

# Re-examining North Tyneside Community Development Project and its legacy

REPORT

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**CDP reports:** some of the reports published by North Tyneside CDP and other projects can be purchased from St James' Heritage & Environment Group (see website: <http://stjameschurchnewcastle.wordpress.com>). Some are available in digital form online at <http://ulib.iupui.edu/collections/CDP>

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## Introduction

This report offers a relatively descriptive and selective overview of the work of North Tyneside Community Development Project (CDP) and considers some of its legacies and lessons for today. A shorter article drawing on this report, which discusses aspects of the work of North Tyneside CDP, along with an article offering a critical overview of the national Community Development Project, can be found in a themed issue of the *Community Development Journal* (see Armstrong and Banks, 2017; Banks and Carpenter, 2017).

North Tyneside CDP (1972-78) was part of the national Community Development Project, Britain's first national anti-poverty programme in the 1970s, funded by the Home Office and located in 12 areas in the UK. Local action-research teams were tasked with researching the causes of poverty in their areas and working with local residents to bring about change. The CDPs produced many detailed and critical local and national reports, which located the causes of local social and economic problems in the decline of traditional industries, failures of government policy and international pressure to cut public spending.

North Tyneside was a 'third wave' CDP, starting in October 1972, and officially ending in September 1977 (although some researchers remained until Easter 1978). This meant it could draw on the learning from the 'first wave' projects, as well developing a close working relationship with nearby Benwell CDP, which had started a few months earlier. Its main areas of work followed a similar pattern to that of many other CDPs, including substantial attention to housing; industry and employment; and advice and information. However, amongst the features that distinguish North Tyneside CDP are its work on issues of gender and youth, including significant reports on women's work and youth unemployment (North Tyneside CDP, 1978e; North Tyneside CDP & N. Tyneside Trades Council, 1977) and its challenging and innovative work in the field of play and recreation. Furthermore, while categorised by Kraushaar (1982: 62) as one of the CDPs that took a 'radical' approach, North Tyneside CDP branded itself in more nuanced and realistic terms as 'radical reformist'. It also paid more attention to documenting the process of the work with community action groups than some other CDPs, whilst at the same time generating hard-hitting research-based political analyses and contributing to major inter-project reports such as the *Costs of Industrial Change* and *Gilding the Ghetto*. This means that some of the critiques of the CDPs regarding the invisibility of gender, and the focus on class politics as opposed to community development work, may be less true in the case of N. Tyneside than some other projects.

This report begins with a brief history of North Shields before outlining key aspects of the work of North Tyneside CDP and discussing some of the legacies it left behind and its significance for the present day. The report draws on research undertaken during 2014-16 as part of the *Imagine North East* project. This involved examining documentary evidence, including CDP reports, census data, Home Office and Cabinet Office records, unpublished local CDP papers and other grey literature. The report also draws on 35 interviews with former CDP workers, past and present community activists, residents and policy-makers conducted in 2014-16 for *Imagine North East*, three interviews conducted in 1987/8 by Patrick Candon, four interviews from 2010 and 2013 by Susan Hyatt and a workshop held in North Shields in 2016 (Armstrong, Banks and Harman, 2016). *Imagine North East* was part of a larger national research project, *Imagine – connecting communities through research*, a five-year programme of research involving a wide range of universities and community organisations. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council under the Connected

Communities programme, the aim was to look at the ways people engage with their communities and with wider society through taking an active role in civic life. *Imagine North East* was part of the historical work package, covering Tyneside and Coventry and involved 12 community-based partner organisations in Benwell and North Shields. An overview of the projects conducted by North Shields community organisations as part of *Imagine North East* is in a booklet on the web (Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, 2015)

### **Background: A brief history of North Shields**

North Shields is an industrial town situated on the north bank of the River Tyne in the Borough of North Tyneside in North East England. It takes its name from the 'shielings' or 'shiels' (fishermen's huts) that once stood on the banks of the river. The industrial origins of North Shields were in sea coal, brewing, baking, salt-making, coal mining, fishing and shipping. Salt-making declined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the last coal mine closed in 1966 (North Tyneside CDP, 1973). The development of the port by the Tyne Improvement Committee was associated with new and transformed industries such as ship repair at Smith's Dock, which was the town's largest employer from the 1890s to the 1960s (Byrne, 1989). These industrial developments had an impact on the population which doubled in the periods 1801 to 1851 and 1851 to 1921 (Byrne, 1989). Between 1921 and 1971, the population of Tynemouth County Borough (as it was known then) hardly grew but the number of dwellings increased by more than 80 per cent (North Tyneside CDP, 1975:2). In the 1930s, an industrial estate was built at Chirton, with an emphasis on women's employment and diversification of industry. During the Second World War, North Shields was an area where engineering and other industries were relocated – in part because the sites already existed at Chirton. Between 1950 and 1960, the area experienced primary industry job losses (about 70 per cent) but manufacturing employment increased for both men and women (Byrne, 1989). Shipbuilding and repair grew and food and clothing manufacturing on the Chirton industrial estate provided mainly women's employment. A significant newcomer at this time was the De La Rue – Formica plant.

In the 1920s, North Shields consisted of Banksides, bank tops, the industrial villages of Percy Main and East Howden and the villages of Chirton and Preston. Council housing, along with subsidised and unsubsidised private houses, was built in the 1920s and after the Greenwood Housing Act of 1930 the Banksides was cleared. The Banksides was an area of 'back-to-back' housing fronting the river Tyne mainly occupied by labourers and poorly paid fishermen. The housing took the form of narrow stair cases rather than streets (North Tyneside CDP, 1976). The housing had developed over centuries on the steep banks emerging from the old, flat port. The Medical Officer of Health gave evidence at the Clive Street Public Enquiry in 1933, describing access to the Banksides as:

... the only means of access to many of the dwelling-houses is provided by means of confused, dark, winding passages, stairways and alleyways constructed mostly of stone and badly worn. (North Tyneside CDP, 1976:105)

Most residents (about 9,000 people) were moved to a newly-built estate – The Ridges (which was later renamed North and South Meadowell and then Meadow Well). Before 1930, most housing was built for 'general needs' rather than slum clearance. Post-war until the mid-1960s there was very little clearance and a declining amount of housing built for general needs (National CDP, 1976). A major slum clearance scheme in the 1960s involved Dockwray Square as the fine terraced houses built for 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrialists had become slum tenements. By the 1970s, the improvement of

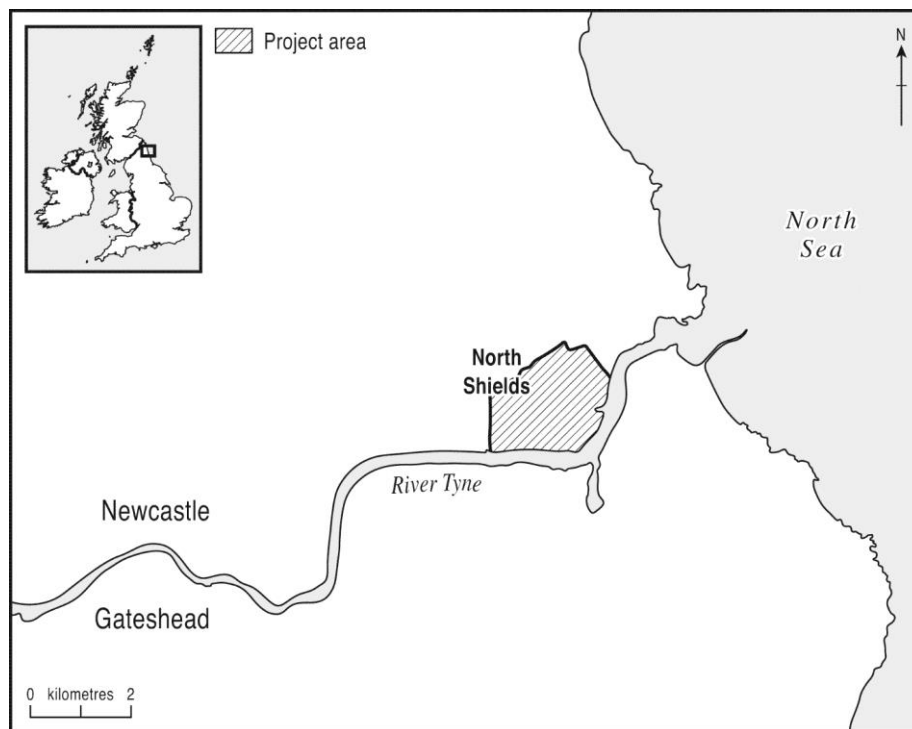
existing housing was a major concern and this was one of the issues issue faced by the North Tyneside CDP team.

### North Tyneside CDP: Setting up

North Tyneside CDP<sup>1</sup> was located in North Shields, an industrial town near the estuary on the north bank of the River Tyne in North East England. Based principally around fishing and ship-building, the town grew rapidly in the nineteenth century, with ship repair at Smith’s Dock being the largest employer from the 1890s to 1960s. By the 1960s, however, the fortunes of N. Shields were changing, with de-industrialisation resulting in primary industry (mining and fishing) job losses of around 70 per cent between 1950 and 1960 (Byrne, 1989, 53). Manufacturing and service sector employment increased, with jobs mainly filled by women (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b:18).

The area chosen for the CDP had a population of 15,950 in 1971, comprising mainly white, working class inhabitants, with only 0.9 per cent born outside the UK (Robinson and Townsend, 2016). It included an old working class riverside district with port-related activities (South and North Trinity), two older village communities (Percy Main and East Howdon), and a 1930s council estate (North and South Meadow Well) along with nearby Hunters Close and Murrays Close. Figure 1 shows the boundaries of the CDP area.

**Figure 1: Map of the North Tyneside CDP area**



<sup>1</sup> The initial name was the County Borough of Tynemouth CDP. It became North Tyneside CDP after local government reorganisation in April 1974 when Tynemouth became part of the new N. Tyneside Borough.

Prior to selecting the precise area, the Home Office analysed the 1966 Census data for the Borough, focusing particularly on social indices such as the proportion of children in the area under five, the percentage of adults over 65, household amenities, income levels and health and employment statistics (Corkey, 1975: 48). This led to the initial choice of Percy, Trinity and Linskill wards, but the local authority convinced the Home Office to include the Meadow Well estate because it was ‘the real problem area’ (ibid). Linskill was left out because much of the housing had already been cleared. According to the 1974 Annual Report (North Tyneside CDP, 1975:2), the area was chosen ‘mainly because the Council felt that the major problem in the Borough was the bad reputation of the Meadow Well Estate’. The other parts of the CDP area were included because they suffered from poor housing conditions, high unemployment, etc. According to the CDP team, this choice was underpinned by a social pathology perspective:

At the beginning of the Project some Councillors, many officials and the Home Office Civil Servants believed that most of the problems of these areas were caused, in the main, by the attitudes and lifestyles of the people living in them. (North Tyneside CDP, 1975:2)

At the time when the CDP was established, the local authority (Tynemouth) was in Conservative control. One of the ex-CDP workers felt that a desire to have a CDP in a Conservative borough may have been a factor in selecting that site (Armstrong, Banks and Harman, 2016:7).

David Corkey, who had been a community development worker in Northern Ireland, was appointed as director of the action team. He felt his appointment was based on his experience in Northern Ireland and that compared with some other candidates ‘my Ulster accent would be a better fit with the Meadow Well’ (David Corkey Interview, 2013). David Byrne, a former lecturer in social policy, was appointed as research director, with Penny Remfry and John Foster as senior community workers (later assistant directors) in the action team. According to David Corkey, John Foster was appointed because he was local, had been a local community centre manager and was an active socialist. He was involved in Workers’ Fight, a Trotskyist organisation that had split from the International Socialists. Penny Remfry had worked in community development in different places and said in interview that her perspective was similar to that of John Foster, characterising this as ‘more revolutionary politics as were around in the early seventies’ (Penny Remfry Interview, 1987). About 20 people were employed as CDP workers at different times over the five years. The action team was in place by February 1973, with their budget administered by the County Borough of Tynemouth. The research team took up their posts in Autumn 1973, administered by the Department of Behavioural Studies, Newcastle Polytechnic.

### **The approach of North Tyneside CDP**

North Tyneside CDP was one of five CDP projects categorised as radical by Kraushaar, (1982:62)<sup>2</sup>. Although all 12 CDPs accepted a structural analysis of problems in their areas as caused by external

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<sup>2</sup> Kraushaar (1982: 62) examined the final project reports of the 12 CDPs, arguing that ‘roughly three groupings of projects emerge’: *local ameliorations* – recognising the structural nature of problems but ignoring this in their strategies and activities (Liverpool, Oldham and Paisley); *traditional responses* – attempting to address wider issues using traditional community work responses (Southwark, Upper Afan, Batley, Cumbria); and *radical responses* – evolving new strategies to address new problem perceptions (North Tyneside, Benwell, Coventry, Newham, Birmingham).

social and economic processes, the five radical CDPs opted for a 'structuralist conflict' model of social change (see Community Development Project Working Group, 1974: 170-172; Green, 1992: 167-168). However, in contrast to other radical CDPs, North Tyneside CDP refined their approach as *radical reformism*. As outlined in one of the final reports (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 10), radical reformism is a class model of society, differing from a revolutionary perspective in that it 'is a process that involves fairly substantial change in one aspect of society but in the end does not challenge the fundamental basis of society'.

When asked recently to explain their thinking on radical reformism, David Byrne (former research director) and Bob Davis (former research fellow) commented as follows:

I think we came up with the phrase because some of us - myself and John Foster in particular - were Marxists with quite a lot of knowledge of debates in Marxist thought about reform versus revolution ... So the idea was all part of an intellectual current, which was trying to see how social transformation could be achieved by democratic means in developed societies. We felt that this sort of change was necessary to cope with the issues confronting working class people in places like North Shields ... Frankly John Foster and myself, as I remember, thought that a lot of the other CDP Marxism was not so much superficial as not particularly informed ... As I recall other CDPs quite liked the expression, but were more focused on analytical and descriptive work and less on action. (David Byrne, personal communication, October 2015)

I think it was in some ways a kind of rationalization of our somewhat ambiguous position of being employed by the state and yet not wanting to work *for* it, without being altogether directly oppositional. In addition, not everybody in the project was of exactly the same mind-set – and here 'radical reformism' perhaps represented a position which most could go along with. On a practical level, I think this manifested itself in the decision by quite a lot of us, after internal discussions, to join and engage ourselves in our local Labour Parties, regarding Labour as still (despite its many deficiencies) a mass working class party. (Bob Davis, personal communication, May 2016)

Whilst 'radical reformism' is probably a realistic description of the ideological position of North Tyneside CDP (and indeed most of the other 'radical' CDPs) and certainly informed the project strategy, this was not necessarily at the forefront of day to day work:

In practice, as a group we agreed in broad terms what we wanted to do. We listened to people on the estate. We wanted to get people involved in the local Labour party - that was where the power was. We worked with what we had. We saw that the ... housing was in a terrible state, people were overworked and underpaid and it was wrong. In our discussions there were differences but we did agree what our approach should be to support people and to challenge, and this is what we did. We wanted to support people to make a difference in their lives. (Penny Remfry, personal communication, May 2016)

In October 1973, North Tyneside CDP summarised their approach in a report to the Home Secretary:



We see our objective as being to initiate processes which will begin to remove social and economic inequality in the following ways:

- a. By the re-asserting of political consciousness at the local level.
- b. By increasing the capacity of the deprived to insist on an equitable distribution in the provision of:
  - i. Employment
  - ii. Adequate housing
  - iii. Health, education, welfare and legal benefits and facilities,
  - iv. Information, etc.
- c. By influencing the policy and performance of government and non-government agencies at the local, regional and national level. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 12)

Before starting action research in earnest, it was clarified in a number of team meetings that the CDP was concerned with 'politicisation, not therapy' and that:

the organisations developed by the project would have to have as their primary focus, issues relevant to their class; that is, although they were neighbourhood or area-based, this would not be the main reason for their establishment and maintenance. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 12)

It has to be remembered that when North Tyneside CDP decided their approach, it was based on a 'fundamentally optimistic set of assumptions. The idea being that there was *scope for improvement in North Shields*' (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 11, emphasis added). Local action group work was started that was 'issue-centred, locality-centred and local authority centred' (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 11) but it became clear to the team that to achieve the politicising objective, a federation of groups was needed. However, the optimism of achieving these goals was tempered by the 1974 White Paper on Public Expenditure which heralded spending cuts. The team realised this meant that most of the issues which had been within the power of the local authority to resolve would now be decided by cuts insisted by central government. This also changed the nature of the politicising objective:

The problem being that in optimistic circumstances, the project argued that politicisation would come through the process of groups fighting on their issue base. But now the need to recognise the issue had to be confronted in an openly political way, meant that the pressure on the group structure would need to be suddenly intensified. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 12)

The decision was made to become more closely involved with the local Labour Party in order to carry work forward in terms of the politicising objective. Team members were also involved in inter-project work which resulted in the report *Cutting the Welfare State* (Counter Information Services/CDP, 1976) and they stated, 'that discussions around this document helped in an understanding of just what was happening in North Shields' (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 13).

Therefore, mobilising the politicising objective through ‘action groups’ became more important and a final report is dedicated to this approach (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d). However, the final report does not clearly define what is meant by ‘group work’ or ‘action groups’ though both terms are used. In examining the final report, the groups worked with were mainly tenants, including children who lived in the CDP area. A ‘brief diary’ of group work activity includes examples of tenants’ groups, and, early on in the project ‘kids forming their own group to plan the playgrounds’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d: 7). According to Bob Davis (Interview, 2013) they preferred to use the term ‘action groups’ rather than tenants’ associations in order to differentiate the types of groups they were creating from other similar organisations. It is also important to note that the majority of the people they worked with were women – most of the tenants, a lot of the claimants and parents (Penny Remfry, in Armstrong, Banks and Harman, 2016: 6).

The work of the CDP action groups before 1974 was about ‘making a gain’ such as speeding up demolition. However, because of public spending cuts and the fact that the local authority was ‘not as progressive in its dealings with the public as it might have been’, the emphasis ‘became much more openly political in nature’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d: 6). The CDP team’s approach from the end of 1974 onwards involved encouraging groups to join or work with the Labour Party and bringing groups together to fight spending cuts. Attempts by the CDP team to politicise groups led to ‘increasing conflict over what North Tyneside Council regarded as being the “proper” work of the project and of what both the workers and those involved in the various groups saw as necessary’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d:6).

### **Organising for change: Mobilising action groups on key issues**

North Tyneside CDP did not embark on group work immediately. First, the team gathered evidence about the CDP area through surveys and historical research, including analysis of census data. A *Community Profile* (North Tyneside CDP, 1973) provided a picture of the CDP area at the time (e.g. population, employment sectors, local services, organisations and facilities). It also included community attitudes to participation and change in the area. In the final summary and evaluation we see North Tyneside aligning itself with other ‘radical’ CDPs in openly challenging the five initial assumptions set out by the Home Office in 1970. Clearly influenced by ‘first wave’ CDPs like Coventry (cited in the report), North Tyneside CDP argued that although the Home Office assumption that there were ‘unmobilised or untapped welfare and self-help resources in communities’ may well be true:

It is becoming clear ... that the source of these problems lies outside, and out of control of these communities, and merely to raise the level of community organisation and articulation in these areas cannot change the underlying structure of relationships between such areas and the political and economic institutions that affect them. (North Tyneside CDP, 1973:32)

Second, they gathered local information and offered advice through ‘information shops’ located in the communities. Information/advice/opinion centres were set up by most CDPs (see Streatfield, 1980, for a critical appraisal of neighbourhood information centres), the aim being ‘to maintain a presence in the project area, provide advice, information and referrals as well as gathering local opinions and needs around which to form action groups’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 21). In a final report, it was noted that information shops were:

not revolutionary... Indeed, the emphasis on “Information and Opinion” and the use of the word “advice”, reflects the main-stream community work origins of the idea at this stage. There was a distinct whiff of participation in it all ... (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 20)

Lynne Caffrey, who ran the information shop on the Meadow Well estate, recalled the issues and the main participants at the time:

We did a lot of work with local groups of people. We did work around housing, welfare benefits issues and unemployment. There was always a hard-core with local people who were interested and involved in things, and some of those people are still around, they're still there. (Lynne Caffrey, Interview, 2013)

The people named as still around were mainly women.

Once an issue was identified, North Tyneside CDP developed a plan of action:

- Initiating debate about the issue, including leaflets, internal discussions, informal meetings;
- Forming an interest group;
- Commencing action through surveys and analysis;
- Calling a public meeting to clarify the issues, form an action group and establish a mandate for further action;
- Organising and carrying out a campaign to achieve the aims of the group via petition, report, councillor lobbying etc. and in some cases by open conflict with the authority;
- Developing other issues – stemming from main problems or others not directly related, including joint action with other groups. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d: 6)

In a discussion about participation and CDPs, Smith et al. (1977: 246) argue that because the national CDP was an ‘action project’ it was concerned with what ‘might be’, not merely with ‘what is’. As projects turned away from the notion of ‘self-help’ there was an ‘attempt to develop a form of participation that would bring about a shift in balance of power’.

Below is an overview of how North Tyneside CDP mobilised action groups and campaigns to organise for change and shift the balance of power in relation to four key issues: industry and employment; housing; play and recreation; and women’s issues.

### ***Industry and employment***

Industry and employment was a significant issue for North Tyneside CDP (see Moor, 1974; North Tyneside CDP/ North Tyneside Trades Council, 1975; North Tyneside CDP/ North Tyneside Trades Council, 1977; North Tyneside CDP, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c; North Tyneside and Benwell CDP/ Tyne Conference of Shop Stewards, 1977; National CDP inter-project reports, 1975, 1977). The CDP team investigated in detail the historical development of industry and employment, the process of deindustrialisation and associated loss of traditional industries and the effects of long-term unemployment. They also looked at where industrial power lay and how decisions affected the workers of North Shields. The aim was:

... to do everything we could, as a project, to assist in the fight to achieve full and stable employment for the local workforce, at wages which were (at least) the national average. The way we saw ourselves doing that was to work with local groups and agencies - not necessarily restricted to the labour movement - providing them with information and also facilities with which to wage that fight. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b: 160)

Alongside research to understand the industrial context, they also embarked on action in the fields of industry, employment and trade unions. This involved collaboration with Trade Unions and other Labour Movement Organisations (see North Tyneside CDP, 1978b:155 – 183). Reflecting on his work some 40 years on, Bob Davis explains how their work contributed to both local and national agendas of concern, particularly during the early days of the 1974 Labour Government when Tony Benn was Secretary of State for Industry:

The team chose to work with representative organisations like the North Tyneside Trades Council – the local arm of the TUC - providing support and information and publishing local reports with them, e.g. on youth unemployment. The CDP team also worked closely with a group of Tyneside shop stewards - the Tyne Conference of Shop Stewards - drawn mainly from the large engineering companies including Swan Hunters and Smith's Dock in North Tyneside and Vickers in West Newcastle, within the Benwell CDP area. This was created to support and further, by the involvement of the shop stewards movement, the Labour Government's 1974 Industry White Paper with its aims of greater state intervention in industry including shipbuilding. (Bob Davis, in Armstrong, Banks and Harman, 2016: 5)

When Prime Minister Harold Wilson removed Tony Benn from his post 'the impetus of the campaign waned'. However, Bob Davis's work continued with the Tyne Conference of Shop Stewards (TCSS), involving 'the collection and dissemination of information of use to the shop stewards movement. Extensive research was undertaken on the ownership and control of industry in the area'. Significantly, this work uncovered the presence of multinational companies in the Tyne and Wear economy (the first signs of globalisation) and resulted in the joint North Tyneside/Benwell CDP/TCSS (1977) publication, *Multinationals in Tyne and Wear*.

### **Housing**

Housing became the focus of several significant campaigns. Housing was identified as a key issue by: a) background research and b) action-research projects. Background research on housing aimed to clarify 'important areas of social organisation as a basis for analysis, action and policy' (North Tyneside CDP, 1976:2). Papers produced by the research team, such as *The property world in and around North Shields* and *Council housing – the attributes of estates*, provided a social profile and were seen as an information base for action work. In contrast, two papers derived from action work as action-research projects: *The saga of Ropery Banks* and *The Meadowell: a history of a 1930s housing estate*. Both were first written as background papers to work with local action groups but later they were used in a report by local residents submitted to North Tyneside Council (The Saga..) and the Meadowell history contributed to a 'shock report', *The Forgotten Slums*, produced by two Meadowell action groups in 1975 (North Tyneside CDP, 1976:1).

By the time the North Tyneside CDP team was establishing itself in the 1970s, the Meadow Well estate (formerly the Ridges) had a reputation as being a problem area. In the early 1960s, Adrian Sinfield found that 'for the rest of the people living in the Borough the Ridges symbolised a tough, dirty, and disreputable world' (Sinfield, 1967: 5). To counter the stigmatised reputation, in 1969, the council decided to change the name to *The Meadowell* and also changed street names on the north side at the same time. The CDP team researched the history of the estate to reveal a series of failures and assumptions, which led to the poor reputation and pejorative labelling of residents. First, when clearance of the Banksides and relocation to the Ridges began in the 1930s, families and their belongings were sent to Moor Park Hospital for de-infestation. The council was keener on general de-infestation than the Medical Officer for Health, revealing the 'moral as opposed to medical character of the process' (North Tyneside CDP, 1976:107). As Damer (1974) argued, the use of de-infestation during the slum clearance process was a significant degradation ritual. Second, the dwellings were cheaply-built and in a style and layout that maximised occupation densities. Combined with the council's rehousing policy, this led to overcrowding on the site. Third, there was inadequate maintenance and repair, exacerbated by poor quality housing in the first place; and fourth, problems on the estate were being described in terms of tenant misbehaviour or juvenile vandalism.

Former CDP research director, Dave Byrne recalls the distinctive and contrasting features of housing at the time of the CDP:

A key distinction at the time of the CDP was between council housing built for 'general needs' and that built in relation to clearance and reduction of overcrowding schemes. So actually most council housing in North Shields - Balkwell in the interwar years and Collingwood estate and estates in Cullercoats, etc, post-war, had nothing to do with slum clearance at all. The point was that Meadowell was stigmatized because it was originally a slum clearance estate in contrast to the respectable and desirable and much better quality estates built for general needs. Percy Main Flats and Dockwray Square Flats were very poor quality although not explicitly clearance related schemes. So most post war and some interwar housing in North Shields and Tynemouth was regarded in the 1970s as a perfectly decent and indeed for most working class households a desirable place to live. It was in no way residualized, although that has happened to some degree since. (Dave Byrne, personal communication, 2017)

The Information Shops also played a role in identifying housing issues and recruiting housing action groups, which also carried out information campaigns for example, repairs and improvement. In 1975, the local housing situation was that 19 per cent of houses were without a bathroom, inside toilet and hot water; 2,600 pre-war council houses were awaiting modernisation under the 1969 Housing Act; 1,400 houses remained unimproved in the General Improvement Areas and 500 households (in Compulsory Purchase Order Areas) were waiting to be rehoused (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 47). The CDP team planned the North Tyneside Housing Campaign in November 1975, covering not only North Shields but the whole of North Tyneside. Crucially, the aim was to challenge the local authority by highlighting faults in their housing and planning policies and the implications of

public spending cuts, and generate a debate about the politics of housing (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 48). As Bob Davis (Interview, 2014) commented:

The notable challenge was the housing campaign, which did, I suppose, set out to expose the council. I mean that really turned into quite a cause célèbre.

One of their strategies at this time was to use community theatre. Kenny Bell (one of the CDP workers) had been working with Welfare State<sup>3</sup> (which later became Welfare State International) – an association of freelance artists formed in 1968 which organise large scale, spectacular outdoor events:

... they pitched up next to Reservoir House, the headquarters of the action team of the CDP on this land with their trailers and things and various animals, and they were doing this what I thought was quite whacky sort of trying to engage people in community theatre. But rather more directly political groups, acting groups, they came and did some work. (Bob Davis, Interview, 2014)

The campaign also included a series of short research pieces, a newsletter called *Housing Action News*, a sit-in at a rent office, demonstrations at Council meetings and a Housing Conference in November 1975. Considerable media attention was generated and there was a threat that the CDP would be closed down because of the challenge to the Labour local authority's housing policy. For example, the series of research pieces criticised the Senior Planning Officer's plan (known as the Holdsworth Plan<sup>4</sup>) which 'rankled with the leadership of the Labour Party' (David Corkey Interview, 1987). The first issue of the newsletter attacked the Labour Party's housing record and the council's slum clearance record, which led to the local authority banning the issue. As Candon (2014:50) argues, 'there was a real concern that North Shields CDP was becoming overtly political' and the action techniques 'caused much embarrassment for the ruling Labour group and resulted in a good deal of hostility'.

Nevertheless, the Housing Conference went ahead and from this a resolution was accepted and a Housing Campaign Committee established of tenants, Labour Party members and trade unionists (see North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 50). The successes and challenges of the Housing Campaign Committee are summarized in the CDP final report *North Shields: Organising for change in a working class area* (1978c: 50-58):

In the end then, the North Tyneside Campaign failed to do more than raise the dust of housing discontent in the area, serving to demonstrate that whilst the cuts were being made

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about Welfare State International see <http://www.welfare-state.org/pages/aboutwsi.htm> [accessed October 2015]

<sup>4</sup> The Holdsworth Plan was: 'to demolish all the private tenanted housing that was left on the banks of the Tyne, from Dockway Square to Borough Road and beyond, all the south part of Shields. Disperse those working-class people of Shields to suburban estates like Battle Hill, Killingworth, bring in private owner-occupied, high-income families and that type of housing along the Bank. And Holdsworth, in his report, quoted grand vistas and luxury flatted accommodation, high-end appartments. All of this to service and support the shopping centre development. And we exposed this as a method of dispersing the working-class population of Shields, and of creating capital out of Shields' (David Corkey, Interview, 1987).

and that the problems existed, it would take more than a few dents in the side of the Labour movement establishment to do anything about them. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 58)

Even though the report seemed to view the Housing Campaign as a failure because the financial crisis of 1976 led to public spending cuts, an interview with a former CDP worker in later years reveals (with the benefit of hindsight) that there were some achievements:

I think one of the big achievements of the project was to stop that plan [Holdsworth] in its tracks. Because once we had exposed it, and once we started to argue in the Labour Party, that the working-class of Shields are being dispersed in the interests of these capitalist developments and it should stop, the Labour Group on the Council began to think about its housing problems in Shields. Now, I think that was a big contribution of the Community Development Project to the social history of North Shields. (David Corkey Interview, 1987)

More broadly, some CDP members were engaging in the Political Economy of Housing Workshop<sup>5</sup> as Dave Byrne recalls:

We were involved nationally with a thing called the Political Economy of Housing Workshop. I was very involved with that. So were lots of people from the CDP. What was interesting about the Political Economy of Housing Workshop was that its background was explicitly Marxist, because it had started out from Marxist urban analysis depending the theory of rent. It was about a Marxist understanding of urban development and class conflict in urban development; so we produced quite a lot of reports on housing. There were CDP reports on housing, of course, but a lot of the CDP effort went into the Political Economy of Housing Workshop reports. (Dave Byrne, personal communication, 2017)

### ***Play and recreation***

Many CDPs became involved in supporting the development of services for young people, including nursery and pre-school provision, adventure playgrounds and play schemes (Community Development Project Working Group, 1974: 179). However, in North Tyneside, during the first three years of the project, *'more funds were dedicated to this area than other areas of work'* (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 37, emphasis added). There are two reasons for this: first, in the *Community Profile* survey, the lack of recreational facilities for young people had come a close second to dissatisfaction with housing (at the time there was one Youth Club on the Meadow Well estate); second, Kenny Bell, the play organiser, was committed to, and familiar with, the Adventure Playground movement (see Chilton, 2013; Sorenson, 1951), having worked previously with Coventry CDP:

I was a student in Coventry, hating what I was doing. I happened to be walking down a back street one day and there was a piece of waste ground and there was this music playing and there was this guy building something, just knocking wood around. So I stopped and talked to him and he'd just been appointed to build an adventure playground and he'd been

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<sup>5</sup> More about the work of the Political Economy of Housing Workshop during the early 1970s and papers presented at the Conference of Socialist Economists can be found at:  
<http://homepages.warwick.ac.uk/%7Eesrbe/pubs/ClarkeGinsburg.pdf>

employed by the Coventry Community Development Project. So I then spent more time working on the adventure playground with him than I did studying. When I eventually finished as a student I worked on the playground full-time and that was linked to CDP, and then a job came up in North Shields as a play organiser, so I applied for that. (Kenny Bell, Interview, 2010)

Despite the need for improved play and recreation in the area, tensions arose around the issue in two ways. First, the relationship between CDP play workers and statutory youth workers at the Collingwood youth club was already tense because of disagreements over the CDP approach to play, which entailed involving young people in the design and building of a playground. Tensions increased when a false report by the statutory youth workers, that young people had burnt down the playground, was reported to the media. A CDP play worker recalls what happened:

At the end of the first summer of the Adventure Playground in 1974, I went on holiday with Kenny Bell and returned to find that a large section of the newly-built wooden fence around the playground had been burnt down. The false claim that was reported to the media that it was the playground which been burnt down came from the Statutory Youth Workers. The evenings had been getting colder and the young people felt it ok to light a fire using scrap and salvaged wood lying in a section of the playground. They claimed it was their wood, in their playground and lighting a fire was ok. Unfortunately the fire got too close to the fence and it caught fire. Kenny and I worked with the young people to arrange a press conference to correct the initial reports, putting across their own version of events. (Joe Caffrey, personal communication, 2017)

Second, the conflict with statutory youth workers brought to a head growing disagreements within the CDP team about play. Kenny Bell raised the politics of play and recreation in a paper at the National CDP Conference in York in 1974, which attempted to:

place play and recreation into a structural conflict model of social change, which crudely means the inadequacy of play and recreational facilities common throughout working class areas which arises from a fundamental conflict of interests between classes in society. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c: 41)

Though this provided a starting point for discussions, play was never developed as an inter-project CDP report (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c).

North Tyneside CDP funded play for one more year and in April 1976, the Recreation and Amenities Department assumed responsibility for the scheme and the two posts associated with the playground. According to Penny Remfry play was 'abandoned to the local authority' because:

Although we set off seeing play as important, as people wanted it, the majority view was that it was not an area where you could politicise people and therefore it became secondary. (Penny Remfry, Interview, 1987)



Joe Caffrey, who worked alongside Kenny Bell as a play worker on the Meadow Well, expressed a similar view:

It was clear from the start that not all team members agreed with the strategy on children's play. The initial involvement in play was to demonstrate need and put pressure on the Local Authority to extend provision. Kenny Bell clearly saw the Adventure Playground as a means of helping develop collective skills, group consciousness and solidarity with young people. The team, however, eventually made a major mistake in coming to the conclusion expressed by Penny Remfry that play was not an area where you could politicise people ... (Joe Caffrey, personal communication, 2017)

While all agreed that the CDP team's involvement in play was to demonstrate need and put pressure on the local authority to extend its provision (because recreation was their responsibility), not everyone believed in the importance of work with young people *per se*, to develop skills, group consciousness, self-confidence, solidarity and cooperation (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c) or that it fitted with the politicising objective. As Joe Caffrey explains:

The [CDP] playleaders had very close contacts with many parents who could have been worked with and politicised to put pressure on the local authority to extend its provision. Some of the parents took part in the campaign to save the Advice Centre, but it took another few years for political activity on play to happen across the Borough. (Joe Caffrey, personal communication, 2017)

In the legacies and enduring effects section, we discuss what happened to play once the local authority resumed responsibility.

### ***Women's issues***

One of the most widely cited critiques of CDP is the failure to tackle gender issues and the 'paucity of attention given to the role of women in community initiatives' (Popple 2011: 162). While many CDPs worked with women, North Tyneside was distinctive in producing a final report on *Women's Work*. Like the issue of play, it was a few CDP workers (this time women) who drove the issue forward, inspired by the women's movement:

I'd spent the previous four years in North America and I'd been involved in the women's movement over there, came up here and actively looked for feminist groups of which there was one, at the time. (Penny Remfry, Interview, 1987)

The late 1960s to mid-1970s was the 'organising stage' of the women's movement (Ryan, 1992) and some women CDP workers mobilised as Gamson (1975) describes, to activate and create commitment. This fitted with the politicising objective of the CDP and their initial approach was to work within existing strategies and relationships established through industry and employment work with the Trades Council. To this end, they tried joint working towards the Working Women's Charter which was drawn up by trade unionists and activists in the Women's Liberation Front and launched in 1974 (Saner, 2014). The Charter aimed to 'raise demands affecting women both as housewives and paid workers' (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b: 164). The list of 10 demands included equal pay,

equal opportunities for entry into occupations and promotion, equal working conditions, maternity leave, free contraception, free and flexible childcare and more women in positions of power and public life (see North Tyneside CDP, 1978b: 164; Saner, 2014). Two women CDP workers were invited to work with the Trades Council to organise the campaign. However, it soon became apparent that translating support into action would not be easy and ‘the two women found themselves carrying the burden of the work’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b: 164).

This attempt at a joint initiative with the Trades Council failed because the Trades Council supported the TUC Charter, and did not want to express their differences (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b). However, the Working Women’s Charter continued as a functioning body in its own right and the work became ‘more firmly based in community issues’ with ‘much of its energy taken up with propaganda, press releases and the production of *Shieldswoman*, its own bulletin’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b: 165). This reveals the difficulties faced by those trying to work with, and improve working conditions for, women within the male-dominated trade union movement. There were also challenges within the North Tyneside CDP team because the emphasis on class analysis made it difficult for women members to raise gender issues at either a theoretical or a practical level (Remfry, 1979). As Penny Remfry (1979: 188) recalls: ‘we always talked about the people we worked with as “tenants” but this actually obscured an important reality – that they were not only tenants but also for the most part women’. Furthermore, most senior CDP workers in North Tyneside and elsewhere were men and although the issue of male dominance was discussed, the women on the project felt, ‘there were areas of our neighbourhood work which I and other women in the project were unhappy about but we were never able to articulate our reasons why’ (Remfry, 1979: 188). Reflecting on this, Penny Remfry (*ibid*) says:

There was the quite common occurrence of women dropping out of groups because of pressure from their husbands – sometimes physical pressure as well as verbal. As a project we never saw this as a problem to be dealt with – it was something that happened.

The ‘side-lining’ of gender and specifically women’s issues within the CDP team meant that some women members ‘were doing it in our spare time off our own backs’ (Penny Remfry Interview, 2015). Importantly, this commitment meant there was a space for local women to talk, and led to a CDP Final Report – *Women’s Work*. This was a study, ‘which started out as a relatively simple explanation of the work that women do in North Shields’ and ‘turned into a socialist-feminist analysis of the oppression of women in general’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978e: 5).

So far, we have discussed what North Tyneside CDP did during its five-year life, combining research (including surveys, statistics and historical and policy document analysis), action groups and campaigns on issues of importance to people in the CDP area. In the next section, we look at the legacy that the CDP left behind.

### **Legacies and enduring effects**

North Tyneside CDP clearly had an impact during the period of its operation – politicising residents, mounting campaigns and challenging local and central government through its research. Yet what did it leave behind after it ended, and can we see any enduring effects today? In assessing its

legacies we draw on interviews with a range of past and current residents, practitioners and policymakers, and literature in the field of community development and urban policy.

Taking 'legacy' to mean something left behind or handed down, this can include material objects as well as ideas, organisational structures, and networks. They may change in form over time and often it is hard to attribute the origins of a current idea or organisation. However, we identified four broad themes emerging from our interviews and review of the literature. Many apply to CDPs in general, but we specifically focus on North Tyneside here.

### ***The CDP literature***

North Tyneside CDP produced six final reports. Several members of the team were also involved in writing some of the influential National CDP inter-project reports, including *The Costs of Industrial Change* and *Gilding the Ghetto* (NCDP, 1977a; 1977b), as well as book chapters and articles (e.g. Corkey 1975; Davis and Green, 1979; Foster, 1975; Corkey and Craig 1978; Remfry, 1979). There was a general view amongst those interviewed that the CDP reports were the most tangible and influential legacy<sup>6</sup>. These were widely read at the time and have continued to be used as teaching materials, particularly in community, youth and social work courses. CDPs are frequently referenced in current literature on community development. The most recent edition of a widely-used UK textbook on community work (Pople, 2015) still contains an appendix listing key CDP reports. They are a significant contribution to the history of community development work, as well as offering material that can be reinterpreted and analysed by each generation from different vantage points. This is exemplified by the *Imagine North East* research project, as younger participants and those initially unaware of North Tyneside CDP have reflected on the persistence of inequality in the area and the limited role of interventions by government and community organisations from the 1970s to the present-day context of economic austerity.

As Kraushaar (1982) notes, North Tyneside CDP was particularly good at documenting its experiences. David Byrne (Interview, 2013) also commented:

I think we did more evaluating than Benwell. Benwell did some very good ground breaking research, especially *The Making of a Ruling Class*, which is a classic, but they did less evaluating.

### ***Organisational structures***

North Tyneside CDP also left behind organisational structures that were significant regionally and locally over the following decades, although it is not always easy to track the identity of organisations through changes of name, location and functions over time. For example, in 1976, the *Trade Union Studies Information Unit (TUSIU)* was established as a joint initiative between North Tyneside and Benwell CDPs (for reflections on the TUSIU, see Hodgson, 2016). This came about from discussions about how to improve trade union education on Tyneside, as most trade unions at a local level lacked the resources to do it themselves. The idea appealed to North Tyneside and Benwell CDPs because they recognised their own work was temporary, whereas the work with trade unions needed continuity (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b). It was also a way of combining community

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<sup>6</sup> Many CDP reports are available online at: <http://ulib.iupui.edu/collections/CDP>

politics with trade unionism, which tended to focus more narrowly on employment issues. A former TUSIU worker commented that:

The model was to try and develop a research facility that was based on action, for the trade union movement - particularly groups of shop stewards who were faced with deindustrialisation. (Keith Hodgson, Interview, 2014)

The two CDPs contributed grant aid for two years, after which TUSIU gained support and funding from regional Trade Unions, regional TUC and local authorities. The Unit lasted for just over 25 years. According to a Newcastle TUC Annual Report (2006) local government financial support for TUSIU ended in 2001/2 and it was 'relatively dormant' until 2005, when it was revived as part of the workload of the Newcastle and Gateshead TUC Centre Against Unemployment<sup>7</sup>. Over the years, according to Keith Hodgson (former TUSIU worker), TUSIU:

Had a considerable national influence on shipbuilding strategy, with numerous reports for different trade unions, many of which were given serious consideration by the Financial Times and other media ... TUSIU also demonstrated the value of worker education and was a significant factor in NUPE establishing regional education officers, which was piloted in the North and then extended to all regions and is still in place in UNISON today. This model was also adopted by other regional unions such as TGWU and the GMB. (Keith Hodgson, personal communication, 2016)

At a more local level, when the CDP ended, local residents were keen for the Information Shop to continue. However, there was conflict with the local authority over the sacking of Information Shop workers, resulting in a nine-week sit-in and other direct action measures (see *Community Action*, 1978; *The Journal*, 1977). Local residents used their organising skills (developed whilst working with CDP workers) to challenge the local authority. Once resolved, the shop continued in the same location but with a new name, the Community Rights Centre, providing 'a combination of welfare rights advice and community development' (David Peel, Interview, 2015). The building where the Community Rights Centre was located is now the Magpie Chippy (Margaret Reynolds, Interview, 2014). The history of what happened next is disputed, with one source claiming that the centre was closed, but that it then continued with a new name, the Meadow Well Resource Centre, later transferring to a new building and becoming Meadow Well Connected, which still exists today. Another source claims that 'the Community Resource Centre (CRC) (a relic of the North Shields CDP) and the Arts Centre combined forming the North Shields People's Centre (NSPC), retaining its affiliation with the TUC and moving to new premises in North Shields' (Beaumont, 2000, 128). These different accounts show not just the vagaries of memory, but they are also testament to the fact that people look at events and organisations from different perspectives and it is possible for links and continuities to flow in more than one direction.

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<sup>7</sup> Newcastle and Gateshead TUC Centre Against Unemployment was established in 1978 and closed in November 2014 after running into financial difficulties. But in June 2015, space was given to operate for six months in the GMB offices (*The Chronicle*, 2015).

Whilst both these organisational structures evolved and changed over time, with name changes and moves to different buildings, they left a legacy of radical community action and civic capacity. Margaret Reynolds (formerly Nolan) a former project worker with Cedarwood Trust who became a local Labour councillor for Chirton Ward in North Shields was a resident during the CDP era. She helped establish a credit union in the early 1980s, with inspiration from Joe Caffrey (former North Tyneside CDP play worker who established the first credit union in the North East in Scotswood). Margaret Reynolds explained how she and others became involved locally and embarked on new career directions because of North Tyneside CDP:

I'm not sure whether I would have ever got involved if it hadn't have been for them [North Tyneside CDP workers]. It was a combination of my circumstances and being involved and thinking: 'life would be a lot easier if we did get some help. We would make use of it'. So yeah, I think it was a very worthwhile project. But I think they also got involved, or they helped, engage with people in the community and people became volunteers. Like Steve Wyers, Brian Charters and Betty Charters. Steve Wyers went to Durham University. Now I'm not sure that, without that project and that encouragement, that he would have taken those steps. So there's probably quite a few people who started their career one way or another through being involved, or seeing the work that was being done. (Margaret Reynolds, Interview, 2014)

### ***Knowledge exchange***

During the CDP period, knowledge exchange was important:

Actually to follow a chain of how an idea passes through different people and ends up as a concrete reality ... all the people involved in CDP in one way or another were important in generating ideas which got taken up by people who had been working away ... in the council, as councillors, in the Labour Party, outside the Labour Party. (Penny Remfry, Interview, 1987)

Generating ideas, in some ways acting as a 'think tank', links to the politicising objective. As Penny Remfry also said: 'the time was ripe – it was the 1970s – a time of ideas and ideologies and turning them into reality' (ibid). Knowledge exchange was about influencing the collective, especially those with power.

The interviews also reveal how skills learnt whilst working with the CDP influenced subsequent work:

I've consciously had the model of CDP in my mind as I've chaired North Shields CAB over the years, particularly in relation to the information strategy. (David Corkey, Interview, 1987)

At that time there was traditional youth work, or boys' club work. The play movement was something very new, particularly to the late '60s and early '70s, and it was very much child and young people-centred. In terms of its philosophy it helped shape how I would work later on, in terms of community development work. It was Kenny Bell who helped and guided me. I was working with these kids one day and Kenny says, "Joe, let the kid do it, and I said,

“They're a bit big for him.” He says, “It doesn't matter, let him knock the nails in, that's how he learns. (Joe Caffrey, Interview, 2015)

A clear example of how skills learnt about organising for change were mobilised in the post CDP period can be found when examining what happened when the local authority took responsibility for play (see earlier section on play during the CDP). In interviews with Sylvia Brown (who was appointed the play leader) and Joe Caffrey (former CDP play worker who continued to live in the area and as a parent was involved in play) indicated that lessons learnt during the CDP were influential in shaping play provision in the Borough.

Recalling her time as play leader, Sylvia Brown commented in interview that the initial problem was reduced staffing (the CDP had employed three full-time play workers), so they focussed on working with local parents to arrange indoor activities and coach trips. An application was made to the Manpower Services Commission to fund 112 play workers during the six weeks summer holiday and it was successful:

And I developed them myself the first year and didn't have a great deal of knowledge of the borough, although I'd lived in North Tyneside for three years, it was very localised, I hadn't travelled around the borough. I developed it on a simple geographic spread basis where I was identifying communities and then, wherever I could, looked for the most ideal premises in that area. I realised in some of the areas I'd completely misjudged the need; I hadn't thought about the need, I was just looking at it from a physical point of view - map and building. So some areas were well over-subscribed because I developed them all equally, and some areas were totally under-used and there wasn't a need. (Sylvia Brown, Interview, 2015)

Local knowledge and working with key mothers in the area was a lesson learnt:

Really learning from that experience that what I needed to do was to involve local people to advise me on their local knowledge about, 'well this is where we need it and these are where the buildings are you could look towards'. So it was realising that the local knowledge was something that would make the play schemes more successful and I ran them for another three years after that, and they did improve ... We started to work with some who you could see were keen and had an interest in developing children's play. So, working through those key people, normally mothers, because primarily, it was the women we worked with, we were able to extend the play beyond the summer schemes across North Tyneside. (Sylvia Brown, Interview, 2015)

From this experience, Sylvia decided to try to mainstream play by developing an infrastructure through play committees:

And then that's what really helped improve and develop an infrastructure from that. And then I think, probably the year after, when we were trying to get the play scheme mainstreamed a bit more, because obviously the Manpower Services was a precarious

funding source... So we started to then bring together the play committees on a borough-wide basis so there could be a campaigning group. (Sylvia Brown, Interview, 2015)

It was important at this time not to aggravate North Tyneside local councillors by being like the CDP because the relationship had been one where '...there were Labour councillors who opposed us all the way through' (David Corkey Interview, 1987). This had left 'CDP workers suffering negative stereo-typing as radical "revolutionaries" (Beaumont, 2000:127), which meant that 'at the end of the day it was very, very rare that the councillors in North Tyneside took any notice of what was happening from CDP's point of view' (Joe Caffrey, Interview, 2015). Nevertheless, the play leader wanted to develop play using a community development approach:

It wasn't professional groups of people who could make sure the play was mainstream. It was going to be the parents themselves ... it was important to get those committees which Sylvia had formed to develop the skills and the abilities to run the play schemes themselves. And that was quite an important step, and in those days it was quite new. I mean, there were bits of that around and it's part of the philosophy that we were working with on the adventure playground with kids [during the CDP], giving them the responsibility of the development themselves. (Joe Caffrey, Interview, 2015)

They worked with an existing organisation in North Tyneside called The North Tyneside Play Council whose members saw themselves as:

sort of a voice on behalf of children to the local authority, very traditional, middle-class way of approaching things, but this meant they could approach the local authority saying, 'Look, we've got some stats here, these are the reasons why you should have children's play in the area'. (Joe Caffrey, Interview, 2015)

It was then agreed that people involved on the play committees (which the play leader had developed) would join the play council and they embarked on a campaign for children's play using direct action tactics learnt during previous CDP actions. Former CDP play worker, Joe Caffrey was involved and helped shape the action using a community development approach:

So you had local people who were quite strong, knew what they were talking about in terms of children's play and had a voice in terms of the Play Council. And that campaign was quite a heavy campaign...So this constant stuff in the media, constant turning-up at council meetings. What it was, they [Council] still hadn't changed their mind, they were still dragging their feet, and we had a play committee meeting, separate from the play council, and it was agreed. Because I was on there now, because I was living in Shiremoor, I was living in a council house and I had kids, and I was on the play committee. So I went there, I wasn't on there as a community worker but we made sure that we used that community development approach of the people taking the lead. (Joe Caffrey, Interview, 2015)

Joe Caffrey also talked about the direct action they took, which was reminiscent of the housing action during the CDP:

We tried to get through to the assistant director [Jeff Slaney] but he wouldn't talk to us. So we decided to go down to his office. There were about six of us who went down. We found the way in and out of the building. So we went inside and we found his office and went in and said, "We want to see [Jeff Slaney]." "He's not in today, he's on holiday," said his PA. "Can you ring him up then and tell him we're not leaving this office until he comes down and talks to us about when the play schemes are starting." And at this point we just got on the phone - their phones - and we rang all of the media and the newspapers, and said, "We're in here, we're occupying this man's office, we want him down here now." He was furious. He came down about an hour and a half later; he came in swearing and shouting. And of course, the combination of men and women just looked at him. It was that sort of direct action. But also, what we were able to do in terms of local people who would sit down with the likes of him and knew the arguments and knew exactly how to handle people like [Slaney] because they'd developed the knowledge and they'd developed the skills in terms of negotiating. They developed the skills in terms of direct action. (Joe Caffrey, Interview, 2015)

In the end, the funding was made available.

### **Networks**

Personal connections and networks were not only important during the time of CDP, for some they also continued once the CDP ended, as described by John Foster (Interview, 1988):

We had this organisation within CDP called Political Economy Collective (PEC), and Gary Craig [Benwell CDP] and myself and one or two others, continued PEC after the ending of CDP projects. Now that PEC, in a sense, has gone but there's an informal network that still exists because there are so many of us still around. It's an informal thing ... an informal process of influence whereby these individuals who have worked together, who've understood each other, they've argued a lot over a long period of time, who were not part of the traditional career route for local government. But some of whom have now been in local government, like myself, quite a long time. And who are now in reasonably senior positions. Well, we can continue that passage of debate and it moves things on.

Many of the North Tyneside CDP workers stayed in the area to live and work. Some went into academia, trade unionism, local government, community work and activism and one became a film maker. Ten years after the CDP ended, some of the former workers were in positions of power locally and had a significant impact on radicalising local politics in the 1980s (Candon, 2014).

Networks also extended beyond CDP workers:

There's a legacy in terms of a whole range of individuals because the networks were not just the people who worked there but some of the networks we established were like my personal networks. There's Hilary Wainwright who edits *Red Pepper* [magazine], who was in Newcastle in the 70s and she was doing work around alternative worker plans with the Vickers Shop Stewards and others. So there was a network involved because of the work we were doing with her and other activists involved. There's still some linkages with Benington



[formerly Coventry CDP]. Dexter Whitfield set up *Community Action* magazine, he was part of that network and we still work with him a lot. (Kenny Bell, Interview, 2010)

Speaking about women's issues during the time of the CDP, John Foster stressed the importance of Penny Remfry and other female workers in pursuing this line of work and in generating a legacy post-CDP. This demonstrates the importance of networks and connections in ensuring ideas and action continue:

... there were women employees of the project who, outside of CDP, played a very important role within the locality, and even beyond the locality, in the women's issue debate ...  
But it's more to do with ideas and to do with personalities and to do with the fact that people are still around who were part of that debate ten, fifteen years ago, and are still arguing for improvements and gains. (John Foster, Interview, 1988)

... Penny [Remfry], in my view, is central to what happened or what exists now in North Tyneside, because she played such an important role at the very earliest days, arguing her corner in CDP, not always to what she would regard as to her satisfaction. (John Foster, Interview, 1988)

### **Conclusion: Considering the key lessons from North Tyneside CDP**

The North Tyneside CDP team was under no illusions that community development work combined with research could solve the problems of poverty in declining industrial areas. The aim was to raise awareness amongst national and local politicians, civil servants and officers, as well as community development workers and local residents, of the fact that the causes of social problems lay outside these areas and solutions could only be found through radical restructuring of social and economic policy. Yet while some of the CDP messages were taken up in subsequent programmes designed to tackle urban decline, which combined strategies for community, social and economic development, the area covered by the CDP in North Tyneside still remains the most 'deprived' part of the borough. In 2015, the very same area (currently Chirton and Riverside wards) was identified as a priority for action by the local authority in relation to employment, housing, education and health (North Tyneside Council Cabinet Report, 2015). While there have been numerous regeneration programmes in the post CDP period, including the Urban Programme, City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget, Enterprise Zones and Neighbourhood Management (see Robinson and Townsend, 2016) and substantial improvements in housing and general quality of life, nevertheless the area is still relatively disadvantaged in terms of unemployment, poor school achievement and ill-health. The CDP metaphor of 'gilding the ghetto' is as apt today as it was in 1977, with North Shields, along with many other former CDP areas, having been re-gilded several times (Banks, 2011).

In the final report on living with industrial change, North Tyneside CDP (1978b:186) identified the tension between local and wider work as a key lesson learnt:

In hindsight, we ought to have better appreciated the strengths of our location – our community base. We had firm local contacts, we developed knowledge about the local workplace, most people who lived in the project area worked locally; we knew what was going on. Whilst our work at a wider level was necessary and of great importance, the

constraints on us meant that we had to order our priorities in the way that we saw them at the time. With greater resources we could have developed the local work more and made the effort to link up our wider work in a more systematic way with it and vice versa. In this way, a strategy which on the one hand concentrated on the unemployed, the claimant, the badly organised, the women, in our local area – the least advanced sections of the working class, and those in most need of organisation – could have been made to relate to fundamental issues that on the other hand better organised sections were fighting; and in this way could have made a big step forward in the attempt to break down the division between “domestic” and “industrial” working-class issues.

Yet despite this rather critical self-appraisal, North Tyneside CDP, along with many of the other CDPs, did show the way in which community politics and class struggle (Corkey and Craig, 1978) could be linked productively to make a difference at local level. They were effective enough to scare the local authority, which became wary of employing community development workers in the future. However, although the CDP left a legacy of community organising that continued after the project ended (workers and activists contributed to developing the women’s refuge and carried on the Community Rights Centre, for example), the limited potential for radical community development within the state had been clearly shown by the CDP.

What has emerged through the interviews and work with community partners for the *Imagine North East* research project is that people take different lessons from the CDP, re-interpreting it in the light of their own experiences and contexts. What we found in the former CDP area of North Shields in 2013-16 is a very different place physically and in terms of community development work compared to the mid-1970s. Community organisations are struggling to survive as local authority cuts bite and individuals and families seek help through crises of indebtedness, benefit sanctions, food and fuel poverty (Armstrong, Banks and Harman, 2016: 12). One of the questions raised at the start of *Imagine North East* was: ‘Were the CDPs right?’ The conclusion of our project is that the structural CDP analysis was right, and still is. Yet 40 years on, in the context of neo-liberal politics and economic austerity, the scope for radical reformism seems even more constricted now than it was then.

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