	Roll back of Keynsian state: privatisation	Neoliberal governmentality for public services i.e. modernisation	Disciplinary action for citizens and problematised state actors
Broad cross party consensus on e.g. housebuilding	Disruptive early experiments in neoliberal governance: deregulation	Re-regulation of planning and governance	Right wing populism: Brexit
Creation of national planning system with discretionary aspect	Entrepreneurial subject	**'Spatial planning' as post-political**	Attack on norms of democracy
	-Planning: Modification, bypassing the system and simplifying the regime		State of exception?
			Localism and centralisation tension for planning, alongside deregulation

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2.1 AUTHORITARIAN-CONSERVATIVE NEOLIBERALISM: FROM THE 'POST-WAR CONSENSUS' TO THE NEOLIBERAL TURN IN PLANNING

I begin this section with a brief overview of the Keynesian Welfare State, and the development of a national, public planning system from 1947 onwards to contextualise the neoliberal turn. The planning system retains core aspects of its post-war formation at the time of writing. I then turn to focus on the 'neoliberal turn' in the British state as crisis response, and the critiques of the post-war planning system mobilised in support of planning reform in this period. I introduce different understandings of neoliberalisation from Marxist political economy, Gramscian political theory and that which documents the role of a 'neoliberal thought collective'. I show how each perspective reveals important aspects of neoliberalisation throughout the chapter. The Thatcher government from 1979 was one of the leaders in neoliberal reform in the wealthy, imperialist nations and represented the 'authoritarian-conservative' pole of neoliberalism. Davies terms this 'combative', in that it followed a Schmittian 'friend-enemy' distinction (2016: 125), with the enemy defined as "socialism", a term that was in practice extended to refer to most of the Keynesian welfare state as well as the fading power of the USSR.

2.1.1 Planning in the Keynesian Welfare State

State planning in the U.K. developed out of a set of responses to public health and (relatedly) housing problems. The expansion of industrial capitalist production had led to rapid urbanisation through the 19th century, and this had brought problems of sanitation and disease as well as smog and pollution. These problems were broached initially by individual capitalists who made whole new towns for their workers. In the early 20th century, it was acknowledged that government had a role to play in legislating and intervening for 'town planning' by setting minimum standards for housing and subsidising housing provision for workers (Cullingworth *et al.*, 2015). Alongside the increase in national and local government intervention, there also emerged utopian movement of 'garden cities', which would come to provide an influential ideal-type model for urban planning in both the U.K. and the British Empire (as well as other nations) to 'improve' (in some cases in explicitly eugenicist terms) the working classes and colonial subjects (Voigt, 1989; Home, 1990). British urban planning practices were developed domestically as well as through expanding

colonial government – with key figures like Patrick Geddes working in both contexts (for a general account see Home, 2013).

Following the Second World War, urban planning was formalised and became a key institution of the interventionist, post-war Keynesian Welfare State and the period of 'embedded liberalism' (Ruggie, 1982). The Keynesian Welfare State was premised on the Bretton Woods system (for Western nations at least) of fixed currency to gold reserves which had made the United States (who had the largest gold reserves) the de-facto lender of choice. Marshall Plan loans, alongside continued extraction of wealth from Empire and the 'Commonwealth', allowed the U.K. to invest in public goods with the aim of reforming and rejuvenating the capitalist economy through maintaining and expanding international trade (Harvey, 2005: 11). Polanyi (2001) identified that markets had become 'dis-embedded' from society through the 'laissez-faire' capitalism of the early 20th century, and that a process of re-embedding within a new set of social relations was required. In the U.K., the post-war Labour government instituted the Keynesian Welfare State to re-embed capitalism by placing limits on the freedom of capital to flow transnationally and taxing the rich to pay for public services. This new set of social relations was a more egalitarian, social democratic version of liberal capitalism.

The Barlow Report released during WW2 concluded that there was a need for a central authority to manage the strategic planning of towns and cities, managing their growth and overall design with the aim balancing out regional inequalities. The destruction of urban areas during the war itself further fed into both the need and opportunity to redevelop towns and cities through large-scale public-sector intervention (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 21). The Labour government (1945-51), a centre left party funded by trade unions and elected on a substantial majority for the first time, introduced a wholesale programme of state intervention into the provision of public goods, national ownership of utilities and industry, transport and communications and the first national planning system (Pelling and Reid, 1996).

The major piece of legislation for the formation of the planning system was the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. The Act effectively nationalised the right to develop and use land, making planning policy subject to the decisions of elected Members of Parliament and a significantly reduced number of local planning authorities (Davies, 1998: 136). The Act was particularly concerned with

'betterment', the capture of increased land value for the public (through a development charge) and the compensation for decreased value for private landowners from public planning interventions (Cullingworth *et al.*, 2015: 29). Land itself was not nationalised, which meant subsequent governments were able to water down charges so that land value changes from planning interventions were (and still are) generally captured by private rather than public interests (Ibid: 212).

The system that grew from the 1947 Act was made up of both development control and plan-making and differed from most European models at the time in its discretionary nature (Booth, 1999). Local authorities had a duty to create development plans as well as making decisions on whether proposed developments were acceptable, giving them substantial new powers. Remarkably, the basic structural provisions of the Act are still in place (in Spring of 2021), even if the principles, policy and governance of planning have changed significantly (Campbell and Marshall, 2000).

The period following the Act saw the formation of planning as a fully professional activity, as local authorities took to producing their new development plans (Davoudi and Pendlebury, 2010). Successive governments promised mass house building programmes, and there was a turn towards modernist urban design in cities; particularly those heavily bombed during the war (Hall, 2014). The post-war period saw the development of the greenbelt to limit city expansion, the increased need to integrate roads for motor vehicles into local and national planning, major public housing expansion into new estates, the creation of 'new towns' and with all of these came a higher status and greater powers for planners (Cullingworth et al., 2015).

Across Labour and Conservative governments there was a broad similarity in planning and urban policy as part of the so-called 'post-war consensus' where markets were supported and regulated by a social-democratic state (Marquand *et al.*, 1988). Some scholars have challenged whether there was truly a consensus (Pimlott *et al.*, 1989) however for the purpose of this thesis it is enough to say that urban planning formed part of a welfare state system based on regular intervention (particularly on housing and transport) that persisted across successive governments and that was mirrored in other comparable countries in Europe and the U.S.

By the late 1960's the planning system faced several challenges. It was criticised for failing to conserve architectural heritage and the countryside, and faced calls for more public participation (Ward, 1994). Newly developed urban areas were identified as having high levels of poverty. The economic crisis of the early 1970's exacerbated this, and funding cuts to local government left them unable to realise their development plans (Davies, 1998).

Planners themselves became targets of public criticism, alongside a wider critique of economic planning and state intervention (Davies, 1998: 142). Planners were identified in the press as out of touch elites for the top-down nature of their practice (Ward, 1994: 210) and as troublesome socialists ruining British heritage with modernist ideals (Tewdwr-Jones, 2005) as well as being blamed for ruining rural villages by too readily permitting urban expansion (Hall, 2014). The planner became the perfect example of the sort of interfering "middle class socialist" Hayek (1944: 67) identified within social democratic states – unwittingly leading society on the 'road to serfdom'. The critiques of planning therefore mirrored critiques of the Keynesian welfare state more generally, which gained traction in the economic crises of the 1970s and were articulated in the 'neoliberal turn' Hayek and others inspired.

2.1.2 Global Economic Crisis (#1) and the Neoliberal Turn in the State

In 1971, the U.S government effectively abandoned the 'Bretton Woods' system of international exchange by cancelling the direct convertibility of dollars into gold. The 'petrodollar' crisis followed in 1973, which further exacerbated inflation in oil-importing nations (Harvey, 2005). The U.K. went into a recession from 1973-75, characterised by the 'stagflation' of rising prices and flat productivity and growth, and unemployment increased (Leaker, 2009). Major industrial action ran through this period as the cost of living increased and workers demanded better pay to compensate (Baccaro and Howell, 2017).

The initial state response was to turn towards deeper and more drastic state interventions in response to the crisis, which Poulantzas (2000) characterised as 'authoritarian statism'. He argued that there was a growing contradiction between the British (and other) state's ability to organise the capitalist economy and to provide political representation. Capitalist production became more global and interconnected and firms from the U.K. began to outsource production to nations

with cheaper labour costs and lower taxes. The interventionist, Keynesian *nation* state was unable to intervene in the roots of a *global* economic crisis (Poulantzas, 2000: 236). Reflexive Keynesian responses to the crisis like e.g. increasing wages, cutting interest rates, borrowing to spend actually exacerbated the economic problems as manufacturing jobs in particular moved offshore and a post-Fordist economy began to develop in the U.K. with a shift towards service sector work (Jessop, 1991).

From the more structural-Marxist perspective of Jessop and Harvey, 'neoliberalism' is primarily how we understand the set of state responses to the crises of the 1970s both within the U.S. and U.K., as well as internationally to restructure the global capitalist economy (Harvey, 2001; Jessop, 2002; Harvey, 2005). Global institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank were repurposed from their role in the Bretton Woods system, to enforce neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on crisis hit nations like Mexico and Argentina in return for desperately needed credit. These 'adjustments' meant these nations (largely in the Global South) were compelled to reduce trade barriers and marginal tax rates, privatise state enterprises, reduce fiscal deficits and adopt free floating currency exchanges: this set of development prescriptions would become known as the 'Washington Consensus' (Harvey, 2005). The most striking early example of the implementation of this neoliberal paradigm of political economy was in Chile in 1974, when a CIA engineered coup overthrew elected leader Salvador Allende to install an authoritarian dictatorship that implemented sweeping neoliberal reforms as opponents were tortured and killed (Klein, 2008: 63-6). From this early point, there was a distinct authoritarian side to neoliberalism.

The U.K. was not subject to an external violent intervention, nor was it treated to a comprehensive SAP when it required its own IMF bailout in the late 1970s. Instead, the neoliberal turn in the U.K. occurred through consent; in the minimal sense that the Thatcher government were elected promising to implement liberalising economic reforms: tax cuts for the rich, deregulation, public spending cuts, deflationary monetary policy, privatisation of state assets and attacks on trade unions (Jessop, 2015).

The neoliberal turn was not merely one of economic crisis-management though. The Chile example, and the SAPs, show that 'neoliberalism' is historically bound up with

authoritarian and violent interventions. Violent interventions were also part of the neoliberal turn in Britain, through racist policing and colonial conflicts in the Falklands/Malvinas, and whilst these were not new to British politics Conservative politicians articulated the particular enemies (racialised Others, the Argentinians) as part of an 'authoritarian populism' (Hall, 1978; Hall, 1985). This populism was combined with the structural economic liberalisation as crisis response, which a more economistic view can sometimes underestimate (Wacquant, 2012).

Hall characterises 'authoritarian populism' as a reaction to the very social and historical bloc[3] (Gramsci, 2003) that had become "habituated to Keynesian recipes for dealing with crises in economic life" (Hall, 1988: 39). Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative party promised a solution to the economic crises as well as a revived nationalism. The ideological conjuncture that Thatcher developed was "distinctively neoliberal, free market" (Ibid), challenging the Keynesian orthodoxy of political economy; yet also connected with more orthodox, conservative aspects of social life. The conservative side of the Thatcherite project aimed "to reconstruct social life as a whole around a return to the old values - the philosophies of tradition, Englishness, respectability, patriarchalism, family and nation" (Ibid). In this way, the radical was combined with the traditional, as Thatcherism promised a "free market *and* strong state" (Gamble, 1988).

What Hall highlights is the way in which Thatcherism was able to build consent through civil society, by reacting to and constructing particular enemies responsible for the problems of the 1970s. Initially, Thatcher attacked the perceived weakness from previous governments in policing the racist caricature of the black 'mugger' (Hall, 1978) and for folding to 'militant' trade union leaders. Hall's work draws upon the Gramscian notion of the 'conjuncture' to explain the neoliberal turn, where hegemony is developed through remaking and reconstructing of social, religious, national, economic and ethical norms in relation to what is 'organic' in existing norms and institutions (Gramsci, 2003: 176). The success of Thatcherism conjoining radical reform (rolling back the state, market liberalisation) with traditional values (law and order, family, nationalism).

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[3] I return to this in Chapter 3, but for now this is the dynamic set of social and economic relations that maintain consent for a particular social order with all the tensions and contradictions that entails.

The 'radical' reforms of neoliberalism were long in the making, emerging out of the 'socialist calculation debates' in the 1930s in which economic liberalism was re-envisaged as requiring an interventionist state rather than 'laissez faire' (O'Neill, 1996). The early works of Von Mises (2012) and Hayek (1944) were developed in German and U.S. schools, and formed a wider societal approach to governing based on concepts such as 'human capital' and the notion of the market as a pseudo-democratic system of accounting for preferences (Mirowski, 2014).

 The programme of the Thatcher government that built on this work was not just another set of policy responses; it represented a paradigm shift in government policy (Hall, 1993). Mirowski (2014) argues that a 'neoliberal thought collective' had developed in the post-war period from the work of Hayek, Milton Friedman and others at the Mont Pelerin Society, through the Chicago Boys in Chile, and to corporate funded think-tanks across the world that developed specific policies for different national contexts. Mirowski (2014: 53- 70) argues that this 'collective' had a ready-made set of policy tools and a world view that provided a solution to the global economic crisis of the 1970's as well as being very accommodating to the capitalist and landed classes - with major tax cuts and deflationary monetary policy. In the U.K., the favoured Thatcherite think-tank the Institute of Economic Affairs did significant work in developing both the neoliberal critique of the Keynesian welfare state as well as new policies (Muller, 1996).

It is, however, possible to overstate the importance of these thinkers in developing what Brenner and Theodore (2002) term 'actually existing neoliberalism'. There is no doubt that Margaret Thatcher was deeply influenced by Hayek however the practice of government and the various political challenges she faced (as well as created) meant that the neoliberal theory did not always follow through to practice. It was in the crucible of the 1970s that actually existing neoliberalism developed the social-cultural aspect Hall and Gamble identify which was fused with the reforms of the state and economy. I term this 'authoritarian-conservative' neoliberalism: strong state interventions into the economic and social spheres to support private enterprise and authoritarian populist sentiments. The term 'authoritarian-conservative' captures both the authoritarian statist and populist aspects of the neoliberal turn and the Thatcher government. It is 'conservative', in that it articulated the need to preserve traditions which the rapid modernity of the 1960s was threatening to sweep

away – whilst also implementing radical changes to the state and economy. As I will show in next section, there is a tension in the Thatcher project between interventions to reshape the state and economy and those who wish to preserve heritage and tradition. This tension shapes the neoliberal turn in planning.

2.1.3 The Neoliberal Turn in U.K. Planning

The U.K. planning system underwent significant change from the mid-1970's (Thornley, 1990; Ward, 1994; Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 1997; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). The planning system was initially liberalised and given a market supportive role according to the ascendant Thatcherite rhetoric. Planning departments and the local government bodies responsible for a substantial amount of the actual planning were also the focus of significant reform under the Thatcher government. In line with a wider approach of 'rolling back' the Keynesian Welfare State, the strategic role of planning was reduced and the Conservative government (1979-1997) experimented with more market-supportive approaches to planning.

The problem with the Thatcherite approach though, was that the implementation of neoliberal reforms threatened to antagonise the electoral base of the Conservative party. Deregulation and greater freedom for private enterprise came into conflict with the rural conservative voters who wanted heritage buildings preserved from concrete modernism and their village protecting from urban sprawl (Pendlebury, 2000). Further, the growing importance of environmental issues showed the limitations of a 'free market' approach to dealing with problems like pollution. There is no need here to enter into a full discussion of the various ups and downs within Thatcherite planning, what follows here is a brief account of the neoliberal turn in planning and its key tension.

Thornley (1990) argues that Thatcherite planning has both an authoritarian and neoliberal component – like Hall and Gamble above. Central to this was what he termed "authoritarian decentralism" (Ibid: 90), which involved withdrawing local authority power and giving power to the central state. This

"...centralised power is then used to establish a mechanism for ensuring that the details of decision-making take place in the decentralised market-place. Democracy

and involvement, other than in the market or general elections, are downgraded in order to ease this "(Ibid: 90)

Thornley identifies three key changes made in Thatcherite planning along these general lines– modification, bypassing the system and simplifying the regime. Modifications were made to legislation and that reduced the power of the local development plans (Ibid: 143), and through the use of 'circulars' from central government which restricted development management interventions on social grounds and deregulated particular economic development (e.g. office space) (Ibid: 160). Bypassing the system involved the creation of new market-led approaches to planning that aimed to 'streamline' planning and reduce public participation, e.g. the creation of Urban Development Corporations to drive investment and act within a parallel planning system that prioritised economic goals (Ibid: 182). Finally, planning was simplified through deregulation, exemplified in experiments with the creation of 'Enterprise Zones' and 'Simplified Planning Zones' that again operated under separate, centrally defined rules (Ibid: 204).

Thornley's account shows the double-edged sword of the Thatcherite conjuncture – increased power for the central state alongside liberalisation of particular areas of planning and the economy through deregulation and privatisation. Acting in the 'public interest' was the underlying principle of planning in the Keynesian Welfare State; the neoliberal turn redefined the public interest as the aggregate of the private interests of businesses and individuals (Thornley, 1990; Ward, 1994). The initial neoliberal reforms to planning were both a rolling back of the corporatism of the Keynesian Welfare State, and the rolling out of a greater use of the 'rule of law' and increased centralisation as well as experiments in neoliberal forms of urban and environmental governance (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 1997).

The problem with liberalisation and creating a 'free market' for developers, however, was that Conservative voters often objected to the impacts of deregulation on heritage and rural areas impacted by urban expansion. Thatcherite planning was caught between cutting 'red-tape' and the demands of MP's constituents. The Secretary of State for the Environment Nicholas Ridley (from 1987-89) had proposed loosening up the green-belt and had shown support for a new development in Hampshire which caused uproar within the Conservative party base especially when he then opposed developments near his own property (Davies, 1998: 146). His

replacement, Chris Patten, advocated a 'local choice' agenda that maintained greater local discretion and regulations than the more zealously Thatcherite/neoliberal wing of the Tory party had initially envisaged for planning (Ibid).

The Thatcher government also faced resistance from Labour-led local government. The most notable example was the Greater London Council (GLC) which promoted a vision of 'municipal socialism' that supported public rather than private housing development and challenged spending cuts and the reduced role of the (local) state (Hatherley, 2020). This resistance led to the abolition of metropolitan level councils like the GLC (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 29), in a straightforwardly authoritarian approach to dissent.

There also emerged another avenue of resistance to the liberalisation of planning, which is important for this thesis – the environment. Environmental concerns and activism had been growing in the U.K. since the early 1970s (Ward, 1994). Global environmental issues such as pollution, global warming and the depleting ozone layer also became prominent during the end years of the Thatcher government (Healey, 1992). Environmental issues like waste management and air pollution challenged the idea that 'the market' could be left alone to solve social problems and maintained something like the Keynesian approach albeit at a regional level (Davoudi, 2009), and the Environmental Protection Act of 1990 gave government powers to restrict or prescribe emissions, the enforcement of which was to be carried out by local authorities in a move that went against the grain of liberalisation (Vigar, 2000).

The initial neoliberal reforms of planning showed the limits of a 'free market' utopianism as well as the tensions within authoritarian-conservative neoliberalism. Deregulation meant that the cultural heritage and natural environment citizens valued in non-economic terms was potentially under threat, and the government had to act to make sure at least these privileged areas were protected. Perhaps more importantly, the 'rolling back' of the state in planning did not lead to the economic revival that the Conservatives promised. Imrie and Thomas (1993) argue that Urban Development Corporations were effectively a failed experiment that were not particularly successful in generating private investment or aiding regeneration. By the end of the 1980's in fact, developers were demanding a more strategic approach to planning than promised in the 1985 White Paper *Lifting the Burden* (Ward, 1994;

Davies, 1998). These demands, along with the tensions between traditional conservative voters and Thatcherites, led to the formation of a 'new consensus' for planning that would be consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act (1990).

Before turning to the 'new consensus', it is worth reiterating two points in section 2.1 that are important for the rest of the thesis. The first, is the central importance of the ideological conjuncture in understanding neoliberalism as a response to a particular 'historical bloc' where the 'post-war consensus' was in crisis. The 'free market' was not a concept introduced to the U.K. in the 1970s, nor was the use of state violence and authoritarian and racist rhetoric. The initial turn towards neoliberalism was the conjuncture of these ideas, as a project of reviving both the capitalist economy and developing a post-imperial national identity. Thatcher and the Conservative party bringing together the radically new (deregulation, privatisation) with the traditional. This is why I term this the 'authoritarian-conservative' pole of neoliberalism – there is a promise of authoritarian interventions towards the (racialised, problematised) Other as well as conservation of particular 'traditions' and ideals like protecting rural and countryside life. The authoritarian populist (strong state) aspect of the initial neoliberal turn helped to mask the tension between those who wanted unfettered liberalisation and those who wanted conservation within the historical bloc of Conservative support.

The second point is that this Thatcherite ideological conjuncture gives us a rough basis for understanding the practice of the state, and of planning. The planning reforms showed the constitutive tension between the two parts of the 'free market-strong state' conjuncture, specifically that some of those who are politically animated by 'authoritarian populism' are also resistant to the market being unleashed into England's 'green and pleasant land': there was a contradiction between liberalisation and conservativism. Planning was re-oriented towards the market and power located within the central state; however, areas such as heritage or waste were not as amenable to the full rolling back of planning. The 'roll-back' experiments of the 1980's failed to gain public legitimacy and had negligible impacts on economic growth.

 What Thatcherite reforms did do, however, was introduce competition as a regulative function within planning practice. From these changes, we get the 'new consensus' for planning to satisfy the rural conservative as well as the neoliberal

zealot. This consensus was then modified as part of a wider drift towards the 'technocratic-progressive' pole of neoliberalisation which built upon and extended the Thatcherite experiments in market-oriented governance.

2.2 TECHNOCRATIC-PROGRESSIVE NEOLIBERALISM: NEW CONSENSUS, NEW LABOUR AND A POST-POLITICAL REGIME IN PLANNING

By the 1990s there was a turn towards a different approach to neoliberalisation in Britain and other nations following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War which I term 'technocratic progressive'. As in the previous section, I will discuss the ideological changes in relation to state and planning practices. I start in 2.2.1 by discussing discuss the U.K. variant of the ideological hybrid of social democracy and neoliberalism termed the 'Third Way' expounded by the Labour administration that came to power in 1997. I draw upon Rhodes and Foucault to theorise the 'rolling out' of new governance and planning forms (sometimes termed 're-regulation'), tracing the 'new consensus' for planning through to the introduction of 'spatial planning' in the later years of the Labour government. In 2.2.2 I identify the key features of 'spatial planning': a discourse of 'sustainable development', 'modernisation' and greater 'participation' of stakeholders. In 2.2.3 I argue that the turn to 'spatial planning' is best understood as a 'post-political regime', and set out what that means and its importance for the thesis as this is the 'regime' that I hypothesise planning practice is turning away from. Davies (2016:128) terms this period 'normative' neoliberalism, as more and more areas of social life were governed by the norms of auditing and neo-classical economics, "which stripped non-market domains of their autonomous logics". The domains of urban and environmental planning were no exception.

I use the term 'post-political' to characterise the emergent 'normative' governance approach as it is a critical approach that is used within planning literature (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011) and because it captures neatly the depoliticising aspect of the neoliberal-social democratic hybrid that became popular across much of the world in the 1990's when many centre left parties were in the ascendancy (e.g. Clinton's Democrats, Schröder's Social Democrats, Mbeki and the ANC). Some refer to this as simply the 'Third Way' though this is not as widely used outside the U.K. A more recently introduced term is "progressive neoliberalism" (Fraser, 2016) in

relation to the Obama administration. I refer to this type of neoliberalism as the 'technocratic-progressive' as it captures the expansion of governance which decentralised (some) powers to the hands of unelected and sometimes unaccountable experts (hence, technocratic), and because in general there was a growing cosmopolitanism which meant there were some improvements for minority groups and investment in public services (hence, progressive).[4] Like 'authoritarian-conservative', it also hints at an internal tension: technocratic and expert led processes were not compatible with progressive demands for greater democratic involvement in decision-making. Indeed, Davies (2016: 128) argues that the proliferation of 'normative neoliberalism' favoured centre-left parties, due to their reformist and interventionist traditions and institutions as well as increasing state spending on public services the justification for audits and private sector involvement to provide 'value for money'.

The 'post-political regime' is a critical way of understanding the approach to planning that was dominant within the' technocratic-progressive' period of neoliberalisation that captures the tension between progressive political demands and language and neoliberal governmentality.

2.2.1 New Labour and Neoliberal Governmentality: From New Consensus to Spatial Planning

Margaret Thatcher was eventually forced from office by rivals following an attempt to introduce the 'Poll Tax' - a flat rate local tax – which led to riots and a campaign of mass non-compliance. John Major became Prime Minister and the Conservatives held onto power - despite a run on the British pound, infighting over Europe, and a series of scandals involving prominent MPs - until a landslide victory for the Labour Party in 1997 (Jessop, 2015).

New Labour (as it was termed by its proponents) articulated an ideological conjuncture of neoliberalism and social democracy. This conjuncture of the neoliberal and social democratic became dominant within the U.S. and many European countries through the 1990's, and was termed the 'Third Way' in the U.K.

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[4] I use the term 'progressive' loosely with Fraser, in that it is relative to what came before (i.e. the authoritarian-conservative)

In the words of Tony Blair, Prime Minister (1997-2007) and proponent of the Third Way politics his project was to unite:

"the two great streams of left-of-centre thought, socialism and liberalism, whose divorce did so much to weaken progressive politics" (quoted in Rawnsley, 2000)

The philosophy of the 'Third Way' developed in response to growing acceptance of globalisation and the de facto dominance of market capitalism within this. Several theorists argued that the post-Cold War period was one of a new or 'reflexive modernity' (Beck *et al.*, 1994; for an overview see Braun, 1996). Beck argued that 'Western' nations were entering a second modernity, where the battles of the first modernity were won (e.g. universal suffrage) and that globalisation was breaking down the first modernity's central political institutions such as trade unions and the nation state (Beck, 2000). Based on these theorisations, Giddens developed the idea of the 'Third Way' and advised the Labour party to abandon traditional notions of 'left' and 'right' (Giddens, 1994). Class struggle was to be replaced with a 'classless society', in which progressive politics would be conducted through pragmatic engagement with global markets and through advancing some of the causes of 'new social movements' around e.g. gender, sexuality, the environment (Ibid).

An important feature of the 'pragmatism' of the Third Way was the rolling out of 'networked governance'. Rhodes (1996) had identified the rise of governance as "self-organizing inter-organisational networks" (Ibid: 658) as a new organisational form alongside markets and hierarchies. These networks combined public and private actors to deliver public services across multiple institutions and agencies, in ways that become autonomous from central guidance and formal government at local and national level (Ibid: 667). Governance was also argued to blur the difference between state and civil society (Hall, 2005: 324), and much of the rolled out governance through the John Major and Labour administrations followed a theory of New Public Management that reconceived of the citizen as a consumer and increasingly encouraged state actors and citizens to behave as 'entrepreneurial subjects' (Hall, 2005: 327).

Alongside rolling out new forms of governance for the public sector, New Labour also continued economic liberalisation. Privatisation was primarily achieved through the

increased of the use of Private Finance Initiatives (PFI's) that brought private money into public service provision on terms that guaranteed incredible returns for investors. Wilks-Heeg (2009: 31) argues that New Labour actually managed to succeed where the Conservative governments had failed in privatising local government services and selling off assets. In 1997, there was one local authority with a PFI contract: by 2005 there were 150 (Ibid). Marketisation was achieved through the expansion of the internal market in the NHS, introducing tuition fees for universities and 'academies' into compulsory education, restrictions on trade unions and increased labour market flexibility and through a programme of 'modernisation' of public service delivery that:

"adopted the top-down managerialist approach of centralised control, supplemented by the rich panoply of 'the audit culture'—the exponential expansion of public service managers over professionals at the coal face, unachievable targets, socially uninformative league tables, perpetual monitoring, moralistic 'shaming,' the merciless proliferation of pointless bureaucratic detail..." (Hall, 2005: 331).

For Hall, the neoliberal aspect of New Labour's particular 'Third Way' conjuncture was dominant and the social democratic subaltern (Hall, 2005: 328). The relation between the two is what Gramsci called 'transformism', "which actively in the ongoing course of governance combines the two elements." (Hall, 2005: 329) – and the dominant aspect transforms the subaltern. The social democratic reforms (e.g. a national minimum wage, increased public spending) gained the support of Labour's electoral base and wider movement as the more starkly neoliberal reforms continued to alter institutions and society to fit the market (Ibid: 330). Hall (2011: 19) called this the neoliberal-social democracy hybrid the "best shell" for rolling-out neoliberalisation after the aggressive roll-backs of Thatcherism, as it successfully expanded markets and market logics into more and more areas of social life under the auspice of progressive interventions.

It may seem strange to say social democracy was an ideal companion to neoliberalism, however if we think of neoliberalism as an approach to state intervention this becomes more plausible. As Foucault argued, in contrast to the laissez-faire of classical liberals the neoliberal conception of the state is one of "permanent vigilance, activity and intervention" (Foucault, 2008: 132), where the

state actively constructs the market society. This is not simply economic intervention rather the neoliberal state:

"has to intervene in society so that competitive mechanisms can play a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society and by intervening in this way its objective will become possible, that is to say, a general regulation of society by the market" (Foucault, 2008: 145).

The neoliberal state encourages citizens and state actors to be entrepreneurial, competitive and individualistic, as well as basing interventions on this assumed subjectivity in the public (Foucault, 2008: 270). Foucault terms this rationality of governance neoliberal *governmentality* (Foucault, 2008: 297). Davies argues that the distinctively neoliberal policies are those that have introduced, defined and measured competition as a regulatory principle irrespective of whether any actual market competition occurs (Davies, 2014b: 315). So, whilst 'governance' captures the restructuring and decentralising of the state towards public-private networks, 'governmentality' captures the distinct rationality of new 'technologies of government' – the actual mechanisms of intervention - and how individual actors are conceived of within this (Foucault, 2008). The Labour administration rolled out neoliberal mechanisms of intervention that were directed to social democratic goals i.e. providing public services.

Planning, as a public institution, was subject to such neoliberal reforms. As I covered above, the tensions in the initial neoliberal turn led to what is widely termed a 'new consensus' for planning (Healey, 1992; Ward, 1994; Davies, 1998) formalised in the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). The Act consolidated European Economic Community environmental directives and other policies alongside the principles of the 1947 Act, and the Planning and Compensation Act (1991) codified the importance of the local development plan (Cullingworth *et al.*, 2015: 112) whilst maintaining the basic structure of planning from 1947 (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 1997: 103). After a decade of regulatory 'roll-backs':

 "The principle of a plan-led system, with a hierarchy of national, regional, structure and local planning, once more seemed well established. Planning once more was an acceptable part of government" (Davies, 1998: 147)

Importantly, planning was no longer "a regulatory system led by the public sector", it was "instead an activity working with and facilitating the market" (Ibid). Planning was still meant to work in the 'public interest', though this was to be achieved by more market oriented different means. There was a bias towards privatisation (e.g. of council housing and municipal space and buildings) and greater central control of urban policy (Lawless, 1991), but there was also a sense that planners and planning had a renewed place within society.

It is important to re-iterate that the 'roll out' of the 'new consensus' occurred because capitalist interests *actually wanted strategic planning* (Healey, 1992: 414). The 'free' market was not necessarily what capital demanded, instead it was reform of the state to be "market-supportive" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2013: 10) and this is what both the Major and Blair governments attempted to do with planning.

The 'new consensus' brought together a reorientation to the market and 'local choice', which granted local authorities the power to intervene with limited discretion whilst maintaining central government powers through e.g. 'guidance' documents (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). The Rio Earth Summit in 1990 set an agenda of 'sustainability' that would become part of planning at local and national levels, which incorporated global environmental concerns (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions) into decision making. Planning would also become more focused on 'participation' (Healey, 1992). The planner of the 1950s was a designer, producing technical plans. The planner of the 1990s was expected to embrace complex social issues, manage the environment, and bargain and negotiate in lieu of strict regulations and strategic autonomy (Healey, 1997; Davies, 1998). By the time a Labour government came to power in 1997, the 'new consensus' for planning formed the basis of their approach, which would eventually develop into an agenda for 'spatial planning' which show a turn towards 'networked governance' (Rhodes) and new 'technologies of government' (Foucault).

2.2.2 Spatial Planning: Participation, Culture Change and Sustainable Development

Labour's key Planning Acts (2004 and 2008) followed nearly a decade of continuity from the Acts in the early 90's, through the John Major administration and the early years of New Labour. From the early 2000s, planning was problematized (again) as being overly bureaucratic, inefficient, and a blockage to growth following a drawn-out inquiry into extending Heathrow Airport. 'Spatial Planning' developed as a means of addressing this critique (driven internally by the Treasury), whilst re-asserting a progressive role for planners through greater participatory and collaborative practice and a rhetorical focus on environmental sustainability (Inch, 2009). There was a recognition that place-making within the de-industrialised city and a regional level of strategic planning were important to the growth of the service economy that replaced manufacturing (Davoudi and Brooks, 2021), though regional level planning was hampered by the failure to build support for regional government in England (Tickell *et al.*, 2005).[5] It is important to be clear at this point that the 'spatial planning' of the Labour government from roughly 2004 onwards is not the same as spatial planning as practiced in many European countries or as envisaged by many of its advocates (for an extensive account see Hillier and Healey, 2010). Instead, the Labour government defined 'spatial planning' as that which:

"goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development of use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function" (definition from Deputy PM office in 2004, cited in Nadin, 2007: 43)

'Sustainability' and 'participation' would become key areas in which 'spatial planning' was rolled out under the Labour government, institutionalising market-supportive governmentality and technocratic governance in "an attempt to replace political judgement with economic evaluation" (Davies, 2014a: 3). The eventual outcome was a planning regime caught in the conjuncture Hall identified – between liberalising the economy and an attempt to revive some of the social-democratic possibilities of

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[5] It should also be noted that from the early 1990s, there has also been the devolution of planning to constituent U.K. nations, as well as several EU directives pertaining to planning. My case study focuses on England, which all of this chapter applies to.

planning that were felt to have been lost (Peel and Lloyd, 2007). Planners were co-opted into neoliberal 'technologies of government' (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2013).

I focus here on participation, the modernisation of planning (termed 'culture change') and sustainability in more detail to show the development of 'spatial planning', before arguing that 'spatial planning' is best understood as a 'post-political regime'.

Participation, Collaboration and Culture Change

The renewed interventionism for planners was markedly different from planning in the Keynesian Welfare State. In an influential work, Healey (1997) drew on Giddens to critique the post-war modernist planning approach as one based on a top-down instrumentalism, which failed to meaningfully involve citizens within planning processes. Healey draws upon the 'communicative rationality' of Habermas (1984) to argue for an institutionalist form of 'collaborative planning'.

The principle of 'communicative rationality' is one of increasing and ensuring participation of relevant persons on an issue or within a polity. Habermas argues that the political processes should aim to achieve a consensus which is arrived at through rational argumentation in the context of an 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas, 1990) that sets basic rules for giving each person their say with minimal pressure and coercion. Healey argues that planning had tended to be dominated by what Habermas calls 'instrumental-technical reasoning', which elides differences in identity as well as the emotional and normative concerns that are often integrated within our 'practical reasoning' (Healey, 1997: 50). Healey and others (Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999) argued that planners needed to adopt more collaborative and participatory approaches to planning, based on a practical reasoning and a communicative rationality that shaped the instrumental and technocratic.

What a 'communicative rationality' meant for planning is that processes should aim to develop a consensus around plans or particular proposals, as the rationality of other's arguments allows people to overcome their own personal views in favour of some sort of agreement – provided lying and manipulation are minimised. In

planning terms this meant that the assumed "role of a communicative planner is that of a broker, a mediator, or a 'critical friend' who enables the process of consensus building" (Davoudi, 2017).

Planning practice under New Labour did utilise greater participatory and collaborative approaches however it is a matter of debate if they were used to the progressive ends. Notions of 'collaboration' and 'participation' were bound up within a wider 'culture change' for planners through a discourse of 'modernization'. For Finlayson, 'modernization' is the drive to re-orientate subjects towards a 'knowledge economy' (Finlayson, 2009: 17) as a response to shifts in global capitalism; for Finlayson this is the driving rationality of New Labour. Planners are subjects of modernization, through the introduction of neoliberal 'technologies of government' such as audits and performance reviews to make processes more efficient (Ibid; see also Raco, 2013) and through reconceiving the role and goals of planners:

"a measure of 'laissez-faire' idealism is combined with genuinely novel attempts to unite agencies and actors in collective and consensual processes of 'spatial planning' through the combining of demands about responsiveness to grassroots 'user-demand' with centralization of control through the setting of goals, targets, means and methods." (Finlayson, 2009: 20)

Planners were expected to have the skills to negotiate between agencies and respond to the various service users – from developers to citizens – as part of increasingly networked governance arrangements. Their ability to do so was measured through national targeting e.g. of time taken to make decisions and level of collaborative working (Ibid). It is through the introduction of these sorts of methods that we see the governmentality of neoliberalisation and the expectation was that planners would come "to act in line with that conception and thus think within the same framework of rationality as the Government" (Ibid). 'Culture change' linked the collaborative and participatory in planning to a drive for private development. Participation[6] was a key aspect of 'spatial planning', in which the language of participation was used to build consent for development rather than as a democratic or deliberative space for

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[6] I am using 'participation' to cover both collaborative, partnership type work as well as citizen engagement, for brevity.

decisions over how space is constructed. As Allmendinger and Haughton (2011: 90) argue:

"This [spatial planning] system gives the superficial appearance of engagement and legitimacy, whilst focusing on delivering growth expedited through some carefully choreographed processes for participation which minimise the potential for those with conflicting views to be given a meaningful hearing."

Baeten (2012) provides an example of participation in 'spatial planning' in the development of London's South Bank. Previously the site of radical housing action in the 1980's, the notion of 'community partnerships' in delivering (re)development had a depoliticising effect, where;

"Uniting all groups in one partnership effectively forecloses meaningful disagreement and dispute, and therefore democracy." (2008:247)

In this example, a network of organisations comprising businesses (local and corporate), resident groups and local government interact as 'stakeholders' that work together to achieve 'consensus' through specifically mandated 'dialogue', the principles which Healey (1998) sets out for 'collaborative' planning. For Beaten (2008) however, this leads to the exclusion of "adversarial agents" as "irrational...extremist" (p.248), as the need for consensus redefines communities as responsible or disruptive in accordance with achieving a largely pre-determined goal of private sector redevelopment primarily aimed at capturing value from rising real estate values. In London in particular, stakeholder partnerships have either excluded or diminished the voices of council housing tenants who were to be moved miles away from their homes for third-wave gentrification (Watt, 2009). Baker and Wong (2013: 99) argue that the same is seen within the regional/sub-regional planning bodies where dissenting voices were excluded to "focus on neo-liberal growth agendas". The greater role for participation, then, did not always live up to the ideals of its advocate.

Recalling Foucault above, we can see how participation and modernisation formed part of a neoliberal governmentality. Participatory approaches invited people into the planning process, but, as the South Bank example shows, it does so in way that conceives of citizens eminently governable subjects who ought to rationally respond

to the benefits of the development. If they do not, they are and were generally excluded particularly if they lacked the financial and political resources to contest sites. Modernisation or 'culture change' institutionalised neoliberal governmentality, in that it connected day to day planning practice with central government management. This 'culture change' is bound up with participation and collaboration, as these were criteria by which planners were assessed (Davoudi *et al.*, 2019).

Planning followed a broadly pro-development perspective regardless of what citizen participation might bring, and greater private sector involvement in planning alongside performance metrics embedded competition as regulatory mechanism for planning professionals who operated within expanding networks of governance with other 'arms-length' regulators (e.g. the Environment Agency established in 1995). In spatial planning practice, 'participation' is limited by competition, and participation was used to legitimate controversial developments that fitted within the need to get (profitable) things done. Importantly, participatory practices linked neoliberal imperatives (private sector development) with ostensibly progressive aims whilst excluding those making demands that were too radical.

Sustainable Development

Sustainability was a key policy discourse of the 'new consensus', as global environmental issues became integrated within planning and urban policy. Following a global trend, 'Sustainable Development' would become the dominant discourse within New Labour's planning and environmental policy (Lafferty, 2004; Luke, 2005: 228).

Sustainable development became particularly important within 'spatial planning' (Raco, 2005). 'Sustainable development' was defined by five principles: Living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy, promoting good governance & using sound science responsibly (UK Government, 2005). Sustainable development integrated environmental 'limits' with economic growth, to start "Living on the earth's income rather than eroding its capital" (Ibid). This particular conception of sustainability was one of 'ecological modernisation', which emphasized a "technical and regulatory" approach to environmental issues (Davoudi, 2000: 123). 'Sustainable development'

also formed part of a rationale for collaboration with environmental stakeholders like NGOs, yet also opened up the possibility of multi-scalar contestations over what sustainability meant as Labour integrated the environment into different levels of decision making (Wilson, 2009: 135).

Whilst 'sustainable development' brought environmental concerns into decision making, it did so in a way that neutralised the challenge a problem like global warming poses to market capitalism. Swyngedouw (2010) argues that sustainable development presents a singular conception of nature, that needs to be preserved against an 'apocalyptic imaginary' of planetary destruction. Instead of seeing the social and ecological as interlinked, this sense of 'sustainable development' constructs nature and the economy as spheres to be 'sustained', pointing to 'win-win' solutions that would appear to accommodate both. A discourse of 'sustainable development' forecloses political debate about different possible social-ecological futures by focusing on solutions within a basically neoliberal framing, encouraging a technocratic approach through e.g. 'good governance' (Swyngedouw, 2007). The multiple aspects of sustainable development encourage a compromise, which glosses over the impact of capitalist production on global temperatures and the natural world. Swyngedouw argues that:

"Difficulties and problems, which are generally staged and accepted as problematic, have to be dealt with by means of compromise and the production of consensus." (Swyngedouw, 2010: 226)

The openness of 'sustainable development' means that it can be captured by dominant neoliberal logics as means of softening the edges of controversial development projects like e.g. nuclear power (Johnstone, 2010). The take up of 'sustainable development' as a policy discourse both foregrounded and narrowed the scope of environmental action within planning. Sustainable development integrated environmental issues as well as other important social considerations into a guiding policy framework; however, it did so in away where 'development' was always the leading aim to which environmental concerns had to bend.

Others take a more circumspect view on sustainable development. Allmendinger (2011: 83) argues that the vagueness of the term plus the supposed need for consensus made an almost impossible task for local authorities – as even a small

group of determined protestors could legitimately claim their objections were backed by an aspect of policy. Raco (2005) similarly argues that sustainable development does not simply become the legitimating face of a 'roll out' neoliberalism. Instead, it gave a chance for environmental voices to be heard and impact on the outcomes of development even within prescribed limits.

There is some truth to this. Labour's later planning reforms took place alongside what were highly contested developments on environmental grounds. Environmental activists had contested new road building works across the U.K., in the knowledge that any public planning inquiry would not allow them to contest the roads development but would allow them to build support for direct action and their movement more generally (Doherty, 1998; Doherty, 1999). A similar approach was used in opposing airport expansions (Griggs and Howarth, 2002; Griggs and Howarth, 2008). Environmental activists and NGOS were able to claim that these examples were against the broad notion of 'sustainability'.

Eventually though, the Labour government rolled out a new approach to managing major projects like airports and road building. The extensive inquiry over increasing capacity at Heathrow airport meant that the planning system had come under renewed attack for being "slow and ponderous" (Allmendinger, 2011: 27). In response, Labour's second Planning Act in 2008 introduced a 'streamlined' system and an Infrastructure and Planning Commission (IPC) to oversee major projects (Ibid: 32). This legislation deepened the commitment to sustainable development that balanced the environmental, social and economic whilst also ensuring the balance was increasingly decided by technical experts particularly in highly contested cases.

To give an example of such a case, Johnstone (2010) shows how the language of 'ecological modernization' and 'sustainability' were used to frame plans for new nuclear power stations as a 'win-win' solution (green and good for the economy), which is then defended through anti-democratic means by putting decisions in the hands of the IPC. He argues that the consultation process with which the 'nuclear renaissance' was pushed foreclosed the question of whether a new generation of nuclear plants was a worthwhile idea, focusing instead on how it would be delivered. Johnstone argues that the introduction of a more centralised process for 'national need' in the 2008 Act and the introduction of:

"The Infrastructure and Planning Commission (IPC), which was a point of particular controversy within the planning act, represented an *authoritarian turn* in the Labour government's sustainable development policy." (Johnstone, 2010: 98, emphasis added)

Sustainable development, as a policy discourse, acknowledged and incorporated a minimal level of environmentalism within planning in the ecological modernisation sense as part of 'spatial planning'. Decisions over the balance of the different principles and demands within 'sustainable development' though, were increasingly taken by experts and insulated from dissent and contestation under the rolled-out governance arrangements like the IPC. The preferred solutions to environmental problems are those that are 'win-win', reducing emissions whilst sustaining GDP growth. Importantly, Johnstone argues there is an 'authoritarian turn' within Labour's planning policy with the IPC and the invocation of a 'national need'. It is this centralising tendency that we will return to later in this thesis as characteristic of the authoritarian turn – here we can see that this turn has its roots in the later years of the New Labour government and the 'spatial planning' approach. We can also see in this example the tension within technocratic-progressive neoliberalism between the 'technocratic' and 'progressive' – the attempt to include more voices in planning did not always sit easily with the pragmatic approach to delivering 'sustainable development', hence the move in the 2008 Act to a centralised process for major infrastructure.

Therefore, planning policy and processes under Labour expanded participation and gave greater space to environmental groups, yet at the same time the imperative for growth and development squeezed out many of their concerns through technocratic management. When it came to major projects, sustainable development was used to frame these proposals as part of a consensus despite substantive disagreement. The contradictory nature though is somewhat the point. Participation, sustainability and modernisation are social, political concepts that imply tensions, negotiations and conflicts. These concepts, however, are modified and regulated by the logic of competition; and progressive proposals are mediated by the imperative to keep up in the global race.

The important claim that these sub-sections are aiming towards are that the changes to planning in this period were ones that developed into a 'post-political regime'. So

far, I have expanded on how 'spatial planning' integrated progressive, political concepts and discourses of participation and sustainability with a neoliberal governmentality that directed planning practice and decision-making towards expanding private development. I will now argue that 'spatial planning' should be critically explained as a 'post-political regime', a regime of carefully managing political dissent.

2.2.3 Spatial Planning: A Post-Political Regime?

"At best, planners were compliant and naive and persuaded themselves that the 'public interest' (and their own professional standing) was best served through circumventing the political. At worst, planners were complicit in this deceit, helping alienate the profession from the communities they formerly represented" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011: 98)

By the end of Labour's time in power, their major planning reforms had only been in place for 5 years (their final Planning Act, only 2 years). Scholars have critiqued the 'post-politics' of the overall approach to governance and more specifically the 'regime' of planning. The above quotation from a widely cited paper captures the critique that spatial planning was a 'post-political regime'. Planning had, through the rolling out of new governance forms, developed practices of circumventing political discussion and contestation in order to deliver development. Planning was still closer to the interests of developers than to citizens; what made this 'post-political' is that development at all costs was increasingly achieved *through* rather than in spite of features like participation, consensus and sustainability. The section starts by discussing the theoretical basis of 'post-politics', before identifying the features of the post-political regime.

What is post-politics?

The identification of a 'post-politics' and sometimes a 'post-democracy' is based on the political philosophy of a number of post-Marxist writers (Žižek, 1999; Rancière, 2004b; Badiou, 2005; Mouffe, 2005a; Mouffe, 2005b; Dean, 2014). The argument

they share is that the so called 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1989), and in the U.K. the 'Third Way', were attempts to hegemonise and naturalise a neoliberal ideology, paradoxically, through the claim that society and governance had moved beyond ideology. I will explore here the work of Mouffe and Rancière, as these tend to be the most widely used 'post-political' authors, to explore what 'post-politics' is. I will argue that even though some aspects of the post-political critique may not be appropriate for the current moment, the insights I cover can still inform analysis of institutions that reproduce features of a post-political regime.

The starting point of 'post-political' critique is a post-foundational ontology. A post-foundational ontology is one in which there is no final or essential grounding to a social order. Most political philosophies base a society in something – the divine right of kings (feudalism), an economic base (Marxist-Leninism), or universal rationality (liberalism). The post-foundational theorist starts from the basis that "all social orders are profoundly contingent and structured to conceal their absent ground" (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2014: 10). This is not a relativist argument, as it "does not assume the absence of *any* ground; what it assumes is the absence of *an ultimate ground*" (Marchart, 2007: 9). The 'end of history' thesis claimed liberal democracy was the 'final ground' of human society: the post-foundational ontology denies this as well as other utopian understandings (e.g. communism) as an alternative final ground too.

The post-foundational ontology is the basis of the 'political difference' between 'politics' and 'the political'. 'Politics' is the "contingent and incomplete attempt to ground a particular set of power relations on an ultimately absent foundation", and 'the political' is the "incompleteness and impossibility of grounding the social order – paradoxically it is the presence of an *absent foundation*" (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2014: 10). 'The political' means there is always the possibility of significant change within any social order, however a social order has a 'politics' that aims at sustaining and naturalising the contingent foundations of power as natural, rational and universal. The political difference is taken to be constitutive of any social order - it is the tension between a contingent and (re)instituted 'politics' and the threat of its 'political' contestation and overthrow.

For Mouffe, the 'political' is understood more specifically as the inherent antagonisms between political identities. She argues that the creation of political identities always requires constructing a 'we' and a 'they':

"Every identity is relational and the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of the 'constitutive outside'" (Mouffe, 2005b: 2)

Drawing on Derrida, Mouffe argues that the formation of political identity is never purely positive as it is always in some part determined from that which is outside of it. For this reason, "the possibility always exists that this we/them relation will turn into a relation of the friend/enemy type" (Mouffe, 2005b: 2) - especially when an Other is seen as "negating our identity" (Ibid). Importantly, a social relation between different political, ethnic, religious, sexual etc. identities does not have to become a friend/enemy type. Particular identities do become 'antagonistic' in this way through politics though, because social actors actively work to create, maintain or even pretend away or deny such differences.

This account of identity formation is the basis for Mouffe's claims that within democracy "division and conflict is unavoidable" (Mouffe, 2005b: 111) and from this she critiques a 'third-way' politics. For Mouffe, liberals generally see adversarial politics as something to be avoided in favour of building a 'consensus'. Mouffe's contention is that a pluralistic democracy needs to account for the possibility of political antagonisms. She argues that the 'Third Way' philosophy adopted by New Labour is a paradigmatic case of denying political antagonisms: the claim to move beyond a politics of left and right was an attempt to bring irreconcilable ideological poles together (Mouffe, 2005b: 65). The first problem is that denying or suppressing antagonistic relations does not mean they go away; instead, antagonisms develop and are given expression outside of the mainstream political space (e.g. the growth of right-wing nationalist parties).

 The second problem is that 'Third Way' 'politics' becomes one of denying the power relations inherent in its institution. For Mouffe, 'politics' is to be understood as the very act of fixing a social order, as:

"...the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions which are always potentially conflicting because they are affected by the dimensions of 'the political'." (Mouffe, 2005a: 9)

It is important to remember that this critique is aimed at putatively liberal-democratic governments (Mouffe, 2005a: 18). Thinking of politics and the political in this way, Mouffe recasts the 'end of history' as a hegemonic declaration. Instead of contesting possible futures, utopias, dystopias or new ways of living, "politics has been reduced to an instrumental activity" (Mouffe, 2005b: 111). Proceeding with a politics based on an instrumental rationality obscures the power relations and ideological moments of the institution of neoliberalism as a hegemonic social order. We can see here some parallels with Healey's critique of post-war planning above; the difference here is that Mouffe (1995) argues that the sort of solutions Healey leans towards (communicative rationality) lead to the same problems as they fail to recognize the importance of identity and the political difference. The importance of the political difference is highlighted by Mouffe and Rancière in relation to the use of the term 'consensus'. A 'post-politics' is an attempt to manage conflicts and antagonisms and this management often presents a 'consensus' as rationally developed and inclusive when it is in fact built up on a series of ideological or identity-based exclusions: there is no 'we', without a 'they' (Mouffe, 2005b).

Rancière argues that claims to a rational social order or final consensus go against the very essence of democracy (Rancière, 2004a). For Rancière as for Mouffe, the democratic project is always an incomplete one. Democracy is disruptive, as it brings forward the voiceless and powerless as a challenge to power. Rancière argues that *dissensus* is the driving force of democracy (he uses democracy and 'the political' almost interchangeably), as it is through disrupting the 'distribution of the sensible' that new political identities become part of the 'police order' – the order that designates which people count within the political community (Rancière, 2004a: 6). For Rancière, claims of consensus miss the most marginalised, the unheard and the voiceless as the as the driving force of democracy is *dissensus*. Consequently, the use of 'consensus' eradicates democracy *in the name of* democracy by excluding

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emergent or dissenting voices from making demands of equality within politics in order to make such a consensus possible (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2014: 13). The use of an exclusionary 'consensus' is a key feature of 'post-politics', alongside the power inherent in making the distinction between who can talk or be will be listened too – what Rancière calls the "partition of the sensible" (Rancière, 2004b: 12).

Following Mouffe and Rancière, scholars have argued that the dominance of what I have termed 'technocratic-progressive' neoliberalism created a 'post-political condition' (Johnstone, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2010; Berglez and Olausson, 2014). A 'post-political condition' signifies a politics dominated by "technocratic mechanisms and consensual procedures" that operate "within an unquestioned framework of representative democracy, free market economics, and cosmopolitan liberalism" (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2014: 6). The lowest turnout in a post-war U.K. election was recorded in 2005, underscoring a level of political apathy (Curtice, 2005).

It is a decade or more since most of the technocratic-progressive, center-left parties left the political stage in Europe, with many suffering a near terminal decline (Doran, 2013). There are more clear and open ideological conflicts over the free market and even over capitalism. We have seen multiple radical uprisings from the Occupy movements to the various popular movements of the 'Arab Spring' that would appear to break from any generalized 'post-political condition'. The response from Swyngedouw and Wilson (2015) is to characterize these as "proto-political movements animated by a heterogeneous multitude of insurgent architects" who were staging a "profound discontent with the state of the situation" (Ibid: 219) and demanding "nothing less than the wholesale transformation of the instituted order" (Ibid: 220).

These movements, however, do not presage a 'return of the political'. Drawing on the work of Badiou (2005), Swyngedouw and Wilson (2015) argue that the Occupy and so-called 'Arab Spring' movements are pre-political events. What matters is what happens when the squares are cleared, and whether these intense and localized expressions of freedom and equality can become a 'sequence' in which those involved continue to find ways to express these same demands within new "socio-spatial practices" (Ibid: 221). They note signs of promise, but ultimately they conclude that

there is still much work to be done to escape the "fantasy that sustains the post-political order" (Ibid: 222) as well as the practice and signifiers of "consensual urban governance" (Ibid: 223).

This presents a problem. It begins to look like the post-political condition is so monolithic that no action or event short of a revolution can be seen as challenging neoliberal hegemony. Beveridge and Koch (2016) argue that the 'post-political lens' limits our ability to see the plurality of urban politics. This lens separates political agency into the 'heroic' and 'anti-heroic', according to the extent to which it looks to transcend the social order (Ibid: 36). In the writings of Swyngedouw (2010) in particular, they identify a nearly omnipotent 'post-political' order or condition. The problem, for Beveridge and Koch, comes from treating 'the political' (as an ontological category) as part of the same level of analysis as the phenomenal day to day world of 'politics'. If we look at an act within 'politics' and compare it to a philosophical concept of 'the political', we will often find the former disappointing the latter.

Swyngedouw (2016) responds to this critique by arguing that this is not what the 'post-political lens' brings into focus. He distinguishes 'de-politicization' from 'post-politicization', where;

"The latter does not by any means suggest a disappearance of politics, but rather the transformation of politics in ways that attempt to suspend the political" (Swyngedouw, 2016: 56)

A researcher is not expected to look at people gathered in Syntagma Square (Athens) demanding a new order and say: 'there is the heroic political'. Instead, the analytical value is in focusing on the means by which 'politics' restricts and manages the space for the staging of a possible new world, of something beyond the 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) of everyday existence and for a radical equality (Swyngedouw, 2016: 58). The 'post-political lens' does not ask us to decide whether a movement or event is revolutionary. It challenges us to understand what spaces there are for the possibility of experimenting with or enacting a different future or dissenting from the currently existing order (Ibid: 58).

That said, there is a problem of talking about a 'post-political condition' or 'order' that can lead us to miss acts and events that do display dissensus, politicisation and new imaginaries. Paccoud (2018) has argued that writing on post-politics seems to be blind to dissenting actors who operate within the broad space of the State, and Blühdorn and Butzlaff (2020) argue that greater attention needs to be paid to the novel ways in which citizens participate in new forms of democratization and their agency within that. Part of the problem here is a shortage of detailed empirical work into the post-political at an institutional and everyday level, and of a more fine-grained understanding of how a 'post-politics' operates, which this thesis provides a potential framework for.

Further, there is a theoretical problem with referring to a 'post-political condition' in the current context, when the U.K. has seen even the 'common sense' of liberal-democratic politics disrupted by the E.U. referendum vote and a powerful right wing populism that has opened up a significant political divide (Hobolt, 2016; Freeden, 2017). Further, we have seen an increasingly mainstream set of attacks on 'cosmopolitan liberalism' and even on 'free market economics', which I cover in 2.3. Even Mouffe (2018) argues that there are much clearer ideological divides, arguing for a leftist response to the populist moment being driven by right wing parties, with some left-populist parties challenging for and even winning formal political office (e.g. U.K. Labour party, Podemos in Spain, SYRIZA in Greece).

In this context, it looks increasingly unusual to talk of a generalised post-political condition. That does not mean, however, we can dispense with 'post-politics'. Arguing that there is a 'post-politics' is arguing that governance provides a real problem for actors trying to challenge particular projects or general approaches within an area of social life (Kenis, 2018). 'Post-politics' is a way of interpreting and critiquing an approach to government, one that would appear to be in decline. Analysis using the above insights into a 'post-politics' does not require invoking a generalised condition – though the disruption of such a condition may suggest that there is also a breakdown in the approach to government. My use of the term 'post-political' here is to talk of a particular regime of planning, one developed within technocratic-progressive neoliberalism. Drawing on the work of Mouffe and

Rancière, 'post-politics' is a way of critiquing a politics that excludes disruptive and dissenting actors *through* the use of 'consensus', a politics which presents political problems as technocratically manageable by denying the role of antagonism and ideology, and which uses participatory governance approaches and language to legitimise state interventions *for* capital. This definition does not rely on invoking a 'post-political condition'; instead it can be used to identify a particular regime for planning which insulates development from contestation to varying degrees of success. The final part of this section elaborates further on this regime.

A post-political regime for English 'spatial' planning

We need to now move from these more general theoretical points to identifying what the post-political regime for planning looks like in the U.K., and more specifically in England as that is the focus of the study. The reforms towards 'spatial planning' were identified as post-political by Allmendinger and Haughton (2011: 93), who argue:

 "English 'spatial planning' has become both hegemonic and problematic in that it mobilises and reproduces acquiescence for policies and strategies that favour certain groups or interests whilst marginalising more radical alternatives."

Building on the discussion above, I argue there are three features of a post-political regime that 'reproduce acquiescence' and 'marginalise more radical alternatives': techno-managerialism, exclusionary consensus and stakeholder participation. Writing on post-politics does not always set out these three features together; these are what my own review of the literature on post-politics identified (though writers may sometimes use slightly different terminology). I take each of these in turn and give examples from English 'spatial planning'.

Techno-managerialism

This is a term used particularly by Swyngedouw (2010) to refer to a post-political approach to governance. The term incorporates the 'modernization' and management techniques covered above as part of a culture change within planning, with the continued importance of expert-led technocracy. In practice this means the proliferation of audit systems and metrics to regulate the behavior of professionals

and the utilization of e.g. 'evidence-based policy' (Raco, 2015). Importantly, the invocation of 'evidence-based policy' is often a rhetorical move to give credence to the roll-out of policy agendas and reforms which are likely to have been motivated by other factors (ideology, interests etc.) (Davoudi, 2006). As Davoudi (2006) argues, 'evidence-based planning' in the New Labour period draws upon a similar instrumental rationality to the 1960's planner. The modification here is that this 'technocratic' approach is linked with the culture change for planners termed 'managerialism' in which planners operate within a target and audit driven practice amidst public-private partnerships.

Techno-managerialism supplants political discussion and conflict through a revived positivism, where 'matters of concern' to citizens become rendered 'matters of fact' through expert-led processes or highly specialized techniques (Latours terms, cited in Swyngedouw, 2010: 217). There is the risk of 'regulatory capture' (Crouch, 2011) as private companies can be the only actors within particular areas that have access to expertise like e.g. planning consultants. Moreover, citizens and activists are increasingly forced to contest proposals on grounds that require expert knowledge to which they do not always have access (Haughton *et al.*, 2016). Techno-managerialism identifies the rules by which these different technologies and metric-led, expert focused practices tend to operate, prioritizing the uncontentious over the messiness of political discussion within planning and governance in the name of following 'evidence-based policy'.

Consensus politics: A key term within the post-politics literature is 'consensus'. At first glance, consensus would seem a strange thing to be critical of - why would we not want to build some level of consensus within politics? To better understand the critique, we return to Mouffe's work. She argues that:

"Consensus in a liberal-democratic society is – and always will be – the expression of a hegemony and the crystallization of power relations. The frontier that it establishes between what is and what is not legitimate is a political one, and for that reason it should remain contestable." (Mouffe, 2000: 49)

The objection here is not to the democratic development of some sort of compromise or agreement per se; rather to the creation of a consensus that becomes so naturalised as to be incontestable. Mouffe argues that liberalism tends to present or ground contestable concepts or ideas through appeals to "rationality or morality" to create a "moment of closure" (Ibid). Swyngedouw *et al.* (2007) argue that this is how 'sustainable development' functions within policy discourses: it acknowledges the problem of climate change whilst simultaneously re-affirming the imperative of economic growth. It follows a logic of finding 'win-win-win' solutions between politics/society/environment that diminishes conflicts and difference. Raco (2015: 30) argues that broadly consensual discourses of 'sustainability' in planning policy also distract from the simultaneous disempowerment of citizens through privatisation as state welfare systems are sold off and governance is contracted out.

There is also a second sense of consensus, i.e. of consensus seeking processes. Presenting a process as consensual or deliberative means that it appears democratic; it brings everyone concerned about a development or plan together to reach some sort of agreement. The problem is that in most important decisions and planning processes there are usually winners and losers and presenting outcomes of decisions or dominant discourses as consensual is a means of avoiding acknowledging or *excluding* the losers. This second sense follows from the first, of a policy and 'growth first' consensus, to excluding potentially disruptive subjects who dissent from the policy consensus in the everyday of planning and urban governance (MacLeod, 2011).

Consensus is the main target of Allmendinger and Haughton's (2011) critique of the 'regime' of 'spatial planning'. They argue that the focus on 'sustainable development', 'urban renaissance' and 'smart growth' from 2004 directed the governance networks of spatial planning towards what are open and uncontestable aims, which in practice meant the exclusion of those who contested neoliberal assumptions (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011). Consensus building processes within the everyday practice of 'spatial planning' reinforced a 'partition of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004b). This partition excluded those who wished to challenge developments on political grounds by codifying them as disruptive or inappropriately political, often masking the

political and economic interests of the developers and government in the new estate, tower block or nuclear power plant (Tasan-Kok and Baeten, 2012).

Stakeholder Participation: Spatial planning differs from the top-down technocracy characteristic of the post-war consensus through an emphasis on 'participation' (Catney and Doyle, 2011: 179). The aim of scholars like Healey was to re-orientate planning towards those being planned for. Within planning literature there is a fundamental critique of the use of participatory approaches like Healey's above that draw upon 'communicative rationality' (McGuirk, 2001). Mouffe (1995) argues that communicative rationality is based on a misguided attempt to rationally develop a political space that does not exclude people. She argues that you cannot simply replace one rationality (instrumental) with another (communicative) as at one level politics is not a rational activity and within the public there are distinct and incredibly hard to reconcile (antagonistic) positions that are often related to integral aspects of identity. On this critique, the very notion of basing an inclusive planning practice on participatory approaches is at best limited and at worst illusory.

Blühdorn (2015) argues that participatory, stakeholder democracy is a "powerful tool for reducing opposition and social conflict" (161), however this is *because* not in spite of emancipatory politics. He argues that the development of participatory governance derives in part from demands of ecological and other social movements; however, it is used for those with appropriate privilege to capture resources for their own (unsustainable) lifestyles. Indeed, Blühdorn and Butzlaff (2020: 377) argue that there is potential paradox between the "proliferation […] of participation" and the growing "ambivalence towards democratic institutions".

I raise the debate, and the points from Bludhdorn, because it is notable that an approach to planning and governance which used the language of participation, collaboration and partnership ran alongside an increased public distrust in public institutions. No doubt some policy makers were influenced by deliberative political theorists; however, in the post-political planning regime 'participation' and 'deliberation' are only echoes of ideal types which may themselves also be insufficient.

Instead, 'participation' in spatial planning was focused on managing potential dissensus through involving particular 'stakeholders' and the exclusion of others (Flannery *et al.*, 2019). The examples of the South Bank (Baeten, 2012) development and the nuclear renaissance (Johnstone, 2010) above are ones in which participation of 'stakeholders' is conditional on them being amenable to the development. Participation does open up new spaces for resistance and dissent; the post-politics of stakeholder participation is the management of this participation - of who is heard and who is not. The management or choreography of participation can fail, as actors demand and occasionally subvert measures like e.g. consultation to what they see to be progressive or emancipatory.

The importance of participation here though, lies in its *legitimating* role. The roll-out of public-private hybrid partnerships for planning (Raco, 2005) and the use of 'soft-spaces' and newly rolled out regional governance separate from formal democratic structures made heavy use of stakeholder participation in what amounted to highly managed political deliberation within basically neoliberal parameters (Haughton *et al.*, 2013). Those who lost out from development, or contested it on systemic or political grounds, were still compelled to accept that various 'stakeholders' were consulted and 'engaged' with before the development inevitably goes ahead (Purcell, 2009). The language of deliberation and participation was used to construct an acquiescence to neoliberalisation (Allmendinger, 2011).

Taken together these three features form a 'post-political regime' of spatial planning. This became the dominant regime of planning and governance within technocratic-progressive neoliberalism. This period in the U.K. saw continuity with the authoritarian-conservative in terms of privatisation, expansion of market forms and logics, low taxes and restrictions on trade unions – however there was also a roll-out of neoliberal governance forms that utilised progressive language and had broadly social democratic objectives. A post-political critique captures the tension of governing in technocratic-progressive neoliberalism – that the demands of progressive actors on e.g. climate change conflict with private development and economic growth. The post-political regime of spatial planning was a means of managing this tension. In Chapter 3, I will draw on the above to set out a 'post-political regime' in more detail. The next section discusses the crisis of 'technocratic-

progressive' neoliberalism, and the extent to which the post-political regime for planning persists through the management of this crisis.

2.3   GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS (#2): LOCALISM, AUSTERITY AND THE POLITICAL

By the time New Labour passed its final Planning Act in 2008, a major financial crisis had developed which would hit a U.K. economy increasingly centred on the financial sector. In 2007, a mass of sub-prime mortgage defaults in the U.S. led to a crisis in major financial centres particularly in Europe and the U.S.A. Within months, it became clear that major financial institutions and banks were massively over valued on the verge of collapse. Governments bought up their 'toxic' assets and shares (Barrell and Davis, 2008). In the Autumn of 2008, the U.K. announced a state intervention to prop up banks. The government would spend £500billlion recapitalising banks, become the effective owner of RBS (Goddard *et al.*, 2009), and by 2012 the government had made £375billion of large scale asset transfers to financial institutions (quantitative easing) to ensure liquidity (Bank of England, 2020).

Across the U.S. and Europe, neoliberalism was declared dead (for a list of examples see Mirowski, 2014: 32). The *Financial Times* (London) opined that the "valuable but imperfect insights of Keynesianism were supplanted by the ideological blinkers of neoliberalism" (Palley, 2010). Economists like Joseph Stiglitz argued the crisis was the outcome of letting neoliberal ideas dominate (Stiglitz, 2008), and there was a call to escape the "economic ideology of neoliberalism [that] took hold in and around government" (Norman, 2011).

What these writers tended to identify was neoliberalism as 'laissez-faire'. Neoliberalism was portrayed as a dangerous ideology, however, this ideology was taken as the "normative vision of the state and economy" (Cahill, 2011: 481) put forward by well-known members of the 'Neoliberal Thought Collective' (Mirowski, 2014) rather than "the actual state of affairs that prevailed in most capitalist countries" (Cahill, 2011: 481). De-regulation of the derivative and other financial instrument markets was identified as the reason the US sub-prime crisis had such a wide-reaching effect. The demands to move away from 'neoliberalism' in this superficial sense elided the deep and structural effects of 'financialization' (Fine,

2012), where citizens increasingly relied on asset price inflation or private credit to compensate for downward pressures on wages as a consequence of anti-union and deflationary monetary policy. These latter features were not the subject of denunciations from the bourgeois press.

The 'death' of neoliberalism was not merely a moral panic. Critical scholars also thought this could be the beginning of neoliberalism's demise. Smith (2008: 349) argued that neoliberalism was "dead but dominant", Jessop (2009) that it maintained an 'ecological dominance', and Crouch (2011) argued it had a 'strange non-death'. In a similar vein, Peck (2010) argued that there was a 'zombie neoliberalism', not dead but not really alive, blindly stumbling forwards. There was a sense that things were going to change; however, this did often come with something like this now well used caveat from Gramsci:

"The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (Gramsci, 2003: 276)

The most 'morbid symptom' of this crisis was that substantive changes to political economy was foregone in nations like the U.K. The Coalition (Conservative and Liberal Democrat) government came to power in 2010 arguing that the most immediate problem was to address the profligacy of the Labour government's public spending rather than the Keynesian, aggregate demand stimulus the leader writers in the *Financial Times* had anticipated.

Within 3 years, the largest financial bailout in history had become a tale of state inefficiency (Mirowski, 2014). Reducing the 'deficit' was made the central goal of U.K. government action through 'austerity' and a common-sense acceptance was built through rhetoric and endless repetition through news media that there was a need to "balance the books" (Stanley, 2014) even though this is a nonsensical approach to government finances. Individual citizens and the supposed financial profligacy of the Labour government (rather than finance capitalists) were identified by news media and the Conservative party as responsible for building up significant and unmanageable debt, for which they ought to be punished. Davies (2016: 130) defines the post-crash era as one of 'punitive' neoliberalism, where:

"economic dependency and moral failure become entangled in the form of debt, producing a melancholic condition in which governments and societies unleash hatred and violence upon members of their own population"

Far from being dead, neoliberalism was very much alive "leading to a further entrenchment of market-disciplinary modes of governance" (Peck *et al.*, 2012: 265). The period of 'austerity' that followed the crisis is the crucible in which the 'authoritarian turn' is forged, as, alongside the quantitative spending cuts, we see a qualitative change in governance (Jessop, 2019: 357) aimed at disciplining citizens, households, trade unions, NGO's and charities for their own and a shared moral failure of indebtedness. Rather than a moment for significant change to the social order, the crisis became a reason for *more* neoliberalisation, and a wave of roll-backs and roll-outs of new state-regulatory structures as part of what Jessop terms "permanent austerity" (Ibid).

Importantly, this further attack on the 'state' is one that sees already deeply neoliberalised states like the U.K. embarking "on the task of hollowing out *themselves* through a battery of austerity measures" (Peck and Theodore, 2019: 257, original empahasis). The Coalition government attacked the social-democratic aspect of the New Labour government, targeting them as the enemy in much the same way the Thatcherite had targeted 'socialists'. The New Labour administration were resolutely anti-socialist, yet their period in office was soon recast as one of excessive spending and state meddling which the incoming Coalition government promised to change. Planning was once again a key site for state reform, and the following section explores how the Coalition government reformed planning, before showing how austerity and the rise of right-wing populism have led to an authoritarian turn in neoliberalism.

2.3.1 Open-Source Planning, the NPPF and Localism

It will come as no surprise to the reader by this point that planning was, once again, a subject of reform. The Conservative's 2010 manifesto stated:

"Britain's complex and unwieldy planning system has long been cited as a significant barrier to growth and wealth creation. We will create a presumption in favour of

sustainable development in the planning system." (The Conservative Party (U.K.), 2010: 18)

From their initial development the reforms were controversial and the focus of significant media attention (Allmendinger, 2016). The aim of the reforms was to further re-orientate planning towards supporting the market alongside a new 'localism', streamlining' the development management process (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014). The key legislation for the reforms was the Localism Act (2011). This was followed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012. The NPPF (DCLG, 2012) condensed significantly the planning policies and statements of New Labour into one shorter document. Its initial development and first draft were made by a group of non-civil service 'advisors' as part of an 'open source' approach to policy making (Raco, 2013). The final draft was significantly revised, though Slade argues this shows a significant shift in the planning policy making approach that was responsible for changes like the "circular definition of sustainable development" (Slade, 2018: 213) in which environmental issues find an even more diminished role. The NPPF introduced a 'presumption in favour' of such development.

The Localism Act led to the removal of strategic, regional planning bodies and introduced a new sub-local level of 'neighbourhood planning'. This level was not comprehensive, 'neighbourhoods' did not have to have a plan like a local authority, but the ethos behind them was one of collaboration and co-production (Parker *et al.*, 2017) and the formation of new 'soft spaces' (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013).

Neighbourhood level planning and its merits are not of particular relevance to this thesis, but the foregrounding of "localism" is. The move to 'localism' was part of wider narrative of reform under the term "Big Society", which loosely referred to the positive agenda of enabling civil society actors to take the place of formal state bodies in providing public services, the empowerment of professionals delivering services and greater democratic input at a local level (North, 2011). It promised a more genuine, localist form of participation to replace the 'stakeholder' form above.

Lord and Tewdwr-Jones (2018) argue that the formation of the Localism Act showed the tension between the different elements of the Conservative party, mirroring the conflicts of the 1980's. They show how the 'Thatcherite' (or neoliberal) tendency pushed for significant de-regulation as a spur for economic growth, as the more

traditional Conservatives defended the need for conservation of rural areas and powers at the local level. The Localism Act gave more powers to government ministers on major infrastructure projects, yet also meant that citizens could collaborate on a 'neighbourhood' plans on an ad-hoc rather than statutory basis (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018). With both the 'big society' and 'localism', the government tended to use the word 'decentralisation' to describe their actions with the stated aim of empowering people at a local level. What this actually meant was "a great many powers relating to planning (and other policy areas) have been fundamentally centralized under the auspices of decentralization" (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018: 234). Planning regulation and bureaucracy was dismantled, without substantial support for the rolling out of new democratic forums or processes.

Importantly, planning reforms were introduced alongside the other key programme of the Coalition - austerity. The overall programme of austerity would come to heavily impact planning. One of the main areas of cuts has been to local government, with an average 21% cut to local budgets to 2018 and with planning and housing departments facing up to a 50% cut (Partington, 2019). The cuts have been geographically uneven, but the capacity of the local state in general has been significantly diminished (Gray and Barford, 2018). This has led to the rise of what Slade *et al.* (2019) call the 'austerity planner', where services are increasingly outsourced to planning consultants. Spending cuts have reduced the size of planning departments and made them more reliant on the fees of applicants and developers (Ibid). The cuts to bureaucracy were not just deregulatory but cuts to resources too, leading to significantly diminished public sector capacity in planning.

2.3.2 The return of the political?

The impact of the 'open-source' reforms, and the persistence of a 'post-political regime' within the resultant planning system is the subject of debate within planning literature. Initially, scholars argued that there was some important consistencies with the New Labour and Coalition approaches, however with continued funding cuts for planning departments and e.g. the continued expansion of deregulatory mechanisms like Permitted Development Rights– scholars have begun to question

the value of a post-political critique of planning. This literature provides good reason to think the planning system in England is both in crisis and moving towards a different regime.

Allmendinger and Haughton (2011) argue that, whilst 'spatial planning' died with the Labour government, it in many ways created the conditions for the 'localism' agenda. They point to the increase of judicial reviews into local or national planning decisions as a sign that there were significant democratic deficits within planning (Ibid: 99). They cite Greg Clark, one of the key Ministers responsible for developing the reforms and who we shall encounter again later. It is worth quoting in full as it captures neatly the localist zeitgeist and a critique of the technocratic-progressive neoliberalism:

"The old view was that the best way to solve problems – whether in schools, health, local government or planning– was for good, serious people to sit down and work out what is the best template to achieve collective goals, to codify it, and roll that out across the country requiring others to implement it. The idea was that this would lift up the under-performers to a dramatically higher standard and so improve social welfare. The trouble is that people, at least in this country, tend not to fall into line with this approach. They bridle at imposition from afar, however well-intentioned, and will expend considerable effort and ingenuity in resisting it. It requires a bureaucracy of enforcement which becomes divisive and adversarial and costly as well as entailing uncertainty and delay." (Greg Clark cited in Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011: 99)

The target of Clark's critique appears to be both the basic ideals of the post-war planning system and the technocratic-progressive neoliberalism of New Labour. Of particular interest is the invocation of liberalism here, i.e. that people 'bridle at imposition from afar' against a 'bureaucracy of enforcement'. It fits in with wider Conservative rhetoric of the time which characterised New Labour as a typically dogmatic 'old left party', with the Conservative Eric Pickles (also responsible for the reforms) referring to planning as "the last bastion of communism" (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014: 352). The Labour administration were committed to making planning market supportive, yet even these limited restrictions they maintained were too much for ardent Thatcherites unafraid of an ideological politics.

Alongside the warm words on local empowerment there was plenty of space for businesses (particularly housing developers) within the reforms with a rolling back of regulations and greater permitted development rights, expanded in 2015 (Ferm *et al*, 2020). Lord and Tewdwr-Jones (2014) argue that the Coalition faced the same dilemmas every neoliberal 'reform' goes through– developers usually demand some level of strategic planning and the protections planning provides to rural villages are very popular in electorally important middle England. Indeed, they argue that there is actually a great deal of continuity with New Labour, the 'local' becoming the new site of citizen participation:

"..focusing on the local provides an opportunity to cloak neoliberal policies in the vestments of participative democracy; collapsing the gap between citizens and political power can appear democratic even if the net result is the transfer of quasi-political power to corporations or (with correct nomenclature) "private"-public partnerships" (Ibid: 355)

Despite the rhetoric and reforms then, there would appear to be some continuity across the Labour and Coalition, with a rolling back of regulations and bureaucracy alongside the rolling out of 'localism' as a revamped form of citizen participation. As with 'sustainability', the term 'localism' has the useful political quality of having multiple understandings to different people to the point where few can find it inherently disagreeable. Localism can refer to: the development of a counter to economic globalisation, the point to which power is decentralised, an environmentally sound alternative to global supply chains, a cohesive and communitarian social unit, and a (preferred) part of a spatial hierarchy (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015). In practice:

"Governing through 'the local' involves freeing localities to become responsible for their own fates and bear the consequences of their own conducts, yet in such a way that their action is aligned with governmental ends." (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015: 78)

One can see the appeal here for the Conservatives; localism suggests reducing central state power and responsibility alongside a pastoral idyll of an organic community, and the openness of the term provided a means of bypassing a contradiction between

unleashing the (housing) market and conserving villages, woodland and heritage sites.

Increasingly, though, it has looked like localism is what you are able to make of it. Healey (2015) identifies a 'progressive localism' at a neighbourhood level in a rural area; however other work identifies an 'austerity localism' that strays far from the rhetoric of empowerment (Dagdeviren *et al.*, 2019) and involves local councils developing new forms of governance to mitigate the worse effects of austerity following severe budget cuts. This is often framed in terms of making reluctant compromises between priorities due to lack of resources, but also the normalisation of 'localist' community groups like foodbanks as part of everyday urban life. It may simply be that localism is just another in a long line of spatial fixes, trying to find the elusive ideal level of regulation that best suits capitalist reproduction (Harvey, 2001).

The focus of this thesis, though, is whether these reforms and those of the Conservative government that follows can still be thought of as 'post-political', or whether new logics of planning are developing. Deas (2013) argues that there is continuity across Labour and Coalition governments' urban policy in the central focus for economic growth and market conditions continue to act as the key driver of decision-making. The social-democratic aspect of spatial planning may have been dropped, but taking its place is a 'localism' based on participation and collaboration (Ibid: 77). Lord and Tewdwr-Jones (2018), however, argue that the Coalition reforms show a greater consistency with the Thatcherite programme, as austerity strips away the effective power of local government and major project decisions are increasingly centralised. They argue that the Coalition reforms and subsequent Conservative government reforms have removed any middle tier of planning, facilitating:

"a movement of political power upwards to the centre where control is rigid, and a simultaneous dispersal of power downwards to whomsoever is sufficiently cognisant that this has happened to seize it." (Ibid: 239)

They argue that planning has been diminished in any sense of being in a 'public interest'. It is either focused on 'national significance' or hyper local activity without any sense that it could be an activity aimed at some social objectives (Ibid: 240). They argue that the narrowing of the remit, scope and deliberation within planning is indicative of a 'post-politics'; however, the stripping back of planning potentially

opens up a political moment to question what planning is for in which even non-neoliberal approaches get a hearing. Allmendinger & Haughton (2015) argue that both 'spatial planning' and the localism reforms constitute a 'post-political regime', though they suggest that the Coalition reforms (including funding cuts) are much less consensual, leading to increasing levels of conflict through a more open and experimental approach to planning.

Recent planning research has argued for the need to go beyond the 'post-political' conception of planning. This research looks to challenge a 'conflict/consensus' binary (Legacy *et al.*, 2019), and show how the planning does still provide space for resistance and social change within supposedly post-political approaches (Ormerod and MacLeod, 2018). Within the increasingly privatised and poorly resourced arena of planning, organised groups can utilise participatory mechanisms to challenge development and find the support of state actors in doing so (Paccoud, 2018). Others have argued that there is an opportunity to embrace conflict within planning decisions, and change development management approaches away from seeking post-political win-win solutions (McClymont, 2011).

More generally, the rise of right wing populism, the Brexit vote and the left wing turn of the Labour party suggest that ideological conflicts which were supressed or obscured within a post-politics are now becoming increasingly part of social life and of planning practice (Davoudi *et al.*, 2020). In this context, we have to question whether 'post-politics' is an appropriate lens for understanding planning practice, when the wider context is a shift towards a more authoritarian neoliberalism (as 2.4 will set out).

Much of the literature re-appraising planning and 'post-politics' focuses (quite rightly) on the interactions between formal politics, policy and the state (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014; Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018; Slade, 2018; Flannery *et al.*, 2019). This thesis follows a different approach, investigating the role planning plays in managing a contentious political-ecological issue – shale gas fracking. By focusing on the level of planning decision-making, the thesis looks to investigate the crisis in the post-political regime from the bottom up and relate the case study back to the shifts in the state and planning policy identified. There is research that adopts a similar approach in the context of urban planning (Ormerod and MacLeod, 2018;

Eraydin and Frey, 2019), however little attention has been given to the crisis of post-politics in environmental planning which is an important area for study especially given the post-political critique was developed significantly through examining the governance of the environment. As Allmendinger and Haughton (2015) argue, the Coalition government reforms have reconfigured a post-political regime, in such a way that we see an increase in these conflicting planning decisions and this thesis examines a conflict to see whether such a regime persists and whether this critical approach is still relevant to English planning.

The possible breakdown of the post-political also raises the question of how to best understand the current planning system and the (still?) neoliberal state? The rest of the chapter discusses a contemporary literature that critically explains recent political and state changes, conceptualising the present period of neoliberalisation as increasingly 'authoritarian' and setting out what an authoritarian turn for planning might look like.

2.4 AN AUTHORITARIAN TURN IN PLANNING?

The link between an 'authoritarian' politics and planning is not a new one. As the work of Yiftachel (1995,1998) shows in the Palestinian context, the tools and processes designed for planning can be used for social control, displacement and violent repression of a population. The particular context of Israel-Palestine is an extreme one; yet it shows how the Othering and exclusion of a particular ethnic group is the basis for deploying the tools of planning. This echoes other work on the use of planning in colonial contexts which shows how town and country planning legislation and policy was used to expand the power of the colonial state over its subjects (Njoh, 2007), producing divisive, oppressive and exclusive spaces in ways that still profoundly impact those nations today (Porter, 2010).

Planning has what Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2004) call a 'dark side'. They argue that planning theorists who have followed Habermas in asking the question 'what *should* be done?' can sometimes miss the question asked by writers like Foucault: 'what *is* being done?' (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2004, my emphasis). This thesis explicitly follows the latter route, through exploring the tentative hypothesis that English planning is experiencing an 'authoritarian turn'. This phrase was in fact used

by Johnstone (2010) to describe the provisions within the Planning Act 2008 to centralise infrastructure decision-making to the IPC, and as the following chapters will show the changes from the post-political to the authoritarian are largely an incremental change. The technocracy of post-politics has within it a latent authoritarianism (Swyngedouw, 2000).

The sense of 'authoritarian turn' in this work goes beyond the 'latent', referring to an open intensification of authoritarian populism and state practices (Bruff, 2013; Bruff, 2016; Brown, 2018; Bruff and Tansel, 2019; Jenss, 2019; Jessop, 2019; Tansel, 2019). I will set out here the features of the authoritarian turn in this literature, which focuses on different areas of state (and supra-state) activity in different geographical examples. Each different geographical context has differing reasons for and realisations of an authoritarian turn, nonetheless the literature identifies some common features of the turn in nations which have (or had) representative democratic politics rather than e.g. China which has its own particular authoritarian features. The literature makes it clear that an 'authoritarian turn' is not supposed to demarcate a radical new change. Instead:

"critiquing authoritarian neoliberalism should take as its starting point the notion that neoliberalism is fundamentally about the coercive, nondemocratic, and unequal reorganization of societies toward the intensification and extensification of the differences, inequalities, hierarchies, and divisions that pervade capitalist society" (Bruff, 2019: 375)

In marking out an 'authoritarian neoliberalism' we are talking about both a reanimation of the authoritarian-conservative tendencies I have identified so far, the continuation of the core aspects of neoliberalisation (e.g. privatisation, marketization,) as well as the development of new ways of governing that are a response to a crisis of neoliberalism's making. In this way:

"we locate the term at the intersection of a range of social relations and utilize it to highlight how contemporary capitalism is governed in a way which tends to reinforce and rely upon practices that seek to marginalize, discipline and control dissenting social groups and oppositional politics rather than strive for their explicit consent or co-optation." (Bruff and Tansel, 2019: 234)

The starting point for the 'authoritarian turn' in the U.K. is the financial crisis. Following this crisis though, we also see a series of ongoing crises: of political legitimacy (e.g. parliamentary expenses scandal in the UK), the climate crisis, Brexit, housing, migration, the Eurozone... each of these demanded a state response as well as bringing forth new oppositional politics. The 'authoritarian turn' is essentially a conceptualisation of the State response to these overlapping crises, which are increasingly built upon punitive, controlling, disciplinary processes and a populist politics that rejects consensus and increasingly the norms and institutions of (neo) liberal-democracy (Bruff, 2013; Peck and Theodore, 2019).

This literature is still relatively young, but within it several features can be identified from studies in different nations and contexts. There are 4 important features of authoritarian neoliberalism I have identified in the literature which I categorise under the following headings:

Disciplinary/ punitive: A key aspect of an authoritarian turn is the use of punitive or "self-flagellating" (Bruff, 2013: 112) language and narratives to support an increase in disciplinary practices (Carvalho and Chamberlen, 2018). In the U.K. that has meant the rolling out of a new social security system, Universal Credit, which includes a system of sanctions to punish claimants for misdemeanours. Not only do claimants receive less money, but the system has also been restructured along a 'workfare' model that disciplines individuals who have lost their jobs or ended up in low paid and insecure work as a result of economic stagnation (Bruff and Wohl, 2016). Similar sort of workfare practices can be seen in other countries e.g. Brazil (Magalhães, 2019). The "perpetual austerity" Jessop (2019) identifies is justified in these terms: in the U.K. there is a need to 'balance the books' because of past fiscal profligacy, a need to discipline citizens and state actors. As Norris and Inglehart (2019) argue, the growth of nationalist political figures has animated support for violence to punish those who are seen to be enemies of the state.

Antagonistic: Governments increasingly submit their decisions to an austerity logic, which limits the possibility of redistributive spending on social programmes (Bruff, 2013: 116). The necessity of following this logic justifies avoiding seeking

consensus or consent. The imposition of brutal spending cuts on Greece by the EU and IMF would be an example of 'constitutionalizing austerity' (Bruff and Wohl, 2016), where legal and constitutional means are used to enforce austerity solutions to capitalist crisis which bypass democracy. There is move to decision-making processes that bypass even token discussions with stakeholders (e.g. environmental groups) that object to policies and strategies that are likely to have detrimental effects on citizens (Wigger, 2019). In contrast to the 'third way', there is no suggestion that decisions bring people together – it is stated a priori that particular groups will suffer to pay for the crash (public sector workers, welfare claimants, students).

Bypassing norms of democracy and a State of Exception: There are moves to bypass norms and procedures of liberal democracy, even in its already reduced neoliberal forms. Cozzolino (2019) details the increasing use of emergency powers and legislation in Italy to pursue neoliberal policy-making regardless of parliamentary objections, and Tansel (2019) shows how the response to popular uprisings in the Middle East has led to a strengthening of executive power to enforce neoliberal reforms which simultaneously undermine the legitimacy of the state as they ignore demands for greater democratic space. In the U.K., there was an attempt to prorogue Parliament in 2019 to push through legislation, which was overturned by the Supreme Court.

What draws these different examples together, is the invocation of a 'State of Exception'. This term has a long and troubled history; it was introduced by Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt to legitimise the extra-legal imposition of Nazi rule in Weimar Germany. For Agamben (2005), a 'state of exception' is when a government acts to suspend the law and looks to increase and extend its power, legitimated with reference to a crisis or threat of some kind, where there is "an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security as the normal technique of government" (Agamben, 2005: 11) to manage said crisis. Mbembe argues that through colonialism, states of exception have long been part of capitalism, rather than being characteristic simply of fascism:

"the colonies are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended - the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of "civilization"" (Mbembe, 2019: 24)

Whilst we ought to be careful of hasty comparisons between contemporary domestic British politics and fascism and colonialism; it is important to realise that these are both political forms that have sat side by side with capitalist reproduction and the latter within the British state. The concept of the 'state of exception' itself is useful because it captures an undertheorized aspect of the state – the points at which the state can suspend laws and norms in order to adjust or even radically alter power relations. Creating such a state relies on the invocation of a crisis and/or the exclusion or Othering of particular groups, a state of exception can be created in specific areas or at specific times as well as with the sort of permanence Mbembe articulates.

Exclusion: Brown (2018) argues that there are appeals to a new 'authoritarian subjectivity' in the U.S.A., particularly to working and middle class white men who have experienced or perceived a decline in their social and economic power. This decline is mobilised as anger against women and minority groups who are constructed as threatening this power. Cosmopolitanism is identified as being responsible for all manner of social 'problems' rather than decisions made by domestic or international capital and governments. In the U.K., a 'metropolitan elite' is often invoked by right wing actors as pervasive influence on politics.

State institutions are also increasingly exclusive. Bruff and Wohl (2016) argue that austerity regimes across Europe have been gendered in their impact on women in terms of the worsening of conditions in women dominated sectors (e.g. care work), and the disciplinary effects of welfare reforms on the family/household. Further, Bhagat and Soederberg (2019) show how the 'refugee crisis' in Europe involves not just the rhetorical othering of the 'refugee' but also a rolling back of state responsibility for refugees and a reliance on activists and NGOs to provide necessary support. The Othered groups or those that apparently defend them (i.e. the metropolitan elite) are often articulated as the 'problem', which requires authoritarian intervention.

Chapter 3 will bring these features together into a framework for the analysis. It is worth emphasising the importance of the variegated and geographically uneven nature of neoliberalisation here. The authoritarian actions of the BJP in India are not going to be the same as the actions of the U.K. government, and we should also not treat the 'authoritarian' as some non-Western problem from which lessons can be learnt (Tansel, 2019: 288).

It is also important to emphasise that the 'authoritarian turn' is not all supposed to be radically new, and that it is still neoliberalism. Logics of competition proliferate, privatisations continue, unequal 'free' trade agreements remain in place. The term 'authoritarian neoliberalism' also brings together the multiple perspectives introduced throughout this chapter. Foucauldian governmentality is present in the work of Brown (2018), identifying the new authoritarian (rather than entrepreneurial) subject which Donald Trump's campaign and subsequent administration looked to animate and construct. Jessop (2019) argues from a Marxist political economy perspective we are seeing a return to 'authoritarian statism' backed by finance capital rather than industrial capital and Bruff (2013) initially proposed the term as a further development of the Gramscian 'conjuncture' used by Hall. Finally, it is also an analysis supported by some of those who focus on 'actually existing neoliberalism' whose approach framed this chapter, as captured here:

"Neoliberalism's authoritarian (re)turn has been marked by the wholesale rejection of political compromise, concession, and consensus as means of managing dissent, while those holding on to power instead seek to make a virtue of ever more strident defences of an idealized status quo ante" (Peck and Theodore, 2019: 262)

The intersection of these perspectives in arguing for an 'authoritarian turn' in neoliberalism both generally and in these specific contexts provides a good theoretical reason to assume this is something we may see signs of in the English planning system as well as within the shale gas case. An area that the 'authoritarian neoliberalism' literature requires further empirical work is the 'authoritarian turn' in response to challenges over the growing ecological crisis, particularly in the nations

of the Global North. Perhaps more than any area, the issue of anthropogenic climate change hits at the heart of the problem of neoliberal market-rule as it requires limitations to be placed on fossil capital (Malm, 2013) as well a call to plan for socially defined outcomes rather than rely upon the logic of the market (Lohmann, 2016).

The thesis partially addresses the energy-ecological gap in the authoritarian neoliberalism literature, by providing a critical explanation of how planning practice is being modified against the backdrop of this 'authoritarian turn'. It identifies the extent to which the authoritarian is being *institutionalised* within environmental planning which has implications for the growing ecological crisis. The political conflict over shale gas is one that tracks the period of the wider 'authoritarian turn', so it also allows me to examine the extent to which the increasingly prevalent authoritarian language and rhetoric in the U.K. is leading to institutional change.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND PROBLEMATISATION

This chapter has discussed different periods of planning reform in the U.K. in relation to wider state, political and economic shifts. I have set out two distinct poles of neoliberalism – the 'authoritarian-conservative' and the 'technocratic-progressive' – to characterise two different approaches to neoliberalisation within the U.K state. These poles emphasise that there are at least two major distinct ideological and governance approaches to neoliberalisation which follow rolling back and rolling out dynamics (Peck and Tickell, 2002). In both, we see the expansion of markets and competition to new areas of the state, privatisation, deregulation, re-regulation, anti-trade union legislation and new 'entrepreneurial' approaches to managing staff and citizens within state institutions.

Authoritarian-conservative neoliberalism is shown in the rise to power of the Thatcher government articulating and 'authoritarian populism' as part of a conjuncture of the 'free market' and the 'strong state. This government rolled back the post-war Keynesian welfare state, deregulating planning and experimented with new forms of privatised urban governance e.g. Urban Development Corporations.

The Thatcher governments free market zeal created a tension with their own electoral base: conservatives in rural areas wanted protection for heritage and their villages through planning policy. Developers also demanded some strategic oversight from the state in areas like housing. From this tension, a 'new consensus' for planning was developed with a market oriented but still discretionary planning system that began to incorporate 'sustainability' and public 'participation'. Authoritarian-conservative neoliberalism did not institutionalise an authoritarian regime for planning.

The Labour government followed this consensus, rolling out 'spatial planning'. Spatial planning embodied the 'technocratic-progressive' pole of neoliberalism and the project of New Labour as an ideological conjuncture of neoliberalism and social democracy. The rolling out of greater participation and the focus on sustainability depoliticised controversial developments and excluded troublesome political actors in the name of (an exclusionary) consensus. Spatial planning brought a renewed technocracy to planning practice, one guided by metrics and performance management that directed practice according to a neoliberal governmentality. I argue that spatial planning was a 'post-political regime' for planning, one that captures the tension between 'technocratic' management of economic development and the demands of progressive actors.

Technocratic-progressive neoliberalism is now in crisis. Right wing populists have targeted its cosmopolitanism, and the Coalition government critiqued its techno-managerial bureaucracy. In planning, recent scholarship has suggested that the 'post-political regime' is less prominent in planning policy and practice. Sustainable development has been redefined. Localism promises a new form of participation. There seems to be a more antagonistic approach to development management, and austerity has significantly reduced the technical capacity of public sector planning. This is the first part of the problematisation for the research: there appears to be a breakdown in the post-political regime, and scholars are questioning the value of critiquing planning as 'post-political' at the current juncture. The thesis examines the extent to which a post-political regime persists in planning practice.

This chapter has also shown that there is a (re)turn towards 'authoritarian neoliberalism' characterised by punitive language and practices, conflict and antagonism and the invocation of a 'state of exception' and exclusive practices. The 'authoritarian neoliberalism' literature supports the second part of the problematisation for the research – that there is a turn towards an 'authoritarian regime' for English planning. The characterisation of authoritarian neoliberalism I put forward in 2.4 would seem to bear some similarity to Thatcherism in 2.1, and it may be that the current changes are a turn to the 'authoritarian-conservative' pole. The thesis looks to identify, through the fracking case, what signs there are of a turn towards an 'authoritarian regime' for planning, what this looks like and its limits. The two parts of the problematisation yield the tentative hypothesis for the research:

there is a turn towards a more authoritarian (yet still neoliberal) planning regime following a crisis in the 'post-political'

The recent present of neoliberalism has been characterised by an "experimental statecraft" (Peck and Theodore, 2015), and this thesis focuses on planning as a state instution to understand the shifting nature of the state in the current moment. The thesis examines the controversial case of shale gas fracking to see what 'experiments' are taking place in manging this controversial issue. The next two chapters set out the analytical, theoretical and methodological frameworks for doing so.

Before turning to Chapter 3, it is worth reflecting on the limits of the periodisation I put forward here. Periodising planning and the state more broadly in epochal terms (technocratic progressive/Post-political/authoritarian-conservative/authoritarian regime) provides some conceptual clarity, however Savage (2009) cautions against an 'epochal' way of theorising and;

"the power of a future-facing mode of apprehension which, whatever its sophistication, is necessarily unable to recognize repetition, recurrence, perpetuation. This failure is embedded in a style of thought in which the past is only rendered as a foil for exhibiting the new" (Ibid:220)

My approach here follows others in marking out the current period as a marked 'turn' away from the 'third way' type of governance, in response to particular conditions and crises (2008 financial crisis, spending cuts, the EU referendum). I

think there is good reason to develop conceptual terms that cover the emergent state practices that follow these crises, and that is what I endeavour to do in the thesis. This Chapter has articulated a periodisation that allows me to offer a conjecture about planning and the state, the rest of the thesis then looks to identify changes on the assumption that the British state is undergoing (some) qualitative change since the financial crisis.

What this Chapter also provides however, is a recent history of planning and the state that allows some connections to be drawn with the past. In particular, Hall's notion of 'authoritarian populism' in Thatcherism was developed through his work on the depiction of young black men as prone to criminality, and today similar populist language is used about the threat from racialised others in figures of 'asylum seekers' or more generally 'migrants' (Kundnani, 2021). I use the term 'authoritarian (re)turn'), because in many ways the authoritarian regime I argue is emerging in planning and the state is a revanchist Thatcherism. The key difference in terms of periodisation (as I argue above) is that the current political right in the U.K. are reacting to the endemic crisis of neoliberalism. Thatcher promised to tear up the post war settlement, no such claims are seriously being made now – the aim of the game is to maintain inequalities, private ownership of resources, rentier capitalism, relative freedom for the City of London etc. As with any periodisation though, my approach risks missing some subtly and nuance, as well as perhaps some repetitions, for the sake of some clarity in establishing what is emerging.

3 LOCATING AN AUTHORITARIAN TURN IN DISCOURSE: A THEORETICAL APPROACH AND AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 questions whether 'post-politics' is a suitable way to characterise contemporary planning, and recent theoretical writing in neoliberalism suggests states across the world states are undergoing an 'authoritarian turn'. The thesis examines the extent to which this turn is being institutionalised in planning. To do so, it focuses on a controversial case of shale gas fracking. To connect the general 'authoritarian turn' with the specific decisions and actions in the fracking case requires both a social theory and an analytical framework to identify features in the case study to relate to the discussions in Chapter 2.

This chapter has four sections. The first section of this chapter synthesises the discussions in the previous chapter into a 'first cut' analytical framework, identifying what a post-political and authoritarian planning regime look like in planning in general terms. The social theory I draw upon to situate the research is Political Discourse Theory (PDT), and in 3.2 I explore the origins of this position, its ontology and epistemology. I then outline the research approach of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) based on the mid-range' concept of *logics*. In 3.3, I integrate these logics into the 'second cut' framework. The revised framework is the basis for the analysis and identifying the dominant regime of planning. 3.3 also sets out the approach to the analysis and the tentative hypothesis.

The research in this thesis was of a live and developing case, for which the tentative hypothesis approach provides the flexibility to adapt. As Bruff and Tansel (2019: 238) argue, critical research into such cases means that we need to:

"reject over-formalized forms of knowledge of production and instead embrace the inevitable *messiness* inherent to the study of socio-economic, legal, and political landscapes that are shifting in front of us, in our own lifetimes"

This chapter will show how the PDA approach provides a balance between formality and the required flexibility for researching live and developing case studies to critically explain broader socio-political shifts. I present the 'authoritarian' features here as though they are entirely prior to the analysis, whereas they are partially

developed through the research process as I sought literature to help explain the changes in the fracking case.

3.1 A 'first-cut' Analytical Framework: From Post-Politics to Authoritarian Planning?

Before delving into the ontology and epistemology of PDT and the concept of 'logics', it is useful to synthesise the various features of the 'post-political and 'authoritarian' into a 'first-cut' framework without PDT's conceptual language. I call this a 'first-cut', as it lacks the theoretical tools for analysis (logics).

I start from the position that "Post-politics is about a way to *represent* or *interpret* social reality" (Kenis, 2018: 845), There is, or was, a 'post-politics' that limits the possibilities and actions of e.g. environmental movements. Locating a 'post-politics', though, is an interpretative act based on both empirical data as well the reconstruction of a particular case in discursive terms. It is a critical term, that does not "describe reality, but criticises the way it is given meaning" (ibid). 'Post-politics' is a way of critically explaining how reality is constructed.

The same is also the case for the 'authoritarian turn'. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 shows different theoretical approaches that argue the current conjuncture is one of 'authoritarian neoliberalism'; however this literature tends to avoid 'ideational' approaches which "underplay the connection between […] ideas and discourses with capitalist development and statehood" (Bruff and Tansel, 2019) (235). This does not mean that authoritarian tendencies cannot be understood at the discursive level, rather that analysis requires approach to discourse that conceptualises dominant ideas and practices as "actively constructed by competing social forces" (Ibid: 238). Both 'post-politics' and 'authoritarian neoliberalism' identify dominant ways of constructing and acting upon the social world by those in power beyond merely ideas.

Table 3.1 sets out a 'first-cut' of an analytical framework that characterises both 'post-politics' and the 'authoritarian'. Table 3.1 locates the features identified on similar terrain, where it would seem that one feature in the 'authoritarian' either directly extends or diverges from another in 'post-politics'. I briefly outline each below the table.

Table 3.1 First cut analytical framework: Post-politics to Authoritarian

Post-politics	Authoritarian
Techno-managerial: Audit systems, metrics and 'modernisation' or 'culture change' for planners, expert-led process, evidence-based policy, networked governance of regulation.	**Executive-Punitive**: Effectively punishing citizens and potentially disruptive state actors, though funding cuts, central government intervention, fines, legal and police enforcement. More direct influence from Ministers and central government.
Consensus: Consensus: Two senses – 1) A broad policy/political consensus as basis of pragmatic delivery of development and growth. 2) Approaches/concepts to create 'win-win' outcomes that can exclude more radical views that come from above consensus, i.e. sustainable development frames a win-win solution on a particular project	**Antagonistic:** Related to first sense of consensus: policy not articulated as consensual, focus is on mobilising anger of disenfranchised white, male working/middle class, policy created to appeal to this subjectivity as well as private interests. Related to second sense: The government actively take a side in specific conflicts. Rather than consensus seeking governance, the government openly fights on the side of its allies vs particularly identified enemies.
Partnership and Participation: Based on communicative rationality, identifying 'stakeholders' for 'partnership' and participation of citizens within stage-managed contexts which often masks power relations.	**State of Exception:** A crisis or problem is constructed in such a way that there isn't time for deliberation and consultation, there is a need to respond which means only a small number of actors need to be involved in decision making – interventions are explicit and normal processes are suspended or bypassed.

Techno-managerial to Executive-punitive: Formal planning systems are always to some extent technocratic, the action of making a plan requires a construction of space which is usually conducted or mediated through a state institution requiring some expertise (Lefebvre, 1991). Chapter 2 identified a specific form, of 'techno-managerialism': an expert led practice, though one which is overlaid with metrics and audit systems to manage planning professionals as well as the process. With regards to development management, this means a tendency towards the measurable (in a positivist sense) as the evidential base for justifying decisions (Davoudi, 2012) in the face of potentially costly appeals. The techno-managerial approach favours those with the resources to afford the expertise required and can lead to an inherent bias against messier political issues that escape formalised knowledge.

The conjunction of 'executive-punitive' denotes two changes. The first is a move away from the dispersed technocratic 'networked' governance, towards a more centralised process of decision making located within the executive branches of government. The growing influence of right-wing populist parties and leaders shows trends towards a rejection of liberal-democratic norms (Stavrakakis *et al.*, 2017; Wodak and Krzyżanowski, 2017). Populist rhetoric is being drawn upon to legitimise more executive decision making that bypasses problematized state actors– of which the 'planner' is by now a classic example. Recent years have seen governments elected across multiple countries with distinct ideological positions and mandates to sweep away the technocratic (i.e. the 'red tape') apparatus of techno-managerialism or on explicitly anti-corruption mandates (e.g. Narendra Modi and Jair Bolsonaro). An authoritarian turn in planning would reflect this change in practice to more executive control over the problematic planners and local authorities.

The second change is a shift from 'managerialism' to 'punitive'. Research into changes within welfare systems (Bruff and Wohl, 2016) show a punitive logic to state practices derived from the supposed need for 'austerity'. Techno-managerial planning excludes the political whilst also aiming towards a (limited) notion of the 'public interest', albeit one aligned with neoliberal growth imperatives. In planning, we can expect a more punitive logic to be applied to both citizens and planning professionals. Decision-making will be guided by prospect of punishment (and reward) for sticking within neoliberal parameters and government agendas.

The shift towards the authoritarian is one in which we see the bypassing or abandonment of democratic norms. This is not a decisive shift, rather the deepening of a tendency to reduce democratic involvement as part of ongoing neoliberalisation (Brown, 2015; Brown, 2018). Nonetheless, in an authoritarian turn for planning we should expect to see the increased use of executive powers from central government and punishment for those planners and local authorities who do not conform.

It is important to note here that central government interventions can be resisted by planners. Penpecioğlu and Taşan-Kok (2016) show how the increased use of authoritarian interventions in urban planning in Turkey have divided planners in terms of their practice – some have conformed, others attempted to work around this, others left the profession. What they argue, however, is that there can be a profound sense of alienation "when they are faced with political conditions in which they have no space to express their expert opinion" (Ibid: 1039). It is important to understand that state actors can resist changes, or even implement changes they believe are wrong due to institutional and political constraints, though in my research the main focus is on the changing rules and constrains state actors face.

Consensus – Antagonistic:

There are two senses of consensus important for analysis. Firstly, there is the sense of a policy consensus, and Deas (2013) identifies a degree of urban policy consensus across Labour and Coalition governments. The continued use of 'sustainable development' as the guiding rubric of planning is an example of this. The formation of the Localism Act and the NPPF (2012) also suggest a revival of some Thatcherite era policy and practices (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014; Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018). A policy consensus across multiple governments is no doubt of importance, and will be touched upon in the research, however it is not the analytical focus of the thesis.

The thesis looks here at a turn in the second sense, from the use of consensus approaches and the construction of 'win-win' solutions towards a more antagonistic approach to planning that targets particular 'enemies' or losers. We have seen key policy terms like sustainable development redefined again in the 2012 NPPF to be even more circular and vague, whilst maintaining the social-environmental-economic tripartite with emphasis firmly on the latter (Raco, 2015). The increased

vagueness of the term though, actually makes conflicts within planning more likely, with different actors being able to claim their position as supported by such policy (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2015). The second sense of consensus, of trying to construct a consensus on a particular issue, becomes more difficult for planners in this less prescriptive policy landscape.

The possible turn is towards a more antagonistic approach to planning. A more antagonistic planning process is firstly supported by a new policy consensus of 'austerity'. Austerity is not planning policy, it acts as a 'policy paradigm' (Hall, 1993) for government departments. The rationale of austerity is the apparent need to cut state spending in order to 'balance the books'. Public spending cuts mean that resources for planning in particular are limited (Slade *et al.*, 2019). Deliberation and consensus building, even when cynically deployed, requires time and resources.

Austerity, combined with a more polarised political context, is leading towards an antagonistic practice where it is stated from the beginning that particular people have to lose and that time is wasted indulging particular viewpoints (usually those that politically dissent from government backed projects). Davoudi (2014: 360) identifies something like this sort of shift within a turn towards 'resilience'; she argues that sustainability offered a "post-politics of hope" while the "securitisation of nature" in resilience discourses renders a "post-politics of fear". Rather than being consensus seeking, an authoritarian logic is *antagonistic* to particular enemies, discourses and actors on the basis of crisis response. To stretch a metaphor, the 'big tent', that Tony Blair was so keen on, has been taken down and replaced with an exclusive backstage area.

Participation – State of Exception

Post-political 'spatial planning' was problematized for using participation in what was an exclusive way (McGuirk, 2001). Participation can mask power relations, as selected citizens have a space to at least give their view, to make a representation or respond to a consultation. As Mouffe argues though; consensus building, partnerships and participation – these are always exclusive acts. The post-politics is to pretend otherwise; to claim that all can win from a proposal, and to claim that a 'communicative rationality' can support democratic deliberation separate from the power relations of the world. What 'participation' does in post-political planning is

legitimise decision making. Aside from the question of whether communicative rationality achieves its aims, the participatory 7 aspect of planning is what makes post-political planning legitimate: when a controversial site is approved, it can be said that 'everyone had their say', however limited or inconsequential the 'say' is.

A shift to the authoritarian cannot be legitimated by 'participation', targeting as it does particular 'enemies' animated by a right-wing populism. Instead, an authoritarian regime for planning would legitimate more direct interventions in terms of a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005). Authoritarian interventions invoke a crisis and present executive interventions as solutions to the crisis. The suspension of deliberative and democratic processes may be required for such an intervention. There is a move away from inviting in multiple 'stakeholders', towards a practice based on crisis response – whether that be financial, geo-political, ecological – where smaller amounts of actors make decisions apparently necessitated by the crisis. The work of Agamben (2005) identifies the 'state of exception' as a deep structural feature of Western liberalism, with its history of defining points at which the sovereign can act outside the law. It is not taken here to be radically new; rather the proposition is that the state is once again at a point where a 'state of exception' is being constructed and invoked (Swyngedouw, 2019) to legitimise executive interventions into social life.

Linking back to Table 3.1, the various changes identified in this table are not complete, in that an 'authoritarian turn' is not a total change. As the study will show, aspects of a 'post-politics' remain alongside the 'authoritarian'. Further, as Chapter 2 showed, the authoritarian is not radically new; instead it recalls some features of the past which are re-articulated in new ways - though it may presage a post-neoliberal world (Davies, 2021). In some cases, we will see that the changes are somewhat by degree – e.g. post-political planning was already said to have a democratic deficit; the argument in this thesis is that this deficit has deepened.

To refine these conjectures for analysis, I need to be able to identify features within a specific case study that can relate back to the two different 'regimes' of planning as broadly set out. To achieve this, I draw upon the theoretical tools from Political

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7 I use this term to as a catch-all for the other associated terms above - collaborative, partnership

Discourse Theory, and the identification of *logics of practices* within institutions (Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

3.2 THEORETICAL APPROACH: POLITICAL DISCOURSE THEORY AND ANALYSIS

The theoretical approach to researching planning and the fracking I draw upon is a particular strand of post-structuralist discourse theory and analysis associated with the Essex School and derived from the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985). Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) is still relatively young; however, scholars have set out an ontologically and epistemologically distinctive approach to research in this new tradition (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Glynos and Howarth, 2019; Marttila, 2019a). The PDA approach is based on a Political Discourse Theory (PDT) that adopts an anti-essentialist and post-foundational ontology. This ontology supports a post-positivist epistemology which identifies a form of critical explanation in terms of 'logics' that sits between a causal law paradigm and interpretivist hermeneutics.

The PDA approach is appropriate for this research for two reasons. Firstly, because the identification of a 'post-politics' in planning has previously been conducted at the level of discourse (Kenis, 2018), and this is consistent with the research approaches identifying an authoritarian turn in neoliberalism (Bruff and Tansel, 2019). Secondly, PDA is particularly apposite as it takes a broad approach to discourse with a focus on the extra-linguistic and gives a primary place to politics and hegemony which his consistent with the thesis's aim to identify a newly dominant institutional regime. Versions of a PDA approach have been used in studies of controversial environmental planning cases (Griggs and Howarth, 2002; Griggs and Howarth, 2008; Tafon *et al.*, 2018). I supplement this approach with some insights from 'discursive institutionalism' (Schmidt, 2010).

The first section (3.2.1) discusses PDT, as a materialist theory of discourse that breaks from Marxism and integrates insights of post-structuralism. 3.2.2 then explores further the ontological implications of this, before 3.2.3 outlines the epistemology of a reproductive approach and the concept of logics and practices that are the focus of the analysis.

3.2.1 A Theoretical Break: Hegemony and a materialist theory of discourse

PDT is at first a theoretical break from Marxism. It takes a post-structural critique of Marxist orthodoxy, to develop a distinctly post-Marxist social theory. The positive articulation of the synthesis of post-structuralism and Marxism is a 'materialist theory of discourse', that rejects the essentialism of 'historical materialism' whilst maintaining a focus on socio-political struggle and how 'hegemony' is constructed, maintained and contested. This section sets out how PDT diverges from Marxism, its post-structural basis and sketches the positive aspects of the discourse theory.

A 'materialist theory of discourse' is derived from a particular reading of Marx that runs through later Marxist political theory in Gramsci and Althusser and through Laclau and Mouffe. In his own writings, Marx inverted the idealism of Hegel to argue that material circumstances shape ideas:

"History does *nothing*, it 'possesses *no* immense wealth', it 'wages *no* battles'. It is *man*, real, living man who does all that" (Marx and Engels, 1975: 21, original emphasis)

Drawing on Feuerbach's humanistic materialism, Marx argued against idealism, and for a relational social theory:

"Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand." (Marx, 1973: 193)

On this reading, it is social relations, the actual activity and actions of humans in specific social contexts that build up dominant ideas and constraints on human action. Marx famously argued that it is "social being that determines [...] consciousness" (Marx, 1977: no page numbers), rather than a collective consciousness or reason determining social life as Hegel (1890) would have it.

Marx, however, also defends a more economically deterministic conception of social life, where "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life" (Marx, 1977: no page numbers). He goes further to say:

"The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas." (Marx, 1932: no page numbers)

Marx rejects the Hegelian idealist conception of social life where history is understood through the conflict of ideas, instead arguing that it is real, lived social conflicts and relations that drive history forward and create social change. Taking this further though, he argues that ideas are products of the dominant material conditions, by which he means economic or productive relations. At other points, he presents this compromise view:

"[People] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living." (Marx, 1996: 32)

It is something like this conception that PDT takes as a starting point, removed of any of the economic determinism above. A crude 'historical materialism' that always bases the social and political on the material and economic can soon begin to look like a Hegelian idealist view (Howarth, 2018: 382). This 'idealist' view is one in which the contradictions of capitalist production are *essential* to analysis and explanation of social life – where material relations of production *determine* the social and political. This led some authors to postulate transcendental laws about capitalism and human history that objectify a Hegelian dialectic into the "fabric of History itself" (Howarth, 2018: 381). In some versions of historical materialism, the abstractions made within Marx's critique of political economy are taken as essential to explaining all actually existing capitalist society as expressions of an underlying *objective reality* of class struggle (Lenin, 1927).

PDT defends a materialism which starts from how social life is (re)produced without this being determined by the economic. In doing so, PDT follows the road taken by Marxists like Althusser and Gramsci towards understanding social relations. Both of these writers had begun to move away from historical materialism in its more idealist sense. Gramsci argued that "each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations, but of the history of these relations" (Gramsci, 2003: 353). Gramsci does not limit these relations to the economic or productive, rather different aspects of

social life (e.g. religion) come to define a person's existence. He argues that the material limits to a person's life are important, that "whether a man can or cannot do a thing has its importance in evaluating what is done in reality" (Gramsci, 2003: 360); however multiple discourses come to determine the social world as "a popular conviction often has the same energy as a material force" (Ibid: 377). Gramsci's notion of the 'historical bloc' is one in which social and political forces can both hegemonise and fragment material relations. For Gramsci, though, there is still an essential a priori link from the economic to the social (Gramsci, 2003: 366).

Althusser also maintains this link, as the economic 'base' is "*determinant in the last instance*" (Althusser, 2014: 21, original emphasis) of the social. For Althusser the means of production, the very possibilities opened up or closed down by the capacities and innovations within the production process, determine the nature of the 'productive forces' within society. The relative cohesion of capitalist society is explained by the presence of the 'Ideological State Apparatus', the *"system of defined institutions, organizations and the corresponding practices"*(Althusser, 2014: 77, original emphasis) which reproduces a "State ideology" that is anchored within the "material functions specific to that ISA"(Ibid). Elements of a dominant ideology, an ideology that serves the reproduction of a capitalist production, are "realized in" (Ibid: 82) institutions and practices which possess a "relative autonomy" (Ibid: 23) and are themselves sites of class struggle. Both the 'historical bloc' and the 'ideological state apparatus' show how *hegemony* is maintained within capitalist society – not simply through economic power of capitalists but through a social reality of ideas and practices located in institutions which can be understood as *discourses*.

The post-structuralist critique advanced by Laclau and Mouffe, which forms the basis of PDT, effectively takes this line of thinking one step further to develop a 'materialist theory of discourse'. Rejecting any essentialism, they argue that social structures are contingent and require constant reconstructing. They argue that the conception of *hegemony* is a "a complementary and contingent operation" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 3) rather than stemming solely from class and productive relations. Laclau and Mouffe argue that Gramsci introduces a "logic of the social" that is incompatible with a classical Marxism which "presented history and society as intelligible totalities constituted around conceptually explicable laws" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 3). It is

important to note that Laclau and Mouffe's critique of Marxism as deterministic was criticised as narrow at the time (Geras, 1988); however it seems fair to say that some Marxists held something like a deterministic position (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987; Howarth, 2018). Indeed, many Marxists had moved to a view of minimal determination where a mode of production "defines the extension and the limits" of the political as a "regional instance" (Poulantzas, 1973: 17).

Laclau and Mouffe simply argue that this link is not necessary. Once we have accepted the independence of the social from the economic to the point of 'determination in the last instance' and invoked a relative autonomy for the Ideological State Apparatus, the question of determination at any point becomes a troubled one. Insisting on an economic base determining the social in the 'final instance' still requires recourse to an essentialist and deterministic starting point for social life:

"If society has a last instance which determines its laws of motion, then the relations between the overdetermined instances and the last instance must be in terms of simple, one-directional determination by the latter." (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 99)

Laclau and Mouffe instead emphasise the concept of 'over-determination', introduced by Althusser from psychoanalysis and linguistics, as one that captures that the meaning of a particular event or object can be multiply determined without any priority given to a particular determining aspect – it could equally be one aspect as it could be another (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). My argument here, with Laclau and Mouffe, is that there is no reason other than trying to maintain a structuralist version of Marxist thought, to argue that the 'over-determined' is somehow still *necessarily* determined by the objectified mode and/or relations of production. It is perfectly adequate and consistent to relate the economic to the political and social and back without adding the extra weight of determinism. One can say e.g. that the neoliberal turn is determined by the move to a post-Fordist service economy, but one can also argue that this structural economic change was in part fuelled by consumer culture as well as being reliant on 'authoritarian populism'. For PDT, both the social/political and economic are 'material' rather than simply the sphere of production.

The break Laclau and Mouffe made from Marxism was critiqued by others in the Marxist tradition. Rustin (1988: 168) argued they entertained a dangerous contingency, claiming that "they reject the idea of testable explanatory theory altogether" by denying "there is no independent external reality". Wood (1998) argued that Laclau was part of a wider 'retreat from class' within Marxist and critical thought (started by Poulantzas), where the aim of socialism was not to " pursue the specific interests of the working class, but to dilute them in an intermediate 'stew'" (Wood, 1998: 53). Rustin is somewhat sympathetic to Laclau and Mouffe's intervention, because of a problem in theorising "new sites of social conflict have emerged in advanced capitalism and these cannot be readily explained in terms of class dynamics" (Ibid: 170), however both Wood and Rustin argue for different forms of a more political and less economistic Marxism (like Althusser's, for example).

It would be too much of a digression to enter into debate on socialist strategy here, and this thesis is not about 'class' per se. The debate over class though, captures an important part of discourse theory and its implications for research and I will make a few points here in response to Wood and Rustin. First, Laclau and Mouffe do not deny an external reality exists, rather they argue that our understanding of such a reality is always discursively articulated. Such a position is incredibly important when thinking of human society and politics, as there are multiple ways in which an event or object can be articulated, and it is a political battle to establish a dominant articulation (I expand on this below). Second, the focus on other political struggles without a priori assuming a class struggle does not diminish the importance of class. I broadly agree with Wood (1998:185) that:

"No one can seriously maintain that any other social movement has ever challenged the power of capital as has the working class, even with its often severely limited objectives and its woefully inadequate modes of organization"

My disagreement with this position is whether this will always be the case, and whether it is all there is to politics. If we were to argue that in Britain today, the 'working class' were the sole agent of change then we would basically have to abandon any prospect of radical social change, in part due to the historic defeat of workers in the 1980's.. My reading of Laclau and Mouffe is that they provided a

theory of discourse appropriate for such a context, and it is perhaps telling that both the subjects of Wood's ire (Laclau and Poulantzas) were both attempting to figure out responses to (neo) fascist dictatorships in poorer countries. Indeed, one could argue that the post-war success of working class movements in Britain was made possible by the continued extraction of wealth from Empire, raising the question of *who* was emancipated by working class movements. Third, and most importantly, none of this discussion means anything for the *essentialism* of class as a category. Many actually existing working class people seek the perpetuation of capitalism just as many middle class people do too (as well as many that challenge it). The old Marxist argument was to invoke 'false consciousness' to explain why workers turned to e.g. fascism, but this is the very problem that Laclau and Mouffe (for all their overly intellectual and sometimes pretentious theorising) focus in on with their anti-essentialism: actually existing working class (or middle class) people do not always act as the Leninist agents of history, and it is both arrogant and patronising to declare people inherently intellectually mistaken for not doing so. For my part, as Chapter 2 makes clear, I draw heavily on the work of Marxist and neo-Marxist writers for my understanding of political economy, while also not having to claim there is an *essential* linkage between that and the social world. Indeed, the aim of this research is to analyse a political struggle in which capital and the state are contested by a movement of different classes.

Their critique of Marxism leads Laclau and Mouffe and those in the Essex School to defend a materialist theory of discourse, which shifts the primacy of explanation from the economic to the social and political. The critique of Marxism is integrated with a Foucauldian understanding of power and post-structural theories of language to form a materialist theory of discourse. This theory is materialist in the sense of approaching society as relational and without a priori essentialism or determinism *and* in the sense of being more than simply linguistic. I will now turn to the post-structuralist influence on PDT.

 Early investigations into 'discourse' had tended to focus on the use of language. Downes (1998) developed a theory of socio-linguistics that focused on the relation between social class and language, and through the 1960s there had a developed a field of content analysis that analysed the use of written and spoken words

(Haggarty, 1996). In Foucault (2007), however, discourse is understood as a wider social *practice*. Instead of focusing on the content or indeed the truth of statements, Foucault was more interested in how a discourse or social practice is formed, and what rules make a discourse possible as a formation. This opens up the question of power (and thus, of politics), the rules and practices embedded within a discourse delineate particular roles and status to social actors which establish power relations (e.g. a doctor within medicine). Foucault had initially argued that discourse (as a field of social practice) was still to some extent defined or structured by extra-discursive reality (Torfing, 2004). This divide is continued within the work of Fairclough (2010), where the power of language and range of other semiotic acts or objects shape the social world. Foucault eventually came to argue against any structuring of discourse by an extra-discursive reality (Foucault, 1990).

Foucault also shifted his understanding of power. Initially, he had argued that power was intimately bound up with knowledge, that power relations are paralleled by the creation of knowledge (Foucault, 1977). The institutionalisation of a discourse, of ideas of knowledge and social rules – these were all acts of power. In his later work, however, he began to argue that power was more strategic (Foucault, 1990). Power was not the institution; indeed, total domination would not constitute a power relation as power requires a degree of liberty for social actors. Attempts to modify social relations often meet resistance, and it is the attempt to overcome this resistance or the ability to establish new social relations that is a power relation (Howarth, 2010). Contrast this with Habermas, who "wants to eliminate power in order to realize his ideal of a communicative rationality" (Torfing, 2004: 8). For Foucault, and PDT, this is impossible without eliminating freedom.

Laclau and Mouffe also adopt this understanding power, and integrate it with a post-structural understanding of meaning. Saussure (1986) had argued that the meaning of a word (a sign) is not derived from its referent in reality (signified) and instead meaning came from a sign's place in a relational network (as a signifier). For Saussure. however, this network was ultimately closed and structured within these limits. Derrida (2001) argued against any determining centre that structured meaning; instead any structuring of language or meaning was contingent, and not limited by a reference to a 'transcendental centre'. Laclau and Mouffe draw upon

Foucault and Derrida to argue that 'discourse' *is* the social world, or in their terms the social is the "field of discursivity" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112). The field of discursivity is understood as a relational network that is radically open with a multiplicity of possible meanings from which temporary and *contingent* structures are formed in discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111). Extra-discursive reality may shape discourse, but our understanding of this reality and even its shaping is always discursively mediated.

For Laclau and Mouffe, discourses as defined as meaningful social practices by drawing on Wittgenstein's conception of 'rule-following', where rules and the 'grammar' of a language are not related to any factual or necessary structural content of that 'grammar'. Instead, rules are determined by their public (and therefore social) judgment of the correct usage of a sign. Famously, "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein, 1967: 21). PDT extends this to all meaningful acts within social practice, and in doing so radicalises the structuralist approach to language and meaning. It follows the structuralist approach in that it assumes a "relational model of reality" (Marttila, 2019b), though rather than taking this system as closed or fixed - it follows a Derridean critique which emphasises the openness and contingency of structuring meanings into discourse(s). Some have argued that this "indeterminacy of meaning" (Marttila, 2019b: 22) was actually recognised by later structuralist thinkers; what is important is that PDT foregrounds the political nature of how meanings are constructed within this indeterminacy.

PDT therefore breaks from an essentialist Marxism and structuralist understandings of language, and draws upon an understanding of discourse in which:

"all social relations are symbolic and articulatory, that is, they involve the linking together of elements of many sorts – linguistic, physical, cultural, and so on – where such elements are assumed to be contingent entities that can be constructed and connected together in different ways." (Howarth, 2018: 379)

For PDT, the practice by which social reality is constructed is one of articulation, which is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that the identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985 105). An articulatory practice combines *elements* – "any difference that is not discursively

articulated" - and *moments* – "differential positions" "articulated within a discourse" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 105). PDT maintains the Gramscian notion of hegemony, of a historical bloc, but the "category of articulation" (Ibid: 93) introduces a further aspect to this as it can be used to connect institutional rules and practices to the wider 'bloc'. Drawing on Foucault and Wittgenstein, hegemony also refers to the way a social practice is dominated by a particular set of rules (Howarth, 2010). Subjects, institutions and discourses are constructed and reconstructed through articulatory practices, and every discreet event or phenomena we speak of is discursively constructed in some way or another. This institutional level of hegemony is related to the wider Gramscian sense in that institutional practices follow and re-articulate aspects of the historical bloc; however, the bloc can also be contested and shaped through institutions too.

What PDT provides, then, is a way of understanding how social and institutional practices reproduce and contest dominant ideological positions. To place it in the context of this study, Chapter 2 identified changes within the dominant ideological conjunctures of neoliberalism over time, suggesting that a similar change has developed more recently towards an authoritarian-neoliberal conjuncture. This new 'authoritarian neoliberal' bloc, aligning right wing populist demands with a 'zombie' neoliberalism, is hypothesised as modifying institutions. To say that an 'authoritarian neoliberalism' is becoming dominant is to say that this particular ideological conjuncture is modifying institutional rules and practices. The thesis explores, at the level of planning as an institution, if this new authoritarianism is dominating the social practice of institutions and the (inevitable) resistance to this. What PDT does is link these together and provide the tools to analyse the social practices of planning and how this relates to the discursive conflict over fracking.

 The next section will elaborate further on PDT, how it is based on a particular ontological claim that distinguishes it from most other social theories and what this means for how we conceive of subjects, agency and institutions when conducting analysis of the social world before turning to the epistemology of explaining in terms of logics.

3.2.2 Ontology of PDT: The absent foundation, Agency and Institutions

PDT draws upon the post-foundational ontology introduced in 2.2.3. It assumes that both a social order and collective or individual political identities are not based on an objective or fixed foundation (Marchart, 2007). Those who support this post-foundational view draw upon the Heidegerrean distinction between the 'ontic' and the 'ontological' (Heidegger, 1978). The 'ontic' is the objective reality - that which exists. The 'ontological' is how entities become intelligible to us. Laclau (2014) argues that the ontological does not merely represent the ontic, nor is it simply transcendent to features of the ontic such as space and time; instead there is an always unbridgeable gap between the two – between reality and our representation of reality that we never completely grasp. That does not mean that we do not try to bridge the gap, to assert some positive ontic foundation. Instead, it means the bridging is only temporary as the two never fully intersect or overlap.

In terms of discourse, a post-foundational ontology means that there is no "ultimate fixation of meaning" (Laclau, 2014: 118). PDT starts from the ontological position that "there is no extra-discursive reality that discourse might simply reflect" (Laclau, 1989: 79). This is not to say there is not an objective reality; rather that any understanding of this reality is discursively mediated in the sense "both social and physical objects exist, but our access to them is always mediated by systems of meaning in the form of discourses" (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 35).

As there is no ultimate foundation (e.g. universal rationality) to a social order, Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 86) argue that the social world is constructed through discourse and the ability of actors to institute or sediment discourses into *practices*. A *discursive formation* is constructed through the articulation of differential positions (from different subjects). Establishing relations between different elements modifies their meaning, though any fixing of meaning is contingent: there is always a surplus of meaning within the field of discursivity that makes the re-articulation of elements possible (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 110-2).

It is worth noting here that discourse is used in two senses: to describe the general way in which articulatory practice operates (hence, a discourse theory) and also in a particular sense of referring to "specific forms of language and symbolization (e.g. texts, documents, speeches, images, and so on) that represent and constitute social

objectivity in various ways" (Howarth, 2018: 379) - e.g. a medical discourse. This is not a hard distinction, however one that recognises that e.g. a private conversation between a small group is part of a broader set of discursive practices without necessarily contributing to social objectivity. When that small group then commit to in an official or agreed text that objectifies their discussions then this text can become part of the *sedimentation* of a discourse in the second sense (Foucault, 2007). The fixing of meanings into sedimented or naturalised discourses is an act of power and can establish a hegemonic position for particular meanings (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 3). Fixing multiple discourses and asserting a claim to a particular ontic foundation for society more generally is a hegemonic act in the ideological, conjunctural sense too.

The contingent fixing of meaning within discursive formations requires the construction of *nodal points* to fix a discursive formation (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 8). A nodal point is a floating signifier that is fixed within a discourse, unifying the field around it, e.g. 'emancipation' can fix a particular discourse around education (Chronaki and Kollosche, 2019). Nodal points give a discourse or discursive formation its identity; they are floating in the sense that they are open terms like 'emancipation' that are given specific meaning within a discourse but also which unify diverse elements together. The fixing of multiple nodal points forms a wider hegemony, as Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000: 15) put it:

"the major aim of hegemonic projects is to construct and stabilise the *nodal points* that form the basis of concrete social orders by articulating as many available elements – floating signifiers – as possible."

This thesis looks at a particular institution of a social order (the planning system), and the way in which this institution manages a discursive struggle over fracking that leads to challenges to the institution and the social order. The contestation of *institutions* and *social orders* takes place between different *subject positions*, as "social agents appear in concrete situations and are constituted by precise and limited discursive networks" (Laclau, 1989: 80). These subject positions contest a social order within institutional contexts. Institutions are not simply formal organizations like a planning authority, it also includes customs and norms – where a particular practice has been institutionalized. Institutions within PDT are treated

as the specific sites and boundaries of social practices as well as sedimented discourses (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

For this study, the more general sense of 'institution' is further supplemented by a compatible discursive approach to analyzing more formal institutions, as this is the main object of study. As Panizza and Miorelli (2013) argue, we can draw upon aspects of Schmidt's 'discursive institutionalism' to develop the view of institutions within PDT. An institution like e.g. a government department has a fairly clearly delineated set of practices and elements that belong to it in terms of having official documents, policies, procedures, texts, roles and resources. It has a history, codes of conduct, achievements, failures and scandals that amount to what the institution means and that limit the actions of actors within it. The institution will also draw upon various sedimented discourses – liberalism, fiscal conservativism etc. in its decision making that allow actors to make sense of things within the given context, what Schmidt (2010: 4) calls "background ideational abilities". These shape the actions and subject positions of institutional actors, allowing them to maintain institutions. Institutional actors also act upon the world by implementing policies or challenging them, using their "foreground discursive abilities" (Ibid) to choose to accept or critique rules or demands from the insitution. In both cases, there are acts of power internal and external to the institution (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000).

The point of agreement here is that "institutions are both structures that constrain actors and constructs created and changed by actors" (Panizza and Miorelli, 2013), however the point of departure is that Schmidt's account grants too much power to 'ideas' and deliberation. Panizza and Miorelli argue that instead we can use Laclau's concept of *dislocation* to explain the dynamics of institutions, where "dislocations are made visible by processes or events that cannot be domesticated, symbolised or integrated within a particular institutional order." (Panizza and Miorelli, 2013: 309). This can be an iterative process of incremental reforms, or one of significant paradigm shift (Hall, 1993). Institutions, are incomplete and contingent structures, always open to the possibility of rupture and reconstitution due to the absent foundation of the social. To combine the language of Laclau and Schmidt, it is through dislocation and rupture that the background becomes more visible. Importantly, at moments of dislocation we can expect institutional actors to be more

explicit in defending (or critiquing) the background ideational, and the fracking case study has a dislocating effect on the planning system.

This opens up the question of agency within PDT. Social actors come to identify with differing subject positions and are able to re-articulate and reconstruct existing and new subject positions. Subject positions can be expected or coerced within an institutional setting, or they can grip actors through a feeling of emotional or ideological attachment (Norval, 2006). Actors are conceived of as regularly involved in an articulatory practice that reconstructs or challenges institutions or more general *social practices* that are "the ongoing, routinized forms of human and societal reproduction" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 104). When we go to work, pick children up from school, play football and so forth, we follow sedimented practices and patterns. Even with these actions though, the regularity is not exact it is rather like Wittgenstein's rule-following where the following of rules can be slightly modified on each occasion (Wittgenstein, 1967).

Agents are both limited by *and* able to modify institutions and practice – particularly in periods of dislocation. The subject is not equal to a collection of subject positions, nor is it equal to some fully formed ego. Instead, the very act of *identification* with subject positions is an act of will which is the result of the incompleteness of the subject (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 129). Following Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject is understood to be split between the Lacanian categories of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. A subject is not taken to be self-identifying; rather the egoistic act of self-identification is an imaginary one. A subject's identity is largely defined symbolically, that is through multiple symbolic identifications and subject positions (for example family, work, political party, music taste). A subject's identity is never complete; as with collective identities like social class, there is an ongoing practice of attempting to fix or stabilise identity (Stavrakakis, 1999: pp 13-39).

With this in mind, we can return to institutions and social practices. Institutions have more informal social practices, often alongside formal rules, and in this way "institutions make possible the activation of contingent forms of subjectivity and multiple forms of identification" (Panizza and Miorelli, 2013: 310). Participating within the practices of an institution often means adopting a different political identity in order to operate within the 'rules' that make the institution function. Actors can, however, challenge the practices of institutions, internally or externally,

particularly at moments of dislocation. Panizza and Miorelli (2013) use Schmidt's discursive institutionalism to show how this can be gradually achieved from within, whereas others tend to emphasis the role of the movement challenging institutions from outside (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000; Griggs and Howarth, 2002).

At this point, we can begin to elaborate the central concept of *logics* for this research. The fixing of meaning and social practices draws upon logics of difference and equivalence. A logic of difference is the attempt to construct limits, to a discursive formation or indeed to a whole social order (Laclau and Mouffe,1985: 130). A logic of equivalence draws links between different discursive moments and discourses – as actors attempt to form a *chain of equivalence* between different elements and the demands of different subjects to secure a hegemonic position for a particular discursive formation (Ibid: 146). Through these two logics, *antagonistic* relations are formed between different discursive formations or a wider social order, and those outside of them. These antagonisms are the "frontiers of a social formation" (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 9), that is to say that the identity of formation is in part defined by that which is outside of it. Recalling Mouffe, there is no 'we' without a 'they'.

On an everyday basis, these two political logics are not always clear or foregrounded. Moments of dislocation and rupture however; provoke political practices that:

 "…comprise struggles that seek to challenge and transform the existing norms, institutions and practices – perhaps even the regime itself – in the name of an ideal or principle. This entails the construction of political frontiers, which divide the social space into opposed camps. But political practices also involve efforts on the part of the power bloc to disrupt the construction of antagonistic frontiers by breaking down the connections that are being forged between different demands" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 105)

This thesis examines two dislocations. The first is that discussed towards the end of Chapter 2, the dislocation of a third-way neoliberal ideology after the financial crisis. The second is the specific focus of the research, the dislocation of a post-political planning regime in the contestation of shale gas.

The term *regime* is used here to capture the set of practices that come to dominate institutions, and it is perfectly possible to have competing regimes especially at

moments of dislocation (Glynos *et al.*, 2009: 9). In this research, I draw on theoretical literature to identify two regimes –the post-political and the authoritarian – which I hypothesize a shift between. These 'regimes' are the specific set of practices and logics I identify in the framework in 3.3. The dominant regime is said to be institutionalised. So far, I have set out definitions and concepts to ground the analysis of logics and regimes; these now need operationalising into an epistemological approach which can be referred to as Political Discourse Analysis (PDA).

3.2.3 Epistemology of PDA: Retroduction, hermeneutics and critical explanation in terms of logics

PDT provides a framework for understanding the social world as one that is continually (re)constructed and from which "objectivity is the historical outcome of political processes and struggle (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 35). The previous section is quite general but provides us with a basic toolkit to analyse at the very least practices and institutions and the challenges to them. On an everyday basis, social actors behave as if the world has "a stable and unambiguous structure" (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 33). PDT is particularly useful for research that looks to analyse that structure at moments of dislocation. Analysis requires moving from theory and ontology to epistemology, and there are three important features of a PDA epistemology: the use of a post-positivist, retroductive approach to knowledge creation, the use of second-order hermeneutics and critical explanation in terms of logics. I will take each in turn here.

The Retroductive Cycle

The PDA approach is a *post-positivist* one. It rejects both the causal-law paradigm (or hypothetico-deductive model) as well as the 'contextualized self-interpretations' of the hermeneutic circle (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Glynos and Howarth, 2019). Instead, it draws upon a theory driven, *retroductive* cycle to produce critical explanations in terms of the logics of social and political practices.

Retroduction is an alternative to inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. Induction seeks to derive general laws from regularity of occurrence (Every time we observe A we observe B), on the assumption that there is a causal mechanism at

work. Deductive reasoning follows from a set of logical statements or premises to conclusions using logical rules (if A then B must be true). Karl Popper claimed to have resolved the 'problem of induction' (how can we be certain A follows B on every occasion?) by arguing that scientific knowledge is produced through a hypothetico-deductive model (Popper, 1994). He argues that science does not proceed by induction, rather through process of 'falsification' which involves testing and re-testing hypothesis and from this we can develop general theories from which further events or phenomena can be deduced. It is by no means clear that this is *actually* how scientific knowledge is produced (Kuhn, 1996); however, this model was taken as a possible basis for social scientific research (Føllesdal, 1979; Elster, 2015).

Glynos and Howarth (2019) argue that Popper's approach relies on the relative autonomy of 'discovery' and 'justification'. What Popper provides is a theory of justification: his view was that the context of discovery and the generation of hypothesis was not important (Popper, 2002) as long as it was justified through the HD-model. This model may be suitable for Physics, where the 'discovery' of unusual phenomenon or the proposing of hypothesis would seem to bear no relation to e.g. the fact of the speed of light in a vacuum. Our hypothesising on these matters is separate from how we then justify physical theories or make predictions.

In social science, however, the "boundary between contexts of discovery and justification is blurred" (Glynos and Howarth, 2019: 115). The process by which we generate a hypothesis, identify problems and come to identify important phenomena is an interpretive act which is informed by the meaningful and discursive world of the researcher. This means that:

"any explanation of a social phenomenon *must* 'pass through' (i.e., take into account in a non-trivial way) the self-interpretations of the actors engaged in affected practices, even if such explanations are not reducible to those self-interpretations" (Ibid: 112)

Explanation in social science is bound up within the context of discovery and meanings attached by researchers. Attempts to make law-like or general explanations are to some extent context dependent (Glynos and Howarth, 2019: 117). The problem of what is known as the 'dissemination effect' further emphasises the

relation between researcher and subject – that the very publication of work can potentially change the observed phenomena through the act of publication.

Retroduction is proposed as an approach to social scientific research that can help manage the problem of the context of discovery and justification. Retroduction has a history in scientific thought, with Peirce (1931) proposing the similar approach of 'abduction' as the cornerstone of the scientific method. Abduction is the process of forming explanatory hypotheses based on inferring possible conjectures from known theories or phenomena, it is a non-deductive logic of inference to plausible initial explanations. More recently, abduction has also been argued to be the realistic approach to scientific research in terms of justification – recognising the theory driven nature of scientific study in something like an 'inference to the most plausible explanation' (Boyd, 1980).

The retroductive approach in social science starts from the basis that we cannot separate discovery and justification. Instead, we proceed by regularly putting forward *conjectures* on what is or is not the case and see if they can be justified through empirical inquiry. This is cyclical, as it requires returning to the conjecture and revising it as part of the research process. It is a discursive process, where we revise "aspects of our account in light of adjustments made in other moments, we never return to the same spot" (Glynos and Howarth, 2019: 118).

The criteria for developing and accepting a hypothesis is simply that it can account for a phenomenon. What this means is that an "account is accepted as a valid explanation when its criteria can be publicly articulated and justified — criteria concerning evidence, consistency, exhaustiveness, and so on" (Glynos and Howarth, 2019: 120). We can generate hypotheses from existing theoretical work as well as new events or occurrences, and these can be justified beyond merely epistemic criteria – political, ethical, ontological – as long as this is consistent with the research aims and supported by evidence and methodology (Ibid: 119). The retroductive cycle differs though, from an interpretivist approach, in that it allows for generalisation and comparison on the same basis of an internal consistency, where there are "shared judgments about theoretical terms, about paradigms, and about what constitute cases that converge or diverge from paradigm cases" (Ibid: 121).

The retroductive approach looks to combine an element of scientific rigour with the particular role human subjectivity plays in social research. The use of conjecture and tentative hypothesis as well as plausible covering explanations has a realist quality. In terms of PDA, this approach is integrated with a post-foundational ontology. Critical realism is perhaps most associated with retroduction, though under very different ontological presuppositions much closer to those of natural science (Bhaskar, 2008). Bhaskar's retroduction focuses on developing theories through testing weak assumptions, which are then tested to build up a picture of the world by asking why different data appears, as part of his wider critical realist approach. The PDA use of retroduction does not carry with it any realist assumptions, instead it emphasises the *over-determination* of each part of the research process by the other (Glynos and Howarth, 2019). In my thesis, this means that the tentative hypothesis and the analytical framework were developed a series of conjectures through the research, modified by other theory as well as data. Removed of realist assumptions of objectivity, the 'retroductive cycle' is continual movement between then different moments which I set out in 3.3.

In contrast to realist approaches, the PDA approach starts from the basis "Nothing outside the collective process of judgment-making—not even the most sophisticated methodological techniques—can guarantee the reliability and validity of the research process" (Glynos and Howarth, 2019: 121). Instead, the research approach is discursive, an ongoing dialectical process of construction and deconstruction, where theory driven conjectures drive discursive analysis in a way that continually modifies the conjectures(s). I will come to how this is operationalised in this study in 3.3.

Subjectivity and Second-Order Hermeneutics

The subject in PDT is not centred, rather subjects are interpellated or 'split' in different contexts as they (re)articulate different discourses and social practices. This subject is not the phenomenological subject that is taken as a given within positivist and some interpretivist approaches, in which a transcendental subject has a self-knowledge that is the basis of both their agency and the sources of their

interpretations of the social world. The implication of a split or decentred subject, is that PDA cannot merely refer to the self-interpretations of a subject in analysis (Marttila, 2019a: 30). To do so would not be consistent with the importance of discourse in shaping subjectivity and would not be desirable as the rules or logics of social practice are not always apparent to subjects. Instead, there is a need to go beyond a subject's "contextual self-interpretations" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 49) to understand the rules and practices that shape their subjectivity as well as how the subject can come to shape those rules and practices.

PDT draws upon a "second order hermeneutics" (Marttila, 2015; Marttila, 2019a). First order hermeneutics focuses on the (transcendental) subjects' self-interpretations. Second order hermeneutics conceives of "subjects' interpretations and articulations as reflecting contextual conditions that are not explicitly articulated" (Marttila, 2019a: 31). PDA therefore requires some a priori knowledge of the conditions of these articulations, drawn from social theory or from other empirical work into the particular context of the study. This does not mean that the subject is not trusted or that they are misguided; rather it looks to account for complexity of social practices and life that are not always consciously observed or attainable through introspection. Taking a person seriously does not involve uncritically accepting their account as uniquely valid, just as it does not mean that treating it as part of a vast superstructure out of their understanding – each subject's articulations are co-constitutive of the social world with the largely "unacknowledged supra-subjective structures" (Marttila and Gengnagel, 2015: 63) of discourses and social practices.

Drawing on a second order hermeneutics places certain limitations on critique, i.e. on the critical explanations we seek in PDA. As with many interpretivist approaches, there is no privileged standpoint epistemologically speaking – as the very practice of critique lacks an ultimate foundation (Marttila, 2019a: 33). PDA employs an "onto-ethical critique" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007), which starts from the premise that subjects are often themselves not reflexive about how their identities and actions are constituted by discourses that grip them (Marttila, 2019a: 33). Analysis should aim to escape a 'hermeneutic circle' by firstly being clear about one's own theoretical and ethical pre-suppositions, and secondly by looking to articulate explanations with

reference to objectified social practices. This thesis will do so through identifying the particular social, political and fantasmic *logics* within the practice of planning and the challenge to these logics and practices from an anti-fracking movement.

Logics and Critical Explanation

In general, logics are defined as:

""the purposes, rules and ontological presuppositions that render a practice or regime possible, intelligible, and vulnerable" (Glynos *et al.*, 2009: 11)

There are three types of logic in PDA and each relates to a corresponding practice. A social practice follows a *social logic* which is:

"the substantive grammar or rules of a practice or regime, which enable us to distil their purpose, form and content" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007)

Political practices follow a *political logic*, which:

"enable us to understand the way a social practice or regime was instituted or is being contested or instituted, thus contributing to our description and analysis of it." (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 106)

Social practices (which follow social logics) are those which are instituted; they only make sense within a particular institutional context.[8] Political logics help us to make sense of how these practices are (re)instituted, "with the characterization of a practice or regime by showing how they emerge and are sedimented" (Ibid). Social practices are largely conducted without an acknowledgement or sometimes even knowledge of how they came to be, in uncovering political logics we are looking to explain how a practice or regime became sedimented, normalised or how it is maintained. Doing so draws upon the political logics of equivalence and difference above, to identify how practices and are problematized or reinstituted. Social

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[8] Within PDA, an institutionalised social practice can be something very open, such as everyday practices of buying and selling goods. For my thesis, I am focusing on the much more clearly bound social practice of planning.

practices are the everyday rules and practices of an institution, political practices are those which contest or institute social practices.

The third type of logics is 'fantasmic' (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). This is not so clearly related to a practice; instead it is related to how a particular regime or practice has a grip on actors and institutions. It draws on particular reading of ideology based on Lacanian pyscho-analysis (Stavrakakis, 1999; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000; Stavrakakis *et al.*, 2017). Lacan introduced a triad of different psychoanalytic registers: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. To explain very briefly, the Symbolic register refers to something like social practice mentioned above – it is the inter-subjective aspect of the social world that comes to partly define a subject. We cannot even speak without it. The Real refers to that which cannot be fully symbolised or imagined. The Real is sometimes linked to 'the political', as that which is radically new and outside of our symbolic order – which can therefore appear as a shock or crisis (Žižek, 1999). The Imaginary is what is important here, as this is used to explain a 'fantasmic logic'. The Imaginary refers to fantasy, but these fantasies are necessary. They are how we imagine other people and the world we live in: as fair, hateful, proud, and/or righteous (for a deeper explanation, see Stavrakakis, 1999). Rather than simply following an 'ideology', attachments to a practice or discourse require a level of necessary fantasy to overcome a gap between the Symbolic and the Real, to structure one's experience. The fantasy may be someone mythical, it is what 'grips' subjects to a practice or regime.

A fantasmic logic grips subjects because the 'fantasy' is in part one of enjoyment. This is enjoyment in the Lacanian sense (sometimes termed 'jouissance') which aims to capture "a subject's mode of being, whether individual or collective" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 107). To some extent, participating in a practice is conforming to (or transgressing) a subject's 'mode of being'. In conforming, one is living out an ideal or a fantasy (e.g. the communicative planner). In transgressing one may still find a perverse enjoyment in the guilt or excitement this brings (e.g. as a rebel). An institution like e.g. the U.K. Parliament has multiple new and old social practices, but part of what keeps this in place is the fantasy that those participating in it are part of a grand history of public service – this fantasy sustains the practice to some degree even for an individual who may act against this (e.g. by fiddling their expenses).

This example implies a darker side to the 'fantasy'. A 'mode of being' is something that can be disrupted by another mode of being, by the perceived incursion of an 'Other'. In the Lacanian sense of enjoyment social actors may find another's mode of being, or rather others enjoying their mode of being, a point of frustration and anger (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Žižek, 2008). We can easily see how easily the ideological fantasy of the nation can be used to direct anger towards another nations or peoples way of being. In terms of analysis, a 'fantasmic logic' also explains how "explicit challenges to existing social structures or institutions are blocked" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 107). The structuring fantasy or the enjoyment taken within institutionalised practice is not something that is easily relinquished. A fantasmic logic *legitimates* social and political practices to participants in the institutions in which they are dominant.

These three logics and practices are identified, and then analysed together as a 'regime' – the logics support each other and changes in one suggests change in another. The next section will synthesise the three logics into the analytical framework.

3.3   A FRAMEWORK FOR A POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE SHALE GAS FRACKING CASE

This chapter has set out the theoretical, ontological and epistemological approach in general terms as well as a 'first cut' analytical framework. This final section will integrate the parts together, to explain the PDA research approach and analytical framework for this study.

The 5 steps of a PDA approach were briefly covered in the Introduction. We can now cover them in more detail (see Figure 3.1) in relation to the thesis. Chapter 2 presented us with a **problematisation**. The object of study is environmental planning in England, and the literature review provided reasons to think that the U.K. state may be entering a new phase of neoliberalisation which scholars have characterised as 'authoritarian'. This is distinguished from a 'post-politics', that was argued to be a dominant regime of planning in technocratic-progressive neoliberalism. Shale gas fracking is a suitable case study, because it is a contested and controversial issue that has developed over the period in which an 'authoritarian

turn' was postulated as taking shape. The case study tracks the theorised *dislocation* of the technocratic-progressive side of neoliberalism and with it potentially the post-political regime.

Shale gas fracking is also selected because it is a case where there is *dislocation* of planning practice within the case study. Planning practice is challenged as it attempts to manage this controversial and divisive issue. The **tentative hypothesis**, under a retroductive approach, is inferred from the explanation of the specific phenomenon - in this case shale gas fracking. More precisely, I am saying that the changes in the fracking case "'would be explicable as a matter of course' if a hypothesis (H) were true" (Glynos *et al.*, 2009:10). Therefore, the hypothesis is that *there is a turn towards a more authoritarian (yet still neoliberal) planning regime following a crisis in the 'post-political'* and this hypothesis explains why the contest over fracking was so disruptive within planning. The initial hypothesis for the research was that there was a breakdown in the post-political regime. As the research progressed, this later hypothesis was formed based on events within the fracking case and the development of the 'authoritarian neoliberalism' scholarship most of which was published during the research project.

Figure 3.1 Five steps of PDA from (Howarth *et al.*, 2016: 100)

Five Connected Steps	
1. Problematization	Constructing the object of study as a problem, at requisite level of abstraction and complexity.
2. Retroduction	Production and testing of a tentative hypothesis to account for problematized phenomenon by a to-and-fro engagement with empirical data.
3. Logics	Content of explanation: capturing the rules that govern regimes or practices, as well as the conditions and objects that make such rules possible. Focus on: *social logics* that characterize a practice or regime; *political logics* of equivalence and difference that account for emergence of practice or regime and its contestation and transformation; *fantasmatic logics* that account for the way particular practices and regimes 'grip' subjects.
4. Articulation	Process of linking together a plurality of logics in order to account for problematized phenomenon, modifying each element in the process.
5. Critique	Employing political and fantasmatic logics to explain and expose the contingency of processes and relations. Political logics reveal exclusions and foreclosures at moments of regime institution. Ideological closure is evident in fantasmatic narratives that naturalize relations of domination.

The research proceeds by **retroductively** testing this tentative hypothesis through a textual analysis of key documents related to two key planning decisions over shale gas as well as national policy and legislation, unstructured interviews with 23

participants in the fracking planning process at local and national levels as well as non-participant observations of shale gas sites. In effect, the planning process for shale gas from national to local level is **deconstructed**, and then **reconstructed** (Marttila, 2015) according to the discourse theory in section 3.2. In the empirical chapters I set out the pro, anti and officially neutral formations focusing on the key points of contestation between them, and show how the 'pro' and 'anti' formations are various "negated, disarticulated, mediated and negotiated" (Howarth, 2018: 386) as well as accepted by the planning-regulatory process.

Table 3.2 'Second-cut' Analytical Framework

Logics of practice	Post-political regime	Authoritarian regime
Social	**Techno-managerial**: Audit systems, metrics and 'modernisation' or 'culture change' for planners, expert-led process, evidence-based policy, networked governance of regulation. *The dominant social logic is to prioritise evidence and positivist approaches over political discussion*	**Executive-Punitive**: Effectively punishing citizens and potentially disruptive state actors, though funding cuts, central government intervention, fines, legal and police enforcement. More direct influence from Ministers and central government. *The dominant social logic is for central government to intervene to punish state actors and citizens for not adhering to a market rationale.*
Political	**Consensus:** Two senses – 1) A broad policy/political consensus as basis of pragmatic delivery of development and growth. 2) Approaches/concepts to create 'win-win' outcomes that can exclude more radical views that come from above consensus, i.e. sustainable development frames a win-win solution on a particular project.	**Antagonistic:** Related to first sense of consensus: policy not articulated as consensual, focus is on mobilising anger of disenfranchised white, male working/middle class, policy created to appeal to this subjectivity as well as private interests. Related to second sense: The government actively take a side in conflicts. Rather than consensus seeking governance, the government openly fights on the side of its allies vs particularly identified enemies

	The dominant political logic is consensual; there is a basic 'rational' consensus that leads to developing reasonable win-win solutions	*The dominant political logic is antagonistic; enemies are identified, and state institutions are required to fight against them*
Fantasmic	**Partnership and Participation:** Based on communicative rationality, identifying 'stakeholders' for 'partnership' and participation of citizens within stage-managed contexts which often masks power relations. *The fantasy of participation legitimates decisions; the idea that planning involves the public grips its main actors.*	**State of Exception:** A crisis or problem is constructed in such a way that there is not time for deliberation and consultation; there is need to response which means only a small amount of actors need to be involved in decision making – interventions are explicit. *A fantasy of crisis and imminent threat legitimates decision making, gripping actors to interventions that can bypass democracy and long-standing processes.*

From this reconstructed discursive conflict, I can then identify the **logics** of planning practice and link back to the tentative hypothesis. Recall Table 3.1 above, that set out the 'first-cut' analytical framework, in general terms. Table 3.2 below sets out the same shifts, but this time connects them as changes in terms of the logics of planning practice. This 'second-cut' framework informs the analysis of the fracking case, and frames the presentation and discussion of the findings, with the logics of these practices summarised in each section:

A brief summary of these 'logics' for the research:

Social logic: The social practice of post-political planning is techno-managerial, in the sense of being led by experts and with planners themselves subject to modernisation and culture change. Planners are seen as negotiators who guide other participants through planning. The conjecture here is that an authoritarian turn is one that begins to reconstitute planning processes in a punitive manner, and so, instead of audits, metrics and targets, there is a more disciplinary logic of punishment (and reward) to govern behaviour. Alongside this, an authoritarian logic

will mean greater centralisation of planning powers within the executive levels of government in order to bypass points at which dissent can be staged even in minimally effective ways.

Political logics are understood as shifting from consensual logics to more antagonistic logics of difference. Analysis looks to identify how demands are "negated, disarticulated, mediated and negotiated" (Howarth, 2018: 386) by planning. Within post-political planning, a consensus-seeking approach brought together the competing economic-social-environmental demands of different actors. Consensus was also exclusive, as a 'partition of the sensible' excluded disruptive subjects who rejected the need for development. The hypothesised shift is to a more antagonistic logic of planning, with the government taking a clear side and intervening to make sure there are clear winners and losers.

Political practices modify social practices within moments of dislocation. What this means is that not only is there a shift within the overall practice of planning, but also that the political logics (of equivalence and difference) can be used to understand interventions into planning that enable a shift. The resistance and challenge of an anti-fracking movement is accounted for in this way: this movement also mobilises a 'chain of equivalence' to challenge decisions within planning and resist authoritarian tendencies. Their resistance shapes the logic of planning practice as well as the government's interventions.

Fantasmic logic: The 'new consensus' and 'spatial planning' received support because they envisaged a renewed role for the planner, based on greater participatory and collaborative approaches to planning. My conjecture here is that this provided the fantasmic grip, the structuring fantasy of planning as retaining some social-democratic value. Recall Allmendinger and Haughton (2011: 98):

"...planners were compliant and naive and persuaded themselves that the 'public interest' [...] was best served through circumventing the political"

They suggest at worst planners were "complicit in this deceit" (Ibid). My suggestion is that this is best understood within the terms of a fantasmic logic- that in order to make planning possible and desirable, it was important to imagine the practice of planning anew in the participatory mode. Doing so is not a deception, nor is it a complete fiction: planners certainly did provide space for wider participation in plan-

making (Raco, 2005). What this fantasy does, however, is obscure the dominance of neoliberal growth imperatives; it obscures the weakening of the power of planners to represent their communities in the face of global economic competition through an appeal to democratic involvement. What is important is that this is part of how planning is imagined, as a public activity, and that when a controversial decision is made it can be legitimated with reference to the participation and partnership arrangements.

It needs to be made clear here, *this is not a critique of participatory approaches to planning* per se. There are, without a doubt, forms of planning practice that challenge power and shape planning decisions just as there are cynical exercises of consultation (Van Wymeersch *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, the hypothesised turn does not necessarily mean all participatory approaches will be abandoned. Instead, the hypothesised turn is towards a planning practice that is more exclusionary and gripped by the necessity of crisis-management. The centrality of austerity and budget cuts mean planners need to make 'tough choices' which have winners and losers (as with the political logics above). The act of taking clear sides, of more overt political interventions, creates a crisis of legitimacy as a 'participatory' fantasy becomes harder to sustain. My proposition is that a new fantasy will be sought to legitimate more direct interventions from government as well as the limits faced by the 'austerity planner' (Slade *et al.*, 2019), by constructing a 'state of exception' to legitimise anti-democratic practices.

The 4th step of **articulation** is the linking of these different logics together, to understand how they operate collectively as a regime. This is done through the discursive analysis; fracking enters planning as a new and disruptive problem. The very articulation of fracking, from differing discursive formations, modifies (or reinforces) existing logics and practices (Howarth *et al.*, 2016). Each chapter of analysis refers back to the framework in Table 3.2, relating the logics here to the articulations and actions within the fracking case.

The purposes of all these steps is to provide a **critical explanation**. Following on from above, critique using a PDA approach aims to find a place between "unapologetic positivism" and a "partisan approach that is prepared to compromise the virtues of scientific study - objectivity, impartiality, consistency, and so on – in

the name of an explicit set of political commitments and values" (Howarth, 2018: 387). This research aims to balance both these positions. The purpose of **critique** is to reveal the "*contingency* and *naturalization* of sedimented relations and identities." (Howarth, 2018: 388). Overlapping crises and the sustained resistance to shale gas are moments of dislocation for the post-political regime, and the emerging authoritarian regime requires significant effort to naturalize. The explanation produced is of how these changes occur, are limited and resisted. Couching this explanation in terms of logics and practices, allows for a level of generalisability as it identifies an underlying rationale which we can fairly assume is reproduced to some degree within planning as an institution. The logics and practices identified in the fracking case allow me to posit a critical explanation of changes within planning and the state.

There are, of course, several similar approaches that would be suitable for this study. I touched above on Fairclough (Critical Discourse Analysis) and Foucault (Foucauldian discourse analysis), both of which share some similar theoretical basis to PDT and use some similar methodologies. PDT is somewhat in line with these approaches in that there is an explicitly political set of commitments (as part of a post-Marxist tradition) as well as built in theoretical assumptions about what discourse consists of. Other approaches, like e.g. conversational analysis, may make use of some similar methodology to what I use here, however they also approach case studies with a more 'bottom up' approach that requires the terms and categories we use in analysis to be relevant to the subjects of the research (Woolfit, 2005: 145). I set out the above framework to make clear my assumptions about the planning system, and PDT provides some minimal features to identify. Still, there also needs to be an element of 'bottom up', which I incorporate into the data analysis through using an open approach to coding date, as Chapter 4 shows.

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This section has set out the theoretical and analytical basis for the thesis. The discussion in Chapter 2 gave us reason to think there is a shift within the political direction of neoliberalisation. It showed how the U.K. planning system had been characterised as 'post-political'; however, it also provided reasons to think that this

regime may be dislocated as the wider state is theorised as undergoing an 'authoritarian turn'.

This chapter then started to develop the tools we would need to analyse a concrete case to explore this possible 'turn'. It defended Political Discourse Theory as a materialist theory of discourse, in which social orders and institutions are the contingent outcomes of an articulatory practice. It argued articulatory practice shapes institutions, and that hegemony is contested through institutions as well as institutions being shaped by dominant ideologies within a historical bloc.

The chapter then set out the ontological and epistemological positions of PDT, and how this informs a Political Discourse Analysis. The PDA approach uses a 5 step retroductive cycle to research an empirical case, which is reconstructed in the terms of PDT. This approach was outlined in relation to the fracking case, and an analytical framework was set out in terms of the 'logics' of planning practice. The thesis will provide a critical explanation of the planning process for shale gas fracking in terms of the logics set out in Table 3.2. The thesis follows a tentative hypothesis, supplemented by more specific research questions that are explained in the next chapter.

4 METHODOLOGY

The thesis has so far presented a problem (an authoritarian turn in English planning?), the theoretical perspective (Political Discourse Theory) from which that problem is approached, and an analytical framework for analysing the fracking case (in terms of logics). This chapter introduces the case study for the research (shale gas fracking in England) and the methods by which this case has been explored empirically. The first section (4.1) covers the research strategy, linking the problematisation to the selection of the case studies and the research questions. Section 4.2 provides greater detail on the methods of data collection (text analysis, interviews, observation) and sampling, and 4.3 details the coding process and method of analysis. The qualitative nature of the methodology and the Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) approach require some reflection on positionality and ethics, and that will be covered in 4.4. The final section (4.5) covers the methodological issues and limits to this approach.

4.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY: PROBLEMATISATION TO CASE STUDY

The methodological approach of the thesis is *problem driven* (Howarth, 2004: 319), in that the selection of methods and their application are related to the problematisation of the object of study and the aims of the research. The problem – of a change in the planning 'regime' – is one that is derived from theoretical work on planning as well as more recent work on 'authoritarian neoliberalism'. Examining a change in planning requires a case in which the regime of planning may be contested, and the controversy over shale gas in England provides this.

The research strategy is to focus on the case study of shale gas fracking, analysing it according to the assumptions of the PDA approach, and relating the outcomes of this analysis back to the problematized regimes. As detailed in Chapter 3, this strategy requires a deconstruction of the empirical case, and then a reconstruction of the case in PDT terms. The reconstructed case study is then analysed in terms of 'logics', the extent to which these logics are shifting, and new logics are hegemonic within planning (or, institutionalised) (Howarth, 2004 327). The use of 'logics' provides a limited set of theoretical presuppositions about the sedimented rules of a practice, its

political institution and the grip it has on subjects. The analytical framework makes it possible to relate the articulatory practice in the shale gas case to more general planning and State practice.

To be more specific, the case study for the thesis is the environmental planning and related regulatory process for shale gas in England. Environmental planning involves input from regulators and other statutory bodies, as well as NGOs. The roles of these bodies are covered in the research, but throughout I will use the term 'planning practice' or 'planning-regulatory practice' to capture this wider network - it is in planning decisions that the different bodies come together and are challenged (or not).

Shale gas fracking in England is a suitable case, as it is a controversial issue which maps onto the time period of a hypothesised 'authoritarian turn'. It is highly contested between two distinct positions – 'pro' and 'anti'-fracking – with the 'pro' position firmly articulated by the U.K. government (Bomberg, 2017b). As a discursive conflict, there are attempts by different actors and discursive positions to dominate the understanding of this new issue both internal to and external to planning, and particular planning decisions are key focal points for the different 'sides' in this debate. The sides contest the meaning of fracking (Bomberg, 2017b) as well as the legitimacy and adequacy of planning-regulatory policy and practice (Cotton, 2017). The fracking case is one in which the sedimented social practices of planning are *dislocated* as they are politically challenged (Howarth, 2004).

With the focus on planning practice, the research also analyses a third position on fracking, the (officially) 'neutral' position of planning and governance bodies. The 'neutral' position refers to those in official positions who may have personal pro/anti views on fracking but are professionally expected or compelled to be neutral in the debate. Establishing the relations between the different positions in the case study, conceived of as discursive formations, provides a window into the practice of planning. The case of shale gas fracking is one in which changes are made, proposed or demanded to the planning process as part of the political contestation between these three discursive formations (Hilson, 2015; Beebeejaun, 2017).

As Figure 4.1 shows, the contestation of shale gas initially occurred at a national level (e.g. national policy and regulatory frameworks, national debate over need for shale). The government rolls out (and back) legislative and policy changes in reaction to a series of small earthquakes, to support the fracking industry and to address public concerns over the practice. These changes are then tested in local authority planning decisions, and the thesis focuses on two of the early and highly contested decisions as smaller case studies.

Figure 4.1 A chart showing the different geographical levels of the fracking debate
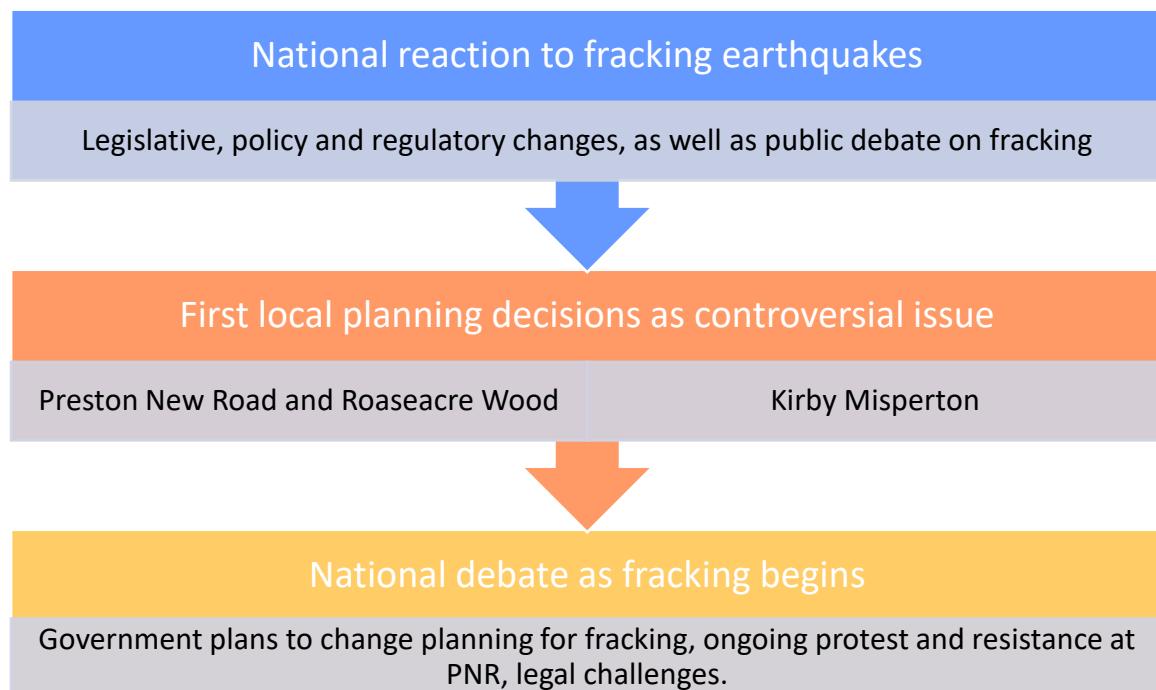
The two local authority case studies are decisions on two sites in Lancashire called Preston New Road (PNR) and Roseacre Wood (RW) that were initially taken together and which both went to appeal after local authority refusal, and a single decision made over a site in North Yorkshire at Kirby Misperton (KM8). PNR (after appeal) and KM8 were both given permission, RW was refused three times. The initial local decisions were some of the first to be considered under the new framework. Both sites test the policy frameworks laid out by the government. The analysis then moves back to the national level, as the government proposes further changes to planning to support fracking as a result of the local contestation.

Both local cases were selected with knowledge of the outcomes, and protests at both sites had begun prior to the start of the research project (September 2017) – so they were established as sites of political contestation. Their place as some of the first decisions over fracking meant that they captured the competing attempts to hegemonise the competing articulations of what shale gas fracking is and means. Figure 4.2 shows how the research is divided into three Phases along a timeline of key events. These phases are identified through the research, moving from the initially post-political government response in Phase 1, through the dislocatory contestations in Phase 2, through to the authoritarian tendencies in Phase 3. Each Phase maps onto a research question, which aims to capture the evolving tentative hypothesis through the research.

Figure 4.2 A timeline of the three phases of the fracking conflict in England

The following chapters (5-7) will take each of these Phases in turn. Phase 1 covers the initial policy and legislation for fracking, as well as the formation of 'pro' and' anti' fracking positions in public discourse. These positions develop alongside the Coalition government's 'localism' planning reforms. These initial discursive regulatory formations are articulated and modified in the two local planning

decisions in Phase 2. Both local cases became the focus of national attention, as the potential first shale gas fracking sites. In the PNR case, an inquiry into the rejection of the proposals at a local level overturned the original decision, and this decision and site become a significant focus of the national debate in Phase 3. Phase 3 focuses on the continued contestation of the Phase 2 decisions, the proposals to change the planning process for future applications up to the abandonment of these proposals and a moratorium on fracking.

Each Phase is connected to the correspondingly numbered research question, and the answering of each of these questions tests the tentative hypothesis. When the research project began, the initial conjecture was that a 'post-politics' was becoming incoherent, and through both theoretical and initial empirical work it developed into the hypothesis that *there is a turn towards a more authoritarian (yet still neoliberal) planning regime following a crisis in the 'post-political'*. The initial conjecture lead to the first question:

1- *How did the State initially respond to the political contestation of shale gas? To what extent is this indicative of a 'post-politics'?*

Following on from the literature review in Chapter 2, it is debated within the planning literature whether the reforms introduced under the Coalition government continued a post-political logic of planning. An analysis of Phase 1 provides an answer to this question and builds on the planning literature to explain the Government's initial set of responses to the contestation of fracking. This phase covers the initial regulatory formation and debate in response to a series of small earthquakes in Lancashire. The earthquakes led to a moratorium, new regulation and eventually legislation, as well as the beginning of protests at fracking sites and fracking becoming established as a national political issue. The first phase has had significant amount of academic attention, and the analysis here will largely draw upon this **secondary literature** as well as the **texts** of speeches and policies that is not covered within this literature. These two methods provide an account of the government level decision making and the logics utilised in developing the regulatory framework. Chapter 5 will answer this question, through focusing on Phase 1.

As Chapter 3 set out, the PDA approach will be used to identify the *logics* of planning practice. Doing so requires a more detailed focus on specific decisions, and to answer the second question:

> 2- *What logics underlie the decision making on shale gas? How are these 'logics' of planning practice articulated and challenged within the decision-making process?*

Chapter 6 focuses on Phase 2 and analyses both the local case studies, of the PNR/RW decisions in Lancashire and the KM8 decision in North Yorkshire as well as the national level appeal into PNR and RW following local authority refusal. The local decisions selected are ones that were nationally significant and brought together both sides of the debate to contest the fracking issue within the institutional context of planning. The regulatory formation of Phase 1 is tested here, as are many of the claims of 'pro 'and 'anti' frackers.

The analysis of each local case draws upon **unstructured interviews** and texts. The local cases bring together the three distinct discursive formations relating to fracking - pro-fracking, anti-fracking and the officially neutral. The analysis of the discursive struggle and attempt to hegemonise articulations of shale gas fracking within the planning process allows me to identify how planning practice (from policy to the discretion of the planners) disarticulates, mediates, manages and negates the different discursive elements of each position. Reconstructing the discursive conflict within planning makes it possible to identify the logics of the decisions to refuse/accept the proposes fracking sites.

What the first two questions cover is a breakdown of post-politics and the early signs of an authoritarian logic to planning practice developing in response to the contestations of the anti-fracking movement. The final question addresses the authoritarian more directly:

> 3- *What signs are there of an 'authoritarian turn' within planning? What are the limitations to the turn in the case of fracking?*

Phase 3 covers the response to the local decisions and a series of rejections for fracking sites, and the PNR decision being overturned by the government on appeal.

Following this decision, direct action and protests increased. The anti-fracking movement, including local activists as well as NGOs, took the conflict to parliament and the courts in order to contest planning policy and police injunctions. Through this both the principle of fracking and the overall practice of planning are contested, with the government proposing changes to planning which antagonise new groups, drawing them into the conflict. The chapter draws largely on text analysis and interviews with those involved at the national level. This phase also covers the protests in the local cases using **non-participant observation**. Earthquakes at the PNR site lead to a second moratorium on fracking that is still in place at the time of writing. Answering this question, in Chapter 7, draws out the emerging authoritarian logics and how they are limited in this particular case.

The overall research strategy covers both a change over time (a turn) and the different scales at which decision making in planning occurs and is shaped – from local authorities to the U.K. Parliament. The empirical chapters (5-7) address a particular research question (see Table 4.1), and the appropriate data is analysed using the PDA approach.

Table 4.1 Chapters, Phases and Questions

Chapter	5	6	7
Research Question	1	2	3
Phase	1	2	3

In doing so, each chapter shows the logic of planning over time – analysing an authoritarian turn and its (current) limits. The method of analysis is explained in 4.3. What I will first cover is the methods of data collection highlighted in bold above.

4.2   METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Within the PDA approach, methods are not treated as "neutral set of rules and techniques that can be applied mechanically to all empirical objects" (Howarth, 2004: 317). The methods for data collection instead have to be related to the PDA approach and its guiding assumptions, and the following section details how each of the data sets mentioned above were collected. Both data collection and analysis are qualitative, but they are not straightforwardly interpretivist – instead aspects of

interpretivist approaches are drawn upon in ways that are suitable for the demands of PDA.

The aim of data collection is to capture the multiple articulations of fracking and planning across the case studies from different subject positions. Many of these articulations are linguistic, but a wider symbolic field of images, actions and events is also drawn upon. There are two primary methods of data collection – texts/documents and interviews. Supplementary to this I also conducted non-participant observations by visiting the two fracking sites during protests and I also draw upon secondary academic studies.

 The following section elaborates on how this qualitative data was selected and collected, and how this relates to the PDA approach. These methods are consistent with other similar PDA studies (Griggs and Howarth, 2002; Griggs, 2004; Griggs and Howarth, 2008; Tafon *et al.*, 2018). It also covers how secondary literature is used in the research.

4.2.1 Texts and Documents

Primary texts and documents are generally the core data of discourse analysis (Howarth, 2004: 335). They are relatively easy to obtain, and often contain what can reasonably be said to be a conscious and deliberate set of articulations if they are written pieces of work or records of public meetings. The texts drawn upon here are almost all still publicly available (a few have been deleted), though the types of text vary significantly, including: policy documents, minutes or transcripts of meetings, websites, submissions to planning inquiries, speeches, environmental statements, proceedings from parliamentary groups, legislation (see Appendix 1 for a complete list). These texts provided a rich amount of data, with records of key events, key actors views and discussions, as well as the particular policies relevant to planning and fracking. When newspaper articles are used, the subject of the analysis is the position put forward by an interviewee, an event reported, and in one or two cases the views put forward by a politician or activist in a comment piece. The editorial or journalistic line is not analysed.

The selection of texts for analysing Phase 1 was based on gaps in the fracking literature. Several pieces of research cover the national discourse in this period, using

different approaches to the one set out here. I analyse some of the key texts these studies identify, as well as including other fracking related texts that are not covered in the literature.

The selection of texts and documents in Phase 2 was guided by the local decisions, theoretical discussions on planning and the responses from research participants. There are key documents that are typical to planning decisions such as the Officer report, minutes from the committee meeting, impact assessments etc. A detailed reading of these allowed for other key documents to be identified, as well as the centrality of particular national policies within decision making. Interviewees also identified key texts that they had developed, felt were mistaken or thought were important.

For Phase 3, shale gas fracking had become a more significant issue for the public, with multiple sites across England. The data collection here focused on key, nationally significant events or debates e.g. proposals to change the planning process for shale gas.

The collection of texts and documents is supported by taking an immersive approach to the research (Griggs, 2004). There are key texts within both planning policy and key aspects of practice that are formally acknowledged to be integral to the discourse of planning; however, it is through the daily practice of immersing oneself within the topic that further texts can be identified too. Importantly, the texts and documents provide a strong basis for identifying the key elements of discourse that their authors are trying to 'fix' as well as the attempts to change the 'rules' of planning practice.

4.2.2 Unstructured interviews

Written texts are traditionally the primary data in discourse analysis, and in many cases the only data. The formality of a report or a policy and its importance in influencing or constraining action allows the researcher to identify which ideas or perspectives have become sedimented or formalised. This data alone, however, "suffers from a series of shortcomings and should therefore be supplemented by other forms of data." (Hansen and Sørensen, 2004: 99). The formality of a published document suggests it is the outcome of consideration and deliberations, but this alone can lead us away from the more informal, emergent and spontaneous

developments in discursive practice (Ibid). Further, additional data helps to contextualise the documents and discover new ones as interviewees identify important texts. This is particularly important in a live case like the shale gas one, as some of the discourse is being produced conterminously with the study. New texts were produced during the study and the actors involved in the fracking case tend to identify their significance before it is obvious to others.

The analysis therefore draws upon 23 unstructured qualitative interviews. As well as contextualising texts, interviews also allow for more spontaneous articulations of the fracking discourse and the planning process and allow individuals situated in different subject positions to articulate, for example, where inclusions and exclusions occur and points of antagonism with other discourses (Hansen and Sørensen, 2004: 100). The interviews in this research provide a view on how the particular discursive positions (pro/anti/neutral) are articulated, on how strategic decisions are made within the conflict as well as the limits placed on action by processes or policies. The interviews provide "thick descriptions of practices and institutions" (Howarth, 2004: 342) that triangulate with the texts, in order to provide a richer explanation of the discursive conflict and its institutional limits as well as to identify discursive elements in more detail.

There are two key issues to address with the use of interviews – selections of participants and the conduct of the interview (ethics is covered in 4.5). In doing so, the specifics of data collection will be addressed.

Selection of Participants

The research project began during Phase 3. By this point, there were two clearly established discursive positions on 'fracking', those who advocated for it – pro-frackers- and those who argued against it – anti-frackers. The different narratives and arguments made by these two sides of the national debate were analysed using critical discourse analysis by Bomberg (2017b) and an argumentative discourse analysis by Cotton *et al.* (2014). These two studies provide a starting point for sampling between 'pro' and 'anti' sides of the fracking conflict.

In addition to the apparent pro/anti position, the focus on planning practice meant that a third position was added, the perceived 'Neutral' position. It has to be

emphasised: *this is not an assumption about the interviewee's personal views on fracking*. Instead, it refers to their official role, the *subject position* that they interpolate into within the fracking discourse (regulator, local councillor) and its formal expectation of being unbiased on the principle of fracking in the sense that they are expected to take an evidence based view on the issue. Each interviewee in the 'neutral' category confirmed this at some point during the interview, i.e. that they had to at the very least try to take a middle ground between 'anti' and 'pro' even if they also expressed a leaning in one direction or another during the interview. This third position is different to anti/pro, in that there is less of a clear identification with a 'side'; however, the thesis will show there is some consistency in articulatory practice.

The sampling, as we can see in Table 4.2 below, also considers the different scales of the research. Participants were selected who were deeply involved in the local conflicts as well as those on a national level (with some crossover). This quota sampling (selecting participants based on them representing an important sub-group) set up the initial framework for interviewee selection, to capture the three different positions as well as the scales at which the contest occurs. Within each subsection of Table 4.2, there is also a secondary element of *purposive* and *snowball* sampling (Patton, 2007; Noy, 2008). It was purposive, in that it required an understanding and immersion in the fracking discourse to identify those within each sub-section who were suitable in an ethical sense (see section 4.4) and who were central to the particular articulatory practice in each area. Within some groups, meeting one or two individuals led to suggestions and further interviews (snowballing); though these were only followed up if suitable. For example, it would not have made a great deal of sense to interview an activist briefly involved in the protests at PNR, instead I looked for individuals who had been more heavily involved in the longer-term discursive conflict.

There was no set number for the sample. The important consideration overall was to achieve saturation in terms of the different discursive positions, so that the interviews and texts together could give a robust account of the pro/anti/neutral discourse. I decided that having fewer interviewees from the 'pro' side was acceptable, as there is a greater amount of publicly available texts produced by 'pro' actors. There are also fewer groups on the 'pro' side, the interviews cover the

companies and industry representatives, and the government position is easier to capture within the public texts produced by government actors than any other group in the case study.

There are three notable types of interviewee that did not commit to an interview – someone from the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA), one of the local planning officers, and someone from a 'pro'-fracking group. With regards to the OGA and local planning officers, the controversy of the issue (as well as time pressures) meant that those contacted were reluctant to conduct an interview, though in each case the absence was mitigated through the extensive amount of documentary evidence that covered the roles and articulatory practice of both these subjects. For the local planners for example, the records of the planning meetings, the local plan, the companies' documents, decisions letter etc. all provide a rich account of the planner's role. To compensate for the absence of the planners as interviewees. I interviewed several other planning professionals: a planning consultant for a fracking company, a planner in a nearby authority to KM8 that had experience with fracking applications, and a planning representative for an anti-fracking group at a planning inquiry.

The pro-fracking groups would also have been a useful interview to have, but they were very difficult to contact/refused requests. Anti-fracking activists and journalists have argued that these are 'Astro-turf'[9] groups with strong industry links, which may explain why they were defensive. In the end, it turned out their role in the conflict was not as important to examining the hypothesis of this research, though some of the texts they produced are analysed in the KM8 case.

Participants were identified and contacted through multiple approaches. Some were contacted directly through publicly available email addresses, others through introductions via other interviewees. The ReFINE group at Newcastle and Durham universities were also able to make some introductions. The interviews were conducted from August 2018 to January 2020. In every case, the person was selected and asked to contribute based on their prominent role within the fracking conflict, what Griggs (2004: 122) calls "nodal actors". Participants were also identified through news media and analysis of texts or role within an organisation.

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[9] A group set up or supported by the industry, to look like a 'grassroots' community group (AstroTurf being a brand of artificial turf)

Table 4.2 Sampling Frame: Interviewees by case and position

	Pro (4)	Anti (12)	Neutral (7)
PNR	Fracking company worker (PNR) Planning consultant	Scientific expert against fracking Lancashire charity PNR Activist 1 Representative of AF group in inquiry	Councillor on planning committee
KM8	Fracking company worker (KM8)	North Yorkshire charity KM8 activist 1 KM8 Activist 2	Councillor voting against Councillor for fracking Neighbouring authority planner
National	Industry Representative	Environmental NGO PNR Activist 2 PNR/RW Activist 3 MP against fracking NGO	Regulator 1 Regulator 2 Regulator 3[10]

[10] For the purposes of anonymity, the three 'regulators' do not have quotes specifically attributed to the body they work for. Interviews were conducted with people from the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England. The latter is not technically a regulator but performs a key regulatory role in the planning process.

Beyond the categories above, the criteria for selection were that they had some relation to the planning process,[11] and as the research (and fracking conflict) developed, it became possible to identify different and new actors.

Conduct of interviews

The unstructured interviews were conducted according to a broadly 'constructionist' approach, (Roulston, 2010: 51-77) albeit one tempered by the limits of PDA. What this means is that each transcribed interview was treated as a co-constructed account of the fracking discourse and the role of planning within this; though in contrast to 'constructionist' approaches, the conduct and transcription of interviews was not one that focuses in intense detail on the specifics of e.g. verbal ticks or nuances. Instead the aim was to co-produce a transcribed text between me and the interviewee that captured key articulations from the participant's position as identified above.

The 23 interviews lasted between 35 minutes and 1hr and 15 minutes (most were 50m -1hr). They were conducted face to face (location chosen by interviewee), via online video platforms such as Skype or Zoom, or on one occasion via telephone. Questions were generally not given in advance (with one exception on request). Interviewees were provided with a rough outline of the research project as well as a copy of a consent form (see Appendix 4). Questions for each interview were prepared according to the interviewee and their role within the discourse. These questions focused on establishing the participant's own role, to be established in their own terms, and then moved on to their understanding of key events they had been involved in as well as their more general understanding of the fracking conflict. The controversy of the issue meant that, in most interviews, participants were generally happy to expand at length on their contributions. One particularly useful technique to keep the interview focused towards the problems of the research was asking hypothetical or counter-factual questions e.g. ''what would you change about the planning process for fracking?' as these types of questions encourage participants to think about the institutional limits of the conflict.

As with any qualitative interviews, the data produced is heavily reliant on the relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer (Roulston, 2010). My

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[11] This discounted e.g. those who were more involved in direct action, or those in fracking companies who were more technically focused than involved in planning proposals.

interviewing technique was aimed at reducing my own input so as not to lead the interviewee. Follow up questions were asked and prompts or provocations like the above were used to get the interviewee to expand on particular issues or events. These interventions were kept to a minimum, whilst maintaining a relaxed and conversational style. Questions were not asked in a set order, generally they were asked in response to something the interviewee had said. It was explained to each interviewee that the aim of my work was not to say that fracking is good/bad; instead, I was interested in their understanding of the planning/political process as well as the fracking contest. It was important not to use theoretical terms or any of the terms of the tentative hypothesis or questions e.g. 'authoritarian'.[12] There was therefore a balance between understanding the interview as a co-construction and reducing interviewer input so as not to lead the conversation too definitively.

In terms of the technique of the interview, the only structuring was to keep the line of questioning and conversation towards issues or events that would give participants a chance to (re)articulate aspects of their discursive position, explicitly acknowledging what I was doing whilst maintaining a level of informality. Clearly, this approach relied on me having a particular personality and approach to people, of building a level of rapport. This rapport was supported by a degree of honesty – being clear the aim is not to produce an analysis that critiques their interpretation, rather to place this within a wider discursive field. The aim of co-producing a text on these terms meant that transcribing non-verbal communication was not necessary or desirable, in that the final text for analysis looked to identify a more deliberate set of articulations rather than the subtlety of expression or associated gestures.

The transcription of these interviews also broke from conventional constructionist approaches. Constructionist approaches often aim to produce ethno-methodological type analyses, which focus on the particular details of the conversation, and the very setting and construction of the interview is an object of analysis (Baker, 2001). The constructionist approach tends to lead towards the hermeneutic circle of interpretation that this research explicitly looks to avoid. This research is instead interested in the meanings utilised by actors to articulate fracking and planning

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[12] If asked after the interview for more details on my research, then I was open about this, and the position I am taking, but the responses to this were not included as data for analysis.

practice – of how they intervene into public discourse and how they construct and deconstruct meanings through articulatory practice.

Interview data in this research is utilized for three purposes. First, it allows for thicker descriptions of the particular elements than is usually available in texts. The thicker descriptions are not the focus of the analysis, but interview data can provide a more detailed understanding of what elements mean. Second, they provide an insight into the strategic nature of discourse because actors are deliberately choosing their articulations and identifying potential problems from their positions. Thirdly, in triangulation with other data the interviews allow me to establish key discursive features and practices within the case study. To further support the interviews and texts, and to provide other avenues for cross-checking data, the thesis also makes use of a series of non-participant observations and secondary literature.

4.2.3 Non-participant Observations

A secondary role is given to a series of overt observations made during a number of fieldwork visits (see Table 4.3 below). These visits were made to the two case study sites, during periods of protest. The purpose was to observe the local areas, the sites and the protest activities. These visits were non-participatory, in that there was no involvement with the protest actions other than walking alongside a march. The visits did, however, involve staying on campsites and moving around the protest sites and talking to people informally (whilst being open about being a researcher). In this way, the site visits could be said to be 'partially participatory', in that any observer would not have known that I was a researcher without speaking to me. The aim of these fieldwork visits was to understand the views of those more involved in direct action and regular protest (but not involved in the planning process as such), and to observe the direct contestation between state (i.e. the police) and protestors.

Limits are placed on the use of these observations. This is to keep consistency with the PDA approach and the aims of the research. The observations draw upon ethnographic techniques of note taking and fieldwork practice (Emerson, 1995) in order to try to understand the perspectives and practices of those involved in protest action, and the shared symbolic meanings produced at these sites and events.

Observations were not made with any positivist conceptions of observing what the anti-fracking groups or the fracking sites were *really* like. At the same time, however, this approach also rejects the fully reflexive ethnographic approach where actors are trapped "in a second-hand world of meanings and have no direct access to reality" (Denzin, 1997 246). The actors at the fracking sites are understood as producing and attempting to objectify particular meanings and symbols within a discursive struggle.

The observation data is only drawn upon in part of the Phase 3 analysis. I draw upon observations of the public-facing articulatory practice: the interventions made into the discursive conflict - e.g. the images displayed at sites and protest events, the particular protest actions taken and the role of the camps themselves. The observations help to capture some of the articulations of activists and residents not involved in the planning process who resisted activities at the sites after the decision. I refer to these articulations in general terms, to protect the identity of those involved, and the public facing aspect of this is consistent with PDA as the protest sites themselves are discursive elements as well as places of contestation (with the industry and police).

Table 4.3 Dates of site visits for observations

Site and time	Duration of stay	Notable events
KM8, December 2017	1 day	Moving of equipment to site for fracking
PNR, June 2018	4 days	National protest camp for multiple UK environmentalist groups
PNR, October 2018	3 days	National protest march, of approx. 2000 people.
PNR and local towns/villages, March 2019	2 days	After first set of earthquakes that led to most recent moratorium.

Table 4.3 details the visits. Each visit consisted of observing the action and protests, talking to the people involved, and observing the sites themselves.[13] Notes were made at the end of each day, recording the key moments, symbols, conversations and some

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[13] More visits were planned for KM8; however, in January 2018 Third Energy were refused final fracking permission for financial reasons. The protestors left, and eventually so did the machinery.

personal reflections on the research in relation to theory and other data. Photos were taken at the sites some of which are included in the thesis for illustrative purposes.

In Chapter 7, the data collected from observations is used in triangulation with other datasets to add description and to show the conflict unfolding 'on the ground'. I had initially expected these visits to feature more prominently; however it became clear that there are several good ethnographic studies (Szolucha, 2016; Szolucha, 2018) to draw upon and my focus also shifted towards the importance of the contestation fracking in the courts and Parliament in Phase 3. The KM8 camp also disbanded earlier than I anticipated.

4.2.4 Secondary literature

Secondary literature, in terms of other empirical studies into fracking, is used within the analysis particularly in Phase 1. There is no particular prescription of what methodological approaches secondary literature should follow to be suitable for PDA (Torfing, 2004). In terms of providing context, a variety of different approaches can be used e.g. survey data as a reflection of public opinion over time. Secondary literature can also help to triangulate with the findings of the methods above; though this requires a little more caution. In drawing upon other discourse analyses e.g., it is important to recognise the differences in approach. I make connections with other discourse analysis on fracking in the thesis (e.g. Bomberg, 2017b) when I have some similar findings, but I do so through using my own terms and framework.

There is a further form of secondary data. As stated above, the thesis does not analyse the news media as such, but it does use quotations in news sources (and articles by e.g. politicians) as part of the analysis. Further to this, it also draws upon several news stories to map events and points of conflict that are relevant to the study but not analysed e.g. court cases in particular the publication *Drill or Drop* which is ran by an independent journalist focusing on onshore extraction. In the case of recorded statements or authored articles by key actors these can be treated as text as in 4.2.1. Contextual news stories are used to provide evidence of particular actions or events.

4.3 THREE STAGES OF CODING AND ANALYSIS

Data was analysed through a three-stage process. To track the changes through the case, a discourse analysis of each phase is presented in the appropriate chapter (5-7) using this three-stage process. In Chapter 5, the analysis is more limited, as this section draws more heavily on existing academic literature, however the original empirical work still follows the three-stage process. In Chapter 6, each local case study is analysed separately, before being brought together to produce an explanation about the logics of planning across the local case. The inquiry and overturning of the PNR decision in the Lancashire case is also analysed here. In Chapter 7, I analyse key events following the inquiry, the drift towards and limits to an authoritarian turn in the fracking case.

Figure 4 illustrates the three stages of coding and analysis for each phase. The first stage (deconstruction) of coding identified any statement within text or transcriptions that articulates something about fracking, and then coded it either in vivo or according to a more general category that covered its meaning - e.g. 'fear of water contamination', 'fracking will create jobs' and 'regulatory gaps'. This first stage took a partially grounded approach. It began with a fairly 'open-coding' process (Charmaz, 2006) where the initial set of categories and codes are developed from the empirical work; however this evolved into theoretical codes by marking each code with its discursive positions – Anti fracking (AF), Pro fracking (PF), Neutral (N). Doing so introduced theoretical distinctions of the ethical values of the speaker or author (for, against or indifferent to shale gas) and also subjective distinctions between 'antagonists' and 'protagonists' (Marttila, 2013) within and between positions.

 Through the first stage it was possible to identify key issues and areas that were being contested as well as the positive positions within each discursive formation on these points – to identify the *elements*, *moments* and *antagonisms* within and between the discursive positions. These can be split into broadly three areas for each phase (though the emphasis changes) – the particular harms/benefits of fracking, contesting different identities/subject positions (e.g. the local community) and contesting planning-regulatory processes.

Stage 1: Deconstruction	Stage 2: Reconstruction	Stage 3: Critical Explanation
Discursive position (AF/PF/N)	Each position reconstructed in PDT terms	Logics within discourses identified
Evolutionary coding, categorise similar claims	Triangulate across all data sets	Comparison across phases to identify changes
3 areas: Harms/benefits, contested identifies/subject positions, contested governance processes	Relations between discourses identifed (i.e. antaognism)	Analytic framework to characterise

Figure 4.3 Three stages of analysis for each phase-chapter

The second stage (reconstruction) takes these semi-theoretical set of codes and categories and reconstructs the separate discursive positions according to the terms and assumptions of PDT, identifying the specific antagonisms between the discursive positions, and the key features of each discursive position - e.g. nodal points. At this stage, the interview data and text data are compared for any major differences in the coding, any particular discursive features that were present in the interviews and not in the texts, differences in emphasis etc. Observation and secondary data are then integrated (where appropriate) with the text and interviews, and each phase/chapter written up as a descriptive draft to bring the different data points together. If the analysis of interviews identified key elements the text did not, then new texts were sought and old ones revisited to see if any evidence was missed (and the same in reverse, from texts to interviews).

Each Chapter (5-7) presents each of the identified discursive formations, if and how a hegemonic position is established by the anti/ pro discourse, and the relation between this and the 'neutral' position (particularly in Chapter 6). This reconstruction of the fracking conflict is used to answer the research question for each phase, through the characterisation of the relative positions within the discourse and the extent to which meanings were dominant, naturalised and contested. PDT provides a framework for identifying a minimal set of features, which allowed the empirically identified elements to be related together. I identify how the formations are "negated, disarticulated, mediated and negotiated" (Howarth, 2018:

386) as well as accepted in planning practice. In Chapter 6 I show how each of the elements of the discursive formations are treated in the planning process according to these 5 categories (negated, disarticulated etc.) and how planning practice restricts each formation (or not). In Chapter 7 the focus moves to the contestation over new proposals for planning practice. Each category means what it does in normal usage – negating is dismissing an element as mistaken or incorrect. Disarticulating does not deny the truth or validity of an element; rather, the claim is that it isn't relevant or appropriate for discussion in planning. Mediating means finding some compromise between competing elements, and negotiation asks if an element can be changed. Some elements are simply accepted within planning.

The final stage of analysis identifies the particular social, political and fantastic logics that underlie and legitimate actions and decision-making within the planning and governance processes empirically observed and reconstructed. In each chapter, the logics are related to the hypothesised 'authoritarian turn' and the analytical framework in Chapter 3 for each phase. The analytical framework provides an a priori basis for determining the extent of any 'authoritarian turn'.

Each stage of the process makes use of Nvivo software. Projects were created for each Phase of text analysis which brought together the different documents and coded them empirically then theoretically using 'sets' to group the initial codes together. Interviews were coded separately, then coded for Phase to then integrate with the text data. The research does not make use of the analytic tools of Nvivo as such; rather the software facilitated a 'manual' coding process based on my own interpretations and coding facilitated by the data software by increasing the speed and volume of data analysis (Welsh, 2002).

The limitations of the approach will be addressed in 4.5, after considering the positionality and ethics of the research.

4.4 POSITIONALITY AND ETHICS

This section gives an account of my own positionality – on fracking[14] and in terms of the relationship between me as a researcher and the research participants. It then

[14] My view on planning is laid out in Chapter 2 and returned to in Chapter 8.

moves to consider two further ethical issues within the research –how the participants data is used and the issue of the wellbeing and impact on participants of the published research. The research was approved by the relevant Newcastle University ethics committee.

I will start with my own position on fracking, so as to make clear my own 'bias' such as it is. I am highly sceptical of the need for fracking at a time when the evidence of the climate-ecological crisis is mounting and warnings each year become increasingly dire. It is widely acknowledged that much more needs to be done to address global heating across multiple areas of society including energy production. Locking into a new fossil fuel industry at this time seems misguided at best. The initial push to do so in 2012-15 reflected a set of strategic decisions at the level of government which were at best complacent and at worst reflected a disregard for the impacts of global heating that are already having severe impacts in the Global South.

I made no secret of my scepticism when asked by participants, though in interviews I kept this until after the interview had finished. The important consideration is the extent to which my own bias, such as it is, impacted on the research. I have made every effort to bring the pro-fracking view into the case studies, and the key claims of the research are based on an analysis and interpretation of what a range people have said and documents which can be verified by anyone concerned. I think that the PDA approach, and the focus on a public practice of planning, give enough distance between my own scepticism and the explanations and analysis produced.

There is a slight unevenness in the number of interviewees split between pro and anti-fracking positions, as well as the observations focusing more on the movement. There are practical reasons for this unevenness (covered above), but it is also in part because of the power relations I encountered in my work. The 'pro' fracking position is led by more powerful actors (i.e. the government), and I felt it was important to do justice to the less powerful side of this conflict – especially when the 'pro' side produces significantly more public text and documents.

In terms of conducting the interviews, many interviewees (MPs, regulators, councillors) hold positions of status which meant that if there was an unevenness in this relation it was in their favour, so to speak. When interviewing activists, there was often a reverse power relation. Without going into much detail, there were some

activists who were in more vulnerable/precarious positions than others. Conversations with this group took place in group settings, on their own turf (as part of observations). The interviewees were selected from those who would seem to have greater security, and this helped to diminish potential imbalances here.

Beyond these questions of positionality, there are two other key ethical issues for the research. The first is a problem of 'using' what participants say within my particular analytical framework. Hammersley (2014) raises this an issue within discourse and social constructivist type analyses generally, namely that participants' words and ideas are in sense reconstructed into something that goes beyond their original meaning – the analysis translates everyday speech into the language of a theoretical milieu. To mitigate this, a degree of openness about the study was taken in terms of how the interview was used, and after each interview there was a chance for interviewees to ask questions; and on-site visits I discussed my work too. Any interviewee had the chance to withdraw their contribution, as explained on the consent form (see Appendix 4). Providing too much information to participants prior to interview is likely to lead to more self-conscious responses though, my approach was to provide information as interviews and interactions developed – allowing participants to withdraw if necessary.

The second issue relates to the value of the research to the participants and their own wellbeing. In an issue as divisive as fracking, it is hard to produce work that will 'satisfy' both sides. The research aims to give each 'side' fair treatment, but the intended audience of the work are those who see themselves as 'neutral'. It at no point directs blame towards participants, nor does it look to critique their utterances on a personal or individual level. Instead, the nature of the analysis is to understand what these utterances can tell me about the discursive world, about shared practices and meanings and about the practice of planning and governance. It is critical, but this criticism comes from a place of wanting to see a major ecological crisis avoided and a stronger democracy. Those who reject these minimal ethical-political commitments will likely want to reject the analysis.

The well-being of participants is protected through strict anonymity. Recordings of interviews were deleted after transcription, and transcriptions anonymised. Participants have multiple reasons for not wanting their views being made public, and each are respected here through the anonymization process. At points this

means sacrificing some detail in the analysis; however, the protection of the interviewees takes precedent – e.g. I haven't attributed the regulator interviews to specific bodies as that would make their responses easily identifiable within that body.

No piece of research is free of ethical concerns, and qualitative research into controversial and politically salient problems always involves the researcher's own views and prejudices. I have endeavoured to minimise the ethical issues and be open about my own positionality through each stage of the research.

4.5 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITS: VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, GENERALISABILITY

The PDA approach is still a relatively new research paradigm (Townshend, 2003), developed over the last 20 years. Its proponents have written more about its ontological and epistemological aspects and have only recently begun to fully deal with the 'methodological deficit' (Howarth, 2004) in the literature. The approach set out in this chapter draws upon this work and other sociological traditions to demonstrate the rigorous approach to the problems of this thesis. I have so far discussed the approach in relation to more interpretivist paradigms. As I am using a post-positivist research paradigm it is also important to discuss the methodological limits in relation to more positivist approaches. I will do so through discussing the methodological limits according to three positivist tests: validity, reliability and generalisability.

Validity in its positivist sense refers to the extent to which a method is accurate in representing phenomena. The discursive, social constructivist paradigm of PDA rejects such a view; however, this does not mean that 'validity' is disregarded. As Whittemore *et al.* (2001) argue, validity for qualitative research is a test of the 'credibility', 'criticality', 'integrity 'and 'authenticity' of the work. The triangulation of multiple data sets within the analysis supports the credibility and authenticity of the work. Triangulation can support factual claims of the type 'at event X action Y occurred' or 'the pro-fracking discourse utilises element X' by bringing together multiple supporting sources. The use of an important discursive feature across texts, interviews and observation speaks to its validity and inclusion within the explanations produced (Howarth, 2004: 338). Triangulation can also point out

important differences that modify a claim, e.g. if articulations within interviews differ from those in the texts; these are in themselves findings that can modify theory (Barbour, 1998).

The issues of criticality and integrity rely on the relation of the researcher with participants, decisions made in terms of selection and the fair treatment of the different aspects of this data which I have covered above. As touched upon in Chapter 3, social science is embedded in the world it investigates, researchers to some degree or another have a stake in the outcomes of their work.

The issue of reliability follows from this. Again, this research is not 'reliable' in the strict positivist sense. The research cannot be repeated again, it is impossible for the same findings to be produced from interviews that happened in some cases two years ago simply because these interviews cannot be repeated in the same context. That said, we should not try to reject any sense of reliability in qualitative research. First, reliability comes from validity. If we judge a work to be valid, then we are judging it to be reliable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Second, reliability is to be judged by laying out the steps of the research, to put it out there to be challenged by those involved in fracking, planning and anyone else. The thesis is as open as possible about its data and the necessary interpretive leaps made by me as a researcher. The theories and empirical studies that make up the problematisation also provide a "socially and historically conditioned context" for the research which acts as a "bulwark against relativism" (Flyvbjerg and Sampson, 2001: 131) by providing limits and frames for these interpretive decisions. The research is reliable in that it provides a critical explanation of the case study in terms of how particular meanings about fracking and the institutions that govern it are constructed (Marttila, 2019b). A researcher following the same theoretical discussion and approach would likely point out similar features and changes, even if their own interpretation differed.

The thesis provides one perspective into the English planning system. It is partially bound by its cases, context, the times of the data collection and analysis in relation to ongoing events. Its context-dependence, however, does not preclude any generalisability. 'Logics' are mid-level concepts. We can reasonably assume that there will be some family resemblance with the logics in other planning decisions of

similar types, and also within the planning process more generally. The driving hypothesis, of an authoritarian turn, is one that is propositional. It suggests a change within planning practice, and, whilst the full extent of this turn cannot be determined by this research, the discussion in Chapter 8 links the study of the fracking case with subsequent changes in planning. The thesis does not declare that 'planning is authoritarian', but the assumption is that the *dislocation* of planning practice within the fracking conflict allows us to theorise emergent possibilities and tendencies. Any generalisation, like the hypothesis, is tentative.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has set out the case studies, the methods of data collection, the process of analysis and the limits of conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis - as well as key ethical considerations. The thesis draws upon established methodological approaches that are adapted for the PDA approach. The methodology is problem driven, and brings texts, interviews and observations of the case studies together to be analysed according to PDT. The analysis identifies the relations between the different discourse positions in the case study over time, and the logics that underlie the practices of planning as a (discursive) institution. These logics and relations are then compared with the analytical framework and the tentative hypothesis in each chapter, providing the basis for the discussion in Chapter 8. This chapter has shown the different ways the challenges and limits of research are managed; the following chapters present the analysis according to the above research strategy and methodology.

5   PHASE 1: EARTHQUAKES, REGULATORY FORMATION AND THE ANTI-FRACKING MOVEMENT (2008-14)

This chapter covers the earthquakes (or, 'seismic events') at Preese Hall in Lancashire that made shale gas a national issue, the government response to these in establishing new guidance and regulatory processes for fracking, and the emergence of an anti-fracking movement to challenge the government and industry. It draws upon existing studies as well as an analysis of key policy documents that are also relevant to the two local decisions covered in Chapter 6. It introduces the first two discursive positions in the research: 'pro' and 'anti'. The chapter answers the question:

> *How did the State initially respond to the political contestation of shale gas? To what extent is this indicative of a 'post-politics'?*

The analysis in this chapter is not of planning practice directly as it does not focus on specific decisions. Instead, it analyses the legislative, policy and guidance changes for shale gas as well as the initial resistance to fracking from activists. The analysis of the texts, documents and the secondary literature indicates an initially post-political response to the anti-fracking movement. The techno-managerial practice of the planning-regulatory process was said to allay concerns about the impacts of the fracking process. Shale gas was articulated as a 'bridge fuel', part of a pragmatic transition to renewables following a consensual logic. In response, the anti-fracking movement claimed that there were regulatory gaps and questioned whether an overtly pro-fracking government could be trusted to manage climate or local impacts.

The chapter starts with a brief explanation of what 'fracking' for shale gas is (5.1). I then begin to unpack some of the key elements of the pro-fracking discursive formation through the development of the planning-regulatory process in response to the earthquakes at Preese Hall (5.2). I then cover the response to this from the emergent anti-fracking movement (5.3). I set out the 'pro' and 'anti' discursive positions, highlighting the nodal points and subject positions (5.4), before arguing that the planning-regulatory process is articulated as following broadly post-political logics (5.5).

5.1 FRACKING: A DIRTY WORD FOR A CONTROVERSIAL INDUSTRY

'Fracking' for shale gas and oil has, since the mid 2000's, seen the U.S.A go from being dependent on imports to the world's largest producer of both hydrocarbons. The very word 'fracking' is imported from the U.S.A, introduced to public discourse by a Colorado NGO that wrote a report arguing against exempting the new shale gas and oil industry from some of the regulations of the Safe Drinking Water Act (Plumer, 2016). It was used in a press release, on the basis that it was the term colloquially used by activists and those who worked on sites in Texas to describe the process. As 'fracking' expanded east and gained more media attention, the term stuck. It was contested by the industry (Fahey, No Date), who objected to the connotations of the word as activists used it as a stand-in for a more derogatory term (e.g. 'Frack-off!', 'No Fracking Way!').[15] The prominent environmental activist Bill Mckibben declared it the 'ugliest word in the English Language', for its sound, and for representing:

"...one more dodge, of the kind junkies specialize in, a way to keep from coming to terms with our addiction to fossil fuel" (McKibben, 2011)

The shale industry tends to use the shorthand term 'hydraulic fracturing'. In the simplest terms, hydraulic fracturing means injecting water under pressure into the ground to create fractures in rock that contain gas and/or oil. This specific process has been used since at least 1949 in 'conventional' oil and gas wells and is regularly used today to stimulate wells to extract the maximum about of hydrocarbons (Hammond and O'Grady, 2017).

The process that has proliferated across the U.S. is more complicated than the shorthand suggests. Fracking is defined as 'unconventional' as it involves additional elements to the process of hydraulic fracturing and because it is targeted at a particular strata of rock called shale, which is deeper lying than the shallower formations natural gas is usually extracted from (Kinnaman, 2011). Shale has hydrocarbons trapped within its porous rock, and from 1997 shale has been injected with what is called 'slickwater' after successful experiments in the Barnett Shale in

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[15] Coincidentally, the term word 'frak' was used as in the same way in the popular science fiction TV show *Battlestar Galactica,* the rebooted version of which was running at the time the industry was taking off in the US.

Texas. Slickwater is water that has had sand (to prop open the fractures) and a mixture of different chemicals added to it. These chemicals are used to reduce friction, and to preserve the quality of the hydrocarbons (e.g. biocides to kill off bacteria). The chemicals used vary from site to site (Hammond *et al.*, 2015; Hammond and O'Grady, 2017).

The newest element of the process is the use of horizontal drilling. A vertical well is drilled down and sealed with concrete casing much like with conventional extraction. When the shale strata are reached (between 1 and 4KM underground), multiple horizontal wells can then be drilled (several KM long). 'Slickwater' is injected, and often an explosive charge is dropped to perforate the well at its horizontal extreme. What flows back is the slickwater, gas/oil, and water from within the rock as well as whatever this carries with it (Ehrenberg, 2012). The full process of 'fracking' is therefore 'high pressure, horizontal, hydraulic slickwater fracking', and this is the process that has been increasingly used in U.S. oil and gas extraction since the late 1990's as oil and gas prices have become high enough to make these techniques commercially viable due to their extra cost (McLean, 2018).

There has been an extensive amount of research into the economic, social, political and environmental issues raised by the proliferation of fracking for shale gas and oil in the U.S. and the other nations to which it has been attempted (for an overview see Evensen, 2018). As covered in the introduction, the shale boom in the U.S. has prompted multiple nations including the U.K. to explore the possibility of extracting shale gas and oil to create jobs, income, energy security and cut household bills (Blackwill and O'Sullivan, 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2014). The U.S. case also provided examples of the problems of shale gas extraction which include: potential for contamination of aquifers or groundwater directly or from poorly treated wastewater (Annevelink *et al.*, 2016), contributing to greenhouse gas emissions (Cooper *et al.*, 2014), hidden "fugitive" emissions from methane leakage (Howarth *et al.*, 2011), a number of health problems correlated in fracking areas such as birth defects (PSRCHP New York, 2018), overuse of water supplies for the process (Cooper *et al.*, 2014), social problems from the creation of 'boomtowns' (Stedman *et al.*, 2012) and fracking related earthquakes (Villa and Singh, 2020).

The fracking boom has led to significant social scientific research in the U.S and across the world. Rather than presenting an extensive literature review on the

different issues on shale gas, however, I have chosen to focus on the issues raised within the U.K discourse and cover them as they are raised in my study. The thesis does not look to make new conclusions about 'fracking' or compare the U.K. response with other nations. I include the above to give some context to what follows and to give the reader a sense of the potential costs and benefits of shale gas, which in the U.K. context both 'pro' and 'anti' positions would have been aware of (prior to the local cases in Chapter 6) through a variety of sources ranging from the academic to online forums and social media. What is important for this thesis is how the issues are articulated and how these articulations are then treated within the planning process. It is only necessary to say here that shale gas and oil had been part of an economic boom in the U.S. (McLean, 2018), with detrimental social and environmental consequences (Finewood and Stroup, 2012; Wilber, 2012; Willow and Wylie, 2014) and that the knowledge of U.S fracking gave both sides of the fracking conflict evidence to draw upon in constructing their discursive formations.

As I set out in Chapter 4, there are two main sides in the discursive conflict - 'pro' and 'anti'. This distinction is used by Bomberg (2017b), and the terms are also used by those involved - on my first visit to a fracking site the protestors were referred to as 'antis' (by themselves and by opponents). The following sets out these two sides as developed through Phase 1. The pro-fracking side consists of the UK's Coalition (Conservative-Liberal Democrat) government, the newly formed fracking companies (e.g. Cuadrilla, IGas) and industry lobbyists UK Onshore Oil and Gas (UKOOG). The anti-fracking side consists of newly formed local groups, which are a mix of residents and longer-term political activists (though through the conflict many of the former became the latter). These groups were supported by Green Party politicians and activists, NGOs like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace and national energy activist groups like Reclaim the Power. I provide a summary of the different actors in Appendix 2.

5.2 A Troubled Start for the Industry: Regulation, Bridge Fuel and All out for Shale

The first fracking site in the U.K. was Preese Hall in Lancashire, and the planning application and approval in 2009 did not initially receive significant attention. In 2011, two small earth tremors at the site established fracking as a national issue, and

lead to a temporary ban as several government reports investigated the safety of fracking and examined the regulatory framework for fracking. In parallel to the reports, the government worked with the nascent industry to make the case for domestically produced shale gas, which then justified later deregulatory moves. In this troubled start, we can see three key elements of the pro-fracking discursive formation: emphasising the strength of U.K. regulation, shale gas as a bridge fuel and the need to capture the economic opportunity that shale gas provided. These elements, from the beginning, reflect the uneasy balancing act of the pro-fracking formation between supporting a nascent industry and being seen to address climate change and protecting the safety of citizens. I will identify and explain each element in more detail.

5.2.1 Earthquakes and Regulation

In the U.K., sub-surface minerals are de-facto the property of the Crown Estate, the public estate of the monarchy which is managed by the government.[16] For onshore oil and gas, companies pay for the exclusive rights to extract petroleum in a defined 10km x 10km area – called a Petroleum Exploration Development Licence (PEDL). Licencing covers all petroleum whether extracted conventionally or through fracking, and each PEDL gives exclusive rights to its owner who wins it in a bidding process and can sell it on if they wish.

The main shale gas basin in England, where both the local case studies are located, is the Bowland-Hodder shale gas 'play' that runs mainly under Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire and the north of the Midlands region. In the south, the Weald Basin also contains shale gas as well as a significant amount of oil (Harvey *et al.*, 2018). The British Geological Survey (BGS) estimated that the Bowland play contains between 1800 and 13,000 billion cubic metres (bcm) of recoverable natural gas. For context, the U.K. annual gas consumption at the time was 77bcm (The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2013).

In 2008, Cuadrilla Resources were granted licenses to explore for Shale Gas in the 13th onshore licensing round (Kahya, 2011) including PEDL165, which covers the

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[16] From 2008-2016 the responsibility was for the Department for Energy and Climate Change, this department was merged into the new Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – in itself a suggestion of a shift in emphasis.

Preston New Road case in Chapter 6 as well as Preese Hall. Cuadrilla Resources in the U.K. is one arm of a holdings company (initially registered in the Cayman Islands) created with the specific goal of exploring for and developing shale gas and oil in Europe, with investment from the Australian mining company AJ Lucas and U.S. venture capital (Beebeejaun, 2019). Cuadrilla appointed as their chair the former BP chief executive and crossbench peer Lord Browne. From 2010, Browne was working for the Coalition government in the Cabinet Office in a role that included hiring non-executive directors for government departments including those departments that were overseeing fracking operations (Pickard, 2010).

Once a company has a PEDL licence, they have to apply for planning permission for each site and further regulatory permits to develop and frack a particular well. In 2009, Cuadrilla obtained these permissions for the site at Preese Hall (Lancashire County Council, 2009b). They were permitted to drill and frack the site on an exploratory basis. In doing so, their operations caused two earth tremors in April and May 2011, which was later confirmed to be as a result of fracking operations (Cuadrilla Resources, 2011).

It is important to note here the relative ease with which this first fracking operation took place. It was not subject to significant media attention; even the environmentally focused *Guardian* newspaper was relatively sanguine in its early reports acknowledging the costs and benefits from the U.S. case (Macalister, 2010), and the planning permission was granted fairly straightforwardly. This is perhaps no surprise: few people in the U.K. really knew what fracking was at this time, and Cuadrilla was only proposing 'test' sites on the proviso of investigating commercial viability.

The earthquakes in 2011, however, established fracking as a controversial issue in Lancashire and nationally (Reap, 2015; Cotton, 2017). The U.K. rarely experiences felt earth tremors, so even a minor event like this became a major story (Harrabin, 2012). The government introduced a national moratorium on fracking, commissioning two reports into the safety of the extraction process.

In December 2012, fracking was given the 'green light' again by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Davey, as he accepted the recommendations of the two reports by Green *et al*. (2012) and The Royal Society and Royal Academy of

Engineering (2012). The Royal Society/Royal Academy report argued that fracking could be done safely, as long as best practices were followed and with strong regulation. The report's recommendations included mandatory Environmental Risk Assessments that consulted with local communities, strong regulatory oversite of well casing similar to the offshore industry, as well as staggered rates of injection of the fracturing fluid.

The Green et al. (2012) report introduced something more novel - a 'traffic light system' (TLS) for monitoring seismic activity for fracking wells, as seen in Figure 5.1. The report concluded that the earth tremors were a result of water moving along a geological fault. The TLS meant that companies as well as the British Geological Survey would monitor seismicity from fracking operations. Seismicity up to a magnitude of 0.5 would be reported to the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the regulators, and anything above this level would mean ceasing operations until regulators were satisfied it was safe to proceed (the largest Preese Hall tremor was magnitude 2.3). The image of a 'traffic light' is a familiar one that simplifies a complex process of self-regulation into an idiomatic representation of safety. Each fracking site had to submit a Hydraulic Fracture Plan to show how they would follow the correct practice and reporting to regulators.
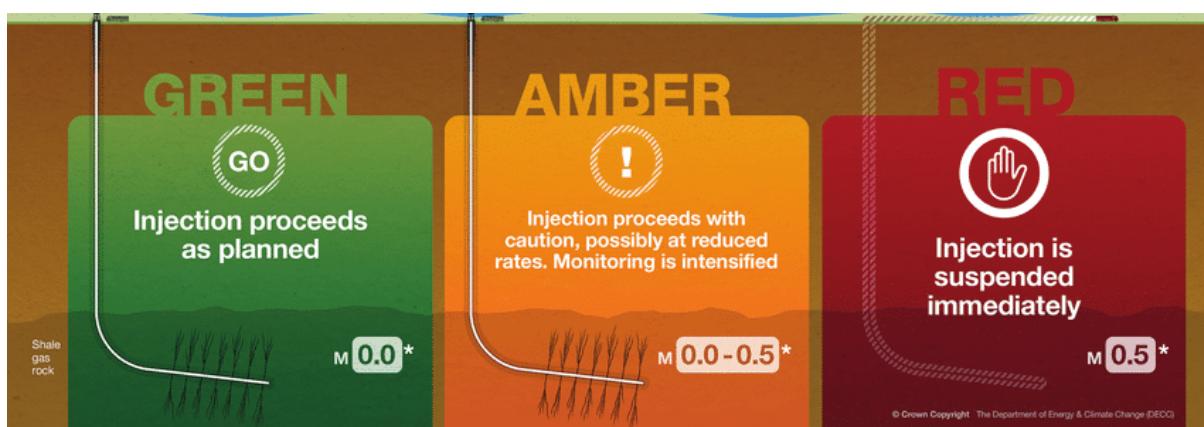
Figure 5.1 Cropped Infographic of TLS for monitoring seismicity: Source: (DECC, 2013)

Davey (2012) lifted the moratorium by explaining how the planning-regulatory framework would mitigate concerns about fracking. The regulatory framework is administered by multiple agencies. The Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for monitoring of water contamination through its existing permitting process. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are responsible for scrutinising the well design

and safety, and the planning process would focus on the impacts of a well site on noise, traffic etc. Following the Wood Review in 2013, the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA)[17] was established with the aim of "maximising the economic recovery of the U.K.'s oil and gas resources" (Oil and Gas Authority, 2017: 7). It was introduced as an executive agency and then became a government company following the Energy Act in 2016. The OGA was given responsibility for issuing the PEDL licences as well as overseeing the new regulatory controls (e.g. TLS) within the new Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

In a written ministerial statement, Davey stressed the role of the "independent experts" and the "precautionary approach" and emphasised the "good record" of the industry and the "risk-based" approach of regulation (Davey, 2012). These claims accord with what Bomberg (2017b) calls a 'reassurance frame', in that it portrays the Preese Hall earthquakes as a mistake which the historically sound regulators and experts are now on top of. The standard of regulation, and the U.K.'s regulatory history for offshore oil and gas is used to distinguish the U.K. from the issues seen from fracking in the de-regulated U.S. (Davey, 2012; Davey, 2013). The technocratic articulation of the planning-regulatory process was a key element of the pro-fracking discursive formation in Phase 1.

The planning-regulatory process has several stages. A company first needs a PEDL licence and the consent of the landowner/ownership of the land for the site. The company then needs to secure and pay for an Environment Agency permit that covers the multiple risks to water (groundwater, aquifers etc.), the process for dealing with waste, any radioactive substances (produced from the water flowing back from the sub surface), as well as the emissions from the process. The company then applies for planning permission and seeks the 'views from the local community', before the HSE approves the well design, and the OGA approves the seismic monitoring. DECC/ BEIS have to give final approval for full fracking operations, though the company can begin other activities short of fracking at this point (DECC, 2015). Figure 5.2 is a government summary of the process.

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[17] Between 2013-15 there was also an Office for Unconventional Oil and Gas that roughly filled the same function temporarily.

Figure 5.2 'Regulatory Roadmap' for shale gas (BEIS, 2019)
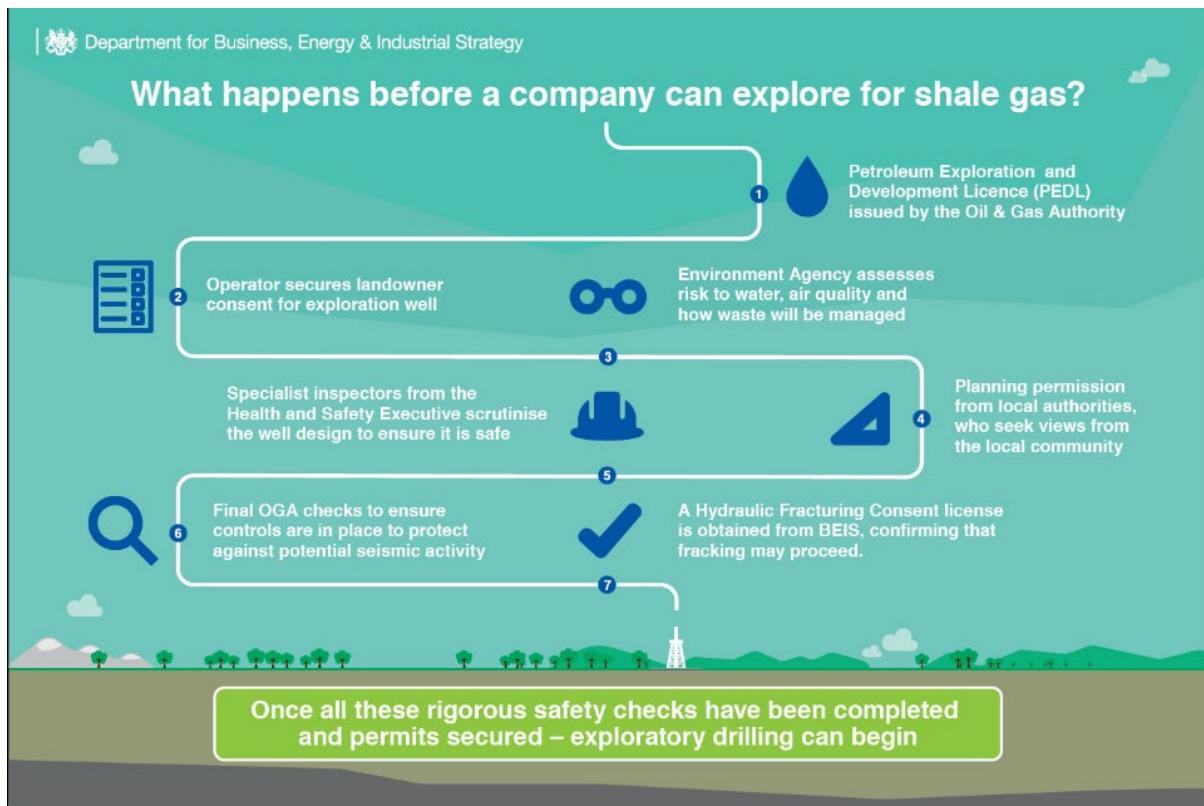
Different regulatory functions, including the local role for planning, are held by different bodies in a form of 'networked governance'. Hawkins (2015) argues that this framework risked leaving gaps, and this was a criticism raised by activists in my interviews and in planning decisions as we shall see in the following chapter. In contrast, each regulatory interviewee emphasized that this dispersed regulatory structure was the same for offshore extraction and multiple other areas of environmental regulation – fracking was no different.[18] The strength of regulation was an important element for the pro-fracking formation to establish, as the strength of regulation provided a reason why any documented problems in the deregulated U.S. would not be replicated in the U.K.

5.2.2 Shale gas as a 'bridge fuel'

The impact on greenhouse gas emissions of a new fracking industry was addressed in the Mackay and Stone (2013) report. Davey (2013) announced this report with a

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[18] Interviewees: Regulator 1, Regulator 2, Regulator 3

speech at the Royal Society where he made the "calm, rational, objective case for shale gas exploration" that distinguished the "realities" from the "myths". Davey argued that natural gas was in fact a "bridge" fuel that allowed a transition away from more polluting fossil fuels (like coal) to renewables, which had been the trend in the U.K. over previous decades. The same claim is made in the *Gas Generation Strategy* (Department for Energy and Climate Change, 2012). Natural gas fulfils the competing demands of 'keeping the lights on', keeping bills 'affordable' and a 'sustainable, low carbon future', as stated in both the speech and the strategy document. Fracking, according to the Mackay and Stone report, would produce less CO_2 than other forms of (imported) natural gas.[19]

Davey also cautioned against being overly optimistic about the economic prospects of shale, but he concludes by arguing that developing a shale industry is a "bridge" to a "zero carbon future" (Davey, 2013). He placed shale gas and renewables within the U.K.s extractive history:

 "From coal in the 18th and 19th Century Oil and gas in the 20th

And renewables in the 21st" (Davey, 2013)

His invocation was a strange one, in that coal was hugely significant in the U.K. right through the 20th century both economically and politically. That aside, his speech had a double effect of connecting energy to a British 'way of life' and engineering ingenuity as well as reinforcing the bridge idea – that the future is a neat transition through to renewables via gas. The 'bridge' or sometimes 'transition' element of the shale gas discourse -which Bomberg (2017b) identifies - articulated both the future of renewables and the historical embeddedness of fossil fuel production in 'keeping the lights on'. The 'bridge fuel' is therefore another key element of the pro-fracking discourse, which articulates a shale gas industry as a pragmatic, consensual middle ground between environment and economy.

There is then, a further articulation of the strength of U.K. regulation to maintain the safety of shale gas. and the articulation of gas as bridge fuel for a transition to a green future (Williams *et al.*, 2017; Drake, 2018) as a key element of the pro-fracking discursive formation. As we shall see, this anticipated the criticisms from the anti-

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[19] We will see in chapter 7 that the report's findings are later contested

fracking movement. Importantly, these elements were in tension with the move to go 'all out for shale' largely articulated by the Conservative part of the Coalition government.

5.2.3 All out for Shale and the Infrastructure Act

Davey was a Liberal Democrat Minister in a Coalition government with the Conservative party who took a less 'calm' and technocratic approach. For example, the Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, argued that:

"Fracking has become a national debate in Britain – and it's one that I'm determined to win. If we don't back this technology, we will miss a massive opportunity to help families with their bills and make our country more competitive. Without it, we could lose ground in the tough global race." (Cameron, 2013)

In the same article, he claimed that the regulatory framework was ""one of the most stringent in the world". He would later declare the U.K. was going "all out for shale" to create jobs and reduce bills (Watt, 2014). The speeches from Davey (cited above) cautioned against exaggerating the benefits of shale, yet other Ministers promoted the shale gas industry in increasingly confrontational and existential terms. As Bradshaw (2016: 173-4) shows, the government drew upon the high end estimates of lobbyists such as the Institute of Directors to claim that shale gas would provide 74,000 jobs and halve gas imports as well as co-commissioning research with industry groups to make similar economic claims. Cameron sets out the 'debate' to be 'won', taking a clear side within what is a divisive issue and constructing the problem as one of communicating this information (the economic value of shale, the safety of the regulation) to the public. The economic potential of shale is a third element of the pro-fracking discursive formation, with shale gas articulated as a huge economic opportunity (Bomber, 2017b). The 'economic opportunity' of shale gas structures the formation as regulatory change and policy was increasingly directed towards securing this opportunity.

The government going 'all out for shale' is exemplified in a leaked letter in September 2014 from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne. The letter instructed Ministers to ensure regulators were playing a reassuring role to the public. At a time when regulatory agencies' overall budgets were being cut, the letter asked Ministers

to "have the necessary skills and resources in place to publicly defend the robustness and safety of the regulatory regime" (Carrington, 2015). Regulation had to be publicly articulated as important in contrast to deregulatory narratives also utilised by the same government around this time. In support of the claim in the letter, each interviewee from the regulatory sector claimed that their fracking work was well-resourced and funded despite government departments and agencies facing significant budget cuts.[20] These claims, along with the leaked letter, suggest that the government was willing to direct resources to the promotion of fracking even if this took away from other regulatory activities.

As Cotton (2017) argues, the letter also showed the government ensuring the 'all out for shale' message became part of the Infrastructure Act (2015) by removing several existing or potential barriers to fracking. This Act affirms the provisions of the previous Petroleum Act (1998), making it the responsibility of government ministers to "maximise economic recovery of UK petroleum" (Infrastructure Act, 2015: p.6, S.41) despite a possible conflict with the responsibility for emissions reductions under the Climate Change Act (2008).

In terms of removing barriers, the Act introduced a new definition of 'associated hydraulic fracturing' based on volume of water which was significantly more limited than the definition used in the reports commissioned during the moratorium (the new definition was derived from a non-peer-reviewed policy paper). The Act also permitted horizontal drilling underneath people's property and National Parks without the landowner's permission (Whitton *et al.*, 2017). The introduction of the clause on drilling under land was no coincidence. In July 2014, the first planning application for a fracking site since the moratorium (in West Sussex) was turned down because of traffic and access issues. During the contestation of this site, the surrounding landowners and the South Downs National Park had argued they had not given permission for the company, Celtique Energy, to frack under their land (Webster, 2014). The legislative changes to drilling permission prevented such a problem occurring in the future.

The government also introduced subtle yet significant changes to planning policy to go 'all out for shale'. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MCHLG,

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[20] Interviewees: Regulator 1, Regulator 2, Regulator 3

2012) set out three stages of gas exploration that planning authorities had to consider separately: Exploration, Appraisal and Production. This meant that companies could initially only apply for planning permission for an exploratory site. By doing so they did not have to provide evidence of the future impacts of production, which would then be the subject of a further application once a site was in place. I will show in Chapter 6 the limiting effects of this change within a planning decision, minimising particular impacts (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions). The NPPF changes introduced limits to what could be taken from the wider pro and anti-discursive formations into planning decisions.

The *Planning Practice Guidance for Onshore Oil and Gas* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013) went further, fixing the pro-fracking element that the U.K. has robust regulation in spite of parallel deregulatory moves. It limits discussions of the regulatory process, stating that:

"... the focus of the planning system should be on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impacts of those uses, rather than any control processes, health and safety issues or emissions themselves where these are subject to approval under other regimes. Minerals planning authorities should assume that these non-planning regimes will operate effectively." (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013: 7)

This section, like much of the document, re-affirms paragraphs of the NPPF and the wider regulatory regime, limiting the focus of a planning decision to local impacts outside of the statutory responsibility of other regulatory bodies. The articulation of the regulatory "domain" (the general regulatory environment) fits with what Stokes (2016) argues is characteristic of the regulatory approach to fracking. The general regulatory 'domain' for shale is taken as the 'most robust in the world' (Cameron's words, above), whereas other more specific features of regulation like drilling under national parks are to be changed to promote regulatory flexibility (Ibid). The planning guidance asserts the robustness of the regulatory 'domain', fixing what can be said (or heard) in planning decisions about the general regulatory context for shale gas.

The government approach is therefore somewhat contradictory. Davey set out the various expert-led bodies of networked governance that would regulate the

environmental and social aspect of fracking, and yet in Cameron's article the 'global race' and making the 'country more competitive' are the motivations for pushing forward. The earthquakes (or seismic events) meant that new regulations on seismicity were necessary but once these were asserted it meant that the 'need' for fracking could be pursued within this expert-led framework. There was a positive assertion in the pro-fracking formation of the role of regulators as a means of promoting the shale industry; whilst the government was simultaneously legislating for deregulation for shale gas (and oil).

 I have introduced three elements of the pro-fracking formation. The first is an assertion of the quality of the regulatory 'domain', fixed within the planning guidance and framed within techno-managerial language within the Davey speech. The second is that shale gas is a 'bridge fuel' to a green future. The third, is the 'all out for shale' as an economic opportunity element, which is in tension with the first as it supports the specific adjustments of regulatory mechanisms and the NPPF to support the fracking industry, emphasised by the leaked letter from Osborne.

 I will now cover how the anti-fracking formation developed in response.

5.3   THE ANTI-FRACKING MOVEMENT

The anti-fracking movement emerged from a series of local conflicts which became national news, and these early conflicts showed shared identities as well as an identifiable discursive formation being developed. I will touch briefly on two of these early struggles, and through this begin to identify key elements of the anti-fracking formation.

In the summer following the lifting of the moratorium in 2013, Cuadrilla Resources decided to drill for oil in Balcombe in West Sussex. They were not proposing to frack the site, but rather to conduct some exploratory work using conventional, vertical drilling. The company had actually received planning permission in 2010 and had begun construction that year, though Cuadrilla had been ambivalent on whether they would begin drilling. In May 2013, they informed the council of their intention (Cairney, 2015). The company had obtained permission for the site without an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), though the Environment Agency required them to apply for a Mining Waste permit before they were allowed to drill. Balcombe

Parish Council had written to Cuadrilla to inform them that the vast majority of residents did not want to see drilling resumed, fracking or otherwise (Cairney, 2015). Nonetheless, drilling began in August 2013, the same month Cameron declared the need to go 'all out for shale'.

The Balcombe site saw the first major organised direct action against fracking in the U.K. Around 100 protesters blocked the road to stop a delivery lorry as its brake wires were cut. Over several weeks, the protest grew and the group 'Reclaim the Power' organised a 6-day camp with multiple direct actions, which attracted at its peak approximately 2000 people: 15 people were arrested and over 75 police officers were involved in policing the protests (BBC News, 2014b). Celebrities like Vivienne Westwood joined the protests, and Green Party MP Caroline Lucas was one of those arrested (BBC News, 2014b). West Sussex County Council eventually got a court order to remove the remaining protestors in October 2013, but by this time Cuadrilla announced that they found hydrocarbons and were ceasing drilling. It was estimated to have cost the police £4million (BBC News, 2014a).

As Hilson (2015: 180) argues, "Balcombe lit the touch-paper for the anti-fracking movement". High-profile environmentalists such as Lucas foregrounded a key element of the anti-fracking movement – the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Alongside this, local concerns about an industrial site and water contamination meant there was also substantial local opposition articulated (Hilson, 2015), though there was also antagonism from some local residents towards the arrival of "professional protestors" (BBC News, 2014b).

Just as the Balcombe protest came to an end, another site was contested at Barton Moss near Salford, Greater Manchester. The fracking company IGas began exploratory drilling works at the site in November 2013, and a protest camp was quickly formed to undertake a number of activities such as disrupting the traffic entering the site by 'slow walking' in front of vehicles (Jackson and Monk, 2014). Despite not receiving the same publicity as Balcombe, there were over 200 arrests. A report on the Barton Moss camp (which lasted until April 2014) by Jackson *et al.* (2019), highlighted claims from women that they had been sexually assaulted by police, and that 98% of arrests were for non-violent offences. Two studies (Jackson and Monk, 2014; Jackson *et al.*, 2019) concluded that the main concern of the police was to facilitate the operations of IGas at the expense of the right to protest.

Speed (2018) argues that the 'Battle of Barton Moss' was a further galvanising moment for the anti-fracking movement. Protestors used the symbolic as well as effective tactic of 'slow-walking'. The police could not initially find a reason to charge people for slow-walking, and as fracking companies tend to hire their equipment from contractors the mounting up of delays was a potential problem for them. Speed argues that the tactics utilised in the face of increasingly violent policing brought the support of activists and citizens across the local area:

"Those moments in front of the trucks at Barton Moss seemed collectively to form a space in which people with diverse backgrounds and biographies were united by their concerns over what fracking might do to our environment" (Speed, 2018: 145)

Slow-walking often involved protestors linking arms in front of vehicles entering the fracking site, forming a physical 'chain of equivalence' that linked concerned local residents with seasoned environmental activists. These initial protests opposed fracking on grounds of climate change impact as well as the damage it may do to the immediate environment and subsequent impacts on human health and wildlife. Just as important, was the antagonistic response from the police which constructed a visible (via TV and social media) connection between the state and the company. Slow-walking, in particular, meant the police had to create reasons to stop people doing something that was legal in order to facilitate speedy access to the fracking site.

Beyond the protests, the anti-fracking movement also developed through less confrontational means. Anti-fracking groups were established across the licenced areas wherever fracking sites were proposed, with over 100 grassroots groups by mid-2014. Groups organised town hall meetings to give talks on the potential dangers of fracking as well as screenings of the film *Gasland* that highlights the impacts on communities in the U.S. particularly of water contamination and the industrialisation of rural areas (Mazur, 2016). The film was mentioned 171 times in UK newspapers between January 2010 and December 2011 (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014) and had been viewed nearly 2.5 million times on You Tube by 2014 (Jaspal *et al.*, 2014).

Emerging local groups were linked together through the Frack-Off network and number of other national groups such as Talk Fracking (founded by Joe Corre, the

son of Vivien Westwood), and more latterly Frack Free United (from 2016). These groups articulated the particular problems with fracking, and addressed the national government and media more directly, in association with established NGO's like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. These groups tended to articulate a clear 'keep it in the ground' element of the anti-fracking discourse, which foregrounded the impact of fracking on climate change, fugitive methane emissions from the process adding to the impact of using the gas and the potential for water contamination (Cotton, 2015). NGOs like Friends of the Earth and 350.org as well as existing activist groups drove these initial protests.

They did so in coalition with local residents and many first-time activists. Localised problems of water contamination and consequent risks to health were emphasised by activists (Hilson, 2015: 185). Fracking was said to be risk to property and also to house prices, alongside the attendant problems of industrial sites e.g. traffic, noise and damage to rural life. The focus on the local could be limiting, but the protest sites represented an attempt to link the local and global scales together (Nyberg *et al.*, 2018). Alongside the 'keep it in the ground' element then, there were a series of localised concerns that emphasized the various localised *risks* of the fracking process - often emphasising the novelty of fracking and the possible regulatory gaps (Cotton *et al.*, 2014; Cotton, 2015; Hilson, 2015; Bomberg, 2017b).

The anti-fracking movement therefore linked local residents with environmentalists, as well as finding other allies such as conservation charities who raised concerns of the impact on rural and countryside and formed the 'fit to frack' coalition.[21] It is not appropriate to say they were part of the anti-fracking *movement* as such, but they were highly sceptical of the need for the industry and concerned about its wildlife impacts (particularly through water contamination). This coalition produced a report (Moore *et al.*, 2014) that articulates the possible impacts on wildlife that they believe regulation is failing to cover – particularly in protected areas. These organisations have memberships which extend beyond the areas impacted and to those concerned with more than energy or climate change issues. Their interventions helped to fix the element that fracking posed multiple and hard to manage risks to the local

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[21] Comprised of: National Trust, Angling Trust, RSPB, the Salmon & Trout Association, The Wildlife Trusts and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

environment as well linking them to larger scale problems such as climate change (Moore *et al.*, 2014: 42).

Several studies have looked to characterise the anti-fracking discursive formation during this time, in terms of its arguments or storylines. Bomberg (2017b) argues that the anti-fracking movement developed a 'threat storyline' that highlights environmental impact (on water, wildlife, seismicity), fossil fuel 'lock-in' by the industry and an emerging critique of government as closely linked with the fossil fuel industry and willing to over-ride *local* democracy to facilitate fracking. Cotton *et al.* (2014) argue similarly that the anti-fracking movement contests government and industry claims about the safety of shale gas, whilst arguing government are simply ignoring the climate issue by not acknowledging the role of methane leakage and its GHG emissions impact (Bradshaw, 2016).

Through this brief discussion of the emergent shale gas movement, I have introduced important elements of the anti-fracking discursive formation. First, is what we can call the 'keep it in the ground' position, which is against fracking per se on the basis that it is adding to the total of fossil fuels being burned in the world and was articulated in the first protests at Balcombe. Second, I have touched on some local concerns to fracking sites, particularly the potential impact on water and the industrialisation of rural areas. Third, there are also questions of human rights and local democracy raised in the staging of the camps and contestations with the police. The following section will expand further on the linkages between these elements within the respective discursive formations, identifying the key subject positions and nodal points of the formations.

5.4   THE 'PRO' AND 'ANTI' FORMATIONS

The preceding sections set out the development of two distinct discursive formations that look to articulate what 'fracking' means in the U.K. It is important to understand that the two develop in relation to one another, e.g. the zealous support for the industry from government ministers gave some credence to environmentalists arguing that the government was taking risks with safety. The protests in turn push Ministers to take a stronger position against what Davey articulated as 'myths' about fracking. As well as establishing their own articulations of what fracking *is*, both sets

of actors also contested the other position. Some of these contestations are almost directly contradictory – the government argue fracking is safe within the robust regulation, and the anti-frackers argue there are gaps and significant risks.

As well as contesting what 'fracking' means, there were also contestations over identity. What I will focus on here are firstly the attempts to link the discursive formations to particular geographical identities or 'subject positions' – of 'local community' and the 'nation'. With these signifiers established, I then set out the 'pro' and 'anti' formations and the nodal points around which the formations are structured, laying out the distinct positions and their antagonisms which will be developed further through Chapter 6. I then move to analyse the logics of planning articulated in Phase 1.

5.4.1 The Local Signifier: Part of the Community

The government and industry looked to address the growing 'public relations' problem with shale by introducing a series of 'community benefits'. Local councils would receive 100% of the business rates from the fracking ventures (possibly up to £1.7millon per site). The industry body U.K. Onshore Oil and Gas (UKOOG) encouraged companies to sign up for their voluntary 'community charter' which involved them giving 1% of their revenues to the 'community' as well as a lump sum of £100,000 per well site (UKOOG, No Date). These benefits formed part of an attempt to develop a 'social licence to operate' (Bradshaw and Waite, 2017) which extended beyond legal and regulatory permissions. It is important to remember that these benefits are offered during a period of 'austerity'. The buy-in of the local 'community' becomes linked to funding for local services that were being cut year on year. The articulation of these community benefits is an element of the pro-fracking formation that shows that the economic benefits were available to the local community, that the companies were on the side of the community.

Bradshaw and Waite (2017) show that the 'community benefits' were articulated by local anti-fracking groups as a 'bribe', and instead helped to fix the element of the anti-fracking formation that the government and industry were too close together and needed to buy community support. The promise of financial rewards for fracking

did not seem to have significant impact, as survey research into the attitudes of people across the U.K. show both a sharp increase in knowledge of and decreased support for fracking in the period during/after the Balcombe and Barton Moss protests (O'Hara et al, 2015). The majority of people asked thought the potential risks outweighed the potential benefits (Whitmarsh *et al.*, 2015). Partridge *et al.* (2017) conducted focus groups across the U.K. and the U.S., and they found that there was a growing scepticism toward the government in both countries for their short-termism, and over whether shale gas really would contribute to GHG reductions.

The appeal to being on the side of the 'local community' was hard to reconcile with the government's national level support. Indeed, the locations of potential fracking sites largely in the North and Midlands allowed anti-frackers to argue that fracking was in part a Westminster government forcing a dirty industry on areas that had less social and economic value. This sentiment was captured when Conservative peer Lord Howell said that fracking is suitable for the North East as it is "desolate" (BBC News, 2013), a term that was jumped upon by activists and made into a T-shirt for protestors.

In contrast, the anti-fracking movement is more successful in articulating the 'local community' as the key subject position within their formation. The establishment of local campaign groups, as we shall see in detail in Chapter 6, composed of residents and local representatives meant there was greater legitimacy to claims of the 'anti' position having local representation. As Beebeejaun (2019) argues, the 'local' was also a limitation within planning decisions and on the more radical claims of the movement, however it is a key identity to articulate in planning system ostensibly built around 'localism'.

5.4.2 National Signifiers: Energy Independence and English Isolation

The pro-fracking discourse tended to draw more on national signifiers to defend fracking. The government increasingly made a much harder case for shale gas along nationalist and geo-political lines. During Phase 1, there was growing geo-political tension as Russia annexed Crimea and supported what was effectively a civil war in

Ukraine. These conflicts led to the suggestion that President Putin would 'turn off the taps' which supplied the U.K. and Europe with gas (Bomberg, 2017a; Nyberg *et al.*, 2018). Domestic gas production therefore becomes a way to protect the nation, and, given the decline in North Sea supplies fracking was presented as way to achieve 'energy security' both geo-politically and economically. The following example is from a House of Lords Economic Affairs Commitee (2014: 5) report:

"Patterns of global trade in energy seem likely to change, reducing dependence on the Middle East and Russia and promoting energy security through greater diversity of supply. The impact on prices is harder to predict. Gas prices, unlike oil prices, are regional rather than global. World price cuts on the US scale are unlikely. But abundant new shale gas supplies are bound to have a restraining effect on prices."

The language in this report echoes the U.S., using the language of 'energy independence' (Sica and Huber, 2017) to over-ride local concerns. Within the literature on fracking, this tends to be thought of as 'energy security', i.e. that shale gas can provide a safe supply of energy in the face of geopolitical threat and this is no doubt part of how the pro-fracking formation articulates the problem. My own interpretation is that it is better understood as 'Energy independence' (Sica and Huber, 2017), perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, because statements like the one above used the threat from Russia to justify on-shoring of production. The language here is of de-globalising, of protectionism, of domestic supply over the world market. Fracking is connected with national security, but importantly it is to be understood as an enabler of greater independence from the rest of the world, an idea that was shown to be important within the EU referendum and subsequent Brexit debates. The pro-fracking formation drew on the growing importance of British sovereignty as a way of articulating fracking as a fuel that provided a 'secure' supply of gas.

At the same time though, English isolation on shale gas became increasingly evident as countries across Europe moved to ban fracking (e.g. France, Netherlands, Romania). Within the E.U., the U.K. government lobbied according to a 'core script' with allies in Poland and Hungary to prevent the European Commission bringing forward any significant legislation on fracking, particularly on water contamination and seismic activity. The U.K. threatened to veto any new restrictions to fracking (Carrington, 2014). The lobbying effort was one of the 'asks' in the leaked letter from

Osborne above and argued for in the House of Lords committee report on the basis that the U.K. regulations were strong enough and world-leading.

Within the U.K., respective national governments decided to introduce moratoriums on fracking within their own national parliaments. The Scottish Parliament announced a moratorium on fracking in January 2015 (Scottish Government, 2019), to begin a process of evidence gathering and public consultation to inform a defined policy on fracking. A month later, the Welsh Senedd introduced a similar moratorium, with some allowance for exploratory drilling (Deans, 2015). The means by which a moratorium was achieved was through the devolved governments' role as planning authorities. Any local authority would have to give considerable weight to the moratorium from the devolved government, deterring firms from applying for planning permission. In September 2015, the Northern Ireland government included a presumption against fracking it its policy framework, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (Department for Environment, 2015).

The threat of the E.U. veto and the devolved government decisions meant that the Westminster government were increasingly isolated in their support of fracking. Anti-frackers could point to the decisions made in Scotland, Wales and the EU and ask why the same precautionary approach did not hold in England. The rhetoric on fracking, as seen in the lobbying operation, became even more exceptionalist and a peculiarly English obsession that nonetheless used 'Britain' as a signifier (as is often the case in English politics). Through the Davey speech, the article from Cameron, the House of Lords committee report there is a consistent linkage of shale gas to ensuring security and stability for the nation – in response to geopolitical threats and global price rises. The 'nation' then, is perhaps a clearer way of explaining the subject position of the pro-fracking formation as it covers the slippery use of 'Britain' by political actors. Shale gas is linked to the security of the nation.

I will now set out fully the anti and pro formations. I draw on the elements and subject positions discussed so far, and flesh this out with other elements. These initial sketches of the discourse are intended to give the reader a sense of the emergent discursive formations in this early phase, with the more precise details to follow in the next chapter.

5.4.3 The pro-fracking formation

Table 5.1 summarises the pro-fracking discursive formation in Phase 1. It includes various elements that have been discussed above – the bridge fuel, energy independence, the world leading regulations, the need to win the global race. These are linked with the identity of the nation around a nodal point of 'economic opportunity'. I will unpack these linkages a little further.

Table 5.1 Pro-fracking formation in Phase 1

Feature	Pro-fracking discursive formation
Nodal Point	Economic Opportunity
Subject position (identity)	Nation, Independence
Social Actors	Central Government (U.K.), Industry lobbyists (UKOOG), new companies e.g. Cuadrilla
Resources	International capital, state spending, right to veto in EU
Chain of equivalence	**Economic Opportunity** –– world leading regulations – job creation – winning the 'global race' –All out for Shale–Bridge fuel – energy independence – Community benefits – keep the lights on

The pro-fracking formation was structured around the nodal point of the economic opportunity of fracking. The Davey speech and statement also made the 'bridge fuel' case for shale. The House of Lords report emphasised the importance of 'energy independence' in the face of geopolitical instability, but these were elements that are much more contested and open. The more fixed moment that was not as contested as heavily was the economic value of a new shale industry. Whether it be in terms of jobs, the value of the shale gas or the value to the exchequer – the economic value of shale structured the other elements of the discourse and made risks seem less substantial in light of the potential economic gains that were articulated.

The other elements and moments are given their meaning by 'economic opportunity'. A great deal of effort was made to articulate fracking as safe (Bomberg, 2017b; Bomberg, 2017a), through reference to the quality of UK regulation as well as the

rolling out of the Traffic Light System and other expert recommendations. As the leaked letter showed, the government understood that they had to consciously articulate the value of regulation in face of mounting public criticism. Further, the government worked with industry to attempt to get community 'buy-in' by offering a series of (economic) community benefits. Together, these elements are fixed around the nodal point of 'economic opportunity', each exemplifying this central claim about fracking: the community benefits allow citizens a share of the profits, the regulations mean that no one needs to worry that the opportunity will come at too high a cost.

The pro-fracking position is one that is increasingly associated with Britain's national wealth and energy independence. The use of the 'British' signifier is a somewhat confusing one, in that shale gas fracking was specifically an English industry once the devolved administrations rejected the process, but one can could say the same about 'Brexit' which was largely carried by English votes. Huber (2013) argues more generally that, in the U.S., oil production and consumption are regularly connected with a 'way of life', and the pro-fracking formation made similar connections with gas and the need to 'keep the lights on' in the face of global geo-political threats and as part of an energy transition in need of a 'bridge fuel'.

In terms of the actors, there is a strong collaboration between the State and industry – perhaps exemplified by Lord Browne's chairmanship of Cuadrilla whilst being part of the legislature and having a specific job in the Coalition government. It is important that at least the executive part of the UK government is pro-fracking - that on one side of this discursive conflict is the power and resources government has. It puts the relative autonomy of planning under significant pressure, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

5.4.4 The anti-fracking formation

The anti-fracking formation in Phase 1 has two related chains that reflect the coalition of actors. The first is what we can loosely call an environmentalist position, of a basic demand to keep fossil fuels in the ground. The second is of the various localised risks of the process to those potentially affected by sites. I will expand on Table 5.2 before concluding this chapter.

Table 5.2 Anti-fracking formation in Phase 1

Feature	Anti-fracking formation
Nodal Points	Keep it in the Ground, Risky process
Subject Position	Local Community
Social Actors	Localised campaign groups, celebrity support, Green party, Frack off network, 'Fit to frack' coalition, Talk Fracking, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, 350.org
Resources	Time given by activists, NGO support, one wealthy backer
Chain of equivalence	**Keep it in the ground –** Climate change commitments - renewables needed instead - fossil fuel lock in – **Risky process –** Water contamination – weak/not joined up regulation – health impacts – wildlife impact – house prices – heavy policing

There are two (related) nodal points to the anti-fracking discourse that structure the emergent discursive formations: 'Keep it in the Ground' and the multiple articulations of fracking as a 'Risky process'. The first is a harder environmental position, to 'keep it in the ground' with 'it' being any new fossil fuel source. This nodal point brings together the tension between the government pursuing fracking and (legally binding) commitments to emissions targets, as well as a more general claim that renewables are not being prioritised and more extraction will 'lock in' fossil fuels. This chain contests the 'bridge fuel' claims above.

The second nodal point is the more general issue of the process being 'risky' and following from that the government are not being cautious enough. The 'risk' covers a multitude of concerns, from the impact on drinking water, health, house prices and agriculture. Importantly, this also brings other actors beyond environmentalists and political activists into the conflict, such as the 'fit to frack' coalition and local residents either as individuals or as part of either regional (e.g. Frack Free Lancashire) or site-specific campaign groups which I will cover in Chapter 6. It is this chain that directly contests the claims made by government over safety and community benefits.

The two nodal points were also linked together. The anti-fracking protests at Balcombe and Barton Moss articulated local problems in connection with global

impacts e.g. local water pollution and increasing greenhouse gases are products of the same 'dirty' fossil fuel industry. What runs through both points is that the government were more interested in pushing through a new industry than the local impacts or climate change (Hilson, 2015; Bomberg, 2017b). In both cases, the government and industry are articulated as either complacent or callous in prioritising economic benefits over social and environmental costs. At this point though, it would not be right to say there is one cohering nodal point which the whole formation is structured by, as the anti-fracking formation is still relatively new and bringing together different actors.

Both these reconstructions of the 'pro' and 'anti' formations are somewhat tentative. They provide more of a rough sketch for the subsequent chapters' analysis to build upon. What these two formations show, though, are two sets of actors articulating different and conflicting conceptions of fracking. Bomberg (2017b) argues that the anti-fracking position was actually more successful than the 'pro' in this early period, in part because anti-fracking actors were able to plausibly articulate themselves as part of, or supporting, the communities impacted by shale sites. In contrast, the government's zealous support of the industry suggested they may be trying to push shale gas through at the expense of residents and obligations to reduce GHG emissions.

The next step is to analyse the logics of planning practice that the reconstructed case study reveals. In this Phase, the focus is not on actual planning decisions as in the next two chapters, but rather on the development of a planning-regulatory framework in legislation and policy and the challenge to this from anti-frackers. Therefore, what I can show at this point is an analysis of how the planning-regulatory process is meant to function.

5.5 A POST-POLITICAL RESPONSE?

The chapter has shown the initial development of the planning-regulatory framework for shale gas. The Government modified the regulatory approach to minerals extraction and the practice of planning to support shale gas fracking, which was contested by the anti-fracking movement. I will expand on the government response,

and the extent to which it is indicative of a post-politics by taking each logic and practice from my analytical framework in turn to answer the question:

How did the State respond to the political contestation of shale gas? To what extent is this indicative of a 'post-politics'?

The *techno-managerial social practices* of planning and other regulatory institutions were foregrounded within the pro-fracking discourse. The planning-regulatory process was said to be the 'most stringent in the world', and the reason why citizens need not be concerned about immediate environmental damage. That said, the leaked letter shows a level of executive intervention happening behind the scenes, though this sort of government support is also typical of the post-political. In this Phase, government support for fracking sat alongside the emphasis on technocratic governance processes in planning and regulation independently assessing sites. The *Planning Practice Guidance* goes further, stating that the regulatory process cannot be questioned in planning, reinforcing the expert-led independence of the process. A new arms-length regulator, the OGA, was introduced adding to the network of governance bodies.

The problem for the government is their increasingly enthusiastic support for the industry. The stated need to 'win' the debate and behind closed doors methods of supporting shale gas undermine the presumed independence that techno-managerialism implicitly relies upon. The techno-managerial practice of the planning-regulatory process is foregrounded in this phase as the reason why fracking is safe; however, the context of departmental budget cuts leads activists to question whether regulators in particular are as strong as the government and industry claimed. The planning-regulatory process as set out follows a techno-managerial social logic though there are early signs of this being contested.

In terms of the *political logic*, the initial government response to the earthquakes is to present shale gas fracking as a win-win solution to economic, environmental and even social problems. Gas is the 'bridge fuel' to the renewable future, and whilst risks are acknowledged the expertise of the British state and its specific regulatory institutions are invoked to dismiss concerns about more direct and immediate impacts than global warming. Shale gas is articulated as a form of 'sustainable development', providing social environmental and economic benefits. The Davey

speech in particular captures this: shale gas is the choice of the pragmatic environmentalist finding a consensus somewhere between 'keep it in the ground' and total de-regulation. This is a logic of difference which excludes a strong environmentalist view whilst claiming to also exclude another extreme and largely imagined position that "shale gas is the sole answer to all our energy problems" (Davey, 2012).

The emphasis on winning the debate for shale gas, however, indicates less of a 'win-win' approach to framing government policy, with Cameron and Osborne taking a more antagonistic approach to the consensual language of Davey's speech. Clearly, the policing at the sites was highly confrontational. There are antagonisms that are developing between the two formations, particularly on the policy and regulatory approach to risk which does not satisfy a broad range of concerns linked together within the anti-fracking discourse by the 'fit to frack' coalition. The attempt to present the shale gas fracking policy and legislation as consensual was disrupted by the initial protests.

Within Phase 1, the *fantasmic logic of participation* is articulated as the key legitimising aspect of planning. The 'regulatory road map' image (Figure 5.2) shows that planning was supposed to seek views from the local community, even if the specifically 'local' issues are limited to the impacts of fracking sites on residents. The government recognised that fracking is not popular; yet also recognised that planning was the place in which discussion ought to happen over the legitimate 'local' issues. Despite early signs of local residents rejecting sites in Balcombe and Barton Moss alongside longer term activists, the regulatory process set out there would be consultation (through e.g. Environmental Risk Assessment) in the planning-regulatory process to allow the public to have their say.

There were some signs of a possible 'state of exception' to legitimise more direct interventions which were not fully developed. Articulating shale gas as a national project, which was increasingly one in which England is isolated in pursuing, suggested a certain exceptionalism. Additionally, invoking geo-political threats suggested shale gas was a much-needed solution to an energy crisis. These were, however, not fully developed as the pro-fracking formation focused on the positive economic impacts of a shale gas industry and the government used this as the

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primary rationale for pushing ahead rather than drawing upon a crisis or exceptional circumstance to legitimate planning-regulatory interventions.

Overall, the state response showed the features of a post-political regime. The techno-managerial expertise, networked governance and independence of the planning-regulatory bodies are emphasised as a set of world leading practices that would ensure U.S. experience of fracking would not be imported to the U.K. Government and industry collaborated to provide 'community benefits' to austerity hit localities to build an exclusionary consensus against those demanding newly recoverable hydrocarbons be kept in the ground, and shale gas was articulated as a pragmatic 'bridge fuel' that balanced the need for energy with environmental concerns. As this final section has pointed out, however, the challenge of the anti-fracking movement as well as the government's own enthusiasm for a new extractive industry meant that there were challenges to the legitimacy of the planning-regulatory practice the government set out for shale gas.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has shown how the Government set out a modified planning-regulatory process for shale gas in response to the earthquakes in Lancashire. It has shown that a pro-fracking formation articulated shale as an 'economic opportunity', the risks from which would be mitigated by strong regulation and 'community benefits'. Shale gas would be a 'bridge fuel' that secured a measure of 'energy independence'. The pro-fracking formation was contested by an emerging anti-fracking movement which protested potential fracking sites and developed a discursive formation based around the need to keep shale gas and oil in the ground as well as the multiple risks from the fracking process e.g. water contamination.

I characterise the initial response as one that fits within the practices of a post-political regime. The techno-managerial practice of the planning-regulatory process was emphasised as a bulwark against problems in the U.S., and whilst the contestation became increasingly antagonistic an exclusionary consensus was constructed around the notion of the 'bridge fuel' and participatory practice was articulated as important in the planning-regulatory process. As the next chapter

shows however, the antagonism between the two formations began to disrupt the post-political regime.

6 PHASE 2: LOCAL CONTESTATIONS AND CHALLENGES TO THE POST-POLITICAL REGIME (2014-16)

The previous chapter argued that the initial response to fracking from the State was a broadly post-political one, albeit with some antagonistic and exclusionary positioning from the government as a key actor within the pro-fracking discourse. This chapter analyses decisions by two councils, and a subsequent appeal inquiry into the shale gas applications rejected by one of these councils. These decisions follow the passing of the Infrastructure Act (2015) and the formation of the planning-regulatory process the government claimed would deliver safe and sustainable shale gas in the U.K.

The first two decisions were initially made at the same time by Lancashire County Council, on two sites at Preston New Road (PNR) and Roseacre Wood (RW) and they were widely seen as a test case for shale gas fracking. When the council rejected both applications, it came as a surprise to most observers. An appeal inquiry followed, at which PNR was granted planning permission and RW was subject to a further inquiry limited to issues of traffic and access. The third decision, which immediately followed the joint appeal inquiry, was over a site in Kirby Misperton in North Yorkshire (KM8). The local council granted permission in this case.

This chapter will take the local authority decisions in turn in 6.1 and 6.2 as two local case studies (PNR and RW are analysed together in 6.1). Each section will describe the local context and the decision-making process. It will then detail key points of contestation in each decision to show the struggle to hegemonise elements of each discursive formation and then present the reconstructed anti and pro-fracking positions. Following this, the 'neutral' discursive formation is presented, alongside an analysis of how the 'pro' and 'anti' formations were treated through the planning process and how decision makers attempted to resolve contestations. Each of the local cases provides an analysis of the decision-making process in terms of logics.

 In 6.3, I analyse the appeal inquiry into the Lancashire decisions. 6.4 then provides an overall analysis of the shifting logics across Phase 2 using the analytical framework. The analysis in each section answers the second research question:

What logics underlie the decision making on shale gas? How are these 'logics' of planning practice articulated and challenged within the decision-making process?

I argue that the rejection of the PNR/RW applications dislocated the initial planning-regulatory framework set out in Chapter 5. In both local cases, I argue that a post-political regime for planning is still dominant; though in each case there are challenges to the consensual political logic and the fantasy of participation. This chapter details these challenges and shows that a post-political regime was a barrier to the anti-fracking movement and that the planning process was generally accepting of the pro-fracking position.

The decision by councillors to use their discretionary powers to reject PNR, however, prompted a knee-jerk reaction from the government who intervened into the planning process to support shale gas through written ministerial statements which also impacted the KM8 decision. These statements contain a critique of the post-political regime and represent an executive intervention which anti-fracking groups articulated as anti-democratic.

6.1   LOCAL CASE STUDY 1: PRESTON NEW ROAD AND ROSEACRE WOOD - THE EPICENTRE OF THE FRACKING CONTEST

The Preston New Road (PNR) decision is the most important in the English fracking story. The government had established the legislative and regulatory framework that they argued would allow for safe exploration and production of shale gas and with that the economic benefits of the industry. PNR represented an ideal site for the industry. When it came to the two decisions in Lancashire, there was national attention on the local authority and a broad expectation that at least PNR would be accepted even if Roseacre Wood (RW) was not. Instead, both sites were rejected.

This section shows that the anti-fracking groups were able to articulate a discursive formation that linked the local together with the global. In spite of a techno-managerial logic disrupting much of the anti-fracking position, the anti-fracking groups articulated a chain of equivalence that encouraged local councillors to reject PNR, against the Planning Officer's advice, by using the discretionary space within the process. The pro-fracking position, backed by the government, is largely accepted through the process.

This section therefore shows a challenge to the post-political regime, insofar as it is unable to legitimately deliver development. The analysis finds that the logics of the post-political are still dominant; but the regime faces a moment of dislocation in the appeal on both these decisions which I turn to in 6.3. The following unpacks the Lancashire case study, focusing on points of contestation between the anti and pro formations and how these formations are then treated in the decision-making. From this reconstruction of this local case study, I begin to identify the logics of the practices of planning.

6.1.1 Context and Planning Process

The two sites are located in Lancashire between Blackpool and Preston, and within a few miles of the Preese Hall site where the earthquakes occurred in 2011 (Figure 6.1). The area is predominantly a rural one, though the Preston New Road (PNR) site is approximately 3 miles from the edge of Blackpool. The city of Preston is just outside the image in Figure 6.1 to the east, to the north east is the Forest of Bowland (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and to the north Morecombe Bay and the Lake District. To the south is the River Ribble, the mouth of which has a number of tourist seaside towns extending down the coast from Blackpool as well as a nature reserve. The PNR site is close to the small town of Kirkham and Wesham, and both sites have a number of villages and hamlets nearby. Figure 6.2 shows the completed PNR site.

Cuadrilla applied to Lancashire County Council for four separate planning permissions,[22] two for the sites and two for a combined total of 179 monitoring arrays within a 4-mile radius of each site. Each exploratory site could have up to four wells each (though not all might be required), with horizontal wells extending up to a 2km radius. The applications were explicitly for 'exploratory' work; further permission would have been required to move to full production.

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[22]I am not covering the monitoring array sites which were separate applications, as they are really incidental to the fracking sites (you would not build the arrays if you did not have the sites). Strangely, the Roseacre Wood arrays were approved as there was no grounds to reject, but PNR array application was refused.

Figure 6.1- Map of Fylde, Lancashire with my text added (Source: Frack off Website)
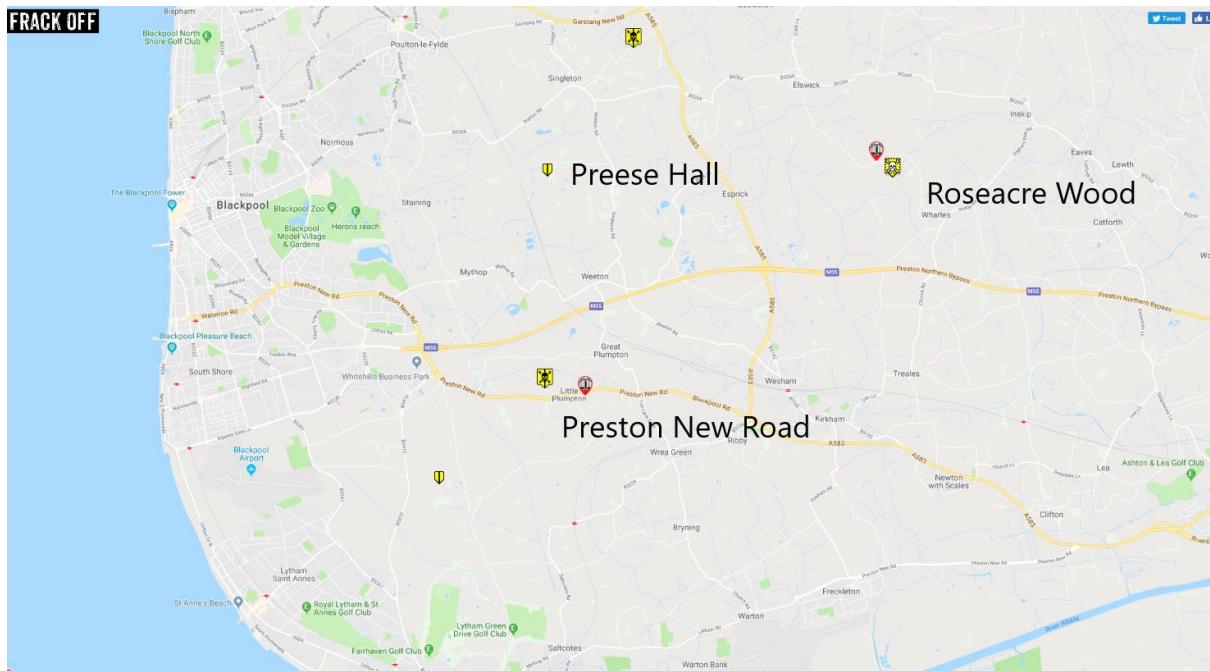
The applications cover all the above ground site, the drilling and construction of the borehole, and the fracking process of injecting the fluid, extracting gas, 'flaring' the excess gas (burning it) and the storage and removal of the wastewater. The definition of development from the 1947 Act includes what is "under the land", though the *Planning Practice Guidance for Onshore Oil and Gas* states that more or less all the subsurface activity is the responsibility of Department for Energy and Climate Change (now Business Energy and Industrial Strategy), the Environment Agency or the Health and Safety Executive. The permitting and regulatory processes from these bodies are included in the planning process. However, as I showed in Chapter 5, the guidance means that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should assume that these processes work effectively.

The applications from Cuadrilla for PNR and RW were published by Lancashire County Council in June 2014, followed by the usual process of public consultation. Public meetings were held with Cuadrillla and representatives from the regulatory bodies. The Development Control Committee of 15 local councillors who would ultimately decide on the applications visited the sites (Lancashire County Council, 2015b). Anti-fracking groups mobilised, holding their own meetings, campaigning across the local area and lobbying county councillors (Szolucha, 2016).

Figure 6.2 : Top: Image of the complete PNR site from nearby field by Ros Wills
(Source: Hayhurst, 2019d)
Bottom: Image of PNR site from Preston New Road, by Gareth Fearn

The council delayed making a decision from October 2014 (within the statutory timeframe) to January 2015 (Hayhurst, 2020b). In January 2015 the sites were granted their environmental permits from the Environment Agency, however the planning officer recommended rejecting both sites – Roseacre Wood for noise and traffic impacts and Preston New Road for the noise impact alone (Hayhurst, 2020b). Cuadrilla requested more time which the council granted on the 28th of January 2015. The decisions were moved to a committee meeting in June 2015, and in the interim Cuadrilla proposed a sound barrier for PNR and RW as well as an updated traffic plan for RW and further consultations took place.

The final decision was slated for the 25th of June. Roseacre Wood was straightforwardly rejected on the grounds of the traffic impact. For PNR, the planning officer was satisfied with the noise mitigation from Cuadrilla and recommended approval. Some of the councillors disagreed, and there was at first a motion to reject the application that contained 5 potential reasons to refuse permission (Lancashire County Council, 2015a). The planning officer said in the committee meeting that three of the reasons were clearly not reasonable (in planning terms), and the Committee voted to exclude the press and public to hear legal advice from a QC (Queens Counsel, a senior lawyer/advocate) via phone (Ibid). Upon returning, a motion was proposed by committee member to reject PNR on the basis that it would negatively impact the landscape and visual amenity (Lancashire County Council, 2015b). This motion lost.

The Committee then resolved that the legal advice the officers had received be given in writing and made public, with further advice to be sought regards the viability of rejecting the application in the face of a probable appeal. The decision was deferred to the 29th of June 2015 (Lancashire County Council, 2015a).

On the 29th of June, the decision to reject PNR was made. The advice from the QC that was relayed by an intermediary to the Committee (verbally) was not as strong as it was in writing,[23] allowing space for a refusal. Additional to the written advice from

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[23] Councillor on planning committee interview.

the council's QC, two extra pieces of advice brought by Friends of the Earth and a local activist group the Preston New Road Action Group (PNRAG) advised that the committee had reasonable grounds to reject PNR. The further legal advice meant that the council could justify refusal at appeal (Lancashire County Council, 2015a). A new motion was put forward that proposed the following reasons to reject the PNR site (taken verbatim from the PNRAG legal advice):

"1. The development would cause an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, arising from the drilling equipment, noise mitigation equipment, storage plant, flare stacks and other associated development. The combined effect would result in an adverse urbanising effect on the open and rural character of the landscape and visual amenity of local resident's contrary to policy DM2 Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Policy EP11 of the Fylde Local Plan.

2. The development would cause unacceptable noise impacts resulting in a detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents which could not be adequately controlled by condition contrary to Policy DM2 of the Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Policy EP27 of the Fylde Local Plan" (Lancashire County Council, 2015b)

The decision itself was described by one councillor as "one of the most difficult things any of us have ever done in our lives" (Unknown Author, 2016: 48:28). The determination had taken just over a year, and it is reported that dealing with two planning applications for fracking can take up to 700 working days of planner's time (Local Government Association *et al.*, 2016). The local policy context was also a little disjointed. The Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (Lancashire County Council, 2009) was adopted in 2009, pre-dating the 2011 planning reforms and the introduction of the NPPF - though the local plans relevant polices were taken to be consistent with the new NPPF. The local minerals and waste plan had been adopted in 2013 (Lancashire County Council, 2013), so the policies from this document were given greater weight though neither document mentions shale gas.

The RW and PNR decisions produced a significant amount of material. The presentation of the findings and analysis is not a blow by blow account. Instead, it

identifies the key elements of each position in the process through first exploring some key points of contestation and then presenting the anti and pro formations and their nodal points, the neutral formation and how the pro/anti formations were processed in planning.

6.1.2 Points of Contestation between the Anti and Pro discursive formations

The four main points of contestation discussed here concern the following: the regulation of seismicity, energy and the need for gas, the local community and which formation articulates their view, and the contestation over the measured impacts of noise and traffic. The first two points are key issues within the fracking debate mentioned in Chapter 5; the second two points are around the reasons for rejection at both sites and are more localised. These four examples unpack the important elements of, and antagonisms between, the two discourses, and how the planning process mediates, negates or disaggregates the dispute (summarised in 6.1.4).

Contesting Regulation: *The risk of earthquakes vs the Traffic Light System (TLS)*

The potential for seismicity and its regulation was a key contestation for both PNR and RW. An important element of the discursive chain of the anti-fracking formation was the 'risk of earthquakes', which the pro-frackers argued was covered by the Traffic Light System (TLS) and was therefore not an issue for planning discussions to be concerned with. The Planning Officer was satisfied that seismicity was addressed for both sites through regulation and dismissed the anti-fracking element of the risk of earthquakes as a 'perceived fear'. The planning process supported the regulatory approach as per the planning guidance and in this way disarticulated the 'risk of earthquake' element and accepted the pro position. This is one example of the support for the strength of regulation.

The RW and PNR sites are both located near the Preese Hall site which had produced felt earth tremors from fracking in 2011; which meant that the potential for further

'seismic events' was a key point of contestation. As per the requirements, Cuadrilla submitted a Hydraulic Fracture Plan (Cuadrilla Resources, 2014) which showed the reporting process to the different agencies according to the level of seismicity reached (as set out in the Traffic Light System). The initial reporting from the EIA also cites several studies in the U.K. and U.S that showed that any seismicity above magnitude of 1.5 is unlikely, and the Hydraulic Fracture plan following the TLS means that operations would have been stopped if any such event above a magnitude of 1 was detected (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014b: 28). The language used in the document minimises the impact of the problem, using terms like 'micro-seismicity' or 'seismic event' throughout (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c).

In contrast, the anti-fracking groups regularly raised the potential for 'earthquakes' as a result of the fracking process. More substantively, the anti-fracking groups invited different scientific experts to speak to the planning committee. One report and presentation (Smythe, 2014) argued that there was a significant oversight in the analysis of the Preese Hall case. The report argued that the faults could not be as easily avoided, and importantly that the geology of the U.K. means that geological faults are more densely located than in the U.S would make "earthquake triggering likely" (Ibid: 25). Seismicity was not simply a threat at the surface; it was argued that fault lines could act as conduits for water contamination too (Smythe, 2014).

Industry interviewees argued that the issue of seismicity was blown out of proportion by activists and news media. A planning consultant said:

"there was a lot of media interest at the time, and you could argue that some of that, the media likes to play on certain things, some of the impacts, seismicity, this whole issue around earthquakes it think was getting a lot of focus by the media"[24]

Despite this, the proximity of the two sites to Preese Hall meant that the issue of seismicity was something that residents and councillors were acutely aware of even if it was heavily focused on by the media. An industry representative argued that the impacts of any seismicity would be relatively small:

"we shouldn't be worrying about 'oh my god will this cause earthquakes, and that's really for the OGA and the other regulators, there is a risk, this is how its mitigated

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[24] Planning Consultant Interview.

and addressed, so you don't need to worry because it won't have an impact on you, it's a very challenging thing from the planning side to be able to step back from all these issues."[25]

The interviewee recognised the emotive power of potential earthquakes could have had for opponents but reiterated that the planning process is not a space to discuss this – a fracking company simply had to show that they have the correct procedures in place through the Hydraulic Fracture Plan, following the Traffic Light System.

The planning officer's report took a similar view to the industry, that the regulatory system in place for monitoring seismicity is substantial enough:

"DECC will control fracking in a way, through a traffic light system that prevents fracturing generating more than 0.5ML which means induced seismicity will not be felt at all, or only by a few under especially favourable conditions. Whilst *perceived fears* are understandable, they cannot be supported by independent review and guidance." (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 57, my emphasis)

This is not an accurate assessment of the TLS: it does not prevent the generation of above 0.5ML events, but rather it just means that sites have to report and shut down when such events occurred (which they did). What is most interesting here is that the Officer's response misconstrued the argument being made and dismissed it as a 'fear'.
As a local parish council argued, it was not simply a 'fear' but rather an argument that there is:

"Potential for earth tremors despite the traffic light system. Tremors can damage property and associated services including septic tanks. Any damage to underground services could result in watercourse pollution" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 25)

This was also stated by a local campaigner in an interview:

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[25] Industry Representative Interview.

"…. there's been no impacts on the ground, well yes ok but what's happening under the ground, and that's the message we want to get across all the time. It's not about what you can feel or see, it's about the infrastructure underneath, and the possibility of methane migration, fluid migration…"[26].

There are two aspects to the contestation then, first that the process could cause felt earthquakes (in a place where such things are unusual) and second a more technical case about sub-surface impacts. Seismicity was dismissed by the planning officer and industry as fuelling an emotional response that cannot be substantiated by anti-fracker's in the first aspect. The second aspect is dismissed by challenging the politics of those giving testimony. Short and Szolucha (2019) show that expert testimony against fracking in this case was dismissed (on seismicity and other issues) as the experts were deemed to be 'activists' and therefore not 'independent', as they campaigned against the fracking process i.e. they were too political. The working assumption in the applications is that mitigation measures will mean that seismicity will not reach above 1.5ml (Arup, 2014a), something that we can say with hindsight to be misguided (see Chapter 7).

The second aspect is that which challenges the regulatory framework, as the quote above from the parish council shows, for not being a sufficient restraint on the wider harms caused by seismicity underground. The *Planning Practice Guidance* (DCLG, 2013) provides a basis for dismissing any challenges to the regulatory framework, and the officer's report follows this by deferring seismicity to other government agencies:

"DECC consider the traffic light system for shutting down operations to be adequate as the association between hydraulic fracturing and seismic activity remains a developing area of knowledge" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 23)

As we shall see in Chapter 7, seismicity would turn out to be a fatal problem for shale gas fracking in Lancashire. The 'risk of seismicity' element of the anti-fracking discourse was negated within the planning process as it was something sufficiently managed by regulation and was articulated as a 'fear' pushed by 'activists' rather than

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[26] PNR Activist 2 interview

experts. When seismicity was also raised by the designated 'stakeholders' (parish councillors, conservation groups, local business groups) with questions about the regulatory mechanism of the TLS, it was disarticulated by citing the TLS as providing the necessary safety limits (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014e: 47). The Planning Officer's report negated the specific concern over seismicity by saying it was a 'perceived fear' and disarticulated related questions over regulation with reference to the *Planning Practice Guidance.*

Contesting Energy Futures: *The Need for Gas in Lancashire vs Greenhouse gas emissions*

The need for shale gas both nationally and within Lancashire was contested in these decisions. There is government support for gas generally and for shale specifically; though when these initial sites were proposed there was little detail provided from industry or government on the scale of the industry in terms of numbers of sites or the expected contribution to the U.K. energy mix. Both sites were defined as 'exploratory' according to the 3 stages introduced by government, which allowed a constructive ambiguity over the eventual scale of a Lancashire industry. For both sites, it was accepted in the planning decision that there is no conflict between permitting the sites and climate change commitments as the 'separation of stages' meant the sites were exploratory – i.e. the actual use of the gas for energy production is not considered in the decisions. The anti-fracking element of the sites and industry causing significant greenhouse gas emissions consequently was negated, by focusing on the local specifics of the site rather than the general scale and impact of an industry in Lancashire or across England.

Cuadrilla made a positive case for the 'need for gas' on the basis that it provides 80% of the energy used for heating in the U.K., and that gas is a "key transition source of energy". Fracking would also reduce "dependency on foreign supplies of gas" (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c: 5). In an argument typical of those made by pro-frackers, a fracking company employee said that:

"...why we are using it [gas] so much we are producing it less and less

indigenously…we are buying it from…America…we are buying it from Russia we are buying it from Qatar…we are buying it from Norway…while we are doing that we are not taxing it…we're missing amount on a huge amount of tax revenues, all those job opportunities…we are essentially off shoring and outsourcing our environmental responsibilities"[27].

As the quote shows, a key pro-fracking element was that the U.K. uses significant amounts of natural gas, and, as long as that is the case, it makes sense to domesticate the economic benefits and environmental safeguards of production rather than shipping gas from abroad which has to be liquefied at extreme temperatures. Essentially, the argument was: the gas is being used anyway and it is better that it comes from the U.K. Therefore, there is a 'need for gas'. The need to pursue gas is accepted for both sites as the national policy is for "maximising indigenous resources, subject to safety and environmental considerations" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 447).

As highlighted in Chapter 5, 'maximising indigenous resources' potentially conflicts with the need to reduce GHG emissions, and 'environmental considerations' are raised by the anti-fracking groups. Anti-frackers contested the need for import substitution and domestic gas production. For example, the problem of 'locking in' fossil fuels was raised by Friends of the Earth:

"Shale gas recovery is incompatible with the UK meeting the climate change target and could lock the UK into fossil fuel use for decades" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 112)

Local groups also reiterated the importance of the greenhouse gas impact of the sites, and it was argued by objectors that the:

"Reliance on hydrocarbons will not contribute to reducing global warming or climate change." (Residents group in Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 123)

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[27] Fracking company worker (PNR)

The anti-fracking element of the GHG emissions of the site localised the 'keep it in the ground' nodal point as another risk from the process, as captured in this interview with an NGO worker:

"we've already seen climate catastrophes, it's not just about stopping fracking in Lancashire, it's about stopping burning oil and gas and coal, we certainly can't afford to do it here, and we can't afford to do it anywhere."[28]

Local campaign groups also raised the problem of 'fugitive emissions' of methane. Citing a study by Howarth *et al.* (2011) in the U.S., anti-fracking groups argue that methane (a greenhouse gas) can escape at several points through the fracking process and that this is insufficiently accounted for in industry estimates of GhG emissions (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 112-3). These fugitive emissions however were monitored by the Environment Agency and covered by the sites' environmental permits, and Cuadrilla argued that their processes reduce 'fugitive emissions' to 13% of the total GhG total (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c: 117). There was a contestation of the total amount of GhG as well as the principle of pursuing shale gas sites in Lancashire as a general contributor to climate change. The contestations over the 'need for gas' were negated in planning practice through a two-step process.

The first step relies on the 'separation of stages'. The applications for planning permission for PNR and RW are explicitly for *exploration* "as a means to more accurately establish the size of UK shale gas resources including the contribution they may make towards energy self-sufficiency" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 45). The separation of fracking into three distinct phases – appraisal, exploration and production – meant that discussion of emissions was limited within the planning process for these sites as only the emissions of the exploration phase can be considered for both sites rather than for a producing industry. The emissions from the site were minimised in this way as the application only focused on a small part of the life cycle of the site. Full production would require a separate application at a later date.

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[28] Environmental NGO Interview

The second step was to then invoke either a national or local carbon budget and point to how each exploratory site is a minimal contributor to this budget. Cuadrilla's environmental statement for PNR claimed:

"Assuming both projects would take place within the same Carbon Budget period, the cumulative carbon footprint would still be relatively insignificant and accounts for less than 0.002% of the UK Carbon Budget and just under 0.1% of the projected EU ETS UK allocation at 2016 level (mid-point of EU ETS Phase 3)." (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c: 123)

The U.K. level budget was also reiterated in the pre-application consultation when stakeholders raised the issue of climate change (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014e: 50). The emissions would come from burning off the gas produced in exploration in a process called 'flaring' which would be covered under the EU ETS carbon trading scheme. Greenhouse gas emissions are considered within the exploratory phase (fugitive and flared); however, the conclusion from the local authority was that the sites would produce only:

"...0.18% of the county's annual emissions as set out in the Lancashire Climate Change Strategy (2009). The project's emissions would be just over 3% of the Borough's annual emissions as set out in the Strategy" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 450)

It was not made clear what would or would not have been an acceptable percentage of a carbon budget for the site or how one would make such a judgment. Short and Szolucha (2019) argue that throughout the report the Officer downplayed the GHG impact and accepts without question industry figures that had serious flaws and relied on definitions from reports from 1995 that have since changed. The acceptance of industry figures aside, the combination of the separation of stages and the invocation of carbon budgets to cover the exploratory emissions minimised the GHG impact of both sites and negated the elements of the anti-fracking discursive formation that challenged the need for gas in this case. Indeed, adopting a localised articulation of the site impacts drew the anti-fracking groups into a debate on terms

that were favourable to the industry rather than defending the basic principle of 'keep it in the ground' (Beebeejaun, 2019 identifies a similar issue of fighting on the local scale for anti-frackers).

To summarise, the 'need for gas' is strongly supported by government policy; the separation of the stages limits the GHG emissions from the sites within this crucial decision for the industry. The exploratory classification of the sites was articulated as a reason for not needing to worry about GHG emissions, which was further underscored by the use of carbon budgets to present the sites as minimal contributors of GHG. These features of planning practice restricted what could be meaningfully said about fracking to the hyper-local and hypothetically measurable.

Contesting the Local Community: *Industrialising the countryside vs Community Benefits*

The third point of contestation is between two elements – the 'anti' view that fracking would industrialise the countryside and the 'pro' fracking view that the shale gas industry would provide a net gain and 'community benefits'. Both the pro and anti actors attempt to articulate the 'local' as their main subject position, and the residents' opinions were prioritised under a planning process explicitly led by 'localism'. In contrast to the first two points, the issue of 'industrialising the countryside' was one that formed the first of the legally defensible reasons to reject the PNR site, recall:

"The development would cause an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, arising from the drilling equipment, noise mitigation equipment, storage plant, flare stacks and other associated development. The combined effect would result in an *adverse urbanising effect* on the open and *rural character of the landscape* and visual amenity of *local resident's* contrary to policy DM2 Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Policy EP11 of the Fylde Local Plan." (Lancashire County Council, 2015b, my emphasis)

I have chosen the term 'industrialising the countryside' as it is used in the representations and captures the different articulations better than the term 'urbanising' used in the rejection.

As the quote above shows, the key policy test was of policy DM2 in the *Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan* that re-articulates the principle of sustainable development from the NPPF. It states that developments should be supported provided that:

"all material, social, economic or environmental impacts that would cause demonstrable harm can be eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels" (Lancashire County Council *et al.*, 2013: 10)

It also lists positive criteria to be supported, such as improving the "local and wider economy" and "reduce carbon emissions", which are derived from the Joint Lancashire Core Strategy (Lancashire County Council, 2009a). It was the NPPF (2012) that (re)introduced the 'presumption in favour' clause for sustainable development which meant there was a need to show that costs significantly outweigh the benefits of development. In planning terms, opponents to PNR had to show that the impact on the countryside was more significant than the economic benefits (this is made explicit in this response to objections from FOE in Arup, 2014b). The anti-fracking groups did this by articulating themselves as defenders of the local community.

Figure 6.3 - Frack Free Lancashire symbol (Frack Free Lancashire, 2020)

The anti-fracking groups did so firstly on symbolic level. The anti-fracking groups positioned themselves as defending the local area and focus on the possible impacts on rural life. The anti-fracking discourse drew upon strong local signifiers to defend the value of the local area – encapsulated in the 'Frack Free Lancashire symbol in Figure 6.3. This symbol became commonplace across the anti-fracking movement (other areas adapted the design), and was seen on T-shirts, badges, banners and posters across the

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county. It is a simple image, the focal point of which is the Lancashire rose – a symbol dating back to the War of the Roses (1455-1487) in which the House of Lancaster was the victor against King Richard III; a king famously depicted as a tyrant by William Shakespeare. Frack Free Lancashire is an umbrella group for smaller more local groups, each with the 'frack free' title that simply captures their straightforward demand.

Building on this articulation of local identity, residents and activists used their own articulations of the character of the area to contest the proposed sites. PNRAG describe the sites as "a few miles from the famous holiday resort of Blackpool and the genteel township of Lytham St Annes" (Preston New Road Action Group, No Date[A]). Local parish councils objected, as did groups from residents in the coastal tourist areas such as Defend Lytham who identified the:

"Unacceptable impacts on health, economy, rural Fylde and at odds with emerging policies of the Fylde Local Plan" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 122)

Local parish councils objected on the basis that the fracking process would use up water and essentially spoil the rural area they enjoy. Frack Free Fylde also argued that the local economy could be impacted:

"Any contamination would have a significant impact on agriculture and business for which there would be no compensation." (Lancashire County Council, 2015b).

PNRAG also pointed out a regional difference, that rural life in the more prosperous south of England was not treated the same:

"If industry of this nature is not good enough for the south, equally not for the north" (Lancashire County Council, 2015b)

Figure 6.4 - Local Activist newsletter
(Source: PNRAG, 2014)

Interestingly, an interviewee from a conservation group pointed out the historic impact of industry on the area:

"we've already been through there with the 19th century industrial revolution around here...its carbon industry... its fracking rather than coal...maybe have the same issues"[29].

This is notable, insofar as those in industry and government were keen to refer to industrial heritage to make the case for fracking, like in Davey's speech above. The element of 'industrialising the countryside' captures multiple concerns, of impact on wildlife, agriculture, tourism and landscape. The image in Figure 6.4 is the front of a longer document produced by PNRAG that details the various rural activities in the area that an industrial fracking site would potentially disrupt. Anti-fracking groups articulated a quiet rural area of agriculture and leisure unsuitable for the gas industry.

In contrast, the pro-fracking discourse made the economic case for fracking in the area. The Lancashire Chamber of Commerce was a key supporter, as were some local politicians. The Conservative MP for Lancaster invoked an historical imaginary in connection with the economic prospects for shale:

"We are generous folk in Lancashire. We are loyal to our Duke and are patriotic members of the United Kingdom. But if others are to make millions, then it is only fair that Lancashire should have a share of those millions." (WH Deb, 19th December 2012)

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[29] Lancashire charity interview

In presenting the EIA and Environmental Statement and in attempting to win community support, Cuadrilla developed their own construction of the locality. There was an attempt to downplay the impacts of the sites alongside a careful consideration of the particular planning reasons for rejection. Cuadrilla provided the usual assessments of 'visual amenity' impact, and highlighted that the area had "no statutory ecological designations"(Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014b: 24), and that the sites were "suitably distant from above ground heritage assets (such as listed buildings)" (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c: 93). Cuadrilla used an image of the rig in proportion to the famous Blackpool tower, visible from the PNR site, as well as everyday objects like electricity pylons (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014b: 21) to downplay the impact of the rig and place it in relations with the landscape. In this representation of space, the rig is dwarfed by the tower, though the two sites are linked in the image by the silhouette of trees and hedgerows. The Tower is located on the coast, surrounded by an urban area and adjacent to a theme park. The implication is that the fracking rigs are not particularly invasive and fit within the local area.

The pro-fracking actors also articulate the local community activity of Cuadrilla. The Environmental Statement for both sites assessed the positive impacts that would flow from the 'community benefits scheme' (whilst acknowledging this was not a material consideration). The EIA for PNR marked out the local community as being in need of new employment opportunities:

"…the growing population will necessitate employment opportunities into the future, particularly in the context of increasing levels of employment benefit claimants." (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014b:126)

Whilst the immediate area is considered to be wealthy (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c: 126), the town of Blackpool nearby is one of the most economically deprived areas in England. Blackpool's long-term economic problems have been exacerbated by cuts to public services and welfare since 2010 (Bambra and Garthwaite, 2015). In this context, the government announced support for a National College of Onshore Oil and Gas for the town, to be jointly ran by Blackpool and Fylde College and UK Onshore Oil and Gas (UKOOG, and industry body) with both public

and private money to provide training for future onshore workers (Hayhurst, 2017c).[30] Cuadrilla also sponsored a local football team and school events, which one anti-fracking interviewee claimed led to the issue of 'fracking' being banned from discussion in their local school.[31]

The problem in the planning decision for the pro-frackers was that only the exploratory sites' impact could be considered. In terms of employment, the PNR site was expected to create a net total of 11 full time equivalent jobs (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c: 151). The community benefits, as stated, could not be considered by planners or councillors. The economic success of shale gas in the U.S. was based on drilling multiple wells. The number of wells needed in U.K. was not made clear at this point. This contestation captures a key problem in microcosm: Cuadrilla want to make the case for economic benefits for Lancashire and the U.K.; yet doing so required setting out more explicitly the number of different sites required which supports the idea that the countryside is being industrialised. Again, these speculative points are not for the planning officer to consider in the decision; nonetheless councillors on the committee as well as the pro and anti-fracking actors were aware that this was likely to be the first of many such proposals for fracking in Lancashire and England. An activist who presented to the council argued:

"…using industries figures, how many well pads would there be within a 10 by 10 KM area, so with 100sqKm, which sounds big but isn't as big as you'd think, you could to 1-11 pads, that's a lot, if you're in an area like this which the Fylde, we have tourism round here, we have farming, its agriculture, is where lots of people retire too, its where we have lots of cyclist and horse riders, you name it, people come for their health, you could have, well pads, every 3-4 miles…"[32].

In this case, the planning officer concluded that the impacts on the countryside would not be significant enough at either site, which for PNR the committee disagreed with after the legal evidence was provided. The anti-fracking formation was articulated by local residents' groups and focused on the accumulation of everyday impacts on local residents. The subject position of the local community was

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[30] No such college had opened at the time of writing.
[31] PNR/RW activist 2
[32] PNR/RW activist 3

linked to the industrialising process of fracking captured in the Frack Free Lancashire symbol. Cuadrilla, in contrast, defined the area by an absence of designated spaces of heritage, wildlife and beauty and focused on the economic impacts they could make in the region.

The anti-fracking position is therefore accepted in the planning decision making by the councillors, even if the Officer negated or at points negotiated it (with conditions). The various 'community benefits' are disarticulated from the pro-fracking position, as not relevant for planning and were considered by some residents to be a 'bribe' (Bradshaw and Waite, 2017). The pro-fracking formation is not as clearly articulated as linked to the local community, in part because fully articulating the economic benefits would entail a clearer explanation of the extent of the scale of the industry in Lancashire.

Contesting the Measured Impacts: *Personal impacts vs Temporary Development*

The final contestation is over two typical planning issues that would be reasons for rejection – noise at PNR and traffic at RW. Within a broader pro/anti fracking discourse these are not key elements; but within planning decisions these are often decisive issues and there are established technical methodologies for measuring impacts for noise and traffic that the residents' groups in particular articulated. The pro-fracking position emphasised the 'temporary' nature of the development to minimise the extent of particular local environmental impacts of the sites (Szolucha, 2018).

Local anti-fracking groups, along with Friends of the Earth, used planning expertise to make the appropriate case in policy and methodological terms on the issues of noise and traffic. As one activist put it:

"LCC were for rejecting both of them, ya know, they just didn't feel it was appropriate that these two developments weren't appropriate and they were refused, but then,

they looked for reasons to override those refusals, and it is very narrow, in that it's down to the ways that the planning policies are interpreted."[33].

Each activist interviewed said that the planning case meant them trying to contest the typically important planning issues individually (e.g. also air pollution, light pollution), which cumulatively amounted to a case for the local impact of an industrial site being placed in a rural location. Noise (for PNR) and traffic (for RW) are cited in almost every final representation made before the meeting, challenging the mitigation measures as well as the assessments made by the council (Lancashire County Council, 2015b). As the quotation above shows, campaigners (with the help of planning professionals who lived locally or from NGO's) recognised that these were key planning grounds to contest the sites on. In this way, these issues were linked to the other elements of the chain of equivalence, though as one of the representatives for an anti-fracking group said:

"for fracking there is the biggest mismatch between what people think are the most important issues in the planning process and what can actually be determinative."[34].

Despite this 'mismatch', the ability of the anti-fracking groups to contest fracking on these grounds was important for the sites to be rejected. A local residents group hired a noise consultant to contest the environmental statement at PNR; the consultant argued that the noise impact would be above recognised standards (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 243). The council commissioned its own noise consultants to assess Cuadrilla's proposals and the resident's group report, and they found potential impacts that could be mitigated. The planning officer recommended refusal on noise grounds for the committee meeting in January, which led to Cuadrilla requesting a deferral to propose what were eventually deemed reasonable mitigation by the Officer (Lancashire County Council, 2015a: 63).

The traffic issue at Roseacre Wood was identified early on by Cuadrilla as an important barrier to planning approval (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014d). The site is only accessible by a narrow single-track country lane, which in turn is only accessible through two small villages and from two small roads beyond that.

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[33] PNR/RW Activist 3
[34] Representative of AF in inquiry

Cuadrilla proposed several routes in a specific Traffic Management Plan (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014f) but a fracking site requires regular HGV visits during construction as well as to remove wastewater during testing and production. Cuadrilla's own figures said there would be 50 HGV trips per day for 3 weeks at the peak (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014a). Cuadrilla submitted a further traffic plan before the final decision meeting in June 2015; however, the planning officer's report was clear that the impacts on other road users would be too severe. A councillor stated; "it just can't fly"[35].

For both sites, the 'temporary' nature of the development was emphasised by Cuadrilla and their representatives, that in each particular example of harm and impact (noise, traffic, light etc.) these would only be for limited periods of time (from a few weeks to a few years). Szolucha (2018) identifies a 'politics of time' as important within the Lancashire case. Szolucha argues that the particular constructions of the future articulated in fracking are important political tools in foreclosing particular arguments – here the seven-year limit to the sites planning permission could be a child's whole adolescence or the rest of an old person's life at a nearby retirement village (Ibid). Throughout the EIA, Environmental Statement and during the initial decisions, the temporary nature of the development was pointed to explicitly as a mitigating effect on any impacts of the site (Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014c; Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014a; Arup and Cuadrilla Resources, 2014f). The other side of the 'politics of time' is a criticism of the length of the planning process from industry and government, which up to the Lancashire decision was over a year, as the fracking company worker said:

"we struggle to get consent in a timely manner…not getting consent in a timely manner means we run up our costs while we are sitting around not deploying our resources." [36]

In this case study, though, it should be noted that Cuadrilla requested delays after evidence was provided of the noise and traffic problems with their plans. As much as this was a highly contested case covering multiple issues with significant amounts of objections and public campaigning, these planning decisions were based on

35 Councillor on planning committee (Lancs)
36 Fracking company worker (PNR)

significant deliberation of technical evidence and the resubmission of plans that were still deemed insufficient on traffic issues by the planning officer (for RW) and on noise issues by the Committee (for PNR). These technical contestations are drawn out and frustrating for the companies, but also for activists who face a significant personal cost from campaigning. Throughout the process anti-fracking groups had to campaign on issues that are not necessarily the ones they take to be most important, as commented an activist interview said following the final Roseacre inquiry:

"it's good that we won, but it's bad that none of the other reasons why we objected to it were taken into account"[37].

Ultimately, the anti-fracking groups were able to make a strong enough technical case against the sites, based on the noise and traffic issues to provide reasonable grounds refusal from the councillors - and the planning officer in the case of Roseacre. They played the techno-managerial game effectively and linked these impacts to the wider anti-fracking formation. I will now summarise the two formations in the Lancashire case.

6.1.3 Anti and Pro fracking Discursive Formations

The following summarises the anti and pro fracking discursive formations in the Lancashire case study. Table 6.1 shows the chains of equivalence in each formation and in italics are the elements covered above. This section sets out the nodal points around which the discourses are structured, and touches upon the elements I did not cover above.

Table 6.1 shows the two positions on fracking, as articulated within these local decisions. There are some similar features to Chapter 5 (the impacts on water, community benefits), though the initial Phase 1 discourse is re-articulated in more localised terms in the Lancashire case.

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[37] PNR/RW Activist 3

Table 6.1 Anti and pro discursive formations in the Lancashire case

Feature	Element/moment **Anti-Fracking**	Element/Moment **Pro-Fracking**
Nodal Points	Risk to local area	Opportunity for Lancashire
Subject Position	Local community: Lancashire identity (red rose of FF Lancashire)	Attempted to articulate part of local community (sponsorship, community benefits)
Actors	Frack Free Lancashire, Frack Free Fylde, Preston New Road Action Group, Roseacre Awareness Group, Friends of the Earth	Cuadrilla, UK government, Industry lobbyists (UKOOG), Lancashire for Shale
Resources	NGO support, consultancy and QC's for decision from fundraising	Centrica investment in Cuadrilla, Planning consultancy (Arup)
Chain of equivalence	**Risk to Local area –** *Risk of earthquakes – Regulatory gaps- GHG emissions (fugitive and total) – Industrialising the countryside - Localised impacts (noise, traffic, light, wildlife)* - Water contamination – weak/not joined up regulation - local economy could suffer (tourism, agriculture, house prices)	**Opportunity for Lancashire** *Strength of regulation (e.g. TLS) – Need for Gas in Lancs – Exploratory site - Community Benefits – Temporary Development* – New industry for Lancs (jobs, tax revenue)

The anti-fracking position is structured around the nodal point of the **risk to the local area**. Anti-fracking groups and activists articulate multiple potential harms that a fracking site *and* industry could bring to Lancashire. Wider demands on climate change and energy production are articulated and linked to the anti-fracking position, though unlike in Chapter 5 the 'keep it in the ground' point is not structuring the formation rather it is one of the risks. It is important also to understand these are 'risks'; each different risk is articulated as one that the industry and government have deemed acceptable to pursue economic gain – a position given

some plausibility by the local experience of earth tremors. Local resident groups and NGOs articulate each element as the dominant view of the 'local community', and the powerful symbol of the Lancashire rose from the Frack Free Lancashire group was widely displayed. The three elements in the chain that I have not discussed so far are not italicised in the table (water, lack of joined regulations, local economy) as these are not covered above – however there are similar contestations at KM8 which I cover there to avoid repetition.[38] The anti-fracking groups linked the local with the global, drawing in support from those immediately impacted by the sites as well as those fighting fossil fuel extraction.

The pro-fracking formation is structured around a nodal point of socio-economic **opportunity for Lancashire**. In both the submitted documents, consultations and their actions within the community, Cuadrilla articulate that Lancashire stands to benefit from a thriving new industry and with that investment in social infrastructure (schools, football clubs, colleges) or 'community benefits'. As part of the planning process, the possible impacts are addressed and minimised with reference to the quality of the regulatory framework and the 'need for gas' articulated in legislation and policy. The temporary and exploratory aspect of the sites are emphasised to minimise the various planning issues raised.

The decisions in this case went against Cuadrilla; yet the need for legal advice showed how finely balanced the decision making was. The anti-frackers were successful because they were able to engage with the planning process on technocratic grounds (e.g. hiring expert noise consultants) as well as contesting the overall principle of the developments even if these were dismissed in the planning process. This next section covers how 'neutral' actors articulated the fracking issue, and how the anti and pro positions as set out here are processed.

6.1.4 The Neutral Discursive Formation and Decision-Making

As discussed in Chapter 4, the officially 'neutral' position differs from the 'pro' and 'anti' insofar as it is not a definitive stance on the need for fracking or not. The

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[38] The contestations are not exactly the same in both cases, however similar enough to not to need repetition.

interviewees from the different roles included here said they understood their role as one of taking an unbiased position between the two sides as it is their official duty to do so. It may be that personally they leaned one way or the other; however together the planning professionals, regulators and to a lesser extent councillors articulated a common discursive position on fracking. I will outline this further, before showing how the discursive chains of the pro and anti-fracking formations are then processed in planning.

The 'neutral' position is not understood as having a 'chain of equivalence', as the neutral position does not look to link demands and elements to achieve a hegemonic status in the fracking discourse. Instead, the various institutional actors have formal decision-making powers or regulatory roles. The neutral formation is included as it shows how those who administer the decision making (in planning, on environmental permits etc.) articulate the fracking issue.

Table 6.2 The 'Neutral' formation in PNR/RW

Feature	Element
Nodal Points	Fracking process is safe when regulated
Subject Positions	Civil or public servants: Planner, Councillor, Regulator, Expert
Actors	LPA, Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, Lancashire County Council, Public Health (local and national).
Resources	State funded, fees from developers
Moments of discourse	**Fracking process is safe when regulated**– *UK has good regulation (not the U.S.)*–– Need to consult and provide public with information – National Policy supports (shale) gas – Neutral on principle of fracking – Process separate from politics

Analysis of interviews and texts shows that the **Fracking process is safe when regulated** is a nodal point around which a neutral discourse on fracking is fixed (Table 6.2). The regulators in particular start from this point:

"we've got confidence in the system in that we know it's the same system , and we see how it works in other high hazard areas and fracking at the moment isn't perceived to be high hazard at all, erm, we can see how its applied, we understand how its applied and hot the framework works, and who they work with" [39].

"We regulate lots of much higher risk and higher hazard profiles than shale gas, [...] this is at the opposite end of the spectrum [to high risk examples]"[40]

Regulators also argued it was important to provide the public and planners with "reassurance around the regulatory framework",[41] and that this framework enables the safety of similar activities like e.g. North Sea oil, waste incinerators. In this way, the neutral formation makes a claim about fracking, that whilst in some nations the process is dangerous, the U.K. has superior regulation that will prevent this.

The safety of fracking and its maintenance is what structures the other claims. Neutrality is articulated on the 'politics' of fracking. In order to ensure the process is safe the regulators, planners and councillors claim that they should not take a side on the more political aspects of the conflict:

"..it's not for us to answer those questions this is something that comes up at public meetings...climate change...political issues in terms of energy and renewables... for us we are just a regulator and we will work to make sure it meets the highest standards...that's what the industry themselves want to do...need to do...to give the public confidence" [42]

"it's quasi-judicial stuff [planning], so you have to take a straightforward independent view on things, that doesn't make your own opinions which you keep to yourself on what your hearing, some stuff you hear from, on different sides of the arguments"[43]

In fact, politics is problematised as an interference into the process of managing and discussing the various issues fracking does present in a rational manner. Activists in particular are problematised because:

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[39] Regulator 3
[40] Regulator 1
[41] Regulator 1
[42] Regulator 2
[43] PNR Committee member

"they've got this idea that its erm, really really dangerous, and that's promoted by the fossil fuel activists, and they use scare tactics to dissuade people from having them in their area, so along with the risks of falling house prices, health scares, pollution, you can keep going with the social arguments, erm, we try to allay those fears"[44]

As well as activists, interference of national political parties is also suggested as disrupting the planning-regulatory process:

"politics interfered with it, party politics interfered with it, which was wrong, simple as that".[45]

The problematisation of political interference, however, also sits alongside an acceptance of national policy and guidance as a valid intervention. The direct interference from political parties or activists is articulated as disrupting the techno-managerial process and the evidence-based debate on fracking. The planning-regulatory process is articulated as something separate from politics, to make rational decisions over how best to manage fracking.

It is on this basis that 'neutral' actors make their decisions. The following tables show how the 'pro' and 'anti' discursive chains are treated within the planning process in terms of being accepted, disarticulated, mediated or negated:

Table 6.3 shows the elements of the anti-fracking chain of equivalence on the left. The planning process largely breaks up this chain (through policy, guidance and dismissing evidence) as indicated in the right-hand column, with the issues of noise and traffic as well as the generalised impact on the rural area being accepted after legal advice. The first point to stress is that the planning process is a significant barrier to the anti-fracking movement: the risks it articulates over fracking are dismissed in the various ways detailed. In contrast, most of the pro-fracking position is accepted:

[44] Regulator 1
[45] Councillor on planning committee

Table 6.3 Treatment of Anti-fracking chain in PNR/RW

Risk to Local area	
Water contamination	**Disarticulated:** Covered by regulators, Planning Practice Guidance says LPA must accept
Weak/not joined up regulation	
Health impacts	
Local economy could suffer (tourism, agriculture)	**Mediated:** Local economic opportunity, community benefits.
Risk of Earthquakes	**Disarticulated:** TLS to monitor, experts dismissed
GHG emissions (fugitive and total) –	**Negated:** Local carbon budgets and separation of stages mean these claims are not relevant to the planning decisions.
Localised impacts (noise, traffic)	**Accepted:** issues of noise and traffic accepted by council based on suitable expertise, though initially mediated by planning officer though conditions.
Industrialising the countryside	**Accepted:** a catchall issue for various local impacts e.g. wildlife, visual amenity etc., which forms reason to reject after legal guidance.

Table 6.4 Treatment of pro formation in PNR/RW case

Opportunity for Lancashire (cost-benefit)	
Exploratory works/Temporary development	**Accepted** as mitigation for various local impacts (noise, light pollution e.g.) by planner.
Strength of regulation (e.g. TLS)	Accepted as given due to PPG and regulatory body consultations
Community Benefits	**Disarticulated**: Cannot consider in a planning decision, though still in statements.
New industry for Lancs (jobs, taxes etc)	**Accepted** that there is potential economic benefit, but constructive ambiguity on wider industry limits this.
Need for Gas in Lancs	**Accepted** as government policy, but planning not place to discuss this.

The Government's support for industry meant that there is significant policy and legislative support for the different elements of the discursive chain articulated by

pro-fracking groups. The need for gas and the strength of the regulations are fixed into policy and guidance, and the exploratory or temporary nature of the sites was often accepted as mitigation for the impacts of the sites. The planning officer (with some justification) approved the PNR site because it conformed to the planning framework and the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show how the discursive chains were treated in planning practice, and how key contestations are resolved. It is important to recognise that the elements articulated by 'pro' and 'anti' actors may have had a greater influence in the decision making than they were officially allowed to but it is not within the scope of this research to determine this fully. What we can say is that, in the PNR case, some elements of the anti-fracking formation were deemed legitimate reasons to reject the site against the advice of the planning officer. The weight of policy and legislation that supported fracking was not enough to fully restrict the anti-fracking formation. Instead, anti-fracking groups fought on technical grounds as well as more obviously political grounds to persuade decision makers who operate within the aspect of the planning process which makes dissent to proposals possible - the discretionary power of local authorities. I now turn to an analysis of the logics of planning practices in this local case study, elaborating further on what these decisions mean.

6.1.5 Analysis of PNR/RW case

To analyse the practices in this case, it is important to revisit the meetings in which the decisions were made (touched on in 6.1.1). It is not a regular occurrence in planning meetings for three pieces of legal advice to be sought to make a decision. The initial pieces of advice from the council's own QC was given aurally (second hand), and, when it was then asked for in writing, it was deemed to be less conclusive than initially presented and led to the call for further advice.

The legal advice sought by Preston New Road Action Group set out the legal process for planning, that the elected members could use their own judgement on the impact of the sites as long as there is a "rational and discernible basis for doing so" (Lancashire County Council, 2015a). This advice provided the reasons for refusal. Friends of the Earth also sought legal advice, which stated that "the balancing of

benefits and harms is ultimately a political decision" for elected members deciding on controversial cases, as long as the decision has "a basis in evidence and exercises a reasonable planning judgement" (Ibid). These two pieces of advice meant that councillors who had initially voted against motions to reject then decided to vote *to* refuse permission for the PNR site on the grounds of noise and industrialising the countryside contrary to local plans, confident the council would not be asked to pay Cuadrilla's appeal costs.

It may seem strange at first to argue that this decision is 'post-political', when the recognised political part of the planning process found reasons to reject a site and industry that was increasingly unpopular. Certainly, Cuadrilla and pro-frackers believe that the planning process has been interfered with, with activists pressuring councillors. As a planning consultant put it:

"their [the councillors] political careers were probably on the line to a certain extent … and then there was lot of public opposition, but technically the officers found, couldn't find technical reasons, initially, to refuse it"[46].

The consultant is basically correct: the anti-fracking movement politicalised the issue of fracking and this likely influenced the outcome of PNR. As I show in 6.1.3, it was the linkage of the different demands into a discursive formation and the identity constructed around a 'Frack Free Lancashire' that connects noise pollution experienced by a small group of people to the risks to the wider way of life in the area and the climate. As the Friends of the Earth Website put it:

"One thing that's been absolutely central to stopping fracking so far in the UK is people everywhere rising up, joining and creating anti-fracking groups and campaigning locally to stop it. Wherever fracking has been proposed, local people have opposed it and councils have largely followed suit." (Friends of the Earth, 2017)

In the PNR/RW case there was an organised network of groups contesting fracking at multiple points, from the very principle of further gas extraction to the impact of HGV traffic on country lanes. There was a politicisation of fracking. My argument is that this politicisation challenges, but is ultimately limited by, practices consistent with a post-political regime. I will briefly explain why in terms of logics and the

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[46] Planning Consultant

analytical framework.

The social practice of planning in this local case is techno-managerial, prioritising evidence-based and expert-led decision making within highly managed parameters over what was deemed political discussion. The process is heavily mediated by planning or specialist consultants, and the anti-frackers' success in the decision comes in part from the ability to hire acceptable experts to justify a rejection. With the exception of the traffic issues on Roseacre Wood, the technical reasons offered are also dismissed. It may be that there simply was not a technical case; however I have shown how anti-fracking experts were dismissed for being "activists" (Short and Szolucha, 2019), how the 'separation of stages' and carbon budgets severely limit discussions of GHGs and the limits placed on meaningful debate by planning guidance. The logic of this approach is to seek to find the technical answer (e.g. carbon budgets) to political questions (is there a need for shale gas?), limiting the space within the process for political dissent and deliberation. The company and their consultants are more able to speak the language of planning, to articulate the sites in planning terms and with the extensive technical material that planners require. The policy framework from the NPPF and its definition of sustainable development place a significant burden of proof on the anti-fracking groups, and heavily limits the points at which they can contest the decision.

The discretionary aspect of planning, where elected lay officials can make their own (reasonable) judgement, provides limited space for political contestation. Beyond the technical contestations the political pressure *to* reject comes from a wider political struggle to articulate fracking as damaging to the local area. The importance of the anti-fracking movement's discursive efforts is tacitly acknowledged by the Cuadrilla worker explaining what happened between the acceptance of Preese Hall and PNR/RW:

"it changed when NGOs started social marketing very hard against the word fracking…and then came the uprising of local community activist groups against what we do." [47].

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[47] Fracking company worker (PNR)

The anti-fracking groups both politicised the impact of fracking Lancashire and contested the site on technical grounds, even utilising legal advice to support a rejection. The anti-fracking groups and actors had different demands and concerns, but these were linked together in contesting the damage fracking can do to the local area and wider concern over climate change. They were able to engage in the planning process on both a political and techno-managerial level, building local support as well as problematizing the proposals on planning grounds. The chain of equivalence articulated by the anti-fracking movement (6.1.3) brought together a wide coalition of interests to politicise fracking. Uniting local residents (of the leafy counties of England) with environmentalists and wider civil society under a banner of 'Frack Free Lancashire' made it harder for Government to dismiss anti-fracker's as disruptive subjects outside of a reasonable, rational consensus. In this way, the (post-) political logic of difference of an exclusionary consensus failed to exclude the disruptive subjects.

There is a techno-managerial social logic to planning that limits the anti-fracking formation within planning; however, the articulation of a chain of equivalence linking the hyperlocal with the global issue of climate change challenges the policy consensus. Even still, it took legal advice to justify a rejection of the PNR site pending an inevitable appeal. Ultimately, the decision making is legitimated by a fantasmic logic of participation. There are multiple consultations, meetings, a wider array of objections and views publicly discussed and considered even if the anti-fracking formation is significantly disarticulated. Even though anti-fracking experts are dismissed in the Officer's report, their reports and presentations were still publicly disseminated and considered. The dissent to the proposals for PNR and RW is staged within or adjacent to the planning process (e.g. protests outside meetings), even if the large bulk of what anti-frackers want to say is not relevant to the decision-making process. Public participation is articulated as important by planning and regulatory professionals (6.1.4)

The Lancashire case shows that the post—political regime was still dominant. A techno-managerial logic disarticulated and negated multiple aspects of the anti-fracking formation, and a political logic looked to exclude the environmental aspect of the formation. The ability of anti-fracking groups to contest the proposals and fracking more generally through articulating a chain of equivalence, however,

disrupts a consensual logic of difference and challenges the post-political regime. With both PNR and RW, it became clear that the framework the government had devised to go 'all out for shale' faced a political problem.

The PNR/RW case does not show the signs of an authoritarian turn: instead it shows the failure of a post-political regime to deliver development. The government's reaction to this, however, is where signs of a turn can be identified as they intervene to support fracking in a way that breaks the participatory fantasy that holds these decisions together. I will cover this moment of dislocation more fully in 6.3 in relation to the appeal against the PNR and RW decisions. Before that, I turn to the second local case study.

6.2   LOCAL CASE STUDY 2: KIRBY MISPERTON & A VICTORY FOR THE INDUSTRY

The second local case study is of the Kirby Misperton (KM8) site in North Yorkshire. In contrast to PNR and RW, this site was granted permission by the local authority. The decision was made shortly after the PNR inquiry making it the first site to gain planning permission for fracking since the moratorium in 2011-12. The findings and analysis from this case study are presented in the same way as 6.1: the context and process are explained, the key points of contestation are discussed and the anti, pro and neutral formations are summarised before analysing how the two positions were treated and the logics of planning practice. This local case shows a more direct, executive intervention into the planning process and a deepening of the antagonisms between the two sides. My analysis shows that there are features of an emerging authoritarian approach alongside the post-political, which will be further explicated in 6.3 and 6.4. In this case, the applicant Third Energy eventually failed to get final permission from the Oil and Gas Authority to begin fracking operations for financial reasons. This failure and the protest camp that was set up in response to the decision are covered in Chapter 7.

6.2.1 Context and Process

The applicant for the site at Kirby Misperton was an established gas company, Third Energy, who had operated conventional gas sites in the area for several decades. The site itself differs significantly from PNR/RW as the proposal was for developing an

existing conventional gas well, drilled in 2013 (Third Energy, 2015a). The site would have required a less extensive drilling and construction period. The site was also connected to Third Energy's existing gas power station a few miles away, meaning that any gas extracted contributed directly to electricity generation rather than being burnt off (Third Energy, 2015a). I will refer to it by its shorthand – KM8– as this is what the company designated the well.

The site is located in rural North Yorkshire. The local area, Ryedale, is covered by an extensive network of canals and dykes which irrigate farmland, and there are several major tourist attractions in the area (Flamingo Land, and Eden Camp). The site is less than a mile outside the village of Kirby Misperton. The North Yorkshire Moors National Park is approximately 5 miles north.

The initial application submitted in May 2015 was incomplete. It was finally validated in late July 2015. In October, North Yorkshire County Council requested further information under Section 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (2011); and in November delayed a decision until February so that further evidence could be provided by Third Energy. The decision was delayed again to May 2016, and in April the Environment Agency granted the environmental permits for the site. The site was granted planning permission (with conditions) on the 23rd of May 2016 (Hayhurst, 2016d).

The planning officer recommended approval, and the committee voted in favour of the recommendation. In this case, the councillors were able to ask legal questions to a QC directly (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b). The decision was the subject of a failed judicial review by Friends of the Earth and local group Frack Free Ryedale. They argued that the process had failed to consider climate change impacts, and that a bond should have been requested from Third Energy to cover the financial cost of site restoration or damage (Hayhurst, 2016e).

As with PNR/RW, local groups and NGOs contested the site. Frack Free Ryedale employed a planning consultant to provide a full set of objections (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b; KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015a). The consultation on the applications saw thousands of objections including 15 parish councils, the district council, local businesses and conservation groups (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a).

The applicant, Third Energy, had multiple conventional gas wells in the area which had been producing since the early 1990s, and most of these wells were granted planning permission without the same level of controversy. Third Energy were represented by a consultancy, now named Zetland Group, that specialise in petroleum planning applications and regulation. Importantly, the local minerals plan was from 1997 and was in the process of being updated (North Yorkshire County Council, 1997). Policies were used from a draft plan as well as the current plan; however, this also meant that national policy was given greater weight due to the datedness of the local plan (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a: 113). For example, the 1997 plan does not make specific references to climate change (Ibid: 238), so much of the policy framework was from national documents like the NPPF.

6.2.2 Points of Contestation

In the KM8 case, similar issues to those found in PNR/RW were raised. The main points of contestation covered here are: Contesting the local community and which formation best represented it, contesting the local economy (tourism vs the gas industry), contesting knowledge-claims through the issue of water contamination, and further contestation of the need for energy and a new burden of proof following a government intervention. The points of contestation and analysis identify changes to planning practice and the discursive formations from the Lancashire case. I don't seek to provide a full explanation of why the authorities came to different conclusions, though as I touch upon below a written ministerial statement may be one important factor, as well as the local embeddedness of the company.

Contesting the Local Community: *Locals vs Activists*

A key contestation was over articulating the 'local community' and what constituted a legitimate 'local' voice – i.e. over linking the respective formations to the subject position of the 'local community'. The pro-fracking groups claimed to speak for the local residents' concerns over the risks and impacts of the industry, and the company argued they had operated within the area for a long time and knew that residents

were broadly indifferent to their activities. Those opposing KM8 were articulated as disruptive activists by the pro-fracking groups.

Local anti-fracking groups (Frack Free Ryedale, Frack Free Kirby Misperton) articulated the unpopularity of the specific application:

"The overwhelming opposition to the application as opposed to the small number of supporters should not be ignored in terms of democracy." (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b)

The district council for Ryedale had voted for a moratorium on fracking in the area (Frack Free Kirby Misperton, 2015), with many other local representative bodies voicing clear objections to the site. As well as the district council, the site faced objections from each town council in Ryedale, 15 parish councils and nearby tourism sites (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a). Frack Free Ryedale articulated their members as "ordinary, hard-working people" that have moved to activism (in whichever form this takes) in response to the fracking issue (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b: 6)

The anti-fracker's 'localism' was contested in the pro-fracking formation. The pro-frackers built on the local history of the company to articulate the industry as a key part of the community (Third Energy, 2015b: 518). The industry tried to build links with the 'community benefits' scheme (Third Energy, 2015a: 510), and established a community liaison group "with the aim of building an open and constructive relationship with the local community" (Third Energy, 2015a: 89). The local embeddedness of the company gave them credibility and allowed the company to make a distinction between the community and the anti-frackers.

In the minutes of the committee meeting, those speaking in favour of the industry articulated an antagonism between the 'local' and the 'activist'. It was alleged that:

"There had been a great deal of intimidation in terms of those opposing the application, which had seen many of those who supported the process feeling unable to speak in public in relation to this." (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b)

The claim was that anti-frackers were scaring a sort of 'silent majority' from voicing their opinions. A local group[48] called Friends Of Ryedale Gas Explorations

(F.O.R.G.E) articulated the local/activist separation:

"We oppose their [the anti-fracking activists] opinions in the strongest possible terms and in many instances have found examples of incorrect/false claims being used to persuade local people, or to make people scared of shale gas exploration or development" (Friends of Ryedale Gas Exploration, 2015)

In this example, the activists were said to be misleading the locals, and this is said to account for the demonstrable local opposition. F.O.R.G.E argued that there was significant support in the area for the industry. They claimed that "local opposition is being whipped up using poor science" (Ibid), articulating that activists and protestors as deliberately misleading the local community who were generally either supportive or indifferent. Third Energy also articulated this element, that local residents developed misunderstandings "in relation to information and opinions obtained from the internet" (Third Energy, 2015b: 421). A local councillor described the anti-fracking groups as promoting "scare stories" and promoting "Project Fear" to a public who "haven't got a strong opinion".[49]. During the pre-application consultation, it was claimed that:

""Frack Free Ryedale (FFR) members staged small protest demonstrations (about 5-8 people) outside of each of the four consultations. Some of FFR chose to participate in the consultation, with some FFR members enjoying Third Energy hospitality whilst spending lengthy periods discussing the proposed project with senior members of the Applicant's project team." (Third Energy, 2015b: 88)

What this example shows, is the company articulating themselves as part of an open and participatory approach to the process that listens to local views in contrast to the activists. Pro-fracking groups like F.O.R.G.E. simultaneously argued that the anti-fracking groups were scaring and misleading residents.

As in the Lancashire case, anti-frackers' attempted to show their own local credentials, but they also articulated the local planning process as being disrupted by the national government. It is suggested by objectors at the Committee meeting that there is "some pressure from Central government for local councillors" (North

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[49] Councillor voting for fracking

Yorkshire County Council, 2016a). Both the pro and anti-fracking formations problematize the planning process, as subject to interference from activists (as distinct from the local community), or from national government. In both articulations, the local is taken as sacrosanct in decision making, as both positions try to connect their articulations of fracking with the views of the 'local community'. Beebeejaun (2019) argues from her fieldwork on the Lancashire case that the emphasis on the local limits political debate, and yet the legitimacy it grants is something that is fiercely contested in terms of identity as well as the scale of the issues discussed.

What this contestation does show is the increasingly antagonistic nature of this debate, contesting the 'local', attacking the opposing side and problematizing the planning system. The next contestation gives a sense of how the local is linked to a particular issue and given content.

Contesting the Local Economy: *Tourism and Agriculture vs History of Extraction*

Beyond who best represents the 'local' community, there was a related contestation of the local economy. Gas (in general) was articulated in the pro-fracking formation as embedded within the local economy, co-existing with other areas. Anti-fracking groups articulated shale gas fracking specifically as a threat to other aspects of the local economy – particularly tourism and agriculture.

The local anti-fracking groups argued the presence of a shale gas industry would deter tourists, by changing the character of the area as well as increasing the risk of seismicity and of water contamination (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b; North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b). Objectors refer to a redacted DEFRA document that was released in full the previous year (Unknown Author, 2015) that warned against potential impacts on tourism from fracking if an area became known as a shale gas field with multiple well sites. Anti-fracking groups highlighted the fact that the Third Energy traffic assessment did not consider the seasonal impact on the nearby Flamingo Land theme park (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b) combined with the traffic flows to the KM8 site. Figure 6.5 below shows the Flamingo Land site (outlined at the top) in relation to the KM8 site (bottom left).

Figure 6.5 Image of site in relation to Flamingo Land attraction. Source: (Hayhurst, 2016a)

Third Energy drew upon its history in the area to argue that both the tourism and the agriculture industry managed to co-exist alongside gas extraction for decades (Third Energy, 2015b: 526). The company argued that the gas industry alongside the rest of the local economy "collectively contribute to socio-economics with sustained growth both in property prices and tourism" (Ibid: 510). When summing up, the chairman of the committee accepted this argument that both agriculture and tourism had thrived alongside gas extraction over the last few decades (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b). The company had a long-term working relationship with the local authority and were able to point to a good track record when addressing the planners. [50].

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[50] Fracking company worker (KM8)

The record of the industry was challenged by Frack Free Kirby Misperton, who made reference to a previous gas leak from the applicant:

> **"**There was a serious incident, some years ago, remembered by local people in Kirby Misperton and Little Barugh when a gas escape caused everyone to have to close all doors and windows for twenty four hours. We believe this was in 2008 but cannot be sure" (Frack Free Kirby Misperton, 12th October 2015)." (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a)

The evidence here is obviously anecdotal; though there is an attempt to question the record of the operator and its value to the local area. Local groups argued that the KM8 site was the start of wider project for fracking, which would industrialise the area and effect the "peace and tranquillity enjoyed by those residing there" (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b). Frack Free Ryedale argued that there was a failure of the company to appreciate "the level of value afforded to the Vale of Pickering where this application is located" (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015:70). Objectors and local groups argued that fracking was novel in comparison to the existing gas wells and so would impact the local economy and area in different ways (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b)

Ultimately, the argument that shale gas would effectively 'industrialise the countryside' in such a way that would damage tourism and the local economy was undermined by key local sites broadly accepting the pro-fracking position. In their initial objection, Flamingo Land stated that:

"the Anti-fracking' campaign is lacking in tangible evidence and/or case studies from scenarios which back-up their arguments" (Flamingo Land, 2015: n.p.)

They went on to object on the grounds that multiple sites in the area could be detrimental to the business by changing the perception of the area, acknowledging that this was not a material consideration. Weeks before the decision, however, the company had a change of heart and raised several objections. The primary issue they cited was that Third Energy had misled them on the onsite treatment of water – Flamingo Land claimed they were told that flow back water would be taken off site for treatment and had since realised this was not true (Hayhurst, 2016d). They cited multiple peer reviewed studies on the dangers of fracking, which is a significant volte

face from the initial objection above which looks more like an element of pro-fracking discourse.

That the company initially distanced themselves from an anti-fracking position undermined the local economy element from the anti-fracking groups though, whereas Third Energy were able to articulate their embeddedness in the local economy. Third Energy could point to the fact they had operated alongside Flamingo Land (and the rest of the local area) for years without causing any problems beyond those raised anecdotally. Third Energy offered multiple mitigations such as specific times of operations as planning conditions that would work around the tourism and agriculture industries (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a: 228). In this way, the risk to the local economy element of the anti-fracking discourse was mediated as the planning officer accepted the conditions.

Contesting Knowledge Claims: *Water contamination vs Strong Regulation*

The risk of water contamination is an element of the anti-fracking discursive formation, and the contestation over this particular issue is one that saw rival knowledge claims mobilised against each other. The pro-fracking position articulated the strength and expertise of regulations, as ensuring the safety of the process. The anti-fracking groups cited expert opinion that the potential for water contamination had been under-estimated by the company.

The issue of water contamination is twofold. The first potential problem raised, was that the fracking 'slickwater' could have escaped into the local water supply via a faulty well or surface spillage. The second relates to the treatment and disposal of water once it has flowed back to the surface, containing both the fracking chemicals and radioactive particles (called NORMS). Both issues featured in multiple objections (Frack Free Kirby Misperton, 2015; Friends of the Earth, 2015; Unknown Author, 2015). For example, Frack Free Ryedale hired a water consultant and argued that:

"there is an absence of discussion on local groundwater flow directions surrounding or immediately beneath the site, vertical variations in water table elevations between strata" (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b: 59)

The objection from Friends of the Earth (2015) also went into detailed criticism of Third Energy's proposals on managing water and cites potential points where watercourses and aquifers could be contaminated. They urged the local authority to follow the "precautionary principle" for fracking, as they claimed it was not clear it could be conducted safely (Friends of the Earth, 2015). An activist in North Yorkshire argued that pollution of various types was a key element within the anti-fracking discourse:

"so a lot of people coming in for different reasons, things that drive them, but ultimately I think as a movement, it's the pollution risk, and I can't say that categorically that speaks for everybody else, but that's the one common thing that runs through every community"[51].

Within the planning process, the responsible company Yorkshire Water were clear in their submission that supplies would not come into contact with hazardous fracking fluid. The Environment Agency said the risk was incredibly low as the site was too far away from any potable water supplies and they believed that the plans put forward by Third Energy mitigated any risks of groundwater contamination (membrane under site, storage and removal of flowback). In the Committee meeting, pro-frackers were therefore able to claim:

"There would be maximum protection against possible contamination from the well itself and the details of this protection had been to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency, demonstrated by the issuing of their permits in relation to water discharge." (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b)

As covered in Chapter 5 and in 6.1, planning guidance is to assume the regulation will work sufficiently. The Committee members, as well as the planning officer (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a: 158) have to accept that, once a permit is granted, the issue of water contamination is not a possible point of rejection for the site. The contestation over water contamination pitted competing knowledge claims against

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[51] KM8 Activist 2

each other. There was a presumed objectivity from both sides of the debate – the anti-fracking groups were trying to show that there are still 'pathways' within the plans for water to be contaminated, whereas the pro-fracking groups claimed that the risk was minimal to non-existent of contamination occurring.

What this contestation reflects is a breakdown of trust within this case (which I unpack further below), further entrenching the difference between the anti-fracking and pro-fracking discourses. The technical contestation is important here, the anti-fracking groups' claims on water are articulated through an evidence-based assessment, and the subsequent dismissal of this within the committee report prompted one councillor to argue that:

"He considered the [Planning officer's] report relied on the applicant, their consultants and the statutory consultees more heavily than the expert knowledge imparted by those in opposition to the application. He considered that the report should have given more weight to those objections." (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b)

The regulatory bodies were taken to be responsible for monitoring the impact on water, so it was not an issue for planning. Objectors, however, drew upon examples, raised expert testimony and emphasized the 'precautionary principle'. What is most striking about this contestation is that there are clearly competing scientific, technical accounts of the impact of fracking at KM8. Articulating a 'precautionary principle' is a means of highlighting the 'facts' on fracking are yet to be established. The government guidance, to take the expert view of the regulators as given, is one that lead some 'neutral' actors like the councillor to challenge the guidance as 'political' interference. A local councillor interviewed argued that the pressure and restrictions from central government actually made it a more antagonistic issue:

"[the process was} like a pressure cooker, we were under, as a planning committee, looking at this, and feeling a bit aggrieved that the government was saying -sorry, you can't question that, because we'd decided, and it was the first time I'd ever know that in 20/30 years on the planning committee, that they actually said you can't question this because the EA say its ok"[52].

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[52] Councillor voting against

The regulators and the pro-fracking actors were convinced the claims over water contamination are unfounded, yet the restrictions placed on the debate here undermines the trust in the process and the trust in the knowledge claims of experts. Interestingly, this is acknowledged by the fracking company worker who identified the problem of "political interventions":

"which are not in many cases technically grounded, but politically formulated if you like, the very good rules that we have in the country, are, one being ignored, and all these additional things are being added onto them because they don't believe that they work right, and they do work right, and there are enough planners to actually progress the work never mind the extra work they are now getting over and above what they had before, so the whole thing is a bit of a mess."[53].

This response highlights that the tightening up of the guidance by government actually problematized and politicised the fracking issue. Both pro and neutral actors suggest that the social practice of planning with its 'very good rules' (in the quote above) will lead to approval for fracking sites provided planners and governance bodies have the time and resources to assess industry proposals, although they do not rule out councillors rejecting finding reasons to reject sites under public pressure. It may be that 'water contamination' was pushed as an issue by anti-frackers because of its resonance, and the technical work was the necessary work to establish this as a problem within the techno-managerial practice of planning. Nevertheless, both sides mobilised competing expert knowledge claims over water contamination, and the anti-fracking element was disarticulated as the regulatory assessment was in agreement with the fracking company. The limits placed by the *Planning Practice Guidance* on discussion lead to a lack of trust in the decision-making process, as the limits amount to an arbitrary intervention into the evidence-based deliberation typical of a techno-managerial practice.

Contesting National Importance and Policy: National Need and a New Burden of Proof

A written ministerial statement (WMS) in September 2015 (Rudd, 2015) set out the

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[53] Fracking Company worker (KM8)

'national need' for shale gas and affirmed the strength of national policy support for the industry. The statement shifted the burden of proof for a local planning issue from the case study in 6.1 (the statement was a reaction to the Lancashire decisions). Following the WMS, a reason to reject had to be significant enough that it would outweigh the 'national need' for gas. Such ministerial statements were increasingly used following the 'localism' reforms, though their legal status has been contested (as I show below). This particular statement is an important intervention in the shift from the post-political to the authoritarian, and I will expand on the significance of it further in the section on the Lancashire inquiry (6.3). Here, I will address the issue of noise pollution as an example of a local planning issue (one which was key to the PNR rejection) which was diminished by the WMS as well as the challenge to the statement's declaration of a 'national need' for gas on environmental grounds.

The problem of noise pollution was an issue within the planning process at KM8; though it was limited by the shorter construction time for the site relative to PNR. Objectors argued that the noise would "cause distress to local residents" (Frack Free Kirby Misperton, 2015) particularly during the drilling period, where levels were set to be as high as those within a nightclub (Unknown Author, 2015). The drilling period was only expected to last 8 weeks due to it being on an existing wellsite, and this limited timespan allowed the company to make the case that this was a minimal amount of disruption.

The company argued that they followed national guidance and guidelines by proposing mitigation with a noise barrier (Third Energy, 2015b: 431), and the local authority proposed some further limitations on noise levels for the drilling process from the applicant (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a: 44). Objectors argued that baseline levels of noise were not appropriate for the quiet rural context, and that the upper limit suggested doesn't take account of the tranquillity of the place (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b: 63). Additionally, the government had also further established the 'national need' for shale gas in the WMS (Rudd, 2015). The statement reinforced the weight of national policy and the burden of proof in arguing for a local issue as it was a (self-declared) material consideration for planning. Additionally, as a local councillor argued:

"every local authority has this sword of Damocles hanging over its head, if they'd have rejected it and the applicant had of gone on appeal, and they'd approved it and

the inspector approved it, they could have hit the county council with huge damages"[54].

 The re-affirmed 'national need' for shale gas as a material consideration for planning, as well as the presumption in favour of sustainable development (in the NPPF), means a significant level of proof was required for a local problem or issue to stop a fracking site being developed. The statement meant that it was harder to justify reasonable grounds for a rejection which would avoid the extra costs associated with the appeal (i.e. of paying the companies legal fees).

The 'national need' itself was contested in the process. During the committee meeting one councillor challenged the 'national interest' argument, claiming that national policy is "incoherent" as it was "incompatible with current views on climate change" (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b). The problem of GhG impact was taken up further after the decision was approved. A judicial review brought by Frack Free Ryedale and Friends of the Earth argued that the local authority had failed to assess the climate impact as they did not have the full information of the GhG emissions of the project.

 In the KM8 case, the 'separation of stages' from government policy was not applied; instead the site would be linked to the local gas power station for electricity production combining several stages. This would mean little 'flaring' at the site as the use of gas in production was not considered part of the overall emissions. As with PNR, the total emissions are presented as a percentage of national CO_2 emissions (0.0014%). This figure only included the emissions from the construction process, traffic from HGVs etc., rather than gas produced. It was accepted as a figure in the Officer's report (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016a: 32). The Frack Free Ryedale objection argued that "neglecting the CO_2 emissions of gas produced from the project is misleading" (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b: 68). It was further stated that "it was not the responsibility of the Planning Authority to expect an applicant to deal with climate change issues" (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016b).

The judicial review brought by Friends of the Earth and Frack Free Ryedale found that the council had assessed the emissions fairly. The review found that the

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[54] Councillor voted against

application was not for the gas power plant, did not require extra development at the site, the actual impact was too hard to quantify and the emissions from produced gas was not in the council's scoping report. Ultimately, the decision to not include emissions was deemed to be a matter of the council's judgement; however, the judge's ruling showed that there was nothing misleading or unlawful about their actions (Hayhurst, 2016e).

It is notable that the problem of the GhG emissions from a shale industry seemed to be stuck in limbo between different layers of government. The 'national need' position could not be contested at the planning level, nor did the local authority have to consider the impact of gas production when approving a site if they did not deem it necessary. The written statement also increased the burden of proof for a local issue like noise being used in a rejection of a fracking site, effectively negating anything but the most severe problems. Counter-intuitively, the national need dovetailed neatly with 'localism'. Planning practice tends to valorise the local, meaning that activists adapted their articulations to fit within these rules. Consequently, the anti-frackers would have had to have identified a hugely significant local issue to trump a 'national need'. The burden of proof is raised which disarticulates a local issue like noise, and this burden of proof combined with the ping-pong of greenhouse gas responsibility meant any 'climate change impact' element was negated. This was the first usage of this written ministerial statement in a planning decision, and it plays an even more important role in the inquiry I cover in 6.3

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6.2.3 Anti and Pro-fracking formations
There are similarities across the two local cases in terms of the elements of the different formations. In the KM8 case, however, the pro-fracking position is structured around the existing gas industry delivered by a reliable local company.

Table 6.5 Anti and Pro fracking positions in the KM8 case

	Anti-Fracking	**Pro-Fracking**
Nodal Points	Risk to local area	Gas is part of local area
Subject Position	Local Community	Locally embedded company
Actors	Frack Free Ryedale, Frack Free Kirby Misperton, parish and district councils, Yorkshire wildlife trust (fit to frack), Friends of the Earth	Third Energy, F.O.R.G.E.
Resources	NGO support, consultancy	Barclays bank as main investor, consultancy
Chain of equivalence	**Risk to Local area –** Water contamination – weak/not joined up regulation – house prices – Damage local economy (tourism and agriculture) - Earthquakes– Damage to rural life (traffic, industrial activity) – Climate change impact - Pollution (noise, air, light) – Precautionary Principle	**Gas is part of local area–** Limited time of development (8 weeks) – Local history of gas extraction - Strong regulations (e.g. on water) – Community Benefits – National need for gas

The anti-fracking 'chain of equivalence' is unsurprisingly similar to PNR/RW and is based around the same nodal point that fracking is a **risk to the local area**. In the Yorkshire case there is a greater emphasis on the local economic impact due to the proximity of the site to a tourist attraction. In this case, the group Frack Free Ryedale hired a consultancy to produce an overall assessment of the proposals (KVA Planning Consultancy, 2015b). The local plan being significantly out of date made it harder for the anti-fracking groups, with the NPPF and other national policy having a more central role. The anti-fracking groups in this case also had to contend with the written ministerial statement that established a 'national need', which they attempted to contest through judicial review and which left the issue of greenhouse

gas emissions disarticulated in such a way as it becomes ambiguous as to who is responsible for considering it. This is a marked change from the Lancashire case, where carbon budgets and the separation of stages for fracking (national policies) were used to claim the emissions impact was minimal – with KM8 the claim was that the decisions on emissions are in part at the discretion of the local council as well as the government's 'national need' statement.

The pro-fracking formation for KM8 differs from Lancashire, as the company were able to articulate their local embeddedness, and because they could claim an even more 'temporary' nature of the development as it involved re-developing an existing gas wellsite for fracking. The formation is structured around the nodal point that **gas is part of the local area**. Third Energy had a good reputation and working relationship with the local council and could point to their existing gas sites co-existing with agriculture, tourism and the local communities.

The contestation of the subject position of the 'local' is, like in Lancashire, one over legitimacy. Anti-frackers articulate government intervention as against local wishes; in response we see that the company and pro-fracking groups argued that protestors were irrational and unscientific and disrupting or even intimidating the local residents. There is a clear articulation of the activist/local divide in this case, something becomes a more prominent part of the fracking discourse. Whilst the 'national need' is introduced here, and helps to fix the pro-fracking formation, the formation is ultimately structured around the embeddedness of gas in the area with KM8 then contributing to the 'national need'.

I will now briefly cover the neutral formation and discuss the way the elements of the 'pro' and 'anti' formations are treated in this case.

6.2.4 The Neutral formation and the Decision

The neutral formation is broadly similar to the PNR/RW case; though there is a stronger articulation of the polarisation and the politicisation of the issue more generally. The neutral discursive formation in Table 6.6 is modified to include this focus (italicised).

Table 6.6 Neutral formation in KM8 case

Feature	Element/moment
Nodal Points	Fracking is safe
Subject Position	Public/civil servants: Planner, Councillor, Regulator
Institutions	LPA, Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, North Yorkshire County Council, Public Health (local and national), North Yorkshire Police
Resources	State funded, fees from developers
Moments of discourse	**Process is safe when regulated**– UK has good regulation (unlike the U.S.)–– Need to consult and provided public information – National Policy supports (shale) gas – Neutral on principle of fracking –– *Project Fear / scare stories from objectors- Process under pressure from government- Planners in impossible situation/ Issue deeply polarised*

I have italicised these new elements of the discourse in comparison to PNR/RW. The neutral formation in the KM8 case had clearer articulations of potential problems for the planning-regulatory process. The role of protestor 'scare stories' and government interventions (from legislation to the community benefits scheme) were problematized as disrupting the planning process and undermining public trust, and the local authority was articulated as caught in the middle of this politicisation. The neutral position, validated by judicial review, was that the planning rules were followed, and that the outcome was fair even if the political tension undermined the social practice of planning.

The argument from councillors (and the company as shown above) was that the government's continued intervention was *undermining* the pro-fracking discourse. As detailed in 6.2.2, there was a belief that the current regulation and policies support fracking, and that the government intervention confused the issue as a councillor argued:

"you got mixed messages from the government, you see - first of all saying - this is the answer to all of our problems, and then saying, well perhaps you didn't ought to frack there and we didn't ought to frack there, so all these things were coming in

after, you know while the application was being processed, and so I just felt unhappy about it, I felt that we hadn't got enough information, hadn't considered, all the issues that I felt were important."[55].

A planner from a nearby authority further emphasised that the process was suffering from political polarisation and intervention:

"the objectors are obviously very polarised at one end, the industry's very polarised at the other end, there's such a big gap between them, it's almost a kind of impasse."[56].

And further:

"the same happens with fracking in terms of the payments to the local community, that's a kind of interesting one, because they're almost saying that the planning system is not enough, they are almost having to coerce communities to take it with hard cash."[57].

The interviewee did, like almost every interviewee, sympathise with the planning officer in the process, and argued that a participatory process was followed:

"I'm sure the industry would say it was too slow, and too many people said too many things, but at the end of the day it kind of did deliver, a decision, and it involved a lot of public being able to have their say, they may not feel that democracy was followed, but democracy isn't just purely, going with the largest number of people, in a planning perspective, because the planning framework sets the boundaries of what planning can do."[58].

This quotation shows how participation was argued to be the important legitimating aspect of the process. The final decision may ultimately be unpopular but the important thing for planning is that people are able to have their say - even if these deliberations take time.

Despite the participatory and consultative nature of the process, future antagonism was anticipated and built into the planning process. The submission from North Yorkshire Police (2015) argued that Third Energy had not sufficiently assessed the

[55] Councillor voting against
[56] Neighbouring authority planner
[57] Neighbouring authority planner
[58] Neighbouring authority planner

impact of protests at the site, and that there was a high likelihood of disruption. To manage this, they requested that a footpath be closed near the site that would allow protestors access to the road for direct action. Notably, their response cited examples from Barton Moss, showing the learning process of policing fracking protests that connects with the planning process; policing protest is as an impact that needs to be anticipated and managed.

Despite the antagonistic nature of the contestations, a decision was reached that also stood up to judicial review. As with the Lancashire case, much of the anti-fracking formation was disarticulated or negated. Table 6.7 summarises the processing of the anti-fracking chain of equivalence in this case:

Table 6.7 Treatment of anti-fracking chain in KM8 planning process

Risk to Local area	
Water contamination	**Disarticulated:** Covered by regulators, Planning Practice Guidance says LPA must accept, plus new WMS burden of proof
Weak/not joined up regulation	
Health impacts	
Wildlife impact	
'Precautionary Principle'	
House prices	**Negated:** Suppressed Defra report raised, but still not a planning concern
Local economy (Tourism and Agriculture)	**Negated:** Gas extraction has sat alongside these industries for years
Earthquakes	**Negated:** TLS to monitor, experts dismissed
Climate change impact	**Negated:** Council judged no need to consider production emissions, judicial review upheld.
Pollution (noise, air, light) and Traffic	**Mediated:** 40 conditions added to permission to limit impacts/ 8-week period due to existing site **Disarticulated:** National Need, new burden of proof
Damage to Rural life (traffic, industrialise countryside)	**Disarticulated:** Area already industrialised

As Table 6.7 shows, each element of the anti-fracking formation was disarticulated, mediated or negated in the KM8 case. The key difference between PNR was a shifting burden of proof for a local issue from the written ministerial statement. The problem of air, light, noise or traffic impacts were either mediated through an extensive set of

planning conditions or disarticulated by not being substantial enough to weigh against a national need.

The element of the more general impact on rural life or 'industrialising the countryside' was limited by the local embeddedness of the company. The anti-fracking actors attempt to link their discursive formation with the 'local community' subject position was disrupted, as the company could legitimately claim to be locally embedded having been working in the local area for decades (unlike Cuadrilla). The anti-frackers could not articulate fracking as delivered by a distant company against the local community, and Third Energy were able to point to their own safe and successful industrial activity in the area. Table 6.8 below shows the treatment of the pro-fracking formation:

Table 6.8 Treatment of pro-fracking discourse in KM8 case

Gas is part of local area	
Limited time of development (8 weeks)	**Accepted** as mitigation for various local impacts (noise, light pollution e.g.) by planner, with conditions attached
Strong Regulations	**Accepted** as given due to PPG and regulatory body consultations
Local History of extraction (embeddedness in economy)	**Accepted** by planners and councillors as support for limited negative impact on local economy
Community Benefits	**Disarticulated:** Not to be considered for planning, and made clear this was the case in the committee meeting
Need for Gas	**Accepted** as government policy, reinforced by WMS

The pro-fracking position was dominant within this case, with the neutral actors largely accepted even the highly contested pro-fracking elements. Despite this, the planning process and the role of both government and activists were problematised, and the contestations were increasingly antagonistic. I will discuss these aspects further in the analysis.

6.2.5 Analysis of KM8 case

The KM8 decision came nearly a year after the PNR/RW decision. During this time, a new statement had been made on fracking to affirm national policy. Those involved in this decision had the knowledge of the outcome of the PNR/RW case and had likely seen or read about the inquiry I will cover in the next section. This case study still shows a broadly techno-managerial practice, albeit a practice dealing with increasingly antagonistic discursive formations. The practice is legitimised though being participatory and deliberative; however, the limits placed on the local authority by government intervention mean that the planning process is increasingly problematized – particularly for its failure to address GhG emissions. The practice of planning is still post-political and provides a significant barrier to the anti-fracking movement, but this approach increasingly lacks legitimacy. I will take each of the different logics in turn.

First, I characterise the process as being techno-managerial, in that decisions were justified along technical grounds and expert led processes. The planning process, however, was problematized *across* the discursive formations. The fracking company and 'neutral' actors argue that the policy and process of planning are basically sufficient to manage the risks and impacts of the site, however the highly contested nature of the sites, government intervention and lack of resources for planning meant the 'proper' deliberative evidence-based process was undermined by political interference. In PNR/RW, the planning process was critiqued because the political and emotional language of the anti-frackers is taken to have corrupted the rational process (particularly the councillors); in the KM8 case the problem was also articulated as a lack of support and resources to manage a controversial case of two polarised positions. As a local conservation charity interviewee specified:

"I think what I would change within the planning system is more resources, and less...in some ways the NPPF is useful in that, but the trouble is that there's all these different paragraphs in it that are mutually contradictory"[59].

Policy and resources are seen as insufficient in supporting a techno-managerial practice, which those regularly involved in planning practice see as under strain.

Second, following from this is the 'polarisation' of the fracking issue in this case. The problem of polarisation is one that is driven by the government's active involvement.

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[59] North Yorkshire charity

In being definitively part of the pro-fracking discourse and using central government power to intervene in decision-making (through the written ministerial statement), the government placed itself in an antagonistic relation with objectors and (potentially) local councils that are seen to side with the objectors. A consensus seeking logic of planning practice was increasingly difficult to maintain in this context. The presence of the more aggressive pro-fracking groups and the references to intimidation and aggressive behaviour from these and anti-frackers too is an outcome of this antagonism being deepened rather than resolved in any consensual way. It is notable that the language used to describe the anti-fracking groups in 6.2.4 has some similarities with language used around Brexit and the polarisation there (e.g. 'Project Fear'). There is less of a win-win solution articulated in the KM8 case, and the continued contestation of climate change and emissions as well as of the 'national need' suggest that the development of a fracking industry meant taking a side – both of which had some expert opinion behind them as I show in the contestation of knowledge claims in 6.2.2.

Third, the decision making is still supported by a fantasmic logic of participation. As much as anti-frackers were frustrated with the outcome, the local authority could show that they consulted widely and imposed multiple conditions on the applicant. Opposing evidence was considered, and a wide range of stakeholder views were included. The key change from PNR/RW was that, with the written statement, the burden of proof to reject a site had increased significantly and the local plan lacked up to date policy on onshore extraction. The social practice of planning was being problematized, the political logic increasingly antagonistic, but the participatory fantasy of planning still gave legitimacy to the local authority decision because both sides had been given a chance to 'have their say'.

The structuring fantasy of participation is, however, increasingly insufficient to legitimate decision making beyond those regularly involved in the planning-regulatory process (i.e., the 'neutral' actors). For this particular contestation, there was an acceptance of the industry figures on CO_2 and refusal to discuss evidence which contested the figures – which later became the subject of the judicial review. The judge supported the planning committee's decision, though all this meant was that the issue of climate change was left floating in terms of responsibility. It was unclear whether GhG impact was simply a matter of energy/environmental policy or

something to be publicly deliberated over site by site. This quotation from an activist articulates the problematisation of post-political planning practice in this case:

"[from the start we said] this is going to end up as direct action campaign, we've got to go through the process, it's really important that we recognise that we can't just be like, we're going to blockade you, we need to fight this at planning, and then we need to go-to court and we need to explore every avenue, and from my perspective that's fucking bullshit, because we knew the whole time that it was essentially wasted energy and that they weren't going to listen to us, and…it's all very well if you're a professional body, and you're going through these motions, but this is people's lives, none of us are getting paid for this, in fact the opposite, we were putting our own money and time and energy and time away from our families, and stress, into trying to tick these boxes, and it didn't matter".[60].

In less contentious cases, it may have been enough to accept that the decision had been made, and that people had their say. In this case, however, direct action would in fact be the next step of the contestation of KM8 as fracking was seen by activists as a front line against ecological disaster. In challenging how climate change was considered, the contestation moved beyond the issue of fracking, to question the planning-regulatory process and the extent to which is participatory in any meaningful sense (if evidence is dismissed out of hand etc.). So, whilst the participatory fantasmic logic is still maintained by most of the 'neutral' actors, the planning process is critiqued for allowing both too much space for the disruptive anti-fracking actors (e.g. by F.O.R.G.E) and conversely for deliberation and consultation being a performative process by activists as the quotation above addresses.

I will bring together the two studies into an overall analysis of Phase 2 in 6.4. Before that, I return again to the Lancashire case and the appeal inquiry to the local council decision. The WMS intervention takes a more central role in this decision, as the antagonism between pro and anti deepens, and the post-political regime faces a crisis of legitimacy.

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[60] KM8 Activist 1

6.3 THE APPEAL INQUIRY INTO THE TWO LANCASHIRE DECISIONS

Phase 2 ends with the result of the inquiry into the PNR/RW decision. Following the result of the inquiry anti-fracking groups across England increasingly took up direct action and the government proposed further interventions to support fracking (as Chapter 7 shows). The planning appeal inquiry took place between the 9th of February and the 16th of March 2016. It was a public event held at Blackpool Football Club, with protesters regularly gathering outside and attended by national media. It was livestreamed online. For both Cuadrilla and the anti-fracking movement, this was a key test of the shale gas industry's viability.

The inquiry was overseen by the Planning Inspectorate, an executive agency in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Lancashire County Council and Cuadrilla were represented by their barristers. Preston New Road Action Group, Roseacre Awareness Group and Friends of the Earth also had barristers to represent the anti-fracking position and several of the parish councillors represented their objections (Hayhurst, 2016c). North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce spoke in favour of the sites (Ibid). The inquiry decision, which was ultimately taken by the Secretary of State, was to overturn the Lancashire County Council decision on Preston New Road citing the 'national need' (in the WMS introduced above) for shale gas as having greater weight than any local issues raised. Roseacre Wood would be the subject of a further inquiry limited specifically to its traffic problem.

This inquiry is a key moment within the shale gas fracking case. The government specifically intervened after the PNR/RW decisions to determine the national need for shale and to strengthen the case for shale gas within planning decisions (Bradshaw and Waite, 2017). The inquiry revisited many of the issues in the original decision. What I focus on in this section is the political tension between the local and the national levels of planning and government, specifically: the national need for gas and climate change commitments (6.3.1), the critique of local government in the inquiry and ministerial statements (6.3.2), and the contestation over possible futures of the shale gas industry (6.3.3). Each of these contestations relates to the written ministerial statement (WMS) on shale gas introduced above (Rudd, 2015), which is an executive intervention into the planning process. A second statement was also

made simultaneously by Greg Clark (2015) which proposed greater Ministerial involvement in future decisions, which I cover in 6.3.2.

I argue that the inquiry is an important moment of dislocation, and that the overturning of the Lancashire County Council decision leads the anti-fracking groups to argue the planning process is anti-democratic. The decision at the inquiry hinges on the Rudd WMS. The statement takes on an even greater importance in the quasi-judicial appeal inquiry for Preston New Road and Roseacre Wood. The inquiry shows how the WMS, as an executive intervention, is linked to a critique of the participatory and deliberative practices of the post-political regime. What I argue is that overturning the Lancashire council PNR decision, based on a statement introduced *in reaction to* the PNR decision, made it increasingly difficult to legitimately claim that planning was a participatory process. The WMS is an executive intervention that shifts the rules of planning in favour of the industry, and this is an important moment in the drift towards an authoritarian regime for planning based on some of the critiques I outline here.

Records of the day to day debates at the inquiry are not publicly available from the Inspectorate. Throughout this chapter, I draw upon the daily record made by independent journalist Ruth Hayhurst (2016c). The in-text references to the inquiry in the following section are from this source and follow the format on the web page in the citation - (Day X, Time in 12hr format XX.XX) –as this is the most comprehensive publicly available record. I focus only on three contestations from the inquiry, which show the importance of the executive intervention (the WMS) and the emerging government critique of the post-political regime rather than the debates that revisited the issues in 6.1.

6.3.1 The National Need for Shale Gas

The Cuadrilla representatives argued that there was a 'national need' for shale gas based on a written ministerial statement (WMS). Within two months of the PNR/RW decision, a public statement was made (Rudd and Clark, 2015) which was followed up four weeks later by a written ministerial statement (Rudd, 2015) to Parliament once it re-opened after the summer recess which formalised the initial statement.

This WMS declared a "national need to explore our shale gas and oil reserves in a safe, and sustainable and timely way" (Rudd, 2015). It restated that the planning process should not question the regulatory system, and it stated that shale "could potentially bring substantial benefits and help meet our objectives for secure energy supplies, economic growth and lower carbon emissions." (Ibid).

The Rudd WMS fixed the pro-fracking elements into a clear and formalised *moment* which the neutral actors are compelled to take seriously. The WMS claimed that the shale has industry will provide 64,500 jobs, £33billion of investment, help with balance of payments, as well as be the "bridge to renewable energy" (Rudd, 2015). Such ministerial statements were being increasingly declared as material considerations[61] by the government at the time, with a High Court judgement in 2013 affirming that in principle the statements can in principle be material considerations (Yildiz, 2013). That said, the content of any particular statement could be challenged and contested; resulting in several legal cases where statements were found to be unlawful (e.g. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government vs West Berkshire District Council and another, 2016). I therefore refer to the WMS as a 'pseudo' policy, in that it took the role of a policy within planning, without going through a policy formation process (Chapter 7 shows how this statement faced its own legal challenges). The use of the WMS in this inquiry is perhaps the highest profile and decisive use of this type of planning intervention to date. It establishes the dominance of pro-fracking elements as well as increasing the burden of proof for anti-fracking groups as I showed in 6.2.

In the inquiry the content and significance of the statement was contested as well as its relative weight in the decisions. Anti-fracking representatives in the inquiry argued directly against the WMS, saying it failed to account for the greenhouse gas impact of fracking in general and of the sites. An expert witness for Friends of the Earth argued the Climate Change Act (2008) meant that:

"Opportunities must be taken seriously and that there is no space in planning practice for the argument that decision makers can leave greenhouse gas emissions for others to tackle (somewhere else, on another occasion)." (Day 12, 12.09)

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[61] 'Material considerations' are the significant considerations outside of local plans and government policy. In principle, anything can be a material consideration for/against a proposal, new material considerations are tested and established by legal precedent.

"The argument cannot be entertained that a development's greenhouse gas emissions amount only to a 'drop in the ocean' and therefore be given little weight in a decision." (Day 12, 12:09)

The Friends of the Earth barrister, summing up, said:

"The written ministerial statement does not favour high volume hydraulic fracturing in the United Kingdom above other methods of obtaining shale gas. Nor does it operate to create a presumption in favour of developments such as these proposals. Nor does it displace the Development Plan. Nor does it reduce the statutory duties under the Climate Change Act 2008. Nor is the Ministerial Statement akin to policy that has been tested by formal public consultation." (Hayhurst, 2016b)

Friends of the Earth also pointed out that, since the WMS, the U.K. had signed up to the Paris Climate Change Agreement. That said, Friends of the Earth's opening statement acknowledged that in planning terms the inquiry was not the place to challenge the government's position, rather that problems with the specific sites ought to form the reasons to reject them:

"The broad government support for shale gas does not mean that these particular developments, in these specific locations, concerning this type of extraction, must be permitted." (Dehon and Lewin, 2016)

Further, Lancashire County Council had also agreed in a statement of common ground the importance of the WMS as a material consideration, arguing only over its relative weight (Planning Inspectorate for England and Wales, 2016). As the representative for Cuadrilla argued, whatever anyone thought of the WMS, it was a material consideration. On the WMS:

"I don't care what you call it. It is a material consideration. It must carry very considerable weight. It is very recent, and it says that this type of development is in the national need. It must be given very considerable weight." (Cuadrilla representative, Day 10, 10.58)

Conversely, the Lancashire council representative argued that Cuadrilla had placed "exaggerated weight" (Day 19, 12.22) on the WMS, and question to what extent it applies to the considerations within this particular appeal – as the specific reasons for rejection are not based on challenging the idea of any national need. Much of the

debate in the inquiry was focused on the relative weight. Anti-fracking representatives argued that:

"A national need will not always trump local impacts and local impacts could trump a national need" (Day 19, 5.22).

With Roseacre Wood, this would be the case – the local traffic problem would trump the national need. With PNR however, no such problem could be identified, a representative from the inquiry argued:

"I think it was challenging because of the policy context, [...] the government are very, very pro-fracking, and they're entitled to take this view, and the planning inspector has to take this into account, so your starting from the basis that the government is saying this is a good development in principle, and you have to say why it's a bad development in this location but that aside they had a fair shout and they presented a good case, [...], and it's just unfortunate the decision went against them."[62].

The question was whether the local impacts are taken to be so significant that they mean the site is not suitable even given the 'national need', which like I showed in 6.2.2. raised the burden of proof for local issues against sites. The WMS fixed pro-fracking elements as a pseudo-policy test to be overcome. The importance of the WMS is articulated in the final decision document:

"The Secretary of State considers that the need for shale gas exploration set out in the WMS reflects, among other things, the Government's objectives in the WMS, in that it could help to achieve lower carbon emissions and help meet its climate change target" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2016: 9)

"He further agrees that the need for shale gas exploration is a material consideration of great weight in these appeals" (Ibid: 8)

"How the Government may choose to adapt its energy policies is a matter for possible future consideration. If thought necessary, this could be addressed through future national policy. These are not matters that fall to be considered in these appeals." (Ibid: 7)

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[62] Representative of AF at inquiry

The new Secretary of State, Sajid Javid,[63] agreed with the Planning Inspector on the importance of the WMS and concluded that PNR should be approved. What is most striking about this sort of government intervention is that it is simply a written statement to Parliament. It is not subject to a vote or even a debate. It was produced in reaction to the initial Lancashire decisions, and is a key determining factor in the appeal decision even though the evidential and political nature of the WMS and shale policy are contested within the inquiry. It is an intervention from a Minister in the executive branch of the state.

Activists articulated the contradiction between such an intervention and 'localism':

"[Theresa May said] she was gona give more power to local authorities, and literally within hours of saying that, Sajid Javid overturned it, and he said well you're not actually, you're not having a voice, and I think it was the fact and I think it's the fact, it's the fact that they've taken private companies, and given them a higher importance over communities, over people that pay their taxes."[64].

In contrast, the use of the WMS was defended on technocratic grounds by pro and neutral actors. A planning consultant (for the industry) claimed that a national decision was needed for two reasons:

"yeh we had to rely on national policy to a large extent ... we were saying that some of the policy was out of date, and some you could argue as relevant some you could say may not be entirely relevant to this particular type pf process...it as more reliant on national policy, and that became a big consideration at the public inquiry."[65].

A councillor argued that the appeal process was ultimately a fair one, albeit one that raised questions over the national/local balance:

"well that's the national planning hierarchy, that's the way it is, the argument about all that is of course, where do you draw the line between national and local, and how much autonomy, real autonomy should the local end have."[66].

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[63] He replaced Greg Clark weeks before the decision was announced in a reshuffle. Clark was partly responsible for the Localism Act and authored another WMS as we shall see below.
[64] PNR Activist 1
[65] Planning Consultant
[66]Councillor on planning committee

The inquiry itself was ostensibly run in a fair way with space for multiple views to be put forward according to current planning rules, and throughout my research I have not encountered criticism of the Inspector that ran the inquiry. Instead, these set of interview responses critique or support the policies and processes from government and the structural relationship between national and local. The anti-frackers articulated the decisions as the government supporting private companies over local democracy (Bradshaw and Waite, 2017: 33), whereas the pro-fracking groups argued that they have the support of national policy from an elected government.

Those who, like the councillor, question the 'national planning hierarchy' also still do so with a recognition that this hierarchy is how planning 'works'. The contestation of the importance of the WMS and its appropriate weight was a contest over where power should lie – with local government and networked governance structures, or more centrally within the executive of central government. In some respects, the 'anti' and 'pro' positions are making similar claims: they effectively agree that the government supports the industry and local government is more likely to listen to activists and citizens. The difference between the two positions is their critique of the appropriateness of these relationships – e.g. the local government are too easily swayed by 'political' arguments and not technically minded /the national government are too close to industry and industry interests.

Regardless, the 'national need' was central to the decision in this case. It made pro-fracking discursive elements significant material considerations in favour of the sites. The WMS foreclosed discussions on energy policy in planning by asserting a highly contested position. The use of the statement meant the government also defended the need for shale without having to define how much shale gas would be appropriate or the scale of the industry as an actual energy policy would likely have to do. The 'national need' intervention is part of an emerging pattern of direct executive interventions into planning decisions where a WMS acts as a pseudo-policy. Both the statement by Rudd and Clark and another WMS also contain a critique of the post-political regime which justifies these interventions, which I now turn to.

6.3.2 The 'Slow' and 'Political' Local Government

Within the inquiry, the local council is critiqued for being slow in its decision making and folding to political interests. In contradiction to this, further deliberation was proposed for Roseacre Wood to try and approve the development. Slowness and being 'political' were constructed as problems insofar as they did not support the government's preferred outcome, but also formed a critique of the failure of the post-political regime to be efficient and construct a suitable exclusionary consensus. Following the Rudd and Clark (2015) joint statement, there was another statement from Clark (2015) that set out the need to speed up planning decisions that had been suffering from "underperformance". This section will unpack the critique of the post-political regime as 'slow' and 'political' - within the inquiry and these statements –.

The 'political' critique of the local council was that they had not followed a rational and technocratic approach and instead bowed to the protestor's 'political' demands. During the appeal the council is referred to by pro-fracking groups as not "rational" (Day 10, 12.40), and acting in a way which was "counter-intuitive" (Day 6, 3:00) to the way in which it should properly serve local residents. The council were accused of not fulfilling their duty to their local area by not working hard enough to "attract new business" (Day 6, 3.00). The representative from the Chamber of Commerce accused the council of a "lack of political will" and said of the sites:

"If they are refused there is a significant risk that industry will lose interest because the political environment will be overtly hostile" (Day 1, 11.07)

The council were articulated by industry and government as making confused decisions, of not serving their constituents and instead having their decision making disrupted by activists. As a consultant argued:

 "I just think it's a really good example of how local politics can influence decision making, the technical case becomes almost secondary, and you could argue whether there is another way of determining certain types of applications, where I guess politics is less prominent and less influential, I can't see that happening though."[67].

 The council representative defended their decision, on the basis that it was "local democracy in action" (Day 1, 11:15), and that local councillors are entitled to use their

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[67] Planning consultant

discretion. We saw in the KM8 case (6.2.2) a discursive separation articulated between the 'local' and the 'protestor'; in this inquiry the critique is focused on the councillors for being swayed by the disruptive political groups.

The Rudd (2015) WMS also critiques local authorities in response to the LCC decision on PNR and RW, by stating that any future shale gas applications could be called in by the Minister, who would also identify "underperforming councils" (Rudd, 2015) that suffered from "slow and confused decision making" (Rudd and Clark, 2015). The statement from Clark (2015) set out details on how councils who did not deliver shale gas decisions in a suitable timeframe would be subject to punitive intervention from central government – where the Minister would effectively take control of any fracking applications the council considered for a year as punishment.

The criticism of the council as 'slow' contradicts the proposed process from the inquiry for Roseacre Wood. The inquiry decided that RW would be the subject of a further and even more limited set of deliberations through an additional focused solely on traffic. The Inspector and Secretary of State agreed with Lancashire County Council that HGV movements and traffic at Roseacre would make the site unsafe to other road users. What the Secretary of State then concludes, however, is that this is down to the "failure of the Appellant to provide adequate evidence that they have properly considered and addressed the safety issues", and that "it may be that the Appellant is able to demonstrate that the safety concerns raised can be satisfactorily mitigated" (Planning Inspectorate for England and Wales, 2016: 22). Contrary to the need for speedy decision-making, the Secretary of State decided to allow a further inquiry to focus specifically (and only) on the traffic and highways problem of Roseacre Wood and allow Cuadrilla to put forward further plans. An activist interviewee said:

""this is where we got really angry, with the government, because they were trying to supersede or overrule the local authority and the local community and give them another chance, to try and overcome it." [68].

It is important to say here that Cuadrilla had provided an initial Traffic Management Plan for the local authority process. This plan was found to be insufficient by the

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[68] PNR/RW Activist 3

Lancashire Planning officer, and Cuadrilla requested a deferral to produce a further plan. They were able to send further evidence and proposals to the inquiry, only for the plans to again be found insufficient and unsafe. A further inquiry would in effect be a fourth chance to discuss the traffic issue. In contrast to the emerging critique of slow decision making; extended deliberations are proposed to give a further opportunity to approve the development after successive failures to do so.

Decision making was critiqued as slow and ponderous even when delays are requested by the company, yet delaying a decision was acceptable if it made the development more likely: 'slowness' was articulated as a problem by government insofar as it is a problem for developers. As well as emphasising the national need, the inquiry also shows the developing critique of local councils as making slow and politicised decision making. There is a critique of the techno-managerial practice, as either being corrupted (political) or simply not being sufficient anyway (slow). The final section focuses on the contestation over a future shale gas industry.

6.3.3 Contesting the Future Shale Gas Industry

Throughout the inquiry there was a contestation over the possible future of a shale gas industry in the U.K., rather than merely the sites. The WMS presented a highly pro-fracking view, drawing on industry funded research, and the local council are consequently problematized as a burden to this future being achieved. There was also a further contestation of the vision of the future that the WMS sums up. Again, the 'slowness' of the local council is a problem insofar as it impacts on the delivery of the industry, not as it impacts on those opposing or living with it.

The Chamber of Commerce representative made the case for the region as a shale gas centre:

"We should get out there to prove that the region could be a centre of excellence in Europe. We must be ready to kick start an important new industry" (Day 18 10.36)

More generally, a planning witness for Cuadrilla links shale gas with economic growth:

"It is only through exploration and testing will those potential substantial benefits be realised and that is recognised in the government statement. One of those benefits is economic growth" (Day 1, 12.54)

The 'separation of stages' for shale gas can limit these pro-fracking claims in planning terms for the two sites, as barristers for the council and anti-fracker's pointed out. Nevertheless, the economic opportunity of fracking is still clearly articulated and linked with the even clearer government support for the industry. The exploratory nature of the sites is used to show that any outcomes are contingent on the amount of gas, alongside asserting possible economic benefits from full industrial production which are stated in the WMS: 64,500 jobs, reduced import dependency, a bridge fuel, £33billion of investment (Rudd, 2015).

I said above how the WMS fixes the pro-fracking formation in planning terms, and this creates an asymmetry over the futures that can be argued for or contested within the process. For example, the specific element of shale gas as a 'bridge fuel' is contested with an environmental warning by an expert witness on climate change:

"Given the bridge finishes at 2030, shale gas would have no role to play after that. There would be a five-year window – it would be foolhardy to develop it for that time frame" (Day 11, 10.36)

In this inquiry, the wider future of the shale industry and its impacts are contested, and the government position challenged as lacking consideration of climate change impacts. When it comes to the final decision, however, points like those above are not relevant points for discussion – the WMS stands as it is. Discussions were had about the content of the WMS (like the bridge fuel element), but ultimately the planning process is directed towards accepting a highly contentious pro-fracking portrayal of a future shale gas industry regardless of the evidence one might bring against the claims made in the statement – these kinds of contestations are what was slowing planning down.

In a further tightening up of political space, the costs of the slowness of planning are only a problem insofar as they are costs to industry. The slowness, though, is one of the few weapons in the armoury of the activists as it impacts on the costs of the industry, at great cost to the participants. Short and Szolucha (2019) show the impact of trying to contest fracking on the activists and campaigners themselves. Companies point out the financial costs they incur, yet the mental, physical and financial burden for activists amounts to a "collective trauma" (Ibid: 264) that was dragged out over

several years. Interviews confirmed this; this quote from an NGO interviewee articulates the distinction between the two sides of the contest:

""that's what the anti-fracking movement consists of, to a large extent, there are people who have to do cake sales to raise money to get a planning expert,[…], they have to do everything to raise the money, this isn't how a planning system should work it isn't how a democracy should work, it's not fair, and that been played out in the planning systems - it's also very lengthy - it takes a long time, it takes a lot out of people"[69].

It may well be that there were no particular planning reasons to stop PNR, but activists tried anyway. Many came new to the planning process, only to find the limitations placed upon deliberation and be confronted with the power central government was willing to exercise. As one interviewee from a conservation group said, the planning process was set up to deliver shale gas eventually:

""there's this fixation on we must frack, we must frack…I would be interested to know what grounds would result in a refusal…at a national level, of course we've not had one sufficiently outrageous yet to know."[70]

An important point here is that 'slow' planning is problematized for delaying a future energy source as well as being costly to the industry. This is a further example of what Szolucha (2018) identifies as the 'politics of time' within shale gas contestation. This particular politics of time is one where the fracking companies economic need to make returns on investment is taken as the de facto timeframe for planning decisions, rather than the time that may be necessary to deliberate on the long term impact of fracking in general or the particular sites – particularly in a planning system stripped of resources. The two WMSs both helped to construct time in such a way that planning was a delay to the returns for the company, but not to the lives of the activists and impacted communities (Szolucha, 2018).

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[69] Environmental NGO
[70] Lancashire charity (before Roseacre decision announced)

6.3.4 Concluding points on the Inquiry

The Secretary of State's decision was released in October 2016, 28 months after the initial applications were made for Preston New Road and Roseacre Wood. Cuadrilla began work on the PNR site in January 2017 and protests in opposition started the same month. The further appeal for Roseacre Wood (already rejected by both local planner and planning inspector) was determined in January 2019 and was rejected (see Chapter 7). The two decisions combined showed that planning policy and practice was supportive of shale gas developments, and that ultimately applications would only be rejected if they had severe local impacts. The next section will provide an analysis of what this means in terms of the logics of planning; before this I will briefly emphasise some important analytical points from the inquiry itself.

First, the 'pro' and 'anti' discursive formations were by this point largely fixed in their key elements, though within the inquiry some new elements are articulated regarding the planning-regulatory process. The anti-fracking position articulated the various harms that fracking can cause and challenges the regulatory framework for failing to consider these harms sufficiently. The pro-fracking formation was also fixed around the multiple opportunities provided by shale gas and affirmed the safety of the process. The structure of an inquiry, however, made antagonisms between the two formations more visible through the cross-examination of different positions. The pro-fracking position was also more openly critical of the local council who the pro actors articulated as failing in the council's neutral role as a result of being too 'political'. Instead, the pro-fracking discourse placed legitimacy with national policy and government, which was not problematised for its political-ness. In this sense, a new element of the pro-fracking formation was the critique of the slow and politicised planning process. The anti-fracking formation, in contrast, defended the democracy of the PNR decision and critiqued the government interventions, linking the formation to a defence of 'local democracy' as Figure 6.6 depicts.

Second, the inquiry was a deliberative process that sought multiple views. Those who were vehemently opposed to the sites on merely self-interested as well as 'political' (in the Mouffean sense) grounds were represented formally in the proceedings. There was little criticism of its conduct, and it followed the policy and planning framework as it was set out. The important question for this thesis is whether the

'rules' here were post-political, and whether a post-political regime was a barrier to the anti-fracking movement and limited the outcomes of the inquiry in advance.

On first analysis, that is an apt summary of the inquiry – a post-political regime was a barrier. I am not arguing that the Planning Inspector themself 'pre-determined' the inquiry in the formal-legal sense, but rather that the identified features of planning policy and practice (guidance, WMS, stage separation) meant that the Inspector was

Figure 6.6 Activist sign outside PNR protest camp (Source: PNRAG, No Date [B])
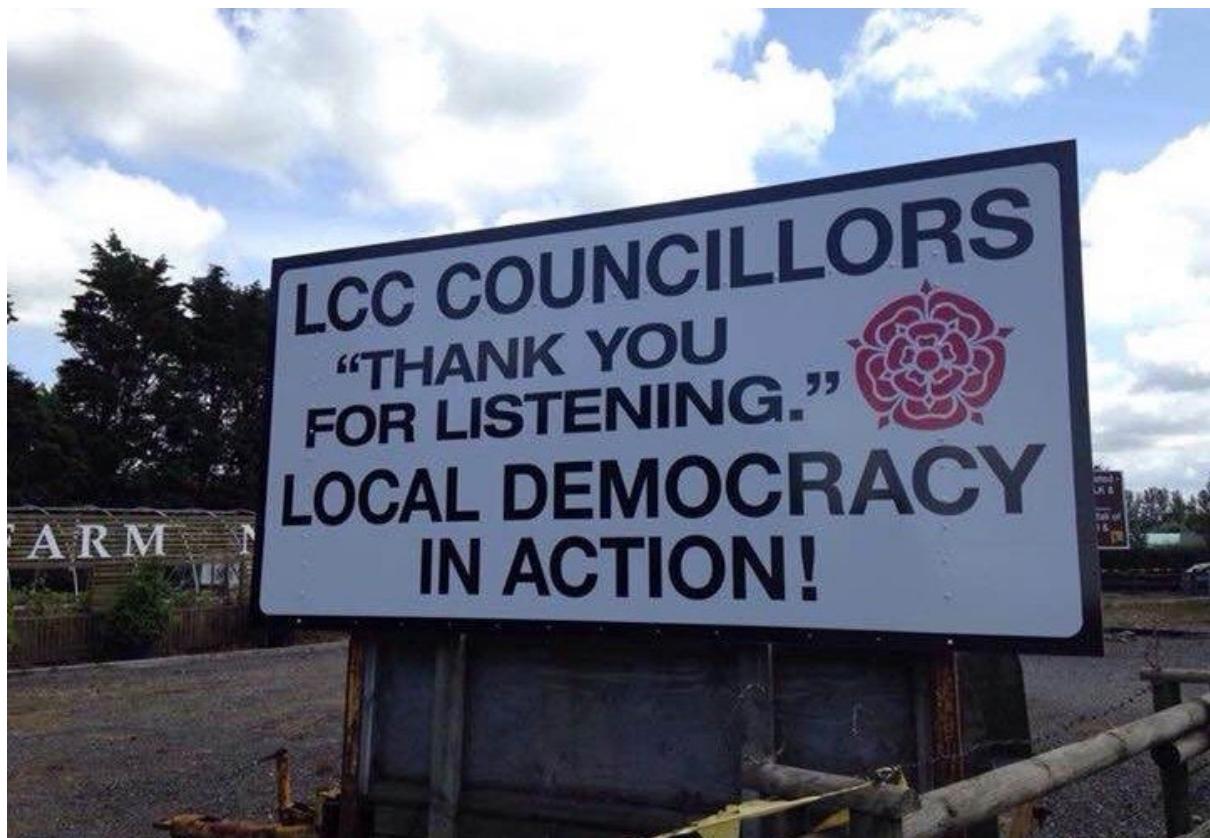
highly likely to support the PNR development regardless of what was said or demonstrated during the inquiry. Substantive arguments on climate change as well as the local reasons for rejection were, as in the local decisions, disarticulated or negated according to the legislative and policy framework. The term 'logic' aims to capture exactly this: it is not simply the ideological mind-set of the actors (in this case the Inspector). It is the rules that a practice follows due to all the various pieces of policy etc. that structure decision making as well as the fantasies that make the practices possible and legitimate.

For that reason, what is of acute interest in this case is the government's intervention into the process to alter the 'rules of the game'. The release of the WMS was reactive.

The government had been clear for several years that they support shale gas; however, they had failed to produce a more formal policy or plan for the industry. Along with industry, the government were happy to talk up the benefits of shale gas in general yet were often vague about how many wells would be developed because this would mean facing up to the number of sites that would be required and where they would be located (potentially hundreds, across rural constituencies in the Midlands and North where many Conservative voters live). Even industry interviewees said that the government's policy ought to spell out a (pro-shale) industrial strategy more clearly.[71]

The government did not set out such a strategy. Instead, it released the WMS as a pseudo-policy, that *stood in* for a detailed energy policy and strategy. It meant that the inquiry decision process was conducted under an altered set of rules to the initial local authority decisions where the WMS placed an extremely high burden of proof on any local objections to fracking sites. Such an approach contrasts with the post-political, spatial planning regime with its reams of policy: the use of the WMS here was not an evidence-based, win-win type of policy process. It was an executive intervention in response to a local planning authority exercising its discretionary power. It limited even further the kernel of space within planning for the staging of dissent and alternative possibilities and arguments. The WMS intervention was justified by critiquing techno-managerial practice as slow, because this practice had failed to deliver development within industry friendly timeframes – yet the Minister simultaneously decided to extend the planning process to give the Roseacre Wood site another chance at great cost to its opponents.

Therefore, what we can say here that there were signs of shift towards a more executive-punitive practice for planning. The WMS fixed elements of the pro-fracking position within these planning decisions and created a significant burden of proof for the anti-frackers. That it does so by executive intervention legitimated through critiquing the 'slow' and 'political' local authority process, is a sign of the drift towards authoritarian logics of planning amidst the post-political procedures of the inquiry.

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[71] Industry representative

6.4   PHASE 2 CONCLUSION– A POST-POLITICAL REGIME IN CRISIS

To conclude this Chapter, I will answer its research question which is:

What logics underlie the decision making on shale gas? How are these 'logics' of planning practice articulated and challenged within the decision-making process?

This chapter has shown that the logics of the post-political regime persist but are increasingly challenged, and I argue here that the regime faces a crisis of legitimacy. The analysis of the inquiry allows me to build on the analysis of the Lancashire and KM8 case. The two local cases showed that there were challenges to post-political practices, but ultimately a post-political regime was dominant within them. From the Lancashire to the KM8 case though, we saw an increasingly antagonistic conflict and the introduction of the 'national need' through the WMS which became central in the inquiry (which happened within a few months of the KM8 decision). I argue that the decision to overturn PNR and re-open the Roseacre Wood decision is a moment of dislocation for the post-political regime because it is the point where the regime is critiqued as anti-democratic by anti-fracking groups; and through the WMS we also see the emerging critique of local government (from central government) as not approving developments quickly enough. The post-political regime increasingly lacked legitimacy for the participants and the local authority process was undermined by government intervention. I will take each of the logics of the regime in turn, to show the growing crisis of the post-political regime.

The decisions in Lancashire (6.1) show a techno-managerial social practice of planning, focused on extensive deliberation of expert testimony and 'proper' planning issues like those local to the site. The process was open to multiple views; however, several of those who challenged the development were excluded despite having what seemed to be expert qualifications. Elements of the anti-fracking discourse are also excluded through the limitations placed on the process by planning guidance, policies specific to shale gas (e.g. the TLS, separate stages) and longer standing planning policy and legislation (e.g. the NPPF). The different parts of 'networked governance' found that fracking was broadly safe, and the Planning Officer in the Lancashire case found no reason to reject PNR on 'technical' grounds, though they did for RW.

What we do see in the Lancashire case, however, is an organised and effective resistance to the proposals. The network of anti-fracking groups linked the risks of shale gas together in a chain of equivalence that united different actors against shale gas fracking from the homeowners near the sites to environmental activists. As those in the industry identified (though not with approval), the sites and this issue of fracking was politicised by these groups. This politicisation put pressure on the local councillors to reject PNR, which they did after legal advice.

In the KM8 case we saw signs of a problematization of the techno-managerial practice of planning. The lack of resources for planning departments was said to be slowing down a process that, if followed correctly, should have led to the approval of shale gas sites. The techno-managerial practice was also challenged by activists, who find that their technical, expert supported articulations were regularly dismissed with reference to the 'rules' of government policy or guidance. The position of the government on shale gas and its continued interventions meant that was increasingly difficult to maintain planning as evidence based and technocratic. Instead, the interventions suggest an executive-punitive logic emerging.

Further, in the Rudd WMS and the inquiry the techno-managerial logic of planning is critiqued with the claim that it was 'slow' and 'political'. The logic of planning practice, as employed in the local decisions, was deliberative and involved going through the various bits of evidence to come to a conclusion. In both local cases this took about a year, but it meant that the planning officers could claim they had done a thorough, technocratic job. The Rudd WMS and inquiry critiqued the slowness, which is in part a result of major cuts to central government funding for planning (Slade *et al.*, 2019), insofar as it delays the decision and causes problems for companies. Decision making was, however, extended through longer timeframes when it suited companies to have them (with RW in the inquiry). The demand to speed-up planning comes with the promise of punitive central government intervention against those councils which are making 'confused' decisions. The slowness critique targets the breakdown of state institutions under austerity (as if the slowness were an inherent property of the process), and the 'confused' critique targets the discretionary space of planning decisions.

In both the Lancashire decisions and KM8 the consensual, political logic of difference fails to break the anti-fracking chain of equivalence. More

straightforwardly, the anti-fracking movement were able to link different demands and actors together making it difficult to present them as extremists. In both cases the local community is treated as sacrosanct, though in the KM8 case the local community (and planning process) are articulated as being corrupted or intimidated by the figure of the 'activist' or 'protestor'.

The inquiry emphasised that the discursive conflict had become irresolvable – so any decision that was made would have meant choosing a side. Without the 2015 WMS, the planning process could claim that it had taken both sides seriously; however, its introduction fixed highly contested pro-fracking elements by making them material considerations as a sort of stand-in 'pseudo' policy that was introduced without any consultation or democratic process. Doing so set the planning system up as pro-fracking, as there was a significant burden of proof for any local issue to trump a 'national need'. The local council (in the inquiry) and the 'protestor' (at KM8) are increasingly identified as the 'enemies' obstructing the 'national need' in a turn towards a more antagonistic logic of difference for planning practice.

The politicisation (nationally as well as locally) of shale gas meant that there was pressure on elected members in the discretionary and formally political space of the planning process in both cases. The local groups articulated multiple technical grounds for rejecting the site, which in the PNR decision were then backed with QC's advice after members decided to go against the planning officer's advice. For a post-politics to maintain legitimacy, it needs a kernel of space for the staging of dissent and this is the importance of participatory practices. In the Lancashire case the anti-frackers were able to use this space to articulate dissent to fracking in such a way as to challenge what was a dominant position on shale gas supported by the government and policy. The planning process in the local cases maintained a basically participatory fantasmic logic and the act of listening to the different views is what legitimates decisions whichever way they go. In the KM8 case in particular, participatory practices were articulated as being undermined by government interventions across the three formations.

The breakdown of the participatory fantasy was continued through the inquiry decision for all but the 'neutral' actors. Planning decisions are regularly overturned on appeal; what makes this inquiry different is that the appeal decision was heavily based on a single WMS released in direct reaction to the initial decision. A Secretary

of State decided the outcome based on a Secretary of State's statement. This is an executive led process, but this also means that the extensive public participation at local and inquiry levels is left seeming rather performative. When decisions are subject to such strong executive intervention, it is difficult to legitimate decisions by reference to public participation – especially when all local decisions faced the prospect of being 'called in' for not being fast enough.

In conclusion, Phase 2 shows that the three logics of the post-political regime are underlie planning practice and are articulated and defended by those employed within the planning-regulatory process. These logics are, however, challenged by anti-fracking groups who win a victory at PNR. In response the government intervened with the Rudd WMS, and in the inquiry, we see an emerging critique of 'slow' and 'political' local government as giving much time to anti-frackers and not the 'national need' for shale gas. The post-political regime faced a crisis of legitimacy, as both the public and the government critique it and the political conflict pushed the government to take more direct measures to support fracking. The government response to this crisis is to turn towards more authoritarian practices which there are signs of here, but which the next Chapter shows in more detail.

7 PHASE 3: AN AUTHORITARIAN TURN AND ITS LIMITS (2016-19)

The U.K. government intervened in the ongoing planning process in the Lancashire case via Rudd's 2015 WMS, which is an indication of a more executive-punitive rather than techno-managerial logic. This chapter will show the continuing drift towards an authoritarian regime, with several failed attempts to institutionalise authoritarian practices, and the limitations that prevented such a regime from being institutionalised – and instead led to a further moratorium on fracking that is still in place at the time of writing. In Chapter 8, I will relate these attempts to the previous reforms covered in Chapter 2, as well as recent proposals for planning reforms that potentially overcome the limits I highlight here.

This chapter will follow a different structure to the previous two, in that it will be structured around the three different logics of the authoritarian regime. I will start by setting out the 'anti' and 'pro' discursive formations (in 7.1) integrating the new elements from the inquiry and the newer elements articulated in this Phase. Doing so allows me to focus the presentation of my findings on the emerging authoritarian regime for planning, which is located in a series of government reactions to the continued contestation of shale gas by the anti-fracking movement. This chapter takes each of the three authoritarian logics in turn (social in 7.2, political in 7.3, fantasmic in 7.4), showing the government drift towards the authoritarian regime and how this was resisted by the anti-fracking movement and its allies and limited by legal frameworks as well as geology. The events covered range from the protests that began at KM8 and PNR in December 2016 and January 2017 respectively - to a second national moratorium in December 2019 following further earthquakes in Lancashire. I focus on the two case studies and the national level contestations. Several other local decisions were made during this period with some appeals still awaiting the Secretary of State's decision at the time of writing (despite the moratorium). For the sake of clarity, I keep the focus on the unfolding local case studies as they show authoritarian tendencies on the ground in response to the protests.

Finally, in 7.5 I will bring together the different logics to assess an 'authoritarian turn' and its limits in the fracking case. I argue that the attempt to institutionalise an 'executive-punitive' practice of planning has so far failed. The government's

increasingly 'antagonistic' approach to fracking made enemies of groups associated with the Conservative political base at a time when they lost their parliamentary majority, and the government were unable to create a 'state of exception' or problematized Other to legitimate instituting new planning practices for shale gas. Ultimately, the resistance from the anti-fracking movement, the law, and the geological reality of a second set of 'seismic events' at the Preston New Road site would lead to a moratorium on shale gas fracking just before the 2019 General Election, which at the time of writing remains in place. The final section will directly address the third research question:

What signs are there of an 'authoritarian turn' within planning? What are the limitations to the turn in the case of fracking?

7.1 ANTI AND PRO FRACKING DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS

In contrast to the previous chapters, I frontload the two formations in presenting my findings and analysis (Table 7.1). The following tables introduce two new nodal points (Fracking is anti-democratic/National Need) which I unpack in this chapter; I want to focus on these new points as they become part of a debate over how to change planning practice.

The 'neutral' position is not covered in this section, as this section does not focus on the decision making on fracking sites, but rather on the contestation over *how* to make decisions on shale gas going forward. I do draw upon some quotations from 'neutral' interviewees; but the focus in this chapter is on the contestation of the 'rules' that the neutral actors on fracking are supposed to be following. It is another research project entirely to understand the views of professionals on the changes to their practice (see e.g. Slade *et al.*, 2019; Schoneboom and Slade, 2020).

As I will show in in the following sections, the national anti-fracking discourse became increasingly articulated around a new nodal point, that **fracking is anti-democratic**. The anti-fracking movement articulates the attempt to develop fracking as the government over-riding local democracy (with the PNR inquiry

Table 7.1 The Anti and Pro formations in Phase 3

Feature	Articulation/example	
Formation	**Anti-Fracking**	**Pro-Fracking**
Nodal Points	Fracking is anti-democratic	Fracking needs to be delivered
Subject position/identity	Local Communities united	The nation (Britain)
Actors	Frack Free Groups, Friends of the Earth, Fit to Frack, CPRE,	Cuadrilla, UK government, Industry lobbyists (UKOOG)
Resources	NGOs support, Talk Fracking money for legal cases	Centrica investment in Cuadrilla, Planning consultancy (Arup).
Chain of equivalence	***Fracking is anti-democratic*** *Restrictions on rights to protest – PNR and RW against local wishes – government supporting industry – NSIP/PDR move to cut out local level – no social licence – attack on right to take direct action – too much corporate power* **Risk to Local area –** Water contamination – weak/not joined up regulation – house prices – Damage local economy (tourism) - Earthquakes – Damage to rural life (traffic, industrial activity) – Climate change impact - Pollution (noise, air, light) – Precautionary Principle	***National need**– More room for TLS – Energy independence – Regulations are gold standard – 'Protestors from out of town' – 'Guided by the science' – slow and underperforming councils – Bridge fuel* **Opportunity for U.K -** Exploratory works/Temporary development – Community Benefits – Minimal localised cost/risks – Jobs – Tax revenue

decision), the treatment of protestors as an attack on basic rights to protest, and the government as choosing to side with fossil fuel companies over 'the people' in the populist sense (Laclau, 1989). This is captured in an interview with an NGO worker:

"it's [fracking] seen as a human rights issue, a democracy issue, it's seen as people having enough of corporate greed, so it's all these things, the people that I see at the sites there not all environmentalists as such, they are saying enough is enough, they don't want this industry, they don't want it because of what it could do to their water, the don't want it because of climate change, they worried about their granddaughters, they're worried about industrialisation of the land"[72].

Alongside articulating the particular impacts of fracking, the anti-fracking discourse constructed a temporary political alliance (with support coming from most mainstream political parties), that opposed the government's continued interventions for the increasingly unpopular industry (according to survey date in Howell, 2018). The government and industries' actions were articulated as wider problems than the fracking issue as I unpack below. The proposal to remove local authority decision making from the process (7.2) allows the anti-fracking movement to make alliances with conservation groups like the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) as well as several Tory MPs. CPRE and the MPs were concerned about fracking but also the wider implications of central government intervening into more and more planning decisions. The anti-fracking discourse became increasingly focused on critiquing the government's interventions and the role of the planning-regulatory process. As 7.4 shows, Phase 3 saw a significant increase in direct action at fracking sites. There is a police and legal response, and in 7.3 we see the failed attempt to build a consensus between the deeply antagonistic discursive formations.

The pro-fracking discourse is harder to summarise. The PNR case was a pyrrhic victory for the industry, it showed that planning policy and processes supported fracking sites without major local problems; yet it also meant that this system could be articulated as ignoring local communities. Newer companies to fracking like INEOS eschewed the community benefits scheme and began taking out injunctions

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[72] Environmental NGO

against potential protests (Hayhurst, 2017b). The industry demanded that the government support the industry further by increasing the thresholds for seismicity in the Traffic Light System. Both industry and government increasingly articulated a pro-fracking discourse around the nodal point that there is a **National Need** for shale and the government needed to intervene to support the industry rather than continue with any deliberation.

Ultimately, the pro-frackers were waiting for strong results from the PNR exploration. The first set of 'flow tests' showed that the extractable levels of gas were good, but the tests caused several sets of small earthquakes similar to those at Preese Hall in 2011. Whilst these were managed by the Traffic Light System, the government found it increasingly difficult to defend the industry in light of these earthquakes and eventually toned down their rhetorical support. The earthquakes and the strength of the anti-fracking movement in resisting government intervention broke the chain of equivalence of the 'pro' formation. By the end of 2019, the government stopped articulating the 'national need' for shale and introduced a second moratorium that was 'guided by the science'. The industry frustration is captured here:

"You've got a lot of people, who, as a country we are slowly grinding to a halt, because nothings getting done, and nothing's getting done because nobody wants anything in their back yard…so, you could argue we may benefit from a couple of years of a benign dictator ya know? (Laughs)"

It is important to be clear that this was meant as a joke, the interviewee did not seriously advocate a dictatorship. The first part of the quotation though, as well as the joke, captures the critique that is articulated more and more by industry and government – that the (post-political) planning system has slowed development down and that more direct government action is needed to secure future development. What this section shows is the drift towards increasingly authoritarian practices, though rather like a tongue in cheek joke these practices emerge and are articulated but not then seriously followed through with. What I show in the next sections is the (failed) *experiment* with authoritarian practices in fracking. The reactionary, authoritarian tendencies of the government find legal, political and geological barriers in the fracking case.

7.2   AN EXECUTIVE-PUNITIVE LOGIC: THE 2018 WMS AND THE NPPF COURT CASE

An authoritarian turn for planning would mean a shift away from the techno-managerial practice of evidence based-policy and expert-led deliberation. We saw in Chapter 6 how aspects of techno-managerialism persist within the planning process for fracking; yet also how the techno-managerial practice was increasingly problematized as slow and limiting development. What I will show here (7.2.1) is how the government attempts to institute an executive-punitive logic in the planning process by proposing to remove local authority discretion and make the planning process for fracking a mixture of Permitted Development Rights (PDR) and part of a centrally governed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process. I will show how this fails, due to the political alliance developed by the anti-fracking group and the chain of equivalence they articulate.

I will also cover (7.2.2) the move to transfer aspects of Rudd's 2015 written ministerial statement (henceforth: 2015 WMS) into the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework, which was prevented through a court case brought by national activist group Talk Fracking. The judge declared the NPPF paragraph to be 'unlawful' in its consideration of evidence – which meant the 2015 WMS was not a valid material consideration for planning. If the government had been successful in these dual moves, then it would have gone a long way to creating an executive-punitive planning practice for fracking. The attempt to do so though, suggests a direction of travel and continues the critique of the post-political regime.

7.2.1 The 2018 WMS, NSIP, PDR and Local Plans

A new Written Ministerial Statement in 2018 proposed two key changes to planning for shale gas:

".... holding an early stage consultation, in summer 2018, on the principle of whether non-hydraulic fracturing shale exploration development should be treated as permitted development"

"…consulting, in summer 2018, on the criteria required to trigger the inclusion of shale production projects into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime."
(Brokenshire and Clark, 2018)

This WMS cites the "disappointingly slow" (Ibid) process for approving sites so far. These proposals would meant local authorities would lose decision-making power over fracking, with exploratory wells (like PNR) being largely processed through PDRs[73] to the point of hydraulic fracturing, and when resources were proved the wider network of sites for production would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate under the NSIP regime.

These proposals provoked a significant backlash from the anti-fracking movement and a wider set of conservation groups and local councils. A key challenge came from CPRE. CPRE responded to the 2018 WMS by arguing:

"Our particular concern with the measures announced in the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of May 2018 is the intention not only to ignore this evidence, but to bypass the rights of local communities to have a say in whether fracking takes place or not."

"We suggest that ministers should seriously consider whether they want to open the flood-gates for demands for PD rights for harmful but allegedly lucrative forms of development" (Campaign to Protect Rural England, 2018: 5)

A report from a group of cross-party MPs' into the planning and regulation of fracking argued that:

"Such changes to the planning regime, proposed by the Government in the 2018 WMS, would result in a significant loss to local decision-making, exacerbating existing mistrust between local communities and the fracking industry." (Housing Communities and Local Government Committee, 2018: 4)

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[73] Permitted Development Rights allow particular types of development to occur without full planning permission. The developer needs to inform the council and show they conform to regulations and the PDR rules set by Parliament, but no planning process like the one detailed above occurs.

The same committee report also details support for the change from industry and pro-fracking groups:

"Zetland Group Limited contended that a further benefit to industry operators of bringing fracking planning applications under the NSIP regime was that it "could, in theory, offer greater certainty and take the decision away from elected members, mitigating the risk of political non planning based decisions." (Ibid: 27)

"Cuadrilla called for the Government to consider use of the NSIP regime in light of the question of "whether local authorities have the resources and the political will to process more complex applications for the production operations which will likely follow if current exploration operations are successful"." (Ibid: 31)

In both these quotations we see a this continued problematisation of the 'political' nature of local authorities, in the first that they are 'political' for not being 'planning based' in decisions, and the second that they *lack* 'political will' to follow through with decisions. The solution from government was to take local authorities out of the process, limiting the space for dissent to decisions.

The proposals to remove local authority control effectively vindicated the arguments made by anti-frackers about the PNR decision: that the government did not care about local communities who opposed fracking. As with his statement in 2015, the Minister that led on the Localism Act (Greg Clark) is supporting less local involvement (as co-author of the 2018 WMS). The contradiction here was not lost on activists who were making the case to government:

"Most local politicians are opposed to permitted development, because they feel it's taking decision making away from the local authority and the local community, the localism act, and the fact that most people get angry by the fact that central government are just trying to overrule what communities want."[74].

The proposals were articulated as a generalised affront to local democracy by anti-fracking groups as well as the MP's in the report, whereas pro-fracking groups argued that it would prevent 'political' interference from elected officials as PDR

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[74] PNR/RW Activist 3

rights are signed off by planning officers under delegated powers. PDR rights were expanded from 2013 and particularly through the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order (2015) as a form of deregulation largely aimed at incentivising house building. The expansion of PDRs created problems for things like the quality of housing (Ferm *et al.*, 2020), but the introduction in fracking was one of the first instances of expanding PDRs to an issue as highly contested in principle as shale gas. The CPRE response captures the creeping increase of PDR usage by asking whether the government really want to 'open the flood-gates' to further expansion of the use of PDRs, and the cross-party report highlights how this move would only exacerbate tensions over fracking rather than resolve any debate. An MP interviewed also makes clear how anti-fracking groups were able to build an alliance against the proposals:

"The usual people who would oppose this, all that kind of stuff was being done, and in particular, Friends of the Earth, Frack Free united, and CPRE, were starting to do a good job of building up a coalition."

"There was an informal network of 20/30 MPs who really didn't like it, and another 20 or so MPs who were on the periphery that didn't like some elements of it, and it became perfectly clear […] that nothing would get through […] but I don't think the government would have done much anyway, they were just all over the place."[75].

It is important to remember these proposals were made during the ongoing Brexit negotiations when most other political and policy issues took a backseat, and the proposals themselves were vague and poorly defined. The NSIP process, where the central Planning Inspectorate oversee the planning process, is used for many different types of development; though it would almost certainly have meant even greater delay to a system critiqued as being slow. The MP interviewee argued that the bringing forward of the proposals actually made it easier for people to oppose fracking as well as the proposals. A Tory MP whose constituency was unaffected by fracking argued in a Parliamentary debate that the proposals were "poor democratic accountability on the part of Government" (WHall Deb, 12th Sept 2018). As another NGO interviewee stated:

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[75] MP interview

"…both of the proposals, the PDR and the NSIP proposals come from a very dark place in the government"[76].

De-regulation is often spoken about as government stepping back, but in this case expanding PDRs would have meant the government setting the rules for extensive development rather than local authorities making decisions – with the final stages of fracking then overseen by a central government agency and Ministers. These proposals would have made fracking more executive led with ministers setting the rules for what is permitted or not under PDRs. Opposing these changes therefore became a wider argument about the role of local government and executive ministerial power.

The poorly constructed and rushed nature of these proposals may have been related to ongoing plan-making in North Yorkshire. A leaked letter shows that the NSIP/PDR proposals had been considered by Ministers in 2016 (Housing Communities and Local Government Committee, 2018: 25), so the proposal had been circulating for several years. The 2018 WMS included, alongside the NSIP/PDR proposal, a series of restrictions to local plan-making that would come into effect immediately, that:

"Plans should not set restrictions or thresholds across their plan area that limit shale development without proper justification." (Brokenshire and Clark, 2018)

In a submission from Frack Free United to an All Party Parliamentary Group debate in June 2018, it was argued that the WMS was rushed out to intervene into the development of the new North Yorkshire Minerals and Waste plan (APPG on the Impact of Shale Gas, 2018: 14).[77] A set of minimum distances of fracking sites from other developments had been proposed to be included in the plan that the Planning Inspector was considering accepting, which would have placed significant limits on where fracking sites were possible. The 2018 WMS addresses this by stating, in rather disturbing language, that local "policies should 'avoid undue sterilisation of

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[76] NGO interview
[77] This was corroborated by 2 interviewees.

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mineral resources (including shale gas)'" (Brokenshire and Clark, 2018) – presumably meaning restrictions that would make extraction difficult. The local-plan intervention in the WMS limited the North Yorkshire plan's development (the minimum distances were revised) and effectively punished the council for attempting to regulate fracking through plan-making.

The NSIP/PDR proposal allowed the anti-fracking movement to fix the relationship between fracking and an attack on democracy and local communities. 97.5% of the 4639 respondents to the question in the government consultation on PDR opposed the introduction of the rights (MHCLG, 2019). Even pro-frackers saw the problem:

"so, do I believe that permitted development is the way to get around all of that and win a SLO [Social Licence to Operate]? Well, there's two ways to look at that, one no... because it doesn't really involve the community...it sort of rides roughshod over their ability to have their stakeholder voice in what's going on."[78].

The consultation respondents overwhelmingly rejected the proposals, and the government shelved the proposals the same day they introduced the moratorium in November 2019. They did state, however, that "there could be considerable merit in taking forward these proposals in the future" (MHCLG, 2019b: 11). The 2018 WMS was a further executive-punitive intervention like the one in 2015 by Ministers into ongoing planning processes, whilst also proposing to institutionalise greater executive led planning practice in the form of NSIP/PDR. These proposals were defeated by an organised political movement, as well as their own poor formulation. The proposals themselves though, follow an executive-punitive logic.

7.2.2 Contesting the 2015 WMS and the NPPF

The 2015 WMS was used as the basis for a paragraph in the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on fracking. In response, activists raised money for a legal challenge to this paragraph and by extension the 2015 WMS. The paragraph on shale gas in the original 2018 NPPF stated:

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[78] Fracking company worker (PNR)

"Minerals planning authorities should: recognise the benefits of on-shore oil and gas development, including unconventional hydrocarbons, for the security of energy supplies and supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy; and put in place policies to facilitate their exploration and extraction" (MCHLG, 2018: 61)

The accompanying consultation document for the NPPF explicitly states that this section builds on the 2015 WMS (Claire Stephenson v Secretary of State for HCLG, 2018). An anti-fracking group, Talk Fracking, contested this paragraph at the High Court (Ibid) on the basis that it failed to consider both the Paris Climate Change Agreement and in particular the 'Mobbs' Report' (Mobbs, 2017). The Mobbs Report, commissioned by Talk Fracking, had identified limitations with the methodology of the Mackay and Stone Report - the report that underpinned the government's claims about the greenhouse gas impact of shale gas in the U.K (in Chapter 5). The Mobbs' Report does not say the Mackay and Stone report is flawed as such; rather Mobbs argued that, since the M&S report's publication, new methods for assessing emissions had been developed. These new methods showed that emissions from fracking sites were significantly higher than the Mackay and Stone report claimed, and that the government was therefore making claims about shale gas that were potentially misleading in the WMS and the NPPF (Mobbs, 2017).

The court case established that, in formulating the NPPF paragraph, the authoring Department[79] of the NPPF were essentially copy and pasting policy established by another - the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The aim was to establish the government's shale gas policy as per the WMS, and authors did not feel the policy needed further research or consideration – and for this reason they did not look for further evidence like the Mobbs' Report (Claire Stephenson V Secretary of State for HCLG, 2018: 28-9).

The problem for the government was that the public consultation on the NPPF did not state that the paragraph cited above was not up for discussion. It invited comments and criticism on the whole section in which the paragraph was contained, and anti-fracking groups made submissions referring to the Mobbs report amongst other pieces of evidence. The judge ruled that the consultation process "was so flawed in its design and processes as to be unlawful" (Claire Stephenson V Secretary

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[79] Department for Housing Communities and Local Government

of State for HCLG, 2018: 34). The paragraph was removed, and never replaced leaving the 'national need' for shale gas with an unclear legal and policy basis in contrast to the certainty with which it was treated in 6.3 above.

This particular incident shows an important tension between the techno-managerial and the executive logics of planning policy. The government were essentially asserting their right to define policy as they see fit, as the Conservatives had supported fracking in their manifesto for the 2017 General Election (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017). The legislative framework, however, supports a deliberative and expert informed process for policy – the government had to consider the evidence on emissions even if they found reason to dismiss it. It is hard to say from this vantage point whether this was because of a disdain for deliberation or technocratic incompetence (i.e. they could have stated the paragraph was not up for debate), however it showed a tendency towards executive and centralised policy formation. If the paragraph was introduced it would have further sedimented the pro-fracking elements of the 2015 WMS within planning practice. Indeed, the QC even said in his legal briefing that the WMS should not be given the primacy it was:

"The approach taken, for example, at the planning appeal at Preston New Road - where the Inspector and the Secretary of State proceeded as if support for the principle of fracking had been settled by the WMS - should not now be repeated" (Talk Fracking, 2019)

That the government failed again is down to a legislative framework largely derived from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), and the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), as well as precedent from case-law. Further, the Talk Fracking group is primarily funded by a single wealthy individual who has chosen to partly fund such court cases. If the anti-fracking movement were not able to raise the funds it is possible that the paragraph would now be national policy despite the procedural errors made.

7.2.3 A Failed Centralisation of Power

Taken together, the NSIP/PDR proposals and NPPF paragraph were attempts to fix the contested elements of the pro-fracking formation and institute an executive-

punitive logic for planning. Both could have limited the space for dissent from the government position and the discretionary power of local government in both plan-making and development management. They are 'executive' in the sense that the proposals would have given more power to central government on fracking as well as fixing in policy the pro-fracking position with insufficient evidence, and punitive in that these interventions have a disciplinary effect on local authority planners and activists.

The proposals for NSIP and PDR come directly from Ministers at the executive level of government and suggests an approach to planning that is led by central government rules through the setting of PDR conditions to allow the substantive construction of fracking sites for exploration. The 2018 WMS was also punitive, like the 2015 WMS the government intervenes in an ongoing planning process at the local level when it is considering a decision that deviates from executive priorities (i.e. of placing restrictions for fracking sites in local plan). In response though, the anti-fracking movement were able to build support amongst more conservative groups and Tory MPs against the proposals. The debate about fracking became a debate about the democratic problem of the government's continued executive-led interventions into planning.

The legitimacy of planning decisions was further challenged in the court case against the NPPF paragraph and the 2015 WMS, which emphasised the extent to which the government had bypassed normal processes of consultation and evidence-led policy making. Following from the inquiry in 6.4, the government were unwilling to play the post-political game and wanted to further fix pro-fracking elements into planning policy. The practices they attempted to institute were ones where there was less local planning input and a greater reliance on rules set out by Ministers. The government interventions are particularly *reactionary* in character, suggesting the drift towards authoritarian practices is in part a result of knee-jerk reactions to political dissent rather than part a coherent ideological vision to restructure the state at this point.

In this case, the government was limited by the legislation that underpins the post-political planning regime and the successful politicisation of the issue and the process. This legislation is long standing though it is by no means sacrosanct. The planning law that underpins the legal case above can be changed by a government with a large majority, and not every policy area is faced with an organised opposition

like the anti-fracking movement. There is a move towards an executive-punitive practice for planning, based on a critique of the techno-managerial; however, the attempt to institutionalise an executive-punitive practice fails in this case. Nonetheless, the techno-managerial practice of planning is once again challenged by government and problematised by their intervention. It is notable that, in these examples, there is a de facto defence from anti-fracking groups of some aspects of the post-political regime despite the same rules and regime limiting them at the local level as I showed above.

7.3 THE ANTAGONISTIC LOGIC OF DIFFERENCE: ROSEACRE REVISITED, A SHALE GAS COMMISSIONER AND A TRAVELLING CIRCUS

An authoritarian turn requires a new political logic of difference to institute. A consensual logic is one that approaches planning on the basis that a consensus is achievable between competing interests, though in practice this often excludes marginalised groups or those which do not wish to compromise to facilitate development. An antagonistic logic of difference, by contrast, identifies 'friends' and 'enemies' based on ideology and identity. The proposed shift is from an *exclusionary* consensus (as critiqued by Mouffe) and 'win-win' solutions, to an antagonistic logic that identifies 'enemies' and those that will lose directly and problematises them to provide some justification for their loss. The change here is one of degree, to a more openly exclusionary political practice.

I have already highlighted in the KM8 case and the inquiry the increasingly antagonistic nature of the discursive conflict over fracking. What I show here, is how the consensual logic is still utilised in the second inquiry at Roseacre Wood (in 7.3.1); although as I show this was a very limited exercise which strained a consensus logic. The strained logic of consensus continues to give way to antagonism, with the government using more antagonistic language as the new Shale Gas Commissioner and government ministers problematize the 'activists' and 'protestors' for disrupting the planning process and shale gas sites. State actors target these figures as corrupting the consensus logic of planning, which is then used to justify the executive interventions I analysed in 7.2.

7.3.1 Roseacre Revisited

In April 2018, a further inquiry was held into the Roseacre Wood site, to focus specifically on the issue of traffic and HGV movements. In February 2019, the Secretary of State announced that Lancashire County Council's original decision would be upheld, and the application was rejected nearly 5 years after it was submitted. I will not go into a detailed account of the inquiry but there are several points to raise in relation to a consensual logic.

First, the very premise of the inquiry is almost a caricature of post-politics. The focus of the nine-day inquiry was entirely on traffic, with Cuadrilla and the council putting their case forward and Roseacre Awareness Group (RAG) putting forward a third-party position on the traffic plans that Cuadrilla had proposed. No other planning or political issues could be discussed; instead, the entire focus was on whether the site could be made viable in traffic and access terms. The conclusion was that Cuadrilla's proposals "would be likely to result in a real and unacceptable risk to the safety of people using the public highway, including vulnerable road users." (MHCLG, 2019a: 19). In particular, Cuadrilla had failed to address the risk assessment put together by RAG which identified various dangerous points on the roads accessing the sites (Ibid: 18).

In one sense, the political logic demonstrated was straightforwardly one of an exclusionary consensus: excluding those who were not willing and able to discuss the narrowly defined issues (traffic) in order to find a consensus separate from all the other antagonisms between the pro and anti-fracking formations. It was though, an extreme version of this logic, narrowing the parameters of discussion to such a degree. The decision to have this further appeal was a decision to allow further deliberation on a matter which multiple experts and planners had said was not possible to resolve. As an activist argued:

"the think with Roseacre is that it proved what was said originally by LCC, it was actually the traffic officer, the highways officer at LCC that said -Roseacre is an inappropriate location for this sort of industry, with the traffic, and the planning

officer agreed with him, the LCC was unanimous agreed with him, that should have been the end of it"[80].

 I highlighted in Chapter 2 examples of how planning practice led communities towards development by the use of various stakeholder and managed approaches that presented outcomes as consensual but excluded disruptive subjects. These approaches, however, did have a strong evidence base – the technocratic nature of planning was a means of excluding those with political objections and I showed evidence for this in Chapter 6. In the case of this extra inquiry however, there is a continued deliberation when it was consistently articulated by the various experts involved that this was not a viable proposal. There is perhaps something more antagonistic at play here. The same activist as above argued:

"so what happened is, and when the Roseacre decision was finally agreed, it's like an anti-climax for everybody, well everybody said - well that was always the case, we always said it was going to get turned down, it just made me laugh, because that wouldn't have happened if we hadn't have fought it, it would have gone through if we hadn't of fought it"[81].

It is of course speculative and counter-factual to say it would have gone through otherwise; however, the pressure and scrutiny generated by the anti-fracking movement in this case certainly meant that any technical errors or shortcuts made by the company would not be missed. RAG had consistently shown from the initial decision the problems with the site using expert evidence, and on two occasions (the local decision and the inquiry), planning officers/inspectors had agreed with them. Szolucha (2016) shows the emotional, psychological and social impacts on activists and communities in Lancashire who had effectively been fighting the sites for nearly 6 years by the time of this appeal. The third look at the Roseacre proposals can also be seen as another battle in a protracted conflict, and, whether intended or not, the further inquiry created a more antagonistic planning practice by giving Cuadrilla a third opportunity to make a case they had failed to make - an opportunity not afforded to the opponents of the development.

[80] PNR/RW activist 3
[81] PNR/RW Activist 3

This further appeal for Roseacre Wood makes use of a consensual logic of difference; yet it does so in a way that made a mockery of any sort of consensus-seeking logic or notion of 'communicative action'; as the further appeal continued the fight for the sake of it until the appropriate answer was reached for the government. This deepens the antagonism between citizens and government; however, within the Roseacre inquiry there were not signs of an enemy being identified through an antagonistic logic. Around the same period of time though, enemies were being constructed by the newly appointed Shale Gas Commissioner and the Energy Minister.

7.3.2 The Shale Commissioner and the Travelling Circus

In October 2018 the government appointed former Labour MP Natasha Engel as Shale Gas Commissioner. As an MP, she had experience of a contested shale gas site in her constituency where she took a pro-fracking position going into the 2017 General Election against the policy of her own party (which was to ban fracking entirely). She had also worked for a fracking company for a brief period. In her own words, she saw her role as:

"working closely with communities, regulators and industry to ensure facts are easily accessible as the process of shale exploration continues to develop." (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2018).

She also identified a problem that her appointment would solve, namely that:

 "there is a need for clear, impartial information to be provided to all parties and in particular those local communities most affected by shale gas development." (Ibid).

The Commissioner's role would at first glance seem to fit within a post-political regime. As the quotations above show, the development of the industry is taken as a given, and the Commissioner's job was to make sure that those impacted got the correct information. In other words, her role was to try and build a consensus for shale gas amongst the legitimate stakeholders.

Activists claimed that the approach to engaging with communities was highly selective. The Commissioner spoke to a newer group at KM8, Reclaim the Road, which were an Astroturf anti-protest group[82] yet the Commissioner allegedly refused to hold open public meetings including anti-fracking activists "because people shout".[83] Instead, meetings were set up with anti-fracking actors that were deemed respectable such as established Community Liaison Groups and local parish councillors. Nonetheless, the 'sensible' anti-frackers maintained a fixed position:

"we are all, quite clearly, every meeting we've had, everyone has expressed, and had documents, and had the research to back up their view, and I don't know what she expects, if she won't meet with people because she doesn't want it to get shouty what does she expect, she's not gonna hear anything different"[84].

The relation here between Commissioner and citizen can be interpreted as post-political consensus building. The disruptive people who shout are excluded in a 'partition of the sensible', and the Astroturf groups are brought in to bring a more two-sided dynamic to the public contestation. All the while the development of fracking sites is taken as a given, as well as scientifically and factually sound, despite many of the reasons for opposing the industry also having expert support (i.e. the 'science' was contested).

My argument, though, is that the political logic of difference of the Commissioner role is one that is better understood as being more antagonistic in approach. It starts from a pro-fracking position within an already polarised debate (rather than starting on something new with an 'open mind'). It may use some consensual language, but the local communities are to be given what the government sees as the correct factual information in a highly contested area. From the Osborne letter covered in Chapter 5, there has been this subtly antagonistic approach to communities that resist fracking - that they need to be made to understand the correct information by state actors.

What we also see with the Commissioner, is the clear construction of an 'enemy' that is responsible for disrupting the flow of facts and correct information to the sacrosanct 'local community'. Whilst anti-fracking groups had been dismissed early

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[82] PNR/RW Activist 1 & PNR/RW Activist 2
[83] PNR/RW Activist 1
[84] PNR/RW Activist 1

on in the fracking story as idealists, in Phase 3 we begin to see a much clearer set of attacks on the figure of the 'protestor'. The exclusion of 'anti' and inclusion of 'pro' activists above is part of this.

After just 6 months the Commissioner resigned, claiming:

"a perfectly viable industry is being wasted because of a Government policy driven by environmental lobbying rather than science, evidence and a desire to see UK industry flourish" (Hayhurst, 2019a)

The claim here is not simply that the 'protestor' is disrupting the local authority (as we saw in 6.2), the claim is that the broader anti-fracking 'environmental lobbying' groups are now steering the Government's (pro fracking) policy. She further argued the Government were:

"listening to a small but loud environmental movement that opposes in principle all extraction of fossil fuels. The campaign against fracking has been highly successful in raising the profile – and filling the coffers – of some campaign groups, but they do not represent local residents nor the wider population" (Hayhurst, 2019a)

She cited the refusal of government to lift the threshold on seismicity in the Traffic Light System as a key indicator that the government were not supporting shale gas. The industry had been calling for this move as it became clear that fracking in Lancashire would regularly produce seismic events (more on this below). In these quotes, the environmental movement/lobby is problematised as politically corrupting the policy and planning-regulatory process by unduly influencing local and national government. Anti-frackers are articulated as not willing to reason and having a financial motive on top of their political concerns that the silent majority of local residents do not share. In problematizing the anti-frackers as such, she articulated them as enemies of the state in language that verges on conspiracy theory.

That she most clearly articulated the 'enemy' in her resignation means it is hard to argue this was the logic of planning or indeed the government (who had allegedly been captured by the environmental lobby). The Commissioner was not alone in articulating the protestor in such a way. The day after the 2018 WMS was released, the Energy Minister Claire Perry wrote this in *The Sun* newspaper:

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"There are those who argue strongly against shale gas, using the most colourful and scaremongering language they can find and intimidating local communities and decision makers with lots of protestors from out of town.

In my experience, most of these arguments are made by people who actually just don't want us to use gas at all – now or ever." (Perry, 2018)

This article was written explicitly to justify the NSIP/PDR proposals in 8.2. The 'local community' is separated from the 'protestors from out of town'. Local councils were being 'intimidated' by the protestors, who are articulated again as uncompromising hard liners on shale gas. The Minister articulated the same position in a Parliamentary debate:

"Frankly, I pity any local councillor who gets an application on their desk, because they will shortly have a travelling circus of protestors to deal with, most of whom do not hail from the areas where these sites are located." (WHall Deb, 12th Sept 2018)

Both the Commissioner and Minister attempted to marginalise those who do not hold particularly radical views. The government defined as radical those who were arguing for positions based on evidence from mainstream national and international organisations. The logic employed by both commissioner and Minister was one that looked to break the link between environmental activist and local resident, and to do so they present the anti-fracking movement as 'intimidating', 'scaremongering' and self-interested ('filling their coffers'). This is a political logic of difference, which separates identities into friends (local communities) and enemies (protestors). A proposed (executive-punitive) change to the social practice of planning (NSIP/PDR) was justified in part by an antagonistic logic that looks to explicitly exclude the 'protestor' from the process because they were supposedly corrupting the local community and council with their 'travelling circus'. The shift in political logic was one of degree, of the extent to which groups were clearly identified as a problem and of who is identified; however both Minister and Commissioner here were unequivocal in who is to blame for the problems faced in gaining planning permission for fracking sites. The identification of this political disruption as a problem for planning formed part of the rationale for removing the local authority

input to planning, and shows a shift to a more antagonistic logic of planning than the exclusionary consensus.

The antagonistic logic, though, was still not fully institutionalised. The Commissioner's resignation was a reflection of the failure to fully adopt an antagonistic logic. The quotes from the Minister above precede the testing at PNR that led to felt seismic events, and the Commissioner's resignation followed these events and the Ministers refusal to lift the limits of the Traffic Light System at the request of the industry. The realisation of further seismic events/earthquakes meant that more of the valorised 'local community' were concerned about fracking as it began to damage residents' houses, making the 'environmental lobby' harder to isolate.

7.3.3 Consensus, Antagonism and Equivalence

In Phase 3 of the fracking case an antagonistic logic of difference is used to create a friend/enemy type distinction for the anti-fracking movement. The two discursive formations had become fixed in their key elements and continued to contest the impacts of fracking. Following the PNR/RW appeal, however, the anti-fracking movement problematized and challenged the government approach and the planning-regulatory process. In one sense, the antagonistic language and positioning from the government is a reaction to this: the government were compelled to intervene as the 'protestors' had generated "countervailing information" (WHall Deb, 12th Sept 2018) and allegedly intimidated local communities and councils.

In another sense, the government was moving more substantively towards an authoritarian practice. The NSIP/PDR proposals to change the social practice of planning were justified by the fact they avoid the problems caused by the protesters, i.e. the removal of a space for dissent was articulated as defending the (apparently pro-shale) silent majority from the disruptive influence of protestors. In this way, an antagonistic logic of difference provided a rationale for instituting a new, executive-punitive social practice for planning.

It is important to understand that a consensual logic was still utilised in the Roseacre inquiry. However, it was both unsuitable for this polarised case (both sides have

shown there is no consensus to be found on shale) and put into practice in a contrived way that prolonged the contestation further over issues that had twice been deemed technically significant barriers to the proposals. As a logic of difference, consensus failed to exclude the anti-fracking groups, and a more antagonistic logic was demanded (by the Commissioner) and articulated (by the Minister).

Both logics, however, fail to break the anti-fracking chain of equivalence. The anti-fracking movement, as highlighted in 7.1, were able to link the various risks of fracking with a new nodal point – that fracking required an anti-democratic process to deliver. This chain of equivalence was not broken by government attempts to split the 'local' from the 'protestor', and the antagonistic logic towards 'protestors' was seen as further support for the industry especially when it came alongside tougher policing measures at sites – it reinforced the central claim of the anti-fracking groups. Indeed, as the seismic events shook Lancashire, the anti-fracking position grew stronger and the government and industry became divided as we shall see in the next section.

7.4   NO STATE OF EXCEPTION: ARRESTING GRANDMAS, TROUBLESOME EARTHQUAKES AND A NEW MORATORIUM.

The removal of local authority power from the planning process through the NSIP/PDR proposal was defended through problematising the participatory logic of planning – in that it allows the disruptive 'protestors from out of town' (constructed as enemies) space to make their case at the expense of the legitimate local residents. In this section I show how the protests at the two local case study sites articulated strong links with the 'local community' (in 7.4.1), and how the heavy-handed policing of protestors strengthened the anti-fracking position as well as undermining a participatory logic (in 7.4.2). Further, the anti-fracking groups are somewhat vindicated by the occurrence of the earthquakes they had argued would occur throughout the planning process - but which had been dismissed. I argue that there is little sign of a participatory and deliberative fantasy to legitimate the controversial decisions after the fact in these case studies; however, the government also struggled to construct a 'state of exception' to legitimate their more authoritarian interventions because they were not successful in portraying the protestors as enemies or threats to

the state nor could they construct a need for a fracking process that was shaking peoples' homes (7.4.3).

7.4.1 Protests camps: Conflicts at KM8 and PNR

Following planning permission being granted at both PNR and KM8, there was a sustained campaign of direct action and protest at each site with camps established and a near permanent presence at the entrance gate to both. This in turn meant a sustained police presence and conflicts between activists and police, pre-emptive injunctions, multiple arrests and for three men a short spell in prison before their sentence was overturned. This section will briefly cover these two sites of protest. Drawing upon some of my own observations from visiting the sites, I argue that these camps (particularly PNR) were a significant part of the discursive struggle. Dissent was staged physically and the antagonism between state and citizen demonstrated at the sites was articulated as anti-democratic by anti-fracking groups. I will start with a description of the protests, and then move to cover the discursive relevance with regards to injunctions and arrests in the next section. **This section contains some descriptions of violence.**

Preston New Road: A camp at Preston New Road was established in January 2017 once Cuadrilla began working on the site. A local businessman, against fracking, allowed a camp to be established about 1km from the PNR entrance. Several other camps were established nearby, though these were not always with permission of the landowner and were regularly moved on by police. Outside the entrance of PNR, a 'gate camp' was slowly built up to include a wood burner, bench and bed. This gate camp was constantly manned by activists who watched the fracking site 24hrs a day for over 1000 days (see Figure 7.1), collecting data on the activity at the site in

Figure 7.1 Image from inside the 'gate camp' with view of the rig, photo by Gareth Fearn

minute detail. In the daytime the camp provided a point for passers-by to interact with – often with support though sometimes abuse.

The PNR camp had a schedule of activities. Each week, there would be a protest led by women dressed like suffragettes (the 'women in white') based around dance, song and speeches (Figure 7.2), where women would walk from the main camp to the gate (this was one of the few regular events that survived an injunction). Most long-term residents of the camp referred to major actions they had done, a particular event being the 'caravan of love', where several activists had attached themselves to a caravan (involving concrete, somehow!) and essentially dropped this outside the entrance of the site (see Figure 7.2)

'Locking on' in some fashion was a key means by which the activity of the site was slowed down. This meant activists physically connecting themselves to heavy objects (like the caravan) or the road with concrete, handcuffs etc. and then essentially waiting for the police to turn up and cut them out. Towers were also constructed; people then chained themselves to the top of these towers. Others would climb on top of lorries, forcing them to stop. In most cases the activist would be arrested, and usually cautioned or fined. One particular incident recalled by many of the camps residents was when an 87-year-old woman, a former Green party councillor, was physically dragged from her wheelchair by police for protesting and the image of this was publicised in news media.

Figure 7.2 Top: Caravan of Love action with faces edited out, original photo by Ros Wills (Source: (Hayhurst, 2020a) Bottom: Image of the 'women in white' marching up the road to the PNR site, photo by author

The main camp itself operated as a place for people to visit and talk about the sites. I stayed there several times, and on one visit a national environmentalist group, Reclaim the Power, hosted a multi-day event there including protests, workshops and training. Activists from across the world fighting fracking or other extractive

industries were invited to the site each week (e.g. First Nations people from Canada), and over the years various senior politicians from the Green, Liberal Democrats and Labour parties came and gave speeches at the gates of PNR. It was the focal point of the anti-fracking struggle in England.

The discursive importance of the PNR site is that it served as this focal point. For example, I attended a protest of over one thousand people at the site which is remarkable for a demonstration outside of a city. The results of the flow testing and fracking at PNR were waited on by the rest of the industry as a sign that it was viable. Further, the nature of the policing continued trends from Barton Moss and other sites, with physical and sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by officers (Netpol, 2017). On one of my visits, I counted 9 vans of specialist 'riot' police in the area despite no particular protest or action occurring, meaning the number of officers likely outnumbered the activists I saw nearby that day. The contestations between discursive formations were physically manifested in the conflicts on the streets and fields around this site. The site and its residents produced images, events and interventions that are part of an anti-fracking discourse as well as developing and re-enforcing links with the local residents who didn't participate in the protests as regularly.

Kirby Misperton: The protest camp at Kirby Misperton was shorter lived, due to the financial problems Third Energy encountered which eventually led them to them being sold off and the new owners pulling out of fracking to focus on conventional extraction. A similar camp was constructed in a field, about 3 km away from the KM8 site. Again, it acted as a place for visitors, and even had its own YouTube channel (Kirby Misperton TV, 2018). There was also a regular presence beside the road at the entrance to the site (see Figure 7.3)

Unlike PNR, the KM8 site is not on a main road, so HGVs had to access through single track roads and through the village. This meant that obstructing access was easier, and the road to the site was subject to regular lock-on's. The protests and actions were often located in the village rather than on a main road. One resident had parked his car in a way that obstructed a HGV outside of his house (it was never clear whether this was intentional or just a bad bit of parking). Within about 15 minutes of a truck being delayed, a specialist police team had arrived to physically remove the

car without speaking to or seeking to find the owner of the car (captured in Figure 7.4). He eventually returned and parked the car further up the road.

Figure 7.3 Image of the entrance to the KM8 site of activists banner, photo by Gareth Fearn

This incident highlighted how the protests at KM8 were much closer to people's homes, and with this the day to day reality of police action at protests. On my visit, many local residents said that they had been shocked by police action and had become more and more active in anti-fracking actions as result. As Szolucha's work demonstrates in far greater detail (Szolucha, 2016; Szolucha, 2018; Short and Szolucha, 2019), protests sites were spaces that helped form bonds between residents and activists even though there were also some tensions.

The protest camp at Kirby Misperton was fully disbanded in March 2018. Third Energy were ready to begin the hydraulic fracturing process; however, they needed final permission to begin fracking from the Oil and Gas Authority. In part due to a

Figure 7.4 Image of police removing a care to facilitate HGV access to KM8 site, photo by author

sustained campaign from anti-fracking groups the main backers of Third Energy, Barclay's bank, pulled their financial support for Third Energy and were looking to sell the company which was over £70milllion in debt (Hayhurst, 2019b). One of the conditions for final permission to frack was to show a good level of financial solvency, and without the major capital investment Third Energy were judged by the OGA to be too indebted. Third Energy were bought by a US firm, Alpha Energy in April 2019 who announced they would be focusing on conventional extraction (Hayhurst, 2019b).

The failure of KM8 to secure final government approval showed the tide was turning against shale gas. Without the backing of major investors, the government were not willing to take on the risk of giving fracking permission to a small company in a debt

driven industry. The refusal to give permission was not a planning one, though it suggests that executive interventions are in part linked to the support of large corporate entities (Barclays bank, Centrica) who have established links with Ministers. These links are something I touched upon in Chapter 5 with the leaked letter and are also characteristic of the post-political too – both regimes are ways of the planning system and the state supporting big finance and developers who have effective lobbyists and the ear of Ministers.

7.4.2 Injunctions, Arrests and Prison

In terms of a 'state of exception', the state reaction to the protests demonstrated some extra-legal features in its use of injunctions and the policing of protest. It is important to note a difference here with this and the other logics – fantasmic logics are how a practice legitimates a regime to its participants, and in planning how decisions are legitimated. Whilst a broadly participatory fantasy was maintained in Phase 2, the overturning of the PNR decision made it harder to claim that planning was based on participation. When the protests against this decision were met with a response that pushed against what was legally permissible though, there was also an absence of a sufficient 'state of exception' to legitimate these actions.

It was the chemical company INEOS who first took out an injunction against 'persons unknown' (in July 2017) for their fracking sites. This injunction meant that anyone committing various minor civil or criminal offences people are often arrested for but then released or given small fines (such as trespass, obstructing lawful activity); could instead be charged with the much more serious offence of being in 'contempt of court'. This carries with it a possible custodial sentence and substantial fines. The injunction contained the "first ever court mandated blanket ban on slow-walking, which has long been a legitimate and legal form of peaceful protest" (Leigh Day, 2019). Cuadrilla took out a similar injunction with PNR, and these injunctions were encouraged by the police, probably in part because the cost of policing at PNR alone was said to be over £7million (APPG on the Impact of Shale Gas, 2018: 8).

There are significant implications for the right to protest generally from such injunctions, but in terms of this thesis there is a further squeeze on the space for dissent to a decision over a development. I have shown through this thesis the limitations places upon the anti-fracking formation through in formal planning

decisions, these injunctions then further limited the possibility of expressing dissent to a planning decision, which in the PNR case many felt was unjust.

Further, the 'protestor from out of town' was articulated by the government as a disruptive influence on planning decisions, as a means of legitimating the move to the NSIP/PDR process for fracking decisions. These injunctions would have made it easier to criminalise the 'protestor', further legitimating the construction of the 'protestor' as the enemy. The wider picture is that it becomes increasingly incoherent to claim that planning is participatory, with new barriers being introduced to dissent.

In developing these more authoritarian actions toward protest, however, the companies and police helped to strengthen the new nodal point of the anti-fracking formation – that fracking needs anti-democratic interventions. Activists raised money to contest the INEOS injunction. A hearing at the Court of Appeal overturned the INEOS decision in April 2019. The QC said afterwards:

"The pre-emptive injunctions ordered by the High Court were unprecedented in their scope and undermined the protections of civil liberties and human rights in the UK." (Leigh Day, 2019)

As with the NPPF court case, the anti-fracking movement connected fracking with anti-democratic tendencies articulated as police over-reach in the right to protest. The court case found the company, as well as the police and courts that initially granted the injunction, to be overstepping what is legally permissible in terms of restricting protests that are non-violent but nonetheless disruptive.

A further example of such legal over-reach came when three activists were given custodial sentences for protest actions at PNR. They were imprisoned for 'public nuisance' and were released after 6 weeks when an appeal judge ruled that the original decision was "manifestly excessive" (BBC News, 2018). A complaint was made against the original judge, whose partner was said to have links with oil and gas companies. When released the three activists headed the protest rally at PNR mentioned above; the attack on human rights was a new element which was linked to the drive for fracking in the anti-fracking formation. The following two quotes from anti-fracking interviewees capture the articulation of the policing and injunctions:

"Very quickly, very quickly realised that the state's agenda and people's agendas are quite different, I mean I've been on demonstrations before, and I've encountered the police before, but never in the way that I've encountered them on PNR."[85].

"fracking firms [...] just reaching out for these injunctions against persons unknown straight away, as I said it's not in response to things that have happened, it's not against people they think are problematic, it creates a whole atmosphere of fear and intimidation against people who would want to show their right to lawful ways to protest"[86].

Again, long standing legislation limited the tendency towards more authoritarian practices: both government and police were experimenting with what is legally possible. The use of injunctions and heavy policing were articulated by anti-fracking groups as showing how willing the government were to intervene to support fracking. The attack on the right to protests was then linked to planning interventions as part of what fracking requires to become established. The attempt to restrict protest from injunctions and policing is not part of planning and the logic of its day to day practice; however the restrictions on protest acted as a threat to those opposing developments and suggested a wider context for planning decisions in which political dissent is restricted. It became increasingly difficult to articulate a participatory logic when expressions of dissent to development were becoming serious criminal offences. What was simultaneously lacking was a crisis or threat that can legitimate more authoritarian interventions - fracking was not important enough nor are the protestors scary enough to merit such treatment as I will discuss further in the next section.

7.4.3 Led by the Science: No Participation, No State of Exception

In November 2019, we reached what may be the conclusion of the fracking story in England. The government shelved the NSIP/PDR proposals and announced another

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[85] PNR activist 1
[86] NGO environment

moratorium on fracking for shale gas in England. The WMS that announced this stated:

"The Government has always been clear that we will take a *precautionary approach* and only support shale gas exploration if it can be done in a safe and sustainable way, and that we will be *led by the science* on whether this is indeed possible. It remains our policy to minimise disturbance to those living and working nearby, and to prevent the risk of any damage." (Leadsom, 2019, my emphasis)

This WMS cited a series of seismic events at Preston New Road, particularly those in August 2019 that reached a magnitude of 2.6 and caused minor building damage to housing. The moratorium on fracking is indefinite, until evidence is provided that shows seismicity can be reduced to acceptable levels. The government moved to a 'precautionary approach' which would be 'led by the science', a refrain that would become commonplace in the reaction to Covid-19 months later.

The problems Third Energy had at KM8 securing final permission, the legal defeats, and the refusal to raise the Traffic Light System threshold in the year or so approaching this point had already suggested the writing was on the wall for shale gas. Felt earthquakes at a scale which residents had been told were highly unlikely (and which the anti-fracking groups had claimed would occur) were the final straw for continued government support for the industry. Even Lord Browne, who had helped Cuadrilla get government support in Phase 1, said in an article that:

"…fracking in the UK doesn't make much sense. I think it was a test to see if it worked. We probably don't need to do it." (Vidal, 2019)

My analysis here, in terms of a fantasmic logic, is that in this final phase planning practice is caught somewhere between the two structuring fantasies I put forward in my analytical framework. I showed in Chapter 6 how the neutral actors articulated planning practice in participatory terms; however, the government as well as the fracking companies were increasingly claiming that participation is a problem insofar as it provides space for 'political' contestation of fracking sites. A participatory logic may still grip some actors, but it is also widely problematised.

There is however, also not a 'state of exception' to grip actors to a more centralised, executive led and less deliberative planning practice. As an industry representative said:

"We don't have an integrated energy policy in Britain at all, and that is part of the issue, we are allowed to chuck an axe if you like between nuclear and oil and gas, and that...if we had a crisis, if we had an energy crisis, I think people's views will look quite different, I think people would actually go - ooh blimey, we don't have any energy we don't have any power, what should we do - you always get, a crisis often leads to a complete cultural change in things, and maybe that's what we need before people are able to get a grip of all this stuff in a collective way"[87].

This quote captures the failure of fracking and the changes the government proposed for planning. Fracking was increasingly unpopular and highly contested. Any further support from government would require an over-riding crisis to legitimate continued intervention; especially following the earthquakes. Such a crisis was not articulated in relation to fracking, though it is not hard to imagine that a geopolitical problem leading to rising gas and oil prices at this time being used to legitimate forcing through shale gas decisions.

The government was left with attempts at constructing protestors as the enemy, which marks a move away from the participatory. In the fracking case, the demonisation was not successful in part because the anti-frackers were able to articulate a link between government intervention and the dangers of fracking and in part because it was difficult to portray the people at protests sites as malevolent threats when some of those who were being arrested were grandmothers from middle England. The anti-fracking chain of equivalence and on the ground organising linked local residents with environmental activists.

By the end of the fracking story little sign of a participatory fantasy structuring the planning process. The legal challenge to the NPPF paragraph showed that the 2015 WMS was not sufficiently researched and justified – suggesting the statement prejudiced the planning process. It therefore became increasingly difficult to legitimise the planning process as participatory, as government interventions had

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[87] Industry Representative

created an unfair playing field whilst also heavily policing those that continued to dissent. At the same time, the government could not construct a 'state of exception' to legitimate its authoritarian tendencies. In the end, 'the science' was articulated as a neutral arbiter of the conflict by a Government facing re-election with new and more important objectives.

7.5 An Authoritarian Turn and its Limits in the Fracking Case

In the following chapter, I will discuss the planning system more generally, and the tentative hypothesis on the authoritarian turn and the crisis in the post-political regime. Here, I will bring together and summarise the emerging authoritarian logics in Phase 3 of the fracking case, and the limits to the authoritarian turn in this case.

The 2015 WMS and the attempt to turn this into policy via the NPPF without considering further evidence, and the proposal to remove local authority development management powers through NSIP/PDR; are attempts to institutionalise a more executive, centralised practice of planning. These changes were introduced in a reactionary way in response to resistance from the anti-fracking movement and the decisions of local councils. They have a punitive aspect, as councils were blamed for being 'slow and underperforming' and their authority was undermined.

As 7.2 shows, there is a reactive ministerial involvement in the planning process, though the Ministers failed to fully change the 'rules of the game' for planning and eventually abandoned the NSIP/PDR proposals. The anti-fracking movement had articulated fracking as linked to anti-democratic tendencies and the overturning of any sort of 'localism' or local democracy following the PNR/RW appeal decisions. The hastily introduced (though long considered) proposals to remove local authority power for fracking decisions further emphasized the government's willingness to bypass local democracy, which brought more conservative actors (as well as Conservative MPs) to oppose these changes. The attempt to institutionalise an executive-punitive logic is further limited by the law. Legal precedent as well as the legislative underpinnings of the post-political planning regime meant that the approach from government to formulating the NPPF paragraph was found to be unlawful– though this relied on the anti-fracking group's ability to bring the case to

court in the first place. There is a drift towards an executive-punitive practice, but one that finds political and legal limits.

The attempt to institutionalise the executive-punitive practice drew upon an antagonistic logic of difference (7.3). The 'protestor' and the 'environmental lobby' were identified as enemies and separated from the 'local community'. The hard-line 'protestor' or 'activist' was said to have disrupted the planning process with lies and scare stories, and more centralised decision making was proposed to avoid these troublesome political groups. Attempts to build consensus were abandoned (e.g. with the Commissioner), and the government actively took an antagonistic approach to the anti-fracking movement as further emphasised by the injunctions and policing of protest.

The antagonistic logic of difference failed to break the links between local communities, environmentalists and other activists in this case. What the antagonistic logic did was make the structuring fantasy of planning as a participatory practice increasingly untenable. Until the seismic events in 2019, the government showed they were willing to support the industry through numerous interventions even if this meant actively excluding an anti-fracking movement and its civil society allies. What the government were not able to do was articulate a new structuring fantasy (of a crisis or threat) for their interventions that would legitimise an executive-punitive practice. Instead, the process of fracking generating felt-at-surface earthquakes in the shires where Conservative voters live (months before an election) meant that fracking was generating its own exceptional problems requiring top-down interventions in the form of another moratorium.

In Phase 3, we see the government attempting to institutionalise an authoritarian regime for planning. Its attempts to do so are limited by law, the politicisation of fracking by the anti-fracking movement, and the very geology of shale rock. It is also important to state again that fracking (as with any other issues) diminished in importance during this Phase, with the focus of most of politics and media on the issue of Brexit. It is important to bear in mind when analysing government and policy that powerful political figures are often managing a flurry of events with varying degrees of competence, malevolence and attempts to solve problems (often inherited form predecessors) at speed. The drift towards authoritarian practices that I have shown in this chapter is a combination of different proposals, interventions

and decisions which share a set of logics. I am not arguing they are part of a coherent masterplan but rather represent an emerging government approach to the problems shale gas fracking has thrown up which draws upon a broadly neoliberal critique of the planning system as slow and inefficient - in spite of decades of neoliberalisation. The drift towards an authoritarian regime though, is not any less of a problem because it is reactionary or incompetence. Incompetence has never been a barrier to being in power in Britain. The following chapter discusses the implications and continuities of the tendencies towards an authoritarian regime in the fracking case, which I characterise as an *experiment* in statecraft.

8 Conclusions: A Crisis of the Post-Political and an Authoritarian Experiment for the Future

In this final chapter I will summarise the contributions of this thesis and set out my argument related to the tentative hypothesis that has guided the research that the fracking case shows an experiment in an authoritarian regime for planning. I will start (8.1) by recapping the preceding chapters and addressing the research questions that correspond to each Phase. I highlight the first three contributions the thesis makes, which are: an original and critical telling of the story of fracking in the UK, bringing a new critical perspective to bear on planning (authoritarian neoliberalism) and an original analytical and methodological framework for analysing practices within planning and state institutions. Section 8.1 sets out what I conclude about the fracking case.

Building on this, I turn (in 8.2) to three more contributions that relate to the tentative hypothesis and the shifting regimes of planning practice and to the literature on post-politics and neoliberalisation. I argue in 8.2.1 that the fracking case shows a crisis of the post-political regime, contributing to debates on post-politics. The fracking case shows a shift between the 'technocratic-progressive' and the 'authoritarian-conservative' poles of neoliberalisation, contributing to debates on changes in the neoliberal state. Finally, I argue that there are signs of an authoritarian turn in the fracking case and I highlight the limits to this, contributing to a growing literature on the 'authoritarian turn' in neoliberalism. I conclude by connecting the fracking case with more recent proposals for planning reform that could potentially overcome the limits I identify in the fracking case. I suggest that the coronavirus pandemic and the economic rebuilding that will follow could provide the 'state of exception' to legitimate an authoritarian turn for planning that was lacking in the fracking case. In 8.3 I discuss the implications of the thesis future avenues for research. This chapter summarises the thesis whilst extending and emphasising the insights the thesis provides for theories of planning and the state more generally.

8.1 Fracking, Planning and Authoritarian Reactions

This thesis has provided a critical explanation of the shifting regimes and practices with the English planning system, in relation to controversial case of shale gas fracking. The research examined a live and ongoing issue as the project was started before any of the events of Phase 3 had occurred. I will summarise the thesis here; and set out the first three contributions of the thesis.

As I stated in the introduction, the background for the thesis is a set of overlapping crises (political, economic, ecological) and the aim was to investigate a potential shift in the planning system (as a state institution) in the midst of these crises. The assumption from literature as well as my own knowledge and experience is that there is a qualitative change occurring in government (and governance) as part of a drawn-out response to the 2008 financial crisis and the 'zombie' persistence of neoliberalisation (Peck, 2010).

I showed in Chapter 2 how the planning system in the U.K. has been the subject of constant reform since the neoliberal turn, first under the Thatcher government to make the system more market-orientated and free from political (and consequently democratic) control. Such changes proved unpopular with Conservative voters and environmental and conservation groups, and a 'new consensus' was reached that integrated sustainability and environmental concerns into a local plan-led system oriented towards private sector led development. The neoliberalisation of planning continued under the Labour administration from 1997 along these lines, until a new wave of criticism of planning meant a series of 'spatial planning' reforms were introduced from 2004.

I draw on a critical literature that argues that the 'spatial planning' reforms instituted a 'post-political regime' for planning in England. This regime is characterised by its techno-managerial practice, the use of an exclusionary consensus to suppress dissent and a participatory fantasy to legitimate decision making and grip its participants. Recent scholarship has argued for the need to reassess the post-political critique, arguing that there were signs of greater politicisation of planning from state and citizen actors. I build on this scholarship by arguing that the regime is part of a wider 'technocratic-progressive' approach to neoliberalism. The wider political context is

that this form of neoliberalism had been undermined by the 2008 crash, 'permanent austerity' and the success of right-wing populist parties and movements. This understanding formed the initial hypothesis for the research – that the post-political regime for planning was likely to also be in crisis.

Chapter 2 also discusses a body of literature on 'authoritarian neoliberalism' that provides a critical perspective on the recent (re)turn to what I term the 'authoritarian-conservative' pole of neoliberalisation. This literature shows that across the world there is a turn towards more centralised and executive led government in formally democratic societies. There is a drift towards anti-democratic approaches that dismiss consensus in favour of an openly antagonistic politics (with clearly identified enemies) in response to overlapping crises. This literature led me to question whether an 'authoritarian turn' was happening within English planning – a state institution long the subject of neoliberal reforms. From these two literatures I formed a tentative hypothesis that:

There is a turn towards a more authoritarian (yet still neoliberal) planning regime following a crisis in the 'post-political'

The hypothesis drove a study of the shale gas fracking case. The fracking case was a live issue when I began this research project (September 2017); one that had yet to be resolved and one in which the government were reacting to a political movement that challenged their support for this new fossil fuel industry. The thesis draws upon Political Discourse Theory to analyse the fracking case; and the Political Discourse Analysis approach provides the tools to understand the contestation between 'pro' and 'anti' fracking discursive formations (Chapter 3). The thesis explores the tentative hypothesis through this case study, by analysing how the two sides of this conflict are treated in the planning process. Following an analytical framework that identifies a 'post-political' and 'authoritarian' regime for planning, I examined the logics of the practices of planning in the reconstructed fracking case. I asked three empirical research questions which I linked to three Phases of the shale gas case and the two local case studies in Lancashire and North Yorkshire. I will summarise the answers to these questions and return to the hypothesis:

1- *How did the State initially respond to the political contestation of shale gas? To what extent is this indicative of a 'post-politics'?*

I characterise the initial response to the contestation over shale gas as post-political. The Coalition government, in response to the earthquakes in Lancashire, argued that the techno-managerial expert-led planning and regulatory process would mitigate any of the problems seen in the U.S context, and that shale gas could act as a 'bridge fuel' to a renewable future. The response looked to find a consensual middle ground between two extremes – hard environmentalism and extracting any fossil fuels possible – in an approach typical of a post-politics.

Shortly after this, however, the government also introduced legislation (the Infrastructure Act, planning guidance) and requests to Ministers (in the leaked Osborne letter) that would support shale gas and limit the avenues for dissent against it. Local authorities were expected to make decisions with the participation of local residents; however, the changes made by government effectively tightened up the already limited (post-) political space for dissent to shale gas sites. These changes occurred in part as a response to the emergence of an anti-fracking movement that linked concerns over localised impacts of sites to the wider energy-ecological questions of emissions and climate change. The state responded to shale gas by modifying a post-political planning regime and presenting shale gas as a win-win solution for economic growth and the environment.

2- *What logics underlie the decision making on shale gas? How are these 'logics' of planning practice articulated and challenged within the local decision-making process?*

Within the two local cases (Chapter 6), I identified that post-political logics were dominant within the planning process; however, these logics were increasingly challenged. A techno-managerial logic was used to exclude what seemed to be appropriate anti-fracking experts and dismiss evidence-based concerns over regulation and climate change. A consensual logic of difference failed to break the chain of equivalence linking the local concerns with the wider environmental ones, with the figure of the 'protestor' increasingly articulated as disrupting the process with a more antagonistic logic emerging in the KM8 case. The challenges to these

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logics made it harder to maintain a participatory fantasy as it did not appear that people are being heard. A participatory logic was rendered incoherent by the overturning of the PNR decision, the further inquiry into Roseacre and the confusion over the responsibility for assessing GHG emissions at KM8. The anti-fracking movement articulated the planning process as anti-democratic, as the government made executive interventions.

Importantly, the government also critiqued the planning system as 'slow', 'political' and 'confused' (Chapter 6). The 2015 WMS intervention indicated a turn towards a more executive led process that even further minimises the space for deliberation. Ministerial statements, policies and guidance intersected with funding cuts and privatisation to further undermine the practices of post-political planning, as there are less planners and less resources to conduct extensive deliberations. Authoritarian logics are increasingly articulated to manage dissent and conflict where the post-political fails – the ministerial interventions are in part reactions to a planning system lacking clear policy and resources required to make decisions according to a techno-managerial practice. Post-political logics persisted through Phase 2, before being dislocated in the inquiry leaving a sort of 'zombie' regime which lacked legitimacy and support from participants and government.

3- *Are there signs of an 'authoritarian turn' within planning? What are the limitations to this?*

The 2015 WMS and the decision to overturn the PNR decision was a moment of dislocation for the post-political regime, and the beginnings of an authoritarian turn. In Chapter 7, I showed how each of the three logics of the post-political regime shift in an authoritarian direction. The attempt to institute the NSIP/PDR approach for shale gas planning applications and to limit plan-making was a move towards an executive-punitive logic. The government took an increasingly antagonistic approach to the anti-fracking movement by articulating activists as corrupting the local community and planning process, using this reasoning to justify the removal of the local and discretionary aspect of planning that provides the kernel of space for political challenges to shale gas. The problem of then 'protestor' was reinforced by the pre-emptive injunctions against protest taken out by companies in collaboration with the police. The changes to the planning process and policy (the NPFF

paragraph) as well as the injunctions are contested by anti-frackers who developed temporary alliances against the removal of local planning powers (including with Tory MPs). What the authoritarian practices lacked was a sufficient 'state of exception' to legitimate their institution.

In the fracking case, the limits to the turn were the anti-fracking movement, long standing planning legislation (e.g. the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) and the actual geology of fracking sites which meant the anticipated (by activists) earthquakes damaged property months before a General Election. This led to a further moratorium on fracking and the claim to be 'guided by the science'.

In following the tentative hypothesis and answering the three research questions, I have made three contributions. First, I have provided a critical re-telling of the story of fracking in the U.K. as a conflict in which aspects of state practice were contested – specifically the extent to which the planning process and decision making on fossil fuel extraction ought to be considered a democratic process. As explained below, the fracking case reveals shifts in state practice, but it also *shaped* those practices as the government reacted to the anti-fracking movement. The research on fracking I have drawn upon here tells us something about fracking as an issue or discourse (Bomberg, 2017), as a community-led movement (Szolucha, 2019), the multiple failures of 'governance' (Whitton, 2017) or problems for planning (Beebeejaun, 2017, 2019) in managing the fracking issue. What I have shown here is how the contestation of fracking shaped the logics and practices of the state just as the state shaped and limits the contestation of fracking.

Showing the relationship between the fracking contestation and the state was made possible by my second and third contributions. The thesis has, particularly in Chapter 7, brought to bear an emerging theorisation of the neoliberal state – authoritarian neoliberalism – on the English planning system for the first time. Authoritarianism is not something that is new to planning, as research into colonial and neo-colonial planning systems makes clear (Yiftachel, 1998; Njoh, 2007; Porter, 2010). Indeed, more recently scholars in Turkey have identified authoritarian turns in neoliberal planning (e.g. Penpecioğlu & Taşan-Kok, 2016).

The emergent 'authoritarian neoliberalism' that Bruff and Tansel (2019) identify is not supposed to be radically new, it is in many ways a reanimation of authoritarian

tendencies but with the new dimension that , this time, neoliberal states are cannibalising *already neoliberalised states* (rather than Keynsian Welfare States) in response to crises and political dissent. My second contribution is to bring these insights largely from political economy into discussions about environmental and land-use planning in England. Writing on planning in England, inside and outside the academy, has a tendency to focus on 'what *should* be done?' – the current moment is one of significant change within states across the world and what I have tried to show here is 'what *is* being done?' (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2004, my emphasis) in the decision-making and practice of putatively democratic planning. My thesis challenges planning scholars to consider reforms in the wider political-economic context of authoritarian neoliberalism.

The third contribution is to bring together the analytical framework that allows me to answer the questions, address the hypothesis and connect the discursive conflict over fracking with these wider state shifts – as I set out in Chapter 3. Clearly, the Political Discourse Theory approach is one that is growing in its usage across qualitative research (Glynos *et al.*, 2021), what I have done here is operationalise these theoretical tools (logics, practices, antagonisms, nodal points) in connection with critical theories of the state. Developing the mid-range concepts (logics), I have connected general theories of the state with empirical case studies in planning and other state institutions. In doing so, I contribute a framework of how a 'post-political' and 'authoritarian' regime for planning operates which the fracking case gives empirical support for. This particular framework is a novel one which can be used to critique other planning or neoliberal state institutions.

Importantly, the identification of 'logics' allows me to draw upon the fracking case to make three further contributions to the literature on neoliberalism and planning discussed in Chapter 2.

8.2 The Crisis of the Post-Political Regime, the two faces of neoliberal planning and the Authoritarian Turn

The fracking case and the logics approach provide a basis to make a more general argument, that there is a turn towards an authoritarian regime in planning following a crisis in the post political. As Chapter 3 set out, the claim made is that the changes

in the fracking case "'would be explicable as a matter of course' if a hypothesis (H) were true" (Glynos *et al.*, 2009:10). I have shown through Chapters 5- 7 how the dislocations and problems that the fracking contest had on planning are made explicable by understanding the planning system as undergoing a shift in its dominant regime – one which follows wider shifts as neoliberalism (re)turns towards its more authoritarian pole. The fracking case provides an empirical basis to make three claims about the planning system and the state in England, each of which represents a further contribution to literature.

Section 8.2.1 sets out the fourth contribution of the thesis, to a literature on post-politics and planning. My thesis has shown that the post-political regime persists in planning although it is being challenged from above and below and increasingly lacks legitimacy. The fifth contribution of the thesis (in 8.2.2) is to the literature on neoliberalisation. My research shows a state institution in flux, its practices led by rules that are legitimised through participatory and consensus logics that the Government were nonetheless willing to undermine and abandon to purse fracking. I argue that the fracking case is best understood as caught between the two regimes in my analytical framework. The fracking case shows the reactionary drift towards the authoritarian regime over the time period of the case study. Finally, in 8.2.3 I set out the sixth contribution, that my thesis sketches out the emerging authoritarian regime for planning that recent reforms to planning may now be instituting. I argue that the fracking case is best understood as a case of "experimental statecraft" (Peck and Theodore, 2015) in an authoritarian neoliberalism. When we consider the *Planning for the Future* White Paper (from Summer 2020) and other proposed changes, it becomes clear that the Government are finding ways to overcome the limitations they found in fracking (and other planning disputes). The fracking experiment could be a small indication of how a (dystopic) politics beyond neoliberalism is developing. I suggest that the coronavirus pandemic and the economic rebuilding that follows could provide the 'state of exception' to legitimate an authoritarian turn.

8.2.1 The Crisis of a Post-political Regime

The fracking case study shows that a post-political regime for planning is in crisis. Chapter 6 in particular, identifies a planning system that in local decision-making still attempts to follow techno-managerial, consensus-seeking and participatory

logics. Reactive government interventions and an organised and effective political movement disrupted these logics. The issue of shale gas fracking is politicised in the marginal space for dissent in the post-political regime. The post-political regime could perhaps have still delivered sufficient shale gas sites for the industry (via appeals etc.). Instead, the government chose to intervene to speed up the process, and these government interventions alongside criticisms from the anti-fracking movement undermined the legitimacy of the planning process for participants if not for planning professionals.

This thesis has shown that there was an enduring post-political regime in the initial planning-regulatory approach to fracking. In Chapter 5 I showed how the formation of the planning-regulatory process for shale following the earthquakes in Lancashire was articulated in techno-managerial and consensual terms (5.2). Shale gas was articulated as a bridge fuel (5.2.2), and Coalition government ministers argued that they were finding some middle way between the oil and gas industry and hardcore environmentalists. Shortly after, Conservative politicians made a strong pro-fracking argument for shale gas and oil in economic terms (5.2.3) and made legislative and policy changes (e.g. Infrastructure Act, planning practice guidance) to support a shale gas (and oil) industry. During Phase 1, an anti-fracking movement began contesting the nascent industry and linked local concerns with the impact on climate change of a new fossil fuel industry.

In Phase 2 (Chapter 6), we saw the post-political regime being challenged. The planning-regulatory process was tested in in the Lancashire and North Yorkshire case studies. In both cases, we saw the reliance on a social practice that is techno-managerial, in that the discussion of extensive technical evidence was prioritised over political discussions (6.3). Expert testimony from anti-fracking groups, however, was regularly dismissed, though in the Lancashire case the groups were able to challenge the PNR proposals based on the evidence provided by consultants and legal advice (6.1). Further, the use of planning guidance to take discussion about regulation off the table undermined the techno-managerial practice, as it effectively cut out even technocratic deliberation over new regulatory mechanisms.

The deeply antagonistic relationship between the 'pro' and 'anti' fracking formations was also a problem for a consensual political logic. It became increasingly clear, particularly at KM8 (6.2), that there was no 'win-win' solution to reconcile these two

sides. Instead, there were signs that those involved in planning were trying to discursively separate the 'protestors' from the residents within the anti-fracking movement through an antagonistic logic of difference (6.2.5). In both local cases, the neutral actors argue that the planning process was fair because a participatory logic was followed that allowed people to have their say; however, the government interventions I have mentioned so far, as well as the 2015 WMS, suggest a more executive-led approach. The Government articulated a critique of techno-managerial planning as 'slow and confused' (6.3.2), and there was a growing problematisation of local authority planning as being disrupted or corrupted by the 'protestor'. Challenges from above and below disrupted and dislocated the post-political regime. The use of the 2015 WMS as the key pseudo-policy that reversed the local council decision made the years of local campaigning and deliberation appear to be a stage-managed and performative process; as ultimately the government intervened at an executive level to overturn the local decision (6.3.1). By the end of Phase 2, the post-political regime increasingly lacked legitimacy yet was still the dominant approach to planning practice.

My thesis supports the argument made by scholars that 'post-politics' is not an adequate frame by which to understand planning at the current juncture (Legacy *et al.*, 2019). It finds with Ormerod and MacLeod (2018) an example of groups shaping planning outcomes by working within current planning structures – even though the anti-fracking groups realised the limitations this placed on what they could articulate within planning. Where my work differs from sceptics of post-politics as a critical frame is that it does not determine a post-politics (or not) by the success of dissenting groups (Beveridge and Koch, 2016) inside or outside of the state in gaining recognition or particular changes they demand. Instead, by focusing on the post-politics of planning *practice* and avoiding relying on a 'post-political condition', I have shown how a post-political *regime* is shifting - partly in reaction to contestation from anti-fracking groups; but also from the Conservative government criticisms of the post-political regime's failure to deliver development efficiently and quickly. The shift in the regime is a shift in the management of crisis and dissent, a shift in the 'politics' (in Mouffe's sense) of planning.

To expand on this, my research shows the contestation over fracking politicised firstly shale gas and secondly the planning-regulatory process. The anti-fracking

movement challenge fracking by 'playing the game' of techno-managerial planning, as well as by developing a broader anti-fracking discourse that links multiple demands in a chain of equivalence (from 'industrialising the countryside' to 'keep it in the ground'). My research concurs with Ormerod and MacLeod (2018) and Legacy *et al.* (2019) that there are spaces and opportunities for dissent in planning from state (local councillors) and non-state actors (activists) as opposed to a monolithic condition. This is not enough, however, to throw out a 'post-politics' as a critical frame– rather it shows that a post-political regime is an increasingly ineffective means of insulating 'development at all costs' from political dissent.

Rather than abandoning the post-political interpretation, I argue that we should see it as an increasingly incoherent logic of planning, a regime in crisis. The crisis of post-political planning is an institutional part of the wider crisis in what I term technocratic-progressive neoliberalism. The 'localism' agenda of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government (2010-15) maintained some features of post-political approaches; however, both austerity and departmental reform have chipped away at the post-political regime (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2015). In addition, there is both a left-wing critique of the managerialism of late New Labour, and a right-wing critique of the supposed cosmopolitanism of both New Labour and the Coalition which was mobilised in the EU referendum. Swyngedouw (2019 argues that the right wing critique has manifested in an aggressive 'autocratic populism' (similar to Hall's 'authoritarian populism') which fuses with the post-political, in that the satisfaction of reactionary demands (e.g. limiting immigration) is given precedence over economic growth.

My research agrees with Swyngedouw's general diagnosis of the contemporary moment. It differs, in that it identifies changes to the institutional practices that we understood as post-political. These practices lack the same efficacy and legitimacy they once did (when a 'Third Way politics was ascendant) and were subject to critique from the government. Swyngedouw still invokes a 'post-political condition' to describe how neoliberal hegemony is maintained on a global scale; by contrast, what I am arguing here is that the fracking case shows that the substantive practices of a post-political regime breaking down alongside the wider political and economic conditions that made them possible. Consequently, there is a need for a new critical approach to planning and other state institutions which captures the newly emerging

logics that help to insulate continued capital accumulation and extraction from dissent. Such an approach should be appropriate to wider societal conditions that seem to be increasingly 'political' in the sense of there being more open antagonisms and clear winners and losers. What is required is an approach that conceptualises the qualitative shift in institutional practices, and that is what I have tried to provide with my analytical framework.

Using this framework allows me to make the fourth contribution of this thesis: an analysis of the breakdown of the post-political planning regime. This regime can neither support capital accumulation sufficiently (i.e. fast enough) nor legitimate decision making to citizens. Post-political planning, at its worst, "mobilises and reproduces acquiescence for policies and strategies that favour certain groups or interests whilst marginalising more radical alternatives" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011). Post-political practices created a planning system which, when facing another wave of neoliberal reform, very few progressive actors can defend as it stands. The post-political regime has eroded trust in expertise and democratic and deliberative planning through mobilising expertise and the progressive language of participation in support of capital and development at all costs and, in many cases (like with fracking), against sections of the public.

There may still be a use for identifying a 'post-political' condition, in that there are hugely limiting factors on any left or even centre left political alternatives. What I have shown in this thesis is that the institutional practices of a post-politics are heavily contested and are being incrementally overhauled. The driving force of this, not captured in the thesis, looks to be emboldened elements of a revanchist "neoreactionary" political right who articulate a critique of liberalism *per se* (Smith & Burrows, 2021). What the fracking case shows are systemic critiques and political contestation of the post-political logics and practices of the planning system (from government and activists), which indicate a substantial change in the nature of how contemporary 'politics' and the state operate even if these changes remain within the broad parameters of neoliberalisation. There is a crisis in the post-political regime, and critical scholarship on planning needs new concepts and categories to explain what regime is emerging in its place.

8.2.2 The Two Regimes of Neoliberal Planning

The analytical framework I set out in 3.3 drew on two literatures that critique the state. The conceptualisation of the post-political regime drew on a critique of 'third way' politics and planning. My argument about the authoritarian regime utilises recent literature that argues that there has been a revival in the authoritarian side of neoliberalisation and that a new authoritarian-neoliberal conjuncture is becoming dominant in many countries. As Bruff (2019) argues, the anti-democratic aspects of neoliberalism are present in the work of its key theorists (like Harek) and, as I cover in 2.1, is also present historically in the Thatcher government which articulated an "authoritarian populism" (Hall, 1985) in conjunction with radical neoliberal reforms. What this thesis shows is a planning system caught in between these two regimes, its practitioners and some participants following post-political practices whilst the government intervened to modify the planning system. The authoritarian turn is in many ways a hardening up of the post-political, but it requires a legislative overhaul as well as a clearer 'state of exception' to fully implement a regime of authoritarian practices. I will outline the three transitions as proposed in the framework, arguing that we are seeing an institutional shift between the two poles of neoliberalism that are in tension. 8.3 expands further on the features of the authoritarian regime.

Techno-Managerial to Executive-Punitive: The shift here is in effect an intensification of the management of state actors outside of central government. The NSIP/PDR move was an attempt at centralisation by removing local authority control, as was including the contested 2015 WMS paragraph in the NPPF to limit local authority discretion. Rather than management by metric, there is a more disciplinary approach for planning practice developing with more direct interventions from Westminster. Similar to changes in the 1980s, undermining local authorities has led to a more rules-based disciplinary planning process (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 1997), where ministerial statements and interventions increase as planning is seen as 'slow' or too accommodating to 'political' actors. The 2015 WMS is a bridge between the two regimes: it did not remove the discretionary and deliberative space; instead, it restricted what could count in such a space. The proposals for NSIP and PDR reflect the tendency towards executive interventions into ongoing planning decisions and plan-making. The shift

here is not simply towards more central government intervention; it is towards a logic where Ministerial decisions rather than technocratic governance is the dominant social practice within planning.

From Consensus to Antagonism: The shift here is that excluded groups are more explicitly targeted and excluded from planning practice, with subsequent political protests curbed in response to planning decisions that were seen to be unjust. The post-political 'consensus' was also exclusionary (Johnstone, 2010); what we see through the fracking case is an increasingly explicit identification of who the 'enemies' are, as well as their mere presence being used as a reason to abandon democratic processes. Groups like the 'protestors from out of town' are clearly problematized as a threat to the order of 'politics'. The antagonism between the 'pro' and 'anti' formations is also used as a reason to intervene, to prevent the 'intimidation' of communities or councils. In part because of the success of the anti-fracking movement, the government were unable to dismiss concerns about fracking as extreme. Instead, activists were constructed as an 'enemy', as a corrupting influence on planning which the NSIP/PDR proposals sought to exclude.

Participatory to State of Exception: A fantasmic logic, as Chapter 3 explained, is the ideological component of planning – it is what grips actors and appeals to their 'mode of being'. It is what *legitimates* planning. In the fracking case, the participatory fantasy became very hard to maintain after the PNR appeal and the government intervention to support the industry with the 2015 WMS. A 'state of exception', which is never really articulated successfully for shale gas, is a different structuring fantasy to participation. It is one that posits a crisis or a threat to public order as legitimating a more authoritarian planning practice. As Bomberg (2017b) shows, a 'security' frame is used by pro-fracking actors regarding gas supply to initially justify the move to shale gas fracking. This storyline was evident in my research; however, the threat (from Russia) to cut off supply was not substantial enough to legitimate interventions into planning and to secure fracking. Instead, a fantasmic logic is what the authoritarian regime lacks in the fracking case. As I argued in 7.5 the government had undermined the participatory aspect of planning that was articulated through the Localism Act reforms, but the government were not able to construct a crisis or 'state of exception' that meant suspending due process. It

is easy to imagine events playing out very differently if there was a global gas price spike around 2015/16 or a more credible threat to supply had emerged.

With each of these shifts, it is important to conceptualise them as contingent. This is why I maintain the value of a 'post-political' critique: the two regimes I identify are related to the two poles of neoliberalism, the institutional regimes of the technocratic-progressive and the authoritarian-conservative poles. Swyngedouw (2009: 63) argues that the 'governance beyond the state' associated with the technocratic-progressive face of neoliberalism exhibits a dual tendency that is both "emancipatory, inclusive and democratizing" and which also contains a "disturbing tendency towards the erosion of democratic accountability and the further consolidation of a fast-forwarding neoliberalisation process". In the fracking case, the latter becomes more prominent with a severe reduction in the former. We should not think of the authoritarian turn as a permanent shift (at this point); rather it is one face or pole of neoliberalism becoming dominant as a form of crisis management. The second moratorium and the government choosing to be 'led by the science' speaks to a techno-managerial logic, for example.

To make sense of the oscillation between the post-political and authoritarian, it is useful to recall (from 2.1) that Thatcherite planning was identified as having centralising tendencies as well as an increase in the use of rules over discretion, minimising local government power (Thornley, 1990; Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 1997). These strong state, authoritarian tendencies are revitalised in the fracking case under another Conservative government. Local authorities are financially crippled, the tendency is to rule from the executive branch of government through written statements in a deregulated policy landscape that lacks detail and where planning departments lack resources to process decisions (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2015).

The important difference between the contemporary moment and the neoliberal turn of the 1970/80s is that the neoliberal reforming zeal is currently directed towards an *already neoliberalised planning system*. Peck and Theodore (2019) identify that austerity programmes are a neoliberal state hollowing out a neoliberal state; what this thesis captures is a political hollowing out alongside the fiscal - a political war between the two poles of neoliberalism. Paralleling the neoliberal turn, an 'authoritarian statism' (Poulantzas, 2000) is maintained as other aspects of the state

are 'rolled back'. Recall how Johnstone (2010) used the term 'authoritarian turn' to refer to the interventions of the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) within 'spatial planning'. It was the IPC that became the unit in the Planning Inspectorate responsible for NSIP in 2012 and in the fracking case we get the call for greater NSIP involvement and removal of local authority power. In this way, the centralising tendencies of the technocratic-progressive face of neoliberalisation are retained and intensified whilst there is a rolling back of the wider networked governance approach to planning.

 What is rolled back is the wider bureaucracy of techno-managerial regulation and policy (e.g. through funding cuts and the Infrastructure Act), yet simultaneously new guidance and supportive policy for fracking is introduced. Technocratic language and deliberation persist, though the further inquiry for Roseacre Wood these practices are taken to almost absurd lengths. There may be rhetorical dismissals of the 'technocratic-progressive' neoliberal approaches and the post-political regime, but both regimes share the common function of insulating development from dissent. That there is a turn to more authoritarian practices is in part a reflection of the perceived need to insulate projects (like fracking) from dissent, a more aggressive defence of the status quo ante from an ideological positions (neoliberalism) bereft of actual ideas. That the U.K. state and economy is deeply neoliberalised already means we should look upon the current turn as a defensive act, as those who have benefitted from 40 years of neoliberalisation want to maintain what they have gained, reflected in the uneasy coalition of Conservative support between older working class homeowners, finance, and land owning aristocratic elites. Unlike the 1980's, there is not the imperative to neoliberalise everything, nor does their appear to be the desire to roll out novel technologies of governance. The government seems focused on supporting the extraction of whatever is left, from the state and from the ground.

As the discussions in Chapter 2 reflected, recent years have seen a civil war between two neoliberalisms. The analytical framework I develop in Chapter 3 allows me to analyse the war of position between these two different poles of neoliberalism –the technocratic-progressive and the authoritarian-conservative – at an institutional level through the use of logics and practices. The fracking case shows a planning system caught between two regimes. The fifth contribution of the thesis is to show how the shift to the authoritarian has been reactionary and incremental, and how a

more authoritarian form of statecraft is developed at an institutional level. The analysis of the fracking case finds a planning system caught between the two regimes of practices. The authoritarian regime is not yet institutionalised as the dominant regime of planning, the post-political lacks legitimacy. I now turn to the final contribution, which is a tentative theorisation of the authoritarian regime in planning that there is good reason to think will soon achieve a hegemonic position.

8.2.3 Authoritarian Tendencies, Limitations and Authoritarian Planning for the Future

The sixth and final contribution of the thesis is that it provides an explanation of the features of an emerging authoritarian regime at an institutional level. The empirical chapters of this thesis have shown a tendency towards authoritarian practices and logics. I will firstly set out the authoritarian turn and its limits in the fracking case in relation to the literature in 2.4, before I connect the fracking case to a set of proposals from government that could, prima facie, overcome some of the limits to the turn in the fracking case and institutionalise an authoritarian regime for planning. My contribution is to identify the incremental construction of this regime in the English planning system.

Authoritarian tendencies and limits in the fracking case

I will set out here how the fracking case shows signs of a tendency towards an authoritarian regime in the fracking case. As stated in Chapter 2, the basic claim about authoritarian neoliberalism is that:

"contemporary capitalism is governed in a way which tends to reinforce and rely upon practices that seek to marginalize, discipline and control dissenting social groups and oppositional politics rather than strive for their explicit consent or co-optation." (Bruff and Tansel, 2019)

My analysis of the fracking case identifies such 'practices'. The practices include a social practice I characterise as **executive-punitive**, where central government looks to remove the discretionary local authority input through the NSIP/PDR proposals, limiting the space for dissent. These proposals followed a promise to identify problematic councils to discipline and the intervention of the 2015 WMS into the Lancashire inquiry (in 6.4). The logic is of reducing political blockages

(bureaucratic and democratic) to private interests that lobby government (recall Lord Browne in government and at Cuadrilla) and of expanding the power of central government to intervene to support particular projects.

The **antagonistic logic of difference** (7.2) articulated in the fracking case marginalizes the anti-fracking movement, portraying them as hardliners who are a threat to the planning process and the silent majority of the 'local community'. Dissenting from fracking is, from the Ed Davey speech in 2012, portrayed as irrational; by 2018 such dissent meant you were part of a 'travelling circus' that wants to shut down energy production (7.4). The presence of dissent is explicitly used as a reason to centralise decision making for fracking; there is a turn to a political practice of the demonisation and direct exclusion of dissenting groups before the fact, e.g. with the use of pre-emptive injunctions for protest following planning decisions. In the absence of an 'exclusionary consensus', there was a turn towards simply excluding the very possibility of contesting fracking by those said to be 'intimidating' councils and communities.

A key reason why these emerging social and political practices fail to become institutionalised in planning is the lack of a sufficient **state of exception** or other fantasmic logic to grip actors and to provide legitimacy for greater executive decision-making (7.5). The fracking case covers a planning system in flux, and, as I show in Chapters 6 and 7, the participatory fantasy that structured the post-political planning regime is difficult to plausibly maintain following successive government interventions and suppressed reports. The threat of Russia and a sudden cut off of gas supply was invoked earlier on in the fracking story (5.4), as well as the need for shale gas to support a transition to renewables, but both these crises are not successfully connected with a need for fracking. The 'protestor' and the 'slow' system are then used to generate a sense of crisis within the planning system; however, these are not successful, perhaps in part because the media and political focus at the time was on the even greater political crisis of Brexit. Therefore, my thesis does not demonstrate that there *is* an institutionalised authoritarian regime in planning. What I have shown is the tendency towards both a social and political practice of planning that is authoritarian. In the fracking case, these tendencies lack a structuring fantasy to legitimate their institution.

Since I began the thesis, the wider 'authoritarian turn' in formally democratic, neoliberal nations has only become starker. There are leading politicians across the world appealing to an authoritarian subjectivity to direct anger at racialised enemies or nefarious 'elites' (Brown, 2018). Those that challenge such political leaders are met with draconian state power, from the militarised policing of the Black Lives Matter protests in the US in 2020 to the Indian government's reaction to the 'Farmer's Protests' in 2021. Like with technocratic-progressive neoliberalism, for an 'authoritarian neoliberalism' to become hegemonic it will have to become the dominant logic of institutional practice of government, to be institutionalised a way makes it 'common sense' for the practice of state institutions like environmental and urban planning with new 'technologies of government developed.

As my thesis shows, there are currently limitations to such a turn in planning in England. Long standing planning legislation and case law were used to remove the pro-fracking NPPF paragraph which failed to consider important new research (7.2). The anti-fracking movement challenged fracking on both a technical level as well as providing a political challenge to government interventions, which were articulated as anti-democratic and contradicting the participatory ethos of 'localism' (6.1 & 7.3). There are also material limits, in the geology of the subsurface in Lancashire (7.4) as well as in the willingness of finance capital to support a risky and contested venture as we saw in the KM8 case (6.3).

What I add to the current literature on the 'authoritarian turn' is a framework (as I cover above) as well as a set of features that explain an emerging authoritarian approach to government at an institutional level as well as some of the possible limits to this turn. Initial literature on authoritarian neoliberalism has tended to focus on its ideological and populist roots; my thesis complements an emerging wave of research that looks to identify the specific ways in which the state is being re-configured in light of the rhetoric and electoral success of right wing, populist parties (e.g. Cozzolino, 2019). My thesis has shown that state processes, practices and logics drifted towards the authoritarian over several years following the financial crisis. In the fracking case, the authoritarian practices are a reaction to political dissent towards fossil capital and energy production in the face of climate change. Rather than authoritarian state actions being simply the responsibility of specific elected populist politicians (e.g. Boris Johnson), the fracking case shows an incremental

direction of travel emerging from the management of the 2007/8 crisis and a decade of 'austerity'.

The question is then – how far can this turn go? In critiquing Hall's notion of 'authoritarian populism', Jessop et al. argued that Thatcherite hegemony was fragile, "passive", and lacking institutional support:

"Where are the Thatcherite 'new model' unions, the Tebbit Labour Front, the Thatcherite Youth, the women's movement, Thatcherite sports leagues, rambling clubs, etc., which might consolidate and fix a mobilized working class? They do not exist and this highlights a certain vulnerability for the Thatcherite project." (Jessop *et al.*, 1984)

Jessop et al. were correct to raise this in 1984; yet at the current moment the sort of deep hegemony they refer to is evident, albeit in different ways. Most of the U.K.'s formerly public institutions are privatised and tend to remain so however much they fail (e.g. trains, water) leaving them largely outside of democratic control when they do. Trade union density remains weak. The disaster of Grenfell tower was not sufficient for substantial regulation to be rolled out to protect citizens. The 'Thatcherite' grassroots organisations Jessop et al. reference may not exist in that fashion, but that is in part because hardly any of these types of community organisations exist. They have turned out to be unnecessary when social media allows like-minded folk to meet digitally to discuss ideas that would make even Norman Tebbit wince, and for political parties to directly tailor information to individuals newsfeeds.

There is nevertheless still a fragility to an authoritarian turn. This thesis has highlighted that grassroots movement can resist authoritarian tendencies, though it is immensely hard work. Authoritarian populism, rather than being a fixed hegemonic ideology, is something governments can animate as it suits. In the fracking case, there was an attempt to tap into an authoritarian subjectivity by presenting the activists as a threat. As Jessop more recently argued, the current moment is one of authoritarian statism *and* authoritarian populism, where we find a

"politics aimed at disorganizing subaltern classes and reorganizing the capitalist power bloc around interest-bearing capital." (Jessop, 2019)

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In the planning system, this intersection is evident, in that the subject matter of planning (in this case, fracking) and those that oppose it were the target of populist rhetoric whilst at the same time there are overt and covert moves to re-organise the state in the interests of capital. It is notable how the government lost interest in supporting fracking companies once large-scale capital (e.g. Barclays) lost interest in financing it (7.4). My contribution to this debate is to show how an authoritarian turn at an institutional level is limited by the law and counter-hegemonic movements. However, these limits could potentially be overcome if a sufficient 'state of exception' could be constructed to legitimate a new regime and if an authoritarian populism could be tapped into and articulated that would support the institutionalisation of an authoritarian regime for planning. It remains to be seen whether undermining some long-standing features of liberal democracy in the U.K. is what will be necessary to protect the interests of 'interest-bearing' or rentier capital. The fracking case shows a government pushing in this direction, and the next section shows a wider ranging, structural attempt to institutionalise the authoritarian turn in English planning.

This thesis has shown the experimental and contingent nature of working out new political arrangements in a highly reactionary way, of an authoritarian turn focused towards protecting capital and the projects able to capture government attention. The experiments in planning practice in the fracking case highlighted barriers for an authoritarian regime, though ongoing reforms may reduce or eliminate some of these barriers.

Authoritarian Planning for the Future?

If I had written up my conclusions immediately after I had finished collecting and analysing my data (February 2020), I would have written here that the thesis suggests a new authoritarian-neoliberal approach to planning may be on the horizon. A month after I would have been hypothetically writing, the government announced a planning White Paper, *Planning for the Future*, which was released in August (MHCLG, 2020). In light of this, I will use this section to tentatively show the connections between the experiment in authoritarian logics we see in fracking with the government proposals. The proposals, as they are, would appear to institutionalise an authoritarian planning regime if enacted. These proposals emphasise the experimental and reactionary character of the authoritarian turn in

planning, contain attempts to escape the legal and political barriers to instituting an authoritarian regime and are reinforced by other legislative changes in progress. I will highlight how there are continuities between each of the logics of the authoritarian regime I identify in the fracking case and both the White Paper and other recent government proposals.

The White Paper proposes an 'executive-punitive' planning practice. It articulates the need to speed up planning, to "modernise the day-to-day operation of the planning system" (Ibid: 18) through a "rules based" (Ibid) approach that defines what is and is not acceptable development within an area. Local authorities would be able to decide which of three possible zones to give to land in their area. Central government would also intervene in local authorities not operating fast enough, and it considers possible sanctions for failing authorities. The word 'sanction' is used in the document more than the word 'transport', and the paper equates "democratic accountability" with "Minister's responsibility for planning decisions" (Ibid: 16).

The proposed planning system mirrors the NSIP/PDR proposal for shale gas insofar as it is based on centrally defined rules and executive decision making. The focus is on speeding up the process by removing democratic input, and the discretionary space that makes it possible for citizens to oppose controversial development. As with fracking, local authorities are threatened with intervention and possible sanction for not conforming to timelines which are not always in their control. Power is (further) centralized, and the possibility of dissent (like we see in this study) is almost entirely evacuated from the planning process in favour of a zoning system with public input every 8 years. Alongside this the government is also consulting on changes to judicial review to ensure "effective governance", ensuring that "the [judicial review] process is not abused or used to conduct politics by another means" (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Changes in this direction would likely limit the ability of groups to challenge decisions such as in the KM8 case (6.2) and even in the case of the challenge to the paragraph of the 2018 NPPF (7.2). There is an executive-led and punitive logic to the changes to planning and judicial review. The proposals would further centralise decision-making and make opportunities for dissent even more limited.

The White Paper also draws upon an antagonistic logic of difference. The problem of the planning system is articulated as an outcome of "decades of complexity and political argument" (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020: 16), in part drawn from the vagueness of 'sustainable development (as introduced in the 2012 NPPF), which will be redefined to "remove any debate about this descriptor" (Ibid: 28). In this way, the paper critiques the deliberative and consensus seeking logic of post-political planning, alongside the vagueness and speed of development of local plans – problems related to both spending cuts for planning departments and the policy created in previous Conservative reforms. It identifies the problem of the 'protestors from out of town', as part of a proposal to:

"streamline the opportunity for consultation at the planning application stage, because this adds delay to the process and allows a small minority of voices, some from the local area and often some not, to shape outcomes." (Ibid: 20)

As with fracking, the problem of people outside the local area is part of a rationale for restricting the already limited democratic space of the planning process. In the fracking case, such antagonisms were limited by a political movement and the relative weakness of the government. A much less coherent movement exists against the White Paper proposals, though the coalition opposing the proposals does contain some of the same actors opposed to the changes in the fracking case. Unlike in the period my thesis examines though, the government has an 80-seat majority, making it harder to defeat legislative changes in Parliament. Protests are also being targeted, with the 'Extinction Rebellion' environmental movement a particular focus of the government. At the time of writing (Spring 2021), the Government is looking to pass into legislation the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that includes severe custodial sentences (up to ten years) for the sort of protest actions we saw in the fracking case. The legislation was designed in consultation with the police specifically in reaction to environmental protests (Home Office, 2021). Such changes mirror the use of injunctions in the fracking case; they would turn a set of minor civil offences into serious custodial ones.

Importantly, the White Paper is able to draw on two more powerful and overlapping crises to create a 'state of exception'. The wider policy context is a government drive to 'Build, Build, Build' as a response to the economic crisis following the coronavirus

pandemic, and the deregulation of the planning system is a means to "unleash Britain's potential" by recovering the "original vision" (MHCLG, 2020: 16) of planning from the late Victorian period. The second crisis, and the focus of almost the entire White Paper, is the housing crisis. As Heslop and Ormerod (2020) show, there are multiple narratives of the 'housing crisis' and one the government and think tanks have deployed over the last few years has been that planning and policy restricts development and increases prices as supply is limited. The White Paper problematises an already highly neoliberalised planning system by blaming planning for the housing crisis, to argue for further neoliberalisation of planning that would reduce even further the space of democratic dissent and remove more barriers to executive power to acting in the interests of capital and protecting rents.

The proposals for this substantial set of changes to the English planning system would, at first glance, help to institutionalise the authoritarian tendencies the I analysed in the fracking case. This allows me to emphasise the final contribution of my research as a critical explanation of the experimental development of an authoritarian regime. The recent proposals cast the fracking case in a new light; the tendencies I analyse ought to be seen as several years of "experimental statecraft" (Peck and Theodore, 2015) in which the government tried to institute authoritarian practices. As with any experiment there are failures, but the recently proposed reforms in the White Paper, changes to judicial review and to sentencing for protestors would help to overcome the barriers the government faced attempting to push through fracking. Further, the experiment still remains broadly neoliberal. Drawing upon the housing crisis and the pandemic as a 'state of exception' leads to the familiar answer: more government intervention is required to engineer the never-quite-realised perfect market conditions for private companies to profit and meet social goals like providing adequate housing. The continued failure of the 'market' to do so is bringing forth an authoritarian fix as a means of avoiding public provision of social goods. The market always falls upwards.

What is new then, is the institutional means by which these conditions will be engineered, and those means in planning are an executive-punitive social practice and an antagonistic political practice legitimated by a state of exception. The Thatcher government failed to institutionalise an authoritarian regime, but in the current moment overlapping crises (climate, pandemic and economic) provide a

strong rationale for executive interventions. I offer here the suggestion that there may be new conjuncture for neoliberalism– the 'authoritarian-reactionary' – where institutional change is more responsive to an aggressive resentment (e.g. over statues) to cosmopolitanism, racialised others (particularly migrants, see Danewid, 2021), and fading British power than to a traditional conservativism concerned with the 'green and pleasant land'. The latter limited the Thatcherites, but the contemporary political right have been successful in mobilising anger against 'elites' to further elite projects. The emerging state-institutional practices that follow this mobilised anger are 'authoritarian'.

This section has discussed the three theoretical contributions of the thesis. First, I have shown that a post-political regime faces a crisis of legitimacy, in which the public and the government critique techno-managerial, consensual and participatory logics. This crisis suggests a need for scholars to develop new critical frameworks. Second, that the fracking case shows planning caught between two different regimes, with a turn towards authoritarian practices that finds political, legal and geological limits. The oscillation between these two regimes mirrors that between the 'technocratic-progressive' and 'authoritarian-conservative' faces of neoliberalisation. Thirdly, I have argued that recent proposals from government allow us to see the fracking case as an experiment towards an authoritarian regime for planning. The government is currently implementing planning and other reforms that would help to institute an executive-punitive and antagonistic planning practice drawing upon a housing crisis and the pandemic as a 'state of exception' to justify its interventions as necessary. I term this 'authoritarian-reactionary' neoliberalism, though it is possible that these changes presage a new ideological conjuncture entirely (Davies, 2021). As I have touched upon throughout, this new phase of neoliberalism is one that contains some repetitions from the past which the new planning legislation is one example of, yet there are also good reasons to think that this new conjuncture breaks from the two poles of neoliberalism into what may be an elongated decline or a radical shift to an authoritarian politics that rejects liberalism entirely.

8.3   Implications and Future Research: Still Neoliberal?

To summarise, I have outlined 6 contributions of the thesis: it provides a critical telling of the story of fracking in the UK, it brings a new critical perspective to bear on planning (authoritarian neoliberalism), it provides an original analytical and methodological framework for analysing practices within planning and state institutions, it shows that a post-political regime faces a crisis of legitimacy and therefore the need for a new critical framework, it demonstrates that planning is caught between two different regimes, and that the fracking case shows an experiment with an authoritarian regime for planning which may now be closer to being instituted as part of new ideological conjuncture for neoliberalism. I want to conclude the thesis by reflecting on the implications of the thesis and possibilities for future research.

The fracking case, as I have reconstructed it, provides a powerful example of an 'experimental statecraft' within planning and the direction of travel for the current administration towards what I tentatively term an 'authoritarian-reactionary' neoliberalism. This research should therefore be of significance to the fields of Planning and Politics, as well as to Geography and Political Economy. What I have produced here is an 'immanent critique', an attempt to conceptualise the emerging patterns and rationale of the State in response to the overlapping economic, political and ecological crises that following the coronavirus pandemic show little sign of abating. My approach here has been to research an unfolding case, in order to theorise present conditions on an institutional level. I have shown one of the actually existing responses to the ecological crisis, where government sought to force through a new extractive industry. The political character of these sort of responses in the U.K. and across the world is of major importance. The technological capacity exists to face the ecological crises; what this thesis addresses is the development of a political approach to insulating capital from these cries and the public demands in response to said crises. The implication of the authoritarian turn here, as a defensive formation, is that the same people that caused the climate crisis are tasking themselves and themselves only with resolving the crisis. It should concern us all that their power is derived from consistent appeals to reactionary elements of the

public, and they overwhelmingly represent the interests of finance and rentier capital in the U.K.

I chose to begin the thesis with an extended history of the planning system and neoliberalisation in the UK. I did so because there is a debate on the extent to which the current authoritarian turn can meaningfully be said to be 'neoliberal'. Slobodian (2021) has argued that the populist right and neoliberals share a common heritage in project, namely crushing the left and anyone who tries to defend 'equality'. He argues that there is nothing incompatible with neoliberalism and authoritarian or populist politics, which I also argue in Chapter 2. Today's leading authoritarian populists are generally also extremely relaxed about freedom for capital, supportive of privatisation and other market reforms e.g., Modi's attempt to liberalise agricultural markets or Bolsonaro's support for industrialising the Amazon. Aligning liberalisation with nationalist rhetoric and attacks on minority groups, unions etc echoes much of the Thatcher period. Even the leading figures of the 'technocratic-progressive' period, like Tony Blair, are not particularly concerned about an authoritarian or racist politics. What they seem to dislike most about the current UK government is the lack of 'good governance' and 'rules based' order, typical of the globalising, normative neoliberal period before the financial crisis.

It is now fairly clear that technocratic-progressive neoliberalism is in severe crisis and is probably irrecoverable. The collapse of this order is what has led authors to once again declare that neoliberalism is dead, and some other new authoritarian type politics is being developed (see e.g. Cooper, 2020). What I have tried to show in my thesis is the long, slow breakdown of the technocratic-progressive neoliberal social order within an institution. The solutions that are being offered by the government in planning, however, do have parallels with the botched Thatcherite reforms in removing local authority discretion and giving more power to both capital and central government. Early signs are they are finding the same sort of reaction from the Conservative party base, who do not want housing estates built in the Home Counties (which is where developers most want to build them!). Again, I offer the term authoritarian-reactionary neoliberalism to capture this rehashing of the 1980s. Given the weakness of the political left and civil society, it may be that governments and capital are able to escape even the minimal shackles of even formal liberal democracy, but my research does not lead me to conclude that is where we are yet.

Privatisation, liberalisation, deregulation and public sector cuts continue in the UK as they do in many countries, so it seems premature to decide that the authoritarian turn presents a new 'epoch', rather than another phase in the neoliberal story, one that may could just as easily repeat the same mistakes as the past as it could preage something radically new.

The research focuses on a set of case studies of one important and controversial issue: shale gas fracking. Following the moratorium announced in November 2019, the shale gas industry appears to be dead. The use of logics as mid-range concepts and the framework I set out in this thesis though, are applicable to other ongoing environmental and urban planning contestations. The implications of my work depend on whether the fracking case is representative or distinctive. I suggest that it is both. It is representative of the crisis of post-political planning and technocratic-progressive neoliberalism. As I show in Chapter 2, the roots of this crisis lay outside of planning, but over time the impacts of the financial crisis, austerity and the EU referendum are impacting the institutions of the state. State actors, naturally, continue to reproduce the practices they are used to, but these become increasingly incoherent and illegitimate in institutions, like planning, that lack the resources, legislation and institutional support these practices were instituted under. The fracking case shows how planning is caught in this indeterminant position, lacking legitimacy yet not reformed towards a new regime whilst its practises are increasingly politicised by activists.

The fracking case is also distinctive, in that it one of several cases where we can see the working out of an authoritarian regime in practice. Prima facie, I can see signs of authoritarian tendencies in planning for the HS2 trainline, the Latin Village market in Haringey, the approval of a new coal mine in Cumbria, and the mounting examples of high-rise, expensive apartment blocks being forced upon communities in the U.K.'s major cities where real estate values keep rising regardless of prevailing economic conditions. These highly contested areas, and the processes by which these decisions are made, ought to be priorities for those interested in what planning is *and* what it ought to be. The implication of my thesis is that we need to be thinking of these examples in newly critical terms, that emphasise the increasingly executive-led, antagonistic practices of planning; antagonistic practices that constructs each authoritarian intervention as a necessary act within the parameters of a 'state of

exception'. Further research can help to establish and improve on the conceptualisation of the emerging authoritarian regime I set out here, what I have shown is some of the governments working out, as they experiment through the issue of fracking with practices we now see being given a formal legislative backing (as I shown I 8.2.3). It is also distinctive in that it shows how planning policy and changes are also developed outside the area of housing, and in the environmental context, through political conflict.

Indeed, the most important implication of the thesis is for the planning reforms and changes in other areas of the British state I touch upon in 8.2.3. The fracking case captures the direction of travel for the state, across successive governments. In the final months of completing this thesis, the term 'authoritarian' has become widely used in news media to describe the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and government support for violent policing. This thesis, as part of the wider research agenda of Bruff and Tansel (2019), shows that this turn has been long in the making. The key question for future research into this area is whether an 'authoritarian regime' will be instituted or face the same backlash Thatcherite reforms did. It may be that lessons have been learnt from the 1980s, and further work is required to understand the extent to which the two regimes I identify may potentially be synthesised. If state institutions (planning, law, voting) are altered beyond even the minimal requirements of liberal democracy, we may potentially be witnessing a turn to something beyond neoliberalism

Activist and scholar Angela Davis said in a speech that "You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time" (cited in Murdoch, 2020). What my research has shown, and current events continue to bear out, is that those in power are happy to act as if is possible to change the world. They are happy to throw out the old, post-political rules and move to another regime entirely to insulate capital and their own power from dissent. I cannot say that the specific events from the fracking case inspired the specific changes we see in the *Planning for the Future* reforms, but these events and changes follow the same logic and occur relatively close in time. Actors across the U.K. government appear willing to not only push through their favoured projects but reconstruct state institutions for capital by diminishing or even eliminating the space for democratic dissent. That they failed in the fracking case is cause for hope. Nevertheless, the institutional

response to the authoritarian turn cannot simply be a desperate attempt to revive the corpse of technocratic-progressive neoliberalism. The latter contained its own anti-democratic tendencies, leading us to the situation in which we now find ourselves. The anti-fracking movement shows one possibility for resistance; however, this may be limited to containing the authoritarian and the imposition of industries with particularly harmful impacts. The escape from the death spiral between different neoliberalisms requires all of those who claim to value democracy and equality to act as if radical transformation is possible, and to do so all the time. At this point, there is no other choice.

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Below is a list of the texts analysed. Documents were either analysed in full (if they were about shale gas entirely), others such as Acts of Parliament or local plans the relevant sections were analysed. Most documents listed here are directly cited in the main body of the text, this appendix provides an at a glance list of the texts that I identified as important in the discourse on fracking and which were analysed for the research.

National level:

Infrastructure Act 2015
The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan
National Policy Statement for Energy Gas Generation Strategy
NPPF 2012
NPPF 2018
Planning Practice Guidance for Onshore Oil and Gas (2013)
UK Government Gas Generation Strategy
Written Ministerial Statement by Ed Davey (2012)
House of Lords Select Committee report on Shale Gas
Ed Davey Speech to Royal society
Written Ministerial Statement by Rudd (2015)
Written Ministerial Statement by Clark (2015)
Written Ministerial Statement by Brokenshire and Clark (2018)
Written Ministerial Statement by Leadsom (2019)
Court cases on the NPPF and PDR rights.
Leaked letter from George Osborne on 'asks'.
Select Committee report into Shale Gas (2018)
Onshore oil and gas exploration in the UK: regulation and best practice from DECC and BEIS

Regulatory body guidance for fracking:

DECC - About shale gas and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) 30 July 2013
House of Commons Standard Note Shale Gas and Fracking 22 January 2014
HSE - Shale gas and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) Q&A
EA - Regulatory Position Statement Onshore oil and gas well decommissioning and abandonment for well prior to 1 October 2013

Preston New Road & Roseacre Wood

Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan documents
Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan – Site Allocation and Development Management Policies –
Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Supplementary Planning Guidance
Fylde Borough Local Plan
Lancashire Minerals and Waster Development Framework

Environmental Statement (PNR and RW)

Emerging findings of the EIA (PNR and RW)
Public Reports pack for Development Control Committee at Lancashire County
Council (with relevant appendices that covers objections)
Preston New Road Hydraulic Fracture Plan
Preston New Road Traffic Management Plan
Roseacre Wood Traffic Management Plan (and addendum)
Preston New Road Noise Management Plan
Environment Agency and HSE permits
Final Minutes from Development Committee 23rd – 29th June
Video of final decision
Arup's response to Friends of the Earth
Arup's response to ABC consulting on seismicity
Preston New Road PNR1z Hydraulic Fracture Plan

PNRAG website
Frack-Off website
Friends of the Earth website
Refraction website
Frack Free Lancashire website
Roseacre Wood Awareness group website

Drill or Drop record of the Planning inquiry
Agreed Statement of Commin Ground between the Appelant and the Local Planning
        Authority Preston New Road -
Opening Statement of Friends of the Earth.
Decision document and report from the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of
State

Kirby Misperton

North Yorkshire Minerals and Waste Plan.
Report of the Corporate Director- C3/15/00971/CPO (NY/2015/0233/ENV).
Special Planning and Regualory Committe meeting on 20th and 23rd May - Minutes.
North Yorkshire Police Repsonse

KM8 Hydraulic Fracturing Operations - Planning Statement.
KM8 Hydraulic Fracturing Operations - Environmental Statement.
Flamingo Land. *RE: Objections to 3rd Energy Application: MGID2634.*
Frack Free Kirby Misperton *RE: Re: Planning application no.NY2013/0233/ENV :
        MGID1961.*
Friends of Rydedale Gas Exploration. 2015. *RE: Regarding Kirby Misperton Shale
        Gas Application: Ref No': NY/2015/233/ENV : MGID1157*
Friends of the Earth. 2015. *RE: Objection to KMA Wellsite: MGID 2598.*

KVA planning conusltancy -Response from Frack Free Ryedale: MGID2714.
KVA planning consultancy - Response from Frack Free Ryedale (supplementary):
. Reference Planning Applications NO: NY/2015/0233/ENV ; MGID1771 (Example of
stereotyped letter).

Third Energy - KM8 Hyrdaulic Fracturing Operations - Planning Statement.

<u>National</u>

U.K. Onshore Oil and Gas (UKOOG): An industry body that represents onshore extractive industry. It is a membership group that includes most fracking companies. They lobby the government as well as promote the industry, and have a 'community charter' which its members are supposed to adhere to (UKOOG, No Date).

Environment Agency (EA): The primary U.K. regulatory body for the environment. They provide the environmental permits (minimum: groundwater, mining waste, radioactive) for each fracking site, and conduct public meetings to explain regulatory processes. They are a non-departmental public body formed in 1995 and sponsored by DEFRA.

Oil and Gas Authority (OGA): Set up in 2015 as the regulator for oil and gas in the U.K. in April 2015 and incorporated as government company in 2016 owned by the Secretary of State for BEIS. They are funded by an industrial levy.

Health and Safety Executive (HSA): The primary health and safety regulator for the U.K., they have particular responsibility for the integrity and design of wells. They are a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Public Health England (PHE): An executive agency within the Department for Health and Social Care, formed out of merger of other health agencies in 2013. They investigate and produce reports on the potential risk from shale gas fracking, and work with the regulatory bodies to provide information to them and to the public. The government recently proposed to dissolve them.

Friends of the Earth: Environmental NGO who have made opposing fracking a key priority in the U.K., with a dedicated anti-fracking team.

Talk Fracking: Activist group set up by Joe Corre, largely involved in legal challenges to fracking policy and policing.

Frack Free United: A national umbrella group of 'frack free' groups aimed at addressing Parliament.

Reclaim the Power: A national direct action activist group, who joined actions against fracking as well as other environmental-energy issues.

350.org: International climate NGO, supported protests at fracking sites.

PNR/RW

Cuadrilla Resources: Cuadrilla are the applicants for these sites and the company that drilled the Preese Hall well. They were founded as a private company in 2007 with the aim of exploiting shale gas and oil, with investment form Australian mining firm, AJ Lucas, and U.S. private equity fund Riverstone Holdings .They had

attempted to develop operations in the Netherlands and Poland, but both these attempts look to have failed.

Centrica: Owners of British Gas, they took out a 25% stake in the PEDL licence that covers this area in 2013 for £40million, committing a further £60million to finance Cuadrilla's future operations. They were the first major energy company to invest in UK shale (Harvey, 2013).

Arup: Major national planning consultancy who produced and supported the planning application.

Lancashire Chamber of Commerce: Local chamber of commerce, who took a pro-fracking stance, support the industry in numerous planning applications.

Backing Fracking: A pro-fracking group, which was organised largely by people who work in the oil and gas industry or supply chain.

Lancashire for Shale: Another pro-fracking group, according to Powerbase linked with pro-shale lobbyists North West Energy Taskforce, who were funded by Cuadrilla. Made up of local business people, claimed to also represent local residents.

Lancashire County Council: Council responsible for determining the planning application, via the Minerals and Waste Committee following recommendations from their planning officers. Some councillors were openly against fracking, some openly supportive, and some took a more case by case approach.

Preston New Road Action Group (PNRAG): A residents group set up to oppose the fracking site, giving evidence at both the initial decision and appeal.

Frack Free Lancashire: A Lancashire wide activist group opposing fracking, their distinctive red rose on a yellow background is an emblem of the fracking movement and was seen at protest camps, demos, planning meetings on flags and t-shirts.

Frack Free Fylde: A resident anti-fracking group focusing particularly on the Fylde area of Lancashire where the two sites are located. They regularly blogged about local and national fracking issues, and run events in Lancashire for residents.

Roseacre Wood Awareness group: Similar to PNRAG, but focused on the Roseacre site, residents group, bloggers and activists.

KM8

Third Energy: The applicant, who have been operating in the North Yorkshire area since 1985 (previously Viking Energy) extracting gas conventionally. They own several sites across Ryedale, and power station to convert the gas to electricity in Knapton.

Friends of Ryedale Gas Exploration (F.O.R.G.E.) A pro-fracking group set up to advocate for the industry in the KM8 case. They claimed to have several hundred members, others claimed it was an AstroTurf group.

Zetland Consultants: Petroleum planning and regulation specialist consultants, who Third Energy hired to gain planning permission and permits for the KM8 site.

North Yorkshire County Council: The Special Planning and Regulatory Functions committee that considered the application. The council and the committee have a Conservative majority.

Frack Free Ryedale (FFR): A local activist group, covering the area where KM8 was proposed. They produced a full response to the application produced by KVA planning consultants with several expert reports on particular areas.

Frack Free Kirby Misperton: Similar to FFR but specifically for the village of Kirby Misperton next to the KM8 site rather than the region.

Kirby Misperton Protection Camp: Following the decision to approve and failed judicial reviews, activists set up camp in a field a short distance from the camp. A small group of people lived there, residents or passers-by would visit to ask questions, whilst also allowing activists to be nearby to engage in direct action – whilst producing video and other content for social media e.g. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cf0xdrH-Yhc . The camp had permanent or semi-permanent residents from nearby villages and towns, Yorkshire and from across the U.K.

These are the main terms commonly used in the analysis. Each is defined in the thesis; this is here as a reference tool.

Discourse	
Elements & Moments	Elements are any difference that is not discursively articulated, so the components of a discourse that do not necessarily mark it out from others. Moments are the components of discourse that are differential, that are fixed within the discourse to a particular meaning - e.g. the national need for shale gas in the pro-fracking discourse.
Nodal Points	The main signifier within a discourse/formation, that gives it identity and modifies the other meanings – e.g. 'Keep it in the ground'.
Chain of equivalence	The chain of different elements and moments which are ordered around a nodal point, linking different demands and positions. Follows a 'logic of equivalence' where different elements and demands are aimed towards a shared problem or actor e.g. the planning system: the elements and demands do not have to be considered equal.
Discursive Formation	These are constructed through the articulation of differential positions (from different subjects). In the case study, these are the pro/anti/neutral positions on fracking that look to articulate what fracking is within a more lose boundary of a 'fracking discourse'.
Hegemony	The ability to fix a) meaning within a discourse, b) the dominant practices of an institution and c) multiple discourse and institutional practices together to form a hegemonic bloc. Hegemony can be constructed and contested at each level.

Consent Form – Research project on Shale Gas Fracking

This interview is designed to be an open conversation. I have some specific and some general questions, though you are free to bring up anything you wish and I will follow up on areas I think are of interest. I am not looking for any particular answer. You can withdraw consent during or after the interview if you so wish.

The focus of the questions will be on the political dispute and planning process around Shale Gas Fracking. I am interested in hearing about your experiences as well as how you see the issue. This can be from your local involvement or in a general and even global sense. Please feel free to bring up anything you think is of interest.

Your response will be anonymised and your data kept securely – details on the information sheet. After the interview, you are welcome to ask me any questions about my research.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided on this Consent form.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time up until four months before publication without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.	☐
6.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
7.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	☐
8.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant:

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____   Date:_09/01/2019_

Name of Researcher   Signature