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Re-gilding the ghetto: community work and community development in twenty-first century Britain

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Re-gilding the ghetto: community work and community development in twenty-first century Britain

Sarah Banks

Introduction

The theory and practice of community work is bedevilled by debates around terminology, identity and ideology – just as much as, if not more than, social work. The term ‘community’ (noun), whilst often dismissed as meaningless, nevertheless has much more substantive content than the term ‘social’ (adjective) as it occurs in ‘social work’. While ‘community’ tends to have a positive evaluative meaning (associated with warmth and caring), it also has a number of descriptive meanings (Plant, 1974) and can be used to describe groups of people that are exclusive, hierarchical, homogeneous and conservative, as well as groups that are inclusive, egalitarian, heterogeneous and challenging. As Purdue, et al. (2000, p. 2) suggest, the contested nature of the concept of ‘community’ allows differing interests to ‘manipulate a term with multiple meanings to their own ends’. In so far as community workers tend to support groups of people with common experiences of disadvantage and oppression to take collective action, they can easily adopt a radical rhetoric linked with a social change agenda. Yet community workers are also very aware of how vulnerable they are to cooption, as governments and service delivery agencies appropriate the radical-sounding discourse of ‘community empowerment’ and ‘social justice’. Community workers have been, and some still are, intensely ambivalent about the mainstreaming of community work as a state-sponsored activity, about moves towards professionalisation and about whether community work should be regarded as a profession, occupation, social movement or a set of skills. To add to the confusion, ‘community work’ as a generic term for a range of practices is being superseded in Britain by the terms ‘community development work’ or ‘community development’ (traditionally regarded as just one of several approaches to community work).

This chapter will first explore the nature of ‘community work’ - outlining an analysis that regards ‘community development’ as one of several approaches to community work. Referring back to Mayo’s (1975) chapter, we will consider her conclusion that community development as an intervention has limited radical potential. It is argued that this conclusion is equally valid 35 years later, as the more radical ‘community action’ approaches to community work have been marginalised and community development has become mainstreamed within policies and practices concerned with promoting citizen participation and neighbourhood renewal. Nevertheless, examples are offered of locally based action for political change (based on

community organising and critical pedagogy), which keep alive the radical community work tradition.

The focus of this chapter is on community work as an occupation and set of practices in Britain, where it has developed separately from social work. Although identified in the 1960s and 1970s as the third method of social work (alongside group work and case work) and early social services departments had community development officers and neighbourhood workers based within them, from the 1980s community work became marginalised in social work education and practice (Stepney and Popple, 2008). The discussion in this chapter centres on community work as an occupation in its own right, outside the framework of social work (see Mark Baldwin’s chapter in this volume for discussion of the possibilities for a radical community-based social work).

Community work and community development

The title of this chapter includes reference to *community work* as well as *community development*, which was the subject of Mayo’s (1975) chapter in *Radical Social Work* (‘Community Development: A Radical Alternative?’). This is a deliberate move to broaden the discussion, just as Mayo’s focus on community development was a conscious choice to subject ‘the most seductive form of community work’ to critical analysis. I am using the term ‘community work’ in a broad sense to encompass a range of different types of work that are oriented towards social change with residents in neighbourhoods and with identity and interest groups. In this generic sense the term ‘community work’ covers practice approaches ranging from community-based planning and service delivery to community action and campaigning, with community development (focusing on self-help and citizen participation) somewhere in the middle, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Approaches to community work

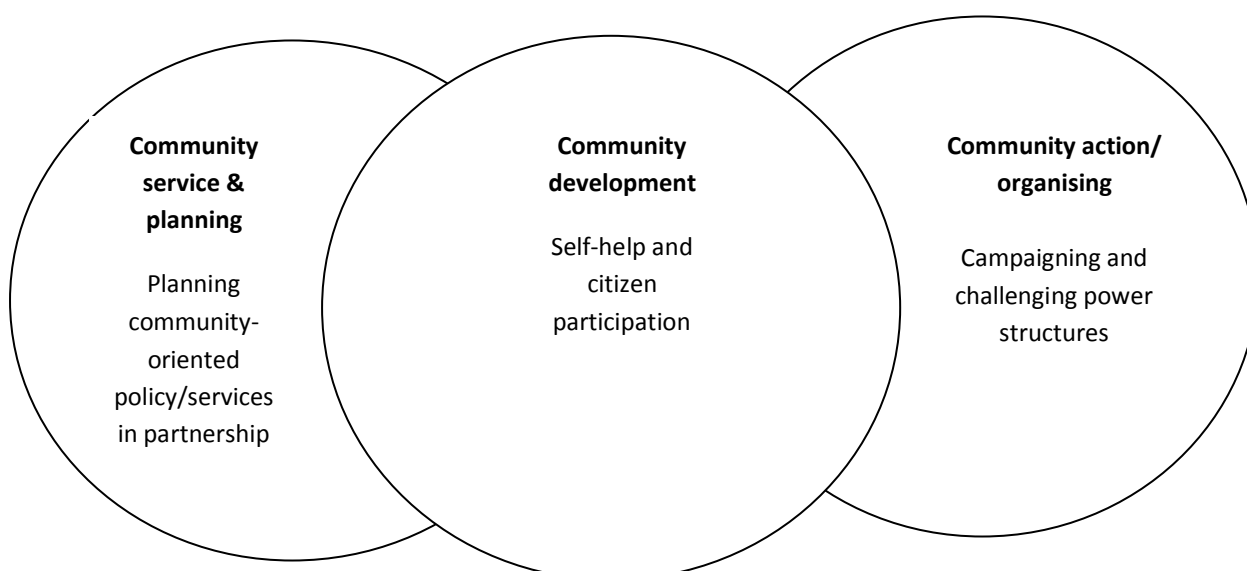
	Community service and planning	Community development	Community action/community organising
Aims	Developing community-oriented policies, services & organisations	Promoting community self-help and citizen participation	Campaigning for community interests and policies
Participants	Organisations and service users/residents as partners	Residents and group members defining and meeting their own	Structurally oppressed groups organising for power

		needs	
Methods	Maximising resident/service user involvement, inter-agency links and partnerships	Creative and cooperative processes	Campaign tactics on concrete issues
Key roles	Organiser, planner	Enabler, educator	Activist, leader
Possible ideological underpinnings	Liberal reformist; or even conservative; consensus seeking	Participatory democracy; liberal democratic; communitarian; or even conservative; consensus seeking	Marxist; anti-oppressive; or other structural theories of social problems; conflict theory

This table summarises and simplifies some of the main categories of community work drawn and developed from various key texts written in the 1970s, 80s and 90s (Banks & Noonan, 1990; Gulbenkian Foundation, 1973; Gulbenkian Study Group, 1968; Popple, 1995; Thomas, 1983). Although presented in tabular form, the boundaries between these approaches are not hard and fast, and, indeed, as Thomas (1983, p. 107) points out, practitioners do not necessarily conceive of their work in this way. Nevertheless some kind of categorisation like this can be a helpful analytical tool to differentiate the wide range of functions, methods, and (implicitly) ideologies embodied within the generic term 'community work'.

Figure 1 presents the approaches in the form of overlapping circles, to indicate the fluidity of the boundaries.

Figure 1: Overlapping approaches to community work



In this model, community development is at the centre of community work, and arguably is the dominant approach within community work as an occupation. The activities and practices identified in Table 1 as community development comprise the focus of much of what community workers did in the 1970s, 80s and 90s and what they have been doing in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Arguably community development is the approach with which most community workers feel comfortable. As Mayo (1975) argues in her chapter in *Radical Social Work*, it is 'attractive to those professionals in search of an alternative to the more directly hierarchical and paternalistic traditional approach of the helping professions'. It is also the type of work that is acceptable to employers and funders and can meet some of the service delivery and citizen participation objectives of central and local government and other agencies, especially if it merges into community service/planning.

This may partly explain why, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the term 'community development' or 'community development work' is beginning to be used more frequently than 'community work' as the generic term covering social change oriented work in communities in Britain. This is most clearly demonstrated in the changing title of the occupation for which national occupational standards have been developed: the term 'community work' was used in 1995; 'community development work' in 2002; and 'community development' in 2009 (Federation of Community Work Training Groups & MainFrame Research and Consultancy Services, 1995; Lifelong Learning UK, 2009; Paulo, 2002). The network that has been most active in developing these standards has also changed its name from the Federation of Community Work Training Groups to the Federation for Community Development Learning. The Association of Community Workers, founded in 1968, was wound up in the mid 2000s, with its members being redirected to Community Development Exchange (a membership organisation for individuals and agencies, officially established in 1991 as the Standing Conference on Community Development with funding from the Home Office).

What is the rationale for this change in terminology, and does it reflect changes in ideology, theory and practice, or is it merely semantic? The shift from 'community work' to 'community development' reflects of a complex array of motivations and trends, some of which are contradictory including:

- 1) A desire on the part of certain key players in the field to gain credibility and recognition for the work as a specialist occupation. The concept and practice of community development might be regarded as more specialist and mainstream than the all-embracing and rather diffuse concept of community work.

- 2) Uncertainty about the identity of the occupation or even whether it is an occupation at all, at the same time as a desire for the recognition of community work as an occupation in its own right. The latest national occupational standards, which ostensibly refer to a recognised occupation, conflate the development process that communities go through with community development work as an occupation; they also include as community development practitioners members of other professions using a 'community development approach'.
- 3) A stretching of the term 'community development'. Not only is the term 'community development' inclusive of process and practice and a range of occupations and practitioners, it is being used in a generic sense to cover the ground previously covered by 'community work'. In theory, at least, the middle circle of Figure 1 is widening.
- 4) A narrowing of focus of the activities of community workers – although the concept of 'community development' has stretched and statements of purpose and values are framed in the language of structural inequalities, the practice of community workers has moved away from community action/organising and more towards community service/planning.

However, before attempting to justify and elaborate upon this analysis in more detail, let us return to Mayo's original chapter written in 1975 in which she subjected community development to some rather honest and rigorous critical analysis.

An historical perspective

In her chapter in *Radical Social Work*, Marjorie Mayo (1975) explores the question whether community development is a radical alternative to casework. Not surprisingly, her answer is broadly speaking in the negative, with one of her conclusions being (p. 142):

If radical social change is the prime objective, community development is not a specially favourable starting point at all: nor does it have any automatic advantage over social work of the casework variety – indeed in some instances it may be, and has been, *more* repressive.

Although she qualifies this comment in the next paragraph, allowing that community (development) work does have some radical potential (small local campaigns can build up local capacity and link to the wider labour movement), the point she is making is that community development is not inherently radical. This is as true, if not more so, in 2010 as it was in 1975. Indeed, according to some analyses of community work (see Table 1), it is almost true by definition, as 'community development' is the term used to refer to an essentially reformist consensus-based approach to community work that focuses on the promotion of self-help and participation in civic life on the part of residents in local neighbourhoods and groups

of citizens with common interests or identities. As depicted in Table 1, it is often distinguished from community action and community organising, which are more conflict oriented and campaigning approaches, with the aim of building alliances and coalitions between people with common experiences of oppression and challenging existing power structures.

Mayo traces the history of term 'community development' and the practices associated with it to the British Colonial Office, which introduced educational programmes in the 1940s and 1950s in colonised countries to encourage self-help and local participation in anticipation of their independence. Similar approaches were also promoted in the USA, in attempts to 'develop' the black minority population and in the war on poverty of the 1960s. The term was also in the title of the first British area-based anti-poverty programme, the Community Development Project (CDP), launched by the Home Office in 1969 in 12 areas, based on a notion of improving local areas by coordinating the efforts of national and local government, local services and local people. As Mayo (1975, p. 137) comments about community development:

As a relatively cheap and typically ideological attempt to resolve various economic, social and political problems it has clearly been attractive to governments and voluntary agencies both national and international for use not just in the Third World but also amongst racial minorities and indigenous poor at home.

The CDP and its aftermath is the subject of Mayo's chapter in the second collection on radical social work (Mayo, 1980). This later chapter is in some ways more optimistic, despite being written following the premature closure of the community development projects during the mid-1970s and in a time of recession and public expenditure cuts. The reason for the closure of the CDPs was because many of the community workers came into conflict with their sponsoring local authorities, having worked alongside local people to engage in community action - campaigns, protests and rent strikes; and many of the action researchers (of which Mayo was one) had contributed to numerous reports outlining the structural causes of unemployment, poverty and inequality and the futility of attempting to tackle such major social and economic problems piecemeal at local level (Benwell Community Project, 1978; CDP Inter-Project Editorial Team, 1977; CDP Political Economy Collective, 1979; Corkey & Craig, 1978; Loney, 1983; North Tyneside CDP, 1978). Mayo (1980, p. 194) argues, however, that some progressive potential managed to survive the first round of public expenditure cuts of the mid and late 1970s, leaving workers and community activists more experienced to make use of the limited room for manoeuvre and seeing one of the legacies of the CDPs as the broad alliance between community organisations and the labour movement. The CDPs are an example of a programme designed within a community development model (self-help and participation), which moved into community action (conflict and campaigning).

Arguably this progressive potential was hard to realise in the following period of neo-liberal policies promoted by the Conservative government elected in 1979, as public spending was further cut and the welfare state came under increasing attack. As Mayo comments in a later chapter (Mayo & Robertson, 2003, p. 27), in the subsequent area-based programmes introduced by the Conservative administration (such as Urban Development Corporations in 1981 and Enterprise Zones), there was 'less interest in opening the Pandora's box of community participation' and a much stronger emphasis on economic development and private sector involvement. Yet the problems of concentrations of poverty, especially in the inner cities, remained and as new area-based programmes were introduced (such as City Challenge in 1991 and the Single Regeneration Budget in 1994), it was recognised that social and economic problems needed to be tackled together and the involvement of local residents in planning and implementing some of these projects was part of the 'solution'. Community development workers were employed to work on these programmes and, especially in the later phases of Single Regeneration Budget programmes, increasingly took on roles in 'community capacity building' – that is, preparing residents to take part in partnership boards and to run projects (Banks & Shenton, 2001).

Nevertheless, in the 1980s the employment of generic neighbourhood-based community development workers by local authorities and voluntary organisations declined, as more specialist posts (for example, in community enterprise, community care and community health) began to grow - linked very much to the promotion of self-help, care in the community, volunteering and business development (Francis et al., 1984; Glen & Pearse, 1993). During the 1980s there was also a growing awareness amongst community workers themselves (as amongst other social welfare workers) of the importance of identity communities - with a particular stress on anti-racist and anti-sexist work (Dixon & al., 1982; Dominelli, 1990; Ohri & al., 1982) - a feature reflected in the chapter in the third British collection on radical social work, this time written by Ian Smith (1989). Smith also offers an account of the successful action on the part of grassroots community workers to fend off attempts to establish a national institute for community work in the mid-1980s, which would have been a move towards the professionalisation of community work – with the aim of giving it a clearer identity, stronger voice, recognised training and qualifications. Following a consultation exercise in 1986, a Standing Conference on Community Development was established instead, with space for regional groupings of workers and activists as well as national bodies. This is an example of the long-standing resistance on the part of community workers towards what was regarded as professionalisation – a position that was maintained for much longer than in social work or youth work. Smith (1989, p. 276) characterises the debate during the 1980s as one between those who wanted to see community work establish itself as a profession and those who regarded it as a 'core set of skills that aims to enable local community groups to achieve their own objectives'. The terms 'profession' and 'professionalisation' were used loosely, with positive connotations for proponents

(recognition and status for work alongside disadvantaged groups) and negative connotations for opponents (incorporation into the mainstream with loss of independence and critical edge).

Ironically, having resisted professionalisation, the Federation of Community Work Training Groups (a national federation of regional groups of community workers founded in 1982 that offered training for community activists and workers) became concerned in the late 1980s to offer recognition to people undertaking training in community work skills and to establish alternative routes to qualification for experienced activists (see Banks, 1990). This led to the active and early participation of the Federation in the development of National Vocational Qualifications in community work – a move resisted by many other occupational groups as entailing increasing government and employer control, simplification of complex practices, a focus on training at the expense of education and a sidelining of theory (Jones, 1989, pp. 212-215). However, the Federation saw this as an opportunity to get community work qualifications recognised in their own right. By this time the links with social work were tenuous, with very few professional qualifying programmes for social work offering any significant community work input. Although the Central Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work had endorsed a route to community work qualification through accreditation of experience, this was not resourced and rarely used. By the mid-1990s, youth work became much more dominant, as The National Youth Agency took over the professional endorsement functions for youth and community work qualifications and community work was left on the margins.

Mainstreaming community development

With the national occupational standards in place (Federation of Community Work Training Groups & Mainframe Research and Consultancy Services, 1995), community work was ready to take advantage of the changing climate when New Labour came to power in Britain in 1997 and central government began to develop policies and programmes with an increasing focus on issues of social justice, inclusion and neighbourhood renewal. A whole range of policy initiatives was introduced to promote active citizenship, community capacity building, community plans, community leadership, community engagement and community empowerment, to name but a few (Communities and Local Government, 2008; Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, 1998; Home Office, 2004a; Home Office, 2004b; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). Those active in national community development organisations began to work hard to raise the profile of community work (specifically community development work) and to demonstrate its effectiveness in working with communities to develop the voices of the people traditionally excluded and to contribute to democratic and neighbourhood renewal. In 2006 several national bodies concerned to promote community development work formed a working party under the aegis of the Community Development Foundation and produced a report for the Department for

Communities and Local Government called *The Community Development Challenge* (Communities and Local Government, 2007). This report (p.11) comments that:

The focus [of New Labour] on tackling inequalities and striving for social justice aligned well with the core values and ideals of community development, which, as a profession, unexpectedly found itself largely in tune with government thinking.

It also makes the point that (p. 13):

There is a CD profession, defined by national occupational standards and a body of theory and experience going back the best part of a century.

The use of the term 'profession' in both these quotations is noteworthy. Mainly the term 'occupation' is used, but the fact that 'profession' has slipped into one or two places in the document is indicative of the bid for status and recognition represented by this report.

In the *Community Development Challenge* report we can, perhaps, find some clues to help elaborate on the answers to the questions posed earlier, about the rationale for the move from 'community work' to 'community development'. Community development as described by Mayo (1975) had its immediate origins in the desire for containing and controlling the move of the former British colonies towards independence. It was a managed way of giving control to local people, developing sustainable local systems of governance and service provision. Similarly the British Community Development Project was intended to be a relatively cheap way of tackling poverty and diverting attention from inequality by offering some degree of local participation in planning and building new housing, services and community projects – a means of 'gilding the ghetto' to use the evocative title of one of the CDP reports (CDP Inter-Project Editorial Team, 1977). According to the back cover of this report, the title comes from comments made by Miss Cooper, chief inspector in the children's department of the Home Office, as recorded in the minutes of a 1969 conference on poverty initiatives:

There appeared to be an element of looking for a new method of social control – what one might call an antivalue, rather than a value. 'Gilding the ghetto' or buying time, was clearly a component in the planning of CDP and Model Cities.

However, as Mayo argues (1975), although community development is not inherently radical, it does have radical potential. The process of citizens engaging in collective action and participating in decision-making is a two-edged sword. It can bring people to political consciousness, stimulate protest, conflict, unease and unrest as well as contribute to developing community-based services and consensual partnership working. The potential of community development work to generate conflict is acknowledged in the *Community Development Challenge* report under the heading

of 'managing tensions'. However, it is not highlighted as a main or desired outcome, rather as a by-product to be managed on the road to developing a responsible community:

As disadvantaged communities begin to gain confidence and assert themselves, they frequently go through a stage of becoming more articulate in their grievances against whatever authorities they have to deal with. In mature CD theory and practice there is a well recognised journey from powerlessness through blame and protest to confidence, responsibility, negotiation and partnership. But this requires on the one hand that CD workers are very skilled and far-seeing, and on the other than authorities themselves have an understanding of this process and do not react to the initial stages with denial or repression.

(Communities and Local Government, 2007, p. 31)

This statement highlights a vital role for community development workers – not only to bring 'disadvantaged' community participants to the negotiating table, but to educate them in the art of civilised participation, the making of moderate claims and to enable them to engage in constructive dialogue and partnership and to take responsibility.

In this account of community development, the concept is being stretched in the direction of what we identified as community service and community planning in Table 1. This is a move in the opposite direction to that taken by many of the CDP workers in the 1970s, who shifted the discourse and practice of community development very rapidly into the arena of community action, underpinned by a Marxist analysis of social problems. In the mid 2000s, the opportunity to mainstream the occupation of community development under New Labour was clearly regarded as a moment to be seized. This was a time when the occupation and its practice had become less radical and was partially incorporated, and when radical government rhetoric made it easier to meet in the comfortable, consensual middle ground. This is in stark contrast to the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which those concerned to mainstream and professionalise community work regarded as a lost moment. According to Thomas (1983), the CDP was a missed opportunity to establish community work as a profession with a discrete set of practice skills. Instead the chance was squandered as community workers turned into political analysts and central and local government beat a hasty retreat. With a Conservative government in power from 1979, the gap between the radical analysis of many community workers and neo-liberal government policies was much too wide to bridge. The *Community Development Challenge* represents a sustained attempt to bridge a much narrower gap in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Reclaiming the radical potential

Shaw (2008) argues that the much-evoked dichotomy between community development as a technical, 'objective' profession and community development as a radical, passionate social movement may be a useful conceptual distinction, but is not a real distinction in practice:

It is important to remember that the contradictory provenance of community development with its roots in both benevolent welfare paternalism and autonomous working-class struggle ... has created a curiously hybrid practice.

(Shaw 2008, p. 26)

Arguably such contradictions are at the heart of most of the state-sponsored welfare professions, including social work. However, in community development work, the fact that practice takes place at the level of the collectivity and is oriented towards social change means that it can be easier for the realities of an essentially reformist practice to be viewed in through a radical lens.

As Shaw (2008, p. 26) comments again:

Part of the problem is that while the socialist discourse of transformation and empowerment has tended to operate at a rhetorical level, it has generally concealed a much more conformist and conservative reality.

Despite these cynical comments, Shaw's conclusion (p. 34) is that community development does have the potential to contribute to radical change – as it embodies within it a choice about whether to act to maintain the status quo and reinforce existing inequalities in power, or whether to critique existing structures and work towards creating a more equal alternative 'world as it could be'. Community development is, she claims, both a professional practice and a political practice.

Similar points are made by recent commentators about the relationship between community development and community action/community organising. There is a tendency to regard these as mutually exclusive approaches. Yet DeFilippis et al. (2007) point to a number of examples of established community-based projects in North America that engage in high profile, effective community organising and political campaigning (beyond their own neighbourhoods), whilst also undertaking locally-based community development and casework with individuals in relation to housing, employment or other legal disputes with the authorities. Bunyan (2010, p. 13) in his account of the growth of broad-based organising in Britain notes the tendency of community work theory to 'divide into two broad camps based upon the micro-level and the macro-level ... at the expense of what has been termed the meso-level'. Drawing on Goehler (2000), Mills (1970) and Shaw (2008, p. 32), he argues that community or neighbourhood can be regarded as the meso-level where the micro-politics of personal troubles meets the macro-politics of public issues - a key arena for connecting people beyond the local into political activity.

Community organising

The growth of community organising in Britain, which developed in the 1990s and has slowly gained momentum over the first decade of the twenty-first century, is a good example of strategic community-based radical action - built from the grassroots; maintaining independence from the constraints of state funding; connecting local, national and global issues and networks; and coordinated by highly skilled workers. Community organising is derived from the work of the Industrial Areas Foundation set up by Saul Alinsky in the USA in 1940, made popular by his books published in the 1960s and 1970s and still continuing today (Alinsky, 1969; Alinsky, 1989; Chambers, 2003; Pyles, 2009; www.industrialareasfoundation.org). Alinsky's method was based on the idea of organising people and money for power through building coalitions of dues-paying institutions (including places of worship, community organisations, schools and trades unions) that could then mobilise around carefully framed issues to challenge large corporations or state organisations on unjust practices, policies and laws. Some of Alinsky's provocative tactics to agitate residents, to frame winnable issues and to create conflict may seem as manipulative as those of the organisations being challenged. For example, he urges organisers to 'rub raw the resentments of the people of the community', 'fan the latent hostilities' and 'search out controversy' (Alinsky, 1989, p. 116). This led to critiques of his tactics from the more moderate sections of the community work field, whilst his lack of a class-based Marxist political analysis also made many on the left wary of his approach (Henderson & Salmon, 1995; Mayo, 2005, p. 106). Nevertheless the tactics have proved very effective, and have kept alive a tradition of radical, challenging community-based work.

While the tradition of community organising has never been strong in Britain, in the last decade peoples' organisations have been developing in several urban areas, often with major input from faith-based organisations and many under the aegis of the Citizen Organising Foundation (Bunyan, 2010). The most well-established is London Citizens, comprising three broad-based organisations: The East London Communities Organisation, South London Citizens and West London Citizens (www.cof.org.uk). Recent successful campaigns have included demands for a living wage, affordable housing, the rights of migrants and ethical guarantees for the 2010 Olympics, which have involved well-planned and high profile conflict tactics such as camping outside City Hall and marches and demonstrations in Trafalgar Square.

Smaller scale examples of community organising can be found in a growing number of other parts of Britain, including Birmingham, Manchester, Wales and Stockton-on-Tees. A good example of a small-scale local network that is supported under a national umbrella and has links with other groups nationally and internationally is the Thrive project in Thornaby, Stockton (www.church-poverty.org.uk/projects/thrive). This project developed under the aegis of a national body, Church Action on Poverty, which in turn is linked to the USA-based Gamelial Foundation – a body that mentored Barack Obama when he worked as an organiser in Chicago and which has

facilitated community organising training in Stockton and other parts of Britain. Thrive has built its capacity to engage in well-publicised actions on issues such as debt and predatory lending, by starting from research into the realities of people's everyday lives, based on in-depth household interviews (Orr et al., 2006), and then offering peer mentoring and support on debt and health-related matters. Despite tensions related to receiving financial support for some of the work from a variety of sources (including the local Primary Care Trust, which required strict outcome measures) Thrive has maintained a critical mix of individual casework, group support and strategic campaigning. The involvement of several Durham University staff and students has also boosted its capacity for mentoring and research work.

Critical pedagogy

Community organising is just one example of community-based oppositional politics supported by paid community workers. As already mentioned, it is not without its critics and there is a danger, as with all types of community action, that people who are living in poverty or experiencing injustice may be used as means for political ends. There are other styles and ideologies of community working that have a radical edge, including those using a critical pedagogy framework (derived from the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire) based on a process of conscientization (developing people's awareness and understandings of their oppression and its sources) leading to collective action (Freire, 1972; Freire, 1993; Freire, 2001; Ledwith, 2005; Ledwith & Springett, 2010). Yet despite the profound influence of Freire's thinking on community work and community development theory, there are few examples of systematically Freirean approaches in Britain. The most notable is the long-running Adult Learning Project in Gorgie Dalry, Edinburgh, which started in 1979. Here programmes of learning are constructed with residents around locally defined themes, leading on to action programmes, based in a radical tradition of popular (of the people) education which links adult education with community action (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 1989). As Colin Kirkwood (2007, p. 7), one of the early tutors and a longstanding unpaid consultant for this project, commented in an interview:

In Freire's writing we found explicit confirmation of our view that poverty and exploitation could not be understood with reference to circumscribed localities but in terms of larger totalities; but equally that this did not invalidate starting from where people live and work.

For Freire, the agenda for learning derived from issues relevant to people's own lives, not from demands made upon citizens by politicians:

The emerging themes, the meaningful thematics, of any Freirean learning programme derive not from the current priorities of national governments or the European Union, although these may be powerfully influential ... It is not a matter of being 'in and against the state' but of being simultaneously inside and beyond the state.

ALP has been funded by Edinburgh City Council from its inception, and workers are employees of the council. This may have caused tensions from time to time, but ALP has consistently maintained its Freirean ethos, mounting actions on a variety of themes from democracy in Scotland to land reform and sustaining international links and exchanges. This is a good example of state-sponsored practice that seems to have retained control over its own agenda.

State-controlled community development practice

Community-based projects, such as those described above, that are supported by community development workers to mount campaigns and engage in radical education are still in existence and some are part of local authority services. However, much community development work is constrained by the requirements of funders (especially central and local government) where the obsession with meeting targets, measuring outcomes and impact serves to divert the focus, time and effort of community participants, activists and paid workers. A recent survey showed that community development workers were spending much less time in face-to-face work (Glen et al., 2004). This is particularly true for local authority workers, many of whom have been drawn into corporate roles to support policy requirements for community planning, engagement and empowerment. The experience of Durham County Council's community development team provides an interesting example of the tensions faced by workers between engaging in strategic policy-level work (including advising all council departments on community engagement) and undertaking locally-based community development work on issues of concern to residents (Banks & Orton, 2007). Even those workers able to undertake local community development work were doing it at a distance, covering a relatively large geographical area and offering support to specific groups as required. The demise of generic neighbourhood work in this and many other councils means that long term relationship building in a specific locality is less possible, which dramatically reduces the role of community development workers in building sustained action or protest-oriented groups.

Some of the biggest opportunities for neighbourhood level work have come through the national area-based regeneration schemes implemented from the 1990s. The most recent of these, New Deal for Communities, was launched in 1998 as a 'showcase for state of the art regeneration' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998, p. 55). It has focused on smaller areas (39 localities of not more than 4,000 households) over a longer timescale (10 years) with even more intense demands for community partnership. Some of the chosen New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas have been subject to a series of area-based initiatives since the 1960s (for example, the west end of Newcastle) and were still categorised as some of the most deprived neighbourhoods after more than 30 years of government sponsored serial regeneration and community development programmes (Lupton, 2003). Many

residents in the Newcastle NDC area were cynical and some recalcitrant. As Dargan (2009) suggests, this is not surprising, since the limited timescale for bidding for funding had meant that outside consultants were employed to develop the bid to determine a 10-year programme that was supposedly a genuine partnership with residents.

The impact of NDC on various indicators (levels of crime, educational achievement and so on) has been limited (Lawless, 2006), although the extent to which cause and effect can be measured, the validity of the measures used and the obsession with measurement itself are all open to question. Whilst in some areas the levels of resident participation have been disappointing and expectations have been dashed (Dinham, 2005), in other areas large efforts have been made, working partnerships developed and improvements been made in housing, services and cultural provision (see, for example, Hartlepool New Deal for Communities, 2010).

The work done with local residents on partnership boards and to develop new projects has generally been community work in the community development paradigm - with radical rhetoric and reformist practice. Whilst many of the government programmes speak in the language of power-sharing and equal partnerships between residents, private, voluntary and public sector bodies ('power-with') or even of 'residents in control' with power to act and power over the agenda, the reality is somewhat different. The agendas are already shaped by central government and the scope for manoeuvre is severely limited, as the very definition of 'community empowerment' in the supposedly radical white paper 'communities in control' so clearly shows:

'Community empowerment' is the giving of confidence, skills, and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them.

(Communities and Local Government & Local Government Association, 2007, p.12)

Some of the language of the critiques of the new Labour initiatives is very telling. The spaces for community control are 'invited', not created, invented or demanded by people themselves; active citizenship is 'manufactured' rather than organic (Banks and Vickers, 2006; Cornwall, 2002; Hodgson, 2004). The language of the *Community Development Challenge* report makes it very clear that, despite the radical rhetoric, the 'community development offer' is one of controlled community involvement. Therefore, if some residents express anger when invited to participate, this is not surprising. In one NDC area, the poor quality of participation by some residents was noted, with examples of confrontational behaviour, abusive language, hostile looks and aggressive tones of voice (Dargan 2009). This kind of behaviour may simply be regarded as irrational or a 'storming' phase on the road to residents taking responsibility, but equally it may be a rational response to an invitation to take responsibility without real power. Gardner (2007, p. 3) suggests in relation to NDC

generally, and indeed all community-based regeneration, that most community engagement is 'shallow and ephemeral' and local views can be 'parochial and illiberal'. The implication is that residents may not be ready or able to take responsibility. Yet if past government regeneration schemes have been experienced by residents as shallow and ephemeral, it is not surprising that recent experiences of community participation are often in the same vein. This should not be taken to imply that meaningful community participation is not possible, just that it needs to be approached differently – as a grassroots process. There are plenty of examples of sustained participatory community-based projects in very poor areas based on locally defined agendas and organic community action – such as the ALP project mentioned earlier.

Community development as a long-term value-based practice

So, what is the state of community work and community development in 2010? The latest iteration of the national occupational standards for what was called community work and is now called community development make a much stronger statement than previous versions about the value-based nature of community development and the primacy of values relating to challenging structural inequalities through collective action. For example, the key purpose of community development is expressed as follows (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009, p. 3):

Community Development is a long-term value based process which aims to address imbalances in power and bring about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion.

The process enables people to organise and work together to:

- identify their own needs and aspirations
- take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives
- improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live, and societies of which they are a part.

The values underpinning the work are identified as:

1. **Equality and Anti-discrimination** – challenging structural inequalities and discriminatory practices.
2. **Social Justice** - identifying and seeking to alleviate structural disadvantage and advocating strategies for overcoming exclusion, discrimination and inequality.
3. **Collective Action** - working with and supporting groups of people, to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence so they can develop an analysis and identify issues which can be addressed through collective action.
4. **Community Empowerment** - supporting people to become critical, creative, liberated and active participants, enabling them to take more control over their lives, their communities and their environment.

5. ***Working and Learning Together*** - promoting a collective process which enables participants to learn from reflecting on their experiences.

These are hard-hitting, radical-sounding values, clearly expressed to give community development workers a mandate to tackle structural inequalities and challenge discrimination through collective action. However, their critical edge is somewhat muted by their placement in document outlining a set of standards that conflates community development as a process, with community development as a set of activities and practices and community development as an occupation. This is a serious shortcoming and detracts from the power of the strong statement about values. As it is very obvious that the range of processes, activities, practices and professionals to which these values are supposed to apply is so all-embracing that either lip service will be paid to a weak version of these values (rather like the government version of community empowerment) or they will be ignored altogether. By trying to be inclusive, the values (and the national occupational standards of which they are a part) become less powerful. For these standards apparently apply not only to paid community development workers with generic or specific briefs, but also to community development activists/volunteers, other professionals taking a community development approach to their role and managers of community development practice. This would imply, for example, that a police officer, health visitor or architect who takes on a community-based role with a brief to undertake participatory practice, should subscribe to the values and practise with the knowledge and skills as laid down in the national occupation standards for community development.

Conclusion: From value statements to value commitments

If community workers are serious about values, then much more work needs to be done to turn the value statements in the various manifestos that have emerged from community development organisations in recent years (which are now coalescing largely around the national occupational standards) into value commitments that are believed in by workers and enacted in practice. As well as statements of principles (promoting of social justice, equality, community empowerment), we need workers to be motivated by passion and anger at injustice and to develop courage to challenge injustices, inequalities and work towards genuine power-sharing in very heterogeneous neighbourhoods or communities of interest and identity. Many workers do have these motivations and commitments and they are implementing them in the micro-processes of their practice (Banks, 2007; Hoggett et al., 2008), but much less so at the meso or macro level. Collective organisations and coalitions of those involved in community work that are independent of government funding can be more effective at challenging the current model of controlled community development (for example, the National Coalition for Independent Action, www.independentaction.net). There is a need to offer a constant critique of, and to move beyond, the empty rhetoric of 'healthy', 'safe', 'sustainable' communities, however seductive and tempting this discourse may be, to return to communities as

sites of struggle, where issues of individual and social justice meet (Cooke, 1996; Hoggett, 1997; Shaw, 2008). Reminding ourselves that community work involves more than just community development may be an important step to reclaiming some of the radical potential that Mayo remarked upon in 1975 and has worked for and written so much about in the subsequent 35 years.

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