The Case of the United Kingdom

Mapping Localism, Resilience, and Civic Activism in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Tony Bradley, Issam Malki, Curtis Ziniel, and Asad Ghalib

Abstract

This article explores the determinants of local resilience in the form of local COVID-19 mutual aid groups. These groups were formed to offer mutual help to those who had experienced a loss of social quality. We test a series of hypotheses, considering which conditional factors are most connected to the formation of these groups, particularly focusing on those that influenced the earliest and most resilient local response to the pandemic. The presence of radical environmentalist activists is a better predictor of resilient community responsiveness than either the activity of the local state or the activity of more moderate community-based environmental civil society organizations. Conclusions are presented on the implications of these findings for the future of localism, social quality, and public policy in the United Kingdom.

Keywords: civic activism, COVID-19, green movement, localism theory, mutual aid groups, radical movements, resilient localities, social quality

The purpose of this article is to reveal determinants of greater local resilience in the form of local COVID-19 mutual aid groups (C-19 MAGs). It addresses two core research questions: (1) What were the most significant influences on the formation of local C-19 MAGs? (2) Does the theoretical framework on "types of localism" presented here help to test the determinants of locality-based action? We present empirical findings on the correlation between the C-19 MAGs and a range of variables drawn from the 55,000 data points of the Greening Markets Research Group database. This is contextualized through a new theory of a localism continuum, related to social quality theory (SQT) and the social quality approach (SQA) (IASQ 2019). Findings are presented to show the relative contribution of different factors influencing the early adoption of MAGs in British localities.

We analyzed this large database of material related to local social change—in respect of the "greening of markets"—correlated against other data on the formation of local mutual help groups across Great Britain. Our interest was in seeking to determine whether there were any discernible patterns in the relationship between the establishment of local resilience groups and factors indicating different aspects of social

International Journal of Social Quality • Volume 11, Issues 1 & 2, Summer & Winter 2021: 145–175
ISSN: 1757-0344 (Print) • ISSN: 1757-0352 (Online)
doi:10.3167/IJSQ.2021.11010210

quality (Van der Maesen and Walker 2012; Wu 1990). Particularly, we were concerned to see whether it was possible to draw any conclusions about the forms of localism that most influence the ability of localities to act in agile, resilient ways in response to the mounting crises of the twenty-first century.

We begin by picturing the epidemiological context in which the processes of societal change take place. We then explain how the pandemic shock gave rise to local resilience. Ample attention is dedicated to the nature of the concept of resilience and its meaning for understanding the role of localism in withstanding the pandemic shock. We then indicate how the localism debate has been framed in the United Kingdom (UK) over the past decade. From there, we proceed to propose a continuum of localism responses, which we relate to the four main conditional factors of the SQT and SQA analytical framework (IASQ 2019). Following this, we outline our research questions, hypotheses, and research design. We present our findings, some interpretations, and conclusions, which indicate the need for a considerable reframing of how the localism debate and the significance of civic movements in the UK are characterized.

The Pressing Epidemiological Context

Britain has been one of the countries most severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic in terms of number of infections, deaths, and death rates. The situation in early September 2021 is indicated, below, using information that we obtained from the Johns Hopkins University.

On 3 September 2021, a total of 6,894,915 confirmed cases with 133,244 deaths were recorded (Johns Hopkins University 2021; see Figure 1 below for a chart of the incidence of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases from the time to which this study pertains, to the date of finalizing this article), although this is an underestimate on account of both the underestimation of deaths caused by discharging patients from hospital to care homes (O'Dowd 2021) and the way in which "deaths with COVID" have been recorded in the UK when there was limited testing in the early months (O'Dowd 2021) (subsequently, reporting changed) (Worldometer 2021). Some 64.37 percent of the population had been vaccinated, with 43,023,372 people fully vaccinated and 91,907,585 doses administered (Worldometer 2021).

It is widely recognized that the UK Government's handling of the epidemic was woefully inadequate in the early months, leading to between 20,000 (Ham 2021) and 50,000—according to Sir David King, former Chief Scientific Adviser—unnecessary deaths (Woodcock and Buchan 2020). Nevertheless, the government had notable success with their immunization program and was ably assisted by the work of University College London (UCL) on research into the effectiveness of treatments and by the astonishingly swift vaccine development at Oxford University (Ham 2021). Even so, a debate has continued to rage around measures to open up society for major festivals and sporting events, which were the sources of significant transmission before the

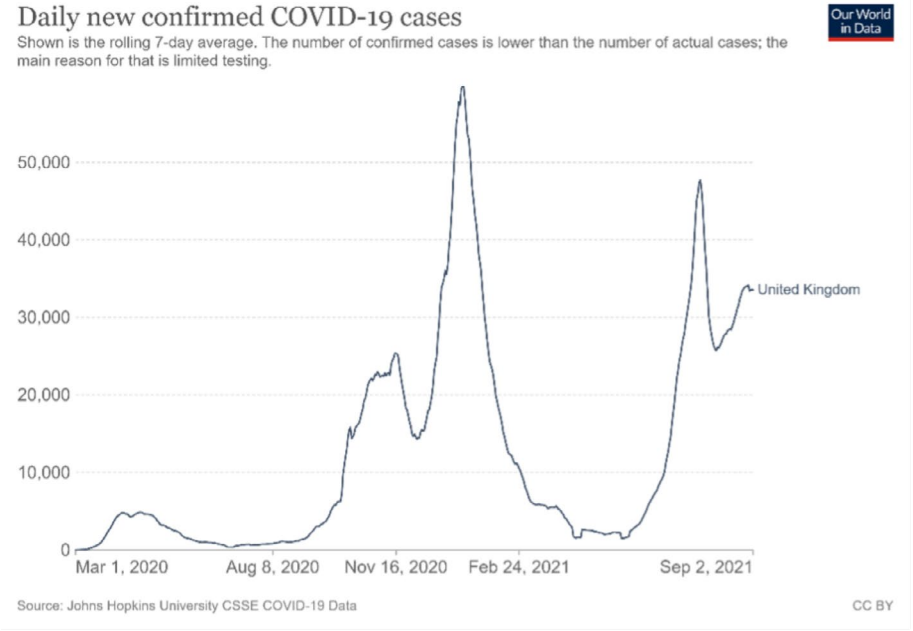

Figure 1. Daily New Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

vaccine program was fully mobilized (Tucker and Goldberg 2020). Furthermore, the hoarding of vaccines, in the wake of the "Delta variant surge" when less-developed countries were seeing surges in death rates, has led to a situation that former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown (2021) referred to as "vaccine apartheid."

Overall, the situation in Britain, in relation to the pandemic, has been a familiar one, which has been replicated many times in public policy, from Margaret Thatcher's "Poll Tax" (swiftly relabeled as the "Community Charge") to Universal Credit (which is neither) and Brexit. The UK is weak on initial policy and implementation, disavowing the precautionary principle, but strong on operational rollout, especially when the military is involved, once the severity of the emergent crisis has been estimated (Hudson 2019; King and Crewe 2014). In relation to the subsequent study and analysis, the point is that there is an urgent need to strengthen the powers available to localities (not simply local authorities) and to understand the capacity of civil society to crank levers that are beyond the capacity of the state to activate, particularly in initial times of crisis.

The Pandemic Shock and the Emergence of Local Resilience

The focus of this IJSQ special issue is the societal impact of the pandemic through the lens of SQT. The twenty-first century appears as an era of deepening crises, requiring

resilient action within localities. The coronavirus pandemic is the latest of a series of supranational crises (cf. 9/11 and the so-called "War on Terror"; the ongoing climate change catastrophe; and the 2007–2008 global financial crisis [GFC]). It represents an extreme event that has challenged the center–local relationship, just at the point when the political right, in Britain, was preparing to capitalize on its newly found support in England's "left-behind" communities.

But the pandemic has reignited the localism debate. Specifically, it has raised questions over the relative capacities of the center and the periphery to mount resilient action to counter the effects of the virus rampaging through local communities. The pandemic has acted as a demoralizing catalyst: it has tested the capacity of civil society and its institutions to withstand the severest shock to global communities since World War II. Localities have sought to demonstrate resilience. But what exactly is meant by local resilience?

The concept of resilience is significantly contested (Dahlberg 2015; Manyena 2006; Winstanley et al. 2015). Questions that have been asked are: resilience "of what, to what and for whom?" (Cutter 2016). Additionally, other problematics have been introduced relating to framing resilience in terms of "what, when, where and why?" (Meerow and Newell 2019). Prior to the GFC, much of the literature on resilience focused on individualized responses (Garrett 2016). But, resulting from the widespread, but unequal, impacts of the GFC, much greater attention has been placed on "community resilience" and the socioeconomic networks, political and cultural resources, and structural factors that condition responses to emergencies, disasters, and crises in and between localities (Dagdeviren et al. 2016; Kirmayer et al. 2009).

Resilience is often associated with community cohesion, active citizenship, mobilizing and volunteer responsiveness and interdependence as resources for recovering from attacks or threats, as outlined in the UK's *Community Resilience Development Framework* (Cabinet Office 2019). But questions remain about how these factors are connected and which are of greatest significance in particular circumstances and local situations.

From the work of the US Homeland Security agencies and the Rand Corporation (Acosta et al. 2016), a variety of community resilience asset indicator frameworks and valuation tools have been constructed (Acosta et al. 2016; Callaghan and Colton 2008; Dimitrijevic and Horgan 2018; Longstaff et al. 2010; Thornley et al. 2014). Even so, the missing element in each of these frameworks is an understanding of the respective spheres of the state, third sector, business, and civic movements in contributing to the local capacity of communities to mount resilience strategies. As such, and in the light of the localism debate, we were concerned to investigate the connections between the various ideal types of localism advanced here and the formation of strategies of resilience to the pandemic across Great Britain.

Transitions in the UK "Localism" Debate

The localism debate has progressed through a series of phases in the UK over the previous decade. During the period of the Conservative–Liberal Democrat (Cameron–Clegg) coalition government (2010–2015), the emphasis was placed on stimulating a "big society"[1] through the 2011 Localism Act (Cameron 2011). This received widespread criticism (Eaton 2011; Labour Uncut 2010; Pipe 2013). The localism agenda was seen as a way of reducing levels of expenditure to local authorities. Equally, it was claimed as part of a civic movement for mobilizing the energies of civil society to bootstrap their own local regeneration. This was the effect of successive waves of the "localism agenda" under both Labour and Conservative/Coalition administrations over the preceding four decades (Bach 2012; Davies and Pill 2012; Jacobs and Manzi 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett 2012).

The nub of the matter was, as Peter Taylor-Gooby (2012) expressed it, a problematic over the role of civil society in generating societal cohesion. Could processes within local civil society better serve the objective of societal integration than central government policy? In Britain, it can be argued that civic movements favor the relatively powerful and exclude the disadvantaged from capitalizing on the benefits of local, often volunteer-based, community mobilization (see Byrne 2013). This is because of the "active exclusive" style of state apparatus exhibited in Britain, exemplified in relation to the green movement (Catney et al. 2013; Dryzek et al. 2003).

The "big society" debate of the 2010s posed the question: how can the local thrive within such a centralized political economy as that of the UK? But others identified opportunities for forms of progressive localism to arise, which bypass the central–local dialectic. By occupying "interstitial spaces"—between the dilution of local democracy and the rise of market individualism—locally organized civic movements can operate a politics of resistance and experimentation (Williams et al. 2014). Indeed, societal and organizational networks, existent between local, national, and supranational spaces can connect "activist places" with "social movement space" (Nicholls 2008). In a previous article, we provided empirical evidence, related to the Transition Towns civic movement—which is local, national, and supranational—which supported this view. Radical environmental action was positively correlated with the local occurrence of green businesses, although we were skeptical about drawing a simple line of causation between these phenomena (Ziniel and Bradley 2019).

More recently, since the 2019 election of the Boris Johnson-led government, the localism debate has transmuted into one relating to "leveling-up" the spatial divide in England between north and south[2] (Tomaney and Pike 2020). This has taken place within the wider backdrop of national devolution (House of Commons 2016), Britain's exit (Brexit) from the European Union (EU), and voter volatility in a turbulent world (Fieldhouse et al. 2019). Indeed, the popular vote to leave the EU is often characterized as a spasm of angry resignation in, frequently northern, localities that

had missed out on any localism benefits (Crafts 2019; Fetzer 2018; Mattinson 2020; Rogers 2020).

A Localism and Social Quality Continuum: Beyond the Austerity–Progressive Action Dichotomy

As such, this more recent turn in the characteristics and determinants of the debate raises the significance of distinguishing between different sociopolitical forms of localism. Additionally, we contend, it is vital to understand these in terms of the real changes in civic movements that are taking place currently, which connect to the theory of social quality. A helpful starting point in this respect is provided by David Featherstone and colleagues (2012), who contrast two forms of localism: "austerity" and "progressive." These authors argue that "austerity localism" represents "roll-back neoliberalism," whereby market rationality is privileged to certain groups, according to their superior political and economic interests and power, but who may have greater needs. Furthermore, by treating all localities as, essentially, the same, and ignoring societal and spatial inequalities, this form of localism can lead to deepening the societal divides that exist between people and places.

By contrast, these authors point toward a more "progressive localism." By this is meant the societal construction of localities that are outward-looking, and expand their understanding of "social justice, participation and tolerance." While helpful, we regard this, politically motivated, dichotomy as insufficiently precise to take account of the real-world interaction of British civic movements across local spaces. As such, in relation to the theory of social quality we propose a more nuanced classification.

In respect of the analytical framework of SQT and the SQA, the main aspects therein are three sets of factors, namely the conditional, constitutional, and normative factors, including their measurement instruments. With the help of their application and connection to daily circumstances, we are able to determine the nature of social quality in a certain space and a certain time (IASQ 2019; Van der Maesen and Walker 2012). In this article, we focus on the conditional factors, namely: societal cohesion, societal inclusion, societal and economic security, and societal empowerment.

We have changed "social" to "societal" as an adjective to describe the four conditional factors. In SQT, from the outset emphasis is placed on the development of "the social" as the core concept. It refers to the dialectic of processes of human "self-expression" and the formation of "collective configurations." This results in continuously evolving productive and reproductive relationships, which are, by the same token, societal wholes (IASQ 2019; Van der Maesen and Walker 2012). In these societal processes, conditional factors play crucial roles. Additionally, it is recognized that SQT also needs to account for the challenge of climate catastrophe and global heating, and therefore must directly take greening conditions into account.

In relation to the localism agenda, we would also characterize these as, correspondingly, denoting the activity of the local state, local organizations, enterprises, and progressive civic movements (greening and societal). On this basis, we propose a fivefold classification of forms of localism, which represent a continuum from and within the two poles identified by Featherstone and colleagues (2012). We have made brief, but necessary, connections to SQT. These are:

1. **Austerity-localism (A-localism):** characterized by the actions of the local state in an era of austerity (reflecting the operation of "formal political capital"). In terms of SQT, this is most connected to the requirement of ensuring societal cohesion and with the negative consequence of stifling societal protest. As Regina Berger-Schmitt (2002) indicates, the role of the local state, in respect of societal cohesion, is twofold: (1) to promote equality; and (2) to reduce divisions in society. Each of these roles are vital to increasing social quality during a crisis.
2. **Beneficent-localism (B-localism):** characterized by the actions of local societal organizations, typically for protecting and enhancing personal-property-based capital (reflecting the operation of social capital). In terms of SQT, this is most connected to the requirement of ensuring societal inclusion, with the negative consequence of excluding property-less societal groups. Jane Jenson (2010) points to the Council of Europe's (2000) Strategy for Social Cohesion, exemplifying that "societal" inclusion is as much a feature of local community organizations as it is of the state in ensuring that citizens have basic needs, progression, rights, dignity, and social confidence, each of which can be seen as facets within social quality.[3]
3. **Capital generating-localism (C-localism):** characterized by the actions of local enterprises, typically for accumulating private capital, but, in the cases of societal enterprises and "third sector" businesses and cooperatives, for mutual economic capital (reflecting the operation of finance, industrial, and manufactured capital). In terms of SQT, this is most connected to the requirement of ensuring societal and economic security, with the negative consequence of increasing inequality. Many global organizations, consortia, and networks emphasize the role of societally responsible businesses in creating a new societal contract for the twenty-first century (see Cramer 2020; Global Compact et al. 2019).
4. **Decarbonizing localism (D-localism):** characterized by the actions of a spectrum of environmental groups (from craft-conservationist to radical progressive) for mutual influence on other civil society groupings (reflecting the operation of community capital). In terms of SQT, this is most connected to the requirement of ensuring local action, typically for advocating a range of greening agendas, including reducing industrial and domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with the negative consequence (from some perspectives, but not ours) of disrupting economic activity, as evidenced below (see Bradley forthcoming(a); Cracknell et al. 2013).

5. **Empowering (progressive) localism (E-localism):** characterized by the actions of a range of progressive political civic movement groups, for mobilizing civil society, as a rainbow coalition, around a wide range of progressive issues and policies (reflecting the operation of "reciprocal capital"; cf. Bradley forthcoming(b)). In terms of SQT, this is most connected to the requirement of ensuring societal empowerment, with the negative consequence (from some perspectives, but not ours) of disrupting societal order (Bray 2013; Martinelli 2010; Pyles 2009).

The purpose of generating this spectrum is to enable a more detailed interpretation of empirical research evidence from studies such as the one reported on here. It indicates a range of possible localism conditions and effects that expands on the simpler austerity–progressive dichotomy (Featherstone et al. 2012). Equally, we recognize that there will be further intermediate locations between these ideal types. Nevertheless, it reflects a continuum of power relations, from that which resides within the local state through to the most radical action, in seeking to occupy localities and wrest power from vested interests (cf. Comer 2015).

In this respect, we consider that the localism debate can be advanced, using this lens, to examine, empirically, what is occurring in localities across Britain beyond the political mantras of "big society," "North–South divide," and even "austerity vs. progressive" action frameworks. Consequently, for this study we wanted to examine the capacity of localities to engage in resilient action and how such engagement is manifest in respect of the localism continuum introduced here.

The Research Question, Hypotheses, and Study Design

It was against the backdrop of the pandemic that a vital new movement for engaging in civic resilience, and localism, emerged in the formation of more than 3,000 COVID mutual aid groups (C-19 MAGs)[4] in Great Britain alone. These represented a community activist movement—of an anarchic kind—that had arisen, apparently spontaneously, without government announcements or policies, through the mobilization of local civil society capacity (Jun and Lance 2020; Kinna and Swann 2020; Steele and Chomsky 2020). Equally, they reflected a real-life, real-time laboratory within which to test out the relative significance of some of the dimensions underlying SQT.

Consequently, we wished to investigate variations between those localities in which the C-19 MAGs formed and those where they were absent, examining the possible influences on this pattern of variable local resilience groups. More specifically, we were interested in the ability of localities to mount agile, resilient action *prior to the UK government announcing the first coronavirus lockdown* on 15 March 2020. In other words, we wished to investigate what might be the correlated factors in those localities that acted in resilient ways in response to the spread of the virus, where the UK's centralized state was not directly involved. This might indicate where local action was

eclipsing calls by Whitehall and Westminster for either a "big society" or "leveling-up"-equivalent response to the coronavirus. Rather, the early adopter MAGs arguably indicated the local capacity of particular societal formations to display intrinsic power-to-act entirely independent of the state's call to do so.

In addition to those C-19 MAGs, which formed in advance of any government announcement, we were interested, secondly, in those localities that responded in this way *after the government announcement had taken place*, and, thirdly, where no C-19 MAGs had been established at all. In this way, the coronavirus represents a dreadful lens through which to view the factors influencing civil society resilience, the capacity of localism, and the variabilities of localities to engage in agile responses to societal shocks. Furthermore, we were interested in the ways in which this investigation, and its analysis, could shed light on the theory of social quality as an aspect of localism.

Our primary research question was: what localism factors condition the abilities of some communities to respond in a more agile and resilient way than others to the impact of serious societal shocks, as reflected by the COVID-19 pandemic? As such, we considered that it was significant to address the factors that have conditioned the early adoption of volunteering and "reciprocity"-based actions in comparison to those localities that were less able, for a variety of reasons, to implement such swift action. To this end, we had identified more than 300 localities across the UK that implemented C-19 MAGs by 15 March 2020 in the early days of the pandemic prior to lockdown. The initial list of these came from the self-proclaimed "anarchist" publisher *Freedom News* (2020). Nevertheless, we were, additionally, able to identify, through social media searches, other C-19 MAGs that formed prior to the first lockdown and were not part of the *Freedom News* anarcho-syndicalism network.

It was hypothesized that the main factors enabling the swift response of the early adopter C-19 MAGs were the presence of activist local (state) councils, key pillar institutions, business community leadership, strong interconnecting organizational networks, and communication. More formally, we stated our hypotheses:

Local resilience, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, is correlated with:
Hypothesis 1: the activity of the local state, in respect of the climate crisis.
Hypothesis 2: the presence of local networks of community organizations.
Hypothesis 3: the presence of green businesses.
Hypothesis 4: the presence of radical activist environmental groups.

As such, we were interested in the relative significance of each of these factors. To investigate this, we interrogated the database that we have compiled for the Greening Markets Research Group (at Liverpool Hope Business School, led by Bradley and Ziniel). The Greening Markets Database (GMDB) is a composite of more than thirty variables, which are mapped for each of the 2,816 postal codes across Great Britain[5] in respect of "greening" production, consumption, and politics related to environmental sustainability.

In this respect, our more refined question, acknowledging the precise nature of the data on which this analysis is based, was: *to what extent does the capacity of the local state, preexistent community organizations, and the presence of greening businesses or local civil society activism, in the environmental sphere, mirror local action to generate resilient communities, to address the global pandemic, at the local level?*

The Indicator Variables

We considered four dimensions of latent variables, each of which is an amalgam of a series of empirical variables (contained within the GMDB). They reflect analytical and heuristic meanings, in order to distinguish types of responses. Unlike the other articles in this double issue, it should be noticed that the concept of "dimension" does not refer to societal complexities as the "sociopolitical and legal dimension" or the "socioeconomic and financial dimension." The four dimensions of latent variable here connect to both our theory of the continuum of localism and the hypotheses, indicated above, of possible influencing factors on the abilities of localities to mount agile (or less so) resilient action in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic locally. The four latent variable dimensions are:

Dimension A. Responsive action of the local state.
Dimension B. The capacity of local civil society community organization.
Dimension C. The generation of responsive business forms.
Dimension D. Radical civic movements as civil society support mechanisms (CSSMs) (for engendering societal transformation), i.e., these movements support transformative social changes within civil society, by their presence and actions. [6]

The empirical variables (from the GMDB) that compose each of these four indicator latent variables are, respectively:

Dimension A: Local authority passed a declaration of action in relation to the climate emergency (by September 2020, when this data point was recorded, prior to the current position, when 75 percent of all Great Britain local authorities have declared (see Gudde et al. 2021); local authority has been granted status as a Fairtrade Town (includes metropolitan boroughs and rural districts).
Dimension B: Local groups of the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).
Dimension C: Presence of the following types of green businesses: organic shops, markets, bakeries, and specialists; organic restaurants, cafés, and public houses; Happy Cow (database network mem-

bers) vegan restaurants; Ethical Junction (database network members) green businesses; Green Achiever (database network members) green businesses.

Dimension D: Local groups of Transition Towns network; Extinction Rebellion movement; weekly environmental school strikes that were held between summer 2018 and autumn 2019 in response to advocacy by (then, teenage) activist Greta Thunberg.

What do we consider to be the *social quality* significance of each dimension? As indicated above, in respect of our continuum of localism:

Dimension A: reflects the need of the local state to maintain *societal cohesion*. Passing a climate emergency resolution recognizes the seriousness of the threat posed by the climate catastrophe, without committing the authority to any specific actions by a particular date (although some local authorities have done so). Even less contentious is the application and acceptance to become a Fairtrade Town, which requires some limited environmental actions[7] (Fairtrade London Capital n.d.). This dimension connects to A-localism.

Dimension B: reflects the capacity of local organizations to ensure *societal inclusion*. These organizations are characteristic of "respectable rebels" (King and Nugent 1980)—middle-class residents who may show moderate concern for environmental issues but whose stronger concern is to defend their local environment and private property interests. As suggested above, such "societal inclusion" is likely to be bounded to "people like us," who would join moderate organizations such as the RSPB. Such communities of residents are sometimes characterized as NIMBYs (defending against unwelcome developments that should be somewhere, but "not in my back yard"; see Burningham 2000). This dimension connects to B-localism.

Dimension C: reflects the activity of local businesses to ensure *societal and economic security*. The presence of any (or all) of these green business types indicates consumer demand for the products, goods, and services that they deliver. As such, the value of societal and economic security is connected to the greening of production and consumption, indicating that business demonstrates levels of environmental resilience in these localities. This dimension connects to C-localism.

Dimension D: reflects a spectrum of responses, from relatively moderate environmental action to ensuring radical forms of *societal*

empowerment. For example, as we indicated in an earlier article (Ziniel and Bradley 2019), the Transition Towns civic movement encompasses a very wide continuum of activity, from some village groups holding an autumn "Apple Day" to radical anarchist groups seeking to "bring down the current capitalist economic system."[8] This dimension reflects a continuum from D-localism to E-localism.

These dimensions represent the independent variables in our study. Our dependent variable was the widespread, but by no means universal, formation of C-19 MAGs across Great Britain. As such, we were correlating this range of independent variables against the presence or absence of C-19 MAGs. We wished to see if any of these dimensions had a greater degree of predictive value in respect of those C-19 MAGs that formed in the first wave of agile resilient action prior to the UK government's imposition of the first coronavirus lockdown. Additionally, we ran our correlations against a small number of "control variables." These were:

Population density: indicator of spatial type, such as village, town, or city borough.

Population percentage holding a degree: indicator of educational attainment, labor market mobility and greater openness to a wider set of ("middle-class") social values.

Reported number of COVID-19 cases: indicator of level of need for a resilient response to mitigate the pandemic effect.

Distribution of socioeconomic status: indicator of social class.

Table 1 provides a summary of the main measures and proxies, their definitions and measurement levels, and the way they are constructed. But why are all our variables to do with environmentalism, either in terms of greening the economy or the political system? In advance of the pandemic, we were investigating the resilience of communities in the face of the climate emergency. That was because this severe and imminent challenge is, arguably, the single greatest threat to local communities (Tuckett 2021), business, the financial system (Carney 2019), and humanity itself (Gills and Morgan 2020; Ripple et al. 2019) as recognized by three-quarters of local authorities in the UK (Gudde et al. 2021).

Environmental action has become one of the most significant touchstones for CSSMs in both politicized and depoliticized contexts (De Moor et al. 2019). Consequently, resilient action would, prior to the pandemic, primarily, be manifest in the arena of environmental protest and activism. The debate has shifted from CSSMs based around protecting jobs, local services, and political institutions (Della Porta and Diani 2015), to actions that protect local people from global crisis (De Moor et al. 2019).[9]

Table 1. Variable Definitions

Variable	Definition	Measurement Level
Outcome Variables		
EMAGs	Early MAGs include all groups formed up to and including 15 March 2020	Count variable
LMAGs	Later MAGs include all groups formed after 15 March 2020	Count variable
Dimension A		
LARPCE	Local authority action resolution passed on climate emergency	Binary (yes=1, no=0)
FT2017	Previous data Fairtrade Town 2017. If the district has attained Fairtrade Town/Area status in 2017	Binary (yes=1, no=0).
Dimension B		
RSPB	The number of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds local groups in the postal code area	Count variable
Dimension C		
NGB	A composite count variable that captures the number of green businesses in a postal code area. The variable is the sum of the following: – The number of organic shops, markets, bakeries, and specialists listed in the postal code area – The number of organic restaurants, cafés, and pubs listed in the postal code area. – The number of Organic Farms in the postcode area. – The number of Happy Cow vegan restaurants in the postcode area. – Count of ethical junction businesses listed in that local authority – The number of 2017 Green Achiever businesses in the district	Count variable
Dimension D		
TTLG	The number of Transition Town local groups in the postal code area	Count
ERLG	The number of Extinction Rebellion local groups in the postal code area	Count
WESN	The number of weekly, regular school environmental strikes in the postal code area	Count
Control Variables		
Density	ONS population density of local authority	Rate
Degree	Percentage of local authority population holding degrees	Rate
SES	ONS measure of socioeconomic status	Rate
CRATE	Number of coronavirus cases per 100,000	Count

It is likely that after the pandemic has subsided[10] CSSMs will, once again, become focused on climate action. Nevertheless, during the pandemic, resilience has been understood as the capacity of localities to provide self-help. As such, from our GMDB—to which we have added data on the formation of C-19 MAGs and the incidence of COVID-19 cases in Britain—we have examined the degree to which these two spheres of resilient action coincide.

Econometric Methodology

The outcome variables—as defined in Table 1—are count variables that take on non-negative integer values (i.e., 0, 1, 2, . . ., n). In the context of this article, we are interested in the population regression E(y|x), where y is the outcome variable and x is the vector of explanatory variables.

An obvious choice for count variables is the Poisson regression model, which has several attractive properties. First, if E(y|x) follows a Poisson distribution, then the conditional maximum likelihood estimators (MLEs) are fully efficient. Second, the Poisson assumption is not necessary for the consistent estimation of the conditional mean parameters (Cameron and Trivedi 2005; Wooldridge 2010).

The basic Poisson model assumes that the outcome variable, y, given $\mathbf{x} \equiv (x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_k)$, follows a Poisson distribution. The density of y given x under a Poisson distribution is determined fully by the conditional mean $\mu(x)=E(y|\mathbf{x})$:

$$f(y|\mathbf{x}) = \frac{e^{-\mu(\mathbf{x})}\mu(\mathbf{x})^y}{y!}, y = 0, 1, 2, \ldots \qquad (1)$$

where μ(x) is the conditional mean and ! refers to the factorial. The main restriction imposed by the distributional properties of Poisson distribution is that the conditional mean and conditional variance are the same (i.e., var(y|**x**)=E(y|**x**)), which illustrates the well-known "equidispersion" property or the "Poisson variance assumption" (Cameron and Trivedi 2005; Wooldridge 2010). The model in (1) is estimated using Maximum Likelihood (ML hereafter).

There are, however, two potential problems when using Poisson-regression-based models. The first issue occurs when the Poisson variance assumption is not satisfied due to the issue of overdispersion ((var(y|**x**)>E(y|**x**)). To mitigate the statistical implications of overdispersion, we estimate a Negative Binomial (NB) regression. This model can be thought of as a generalization of the Poisson regression model, which includes a Gamma noise variable, v, where v~Gamma(1,α) and α is the variance parameter of the Gamma distribution. The model can be expressed as:

$$f(y|\mathbf{x}, \alpha) = \frac{\Gamma(y + \alpha^{-1})}{\Gamma(\alpha^{-1})\Gamma(y+1)} \left(\frac{\alpha^{-1}}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu(\mathbf{x})}\right)^{\alpha^{-1}} \left(\frac{\alpha\mu(\mathbf{x})}{1 + \alpha\mu(\mathbf{x})}\right)^{y} \qquad (2)$$

where $\Gamma(.)$ denotes the Gamma integral. Note that the first and second moments of the NB are $E(y|\mathbf{x},\alpha)=\mu$ and $var(y|\mathbf{x},\alpha)=\mu(1+\alpha\mu)$. The NB regression defines $\mu=\exp(x'\beta)$ and leaves α constant.

The second issue is that, in some cases, there is a large proportion of zeros in the sample, giving rise to the problem of "excess zeros." One approach to account for this issue is to estimate a zero-inflated model. The model supplements a count density, $f_2(.)$ with a binary process with a density of $f_1(.)$. This implies that when the binary process takes value of 0 (with a probability $f_1(0)$), then the outcome variable y is equal to 0. On the other hand, when the binary process takes value 1 (and probability $f_1(0)$), then the outcome variable is equal to 0, 1, 2, . . . from the density $f_2(.)$. For simplicity purposes, we can write the zero-inflated model as follows:

$$f(y) = \begin{cases} f_1(0) + [1 - f_1(0)]\, f_2(0), & \text{if } y = 0 \\ [1 - f_1(0)]\, f_2(y), & \text{if } y \geq 1 \end{cases} \tag{3}$$

This model implies that the zeros realization in the data occurs in two ways. It occurs as a realization of the binary process $f_1(0)$. Second, it occurs as a realization of the count process, when the binary process takes value 1.

In summary, we estimate two specifications for each of the two outcome variables, EMAGs (E for earlier) and LMAGs (L for later, as defined in Table 1). The specifications include those in Equations (1) and (2) accounting for the modification illustrated in Equation (3). We estimate zero-inflated Poisson and NB regression models. The outcome specification is defined as follows:

$$y_i^s = ß_0^s + \sum_{j=1}^{8} ß_j^s w_{ij}^s + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \gamma_j^s z_{ij}^s + u_i^s \tag{4}$$

where w_{ij} and z_{ij} refer to set of determinants and control variables (i.e., $\mathbf{x}=[\mathbf{w},\mathbf{z}]$). The term u_i refers to the error term, and s takes value 1 for the outcome of early MAGs and 2 for later MAGs.

Results and Interpretation

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 reports a summary of descriptive statistics of all the variables discussed above. In general, the sample size varies between 2,362 and 2,816 due to missing values. Nonetheless, we have a sample of at least 2,362, which is large enough for our econometric exercise. The average of earlier MAGs is slightly higher than later MAGs. The range of later MAGs is, however, wider than that of earlier MAGs. While the

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Outcome Variables					
EMAGs	2,816	0.431	0.704	0	5
LMAGs	2,816	0.338	0.689	0	6
Dimension A					
LARPCE	2,816	0.726	0.446	0	1
FT2017	2,362	0.177	0.382	0	1
Dimension B					
RSPB	2,816	0.058	0.237	0	2
Dimension C					
NGB	2,360	10.519	11.144	0	92
Dimension D					
TTLG	2,816	0.093	0.309	0	2
ERLG	2,816	0.087	0.285	0	2
WESN	2,816	0.029	0.172	0	2
Control Variables					
Density	2,362	16.346	22.798	0.2	138.7
Degree	2,362	0.25	0.075	0.117	0.553
SES	2,362	25.697	8.026	0	49.58
CRATE	2,816	137.941	119.058	4	645

Obs: Number of observations; Std. Dev: Standard deviation; Min: Minimum; Max: Maximum.

maximum number of earlier MAGs is five, the maximum number of later MAGs is six in any postal code locality.

Table 3 offers more insights on the distributional properties of EMAGs and LMAGs. EMAGs take six values (EMAGs = 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and LMAGs take on seven values (LMAGs = 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). The most prominent feature of both variables is the dominant occurrence of zeros (67 percent of EMAGs and 75 percent of LMAGs), which implies the absence of MAGs. Figure 2 illustrates the distributional properties of the outcome variables. The distributional properties may suggest the presence of the excess-zero problem. This can be seen on the discrepancy between the mean value of counts and the maximum value of MAGs.

Table 3. Frequency of Counts

EMAGs				LMAGs			
Count	Freq.	(%)	Cum.	Count	Freq.	(%)	Cum.
0	1,874	66.6	66.6	0	2,105	74.8	74.8
1	733	26.0	92.6	1	541	19.2	94.0
2	159	5.6	98.2	2	126	4.5	98.5
3	38	1.3	99.5	3	28	1.0	99.5
4	10	0.4	99.9	4	9	0.3	99.8
5	2	0.1	100.0	5	3	0.1	99.9
				6	4	0.1	100
Total	2,816	100		Total	2,816	100	

Freq.: Frequency; (%): The proportion as a percentage; Cum: Cumulative frequency.

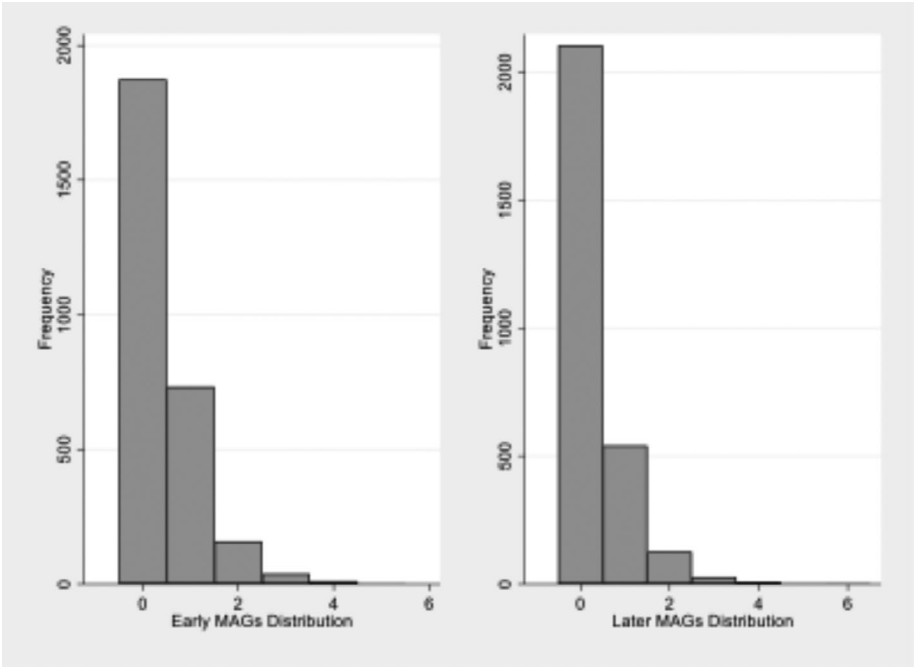

Figure 2. EMAGs and LMAGs Distribution

Estimation Results

Tables 4A and 4B report the conditional MLEs and the marginal effects of the EMAGs and LMAGs, respectively. We report the zero-inflated Poisson and NB estimates for each outcome variable. The estimated slopes of the Poisson and NB models are not directly interpreted. Thus, we convert them into marginal effects, which are easier to interpret.

According to Table 4A, eight of the eleven variables have a statistically significant effect on EMAGs, seven of which are proxies capturing the four dimensions. We first note that Poisson and NB estimates (and their marginal effects) are very similar. This is because the Poisson model does not suffer from overdispersion. Indeed, the variance coefficient, α, is very small—close to zero. This is confirmed by the Chibar2 statistic,

Table 4A. Early MAG Estimation Results

	Poisson Regression		NB Regression	
	Poisson Estimates	**Marginal Effects**	**NB Estimates**	**Marginal Effects**
		Dimensions		
LARPCE	0.069	0.008	0.069	0.008
FT2017	–0.236**	–0.097	–0.236**	–0.097
RSPB	0.268**	0.128	0.268**	0.128
NGB	0.009**	0.003	0.009**	0.003
TTLG	0.356***	0.183	0.356***	0.183
ERLG	0.302***	0.867	0.302***	1.058
WESN	–0.025	0.026	–0.025	0.026
		Control Variables		
Density	–0.008***	–0.004	–0.008***	–0.004
Degree	2.084***	1.658	2.084***	1.658
CRATE	0.002***	0.001	0.002***	0.001
SES	0.012*	0.006	0.012*	0.006
Intercept	–1.805***	–	–1.805****	–
α	–	–	1.09e-47***	
		Regression Statistics		
Observations	2,360		2,360	
Wald Statistic	103.94***		103.94***	
Chibar2 (01)	–		1.1e-05	

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

which fails to reject the null hypothesis that $\alpha = 0$. Thus, the appropriate model to explain the determinants of EMAG formation is the zero-inflated Poisson model.[11]

Table 4B reports that the estimates of the Poisson and NB models are visibly different in terms of magnitude and significance. This is due to dispersion coefficient, α, being relatively large compared to that estimated for early MAGs. The null hypothesis that $\alpha = 0$ is not rejected. This implies that the Poisson model is not the appropriate model for LMAGs because of the overdispersion. Therefore, we interpret the NB estimates' marginal effects as they are comparable to those based on Poisson for the EMAGs.

According to Table 4A findings, the measure of ***Dimension A – Local authority passed a declaration of action in relation to the climate emergency*** (LARPCE) is found to be statistically insignificant and have no role in explaining EMAGs. Similar

Table 4B. Later MAG Estimation Results

	Poisson Regression		NB Regression	
	Poisson Estimates	**Marginal Effects**	**NB Estimates**	**Marginal Effects**
		Dimensions		
LARPCE	0.24	–0.004	–0.026	0.009
FT2017	0.423**	0.089	0.166*	0.072
RSPB	0.526	0.144	0.35**	0.168
NGB	0.002	0.005	0.015***	0.004
TTLG	0.05	0.059	0.124	0.096
ERLG	–0.086	0.059	0.082	0.044
WESN	0.149	0.153	0.444**	0.122
		Control Variables		
Density	–0.006*	–0.002	–0.007***	–0.002
Degree	2.139	0.690	2.304**	0.840
CRATE	–0.002***	–0.00001	–0.00001	–0.0002
SES	–0.003	0.003	0.001	0.002
Intercept	–0.967***	–	–1.706***	–
α	–	–	0.712***	–
		Regression Statistics		
Observations	2,360		2,360	
Wald Statistic	103.94***		76.17***	
Chibar2 (01)	–		21.71***	

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

findings are reported for the LMAGs. Because this is a dummy variable with a binary distinction, the result showed that whether the local authority acted to pass the resolution was insignificant.[12]

In contrast, the second measure of ***Dimension A – Local authority has been granted status as a Fairtrade Town*** (FT2017) is found to be negative and statistically significant. This implies that districts that attained Fairtrade Town/Area status have around 0.1 MAGs less than districts that did not attain Fairtrade Town/Area status. This factor, however, does not have any significant role in explaining the LMAGs.

On this measure, there is *an inverse relationship* between the activity of forming a Fairtrade Town and early adoption of a C-19 MAG. But, there is a direct correlation with later formation. This indicates that those localities that engaged in the moderate activity of obtaining Fairtrade Town status were less likely to engage in the most agile, resilient civil society action to mobilize help.

Equally, when the C-19 MAGs had taken on a "bandwagon effect," these localities were more responsive to forming self-help groups. This indicates relatively "resistant localities," without the level of "community capital" to lead in empowering action. In fact, they reflect a form of response that resists such action, until forced, by societal pressure, to engage. This bears out some of the findings in our earlier article (Ziniel and Bradley 2019), where we identified that Fairtrade Town status is, in fact, an indicator of localities that are impervious to green movement agency, despite what might be expected from the labeling of such communities. Actually, as some of us know, from being resident in Fairtrade Towns, once the designation is awarded—as a minor feather-in-the-cap of a local authority—it has little active societal transformative significance. Indeed, it is appearing to "inoculate *against*" radical change.

Dimension B – Local groups of the RSPB (RSPB) is found to have a positive and a statistically significant effect on both EMAGs and LMAGs. The estimated effect on EMAGs is 0.128; or the higher RSPB by one extra group, the higher the number of EMAGs by 0.128. This effect is less than that of RSPB on LMAGs. It is estimated that the higher RSPB by one extra group increases the number of LMAGs by 0.168 MAGs.

On this measure, there is some discernible difference between the formation of EMAGs and LMAGs based on the prior presence of moderate community organizations. There is a reasonably strong correlation for both, but this is stronger for later-formed MAGs. This indicates that, once again, there is a spectrum of local responses (as is, obviously, the case) but that these "beneficent" moderate environment organizations are more correlated with the "bandwagon effect."

Equally, this variable indicates that localities with local groups of these organizations are not "resistant" to radical action (as with the Fairtrade Town localities; see above). Rather, they are more "quiescent localities," as would be expected from communities of middle-class "respectable rebels," whose action is more compatible with the protection of their "consumption sphere property" interests and rights. They would be expected to jump onto the bandwagon of MAGs later, as is shown by the correlation,

while a smaller number have engaged in more radical earlier responses, showing that this variable indicates a spectrum of local action from "quiescent to marginal radical."

Dimension C – Presence of the following types of green businesses (NGB) is estimated to be positive and statistically significant on both EMAGs and LMAGs. Both estimates are small in magnitude (0.003 and 0.004 on EMAGs and LMAGs, respectively). On this measure, there is a very marginal correlation between early adoption and the presence of green businesses. This is in line with our earlier research that shows that there is a relation between Transition Towns (TTs) and green businesses. But, given the spectrum of TTs (see above) and, also, the widespread nature of these businesses, in terms of their green agendas, this marginal, but significant effect, is, most likely, a reflection of those localities that contain the more radical green businesses. We cannot, however, prove that fact from this analysis. The response is like that for Dimension B, albeit with a weaker effect. Again, there is a spectrum from "quiescent to marginal radical" local action.

Dimension D – Local groups of Transition Towns network (TTLG) is estimated to have a positive effect on both EMAGs and LMAGs. However, the effect is only statistically significant on EMAGs. The magnitude of the effect is relatively high. It suggests the higher the presence of TTLG by one extra unit, the higher the number of EMAGs by 0.183.

On this measure, there is a strong correlation between the presence of TT groups and those localities that were able to engage in agile, resilient action. The effect is greater than for the respective "moderate community organization" variable (RSPB), indicating that these localities are further along the localism continuum than either the B-localism- or C-localism-type localities.

Again, there appears to be a spectrum of effects, but this variable indicates a far stronger correlation with early adopter than later adopter MAGs. The strength of the statistical significance suggests that there is a real effect of D-localism localities engaging in a swifter response to the pandemic. The far lower significance in respect of the weaker correlation with the "bandwagon" MAGs further indicates a skewing of these D-localism neighborhoods to an agile response.

Similarly, ***the presence of local Extinction Rebellion (ER) groups/networks*** (ERLG) is only relevant—statistically—in explaining EMAGs. The effect is not found to have a statistically significant role in explaining LMAGs. The estimated effect suggests the higher ERLG is by one extra local Extinction Rebellion group, the higher the number of early MAGs is by 0.867.

On this measure, there is an even stronger correlation with earlier adoption MAGs than recorded for the TT localities, albeit at a marginally lower level of statistical significance. This indicates that those localities with ER groups are even further along the localism continuum, which can be characterized as E-localism, for the "empowerment" of self-help groups to form faster.

It is fascinating to note that there is a far lower correlation with later adoption MAGs, and that this is negative, in terms of statistical significance. This indicates a much stronger meaningful significance, given that the statistical significance p-values for the positive correlation are < .01 (less than a 1 percent chance that the results are just random error). Localities where ER groups are present exhibit strong tendencies toward agile responses, and show no discernible preference for joining the "bandwagon."

Finally, ***Localities where school environmental strikes took place*** (WESN) is estimated to be positive for both EMAGs and LMAGs. This factor is only statistically significant in explaining later MAGs. The estimated effect suggests that one extra school environmental strike increases the number of later MAGs by 0.122.

While we cannot be certain from this analysis, the clear indication of the statistical significance of the correlation between environmental school strikes and the formation of LMAGs is that the students engaged in these strikes were, mainly, the children of parents in the B-localism category. So, when compared with the results for localities with higher proportions of the population holding a degree, the effect is considerably greater for young adults than for school-age children.

This reinforces the picture of "respectable rebels" only joining the bandwagon of later MAGs. Nevertheless, their children adopt a more radical activist position, but do not have the social capital capacity to form EMAGs on their own. Nevertheless, this points to a possible extension of the D-localism and E-localism forms in the future, as this generation reaches majority and gains the ability to act with independent agency.

Finally, all control variables—including population, degree, COVID-19 cases, and socioeconomic status—are jointly statistically significant in explaining the formation of both EMAGs and LMAGs.

Interpretation

A surprisingly clear picture emerges from the findings of our data analysis. Our most general research question was: *what localism factors condition the abilities of some communities to respond in a more agile and resilient way, than others, to the impact of serious societal shocks, as reflected by the COVID-19 pandemic?* To that we added a series of hypotheses to test the relative effects of indicator variables of four measures of social quality: societal cohesion related to the activities of the local state; societal inclusion related to the activities of preexisting, moderate civil society community organizations; economic and societal security related to the activities of local business enterprises; societal empowerment related to the activities of radical CSSM groupings. To these, we added a fifth dimension of social quality connected to climate action.

We connected these dimensions of social quality to the localism debate to produce a continuum of locality-related localism types within a spectrum from "austerity localism" (A-localism) to "empowerment localism" (E-localism). When we ran our

model, we were surprised by the results. As outlined above, the five localism types do, in fact, represent a clear continuum of effects. Furthermore, this continuum reflects an increasing capacity of localities to engage in agile resilient action in response to the severe shock of the coronavirus pandemic.

In relation to our four hypotheses:

1. Local agile resilience is *not* positively correlated with the activity of the local state (A-localism). Indeed, in some respects, as indicated by the correlation with Fairtrade Town status, we argue that "austerity localism" has an element which vigorously resists swift local resilient action. Even so, where there was no resistance to engagement in forming MAGs the local state was not a significant actor in mounting swift resilient action.
2. The capacity to form self-help groups, to enable a locally resilient response to the pandemic, in a swift manner, was positively correlated with the activity of preexistent, moderate community groups (B-localism) reflective of social capital networks.
3. The activities of local businesses (C-localism) reflective of financial-capital-generating enterprises. But, in each of these two cases, the effects were marginal, though real. On this basis, we conclude that in a small proportion of localities these community and business dimensions reflect the activity of more radical fractions, within these broad categories of community networks and green businesses, with effects on the formation of early-adoption C-19 MAGs.
4. The presence of a spectrum of environmental groups concerned with climate action and "decarbonizing" society (D-localism)—ranging from the moderate to the radical, evidenced by the diversity of the TT network—is strongly correlated with the formation of agile, resilient groups to address the local impact of the pandemic.
5. By far, the most significant influence on the formation of earlier C-19 MAGs, indicating swift and agile resilient action in the face of the pandemic, were the most radical environmental groups, operating from an explicitly anarchist worldview, as evidenced by local Extinction Rebellion groups.
6. In one sense, this is obvious. The *raison d'etre* of these anarchist groups is to engage in local, direct action and to effect change outside the workings of the state or even moderate civil society organizational structures. But what our evidence shows is that, in the case of responsiveness to the coronavirus pandemic, their impact is more influential than that of the local state, preexisting community organizations, and business enterprises.

The anarchists are the ones who have been influencing the abilities of communities to help each other and provide mutual aid in this most dreadful of circumstances. They are those who are, to use Noam Chomsky's phrase (Steele and Chomsky 2020),

"the key to our survival." Equally, the limitations of the current study need to be recognized. While our data analysis and evidence do point to certain indications and conclusions, we have not undertaken a "treatment effect" testing of the determinants of improving pandemic outcomes at a local level. Once we have augmented our database with further evidence on the numbers of COVID-19 cases and mortality rates, we will be able to undertake that analysis. Such a study must await a subsequent analysis and article. Even so, we can suggest some interim conclusions, which have pertinence for the development of SQT.

Conclusion

So, what are the implications for the localism agenda, through which lens this article is framed? In the shift from "big society" to "leveling-up," we have seen that the central state has a controlling interest over the local. But, as our evidence indicates, the local state is by no means the most active agent in enabling a form of localism that can respond resiliently to the crises of the twenty-first century. Indeed, our findings suggest that there are aspects of local state action that are resistant to such nimble responsiveness, possibly because of risk aversion and the structures within which public systems operate.

The evidence presented here suggests that the local state has a marginal and even counterfactual role in the empowerment of local communities in respect of early resilient action. The centralization and "active exclusive" nature of state intervention and reservation of support for community organizations—which have a less radical and empowering agenda—means that the local state, in the UK, is relatively impotent in anticipating crises and mounting early responsiveness to create the conditions for societal resilience. This leaves a space for the types of locally organized civic movements occupying "interstitial locations" that Andrew Williams and colleagues (2014) point to.

Far from the charitable and voluntaristic instincts of radical community organizations being subjectified and diminished because of the neoliberal state's action, new forms of experimentation with mutual aid have emerged during the pandemic. And, as our analysis indicates, these have been conditioned by the prior presence of radical, even anarchist-inspired, civic movements in many localities, enabling the most immediate, resilient response to the crisis. The implication is that, outside times of crisis, such local movements may be able to extend their reach to become even more significant in building local resilience for when the next crisis occurs.

These findings have implications for our understanding of the new relationships that are being created within civil society, influencing the differential capacities of localities to respond to critical events. But they, also, affect our development of social quality theory. Arguably, as the climate catastrophe deepens and considerably greater resilient responsiveness is required, the relative weight placed on different dimen-

sions of SQT needs to change. The role of the state is diminished, particularly at the local level, and that of radical civic movements is becoming enhanced. In the terms presented here, a shift is taking place from "A (for austerity) localism" to "E (for empowerment) localism." In turn, this needs to be reflected in the development of SQT under conditions of environmental crisis.

Nor can localities necessarily rely on social capital networks or local businesses for the keys to their survival. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, we need look to the more radical elements within society to lead the way in terms of delivering social quality through societal empowerment. Yet, the current state of British social policy and its political economy appears quite antithetic to such a conclusion. The new *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill* (Home Office 2021)—which was rushed through the UK Parliament by the Home Secretary, Priti Patel—rested on the assumption that "over recent years, certain tactics used by some protesters have caused a disproportionate impact on the hardworking majority seeking to go about their everyday lives" (Home Office 2021).

By contrast, as this study suggests, during the pandemic, when it came to acting to help local people and bring mutual aid to those in need—albeit in localities that are not the most deprived in the country—it is the anarchists who were at the front of the queue, helping people "to go about their everyday lives." Far from seeking to stop popular protesters, by sentencing them to custodial terms, the Home Secretary should be celebrating them and resourcing their activities. Such radical movements can influence local political economies by generating an increased capacity for mutualism and reciprocity. This, in turn, increases the potential for new political expressions to emerge, as has become evident with developing groupings such as Compass and the Progressive Alliance alongside the Scottish Green Party's recent entry into a coalition government with the Scottish National Party in Scotland.

These transformative changes to localism are less likely to lead to a shift in national politics at Westminster. Nevertheless, the cultural importance of local resilient civic movements is likely to play an increasing role in altering the balance of power at the city, regional, and community levels as the ecological crisis deepens. Perhaps it is they who genuinely hold the key to the next phase of localism and indeed the debate on the nature of social quality in the mid-twenty-first century.

Tony Bradley is Centre Director of SEARCH (Social and Economic Action Research Centre at Hope) and Senior Lecturer in Business Sustainability, Innovation, and Social Economy at Liverpool Hope University Business School, where he co-leads the Greening Markets Research Group. He is a sociologist and political economist specializing in interpreting the impact of the green civic movement on localities, businesses, and the wider economy. Email: bradlet@hope.ac.uk

Issam Malki is Senior Lecturer in Economics at the School of Finance and Accounting, University of Westminster. His main research interests are on econometric theory and its application to economic and social problems. Email: i.malki@westminster.ac.uk

Curtis Ziniel is a Senior Lecturer of Research Methods within the Liverpool Hope University Business School. His research is focused on the intersection of business and politics, especially in terms of the impact civic movements and other forms of collective action can have on the business world. He is published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *International Journal of Social Quality*, *International Public Management Journal*, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, and *SAGE: Research Methods Cases*.
Email: zinielc@hope.ac.uk

Asad Ghalib is a Principal Lecturer at the Liverpool Hope University Business School. His research interests lie in designing, conducting, and analyzing household surveys to capture a range of socioeconomic characteristics. He has also been engaged in developing models to capture and gauge social impact in households and across communities.
Email: ghaliba@hope.ac.uk

Notes

1. This policy idea was launched by David Cameron at Liverpool Hope University, where the three of us teach, on 19 July 2010.
2. It should be noted that this is an English—not a British or, indeed, UK—issue.
3. Space does not permit for a discussion of why the adjective "societal" should replace the more vacuous "social." See, among others, Van der Maesen and Walker (2012).
4. We report on more than 2300 instances of C-19 MAGs in this article, given that there were data gaps in analyzing the incidence of all 3,000+ groups across Britain.
5. Northern Ireland was excluded from the database, as there are many differences in local government and spatial structures in the Province compared to the rest of the UK. The 2,816 are the "first half" postal codes, which indicate local city, town, and regional areas, but do not get down to street level. The final list of instances was 2,300, as some postal codes needed to be omitted on technical grounds.
6. It will be noted that Dimension D amalgamates the D-localism and E-localism forms, which represent subsets of the radical environmentalist civil society social movement, as reflected in our Hypothesis 4.
7. These include checking that local retailers stock a range of Fairtrade goods and that fairly traded beverages are served at meetings and in some local workplaces/organizations.
8. The Transition Towns's origins lie in a movement responding to what was considered to be "peak oil," when the use of hydrocarbons for energy generation and industrial production was regarded as deeply unsustainable (see Bailey et al. 2010; and Hopkins 2011). Now, the debate over global and societal decarbonization has made this challenge to the use of oil, coal, and gas mainstream and conventional. Sustainability is now focused on how to ensure the transition away from hydrocarbon usage, irrespective of the levels of reserves left in global sources.
9. This is not to deny the significance of the widespread protests relating to identity injustice, concerning Black Lives Matter, and the #MeToo movements in the United States (US), UK, and globally, following the murder of George Floyd and the conviction of Harvey Weinstein, both in the US.
10. As we write, there is little sign of that globally, as case numbers and deaths skyrocket in many countries, most notably Brazil and India.

11. As a general note: we interpret the sign, magnitude, and statistical significance.
12. This is not a (continuous) effect, but rather the difference between two categories.

References

Acosta, J. D., A. Chandra, V. L. Towe, Y. Zhao, and Y. Lu. 2016. *The Development and Pilot Testing of the ENGAGED Toolkit*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/tools/TL200/TL202/RAND_TL202z1.backgrounder.pdf.

Bach, S. 2012. "Shrinking the State or the Big Society: Public Service Employment Relations in an Era of Austerity." *Industrial Relations Journal* 43 (5): 399–415. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2338.2012.00693.x.

Bailey, I., R. Hopkins, and G. Wilson. 2010. "Some Things Old, Some Things New: The Spatial Representations and Politics of Change of the Peak Oil Relocalisation Movement." *Geoforum* 41 (4): 595–605. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.08.007.

Berger-Schmitt, R. 2002. "Considering Social Cohesion in Quality of Life Assessments: Concept and Measurement." *Social Indicators Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality of Life Measurement* 58 (1): 403–428. doi:10.1023/A:1015752320935.

Bradley, T. Forthcoming(a). "Valuing Civil Society Environmental Engagement." In *International Handbook of Sustainable Development and Finance*, ed. T. Cadman and T. Sarker. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Bradley, T. Forthcoming(b). *Beyond Markets: Mutualism and Reciprocal Capital in the Social Economy*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Bray, M. 2013. *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books.

Brown, G. 2021. "The World Is Making Billions of Covid Vaccine Doses, So Why Is Africa Not Getting Them?" *The Guardian Online*, 16 August. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/aug/16/world-billions-covid-vaccine-doses-africa-unprotected.

Burningham, K. 2000. "Using the Language of NIMBY: A Topic for Research, Not an Activity for Researchers." *International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 5 (1): 55–67. doi:10.1080/135498300113264.

Byrne, P. (1997). 2013. *Social Movements in Britain*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Cabinet Office. 2019. *Community Resilience Development Framework*. June. London: H. M. Government. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828813/20190902-Community_Resilience_Development_Framework_Final.pdf.

Callaghan, E. G., and J. Colton. 2008. "Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities: A Balancing of Community Capital." *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 10 (1): 931–942. doi:10.1007/s10668-007-9093-4.

Cameron, A. C., and P. K. Trivedi. 2005. *Microeconometrics*: *Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cameron, D. 2011. "PM's Speech on Big Society." *Gov.uk*, 15 February. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-on-big-society.

Carney, M. 2019. "Fifty Shades of Green: The World Needs a New, Sustainable Financial System to Stop Runaway Climate Change." *Finance & Development* 56 (4). https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2019/12/pdf/a-new-sustainable-financial-system-to-stop-climate-change-carney.pdf.

Catney, P., S. MacGregor, A. Dobson, S. Marie Hall, S. Royston, Z. Robinson, . . ., and M. Ormerod. 2013. "Big Society, Little Justice? Community Renewable Energy and the Politics of Localism." *International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 19 (7): 715–730. doi:10.1080/13549839.2013.792044.

Comer, T. 2015, ed. *What Comes after Occupy? The Regional Politics of Resistance*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Council of Europe. 2000. *European Committee for Social Cohesion: Strategy for Social Cohesion*. CM92 Addendum (Revised). Meeting of 13 July. https://rm.coe.int/16804ea3a0#.

Cracknell, J., F. Miller, and H. Williams. 2013. *Passionate Collaboration: Taking the Pulse of the UK Environmental Sector*. *Greenfunders.org*. November. http://greenfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/Passionate-Collaboration-Full-Report.pdf.

Crafts, N. 2019. "Brexit: Blame It on the Banking Crisis." *Vox EU-CEPR*, 15 January. https://voxeu.org/article/brexit-blame-it-banking-crisis.

Cramer, A. 2020. "The Business Role in Creating a 21st-Century Social Contract." BSR Occasional Papers. https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-21-Century-Social-Contract-Summary.pdf (accessed 6 September 2021).

Cutter, S. L. 2016. "The Landscape of Disaster Resilience Indicators in the USA." *Natural Hazards* 80: 741–758. doi:10.1007/s11069-015-1993-2.

Dagdeviren, H., M. Donoghue, and M. Promberger. 2016. "Resilience, Hardship and Social Conditions." *Journal of Social Policy* 45 (1): 1–20. doi:10.1017/S004727941500032X.

Dahlberg, R. 2015. "Resilience and Complexity: Conjoining the Discourses of Two Contested Concepts." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 7 (3): 541–557. doi:10.3384/cu.2000.1525.1572541.

Davies, J. S., and M. Pill. 2012. "Empowerment or Abandonment? Prospects for Neighbourhood Revitalization under the Big Society." *Public Money and Management* 32 (3): 193–200. doi:10.1080/09540962.2012.676276.

Della Porta, D., and M. Diani. 2015, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Moor, J., P. Catney, B. and Doherty. 2019. "What Hampers 'Political' Action in Environmental Alternative Action Organizations? Exploring the Scope for Strategic Agency under Post-Political Conditions." *Social Movement Studies* 20 (3): 312–338. doi:10.1080/14742837.2019.1708311.

Dimitrijevic, B., and D. Horgan. 2018. "Socially Innovative Frameworks for Socioeconomic Resilience in Urban Design." In *International Conference for Sustainable Design of the Built Environment*, 1033–1044. London: SDBE London.

Dryzek, J. S., D. Downes, C. Hunold, D. Schlosberg, and H.-K. Hernes. 2003. *Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Norway*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eaton, G. 2011. "Blow for Cameron as Liverpool Pulls out of the 'Big Society.'" *New Statesman*, 3 February. https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2011/02/liverpool-council-society-cuts.

Fairtrade London Capital. n.d. "Fairtrade London, Fairtrade Towns."

Featherstone, D., A. Ince, D. Mackinnon, K. Strauss, and A. Cumbers. 2012. "Progressive Localism and the Construction of Political Alternatives." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37 (2): 177–182. doi:10.1111/j.1475-5661.2011.00493.x.

Fetzer, T. 2018. "Did Austerity Cause Brexit?" *University of Warwick CAGE Research Center*, 3 June. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/news/03-06-20-advantage_magazine__summer/article-7/.

Fieldhouse, E., J. Green, G. Evans, J. Mellon, C. Prosser, H. Schmitt, and C. van der Eijk. 2019. *Electoral Shock: The Volatile Voter in a Turbulent World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freedom News. 2020. "COVID-19 UK Mutual Aid Groups: A List." *Freedom News*, 13 March. https://freedomnews.org.uk/2020/03/13/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list/.

Garrett, P. M. 2016. "Questioning Tales of 'Ordinary Magic': 'Resilience' and Neo-Liberal Reasoning." *British Journal of Social Work* 46 (7): 1909–1925. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcv017.

Gills, B., and J. Morgan. 2020. "Global Climate Emergency: After COP24, Climate Science, Urgency, and the Threat to Humanity." *Globalisations* 17 (6): 885–902. doi:10.1080/14747731.2019.1669915.

Gudde, P., J. Oakes, P. Cochrane, N. Caldwell, and Nic Bury. 2021. "The Role of UK Local Government in Delivering on Net Zero Carbon Commitments: You've Declared a Climate Emergency, so What's the Plan?" *Energy Policy* 154 (112245). doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2021.112245.

Ham, C. 2021. "The UK's Poor Record on Covid-19 Is a Failure of Policy Learning." *British Medical Journal* 372 (284). doi:10.1136/bmj.n284.

Home Office. 2021. "Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021: Protest Powers Factsheet." *Gov.uk*, 16 April. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-factsheets/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-protest-powers-factsheet.

Hopkins, R. 2011. *The Transition Companion: Making Your Community Resilient in Uncertain Times*. Totnes, UK: Green Books.

House of Commons. 2016. *Devolution: The Next Five Years and Beyond*. Communities and Local Government Committee, First Report of Session 2015–16. 25 January. London: The Stationery Office. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmcomloc/369/36904.htm.

Hudson, B. 2019. "Why Policy Failure Is so Common in the UK." *LSE Business Review*, 26 January. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2019/01/26/why-policy-failure-is-so-common-in-the-uk/.

IASQ (International Association on Social Quality). 2019. *Ideas and Suppositions about the Application and Elaboration of the "Social Quality Approach" (SQA) in Eastern Europe: The Case of Ukraine*. IASQ Working Paper No. 17. The Hague: International Association on Social Quality. https://socialquality.org/wp-content/uploads/IASQ-Working-Paper-17-4.pdf.

Jacobs, K., and T. Manzi. 2012. "New Localism, Old Retrenchment: The 'Big Society,' Housing Reform and the Politics of Welfare Reform." *Housing, Theory and Society* 30 (1): 29–45. doi:10.1080/14036096.2012.683293.

Jenson, J. 2010. *Defining and Measuring Social Cohesion*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Johns Hopkins University. 2021. "United Kingdom—COVID-19 Overview." *Coronavirus Resource Center*. https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/united-kingdom (accessed 3 September 2021).

Jun, N., and M. Lance. 2020. "Anarchist Responses to a Pandemic: The Covid-19 Crisis as a Case Study in Mutual Aid." *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, Special Issue on Ethics, Pandemics and Covid-19*. September. https://kiej.georgetown.edu/anarchist-responses-covid-19-special-issue/.

King, A., and I. Crewe. 2014. *The Blunders of Our Governments*. Rev. ed. London: One World Publications.

King, R., and N. Nugent, eds. 1980. *Respectable Rebels: Middle-Class Campaigns in Britain in the 1970s*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Kinna, R., and T. Swann. 2020. "This Anarchist Thinker Helps Explain Why People Feel so Driven to Help Each Other through the Coronavirus Crisis." *The Conversation*, 27 March. https://theconversation.com/this-anarchist-thinker-helps-explain-why-we-feel-so-driven-to-help-each-other-through-the-coronavirus-crisis-134494.

Kirmayer, L. J., M. Sehdev, R. Whitley, S. Dandeneau, and C. Isaac. 2009. "Community Resilience: Models, Metaphors, and Measures." *International Journal of Indigenous Health* 5 (1): 62–117. doi:10.3138/ijih.v5i1.28978.

Labour Uncut. 2010. "Ed." *Labour Uncut*, 20 July. http://labour-uncut.co.uk/tag/ed/.

Longstaff, P. H., N. J. Armstrong, K. Perrin, W. M. Parker, and M. A. Hidek. 2010. "Building Resilient Communities: A Preliminary Framework for Assessment." *Homeland Security Affairs Journal* 6 (3). wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Building_Resilient_Communities_Framework.pdf.

Lowndes, V., and L. Pratchett. 2011. "Local Governance under the Coalition Government: Austerity, Localism and the 'Big Society.'" *Local Government Studies* 38 (1): 21–40. doi:10.1080/03003930.2011.642949.

Manyena, S. B. 2006. "The Concept of Resilience Revisited." *Disasters* 30 (4): 434–450. doi:10.1111/j.0361-3666.2006.00331.x.

Martinelli, F. 2010. "Historical Roots of Social Change: Philosophies and Movements." In *Can Neighbourhoods Save the City? Community Development and Social Innovation*, ed. F. Moulaert, F. Martinelli, E. Swyngedouw, and S. Gonzalez, 17–48. London: Routledge.

Mattinson, D. 2020. *Beyond the Red Wall: Why Labour Lost, How the Conservatives Won and What Will Happen Next?* Hull, UK: Biteback Publishing.

Meerow, S., and J. P. Newell. 2019. "Urban Resilience for Whom, What, When, Where, and Why?" *Urban Geography* 40 (3): 309–329. doi:10.1080/02723638.2016.1206395.

Nicholls, W. 2008. "Place, Networks, Space: Theorising the Geographies of Social Movements." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34 (1): 78–93. doi:10.1111/j.1475-5661.2009.00331.x.

O'Dowd, A. 2021. "Covid-19: Official Figures 'Underestimate' Deaths Caused by Discharging Patients into Care Homes." *British Medical Journal* 373 (1415). doi:10.1136/bmj.n1415.

Pipe, J. 2013. "Two Years on, What Has the Localism Act Achieved?" *The Guardian*, 2 November. https://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/nov/02/localism-act-devolution-uk-local-authorities.

Pyles, L. 2009. *Progressive Community Organizing: A Critical Approach for A Globalizing World*. New York: Routledge.

Ripple, W., C. Wolf, T. M. Newsome, P. Barnard, and W. R. Moomaw. 2019. "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency." *Bioscience* 70 (1): 8–12. doi:10.1093/biosci/biz088.

Rogers, A. 2020. "Northern Leaders Express Fury at Westminster over Local Lockdown Approach." *Examiner*, 2 October. https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/northern-leaders-express-fury-westminster-19034267.

Steele, C., and N. Chomsky. 2020. "Interview with Noam Chomsky: Mutual Aid Is Rising—and It's Key to Our Survival." *TruthOut*, 28 May. https://truthout.org/audio/noam-chomsky-mutual-aid-is-rising-and-its-key-to-our-survival/.

Taylor-Gooby, P. 2012. "The Civil Society Route to Social Cohesion." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 32 (7–8): 368–385. doi:10.1108/01443331211249002.

Thornley, L., J. Ball, L. Signal, K. Lawson-Te Aho, and E. Rawson. 2014. "Building Community Resilience: Learning from the Canterbury Earthquakes." *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 10 (1): 23–35. doi:10.1080/1177083X.2014.934846.

Tomaney, J., and A. Pike. 2020. "Levelling-Up?" *The Political Quarterly* 91 (1): 43–48. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12834.

Tucker, M., and A. Goldberg. 2020. "Coronavirus: Sports Events in March 'Caused Increased Suffering and Death.'" *BBC News Online*, 26 May. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52797002.

Tuckett, R. 2021. "Greenhouse Gases and the Emerging Climate Emergency." In *Climate Change: Observed Impacts on Planet Earth*, 3rd ed., ed. T. M. Letcher, 19–45. Oxford: Elsevier B. V.

UN Global Compact, Linklaters LLP, and UC Berkeley School of Law. 2019. *Guide for General Counsel on Corporate Responsibility 2.0*. New York: United Nations Global Compact.

Van der Maesen, L. J. G., and A. Walker, eds. 2012. *Social Quality: From Theory to Indicators*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, A., M. Goodwin, and P. Cloke. 2014. "Neoliberalism, Big Society and Progressive Localism." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 46 (12): 2798–2815. doi:10.1068/a130119p.

Winstanley, A., M. Hepi, and D. Wood. 2015. "Resilience? Contested Meanings and Experiences in Post-Disaster Christchurch, New Zealand." *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences* 10 (2): 126–134. doi:10.1080/1177083X.2015.1066402.

Woodcock, A., and L. Buchan. 2020. "Coronavirus: Up to 50,000 People Could Be Infected in UK, Government Says." *The Independent*, 17 March. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/coronavirus-cases-ukupdateinfections-how-many-todaylatest-a9406921.html.

Wooldridge, J. 2010. *Econometric Analysis of Cross Section and Panel Data*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Worldometer. 2021. "Coronavirus: United Kingdom. United Kingdom COVID: 6,862,904 Cases and 132,920 Deaths." *Worldometer*. https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/uk/ (accessed 3 September 2021).

Wu, Z. 1990. "On Social Quality." [In Chinese.] *Sociological Studies* 4 (1): 12–21.

Ziniel, C., ands T. Bradley. 2019. "Greening British Businesses: SMEs and the New Wave of the Environmental Social Movement." *International Journal of Social Quality* 8 (2): 1–26. doi:10.3167/IJSQ.2018.080202.