

The Big Society: A New Direction for Third Sector Policy?

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The Big Society and the Cameron Conservatives

Core theme of Cameron and Conservative Party
in run up to 2010 election

- Hugo Young speech – November 2009
- *Building a Big Society* paper – April 2010
- Manifesto – your contribution to government...

But – confusion on the door-step, profile dropped...

Coalition Government

Big Society quickly back on the agenda

May 18 – PM and DPM

- ‘Big Society at the heart of public sector reform...’
- Early policy statement – *Building the Big Society*,

July 19 – PM (3 more followed...)

- Liverpool Big Society speech – ‘*my great passion*’,
‘*huge culture change*’

Office for Civil Society

Dropping of Third Sector – ‘term abolished’, Cameron.

But OCS retained in Cabinet Office, to lead on –

- Making it easier to run voluntary organisations
- Making it easier for organisations to work with the state
- Getting more resources into the sector

Further policy papers - *Building a Stronger Civil Society*,
Supporting a Stronger Civil Society, Better Together....

Big Society – New Political Discourse?

A new narrative for centre-right Conservatism?

- Fear of Credit Crunch and Recession – failure of free market - *abandon the New Right?*
- Dismissal of New Labour ‘Big State’ – failure of public sector - *reject the Centre Left?*
- Cover for extensive cuts in public welfare expenditure – *need for DIY welfare?!*

Big Society – Old Political Rhetoric?

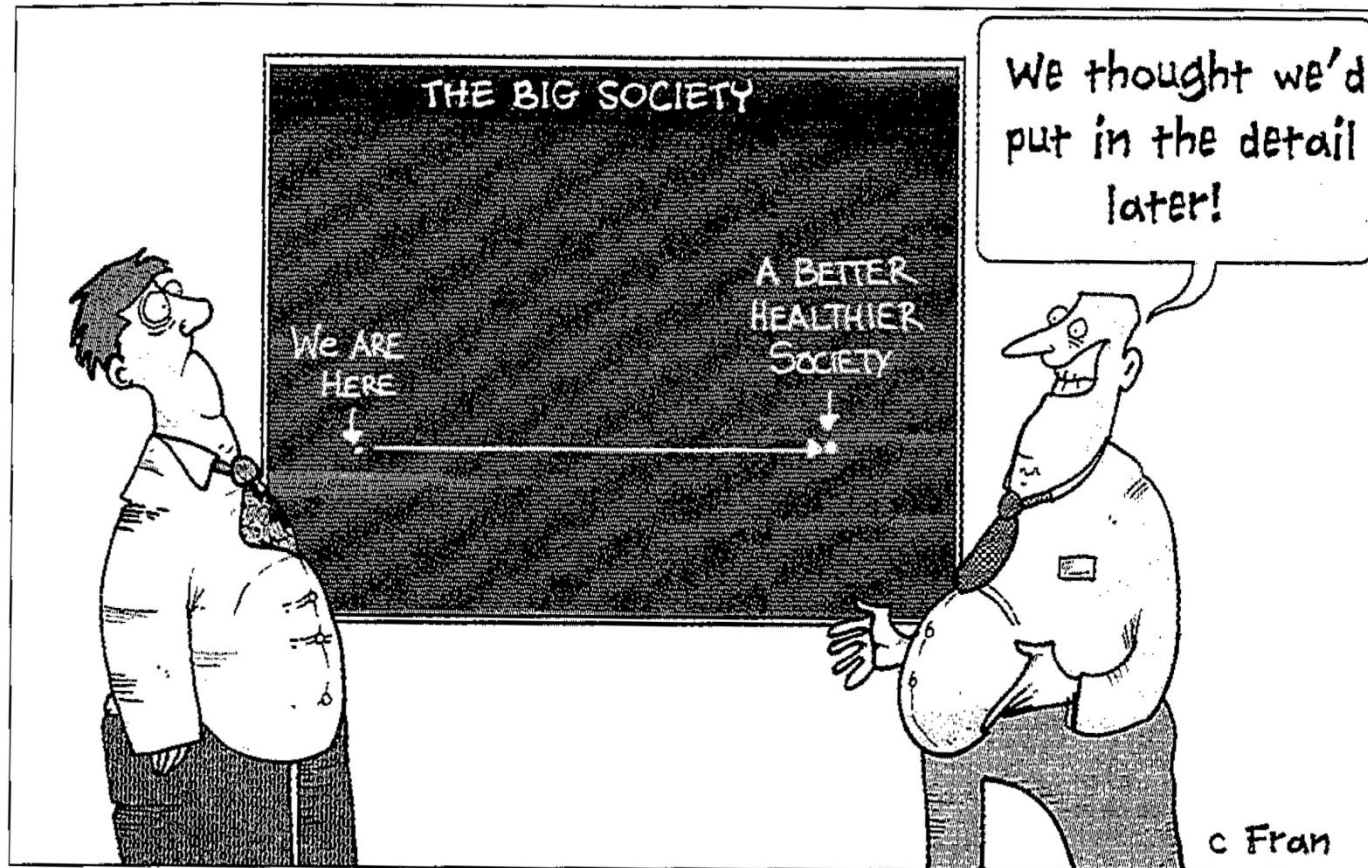
Fetishism over change in terminology – third sector to civil society, pilots to vanguards, grassroots to communities...

Determination to distance Coalition from New Labour – and blame Labour for all problems

New terms – but appeals to old rhetoric

The Big Society: just 'not the Big State'??

Cabinet Office Policy Programme



Policy Programme

Making it easier for charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations

- Red Tape Taskforce and Mutuels Taskforce
- White Paper – Open Public Services (Market competition – Pricing not costing)
- Big Society Bank – *Big Society Capital* established 2012 (£400m in dormant accounts – plus £200m from leading banks)

Policy Programme

Localism and Decentralisation

- Devolve power to local government – and drive down to neighbourhoods and communities
- Public sector workers to create employee-owned enterprises (*Right to Provide*)
- Communities to propose opening up local services (*Right to Challenge*)
- Four ‘vanguard communities’ – [**Liverpool**], Windsor and Maidenhead, Sutton, Eden Valley (Cumbria)

Policy Programme

Volunteering and Community Action

- National Citizens Service for 16 year olds - 'Voluntary' experience for all in summer after GCSEs
- Train 5000 community organisers – to be self funding (£2m to co-fund 800 places by 2012)
- Community First Grants - £30m for co-funding, plus £50m to support local endowments
- £42.5m four year fund for Volunteering Infrastructure

Public Spending Review

Massive reductions in public support for third sector

- OCS Budget cut by around 60%
- Review of QUANGOS – Capacitybuilders, Commission for Compact - closed
- End of central support – Futurebuilders, Change-up, Social Enterprise Investment Fund
- Cuts in support for Strategic Partners (from 42 – 11)
- Local authority funding under pressure (*False Economy* - found 2000 charities experiencing £110m cuts in 2011)

Innovation or Continuity?

Most policies continue existing trends

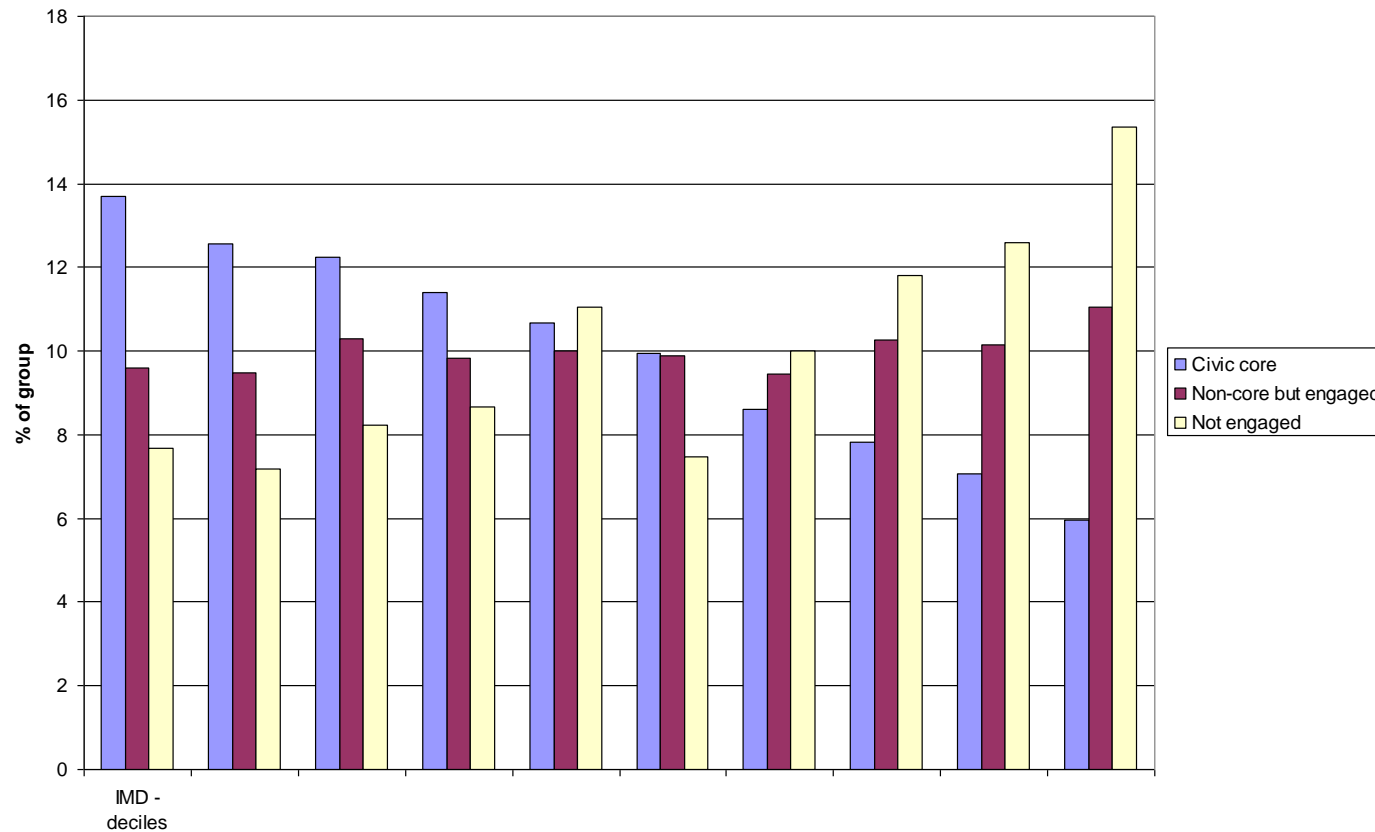
- Public service delivery
- Community Organisers and Community First
- Mutuels and Social Enterprises – Right to Provide
- Big Society Bank
- Encouraging giving and volunteering
- Role of OCS....

Delivery Challenges Remain

- Expenditure cuts threaten third sector organisations
- No evidence for increase in volunteering
- Evidence of decline in charitable giving
- Geographical and social inequalities in voluntary action
- Market based commissioning excludes many
- Little evidence of community appetite for service transfer (Liverpool dropped out of Vanguards)

Where is the Civic Core?

Distribution of core and non-core groups by IMD



Open Public Services

Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Act

- A fiscal advantage for third sector organisations to deliver public services – *tilting the playing field*
- Defining and rewarding social value
- The role of legislation in creating the big society

But –

- No preferred providers
- No definition of social value
- Decisions to be taken by commissioners on service value, including social value

Open Public Services

TSRC Research

- Partnerships and Restructuring
- Commissioning
- Criminal Justice
- Health and Social Care
- Housing
- Employment Services

Work Programme

High profile example of public service out-sourcing

Recent history of private and third sector delivery of employment support (Freud Report)

Flexible New Deal and Future Jobs Fund - Third sector involvement as specialist provider

But – Work Programme rushed through in 2011 by DWP under Coalition, with potential problems for third sector providers

Work Programme

Some continuity with contracted out approaches under New Labour - Prime model, conditionality, differential payments, DEL-AME switch were all emerging

But - Work Programme goes further

- One programme for all 'customer groups' - national rollout
- Payment by results for all contracts
- Primes to bring supply chain management expertise and financial scale
- Sub-contractors come from all sectors

Work Programme

National roll-out

- 18 Contract Package Areas (CPA) covering UK, 40 contracts
- 18 Prime contractors - just 2 'third sector' and 1 statutory
- Degree of referrals retained or passed to sub-contractors varies greatly
- Estimated less than 20% delivered by TSOs - yet much more claimed in some government rhetoric

Work Programme

Upheaval, complexity and uncertainty

- Loss of existing contracts and profile
- Intensive bidding requirements
- Losing out in one CPA, moving to another

Squeezing out the third sector

- Price discounting
- Contracts/referrals not forthcoming ... window dressing?

Payment by Results

- Payment model too risky - especially niche providers
- Creaming and Parking within customer groups

Merlin Standard ?

Big Society – New Direction?

Contradictory tensions

- Innovation claimed - but in practice change is incremental
- Big Society goals displaced by other policy priorities
- Big Society must be built *bottom-up* – but government policy works *top-down*
- Big Society posed as alternative to Big State – but in practice both are needed, and used

Big Society is *English* discourse – different politics in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Big Society – Empty Space?

Big Society – Space for competing discourses

- Think tanks – *Respublica*: change to delivery of public services
- Big Society campaigners – community organisation (Your Square Mile)
- ACEVO – Third sector to replace state
- NCIA – Sector should distance itself from state
- NAVCA, etc – Smaller organisations need state support
- Labour Party – ‘Good Society’