

The logo for WISERD, featuring the letters 'WISERD' in a white serif font on a dark purple rectangular background.

Wales Institute of Social & Economic  
Research, Data & Methods  
Sefydliad Ymchwil Gymdeithasol ac  
Economaid, Data a Dulliau Cymru

# Civil Society Research: reflections on volunteering, participation and social change

## The voluntary sector in Wales - lessons from WISERD research



# Unpicking place and community

David Dallimore, Bangor University

# Place One



The opening of the book at the National Theatre, London, 1955. (Source: from a photo copyright by J. P. H.)

# Place Two



# Place Three



*“This is a really strong community where people get on, and get things done“*

*“There's no community left here. It used to be good but now it's just everyone out for themselves”*

*“There used to be a really, really strong community... but now it seems to be about five different communities, and they don't communicate with each other.*

# The problem with place

Place is not the same as community

Community as shared belonging and identity

Defining community means defining community boundaries

- Physical boundaries
- Emotional boundaries
- Social and economic boundaries
- Boundaries of power and influence

# Implications for practice

Understanding concepts of place, community, identity and belonging in  
community development

Place-based initiatives benefit from co-production

Empowering communities requires delegation of power and responsibility

Places are intrinsically unequal – one size does not fit



**Local Trust**  
creating  
lasting  
change



# Pushing the boundaries of Big Local

David Dallimore, Howard Davis, Marta Eichsteller, Robin Mann  
Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods  
(WISERD), Bangor University

[www.wiserd.ac.uk](http://www.wiserd.ac.uk)

[www.localtrust.org.uk](http://www.localtrust.org.uk)

Promoting well-being through the Social Services  
and Well Being Act (Wales)  
Challenges and opportunities for the third sector

Dr Christala Sophocleous

Prof Paul Chaney and Prof Dan Wincott

WISERD

[sophocleousc1@Cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:sophocleousc1@Cardiff.ac.uk)

# Opportunities

- Section 16: local authorities must promote:
- not for private profit organisations, social enterprises, co-operative organisations, co-operative arrangements, user led services and the third sector to provide care and support and preventative services
- care and support and preventative services that involve service users in the design and running of services
- Part 9: third sector representation on Regional Partnership Boards – as equal partners
- Duty to establish ‘Social value Forums’

# Challenges

Highly variable pattern of practice arising from local conditions, values and pressures.

- 4 Key Areas of Challenge:
- Planning and decision-making
- Understandings and practice of 'developing collaborative services'
- Approach to Funding - & understanding of costs
- Understandings of 'social value'

# Planning and decision making

- Extent of third sector Involvement in RPBs – just at Board level or throughout the process?
- Challenges to ‘representing the interests of...’
- How does the third sector represent itself?
- Local, regional and national challenges

# Developing collaborative services

- Collaboration for ease of procurement or collaboration for better service user outcomes?
- Enforced collaborations through tendering processes can cause *competition* between third sector organisations
- Corroborative planning for strategic commissioning of holistic can help to build whole system *synergy*

# Funding and costs

- Short term contracts – huge issue for third sector groups
- Contracting vs coproduction
- ICF – strategic use or gap plugging? And where is the innovation?
- ‘Voluntary is not free’
- Austerity undermining the aspirations of the Act

# Social value

- Confusion about *social value* and its meanings
- Is it 'added value' of a service or intrinsic to it?
- Can it be quantified? And how do attempts to do so help or hinder aspirations of the Act?
- What are social value organisations? And what if any link is there to an organisations' governance?



# Three Paradoxes

1. Prescriptive legislation but highly variable almost *laissez faire* implementation
2. Collectivist ambition yet resulting in marketization
3. Aspire to simplify social service system but implementation is creating greater complexity & competing values

# Social Action as a Route to the Ballot Box: can Volunteering Reduce Inequalities in Turnout?



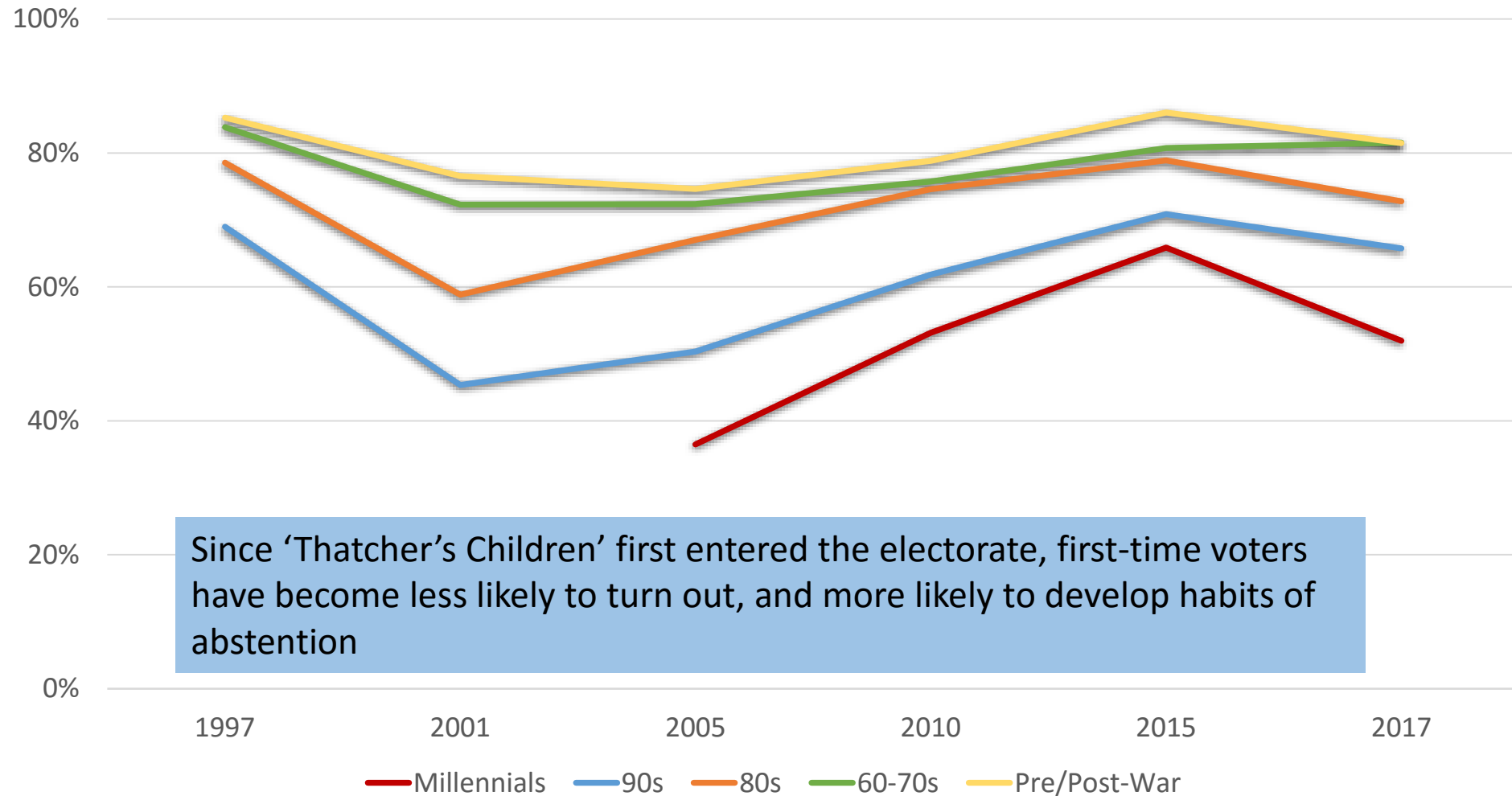
Stuart Fox

Quantitative Research Associate

[foxs8@Cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:foxs8@Cardiff.ac.uk)

@stuarate5933

# Turnout by Generation in UK Elections, 1997-2017



Source: British Election Study

# Could Volunteering Make a Difference?

Volunteering is associated with many individual & communal benefits

Greater political engagement is one of them – associated with greater interest in politics, feeling that voting is a civic duty & more political knowledge

- Transferable skills (e.g., teamwork, communication, leadership)
- Aware of social issues (e.g., homelessness)
- Social networks

As a result, volunteering increases turnout...

# Volunteering and Voting in 2015 General Election

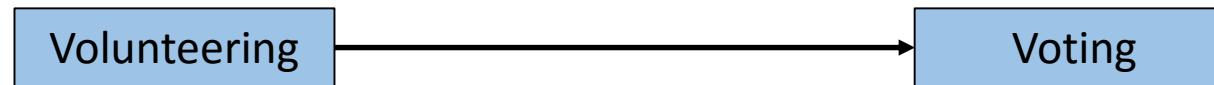
Those who volunteered (of any age) in the year before the 2015 election were more likely to vote



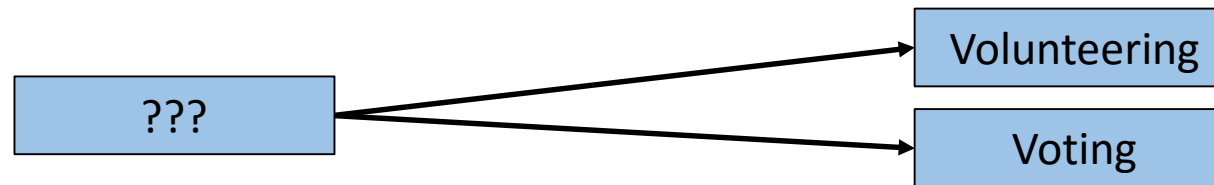
# BUT there's a problem

Those most likely to vote are also most likely to volunteer (regardless of age)

Rather than volunteering driving voting...



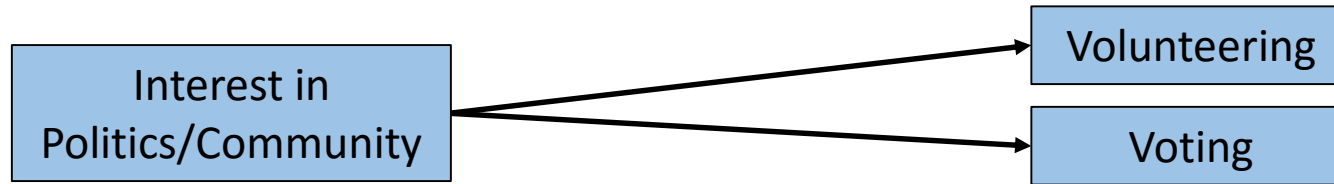
What if voting and volunteering are driven by the same thing?



Existing research hasn't taken account of this – that's the objective of this project

# Social Action as a Route to the Ballot Box

Volunteering **has no substantial effect on turnout** for the majority of people



People engaged enough to volunteer would most likely vote anyway & vice-versa

**BUT...**

If (some) politically disengaged people volunteer there is a small, positive effect

Primarily, those who don't own their homes & who do not have jobs

- Volunteering isn't an effective route to the ballot box for the typical volunteer
- 'Compulsory' volunteering (e.g., Welsh Bacc.) might make a difference...